Common at Last
A Journal in Twelve Essays

Douglas Gwyn

Plain Press

Plain Press
Philadelphia and Birmingham

All biblical quotations in this book are from the
New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

Table of Contents

Introduction

What is the common? I've published two collections, the first consisting of eighteen essays, the second of thirteen. And now I'm finishing a third collection, bringing the total to forty-one essays. I'm still trying to answer that question. The experience has been both energizing and puzzling. I seem to be exploring a realm so vast and pervasive, I don't know how to describe or map it. Yet I continue to be drawn further in. Is it a maze or a labyrinth? Will I be perpetually lost here? Or do patient, meditative steps finally reach some kind of center, or final perspective? Or is it in the nature of the common life to be perpetually generative?

As I completed the first collection, *Into the Common* (2021), I decided to frame the essays as a journal. I commented in the Introduction to that collection that "journal" does some justice to the way the essays *occurred* to me to research and write, one by one over time. But I'm also increasingly aware that these essays form a journal in a second sense, of *memoir*. The essays often reference different experiences and periods in my life, or my previous work in Quaker ministry and historical theology. These serve as examples and figurations for my present exploration of the common life.

That pattern continued with *Further into the Common* (2022). And in retrospect, I see how it was already emerging in *Life in Gospel-Space: A Testimony* (2020). That was a more intentional memoir that played out as a series thematic essays rather than a linear life-story. I introduced the common there.

But this much self-reference in relation to a vast, all-encompassing theme such as the common seems contradictory. Or perhaps it is paradoxical. Following the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, I came to realize that the *singular* is the key dialectical partner to the common. The singular is not the same as the individual or particular, which relates more to the universal. The universal tends more toward abstract principles and ideals, and is dominated by the realm of money (see the

"Everlasting Sabbath and Commonist Economics" essay, *Into the Common*). And in this era of finance-driven capitalism, money maps our world and defines our individual places in it as never before.

By contrast, the individual becomes singular through some kind of shift of being that I have termed a *calling*. I know from my own experience that my calling to ministry in 1968 set me on the course that I have finally understood to be the common life.

I understand calling in theistic terms: I was called by God to serve divine purposes. But a theistic conviction is not necessary to the experience of calling. Whatever framing we give it, many of us have felt drawn by some sense of a Oneness of reality, and into some form of service to the common life. We become singular *ones* in relation to the *One,* and in service to the concrete realities of the common life. That life includes other human ones, other species of human (that is, earthly) life, and the health of the planet as a whole common.

So perhaps my recurrent self-references in writing about the common have been inevitable. I write from the singularity of my vision of the whole. I don't know how else to do it. I have to admit, in sharing my writing with others, I get no significant responses. Is my approach *too* singular, self-referential? Or is the common so subliminal to most people's perceptions that it just doesn't register?

As it happens, the friends who have read the essays are Quakers. In various essays, I have suggested that the founding vision and practices of the Quaker movement, with its conviction of the light of Christ in all human consciences, were commonist. But as capitalism spread over Anglo-American culture – and Quakers became very good at business, finance, science, and technology – the light came to be conceived as an abstract universal (theistic or not) possessed by particular individuals everywhere. So perhaps I have been sharing my essays with the wrong people.

Meanwhile, self-publishing the books with Kindle Direct Publishing and putting the books up on Amazon is like squeezing an eyedropper into the ocean. But I haven't known what else to do. My conviction is still clear, the essays keep coming, and it doesn't seem right to keep them to myself.

So, with something of a shrug, I introduce this third volume of journal/essays. I feel a bit like Luther, as he sparked a Protestant Reformation, to the wrath of a Roman Church establishment: "Here I stand, I can do no other: God help me!" Luther stood there at the risk of his life. Today, amid the Babel of free speech and the technological proliferation of all kinds of voices and views, obscurity is much less lethal than persecution, but more effective.

The Essays

The Anarchist Unconscious, Part I: Anarchy and Anarchism in Seventeenth-Century England (8-9/23) extends some brief observations I made in *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (1995). I suggested there that the early Quaker Lamb's War, as a movement committed to following the step-by-step leadings of the Spirit in an unfolding revolutionary situation, was anarchist in terms of human political categories. This essay expands on the socio-historical setting of the early Quaker movement and its response to the religious and political dilemmas following the English Civil War of the 1640s. It follows the commoning and anarchist thrust of the movement, its recontainment by the powers of Britain's new imperial aspirations, and its maturation into an abiding pacifist-anarchist society within a bellicose capitalist regime in Britain and America. It also countenances how this anarchist logic became opaque to Friends themselves over time, as they absorbed extrinsic theologies and philosophies. The essay concludes with reflections on anarchy and anarchism in relation to chaos theory.

The Anarchist Unconscious, Part II: Anarchy and Anarchism in Sixties and Post-Sixties America (8-9/23) reviews the anarchist essays of Paul Goodman on student radicalism in the 1960s, then examines the anarchist logic of the Movement for a New Society starting in the 1970s, and the Alternatives to Violence Project starting in the 1980s. Both were generated by Quakers out of the implicitly anarchist logic of the Religious Society of Friends. The annual Gatherings of the Friends General Conference also manifest the networking and carnivalesque qualities of anarchist organization and experimentation. The essay then briefly reviews the anarchist thought of the French Protestant sociologist Jacques Ellul. It concludes with some brief Jungian reflections on the unconscious and two evocative passages from the prophet Isaiah.

Like Jesus: Living into the Paradox, Parts I and II (10-12/23) is a distillation of many years of biblical study, teaching at Quaker study centers, and preaching on gospel texts as a Friends pastor. I submitted it to a Christian publisher who expressed interest, but needed me to do considerable promotional work to make the venture viable. I have never been good at self-promotion, and at my age I didn't feel I had the energy to fulfill that obligation.

So I withdrew the manuscript and decided to add it to this continuing series on the common. Indeed, the paradox of Jesus as witnessed in the New Testament gospels places his unique Messianic identity in tension with his human commonness. As later Christian theology summarized, Jesus is "truly divine, truly human." That paradox plays out in our lives as we follow the example and felt leadings of Jesus into our unique callings that play out in our utter commonness and our lives in community. So while this extended essay doesn't foreground the concept of the common(s), that logic is pervasive. As such, the essay is my fullest expression of the idiomatically Christian commonist faith.

Of course, commonist thought and action must always play out in the idioms of its historical circumstances. Otherwise, it falls prey to the universalizing abstractions of money and power. As the essay acknowledges, Christian faith and practices have fallen into those temptations many times and in many ways over the course of two millennia. But there are always individuals and communities rediscovering and reclaiming the common life. This commonality is not limited to our own species. Part II draws upon New Testament epistles to suggest the larger, cosmic scope of our common redemption with Jesus.

Decay in Common (1/24) was apparently occasioned by my seventy-fifth birthday and my sense of advancing age. Somehow, the occasion opened out to reflections upon several developments in my twenties, during the 1970s: the socio-economic decay I experienced in New York, and the vibrant artistic movements that took root amid that decay; the ensuing gentrification of depressed neighborhoods that came with the new global expansion of finance-driven capitalism; my wanderings amid that new global empire in the 1980s and beyond; further reflections upon the apocalyptic theology I learned from Paul and from George Fox in the 1970s; some perspectives on decay and generation

from soil science; my practice of war tax resistance; and truth as a matter of participation rather than propositions. I find that my calling has played out according to the key experiences and revelations I received amid the fecund rot of New York in the mid-1970s. And all these years later, I find all these together in the dynamics of the common life.

Melancholy in Common (2-3/24) may have been provoked by the dark months of the year. But the darkness this season has mixed with uncharacteristic warm weather. Though pleasant enough, it activates my grief for the increasing momentum of climate change, with its many unfolding disasters in the biosphere. In any case, autobiography and history intertwine again, as I muse on melancholy in various national-historical contexts: American, Russian, English, and Palestinian-Israeli. The essay explores the way melancholy can transmute into spleen: anger and energy for action. As a melancholic personality, my own experiences of melancholy and spleen inform my view of these different historical phenomena.

The Once and Future Common: Groping My Way on with Abraham (4/24) reflects on my wanderings over many years of ministry, in common with the saga of Abraham and Sarah. My identification with Abraham took form early on, as I noted the mysterious qualities of his call and mine. This essay reworks a chapter I wrote on Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar for *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience* (2000). I eventually dropped the chapter, feeling that it overly elaborated an already long book. In this reworking, the horizon of their seeking and wandering is the common life, which found powerful realization centuries later in the tribal confederation of ancient Israel. But Abraham as the "father of multitudes of peoples" is the forebear not only of Israel but wider gatherings of the Christian and Muslim movements. This essay also draws upon Wolfhart Pannenberg's eschatological theology, which frames God's call as the ultimate future drawing us into new, provisional realizations of the kingdom of God on earth.

The Common of Creation and Nature: Pannenberg's Dialectic of Theology and Science (5/24) carries over from the preceding essay with one of Pannenberg's later books, where he engages the natural sciences with his eschatological theology of God's creation. This has personal meaning for me, since I had majored in zoology as an undergraduate before

"changing kingdoms," one might say, by studying at seminary and discovering Pannenberg. His later work creates a dialectical relationship between the scientific method, which seeks the immanent causation of natural phenomena, and the transcendent understanding of the cosmos as God's creation, according to Hebrew-Jewish and Christian faith. So this essay seeks a common reality of nature and creation, even as that common reality remains dialectical – binocular and dynamic.

The Music of the Common: Noise, Silence, and Music in Motion (5-6/24) is inspired mainly by Jacques Attali's *Noise: Music and Political Economy* (1977 in French, 1985 in English). Attali theorizes the ways music has both reflected the prevailing order in political economy and sometimes heralded changes ahead. Indeed, his reading of changes in music in 1977 is prescient of music and political economy nearly fifty years later. This essay begins with ruminations on Bob Dylan's album, *Street Legal* (1978), and later reflects on songs by the Beatles and Gillian Welch, as well as my own obscure errantry as a recorded songwriter.

A Federated Common (6-7/24) ends this journal of essays with an ambitious scenario of federation as the polity most able to sustain and protect the common life on earth. This requires a major effort to think our way out of the nation-state as the definition of a federal polity. Aided by the analyses of Daniel Elazar, this essay projects a global federation of three branches: ecologic, economic, and civic. The abiding necessity of the territorial nation-state in some form comprises the civic branch. But the ecologic and economic branches must be constituted from the ground up, and from the margins to the centers. This scenario also draws upon the covenantal history and logic of ancient Israel, as reconstructed by Norman Gottwald. Finally, the essay makes clear that a federated common would not replace the anarchistic dynamics developed in the first two essays of this collection. Rather, it would constitute a polity, a political structure, concomitant with the essentially pre-political dynamics of nonviolent anarchist social forms.

Reverse Engineering: Part I, The Technological System (8-9/24) reviews the work of three important critics of technology and its effects upon both human society and the environment. Jacques Ellul is probably the best known for his prescient critique, beginning with *The Technological Society*, published in French in 1957. I already gave some attention to Paul

Goodman, the forgotten anarchist and "philosopher of the New Left" in the 1960s, in the "The Anarchist Unconscious, Part II." He had some important insights into technology in his last book of social criticism in 1970. Neil Postman is a more recent critic in *Technology* (2011) with important, updated insights. This essay concludes that the global technological system today poses the most radical enclosure of the common in history.

Reverse Engineering: Part II, Deconstruction and Reconstruction looks at two historical examples of the reverse engineering of social systems, each with key innovators in deconstruction and reconstruction: Jesus of Nazareth and George Fox. It then looks at two Hebrew prophets with important revelations in their day. Isaiah 44 deconstructs idolatry and contrasts it with Israel's god of history. Micah 4 envisions a reconstruction of iron-age technology that brings peace and sustainability to the nations of the world. The essay then ventures an "abstract model," the key step in reverse engineering between deconstruction and reconstruction, to engage the present technological system.

* * * * *

As I have come to the end of writing this last journal of essays, I am reminded of camping at the Zion National Park in Utah in the mid-1980s, with my first wife, Dorian. We hiked a trail that rose far above the canyon floor to a place called Angel's Landing. It was a narrow precipice of solid rock jutting out into the ether above the canyon. The panorama was sublime, but we were unable to continue all the way to the final promontory. The sheer drop of thousands of feet on either side was vertiginous, at least to us. We were reduced to crab-walking, while some others strode on by. A Frenchman walked past of us right to the edge and exclaimed, "Ah, superb!" then walked on.

I have since reflected that this is what the "terror of the Lord," pure dread, means. It is to become so acutely singular in relation to the One that one fears the abyss of a wrong step. It's not that the One is a vengeful ogre, ready to punish. It is that once this relationship is established, there is no other life one would desire. Meanwhile, the vision, the perception of all life common, is sublime. But that is equally what

makes the place where one stands so terrifying. The grandeur accentuates one's miniscule existence amid a world so vast and so various. You could call this "one with everything" experience mystical, in a static, metaphysical sense. But I prefer to call it *apocalyptic* in the metatemporal sense of a singular life *revealed* in common with a vast cosmic unfolding. "O Lord, what are humans that you regard them, or mortals that you think of them? They are like a breath; their days are like a passing shadow" (Psalm 144:3-4).

1.

The Anarchist Unconscious

The Ever-Emergent Politics of the Common

Part I: Anarchy and Anarchism In Seventeenth-Century England

(8-9/23)

Six months ago, I completed a collection of thirteen essays on the common and published them as *Further into the Common,* thinking perhaps I had finished journaling on that subject. But now, two more seem compelling to add. And similarly to earlier essays, these two reflect further on my years of scholarship on early Friends and other experiences among contemporary Friends.

Nearly thirty years ago, in *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (1995), I suggested that the politics of the early Quaker Lamb's War were basically anarchist. That is, a movement committed to the leadings of God's light/Spirit in an unfolding revolutionary situation was by definition anarchist according to any human categories of political formation. And in the conclusion to that book, I further suggested that any renewed covenantal politics in today's postmodern situation will be similarly anarchist in some sense. In support, I drew upon the writings and example of Jim Corbett, an Arizona Quaker goatherd and a central figure in the sanctuary movement of the 1980s. (I returned to some of Corbett's insights in the "Common Law" essay in *Further into the Common*.)

In "Job Experience" and "Proposal for a National Common Service" in that same volume, I reflected on my years of working in various Quaker nonprofit organizations. I suggested that nonprofit organizations (NPOs) constitute a third sector between the public and private sectors of American society. There are one-and-a-half million NPOs in the United States today, working in a wide variety of ways to protect, reclaim, and advance natural and cultural commons (without using that terminology), and to nurture various forms of religious and cultural community. Their wide diversity of visions, commitments, and political leanings constitutes an uncharted, unconscious anarchist politic.[1] Or perhaps it is better to describe it as pre-political, in that NPOs are not engaged in the political contests of the nation-state. Indeed, they are forbidden by law from engaging in overt political advocacy.

This is actually to their advantage and to the preservation of the common life. Because, as the "Proposal for a National Common Service" essay also suggests, the modern nation-state is an increasingly vexed equation. Capitalist market economics and their concomitant secularizing affects have eroded the myriad forms of religious, community, and cultural institutions that typically mediated and mollified political conflicts in the past. Consequently, the "nation" becomes an increasingly imaginary entity, a projection of polarizing hopes and fears

for "America." In this situation, residual religious and cultural communities align into blocs of dualistic conflict vying for control of the state apparatus, ranging from federal to local governments.

"Culture war" is the common parlance for this mounting antagonism, now drifting into some kind of civil cold war. Cold at least so far, if one discounts the increasing outbreaks of spectral violence by socially isolated men acting out reactionary impulses with semi-automatic weapons. Such outbreaks are certainly anarchic, but not anarchist. One task of these two essays is to discern between anarchy and anarchism in early modern and present-day circumstances.

Some Basic Definitions

It would be useful to begin with some normative definitions of anarchy and anarchism. *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines *anarchy* as disorder, violence, the absence of government. It defines *government* as "the exercise of authority over" various organizations, institutions, and states. *Webster's* defines *anarchism* as a "theory that all forms of government interfere with individual liberty" leading to "resistance and sometimes terrorism to organized government." The association of both anarchy and anarchism with violence is accurate enough to some outbreaks of social anarchy and some anarchist movements in history. But it also reflects the vague impressions and fears in the popular imagination toward both anarchy and anarchism. Psychologically, such fears often attend the unexamined shadow world of the unconscious, both individually and socially. Note also that *Webster's* definition focuses anarchist concern for "individual liberty," but anarchist movements in history have had a larger concern for peaceful, productive social *organization* below the state level and free from government interference, whether the nation-state persists or not.

"Individual liberty" is more the concern for *libertarians*, who advocate for "full civil liberties," according to *Webster's*. The civil sphere is defined by the state's legal definitions and boundaries. Anarchist and libertarian concerns may overlap, but they pursue different agendas. The "civil" concern of libertarians is secular, typically focusing on the individual self-interests of citizens participating in a free market, with minimal moral boundaries. By contrast, anarchists are typically motivated by strong moral and/or religious concerns. (The next essay will explore the unconscious anarchism of twentieth-century American Quakers and the conscious Christian anarchism of Jacques Ellul.)

We are generally unconscious of the common life that undergirds our social reality, and of the anarchistic forms of organization that nurture that life. But the natural world offers many evocative examples of the interplay of anarchy and anarchism, chaos and order. For example, there is randomness in the dispersal of plant and animal populations, along with variations in weather and climate within a given ecosystem. But that randomness is countered by a wide variety of symbiotic, predatory, saprophytic, and parasitical relationships between species, along with larger balancing systems.

In his classic, *The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher* (1974), Lewis Thomas points out that symbiotic relationships are much more pervasive in the natural world than life-and-death competition. And these relationships are all contained within the planet's self-regulating biosphere, as famously hypothesized by James Lovelock (see "In Common with Gaia" in *Further into the Common*). If today's pressing imperative is to forge a sustainable, balanced relationship between the natural and cultural commons on earth, then humans should expect to be inspired and even invited by the witness of other species around us. In *The Gospel in the Anthropocene: Letters from a Quaker Naturalist*[2] Brian Drayton offers evocative examples of divine wisdom and symbiotic relationship in the natural world, interspersed with Christian teaching and Quaker spiritual formation, all serving as guides to facing the pressing challenges of climate change.

Anarchistic cooperation and symbioses are also much more common and intrinsic to any human society than we perceive and name. Again, our consciousness is largely narrowed by the commodity desires and commercial competition of the marketplace, as well as our idolatrous fixation upon the nation-state and its political conflicts. Any hope to perceive, protect, and promote the common life today demands that the anarchist unconscious be raised to greater consciousness and intention. To set the framework for that task, let us start with the beginnings of the modern nation-state and its various sites of resistance, focusing here upon Anglo-American history, with special attention to the early Quaker movement. Those developments were concurrent with the progressive enclosure of common lands in Britain, Ireland, and America – and the consequent repression of common consciousness in the Anglo-American mind.

Hercules versus the Many-Headed Hydra

In *Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (2008), Peter Linebaugh describes the Magna Carta and the lesser known Charter of the Forest, both signed by England's King John in 1215. The former guaranteed the political liberties of the people, while the latter guaranteed their rights to hunt and gather, herd and garden on England's vast common lands. Thus, the former established legal rights while the latter established the economic basis for the vast majority of the population, the "commoners." Together, these founded the common law tradition in England. As noted in the "Common Law" essay in *Further into the Common*, Linebaugh also describes some of the subsequent history of enclosure of common lands by wealthy landowners and the destitution of large numbers of commoners from their means of subsistence.

In *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000), Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker follow that history into Britain's imperial ventures in the Caribbean, West Africa, and Virginia. They begin with the multitudes of immiserated commoners driven off the land and drifting into England's towns and cities. England's ruling classes fretted over the destitution, thievery, mobility, and lawlessness of this growing underclass. The perception of such multitudes as a chaotic monstrosity appears in print with Francis Bacon's *Advertisement Touching on an Holy War* (1622). Bacon is better remembered today for his advocacy of inductive reason and experimental scientific methods, but he also served as England's Lord Chancellor under James I. In view of the growing tensions between the King and Parliament over issues of taxation, Bacon advocated what amounted to a politics of distraction: a holy war against "swarms" and "multitudes" at home and abroad. These included West Indians, vagrants, and Anabaptists (or "Baptists," spreading quietly in underground congregations around England by this time). He compared this heroic task to "the labours of Hercules" in classical Greek mythology, especially his slaying the nine-headed Hydra.

The image of an amorphous, monstrous multitude as Hydra and the ruling classes (both the traditional aristocracy and the ascendant capitalist class) as Hercules became a recurrent theme in reactionary literature.[3] Early in the seventeenth century, a policy of terror was instigated against vagrants and thieves. Hanging for theft was common. Over the seventeenth century, an average of eight hundred per year were hanged in public, exemplary fashion. Women became targets for

burning or hanging as witches, especially during the reign of James I. Meanwhile, other hapless souls were impressed off the streets into service in the royal navy or army, or shipped as indentured servants to colonies in the Caribbean and Virginia.

Linebaugh and Rediker focus on the year 1649 in this expanding human tragedy, also known as early capitalist expansion. The English civil war (1642-48) had been fought by men with a wide variety of hopes for England's future. The more radical hopes for political and religious reform began to fade in 1647, after the debates at Putney among army officers and representatives from the ranks failed to reach a consensus. But the beheading of Charles I in January 1649 precipitated a critical, decisive moment. In May, a failed mutiny by more radical elements in the army's ranks resulted in the hanging of three of its leaders.

Oliver Cromwell, preeminent among the generals, then commandeered part of the army to wage a genocidal re-subjugation of Ireland. Besides much slaughter, mass starvation ensued, and many Irish were rounded up for servitude in the New World. And still in that same year, England began colonizing the river Gambia in West Africa to transport Africans captured off their tribal commons to become slaves in the Caribbean and North America. If the ascendant English capitalist class could render its own poor, displaced commoners and then the Irish as subhuman drudges, it was a small step to render Africans similarly.

But popular counter-currents also unfolded the same year. A dozen "Digger" communes were begun by poor people squatting and farming on common lands in southern and central England, starting in the spring of 1649. And over that summer, an expressionistic outburst of defiant antinomians dubbed "Ranters" began raging in the streets of English cities and towns. Ranters were not an organized group but a spontaneous convergence of anti-Puritans. As such, they were certainly anarchic but not anarchist.

In the spring of 1650, however, Digger communes were dispersed by local mobs and army troops. By the end of summer, the most notorious Ranters were imprisoned under a newly minted Blasphemy Act. In October, a young, obscure radical preacher named George Fox was arrested by the army and imprisoned at Derby under the same Act.

Radical ideas had been proliferating during the civil war years (1642-48). The suspensions of press censorship and of enforced parish church attendance enabled a sudden burst of religious dissent and experimentation all around England. These radicalized in tandem with

political ideas. An alarmed clerical ruling class cried for renewed government repression. The publication of *Gangraena* in 1646 by Puritan divine Thomas Edwards exemplifies that panic. In his Preface, he describes the multiplying heretical ideas and antinomian sectarian groups as a "many headed monstrous Hydra" about to ruin England's more orderly reformation into a Presbyterian national church. In the rest of the tract, Edwards lists some 176 pernicious doctrinal errors floating at large, including calls for a separation of church and state. Number 153 asserts that the earth is the common treasury of the Lord and advocates that the estates of the rich should be shared among all the saints. Number 158 asserts that true Christians cannot fight to defend their religion or their nation. He summarizes, "This Land is become already in many places a Chaos, a Babel . . . Toleration is the grand designe of the Devil." "What will men not fall into, what will they not preach, if Government is not soon settled?"[4]

The Quaker Emergence

Historian Ronald Hutton observes that Puritan clerical- and ruling-class fears focused mainly on antinomian outbursts and resistances in the South. But "those who shared this 'moral panic' were facing the wrong way . . . They ought to have been watching the dales of the North, where the most important and dramatic heretical movement in English history was brewing up, unnoticed by outsiders."[5] This movement, dubbed "Quakers" by hostile observers, was a convergence of radical spirits catalyzed by George Fox, who had been released from Derby gaol in late 1651 and began itinerating across the North, from Yorkshire to Westmoreland and Lancashire over the ensuing year.

This grassroots rising grew so rapidly that panicked northern Puritan divines beseeched Parliament to take special repressive measures. By their own efforts, clergy managed to get Fox and another key Quaker preacher, James Nayler, imprisoned in 1652 and 1653. But still more shockingly, the two exerted strong influence upon local magistrates and were soon itinerating again. Just in the period 1652-53, the movement gathered at least a tenth of the people in the English Northwest.[6]

By 1653, Quaker tracts began to be printed in London for wider distribution and influence around the country. Fox's *To All that Would Know the Way to the Kingdom* that year summarized his message that "Christ is come to teach his people himself and bring them off the world's ways and religions." Christ's coming was through his

light/Spirit in each person's conscience, able to gather and lead men and women into righteous, peaceful, equitable communities. Fox had innovated a form of spiritual counsel that helped discouraged radicals locate this divine source, which was hitherto unconscious, or below the "self," as Fox articulated it in the terms of his day.

But this was not a narrowly religious message. For example, Fox inveighed against the advanced state of enclosure of common lands:

> O ye earthly-minded men! give over oppressing the poor; exalt not yourselves above your fellow-creatures, for ye are all of one mould, and blood; you that set your nests on high, join house to house, field to field [see Isa. 5:8], till there be no place for the poor, woe is your portion. The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof [Psa. 24:1]. And you that have not so much of the earth, give over your murmuring, and reasoning, fretting, and grudging, for all your want, is the want of God.[7]

Thus, Fox not only excoriated England's new capitalist classes and their ruling elites; he also chided the poor to give up passive-aggressive "murmuring" and get with the movement.

Indeed, when the movement reached London in 1654, the chief Digger writer Gerrard Winstanley was quickly moving in Quaker circles. He told Edward Burrough, the Quaker apostle to London, that Quakers were the new way forward.[8] Evidently, he recognized that the exponential growth of Quaker gatherings in the North, and now the sensational Quaker public events unfolding in London and Bristol, instigated by an itinerating vanguard of male and female prophets, was something much harder to suppress than local communes of poor folk. The common source of Christ's light within could be the basis for a transfigured English society.

These are all hallmarks of a successful anarchist groundswell. And while early Quaker tracts contained many social and economic critiques, their primary target was the established church, its university educated and enfranchised clerical ruling class, and the tithe system of its support. This system alienated men and women from Christ's light in their own consciences and deformed the social conscience generally. Over the course of the 1650s there was hardly a parish in England where services were not interrupted and clergy challenged by Quaker men and women. They soon found themselves before a local magistrate and thrown in a gaol.

Anti-religion is a hallmark of anarchist movements (Mikhail Bakunin's 1882 *God and the State* is a classic text). Surely no anarchist move-

ment in history has made such a thorough job of it. While the movement was radically Christian, it was spiritually grounded in the commonist conviction of the light in each person's conscience, a power not only to restore early Christian faith and practice, but to reform all aspects of English society. Reforms would generate from the innovations, example, and prophetic witness of liberated Quaker base communities (as noted variously in some of the essays in *Into the Common* and *Further Into the Common*).

A tract written by four Quakers imprisoned at York Castle, *A Brief Discovery of the threefold estate of Antichrist* (1653), begins by prophesying that God will soon overturn every contrary nation, false ministry, hypocritical professor, corrupt magistrate, and devouring lawyer – in other words the entire establishment. "Christ is coming to take the government upon his shoulders." But the tract focuses primarily upon Antichrist's rule of the state-sponsored parish church, "the Idols Temple, where the Beast is Worshipped." The false temple's priests preach in exchange for tithes and gifts: "they give a large price for something a thousand times worse than nothing." By contrast, now "the Saints are made the true Temples of the living God." The authors call people out from the false temple: "Repent and amend your lives . . . lay aside your silks and velvets . . . and feed the hungry, cloathe the naked, and let the oppressed go free."[9]

One of the four authors, Benjamin Nicholson, published another tract that year, while still a prisoner at York Castle. In *A Blast from the Lord, or, A Warning to England* he prophesies that "God is coming to overturn, overturn, overturn your power and give it to him whose right it is; Jesus Christ shall have the rule and dominion over nations and he alone shall rule in his saints and not by might nor power of man . . . but by the Spirit of the Lord." Thus, Nicholson articulates a new, anarchist sovereignty: Christ ruling among communities gathered in his Spirit. Against magistrates such as those who have cast him and other Quakers into prison, he writes,

> Instead of covering the naked, and feeding the hungry, you set out Laws to punish them: my heart bleeds to think of the hard usage of my poor fellow creatures that have no abiding . . . You wallow your selves in the earth's treasure like swine, and never consider that the earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof, and that he hath given it to the sons of men in general, and not to a few lofty ones . . . and if a poor creature steal a horse, ox, or sheep, he is either put to death, or burned in the hand; but you never consider how many horses, oxen, and sheep you

> steal from the Lord and use them to satisfy your own wills and lusts.[10]

James Nayler, another Yorkshire Quaker, was the most advanced leader in articulating the revolutionary meaning of the movement. In November 1653, he addressed a stalemated Parliament in *A Lamentation over the Ruins of this Oppressed Nation*:

> And you that have so much cried up the kingdom of Christ in words and yet have been bold to limit him in his kingdom (the consciences of his saints), therefore above all the rest you shall not escape unpunished . . . Therefore will I arise, saith the Lord . . . and I will appear for her [Zion] in the midst of her enemies, and I will gather the outcasts thereof, who have not been regarded, but have been scattered by you as the off-scouring of the world . . . for the world's outcasts are my jewels, and I will bring them to possess the gates of their enemies; even by the word of the Almighty shall this be accomplished; the day is near at hand.[11]

The "outcasts" being gathered would include those who had been cast out and scattered from common lands over preceding decades.

In April 1654, with Parliament dissolved and Oliver Cromwell named Lord Protector, Nayler wrote an epistle *To the Rulers of This Nation*. He reminds the ruling generals that during the civil war, they had promised the nation liberty of conscience. Men like himself (a quartermaster during the war) had risked everything in fighting the king in order to have "liberty to profess Christ alone, to be king in conscience, and submitting alone to his pure law going forth of Zion, denying all laws that are contrary to that of Christ in the conscience."[12] He notes that since the war, as long as people like himself only *talk* of the kingdom of Christ, they are not persecuted. But now that Christ has gathered them to himself to *enact* the kingdom through his rule in their consciences, they are persecuted. Nayler thus articulates a revolutionary, world-ending concept of sovereignty in the wake of the beheading of Charles I: Christ ruling in the nation directly through the collective enactments of human conscience.[13] This is one of the most acutely anarchistic concepts ever advanced.

The Quaker movement named its nonviolent revolutionary struggle "the Lamb's War," based on imagery from the Book of Revelation. In *The Lamb's Warre* (1657), Nayler, now a prisoner at London's notorious Bridewell, gave the definitive statement of this struggle, its nonviolent means, and its aims of total social transformation:

> Their war is not against Creatures, not with the flesh and blood but spiritual wickedness exalted in the hearts of Men and Women, against the whole Work and Device of the god of this World, Laws, Customs, Fashions, Inventions, this is all Enmity against the Lamb and his followers who are entered into the Covenant which was in the beginning. [The Lamb has come] to take the Government to himself that God alone may wholly rule in the hearts of Men and man wholly live in the Work of God.[14]

This is a vision of total nonviolent cultural revolution from below. England's rulers felt duly threatened by this groundswell from the North, which had synthesized many radical religious and political ideas from the civil war years into something much more popular, trenchant, and difficult to repress.

One response came from Thomas Hobbes (formerly a secretary to Francis Bacon) in *Leviathan* (1651). Taking his title from Job 41 (which describes "Leviathan" as a creature "more powerful than anything on earth"), Hobbes argued for an absolute sovereign power to subdue the social chaos overtaking England. With the recent fall of Stuart monarchy, some new form of sovereignty was urgently required. Hobbes suggested that it could be monarchic, aristocratic, or democratic; but absolute power to subdue anarchy was crucial. Otherwise, society would devolve into a "state of nature," a "war of all against all." Hobbes' ideas laid one early philosophical foundation for the modern nation-state.

Later, in *Behemoth* (1668), Hobbes (now a tutor to Charles II) utilized the Hercules-Hydra image in reviewing the causes of the civil war of the 1640s:

> You have read, that when Hercules fighting with the Hydra, had cut off any one of his many heads, there arose two other heads in its place; and yet at last he cut them all off. The story is told false. For Hercules at first did not cut off those heads, but bought them off; and afterwards, when he saw it did no good, then he cut them off, and got the victory.[15]

Hobbes thus implies that Charles I did not employ sufficient violence against his political enemies in the 1630s to avert civil war. Hercules prevailed over Hydra only after his son was restored to the throne and the national church was re-established in 1660, soon followed by the intense persecution of religious nonconformists – especially Quakers.

In her *Political Theory of Anarchism,* April Carter devotes a chapter to Hobbes.[16] She notes that Hobbes saw only violence and disorder in the anarchic situation around him. But his pessimistic view was premised

on the individual and self-interest. His social contract theory derived from the contractual relations of the marketplace. By contrast, anarchism is premised upon the power of groups to shape individual psychology. This was clearly the effect of gathered Quaker communities upon their participants. Early Friends were not optimistic about human nature; rather, they were convinced of the power of Christ to gather, teach, and lead "*his people*," rather than individuals as such.

In its dynamics of local organization and wider networks, anarchism offers a crucial mediation between the absolute power of the state and "the people" or "the masses" in general. Early Friends didn't seek to dissolve the state or seize power. They simply sought protection from the state in order for them to advance their social reconstruction from below. In the long run, the state might have been forced politically to reform – or else topple – in order to meet the demands of a new society. The repeated Quaker use of the phrase "overturn, overturn, overturn" (from Ezekiel 21:27, exemplified above in *A Blast from the Lord*) suggests an ongoing process of political reformulation that had already begun with the civil war and was pressed further by the Lamb's War. But that implication goes far beyond what Friends were able to accomplish in England.

The anarchist socio-spiritual vision of the Quaker Lamb's War is strongest in the earliest pamphlets and tracts. Doctrinal tract warfare between Friends and other religious groups began to predominate by the latter 1650s, suggesting a Reformation-framed penchant to prove itself the "true Church." But in that era, socio-political issues were always at stake with theological questions.

In any case, escalating persecution from Puritan and then Restoration-era regimes (finally ending only in 1689) slowly ground the movement down from its larger, grassroots theocratic vision. Still, discouraged radicals continued to gravitate to Friends as the only viable option left within an aggressively anti-utopian environment.

Post-Revolutionary Quaker Anarchism

But Quakers themselves were not immune to the cultural affects of Britain's new imperial expansion. Even as early as the mid-1650s, some exiled Quaker settled in Barbados. No longer immersed in England's revolutionary situation, some readily adopted slaveholding.

In England, by 1666, as crushing persecution killed off Quaker leaders and the utopian hopes of the movement were clearly defeated, Friends began to organize themselves more seriously as a sustainable

anarchist sect within a newly secularizing society. The emerging Religious Society of Friends became a counter-society within its surrounding Anglo-American societies. Sociologist Max Weber defined a "society" as interactions based upon intentions that are in turn founded upon a common body of knowledge, norms, customs, and expectations.[17] The refined system of Quaker faith and practice certainly fits that definition.[18] Early Friends thus created a microcosm of the kingdom of God they had struggled and suffered so valiantly to achieve more widely.

Egalitarian, nonviolent, consensual, low-consumption behavioral codes had been growing among Quakers from the earliest years. These molded a communal ethos with group processes of collective spiritual discernment and decision-making. Separate women's and men's meetings for self-government balanced gender relations as collective processes (in contrast to our more modern individual framing of gender relations). Fox framed the emerging organization as "gospel order," a collective incarnation of man and woman as "help-meets" in Eden. The organization was not an end in itself but a way of creating human space for Christ to teach and lead his people directly. Fox asserted that Christ's government was before the world's governments and would remain after they were gone – a classic anarchist conviction, in Christian terms. Quaker group processes matured into a system of monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings within geographic regions and nations.

The Quaker pattern has some resonance with the anarcho-syndicalist economic system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In that system, self-managed workplaces participate within an industrial syndicate/trade union, which in turn coordinates with other syndicates/unions in an overall federation. Today, anarcho-syndicalism is considered an antiquated approach, geared to classical industrial relations and a proletarian working class.[19] Quaker anarchism was a spiritually grounded form of social organization, economically based in small-scale business and farming, but also articulated in wider networks of social reform and prophetic witness within the rapidly expanding regime of early capitalism. Of course, that religious framework of faith and practice is in some ways more antiquated than anarcho-syndicalism. But as we shall see in the next essay, it has some abiding resonances with post-industrial anarchism today.

Not all those who had participated in the mercurial, expressionistic style of the movement's first decade were ready to be so well organized. In the 1660s-70s, resisters to organization were often dismissed as "Ranters" by Quaker leaders. Robert Barclay's *The Anarchy of the*

Ranters (1676)[20] is a key statement from the organizers. Barclay was a university-educated member of the Scottish gentry who converted to the Quaker movement in 1666 from Presbyterianism. His class, educational, and religious background framed his concern for a well ordered and doctrinally coherent body, the true restoration of primitive Christianity after the Reformation's many failures. Barclay observes that resisters decry Quaker organization as a "breach of liberty," an internalized "persecution, oppression." He notes that besides the active resisters remaining within the movement, others had initially resisted but eventually recognized the necessity of organization. Still others had dropped out and forsaken religion altogether. Barclay is the first Friend to describe Quakers as a "denomination." That surely constitutes the last nail in the coffin of James Nayler (d. 1660).

The Quaker ventures of William Penn, another second-generation, university-educated, upper-class convert to the movement (by 1667) are particularly paradigmatic of a breakdown of first-generation Quaker anarchism, as the modern nation-state took shape. As I have earlier shown in *The Covenant Crucified*, Penn's writings follow two tracks: one is sectarian and pietistic, as exemplified in his classic, *No Cross, No Crown* (1681); and the other is early liberal political advocacy for religious toleration and Whig governmental policy in the 1670s. Penn's pietistic writings alongside his Whig political activism constitute a *schizoid split* from the apocalyptic theology of first-generation Friends, with their concomitantly anarchist Lamb's War.

Penn's Whig hopes were dashed by defeat in the fraudulent elections of 1679. But the next year, he received an amazing opportunity when Charles II bestowed on him a very large charter, to create a Quaker-led colony in America. Penn called it a "Holy Experiment," featuring wide religious toleration, a reformed legal system, and advanced constitutional ideas. He initiated friendly, respectful relations with the indigenous Lenape people and bought land from them, rather than simply taking it by force of arms. He also attracted large numbers of persecuted Anabaptists and German Pietists to Pennsylvania. These peaceful peoples helped the large Quaker contingent maintain political control for 70 years.

But the growing influx of land-hungry British and Irish immigrants, with less respectful or peaceful attitudes toward indigenous peoples eventually overran Penn's experiment. In addition, the Seven Years War between French and British colonial interests in the region during the 1750s further compromised the Quaker experiment. Friends began withdrawing from government altogether.

As attractive as Penn's Holy Experiment is, Quakers in state power is a serious contradiction. The Quaker anarchist genius is pre-political, embedded in the social infrastructure, moving from below the state apparatus. Penn's schizoid split was simply a Quaker version of the modern schizoid split in consciousness between religious piety and political activism. But it has cast a long shadow over the Religious Society of Friends ever since. Except for a few sound-bytes like "that of God in every one," the apocalyptic, anarchist consciousness of the first generation is opaque to modern Friends.

Anarchy and Anarchism

Both "anarchy" and "Ranters" were polemical terms for Barclay. But in the 1650s, expressionistic Quaker street-preachers and parish church invaders were often mistaken by outsiders for Ranters. There was not yet a clear boundary between the two. In his *Journal* (written in the mid-1670s), Fox himself admits to visiting some leading Ranters imprisoned at Coventry shortly before his own imprisonment for blasphemy at Derby in 1650. His contacts may have been more extensive than that. And after the movement was underway, Fox was able to draw a number of individuals out of Ranter anarchy and into Quaker anarchism.[21] *The early Quaker case makes it clear that we need to keep "anarchy" in a more dynamic relationship with anarchism.*

The bulk of Linebaugh's and Rediker's *Many-Headed Hydra* is devoted to various resistances to British capitalist imperialism as it spread across the Atlantic. Resistant groups included displaced commoners, indentured European servants in the Caribbean and America, enslaved Africans, pirates on the open sea, and especially sailors, whose movements from port to port often made them contagions of rebellion. The rhetorical figure of Hercules vs. Hydra continued to be mobilized by British ruling classes against these unruly elements. But by the latter eighteenth century, some social reformers and revolutionaries turned tables and depicted themselves as Hercules fighting the Hydra of multiple transatlantic powers.[22]

(Perhaps something similar is at work in the Book of Revelation, where both the Dragon [Satan] and Beast [Caesar] are portrayed as seven-headed. I haven't done the research, but it's easy to imagine that imperial Rome employed the Hercules-Hydra myth to instill ideological resolve against restive elements around the Empire. If that is the

case, then John the apocalyptic seer turns Rome's ideology against itself, as the Christian movement draws the earth's "peoples, nations, and tongues" into a common of resistance, gathered by the Lamb.)

While these resistances and rebellions evinced some degree of impromptu organization, they were more the outbursts and reprisals of desperately oppressed groups. As such, their episodic and scattered quality might be termed *anarchic*, but not necessarily with a negative connotation. Linebaugh and Rediker don't relate the Hydra to anarchy or anarchism. Moreover, they seem rather enamored of the violent option. For example, they are either unaware or uninterested in the decade of organized nonviolent resistance to British colonial misrule among the American colonies, as well as the quiet, mediating efforts on both sides of the Atlantic, before hot-heads in Puritan Boston pitched the conflict into violent struggle in 1775.[23] Quakers, with their history of nonviolent resistance, were involved in both the organized resistance and the quiet negotiations. But once the violent revolution began, they were stigmatized and marginalized among the colonies, because they refused to fight or even to take sides.

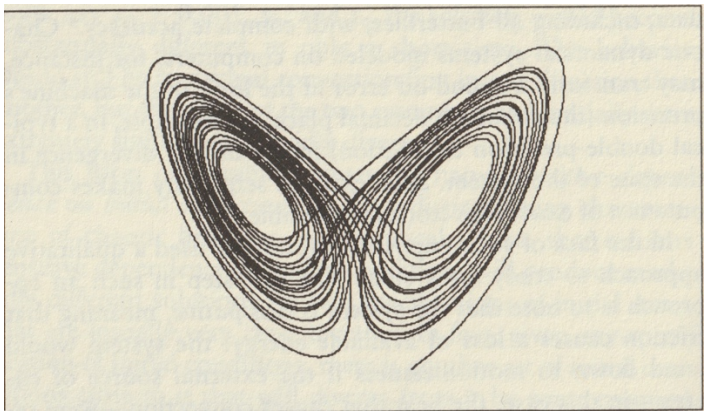
It should also be noted, however, that by that time, Quakers were sufficiently prosperous and middle- to upper-class that their well ordered anarchist society had few dealings with lower-class anarchy and its violent episodes. They could be socially visionary, such as the colonial New Jersey prophet John Woolman and his abolitionist ally Anthony Benezet.[24] But as an organized body, their social engagement played out mainly in advocacy to governments on behalf of enslaved Africans and Native American tribes, as well as philanthropic efforts in many directions.

By the early nineteenth century, the meaning of Quaker anarchism and its relevance to rapidly changing social conditions in Britain and America was increasingly obscure, even among Friends. They began to find extrinsic theologies, philosophies, and social practices more attractive. Some began to hybridize with evangelicals, while others gravitated toward Unitarians and humanists. Both redefinitions proved reenergizing, but they also precipitated outright schisms among Friends in America. A uniquely Quaker form of anarchism was compromised in various ways as the schizoid split deepened, both in consciousness and in formal polity.

Anarchy and Anarchism in the Common Life

The dynamic relation between anarchy and anarchism can be related to modern chaos theory. In the "Job Experience" essay in *Further into the Common*, I reflected on God's answer to Job out of the whirlwind, drawing upon chaos theory and the concept of the "strange attractor." I will repeat here the relevant part of that reflection:

> Mathematical analysis shows that patterns that spiral out toward chaos also reach a certain point where they are drawn back into a new order, or center. This "strange attractor" phenomenon was first charted by meteorologist Edward Lorenz using early computers in the 1960s. The pattern is reproduced here. As Stephen Kellert describes the pattern, "we see two disklike structures, one corresponding roughly to a clockwise sense of rotational convection and the other to a counterclockwise sense . . . That shape is fractal. The stretching and folding of chaotic systems gives strange attractors the distinguishing characteristic of a nonintegral, or fractal, dimension."[25]



It may be a leap to move from fractal patterns in mathematics and natural phenomena to social phenomena. But certainly, some kind of chaos is at play in human minds and societies. In the case of England in the 1640s-50s, there was a degree of social chaos/anarchy during and after the civil war. A Puritan writer like Thomas Edwards in *Gangraena* or the statist writer Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* viewed it with particular alarm, given the kind of order they wished to see established, by way of government coercion. But we also see a figure like George

Fox, who was awash in chaotic *anomie* as an adolescent during the war years, but who found a "strange attractor" of sorts, a spiritual foundation in common with others. As I have shown in *Seekers Found,* Fox began to draw others out of their own desperate chaos and into an anarchist movement with a new, covenantal sense of peace and social order, growing step by step in relation to a hostile environment.

Let us now move in the next essay to a similar trajectory of socio-spiritual anarchy in the American 1960s and some Quaker-inspired gatherings into anarchistic renewal over the following decades.

2.

The Anarchist Unconscious

The Ever-Emergent Politics of the Common

Part II: Anarchy and Anarchism
In Sixties and Post-Sixties America

(8-9/23)

The social ferment and radical politics in American society of the 1960s-70s has affinities with the situation in England of the 1640s-50s. Paul Goodman, an academic sociologist and gestalt psychologist, wrote with acute insights into that more recent period. His *Growing up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* (1960), helped ignite the youth rebellion of the American 1960s.[26] Goodman argued that Beats, youth gangs, juvenile delinquency, and the general alienation depicted in the 1950s films like *The Wild Ones* and *Rebel without a Cause* were symptoms of a young generation unwilling to fit itself into the sterile bureaucratic structures, militaristic patriotism, repressed sexuality, and pallid spirituality of postwar American society. Over the next decade, he became known as "the philosopher of the New Left," articulating anarchist, decentralist, and libertarian principles, both in support and in criticism of evolving radical student politics.[27]

Goodman's anarchist writings are secular and generally pacifist. He doesn't advocate overthrowing the state or taking power, but argues for greater autonomy and creative association within the social infrastructure. He defines the "Anarchist Principle" thus: "valuable behavior occurs only by the free and direct response of individuals or voluntarily groups to the conditions presented by the historical environment . . . Anarchists want to increase intrinsic functioning and diminish extrinsic power. This is a social-psychological hypothesis with obvious political implications." But because historical conditions vary greatly, it is impossible to define a general anarchist ethic or strategy. For example, guerilla violence has been an anarchist technique in some times and places; "yet where, especially in modern conditions, *any* violent means tend to reinforce centralism and authoritarianism, anarchists have tended to see the beauty of nonviolence."

Anarchist responses to social crises have been very successful in many cases.

> Of course, to later historians these things do not seem to be anarchist, but in their own time they were all regarded as such and often literally called such, with the usual dire threats of chaos. But this relativity of the anarchist principle to the actual situation is of the essence of anarchism. There *cannot* be a history of anarchism in the sense of establishing a permanent state of things called "anarchist." It is always a continual coping with the next situation.[28]

Goodman notes, "It is a common misconception that anarchists believe that 'human nature is good' and so men can be trusted to rule themselves. In fact we tend to take the pessimistic view; people are not to be trusted, so prevent the concentration of power."

Consequently, the essential quality of anarchism is not freedom as such but autonomy. Anarchistic innovators have most often been artisans, farmers, merchants, professionals, and aristocrats – those who have already known a degree of autonomy and wish to advance it for themselves and others. Such individuals and groups formed core elements of the American Revolution, and "afterwards enjoyed a prosperous semi-autonomy for nearly thirty years – nobody cared much about the new government." "Anarchy requires competence and self-confidence, the sentiment that the world is *for* one. It does not thrive among the exploited, oppressed, and colonized. Thus, unfortunately it lacks a powerful drive toward revolutionary change." Instead, anarchist changes

> might be piecemeal and not dramatic, but they must be fundamental; for many of the present institutions cannot be recast and the tendency of the system as a whole is disastrous. I like the Marxist term "withering away of the State," but it must begin now, not afterwards; the goal is not a New Society [i.e., Lyndon Johnson's federal programs starting in 1965], but a tolerable society in which life can go on.[29]
>
> In anarchist theory, the word *revolution* means the process by which the grip of authority is loosed, so that the functions of life can regulate themselves, without top-down direction or external hindrance. The idea is that, except for emergencies and a few special cases, free functioning will find its own right structures and co-ordination.
>
> An anarchist description of a revolutionary period thus consists of many accounts of how localities, factories, tradesmen, schools, professional groups, and communes go about managing their own affairs, defending themselves against the central "system," and making whatever federal arrangements among themselves that are necessary to weave the fabric of society.

The early Quaker movement is exemplary of Goodman's principles. Their main petitions to the government were for freedom from persecution, to give space for the movement to grow and build a new spiritual and social coherence out of the chaotic aftermath of of the civil

war. And while their overall definition of the movement was religious, Friends were avid in organizing themselves in business, education, egalitarian domestic life, apprenticeships, and other aspects of a functioning society.

As exemplified above, secular anarchists often speak of "federal" forms of organization. It is worth noting that the term derives from the Latin *foedus*, "covenant." In the essay "Peace on Earth: Covenant, Constitution, Technology, and Economics in the Common Life" (in *Into the Common*), I showed how Reformation covenant theology was a driving force in the modern development of federal constitutionalism (as well as scientific methods and market relations). Early Friends advanced a unique covenantal vision for English society in the 1650s, what George Fox sometimes called "the covenant of light, life, and peace." In true anarchist tradition, they didn't present a grand design, but followed the process step by step, as the Spirit led and the historical situation allowed.

And just as early Quakers scorned the violent Fifth Monarchist insurrections in the 1650s and 60s, Goodman was critical of the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric of revolution that overcame the New Left in the latter 1960s. He reflected that students were largely uninformed of the anarchist option because they had never been introduced to thinkers such as Bakunin, Kropotkin, Proudhon, and William Morris. The anarchist aim is not to "seize power" or "smash the state." In such violent revolutions, "a new regime establishes itself and reorganizes the institutions according to its own ideas and interests. To anarchists this is precisely the counterrevolution, because there is again a centralizing authority to oppose." Thus, it is not surprising that

> Marx expelled the anarchist unions from the International Workingmen's Association. Having used them to consolidate their own minority power, Lenin and Trotsky slaughtered the anarchists in the Ukraine and at Kronstadt. Stalin murdered them in Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War. Castro has jailed them in Cuba.[30]

Goodman presents various critiques of centralization. In general, some kinds and degrees of centralization are necessary, but that tendency has been pushed "so far as to become ineffective and wasteful, humanly stultifying, and ruinous to democracy . . . We need at present a strong admixture of decentralism." "The [centralist] system was designed for disciplining armies, for bureaucratic record-keeping and tax-collection, and for certain kinds of mass-production. It has now pervaded every field." In such a system, "persons are personnel."

By contrast,

> The principle of decentralism is that people are engaged in the function they perform; the organization is how they co-operate. Authority is delegated away from the top as much as possible and there are many centers of decision and policy-making. Information is conveyed and discussed in face-to-face contacts between field and headquarters. And each person becomes aware of the whole operation . . . Historically, this system of voluntary association has yielded most of the values of civilization.

As an example, he cites the progress of modern science as being "exquisitely co-ordinated" through voluntary associations, publications, and conferences. "Yet in this vast common enterprise, so amazingly productive, there was no central direction whatever." The "common aim of exploring Nature" served as the chief bond of cohesion. He also notes that the early period of free enterprise, as celebrated by Adam Smith, thrived on partnerships and vigilant joint stockholders. "Pretty soon, however, the stockholders stopped attending to business and became absentee investors or even gamblers on the Stock Exchange."

Goodman has some sympathy with "the startling strength of know-nothing movements in the country." Those opposing Lyndon Johnson's New Society

> reiterate the slogan "government must not do what people can do for themselves." By "people" our reactionary friends seem mainly to mean corporations, which are not people, yet I do not think that liberals and progressives pay attention to the underlying gripe, the loss of self-determination. The liberals glibly repeat that the complex problems of modern times do not allow of simplistic solutions; but what is the use of solutions about which one has no say, and which finally are not the solutions of one's own problems?

Many of the struggles of succeeding decades of American politics have generated out of that stalemate. Both sides remain deaf to each other – and unaware of anarchist alternatives.

Writing in 1964, Goodman already had concerns about the cybernetic revolution:

> automatic and computer technology is by nature highly centralizing, in its style and its applications, and this is a massive phenomenon of the present and immediate future. Where it is relevant, this technology should be maximized as quickly as

> possible and many such plants should be treated as monopolies. *But perhaps the profoundest problem that faces modern society is to decide in what functions the automatic and computer style is not relevant, and there sharply to curtail it or eliminate it.*[31]

Thereby hangs the tale of the succeeding half-century and more. Goodman died in 1972, aged 60. If he had lived longer, he might have found some decentralist tendencies in the digital revolution. Internet-based political organizing has been celebrated for its decentralized basis. But the centralizing powers of internet service providers, the vast economic power of internet business, and the narcissistic, retrograde energies of much social media interaction seem to outdistance progressive action overall.

Post-Sixties Anarchism: The Movement for a New Society

By the end of the 1960s, with conservative backlash underway in US politics and the war in Vietnam in full force, a sense of exhaustion and defeat came over the New Left. The Quaker-inspired odyssey of one particular organization is paradigmatic of the strengths and weaknesses of post-sixties anarchist activism more generally. In *Oppose and Propose! Lessons from Movement for a New Society*,[32] anarchist Andrew Cornell offers the first published historical sketch of MNS (1971-88) and its wider influence on feminist, environmentalist, and anarchist activism. Cornell summarizes that MNS integrated and popularized "consensus decision making . . . the spokescouncil method of organization . . . communal living, unlearning oppressive behavior, and cooperatively owned businesses – [practices] that are now often subsumed under the rubric of prefigurative politics."

MNS grew out of the Philadelphia-based A Quaker Action Group (AQAG), best known for their anti-war work in the 1960s, especially the voyages of the *Phoenix* in 1967 and 1968 carrying donated medical supplies to both North and South Vietnam. In addition, AQAG members George Willoughby and George Lakey taught a course called "Preparing for Radical Living" starting in 1968 at Pendle Hill, a Quaker center near Philadelphia. But their program proved too volatile for that small community's delicate balance of study, contemplation, and action. Willoughby, Lakey, and a core of other leaders moved on in 1971, first seeking to operate under the aegis of the American Friends Service Committee.

When AFSC was unable to find unity in approving their proposal, they struck out on their own, establishing a cluster of communal residences in West Philadelphia. Another cluster soon began in Eugene, Oregon, and networked communities spread to other US cities and campus towns. Dubbed "Movement for a New Society," the organization drew about 300 active members and many more supporters by the end of the 1970s. But MNS viewed itself more as a "network of small groups rather than of individual members." They coordinated their activities on local, regional, and national levels. On the local level, collective residences were grouped together as Life Centers. Centers around the country circulated ideas and experiences through monthly newsletters. The entire network met annually for a week. These Whole Network Meetings were devoted to socializing, strategizing, and policy-making. Given the Quaker affiliation of several MNS leaders, one readily recognizes resonances between MNS and Quaker organization (briefly described in the preceding essay).

Life Centers were not ends unto themselves but bases for active campaigning for peace, justice, and the environment. This quickly unfolded in blockades of arms shipments, anti-nuclear organizing, and racial justice activism. But MNS exerted its widest influence as a training hub in West Philadelphia for radical organizers from around the world, teaching democratic group processes, strategic campaign planning, and direct action tactics. Cornell comments, "MNS's model of movement education helped establish a culture of training within the antiauthoritarian Left that continues to the present day in the form of DIY skill shares, workshops at anarchist book fairs, and tactical trainings at convergence centers prior to large demonstrations."

In order to clarify vision and strategy, residential groups spent considerable time in group processes seeking to root out implicit racism and sexism within and among themselves, and in co-counseling for mutual support and conscious-raising. This was important work, but over time it tended to intensify the internal dynamics of MNS at the expense of its activism.

By the early 1980s, concerns were raised over the tensions between utopian community and social engagement. And as MNS struggled to engage with the neoconservative politics of the Reagan era, many residents felt that maintaining a pure community of simple, egalitarian living was itself sufficient witness. So, while some continued to push the macro-analysis of social problems and new strategies of engagement, their efforts were discounted by others as middle-class intellectualizing or "a masculine trip." Finally, an insistence upon consensus

practices in all decision-making rendered advances in vision and action nearly impossible. As one MNS leader reflected later,

> We did so much difficult internal work because we had such a hard time confronting the larger social, political, and economic world in which we lived. It was easier to try to change ourselves and our immediate comrades than it was to devise long-term campaigns and strategies for changing the outside world.

Cornell summarizes that, as the 1980s progressed, "MNS had made little progress in bringing in new members and diversifying itself due to the defining role that its own movement subculture played in the organization."

We noted something similar in the preceding essay about the early Quaker movement's evolving dynamics, as the anti-utopian, imperial politics of Britain's Restoration era continued into the eighteenth century. Finally, in 1988, MNS came to consensus to "lay the group down." But important aspects of its work morphed into new organizational forms, such as Training for Change in Philadelphia, Future Now in the Twin Cities, and New Society Trainers in Seattle. New Society Publishers continues to issue path-breaking literature on feminism, ecology, and social movements.

Cornell reflects on the centrality of community-building in MNS and the attempt to embody in their "very style" of action how they were different from the present system. "Such theoretical linkages are indicative of the role MNS played in bridging, transmitting, and transforming the antiauthoritarian politics of the late 1960s into the practices, priorities, assumptions, and attitudes that comprise the contemporary anarchist movement as it has taken shape in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s." (For more on these organizational priorities from a commoning perspective, see "Some Assembly Required: Leadership and Organization in Common," in *Into the Common*. For the autobiographical perspective of a key MNS leader, see George Lakey's recent memoir, *Dancing with History*.[33])

Again, the overall shape of these "theoretical linkages" is very similar to the role of lifestyle and demonstrational behaviors forged by early Friends as their "testimony to the world." Early Friends advanced these in theological terms, through biblical reflection and the felt movements of the Spirit/light among them.

It is interesting to note parallels between the MNS trajectory and Ursula LeGuin's science fiction classic, *The Dispossessed* (1974). Subtitled *An Ambiguous Utopia*, it poses two planets rotating around each

other. One planet is lush and fertile, with more-less an advanced capitalist society. The other planet is arid, with an anarchist society eking out an egalitarian existence. (But she doesn't name either society as such.) LeGuin portrays the anarchist society positively and in considerable detail. But she also narrates a struggle between the comforts of that society's general consensus and the strenuous efforts of some innovators. The novel's protagonist, Shevek, a leading physicist, embarks on a controversial mission to the capitalist planet, seeking some kind of symbiotic relationship between the two worlds. But he eventually realizes that his scientific work will only be captured and exploited for warlike purposes there. He barely escapes back to his home planet. My recent reading *The Dispossessed* helped provoke the reflections in these two essays.

Post-Sixties Anarchism: The Alternatives to Violence Project

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) is today a world-wide, volunteer-based movement offering workshops in creative responses to violent situations. It is another example of a Quaker initiative that has spread in anarchistic patterns through intrinsic relationships.[34] In the 1980s, Friends in New York Yearly Meeting (a regional Quaker membership body) were engaged in outreach to a number of prisons in that state, usually in the form of silent worship and discussion groups with the incarcerated.

Prisoners in the Greenhaven prison were working with youth from New York City in a "scared straight" style, warning them how crime leads to incarceration. But their approach wasn't working very well. They heard that Friends had trained Vietnam war protestors how to respond nonviolently to conflict at demonstrations. They asked the Quaker visitors to do a workshop with them, teaching something they could pass on to urban youth. This began a process that quickly spread to the Auburn prison and others in the state, soon named the Alternatives to Violence Project.

New York Yearly Meeting Friend Steve Angell became the central organizing agent of the fledgling movement, on a volunteer basis. But AVP quickly became ecumenical, with trainers/facilitators joining the work from other religions and none. In addition, prisoners who had gone through the workshops could themselves become facilitators. They were paired with facilitators from the outside, which formed an energizing dynamic. Meanwhile, organizers resisted the pull from the

prison administrators to make it their program, feeling that would neutralize AVP's credibility. It belonged to the prisoners. But maintaining outsider participation on a volunteer basis was crucial as well. It evoked the quality of offering a gift to others that the volunteer had received in some way.

By the late 1980s, AVP was multiplying not only around the US but internationally. AVP was introduced to the NGO Alliance on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at the United Nations in New York, which helped spread the work more widely. It also moved AVP's outreach beyond prisons, which had been the intention from the beginning. In the latter 1990s, a British Friend in Croatia invited AVP to offer workshops there, which soon spread to Serbia. Around the same time, Friends in the African Great Lakes region, another area of recent genocidal violence, invited AVP. The work soon spread to South Africa and elsewhere on the continent. Today AVP is on six continents. As of 2007, the organization was continuing to expand at a phenomenal rate of 30 percent per year. There is a US national gathering once a year and an international gathering every second year. The organization became a nonprofit (NPO), mainly to cover costs of publications and volunteer expenses, but has kept paid staff to a minimum.

AVP is a simpler organizational equation than MNS was, focusing on a specific concern and training regimen, and without forming communities. Its genesis in the anti-utopian 1980s, a decade after MNS began, perhaps shaped its less revolutionary aspirations. But it informs communities of many kinds and has thereby spread to many different places and situations, through the Quaker/anarchist genius for intrinsic relationship.

Post-Sixties Anarchism: Friends General Conference Gatherings

AVP has offered its workshops at Friends General Conference Gatherings over the years, feeding its collective wisdom back into its Quaker origins.[35] Week-long FGC Gatherings offer around 50 workshops each year, ranging from personal spirituality to social justice work and environmental action. In addition, interest groups arise more spontaneously. Workshops and interest groups typically reflect networks of exploration and innovation both within and beyond the Religious Society of Friends.

Gatherings have generally attracted one to two thousand North American Friends for a festive time of learning, socializing, and spontaneous music-making. They exude the *carnivalesque* flow of energies

often found in anarchist-style gatherings, ranging from mass convergences like the anti-WTO protests at Seattle in 1999, to the Occupy phenomenon in city parks and plazas around the world in 2011, to local farmers markets today. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe this flow, there is no center dictating an order or meaning; rather meaning arises out of exchanges among the multitude of participants in dialogue, creating a shifting, common narrative. The common emerges amid the proliferation of dialogues as an open, distributed network of relationships.[36]

Post-Sixties Anarchism: A Christian Exploration

As the radical politics of the 1960s-70s ebbed, a number of radical Christian theologians began searching for deeper foundations to bolster a prophetic witness against the neoconservative politics of the Reagan-Thatcher era. In the "Peace on Earth: Covenant, Constitution, Technology, and Economics in the Common Life" (*Into the Common*), I noted the renewed interest in covenant theology during the 1980s, among biblical theologians such as Walter Brueggemann and political theorists such as Daniel Elazar. In a similar vein, two theologians explored anarchy and anarchism in the latter 1980s. One of them in particular merits a brief review here.

Jacques Ellul was a French Protestant sociologist and legal scholar probably best known for his book, *The Technological Society* (1954 in French, 1964 in English), a ground-breaking analysis of the powerful shaping influence of modern technologies. His theological vision, with its social implications, was already set out with *The Presence of the Kingdom* (1948 in French, 1951 in English). He was a radical Christian who drew upon Marxist analysis but rejected Marxist politics. He had some contacts with the anarchistic Situationist movement around Paris in the 1950s-60s. His last book was *Anarchy and Christianity* (1988 in French, 1991 in English). Inspired partly by contacts with American theologian Vernard Eller,[37] this small book summarizes the political meaning of Ellul's theological convictions.

In his Introduction, Ellul notes that Christians and secular anarchists generally want nothing to do with each other. In fact, he himself wants nothing to do with the secular anarchism he has observed.

> What, then, am I trying to do? Simply to erase a great misunderstanding for which Christianity is to blame . . . All the

> churches have scrupulously respected and often supported the state authorities. They have made of conformity a major virtue. They have tolerated social injustices and the exploitation of some people by others, explaining that it is God's will that some should be masters and other servants, and that socioeconomic success is an outward sign of divine blessing. They have thus transformed the free and liberating Word into morality, the most astonishing thing being that there can be no Christian morality if we truly follow evangelical [i.e. gospel] thinking . . . Finally, all the churches have set up a clergy furnished with knowledge and power, though this is contrary to evangelical thinking . . . *ministerium* being service and the minister a servant of others.[38]

He follows the New Testament assertion that earthly powers function to limit and punish social evils. "Christians, however, if they act properly and are not wicked, do not need to obey the political authorities but should organize themselves in autonomous communities on the margin of society and government" (p. 8). (This same anarchist logic was articulated by early Friends, who promised the Puritans and then the Restoration governments that they would obey all just laws, but would resist unjust laws. But Ellul seems not to know the early Quaker example. And as noted in the preceding essay, even modern Friends themselves don't understand the Quaker movement before William Penn and Robert Barclay.)

Ellul continues,

> What I am advancing is by no means a rediscovered truth. It has always been upheld, but by a small number of people, mostly anonymous, though their traces remain. They have always been there even though they have constantly been effaced by the official and authoritarian Christianity of church dignitaries. Whenever they have succeeded in launching a renewal, the movement that they started on the basis of the gospel and the whole Bible was quickly perverted and reentered the path of official conformity. This happened to the Franciscans after Francis and to the Lutherans after Luther [p. 9].

We could add early Quakers after Fox and Nayler here, but in less abject ways.

Because anarchism often conjures up images of bomb-throwing terrorists in the popular imagination, Ellul makes his position clear: "There are different forms of anarchy and different currents in it. I must first say very simply what anarchy I have in view. By anarchy I

mean an absolute rejection of violence. Hence I cannot accept either nihilists or anarchists who choose violence as a means to action" (p. 11).

Additionally, in contrast to the classical anarchist animus against the centralized state, Ellul looks more broadly at "the omnipotence and omnipresence of administration" (p. 16). Already in 1988, he describes a situation more painfully apparent today:

> There is no point here in discussing what everybody knows, namely, the growth of the state, of bureaucracy, of propaganda (disguised under the name of publicity or information), of conformity, of an express policy of making us all producers and consumers, etc. . . . The churches have once again betrayed their mission. The parties play outdated games. It is in these circumstances that I regard anarchy as the only serious challenge, as the only means of achieving awareness, as the first active step [p. 22].

This point is more fully developed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri among others under the rubric of "governance," in contrast to official "government."[39] Governance is the whole array of state, financial, and corporate bureaucratic regulation, health and safety codes, and the norming of life in an advanced society. The postmodern state rules less by overt law and enforcement than through this pervasive web of administered social order (I noted this phenomenon in local terms in "Richmond, Indiana: 1968 and 2008" in *Into the Common*).

One can hear in Ellul's critique some overlap with the anti-state rhetoric of various populist politicians today. Donald Trump would "drain the swamp" of federal bureaucratic regulation. But that stream of thought is libertarian, focusing on individual civil liberties and the pursuit of economic self-interest with minimal moral boundaries (as noted in the introductory section of the preceding essay). That logic contrasts sharply with the anarchist concern for coherent, peaceful social organization below or without the state. We heard Paul Goodman describe anarchism as "intrinsic relationship" in contrast to "extrinsic power."

Ellul notes some particular cases of anarchist resistance to the state and its administration.

> I have in mind one that is most important, namely, the objection to taxes. Naturally, if individual taxpayers decide not to pay their taxes, or not to pay the proportion that is devoted to military expenditures, this is no problem for the state. They are arrested and sentenced. In a matter of this kind, many people

> have to act together. If six thousand or twenty thousand taxpayers decide upon this type of action, the state is put in an awkward position, especially if the media are brought in. But to make this possible there has to be lengthy preparation: campaigns, conferences, tracts, etc. [p. 17].

War tax resistance was a small but growing phenomenon in the United States in the 1980s, as the Reagan administration launched a second arms race. But it faded over time as pacifists became distracted by other dramas of state power.[40]

A major portion of Ellul's small book is taken up with biblical foundations for a modern Christian anarchy/anarchism. I have explored many of these foundations in preceding essays. under the rubric of the common. In his Conclusion, Ellul reiterates his critique of the many political compromises and conformities of the historic churches.

> This runs contrary to the orientation of Paul, namely, that we are not to be conformed to the ideas of the present world. Here is a first area in which anarchism can form a happy counterweight to the conformist flexibility of Christians.
>
> In the ideological and political world, it is a buffer [set off as a separate paragraph, as it is here].
>
> Naturally, Christians can hardly be of the right, the actual right, what we have seen the right become . . . The right has now become the gross triumph of hypercapitalism or fascism. There is none other. This is ruled out, but so is Marxism in its 20th-century avatars . . . Finally, anarchism can teach Christian thinkers to see the realities of our societies from a different standpoint than the dominant one of the state [p. 104].

Anarchy and Christianity is not Ellul's best writing. It often seems loose and fragmentary. But the pungent statements quoted here sample his several prophetic insights and offer some outlines for a contemporary Christian anarchism.

Habit

Anarchist initiatives often burst onto the social scene appearing to be spontaneous actions. For example, Rosa Parks' famous refusal to sit at the back of a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955 seemed spontaneous to outsiders. But she had already been part of a network of

civil rights activists studying forms of nonviolent resistance and preparing for such a moment (see "Some Assembly Required: Commoning Leadership and Organization"). While spontaneity and innovation are key elements in anarchist practice, these thrive most sustainably in the context of stable, appropriate forms of human behavior and organization. For example, more than three centuries of Quaker faith and practice continue to generate new initiatives and organizations. And we saw how the Quaker-inspired MNS grounded its activism in regular practices of communal living, group consciousness-raising, and training in nonviolent direct action. We also noted AVP's use of group processes in training creative responses to violent situations. Both organizations have emphasized forming and enacting new habits of the heart.

Hardt and Negri draw upon the American pragmatist philosophers for an understanding of habit:

> Habit is the common in practice . . . Habits create a nature that serves as the basis of life. William James refers to them as the enormous flywheel of society, which provides the ballast or inertia necessary for social reproduction and living day to day . . . Habits are like physiological functions, such as breathing, digesting and circulating blood. We take them for granted and cannot live without them. Unlike physiological functions, however, habits and conduct are shared and social. They are produced and reproduced in interaction and communication with others. Habits are thus never really individual or personal . . . Habits constitute our social nature . . . "We may think of habits as means, waiting, like tools in a box, to be used by conscious resolve," John Dewey wrote. "But they are something more than that. They are active means, means that project themselves, energetic and dominating ways of acting." Habits are living practice, the site of creation and innovation . . . the pragmatists give priority neither to the individual nor the social . . . the motor of production and innovation lies between the two, in communication and collaboration, acting in common . . . Habits form a nature that is both produced and productive, created and creative – an ontology of social practice in common.[41]

Of course, habit as such isn't necessarily good. A drug habit, legal or illegal, is only a more acute instance of a strongly habituated consumer culture today. Consumerism produces and reproduces an atomized, in-

dividualist worldview. And of course, that is socially inured by a capitalist economic system and its powerful technologies of media and advertising.

A commoning-anarchist formation of habit is clearly counter to that dominant culture. Unfortunately, Hardt and Negri miss the crucial importance of community as the mediating element between the individual and the social whole. Communities can form the individual in counter-cultural convictions and habits. Communities offer the strength to sustain such habits consciously and creatively against the reflexive habituations of the wider society. This was true of the early Quaker movement and continued in evolving forms in the Religious Society of Friends. The traditional plain Quaker dress was itself a "habit" akin to the traditional attires of the Roman Catholic orders and orthodox Jews. These function internally as signs of solidarity, and externally as tokens of resistance. Most adherents of these traditions have dropped the traditional attire today, but the communal dynamics of counter-cultural habit still function, if less acutely.

These dynamics are mostly rational and intentional. But something deeper evokes them, calls them forth. The recurring theme of all the essays in these three volumes has been that the vast diversity of the common, together with the absolute, transcendent unity of the One, act like parents drawing us into lives in faith with one another and with the earth. Early Quaker writings utilized the biblically based metaphors of seed and light to evoke that consciousness. That language helped men and women focus on a subtle Presence that had hitherto remained subliminal, unconscious.

The Anarchist Unconscious

As I reflect upon my own growing awareness of the anarchist qualities of Quaker traditions, I also note how Friends generally seem stubbornly uninterested of such connections. "Quaker" becomes a reified, self-authenticating matter of personal preference and collective identity that walls off important parallels in the wider socio-spiritual world. In addition, as noted in the introductory section of the preceding essay, fixation upon the nation-state, abetted by the news media, which thrive on its conflicts and contests, further blind our perception of Goodman's "anarchist principle" of "intrinsic functioning" in contrast to "extrinsic power."

If we understand the common to be the grounding of all relations in nature and culture, and anarchy/anarchism to be their intrinsic functioning, below the extrinsic relations of power, then we realize that we are dealing with a largely unconscious realm. What Carl Jung called the "collective unconscious" can just as appropriately termed the *common unconscious*, for it connects us with the entire cosmos. Dreams can connect us with that realm. Jung describes dreams thus:

> The dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the soul, opening into that cosmic night which was the psyche long before there was any ego-consciousness, and which will remain psyche no matter how far our ego-consciousness extends. For all ego-consciousness is isolated; because it separates and discriminates, it knows only particulars, and it has only those which can be related to the ego. Its essence is limitation, even though it reach to the farthest nebulae among the stars. All consciousness separates; but in dreams we put on the likeness of that more universal, truer, more eternal man dwelling in the darkness of primordial night. There he is still in the whole, and the whole is in him, indistinguishable from nature and bare of all egohood. It is from these all-uniting depths that the dream arises, be it never so childish, grotesque, and immoral.

These "all-uniting depths" whence dreams arise are not only the common ground of all things but the totality of human experience: "A dream, like every element of the psychic structure, is a product of the total psyche. Hence we may expect to find in dreams everything that has ever been significant in the life of humanity." Jung states it even more pointedly: "The unconscious is the unwritten history of mankind from time unrecorded."

The *archetypes* that appear in our dreams "are eternally inherited forms and ideas which at first have no specific content." Our dreams dress these forms with the materials of our personal events and circumstances. But archetypes are not stand-alone metaphysical entities; they have been formed in human history. They are like riverbeds along which the water of life has flowed for centuries, digging deep channels for itself.[42] The common and its anarchist social formations in human history are the deepest channels of our collective history. They keep emerging as a "return of the repressed" (to use Freud's terminology) in a world dominated by the ego and the extrinsic relations of power.

We could therefore look to our own dreams as intimations of the common life. My own dreams include landscapes, seascapes, and city-scapes, humans, and other species in ways that beckon me into the common life. Of course, only a few dreams stand out in that way. Much of what I can remember of a night's activity is just a chaotic jumble. So again, as noted at the end of the preceding essay, chaos and order, anarchy and anarchism, keep interacting:

> I form light and create darkness,
> I make weal and create woe,
> I am the Lord, who do all these things [Isa. 45:7].

> The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught,
> That I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary.
> Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear
> To hear as those who are taught [Isa. 50:4].

3.

Like Jesus

Living into the Paradox

Part I

10/23

Jesus is a living, enlivening paradox. Reflecting on the four gospels of the New Testament, Christian tradition concludes that Jesus the Christ is "truly God, truly human." You can't find a bigger paradox than that. At its root, "paradox" means literally beyond belief, beyond our categories of thought and experience. It has been said that when two small truths or facts disagree, it is a contradiction; but when two large truths stand in tension with each other, it may be a paradox. A statement, a story, or a person may be paradoxical. I want to explore with you the paradox of Jesus, how he illuminates our joys and sorrows, how he reveals God's love and purpose in our lives, and how the gospels invite us to live paradoxically – like Jesus.

In the gospels, the paradox of Jesus plays out between two identities: Messiah, or Christ; and Son of Man. "Christ" was the ancient Greek correlate to the Jewish concept of "Messiah." Both words meant divinely "anointed." Meanwhile, "Son of Man" can be rephrased as "Human One" in more contemporary, gender-inclusive terms. In ancient biblical usage, "son of man" usually meant simply a human being (for example, God addresses the prophet Ezekiel as "son of man"). Today, some orthodox Christians may bristle at "Human One" as a gender-inclusive update of the traditional "Son of Man" translation of the New Testament Greek. Meanwhile, some orthodox humanists may bristle at the divine implications of Jesus as "Messiah" or "Christ." But here we are simply playing out conflicts between our orthodoxies. Orthodoxies tend to contradict, caricature, and stultify each other.

By contrast, paradox enlivens and invites. And Jesus is paradox, not orthodox. Like new wine bursting old wineskins, Jesus is always exploding our categories, ending our constructed worlds, opening out a new creation to us. In what follows, I will often use "Messiah" where the New Testament text uses "Christ." And I will use "Human One" where the New Testament text uses "Son of Man." But when quoting the text (New Revised Standard Version) directly, I will retain its language.

The gospels affirm that Jesus is the long expected Messiah, the Christ, God's anointed redeemer. Jesus himself seems to confirm that identity. But he appears to prefer the title Human One. The most telling example comes when Jesus asks the disciples,

> Who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man

> must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly [Mark 8:29-32].

Ancient Jewish expectation of the Messiah was laden with expectations of military leadership and the national glory of David and Solomon. That was not the path Jesus had discerned during his time of temptation in the wilderness (see the "Temptation" section below). By contrast, he speaks more often of the Human One, always in the third person. Sometimes he seems to refer to himself, as in the example above. But at other times, he implies some indeterminate humanity. Thus, substituting "Human One" for "Son of Man" has the added benefit of connoting either a single individual or a collective humanity.

For example, some Pharisees chide Jesus that his disciples are plucking grain in the fields on the Sabbath, against Sabbath regulations. Jesus answers, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). Jesus and his disciples are homeless and hungry; they need to eat. That is their human situation, which has priority over the general regulation. Here the Son of Man/Human One appears to be the disciples.

But the term opens out more widely in other instances. For example, later, as Jesus anticipates the time after he is gone, he remarks that his disciples "will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man." But they should not look here or there for him. "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day." (Luke 17:22-24). Jesus the Son of Man, the Human One, will enlighten all humanity – if we will look and see.

In effect then, "Messiah" articulates the absolutely unique identity and divine purpose of Jesus, God's beloved Son. Meanwhile, "Son of Man," the "Human One," suggests the commonness of this Galilean carpenter's son. That is how the later doctrinal formula, "truly God, truly human," plays out in the gospel story of Jesus' life and ministry in its Palestinian Jewish context.

Jesus states the paradox acutely at the end of his life, during his trial in the temple before the chief priests and council of elders. The high priest finally asks Jesus directly if he is the Son of God (Messiah). Jesus answers "I am." But he immediately adds, "and you shall see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62; see Daniel 7:13). The Greek for "clouds" (*nephelon*) can also denote a multitude, an indeterminate throng (as in the "great cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12:1). The

chief priests correctly infer that Jesus is predicting a mass movement. Indeed, that is what will spread after his death. But they filter his statement through the popular expectation of a Messiah. Therefore, they fear that he threatens a violent uprising that could unseat their power and bring terrible reprisals from Rome. That fear propels their hasty transfer of Jesus to Pilate for execution as a political criminal, a pretended "King of the Jews." This is the moment Jesus had prophesied when Simon Peter named him Messiah.

Jes-us

But that most acute moment in the gospel story is only one of many moments in the life of Jesus. Very few of us face a moment as terrible as that one. Other moments in the life of Jesus can illuminate moments in our own lives, moments that may occur only once, or recur again and again, often to our confusion and frustration. In light of the life of Jesus, however, we may find ourselves living out paradoxes like his. We find ourselves illuminated in our uniqueness, something like his, *and* in our commonness, also like his. In these moments of recognition, our confusion, fear, and frustration become living faith. We learn to live faithfully, with new-found peace and clarity.

A living faith in Jesus reframes personal *identity* and *purpose*. We all carry inherited or adopted racial, gendered, national, or class *identities*. We continue in those, but we find them reframed by our identity in Christ/Christ in us. We discover friends and community across boundaries of identity; we *identify* with the violated and oppressed, as Jesus did. Meanwhile, we carry on our practical *purposes*, *callings* in the world: meaningful employment, service, or raising a family. We find these purposes reframed as our part in Jesus' ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation can mean peacemaking where there is conflict, or inviting in those who are excluded or marginalized, as Jesus did. It also extends to living more sustainably on the earth with the other species around us. "Human" after all means literally "of the earth." Following Jesus, our identity and purpose are reframed in common with all life on earth (more about that in Part II, "Coming Home").

The sections that follow in these two essays will explore our paradoxical identities and purposes in light of the life of Jesus, as narrated in the New Testament gospels. Some sections may highlight identity more; others may highlight purpose more. That is characteristic of paradox: we don't live perfectly in the center of two elements in tension.

We tend to shift from one side to the other, given particular circumstances. But faith in Jesus cannot choose one over the other. We keep rebalancing in our walk with Jesus, just as we keep rebalancing physically with one step after another in forward motion on the earth.

The Real Jesus

In our highly secularized world today, we tend to doubt almost as a matter of faith. We feel obliged to remain a bit suspicious of what we hear, and not be "taken in." In the case of the gospels, we often question whether Jesus "really" said this or did that. Walking on water is the most notorious example. Modern New Testament scholarship has struggled to remain faithful without being naive. For example, in recent decades, scholars in the Jesus Seminar pooled their expertise to parse out what seems historically credible in the gospels, even setting percentages of probability whether Jesus "really" did this or said that. But that undertaking becomes as literalistic as the literalism they scorn among fundamentalist Christians. Insisting that Jesus "really" did walk on water or "really" didn't amounts to the same thing. And setting percentages is ludicrous.

The closer one studies the gospels, the more one detects a sophisticated literary development of the stories about Jesus, and their arrangement into the overall structure of the story. To recognize this means more than simply choosing a sophisticated *literary* reading over a *literal* reading of the gospels. It should lead us to realize that the gospel writers elaborated the story of Jesus according to their own walks with Jesus. A few walked with Jesus on the earth. Many more walked with him in his Spirit during the first decades after his death. Thus, the beautiful literature we call the four gospels is more than "art": it's heart.

In other words, the "real Jesus" we meet in the gospels is some combination of what the physical Jesus of Nazareth said and did in his few short years of ministry *and* what the Spirit of Jesus said and did, risen in the hearts of those early followers. We don't need to be too concerned to know exactly how that combination worked. More importantly, through their faithful witness, those first generations act as a bridge between the Jesus of *history* two thousand years ago and the abiding *mystery* of Jesus we experience today. The "real Jesus" is both history and mystery – a paradox that is never "solved," only lived.

Mark (1:15) summarizes the message of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come

near [or is at hand]; repent, and believe in the good news." Jesus discerned that the time was fulfilled and the kingdom of God loomed in the historical circumstances of his time and place: namely, an ancient Palestinian society was starting to crumble under a harsh Roman occupation. But the time may also be fulfilled and the kingdom of God come near in the mystery of our own circumstances of time and place. Those circumstances may be personal and/or social. When we recognize that moment, we are enabled to repent/turn and believe the gospel/good news. We set out on a new path of some kind. To *believe* in the gospel is not only to find that story compelling, but to begin participating in that story according to our personal circumstances in time and place.

Thus, to believe is to live faithfully with that story amid our circumstances all these centuries later. Other religions and spiritualities teach "enlightenment," "submission," "liberation," and other good things. We who live in faith with the gospel need not deny or downplay them. We are simply on a path that is absolutely unique. But it does have points in common with them – another paradox of the unique and the common that comes with our good friend Jesus.

The sections that follow come in the order they occurred to me to write. They might have been ordered differently, but I don't see another order that seems better.

Observing

Observation is common to all of us. Physical vision is only part of observation, and those without physical sight observe their environment through other senses. Observation integrates sensory input with past experience and internal processes of reflection. It orients us to our surroundings and guides our actions therein. But each of us observes from a unique point of view, where we are standing, where we are moving. And each of us may choose a certain vantage-point, where we can optimize or maximize our observation of what interests us. Our interest may be lust, leading us to choose some vantage-point or another. Our interest may be financial gain, keeping an eye on betting odds, or stock market trends. Our interest may be in personal growth, learning to observe more closely our own moods, emotions, and interpersonal communication. We may even be religiously observant, following the moral, spiritual, and liturgical practices of a faith tradition.

But each kind of observation is situated, interested, practiced, and sharpened over time.

We don't tend to think about it, but the teachings of Jesus are grounded in a great deal of observation over time. His parables indicate that he has watched farmers and farm workers planting and harvesting. He has watched women making bread, keeping house. He has watched parents and children. His eyes have followed merchants, beggars, lepers, prostitutes, tax-collectors, Pharisees, scribes, the mad and the sane, the rich and the poor. His observation of human behavior contributes to his healing powers. He has also observed the natural world: the lilies of the field, hens with chicks, foxes, the life and death of birds, the weather. We all do this to some extent – it is a common human activity. And all teachers teach in various ways and degrees through observation.

But again, there is a *unique* point of view and interest in the way each of us observes. And there is something *absolutely unique* in Jesus' viewpoint and purpose. I don't mean that in some supernatural way, but in view of the unique place and time in world history where Jesus' life took place. Jesus grew up in Galilee, as an inheritor of the unique Hebrew-Jewish revelation, but at an interface with nearby gentile communities. He was executed by the Romans, but then became an agent of contagion throughout their empire. The contagion reached furthest to the West, and exerted a major influence upon western civilization, which in turn has impacted cultures around the world in major ways. Of course, that global reach of the life of Jesus has come with all kinds of dilution, corruption, harnessing to imperial and national ambitions, and even denials of his message and the meaning of his life.

But far beyond anything a truly human Jesus could have known in his lifetime, his point of view has extended around the world, more than any other single life. What Jesus of Nazareth observed in his little, agrarian corner of the world two millennia ago has sight-lines that still intersect with the observations of people around the world, wherever his words are physically heard and inwardly absorbed. Everywhere and always, there are individuals and communities living faithfully into the paradox of Jesus, notwithstanding the contradictions others have made of him.

Two observations of Jesus recorded in the gospels are particularly telling. Matthew records,

> The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, "It will be fair weather, for the

> sky is red." And in the morning, "It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening." You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah [Matt. 16:1-4].

Given the popular Messianic expectations growing around Jesus, as well as some of his provocative statements, those who feel responsible for good religious and social order demand that Jesus prove himself, perform some kind of conclusive, unmistakable sign of his authority versus theirs. Jesus answers by changing the meaning of "sign" from a magical feat, a "special effect," to subtler processes of observation. And from "heaven," he shifts to "sky" and the commonplace prediction of weather. Then, from signs in the sky and daily weather, he shifts to "the signs of the times." There is heavy weather ahead, and they don't see it coming. So there shall be no sign but "the sign of Jonah." As Jonah preached repentance to the city of Nineveh, so Jesus preaches "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has drawn near; repent and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15).

The teachings of Jesus provide truths for all times and seasons, including our own. But he speaks most acutely to his own time and the growing crisis of his people under a crushing Roman military occupation and taxation, together with imploding conflicts among different Jewish factions. Jesus doesn't need to be clairvoyant to see the disaster that will eventually befall his people, some forty years after his death. To repent and believe the good news could turn his people from their hatred of the Romans on the one hand and their mystification by the temple regime on the other. It could move them to believe and enter the zone of universal amnesty that Jesus announces, and to begin building a cooperative society from the grassroots, one that could endure the Romans and shrug off the temple priesthood. (I have more fully articulated this interpretation of Jesus' ministry and the commoning movement that followed his death in *Life in Gospel-Space* [2020], *Into the Common* [2021], and *Further into the Common* [2023]).

Luke records a more pointed prophetic observation by Jesus while still in Galilee:

> At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the

> tower of Siloam fell on them – do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did" [Luke 13:1-5].

Within any given society, we have a tendency to assign blame to individuals and groups for their misfortunes. The blame may not be "sin" as such, but perhaps an unhealthy lifestyle or a lack of initiative. But Jesus instead points to a dark cloud advancing upon his whole society, his whole people – the righteous and sinners alike. Forty years after his death, in response to a Jewish revolt, the Romans will sweep over Galilee spreading murder, mayhem, and destruction. Then they will destroy Jerusalem and its temple. Many tens of thousands will be killed, and more tens of thousands dragged off into slavery elsewhere in the empire. It will be the worst single catastrophe in Jewish history until the Holocaust of the twentieth century.

When Jesus finally comes to Jerusalem, Luke records him looking over the city, observing its beauty with the prophet's gaze:

> As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God" [Luke19:41-44].

Luke probably finished his gospel ten to twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. He likely added some details here from hindsight. But there's no reason to doubt the general foresight Jesus has in his own moment.

Such prophetic foresight is less a matter of seeing into the future than a deep discernment of the present and its tendencies. In announcing "the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand," Jesus sees the potentials for redemption or destruction among his people in that present. Divine revelation had moved the Hebrew prophets before him, and has motivated true prophets ever since. But Jesus, unique in his identity as Messiah and his world-historical moment, is prophetic in a manner that extends beyond his historical moment. His words reverberate throughout subsequent history. Wherever men and women follow their calling into prophetic gifts of service, they will find their observations and revelations resonating with his. They will find the

clarity of divine insight mixing in paradoxical tension with their very human thoughts and feelings of hope and grief for themselves and their people.

What Jesus observes during his time in Jerusalem has socio-economic grounding. Mark describes Jesus sitting with his disciples in the temple opposite the treasury. They watch people depositing their money there, including impressive gifts from the wealthy. Then they see a poor widow add two small copper coins, worth a penny. Jesus observes to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on" (Mark 12:41-44).

Many stewardship sermons in churches have extolled the widow and the "mite" she gave so sacrificially. However, Jesus is not extolling the widow, but observing the mystifying power of a dazzling temple to draw in the devotion and resources of rich and poor alike. His "dim view" of the scene becomes clearer in the following verses. As they are leaving the temple, his rural Galilean disciples are awed at such large stones and great buildings. Jesus answers, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down" (Mark 13:1-2).

Jesus' last days in Jerusalem also become the urgent occasion for him to teach his disciples something of the powers of observation they will need after he is gone, in a very different situation. He repeatedly calls his friends to "watch." The Greek verb *gregoreo* also connotes to stay awake, be vigilant, alert. As he looks ahead, Jesus warns them,

> If anyone says to you at that time, "Look! Here is the Messiah! or "Look! There he is! – do not believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be alert [watch]; I have already told you everything [Mark 13:2-23].

The Greek imperative *ide* connotes a focused "Look!" here or there. Signs and omens serve to fixate attention, the kind of fixation on a Messiah that Jesus consistently deflects from himself. Instead, he presses the disciples to maintain a wider attention in watching, remaining vigilant. Jesus continues,

> But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" [quoting

> Dan. 7:13] and with power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven [Mark 13:24-27].

Jesus speaks here not of a cataclysmic collapse of the physical universe, but of a kind of vision that does not depend on physical light. By that vision, one sees the Human One, the gathering of a new humanity from all over. This perception indeed requires wide-angle vision, a 360-degree vigilance without, and deep insight/revelation within.

This statement is parallel to Luke 17:22-24, where Jesus compares the coming of the Human One to lightning flashing across the sky (quoted in the introductory section). Indeed, when the Spirit of Jesus is poured out upon all flesh (in Acts 2), the Human One begins to spread in a transfigured humanity. That occurs in the days following the raising of Jesus from the dead. But it also occurs in the present, wherever this revelation raises our lives to new levels of vision and action. This is how we begin living the paradox with Jesus. As the Human One, Jesus spreads *among all of us*. As Messiah, he embodies *uniquely in each of us*. This happens in part as we learn to pray – to turn our attention in various ways to God (see the section on prayer below) – and as we watch what is happening all around us. This is learning to observe with Jesus.

Jesus' observations spoke to his particular time and place. But his words also resonate with other times and places, not least my own American society with its own lethal conflicts in the twenty-first century. Today, white Christian nationalism combines three identifications in varying proportions. Together, they echo the nationalistic, ethnic, and Messianic hopes of Jesus' day. White Christian nationalists indulge in magical thinking about a second coming of Christ, or a return to a "Christian nation." This powerful bloc in American politics polarizes strongly against its opposite: multicultural liberal statism. A rainbow of various racial, gendered, ethnic, and cultural identities combine in shifting humanistic coalitions to oppose the advances of white Christian nationalism. These coalitions appeal to the state to correct various injustices in American society, to defend and extend the US Constitution.

The more they appeal to the state, the more their white Christian nationalist opponents become alienated from the state, want to defund the government and "drain the swamp" of its bureaucratic apparatus. Meanwhile, both nationalists and statists are motivated subliminally by a sense of America's eroding credibility and power on the world stage. Thus, while the United States is still the most powerful nation-state in

the world, it shares with Roman-occupied Palestine a growing sense of crisis.

As long as we remain transfixed by this political *contradiction*, it is difficult to recognize the *paradox* Jesus embodies or to imagine how we can embody it in the current situation. Certainly, the unprecedented prosperity of post-war America has addicted many of us to middle-class (or better) comforts – in contrast to the poor peasants and social outcasts who gathered in the largest numbers around Jesus. But this long era of prosperity is moving into definitive contradiction with the long-term indebtedness and trade-imbalances that have financed it. I'm no clairvoyant, but I do see heavy weather already breaking in, with more to come. Thus, "the time is fulfilled," opening new space in American society for the paradox to take hold. But "the sign of Jonah" is our perennial invitation to repent, to turn and believe the good news.

Misunderstood

One of our greatest frustrations comes when other people just don't get what we're saying, just don't perceive or appreciate what we're doing. It's especially frustrating when we're offering the best we've got, with the best intentions, often trying to be helpful – and others just seem to shrug it off, or not even notice. We wonder, why do I bother?

I sometimes think of J. S. Bach, whose music is revered much more today than it was during his lifetime. The musical forms he found so rich in compositional possibility were considered passé by his contemporaries. And some of his greatest compositions, like the B-Minor Mass, were never performed in his lifetime. His Brandenburg Concertos, if they were ever performed, were long forgotten on a library shelf. Yet as a man whose deep faith inspired all his work, he inscribed his musical scores "to the greater glory of God." Bach understood that ultimately, it wasn't about him.

In the gospels, Jesus says repeatedly, "Do you still not understand?"— often to his own disciples. It's not as if he were trying to make it hard for people. Even his parables, which in some ways seem an indirect form of expression, were intended to evoke the truth in people's hearts, rather than to explain it to their minds. Much of his teaching only began to make sense after his death, when the teller of parables became himself the parable. And as we read the parable that is Jesus today, he evokes in our hearts something more profound than what we understand with our minds.

Mark Twain, who often used irony to get at the truth, wrote, "When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant, I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years." That change in perspective had much to do with his years of experience out on his own.

Similarly, many people think they know what the gospels say and are not interested. But if we listen to them as we continue to mature, they continue to generate fresh insights and a larger vision. In Mark 4, Jesus tells a crowd his parable of the sower and the four soils. After most of the crowd has wandered off, he says, "To you has been given the secret/mystery of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables." He then goes on to explain the parable. But these "insiders" are simply "those who were around him along with the twelve." Thus, those who linger with Jesus and his story, waiting for more understanding, will receive more. That's how we still learn today.

It is a cliché, but no less true, that our words and actions "plant seeds" with others, even if they seem hopelessly futile at the time. And just as Jesus himself became the parable after his death, some of the seeds we plant today may not take root with others until we ourselves have been "planted." Or they may never take root. But at least we have been faithful with the truth we received. And what we have received is both *unique* to the person we are, an image of the personal God, *and* nothing special, *in common* with all other persons and all of God's creation. Thus, whether or not we are understood by others, we are the paradoxical sisters and brothers of Jesus. And as such, we are comprehended within the unfathomable wisdom of God.

Mentor/Friend

Continuing in that vein, each of us receives opportunities to mentor another person, or perhaps many others. It may be a short-lived connection or it may last a lifetime. Parenthood is a life-long nurturing, mentoring relationship. Even after children have grown up, moved away, and are making their own decisions, one can still model and speak from the perspective of life-stages in their future. Teachers are mentors not only in the subject matter they teach but also in the way they teach and their entire manner of being. Those in trades and professions also mentor those who are just starting out. And even those

who are accounted to be intellectually limited can model subtle forms of wisdom for those of us who think we know it all.

But true mentoring is also friendship. What we teach and model may be special knowledge, even a wisdom unique to who we are. But the mentoring relationship grows into friendship out of our sense of common humanity and the learning process that continues among all of us. The goal of loving parenthood is for the parent and the child to mature into mutual friendship. In teaching, the aim and the style should be collegial, grounded in a shared sense of purpose in the world. As parents or as teachers, let us remain teachable. And to remain teachable is to endure incomprehension or the outright rejection of what we offer. It is to ask oneself, am I wrong? Or am I conveying the right thing in the wrong way? Does my life contradict what I am teaching?

The gospels offer very compact, literarily composed stories of Jesus gathering his disciples. It's hard to imagine that Jesus really just walked by and picked them up. But even in abbreviated form, the gospels do sketch their range of personalities. In John 1, the new disciples range from Andrew, eager to follow Jesus, to Nathaniel, initially skeptical. The disciple John seems to be especially insightful – at least according to his gospel. Simon Peter is portrayed in all four gospels as volatile, quick to leap to the wrong conclusion, but so whole-hearted that Jesus sees something special in him. Thomas the questioner is good to have in the mix. Matthew/Levi the tax collector is ready for something completely different. And perhaps Jesus sees something dodgy in Judas from the start, but wants to give him a chance. Mentoring is never a guaranteed success. The gospels of Luke and John also mention women close to Jesus, but their androcentric viewpoint doesn't tell us much about them. Mary Magdalene seems to loom especially near, but without explanation.

After a period of teaching and modeling among his mentees, Jesus sends them out in pairs, first twelve of them and then seventy, to teach and heal on their own. When they return, brimming with stories of discovery and success, Jesus rejoices with them. "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority" (Luke10:18-19). Jesus rejoices in the success of his mentoring; his authority is now theirs. This movement will outlive him, nothing will stop it now.

His disciples have become co-workers. But by the end they are more than that: they are his friends, because he has held nothing back; he has taught them all that he himself has received (John 15:15). He gives them one more teaching: they must now love one another as he

has loved them. This means more than warm feelings. If they are to love one another as he has loved them, they must mentor and encourage one another as he has them. This is what Jesus means by laying down one's life for one's friends (vs. 13). The Greek word for "life" here is *psyche*. It is to devote one's heart, mind, and soul – one's sustained attention – to one another. Jesus uses the image of a vine to convey the sustained interconnection and nurture they will find as they abide in his Spirit. And as a vine spreads indeterminately, so the joys and challenges of mentoring relationships will spread in the years to come.

Mentoring and friendship work in both directions. Mentoring relationships may grow into friendships, while even casual friendships may include some kind of mentoring between equals. Often this occurs only subliminally between us. But it may be more effective without our conscious intention to teach or to learn from each other. Just being ourselves with one another, without role expectations, reveals what is unique in each *and* common among all. Again, we discover the paradox of our friend Jesus, as he continues to teach us by just being himself.

Healing

As Jesus begins in ministry, he is first recognized mainly as a healer. Mark (1:24-28) tells us that the "unclean spirits" of physical and mental illness already know who Jesus is. At Capernaum, he confronts a man with an unclean spirit of some sort. The spirit says through the man, "'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!'"

At least three things stand out here. *First*, Jesus asserts a separation between the man and the unclean spirit. They say together, "What do you have to do with us?" Then the spirit says, "I know who you are." And Jesus replies, commanding, "come out of him!" By implication, he says to the man, you are not your illness. *Second*, Jesus orders the unclean spirit out, he does not destroy it. The spirit is unclean because it is somewhere it shouldn't be, making this man ill in some way. The spiritual world is full of many kinds of powers. They are all part of God's good creation, but there is also chaos that disorders and displaces spirits, setting creation out of its true harmony. As "the Holy One of God," Jesus has authority to heal, make whole, restore order out of chaos. And *third*, Jesus knows that his Messianic identity arouses

all kinds of wishful projections with people (as noted earlier in the Introduction). He will move more freely and be more effective if he remains a bit mysterious. So he commands the unclean spirit to shut up and just come out of the man. The people around this scene are stunned as they overhear this conversation and see its healing effects. They ask each other, "What is this? A new teaching! With authority, he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him. At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee."

The healing ministry of Jesus is motivated by compassionate love. *Love is his authority*. He receives this love/authority from God, as suggested by the scene of his baptism: "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved son; my favor rests upon him'" (Matt. 3:17). These words echo Psalm 2:7 and imply God's anointed king, Messiah. Yet the authority of love is not simply vested in him. Love flows outward to others, with healing effects, as we all know from our own experience. Love unites us, but it also separates us from what doesn't fit, what doesn't belong with us anymore. Healing is coming into a greater integrity of mind, spirit, and body. Integration involves some shedding, and we must be willing to let some things go.

And as the integration progresses, we are freed to pass the love on to others in generous, healing ways. Love is a mysterious authority that doesn't *wield* power so much as *yield* to a power that moves through us to others. It is not power-over but a cohortative power-with: "Let's!" As love heals and authorizes us to love, we grow as God's beloved daughters and sons, sisters and brothers of Jesus. And often, others will recognize that giftedness in us. But like Jesus, we will be more effective and move more easily if we keep a low profile, remain humble human beings, not wrapping ourselves up with authority. That is living into the paradox of Jesus, the Messiah/Human One.

As the word about Jesus spreads, multitudes are coming to him to be healed. Jesus loves the multitudes, but his ministry is not about mass-produced, indiscriminate cures, like patent medicines. And his healings are not in the narrow sense of restoring personal health, as we tend to conceive healing today. They are also about restoring a person to community. The overall impetus of Jesus' ministry is creating community out of multitude. Community is where spiritual health and general well-being can be sustained. The healing of the leper in Mark 1:40-45 offers a good example, and adds more dimension to the paradox of Jesus.

A leper, excluded from the community, comes to Jesus. Kneeling before him, the leper says, "If you choose, you can make me clean."

We are told Jesus is moved to pity, compassion for the man. But some early manuscripts instead say he is moved to anger. That's initially surprising, but plausible. Perhaps there is something manipulative in the leper's approach. He kneels and rather coyly suggests that Jesus could heal him if only he willed. Stated as a conditional "if A then B," is opposite to what Jesus is about. The leper is thinking magically: that is, Jesus has magic power to heal, if he just wants to. Magic is the manipulation of special powers. Similarly, technology is the manipulation of particular forces and mechanisms of nature.

But Jesus heals through love, not magical or technological manipulation. So "Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I do choose. Be made clean!'" There's nothing tentative or conditional about touching a leper. And in place of the leper's conditional/subjunctive approach, Jesus answers with an indicative statement, "I do choose," and an imperative, "Be made clean!" This restates the overall gospel Jesus is preaching, as summarized in Mark 1:15: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." You are at the threshold of a new reality; now turn to it and step into it. This takes the leper – and all of us when it happens – off-guard.

Jesus jolts the leper out of his physical and spiritual condition and into new life. He tells him to present himself to a priest and make an offering as Moses commands. The priest will certify his healing, which will allow him to move freely in community again. But Jesus also commands him to tell no one how this happened. Nevertheless, in his joy, the man uses his new life in community to tell everyone about Jesus, making it harder for Jesus to move, especially in towns.

It's ambiguous whether Jesus *healed* the leper, or simply *drew* him into this new reality. But clearly, there is something about Jesus that makes it happen. Later, in Mark 5, a woman with a chronic hemorrhage – which renders her ritually unclean and excludes her from community – touches Jesus' garment in the midst of a large crowd. She too is acting by magical, "if-then" logic: "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well" (5:28). And when she does, she is immediately healed. Jesus notices and asks "Who touched me?" When the woman tremblingly confesses that she did, Jesus answers, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease" (5:34). Again, Jesus speaks in the gospel-logic of "because-therefore," an indicative statement followed by an imperative into new life. Again, "If-then" is the logic of magic and technology. Today, medical technologies can be useful (the root meaning of "commodity"). Technologies can cure you

and leave you alone without changing you. But the gospel heals and creates community, life-in-common, among those who move into its new reality. Again, Jesus tells the woman it is her faith (initially imperfect) that has healed her. But there is something about Jesus that makes it happen, draws people into that reality.

In the final analysis, healing is faith and faith is healing. We live into the paradox of Jesus as we learn how to draw forth the hidden wholeness in others and invite them to live more from the wholeness and less from their brokenness. And the wholeness grows in community with others. Your love is your faith in that person, and your faith may prove contagious. Any healing that happens will be in their response, but you will have had something to do with it. The truth hovers in the middle of that paradox.

Praying

Healing is exhausting work. Healers and spiritual guides I have known report the dangers of burnout that attend their gifts. Interwoven with the healing stories of Mark 1, we are told how one morning before dawn, Jesus leaves the disciples and goes out to a deserted place to pray. Many things can be suggested by "pray": asking for guidance and strength, interceding on behalf of others, giving thanks for God's guidance and blessings, or simply an unqualified being with God, being still and attentive, resting in the Presence. All the cognates and connotations of the Greek *proseucheto* suggest the turning of one's attention from the many to the One. In order to sustain effective ministry among so many people, even Jesus needs time alone. And surely for all of us, our best gifts of service to those around us are sustained by time alone. This is another aspect of the paradox. No one becomes one and remains one without staying in touch with the One. And every one has something to give to some other ones.

Whether one is asking, thanking, or just being with God, prayer is most of all about finding and maintaining *alignment* with God. The flurries and occasional storms of daily living inevitably pull on us and distract us from alignment with God's will, God's love, God's forgiveness. In prayer, we find our way back into the Presence and realign ourselves. In Matthew 6:5-13, when Jesus teaches how to pray, he emphasizes solitude. If you can't go to a "deserted place" in the natural world, retire to a quiet room. Be one, al-one with the One. The words

he offers are not a magical incantation, needing word-for-word memorization. Rather, he models the overall shape of prayer.

In essence, there are three key dimensions to alignment contained in "the Lord's Prayer." *First*, it is alignment with God's *will*. Jesus states this in three ways: "Hallowed be your name," "your kingdom come," and "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." These are three ways of accenting the same thing. This is not a wish list for Santa Claus. It is meant to align our wills with God's will, so we can play our part in realizing something of heaven on earth, to hallow God in the here and now, to enact the kingdom of God in some imperfect, provisional way. *Second*, it is asking God to *sustain* us in our alignment. "Give us this day our daily bread [or bread for tomorrow]." It's not asking for wealth and fame, but simply enough material blessing to keep us going, to keep us discerning and doing God's will. And *third*, it is alignment with God's *forgiveness*. To ask God's forgiveness is simultaneously the promise to pass it on. The kingdom of God spreads within this zone of amnesty, which Jesus opens far and wide. God's amnesty, allowing us to start over, obligates us to extend the same grace to others.

In these three ways we actively align ourselves with God through prayer. The final part of the prayer is simply the abject plea of creature to Creator. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." It is a confession of our very real weakness and vulnerability. We may succeed in resisting temptation, but it is better if we are led away from the evil one, the tempter. If we fail the test, it may prove very hard to restore our alignment with God's will, love, and forgiveness. We will explore temptation further in the next section.

Before moving on, note that while Jesus frames prayer as a solitary activity, his model for prayer is voiced in the first person plural: "us." One prays on behalf of oneself and one's community of faith. But because faith is always extending, one also prays for an indeterminate extent of others. Thus, paradoxically, as a solitary one prays in relationship with the divine One, the same one simultaneously has the multitude, the world at heart.

Another example of Jesus in prayer is important to note. Mark 6 includes the miracle known as the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus and the disciples retreat to a deserted place to rest for a while. But a "great crowd" from the surrounding area follows them there. Jesus has compassion on them, seeing "they were like sheep without a shepherd," so he begins teaching them, feeding them with his good news. But as the day goes on the disciples are concerned that the hour is late and the crowd must be physically hungry. The dilemma ensues: how

to sustain 5000 hungry peasants with five loaves and two fish – not even enough to sustain Jesus and the disciples.

First, Jesus gets the people to sit down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. In doing so, he is forming sharing communities out of a hungry, formless multitude. Then,

> Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of fish [Mark 6:41-43].

I don't wish to deny the miracle implied here. That would be as literal-minded as those who insist it was a miracle. But it is often suggested that some among the crowd have brought bread and dried fish with them, hidden in their clothing, and that Jesus inspires them to share it with others in their groups. But that sharing would be less likely to happen at large among a crowd of 5000 than among smaller groups, face-to-face communities. However, the *contagion of sharing* begins with Jesus blessing – consecrating – the few loaves and fish on hand. It would be clear to the crowd that Jesus and the disciples don't have enough even to feed themselves. But as Jesus demonstrably prays over what they have, divides it up, and the disciples begin distributing it, the spirit of sharing begins to spread. This story enacts Jesus' parable of the kingdom of heaven: it's like leaven/yeast spreading in the dough (see Matt. 13:33).

So at the very least, we can see the miracle of sharing community here. Moreover, the twelve baskets of leftovers suggest how sharing communities share not only among themselves but more widely. We are left with the implication that the satisfied crowd can take the leftovers back to their villages and towns to feed others. It is quite possible that this story functions in Mark as a parable, suggesting how subsistence communities of sharing formed among the displaced and hungry peasants who gathered around Jesus in Galilee. But the role of prayer, of blessing/consecrating *what is*, creates *what can be*. It is alignment with God's loving will. And in like manner, when we give thanks and consecrate who we are and what we have, we stand at the center of the paradox of Jesus. God takes hold of who we are and what we have, and through compassion and generosity creates something more.

Tempted

We heard the last of "the Lord's Prayer" ask that we not be led into temptation. It's a confession of our very real weakness and vulnerability. Oscar Wilde had it right when he wrote, "I can resist anything but temptation." We may succeed in resisting temptation, but it is better if we are led away from the evil one, the tempter. If we fail the test, the tempter may then become our leader, and we may fall prey to evil. It may prove very hard to restore our alignment with God's will, love, and forgiveness. Whether we have fallen into some private addiction or committed some social trespass, many of us know how hard it is to get back into alignment and service with God.

Jesus knows what it is to be led into temptation. Both Matthew 4 and Luke 4 describe Jesus being led by the Spirit into the wilderness to fast and be tempted by the devil. But it is good to recall that temptation also connotes trying, testing. One may fail the test, be drawn out of one's true calling and purpose. Or through the testing, one may rise to new clarity and resolve. Satan is, after all, part of God's creation, even if the most troubling. The tempter serves the Creator if we come through the testing stronger. As the power of evil, Satan only has what power we give over. Looking around, we can see a lot of power given to Satan.

Jesus comes through his temptation clearer, stronger, and ready to begin his ministry. Let us follow him through that ordeal and see what it can teach us for facing our own ordeals. Luke tells us that after he has been baptized by John and is praying, Jesus hears a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased" (3:22). These words echo Psalm 2:7, an enthronement psalm for the anointing of a king. The Messianic meaning is clear. But what kind of Messiah will Jesus be? That is exactly where the tempter takes hold in the wilderness. In the first and third temptations, the tempter begins by saying, "If you are the Son of God . . . ." This is the conditional logic we noted in relation to the leper's healing. The temptation here is for Jesus to prove himself. It is opposite to the logic of the gospel.

Briefly, the temptations pose three scenarios of Messianic glory, economic, religious, and political: i.e., turning stones into bread, a miraculous landing from the pinnacle of the temple for all to see, and rule over the nations of the world. But all these are phantasms of magical thinking, heroic wish-fulfillment. Of course, one might imagine doing

great good with such super-powers. They're not temptations if one is not tempted! Note that Jesus doesn't just scorn them as ludicrous. Instead, he keeps low and lets them pass over like clouds. In this moment of weakness (remember, he's also fasting), he resorts to Scripture. In each case, he quotes from Deuteronomy in order to resist the temptation. Deuteronomy is a powerful restatement of the laws of Moses (encoded earlier in Leviticus). Modern scholarship believes Deuteronomy to be the product of Levite priests/teachers from the northern kingdom of Israel, after it fell to the Assyrians (722 BCE) – after the temptations of power had corrupted its kings, the wealthy, and the temple priesthood, according to prophets such as Amos.

So Jesus draws upon that deep source of wisdom in his moment of weakness. And as he answers the third temptation, Jesus dispatches the tempter – "Away with you, Satan!" (Matt. 4:10). Luke 4:13 states it differently: "When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time." That foreshadowing points from this beginning of Jesus' ministry to the mid-point, and to the end (where we will proceed next). But first, Luke adds, "Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee" where his ministry will begin. So he is led by the Spirit into the weakness of temptation, but he emerges from temptation in the *power* of the Spirit. The time of fasting and temptation has clarified for Jesus what kind of Messiah he is and how he must proceed. The power of the Spirit will work through him, not in super-heroic but in more subtly human ways. Thus, he has located the paradoxical space between Messiah and Human One, where his good news will unfold for all humanity.

Satan indeed returns at the mid-point of Jesus' ministry, in the passage we noted in the introduction to this essay. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all include Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah. But only Mark has Peter rebuking Jesus for changing the subject and prophesying the suffering and death that await the Human One. And only Mark includes Jesus' pained response, "Get behind me, Satan!" Mark thus emphasizes how dreadful this prospect is for Jesus himself, and how his friendship with Simon Peter and the others makes the prospect only more painful. This is a moment of weakness where the tempter makes another pass at Jesus.

But the final and most "opportune time" comes in the night of Jesus' arrest. After the Passover Seder of food and drink, Peter and the other disciples contentedly fall asleep. Meanwhile, Jesus sweats blood in desperate prayer, sensing the impending moment of his arrest. "Deeply grieved, even to death," Jesus throws himself on the ground,

praying, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want" (Mark 14:36).

The tempter is not overtly mentioned here, but this is temptation as dire as humans know. And this Jesus is not the super-human, heroic Messiah marching resolutely to the cross, as imagined by some Christians. "Remove this cup from me" is an absolute, desperate, human plea. The "yet" that follows is an abyss. With that one word, Jesus passes through the most profound personal eclipse. He passes over from one side of his paradoxical identity and mission to the other. He knows that everything the Father/Spirit has led him to say and do has not only revealed good news in all directions, especially to the poor and outcast; and it has *also scandalized* in all directions, especially the religious and political authorities. And the last few days of teaching on the temple grounds have been the most provocative of all. So now, as Passover begins, Jesus passes over into the largest meaning of his identity and purpose as Messiah. It is not that either Jesus or the Father "want" him to suffer a terrible death. ("Will" sounds better to me than the NRSV's "want," but either one sounds terrible.) But all the steps along the way to this point have been a convergence of both their wills. The conclusion is finally undeniable.

Jesus finds the disciples asleep. He chides Simon Peter, then adds to all of them, "Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" 14:38). In this awful moment, Jesus himself acutely knows the weakness of the flesh, the abject fear of death. In the first section of the following essay, we explore the disciples' failures in their time of trial, which jolts them from sleep into panic.

May God preserve all of us from the fear, panic, and temptation Jesus and the disciples face that night. But each of us comes to know the sometimes painful paradox of Jesus in our own circumstances. When we know ourselves to be like Jesus, God's beloved daughters and sons, we learn how to speak and act in healing ways, from that source of love within us. Or again like Jesus, we may be led to "speak truth to power" in prophetic ways. In either case, we speak and act out of our unique identity and gifts, our oneness with the One. Yet our very human appearance, our commonness, and our incomplete wisdom may cause others to reject what we offer, even reject us. We may be tempted to give up, to doubt our spiritual gifts and leadings, or reject those who reject us.

Thus, we may fall prey to temptation in either direction: we may either become smug and self-important in God's love and our giftedness, or become discouraged or ashamed of ourselves when others don't recognize or accept what we have to offer. To be like Jesus is to live at the center of his paradox and not veer to either side. That would turn the paradox into a contradiction, an either/or between our unique belovedness and our utter commonness.

Like the disciples of Jesus, our friends and our communities can help us along, but even they won't always understand. We may have to risk losing them in order to follow the leadings of God's love where it takes us. But again, like Jesus at the outset of his ministry, it is important to become clear *what kind* of beloved children of God we are, to discern our unique identity, gifts, and purpose. That discernment is ongoing in our walk with Jesus. There are times when each of us needs to withdraw, like Jesus in the deserted places, to regain clarity of purpose and the strength to continue.

The Letter to the Hebrews witnesses,

> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need [4:15-16].

It's not important to me to believe that Jesus never sinned, never made a mistake. One aspect of our humanity and a major source of temptation and error is incomplete knowledge. We don't always see all the factors that should affect our decisions, or could determine their consequences. If Jesus has been tempted in every respect as we are, then he has shared that weakness with us. But whatever mistakes he may have made, I do believe he was able to remain on, or regain, his unique course and mission (see the "Tired and Testy" section in the following essay). And he is able to guide each of us beyond our missteps and sins, to find or regain our unique purposes in living.

4.

Like Jesus

Living into the Paradox

Part II

Rejected, Betrayed, Denied, Scattered

Incomprehension by one's friends and community is frustrating, disappointing. But betrayal, denial, and scattering are devastating. The mental and emotional anguish cuts deeper than any physical violence or legal actions against us. It may leave us permanently wounded, beaten down, shamed for who we are. This is where the Spirit and example of Jesus are crucial – literally. Learning from Jesus and his cross, we may learn how to meet our own crosses and rise above. This means

> looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, that you may not grow weary or lose heart [Heb. 12:2-3].

Let us look at four kinds of devastation in light of the life of Jesus. The first is rejection, by those who didn't really know him anyway. We will then explore the betrayal, denial, and scattering from Jesus by his friends.

Rejection

We have already noted how Jesus turns Peter's affirmation that he is Messiah into a prophecy of the Human One: "he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:30-31). Jesus speaks here specifically of his own unique future. But as Human One, he is also the model and seed-crystal of a new humanity, a life and death in common with all.

Jesus will be rejected by the entire establishment – the ruling council of elders, chief priests, and scribes – whose authority is seated within and mystified by the magnificent temple at Jerusalem. He will be tried, rejected, and condemned there. But through the ensuing horror, his crucified and risen body will replace their temple. And as Human One, not just his body but all human bodies become the common temple of God, to be treated with reverence and devotion.

But this deep transfiguration of the human condition is tragic fully as much as triumphant. Indeed, Jesus weeps for Jerusalem and its temple: "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42). The very magnificence of the temple and the power it invested in its authorities blinded their eyes, both to their common humanity with Jesus, and to the messianic purpose of his coming to them.

But these authorities were also invested with a sense of responsibility in their role as mediators between their people and the Roman occupation. With so many people in Jerusalem for Passover and the excitement and tensions growing around Jesus day by day, they had a reasonable concern that riots could break out and that the Romans would come down hard. That logic is stated succinctly by the high priest Caiaphas, according to the Gospel of John (11:50): "It is better that man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." Over the centuries, how many have been murdered, lynched, scapegoated by those in power or privilege out of a sense of responsibility to protect their people? How many innocents have been bombed for the sake of national security?

So that tragedy extends throughout human history, as those in authority, power, or privilege reject and marginalize others. Indeed, all of us, in blindness to our common humanity, objectify and distance ourselves from one another according to race, gender, region, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on. Today there are important legal and legislative struggles to right these wrongs. But for those who can see it, these social identifications – both positive and negative – are transfigured as we identify with Jesus in both his rejection and his rising above. As he rose, we rise. Rising above centuries of racial oppression and stigmatization, African American spiritual asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" He is here as we were there.

Betrayal

The Greek verb in the New Testament for "betray" is *paradidomi*, literally "hand over," "give over." We will never know the true motives of Judas in handing Jesus over to the authorities. In the gospels, he is rewarded by the chief priests with thirty pieces of silver. But is that his motive or simply what they make of it? Has Judas been an informer for them all along? Or does he lose faith in Jesus at some point and agree with the authorities that he is too dangerous? Or is Judas motivated by the popular nationalistic hope in a Messiah? In that case, does

he think that a private meeting with Jesus will convince the council of elders, priests, and scribes that this is their man? What does his kiss that evening in the garden of Gethsemane mean?

These ambiguities around Judas create space for us to recognize how we may betray Jesus the Messiah in our own lives, or betray ourselves in common with Jesus the Human One. How do we "hand over," "sell out" Christ in us and ourselves in Christ (to use Paul's alternating language of "Christ in you" and "in Christ")?

Betrayal is handing over integrity to authority. The gospels show us Jesus as a man of great integrity. But more than that, we see him integrating all kinds of people together: Jews and gentiles, women and men, the righteous and sinners, insiders and outcasts. By contrast, the chief priests and scribes administered an elaborate regimen of *separations* between clean and unclean, holy and profane. Over centuries of occupations by foreign empires, this regimen had become obsessive, an attempt to maintain a national-ethnic-religious integrity against wave after wave of foreign oppression and corruption.

Jesus says his purpose is not to abolish their law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). But his approach is encapsulated in his comment on Sabbath observance: "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). Yes, some kind of Sabbath rest, reflection, and prayer is vitally important if humans are to keep integrating their experience and reorienting their purpose in life. But Sabbath is to be kept amid changing conditions, not under elaborate, fixed regulations. And to say "the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" implies a Copernican revolution in consciousness, especially when we realize that Jesus speaks not solely of himself but of the motley, common humanity converging around him.

We ourselves find integrity through various forms of Sabbath rest, reflection, and prayer. As we integrate our short-term and long-term experience, we recalibrate how we shall live accordingly. Another word for this integration is "conscience" or "consciousness," literally "knowing together," integrating what we know into some whole, some coherence, an integral shape.

But again, paradoxically, Jesus the Messiah is present in the midst of our common humanity. Jesus takes our human capacity for integration to another level, as we allow him to be "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." He is both our historical example and our inner guide – and not only as individuals. He integrates us together as we exemplify and guide one another with words and lives that resonate with his.

All that being said, it is *frighteningly easy* to betray that integrity to authority. Authority is often projected visually. We already noted the visual splendor of the Jerusalem temple and the vested the authority of its ruling council. And still today, vestments project the authority of clergy, uniforms project the authority of the police and the military, an Armani suit projects the authority of a government or business leader, or a white lab coat projects the authority of a scientist or medical professional. Cathedrals, business towers, and hospital complexes are the impressive architectural complements to these human vestments. These forms of authority may be wielded by individuals with true authority and good will. But their true authority does not consist in vestments and architecture, which may mislead both them and the rest of us.

By contrast, the gospels tell us nothing to suggest that Jesus projects authority visually. Apparently, he is an ordinary-looking Galilean. But he "spoke with authority, not as the scribes." His authority is heard, not seen. By extension, the authority of Jesus speaks to us across history in myriad, mysterious ways as we listen to the gospels, and as that listening awakens us to his intimations in our consciences/consciousness. Thus, as the Jesus of history awakens the mystery of Christ in us, our integrity grows.

Still, we will be tempted in countless ways to hand over our hard-won integrity to the authority of clergy, police, government, doctors, and so on. We are easily awed and intimidated by authority. But an envious rebellion against authority is not the point. In a chaotic, violent, and unjust world these authorities have their place. It takes the courage of faith to *put* them in their place as far as we can, to preserve the integrity of Christ within and among us. That's all Jesus did and all we need to do.

Denial

As Judas models the ambiguities by which we may betray the integrity we find in Jesus to overweening powers of human authority, Peter models the vehemence with which we may deny him outright. We noted earlier Peter's volatility. It comes out acutely in both directions in the story we have examined earlier in Mark 8:27-33. First, Peter has the clarity and courage to blurt out what the other disciples are probably thinking, that Jesus is the Messiah. But then, when Jesus shifts terms to Human One and prophesies what he will suffer, Peter takes him aside and rebukes him. Peter strongly denies the truth that Jesus

has suddenly sprung upon him. "But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter," because Jesus knows they are prone to the same misapprehension, even if they lack the courage to blurt it out as Peter has done. So it is to them as well as to Peter Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan!" Of course, they are not the Tempter as such. But the confusion of his closest friends adds to the very human dread Jesus feels toward his future. It tempts him acutely in that moment.

And suddenly, Jesus calls to a whole crowd, along with his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." What Jesus has said about himself as Human One extends indeterminately to as many who will listen and follow. Thus, the very painful paradox: the very self that wants to follow Jesus must be *denied* in the process of following Jesus.

That paradox becomes an active contradiction in Simon Peter the night of Jesus' arrest. Because he hasn't really taken in what Jesus said earlier, Peter is taken off-guard when Jesus is suddenly arrested. In all four gospels, during the first hours after the arrest, Peter denies any acquaintance with Jesus. Unprepared for this moment, Peter denies Jesus in order to save himself. The cock's crow just after his third denial symbolizes Peter's "dawning" realization of what he has done.

The Gospel of John (21:15-19) also includes a touching and instructive story of Peter's restoration as Jesus' friend. It is also Peter's preparation to become a central figure in the future movement, a potential Jesus had seen in him all along. Mirroring Peter's three denials, the risen Jesus asks him three times if he loves him. Painfully, Peter protests that he does. But now his love must be directed outward and forward: "Follow me" as you "Feed my sheep." The call shifts the very structure of one's being.

Today, it is not skeptics and scoffers who deny Jesus. They merely doubt. They don't really know whom they doubt. Peter's denial is found among those who vaunt Jesus most ardently. Today, white Christian nationalists blatantly typify Peter's denial. They blend Jesus with a two-fisted hero like John Wayne, merge Christian faith with nationalist militarism, and even urge the United States and the modern state of Israel to enact some kind of Armageddon, so that Jesus the Messiah/Christ can return in glory like some Marvel super-hero. A one-sided devotion to Jesus as Christ easily leads to callous disregard for the Human One and our common humanity, "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40) who embody him in hidden ways. This is contradiction, a denial of the paradox that is Jesus. Liberal humanists who oppose white Christian nationalists often simply opt for the other side of the

contradiction. A humanistic concern for "the least of these" easily becomes paternalistic, victim-minded, and locked into political binaries.

Scattering

We should not lose sight of the other disciples, as they scatter at the arrest of Jesus. They aren't even there with Peter to deny Jesus outside the council chambers during the trial. They flee into hiding, because they too are unprepared for the horror Jesus had earlier prophesied. Of course, paradoxically, their very human failure will preserve their lives and allow them to serve as eye-witnesses, even courageous apostles of the good news of Jesus. Some, like Peter, will even be martyred.

But staying with that moment of scattering, we may receive insight into the ways we scatter, how our faith becomes diffuse in our modern world. Five centuries ago, the Protestant Reformation saved living Christian faith from the human, institutional failings that had slowly overtaken the Church over its first 1500 years. But as Protestant Reformations and Catholic Counter-Reformations proliferated, protracted wars and stalemated doctrinal controversies began to undercut Christian credibility altogether. The liberal Enlightenment offered a "sweet reasonableness" that finally ended the wars and rendered the doctrines moot. Faith became sectarian in a gradually secularizing society. Continuing schisms created new communities of faith, but more broadly scattered the faith. Today, in a rapidly secularizing society, not only does a smaller percentage of people adhere to faith, but faith generally defines a smaller scope of life among those who still believe.

Like the scattering disciples of Jesus, our diffusion and cowardice may save us in a secular, market-driven culture to live and thrive for another day. But to what purpose? To live and thrive for another day after that? Perhaps the aftermath of that terrible night for the disciples offers a figure for us to contemplate.

Over the next days, the disciples encounter the risen Jesus. The disciples ask Jesus, "Is this the time when you will restore the kingdom of Israel?" Amazingly (at least in hindsight), they still hold to the nationalistic hope they had attached to Jesus as Messiah. Jesus answers, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:6-8). In the ensuing chapters of Acts, the Spirit of Jesus indeed empowers the frightened disciples to become bold apostles of a spreading movement, across

many languages, cultures, and peoples. The paradox here is that the Spirit of Jesus *re-focuses* their lives and purpose, even as it *re-scatters* them in many new directions. To receive the Spirit of Jesus is to live into that paradox.

This story is figural for us two millennia later. It suggests that we should renounce hope in a restoration of the Church and the culture of Christendom we have known. Instead, we can expect and wait for something profoundly new – yet related to past history – to unfold. It will refocus our lives and purposes, while also scattering us toward new ends. The key is to "wait for the promise" (1:4). Waiting is a deep spiritual exercise, complementary to Jesus' imperative to "watch" (heard earlier in the "Observing" section). We don't give up on the promise, but we know that we *don't know* when/how/where the promise will be fulfilled. And the promise will be fulfilled not once and for all, but episodically, amid changing circumstances.

In the process of waiting, the focus subtly shifts from waiting *for* to waiting *upon*, serving. Expectation becomes participation in a new, unfolding reality, as one receives intimations of the new life to be enacted whenever/however/wherever it comes. That is the process the Book of Acts narrates. The letters of Paul offer us ground-level glimpses into it. My research into the early Quaker movement as it emerged in England in the 1650s, out of many different kinds of failed Christian expectation, finds a similar process. Early Friends indeed called their quiet worship "waiting upon the Lord," which released enormous spiritual power for witness and resistance. This is the waiting Isaiah testified "shall renew their strength" (Isa. 40:31). The Quaker movement produced a very different kind of church for the early modern period, eventually named the Religious Society of Friends (see Gwyn, *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience*, 2000). Today, in our postmodern times, a renewed practice of waiting and watching will produce some new gathering/scattering dynamic.

Laughing and Weeping

Laughing and weeping seem contradictory. They are contrary motions of the heart – in most cases. But sometimes people weep until they laugh, or laugh until they weep. Put-down humor, and sexist or ethnic jokes just scorn someone else. But at its best, humor plays with the ironies and paradoxes of our shared human experience. Good humor

is not laughing at another; it is laughing with one another in our common humanity.

A paradox is two truths in ironic relation to one another. The two truths remain hidden to one another. Seeing one truth, we are often surprised by the other. The punchline of a joke works by the element of surprise, like a magician who gets the audience to focus on the wrong hand. From another angle, the great British comedian, Spike Milligan reflected that comedy begins with tragedy. For example, "gallows humor" often plays on paradoxes in the direst facts of life. Such humor is often not the "ha-ha" type, but may simply elicit a wry grin or a good-natured shrug. My mother occasionally quipped, "You can get used to anything but hanging."

Jesus on the cross evokes the most painful ironies of human existence and reveals the deepest paradox in God's suffering love for us. It is the final and fullest paradox in the gospel. The gospels portray the friends and disciples of Jesus, along with others in basic human sympathy, weeping and wailing at the foot of his cross. Meanwhile, others laugh and jeer at his agony and humiliation (see Matt. 27:39-44).

We probably miss the irony and humor in some of Jesus' sayings as they are recorded from his brief years of ministry. Humor often plays with the nuances of social context and interactive moments. So we're bound to miss many nuances from a time two millennia ago, in a faraway place. But we also miss the humor because we are apt to miss the basic paradox of the gospel. We tend to picture Jesus religiously as the Messiah, the Christ, a divine being, or in humanistic terms as a teacher of wisdom. But when we behold Jesus as both Messiah and Human One, his paradoxes generate endlessly. And we begin to discover them in our own lives too, as this essay attempts to show.

A story in Matthew's gospel (17:24-27) may serve as a hint to Jesus' sly but good-natured humor. When Jesus and the disciples return to Capernaum, Simon Peter's home-town, the local temple-tax collectors ask Peter if his teacher pays the temple tax (two drachmas per male person). Caught in the moment, Peter answers, "Yes, he does." When Peter gets home, Jesus asks him, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?" Note that Jesus frames the temple tax as a secular "toll or tribute," not as a matter of religious devotion. Peter answers that kings take it from others, not their families. "Then the children are free. However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up; and when you open

its mouth, you will find a [four-drachma] coin; take that and give it to them for you and me."

Come on, it's a joke! Matthew doesn't proceed to tell us how Peter indeed went fishing, found the coin, and paid the tax. Matthew just leaves us to get the joke, or else "bite on the hook" of magical thinking. But Jesus gives us a hint, when he says "the children are free." The children of God have direct relationship with the divine; they do not need the expensive mystifications of temple religion and its priesthood to connect them with God and with one another. Taken together with Jesus' more overt criticisms of the temple, this story is a fish-story.

In Luke's gospel (7:24-35), Jesus reflects on the different ways the multitudes view John the Baptist and himself. Regarding their view of John, Jesus applies a bit of sarcasm: "What did you go into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?" or "Someone dressed in fine robes?" "Look at" implies that many went out to the wilderness of the Jordan River just to gawk at this strange man living almost like an animal, dressed in skins, eating locusts and honey. But some of them discovered a prophet, "and more than a prophet." And those who were also baptized by John "praised God."

But Luke adds that those who had refused John's baptism "rejected God's purpose for themselves." Thus, in rejecting John, they missed the truth about both God and themselves. In particular, Luke mentions the Pharisees and scribes, the most frequent critics of Jesus and his ministry. Jesus then reflects,

> To what then will I compare the people of this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another,
>
> > We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
> > We wailed, and you did not weep.
>
> For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, "He has a demon;" the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children.

The verse form of the children's calling to one another suggests some kind of playground song or chant. Jesus' ensuing comment is something like "damned if you do; damned if you don't." It also suggests that Jesus knows how to "party," but with a purpose: to invite even despised "tax collectors and sinners" to find God's purposes for themselves.

Jesus caps off his remarks: "wisdom is vindicated by all her children." *Sophia* (wisdom) is the divine mother who loves and desires good for all her children, "as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings" (Luke 13:34). Her wisdom is not reckoned by only a few of them, even the wisest and most righteous. Paradoxically, both John's extreme asceticism and call to repentance *and* Jesus' offer of universal amnesty and invitation are different modes of one truth. Together, repentance and forgiveness, self-denial and joyful acceptance vindicate all of Sophia's children, as they find and follow God's purposes for themselves.

You may have noticed that the reflections in this essay have drawn very little upon the Gospel of John. John's perspective is more strongly oriented to the divine identity of Jesus as the Messiah/Christ/Son of God. Though the fourth gospel occasionally uses "Son of Man," John's Jesus is omniscient, untouched by temptation, virtually without suffering. The fourth gospel teaches sublime truth, but it avoids the deep paradoxes between Human One and Messiah we find in the first three gospels. I'm glad we have all four gospels, each with its own perspective on Jesus.

Nevertheless, we do find in the Gospel of John a story of Jesus weeping, when he raises his friend Lazarus from the dead (John 11). Lazarus and his two sisters Mary and Martha live in Bethany, just outside Jerusalem. The three are apparently close friends of Jesus. The sisters send word from Bethany that Lazarus is seriously ill. But Jesus chooses not to go to him. He tells the disciples that the illness will not end in death, rather in God's glory. He continues to itinerate with them until he clairvoyantly knows that Lazarus is dead. Now he is ready to go to him. When he arrives, Mary, Martha, and others present are grieving deeply. Both sisters remark that if Jesus had been there sooner, their brother would not have died. Surely, they must wonder why Jesus tarried in coming, but their accusation is indirect.

Still, as he confronts their grief and the mourning of their friends, even this larger-than-life Jesus "was greatly disturbed and deeply moved . . . Jesus began to weep." He shares in their humanity. But he goes on to raise Lazarus from the dead in a rather demonstrational manner, "for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you [the Father] sent me."

Soon after, when Jesus senses the hour of his arrest and death looming, he says to his disciples, "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – 'Father save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name" (12:27-28). We get nothing of the desperate, blood-sweating Jesus portrayed in the

first three gospels. But John gives us the perspective of the resurrection. From that angle even the cross itself is the glorification of the Son of God, not the terrible death of the Human One.

When we learn to live in the paradox Jesus reveals, we begin to find and follow God's purposes for ourselves. We better understand the unique call that makes each of us unique ones in relation to the One, with service to offer to other ones. At the same time, we better understand the follies, temptations, suffering, confusion, weeping and laughing that attend our shared human condition. Sometimes, humor can both affirm our common humanity and raise it to another level that glimpses our share in God's loving purposes. We may even laugh at both our suffering and our joys. At other times, we can only weep with one another and pray for God's strength and guidance.

A bit of contemporary Jewish humor gets at something of the paradox we are exploring here. A wise and beloved rabbi stands before the congregation, bows down, and prays, "O Lord of heaven and earth, before you I am as nothing!" Moved by this, the cantor also bows and prays, "O Lord of heaven and earth, before you I am as nothing!" Moved by both of them, Mr. Schwartz comes forward from the congregation, bows and prays, "O Lord of heaven and earth, before you I am as nothing!" The cantor whispers to the rabbi, "Look who thinks he's nothing!"

Tired and Testy

Occasional weariness, impatience, and testiness are part of our human condition. We get over-extended and may be "short" with others. I'm glad the gospels include a story that portrays that side of Jesus. Mark (7:24-30; also see Matt. 15:21-28) tells of Jesus and the disciples escaping the Galilean crowds to the gentile region of Tyre and Sidon on the coast. Jesus doesn't want anyone to know he is there, but he cannot escape notice even there. A local woman comes into the house where he is staying, bows down at his feet, and implores him to cast a demon from her daughter. Jesus wearily answers (perhaps snaps), "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Matthew's version adds, "I was sent only to the

lost sheep of Israel." Undaunted by this slap, the mother replies, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

Moved by her persistence, Jesus responds, "For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter." She returns home to find her daughter freed. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus responds, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." This healing story, like a number of others in the gospels, indicates that the healing power doesn't reside in Jesus alone but in a momentary situation between him and a person whose faith, hope, and desperation compel her or him toward Jesus. They recognize something in him that draws them out, and Jesus recognizes something in them that draws him out in return. Here, a weary Jesus is energized by the woman's faith and invites her to step into a new reality. Both Jesus in his weariness and the woman in her desperation are taken beyond themselves. And in larger terms, this story hints that the gospel will take both Jews and gentiles beyond their given identities to a new place in common. Perhaps the healing of the woman's daughter also takes place in the space *between* the two of them, when the mother gets home (maybe each thought the other was possessed!).

In our own times of weariness and testiness, we may sometimes be energized by the approach of another person showing good faith toward us. We may find ourselves able to summon the good will to respond helpfully. But better yet, when that person touches upon our unique giftedness, something more than an act of will may occur. We may experience the paradox of a divine calling/vocation/gift emerging from within a tired human body and mind, to do something beyond ourselves. The "beyond" is partly what the other person or situation brings, and partly what passes through us in that moment.

Called out/in Common

Thus far, we have reflected on gospel stories about Jesus in order to locate his paradox in ourselves as individual women and men. But the paradox extends beyond individual experience, to our communities of faith. The letters from the apostle Paul to the early communities are more complex and challenging to read than the gospels. This is partly because the paradox of Jesus becomes more complex and challenging amid the variety of personalities and backgrounds that converge in community. But the paradox comes to maturity in the common life – even while contradictory viewpoints and outright conflicts multiply.

Paul uses the Greek term *ekklesia* (literally, "called out") for these newly forming communities. The term was probably already in use among early Christians. In their Greco-Roman environment, a variety of ethnic and trade groups were called *ekklesia*. The word could connote simply a gathering of some kind. But it gains a more acute meaning in early Christian usage, because these are not people of a certain ethnic group or trade, but persons from various ethnic, religious, gendered identities, and socio-economic locations, called together into a common life, what Paul calls *koinonia*, "the common." Their common language is the *koine* Greek, not the classical Greek of philosophers, but the more vernacular language of the marketplace, the street, and the common people, mixing and matching in the vast Roman Empire of their day.

In his letters to these communities, Paul addresses a wide variety of questions, conflicts, and simmering schisms. But he frames it all within their shared experience of *calling*. Concerned over divisions forming in the Corinthian community, Paul reminds them, "Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise . . ." (1 Cor. 1:26-27). The divine calling is unique to each, and it comes with gifts (*charismata*) of spiritual power, to the service of others:

> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good [1 Cor. 12:4-7].

The unique, divine calling in each one thus opens out to the common life, the human condition in all its foolishness, weakness, and commonness. We thus encounter again the paradox of Jesus, where Paul keeps drawing his readers, out of their various confusions and conflicts. Each one needs to stay grounded in his or her call and the gifts of service that come with it. Only then can all of them together be the *ekklesia*, called out from their sheer, given variety into a common life. It is a paradox between the *givenness* of human *conditions* and the *destiny* of divine *calling*.

Paul summarizes this good news in relation to Jewish versus gentile ethnic identities, and enslaved versus free socio-economic circumstances.

> Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. Let each of

> you remain in the condition in which you were called. Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever [*or*, avail yourself of the opportunity]. For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a free person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters. In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God [1 Cor. 7:19-24].

"You were bought with a price" refers to the original Christian understanding of atonement through the death and raising of Jesus. We are *ransomed* from captivating spiritual powers and "human masters." We are *reconciled* with the One and with one another through the paradox of Jesus the Christ/the Human One.

The letters of Paul are at least as challenging for us today as they already were to his intended readers. But if we peel away the centuries of tradition and patriarchal authority that made him the "godfather" of Christian orthodoxy, we discover a man wrestling mightily with the deep paradox of Jesus, as he translated it from Palestine to the multicultural Greco-Roman world of his day. That paradox is deeper than creeds can convey and it resists the ideological closures of any age.

The *ekklesia* today desperately needs refreshment in the paradox of Jesus. We are in a period of great reckonings with the legacies of sexism, racism, colonialism, heterosexism, classism, and more, always more. These important, epochal reckonings have begun at large in secular society and are necessarily ideological. Ideologies tell important truths, but they are shaped around particular social identities and experiences, and thus remain partial, often exclusive of other truths. Today, these truths are being absorbed and reckoned with by the *ekklesia*. Some *ekklesia* react against them and re-entrench in old social norms, while some others swallow them whole, without sufficient theological reflection.

Of course, Christian theology itself can easily become an ideology of Christian identity and experience. But as theology keeps rediscovering and returning to the paradox of Jesus, it may help the *ekklesia* remain faithful to its center in Christ/the Human One. As noted in the introduction to Part I, we cannot remain in perfect stasis at the center of a paradox. Events and personalities keep pushing us to one side and then the other. But stasis is not life anyway. Dynamic life, even if exhausting and despairing at times, is the life of paradox.

If as individuals we remain grounded in our calling, and if as communities we keep hearing ourselves "called out" by the One, we will find ways to reckon with the ongoing injustices of sexism, racism, and more, while abiding faithfully together across our differences. Even as we become tired and testy with one another, we may also recognize our mutual faithfulness to the paradox of Jesus. Like the woman of Tyre, we may come home to find our house strangely in order.

Coming Home

Our "home" in the largest sense is the earth itself, its species, ecosystems, the entire biosphere. And this house is increasingly out of order. Human impacts upon the earth are leading to mass extinctions of plant and animal species, the degrading of whole ecosystems, and accelerating chaos in the biosphere, climate change most obviously.

Of course, we find nothing about our present ecological crisis in the teachings of Jesus, as he moved and taught in the hills of Galilee two millennia in the past. But in the "Observing" section above, we noted his attention to housekeeping, planting and harvesting, hens and chicks, wild animals and plants, weather patterns, and so on. Jesus observed not only with insight but with empathy. His insights and empathy were sharpened by his own homelessness. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). As he itinerated with his disciples, they relied upon the hospitality of householders. But they continued to live on the edge. As the Human One, Jesus related to the vulnerability and suffering of all fellow creatures, such as the fall of a sparrow. And as Messiah, he drew all he saw into one realm of redemption.

Perhaps Jesus had more to say about the natural world and our place within it. But his growing conflict with the religious and political establishment, culminating with his execution by the Romans in Jerusalem, focused the gospel writers in that direction.

To be "human" is literally "of the earth" (the same is true of "Adam" in Hebrew). Thus, our species is really at one with all the species of plants and animals that rise from and return to the earth. The only difference is that, we are created in the "image" of God, whose Word creates all things (Gen. 1:27). That is, through human language, we have a degree of consciousness and self-awareness that takes in and integrates our lives on earth more fully. And that consciousness is also conscience, a moral sense of how we should live with one another and

upon the earth. But clearly, we are not living up to that image, either in our social order or in our lives among the species and systems of the earth.

As Walter Wink[43] wryly comments, *we* are the missing link between the primates and the humans. As the Human One, Jesus not only embodies our common humanity. He also models and calls us to a fully realized humanity, in common with all creation, a true humanity "of the earth." This points both *back* to the creation story in Genesis 1, where humans are created to be stewards of creation in God's image, and *forward* to our convergent destiny. "Ecology" and "economics" both have their root in the Greek *oikos*, household. The Greek *oikomene* means "steward," keeper of the household. We are created and called to be good stewards; we are here to keep house.

At the same time, as Messiah, Jesus is like the lost coin that the woman sweeps and searches her house to find (Luke 15:8-10). As with her joy in finding the coin, our deepest joy will be to recover the Messiah as we set our house in order. This largest, cosmic understanding of the Messiah/Christ is articulated most fully in an early Christian hymn, as quoted in a letter written to the movement around Colossae:

> For he is the image of the invisible God,
> First-born before all created things,
> For in him were all things created
> in heaven and on earth,
> visible and invisible,
> Thrones or Princes,
> Powers or Authorities.
>
> All have been created through him and for him.
> And he is before all things,
> and all things subsist in him.
> And he is the head of the body, the church,
> he the beginning, the first-born from the dead,
> that in all things he might have the primacy,
> for in him by God's own will the fullness of God dwelt,
> and through him God reconciled all things,
> made peace on his account through the blood of his cross,
> peace through him on earth as it is in heaven [Col. 1:15-20].

According to this vision, finding Christ is also finding ourselves in the midst of a universe framed in Christ. Notice all the prepositions: – in,

through, on, before, from, for, of – relating us both spatially and temporally with everything in Christ. This is more than a static pantheism (everything is God) or panentheism (God is in everything) – it articulates a dynamic destiny, a calling.

Thus, to live into the paradox of Jesus is both to embrace the fullest meaning of "human" *and* to follow the call of Messiah/Christ into service/stewardship wherever we find ourselves in that fullest scope of "humanity."

The Human One Must Suffer and Be Rejected, Killed, and Rise Again

As we move toward the end of these reflections on the paradox of Jesus, let's return once more to that key moment we encountered in Mark 8, where Jesus articulates what it means to be Messiah/Christ:

> Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly [vss. 29-32].

Here Jesus speaks specifically of himself as both Messiah and Son of Man/Human One, and what lies ahead for him. But it is more acutely his vulnerability as the Human One, an ordinary human being, that makes him liable to the coming calamity. We tend to think of his "great suffering" as his crucifixion. But he mentions this before his rejection and death. The Greek *pasein* translated "suffering" here derives from the verb *pascho*, to suffer, to endure. It becomes *passus* in Latin, meaning both suffering and patience. It is also the root of our word for Jesus' death, the Passion.

Because Jesus mentions suffering first, we are invited to understand that all his years of ministry are a crescendo of suffering, patience, finally ending in rejection and death. It begins with his fasting and fending off the Messianic temptations in the wilderness. It continues with patiently mentoring his disciples in spite of their incomprehension, culminating with their betrayal, denial, and scattering at his arrest. It ends with his rejection and death.

I do not assume that Jesus sees all this in his future as clearly as Mark narrates it here. But as noted earlier, Jesus would surely recognize

the disastrous tendency of his trajectory, if not the details. And as suggested in the introduction to Part I, elaborations of his words by the gospel writers are not fictions as such. Rather, their elaborations are inspired by their participation in Christ/the Human One during the decades following Jesus' death. They are living his life and speaking his words in new circumstances.

Jesus also prophesies that he will rise again. This is where the Messiah/Human One will become truly contagious, a new collective reality in the world. This is why Jesus consistently speaks of the Human One in the third person singular, even when referring to himself. In so doing, he points us toward his reality among us here and now. As multiple and various as we are, we become the Human One as we converge in his paradox.

But along the way, we reenact his trajectory in our own circumstances. We suffer incomprehension, sometimes even hostility and rejection. This requires great patience, the divine Passion working through us. Even where we are recognized (like Peter recognizing Jesus as Messiah), perhaps praised, we will know that they haven't really grasped what we've been saying; they've misconstrued what we are really about. Or again like Jesus, in our weariness, someone like the woman of Tyre may expand our sense of what we are really about. Like Jesus, we have to live patiently, retaining a spirit of humility, the humility of a servant (see Phil. 2:5-11). Whether praised or condemned, liked or hated, accepted or rejected, we must abide patiently in the divine calling and service that truly transforms. The African American spiritual, grounded in centuries of oppression, rejection, and marginalization, affirms, "Nobody knows the troubles I've seen; nobody knows but Jesus."

These troubles may not get us killed like Jesus, but they exert a psychic and physical wear and tear that can shorten a life – or lengthen it. As Nietzsche remarks, "What doesn't kill us makes us stronger." Whether that strength plays out in a longer life, or a more resilient life, our share in the sufferings of Jesus (2 Cor. 1:5-7) may also inspire and strengthen others. It is an authority like that of Jesus, not like that of the scribes (Mark 1:22, 27). "Scribes" are those in any age who rule through expertise, who hold their positions within the various pyramids of human knowledge and power. Some handle that authority better than some others. But as quoted earlier, "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). The authority of the Human One is an authority from below.

Jesus makes this clear as he follows his prophecy of the Human One with its implications for both the disciples and the larger crowd around them:

> If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? [Mark 8:34-36].

Here Jesus states the paradox most succinctly – and painfully. The paradox of gaining and losing one's life is the crux of the entire life of Jesus, the whole thrust of the gospel, and the character of life among the followers of Jesus. "Life" here is *psyche*. As we noted in the section on mentoring and friendship, to lay down one's life (*psyche*) for others is to devote one's "soul" – heart, mind, strength – in sustained attention to others. The word can also connote physical life. But if Jesus had meant only that, Mark might have used *bios*, which is more specifically physical life or a lifetime. Thus, where one's attention is focused for the sake of Jesus and his good news, personal resources of time and possessions, spiritual gifts and service will follow.

Here the Christ/Human One rises again within and among us. And just as his paradox turns us inside-out, the gospel in our words and actions turns the world upside-down for others (Acts 17:6). Just as the gospel ends life as we had known and followed it, so it ends the world as we had known and followed it. This is the true meaning of a key word in Paul's letters, *apokalypsis*, "revelation."

Epilogue

But the world as we know it, with its myriad forms of violence and oppression, is depressingly impervious to overturning. Again, the African American experience can prove instructive to all. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) in the depths of the Jim Crow regime of the South (and race relations in the United States generally). In his final chapter, he reflects on the spirituals, which he calls "sorrow songs." He explores how these songs, many of which come from the centuries of enslavement, are immersed in the melancholy of oppression. But they offer more than vague, compensatory dreams of heaven.

They contain an affective power to transform depression into resilience and hope. One example is "My Lord, What a Morning," which Du Bois renders "My Lord, What a Mourning." Of course, in oral tradition and group singing, either sense is possible.

In its standard form,[44] the song goes as follows:

Refrain
My Lord what a mornin' (3x)
When the stars begin to fall

You'll hear the trumpet sound
To wake the nations underground
Lookin' to my God's right hand
When the stars begin to fall

Refrain

You'll hear the sinner mourn
To wake the nations underground
Lookin' to my God's right hand
When the stars begin to fall

Refrain

You'll hear the Christians shout
To wake the nations underground
Lookin' to my God's right hand
When the stars begin to fall

Refrain

"When the stars begin to fall" echoes the prophecy of Jesus at the end of his life (quoted earlier in the "Observing" section):

> But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" [quoting Dan. 7:13] and with power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven [Mark 13:24-27].

"That suffering" refers to his preceding prophecy that "nation will rise against nation" in "wars and rumors of wars" (13:7-8). But note that in the sorrow song, the trumpet's sounding, the sinner's mourning, and the Christians' shouting "wake the nations underground." Perhaps these are the submerged, oppressed peoples of the earth, "lookin' to my God's right hand" of resurrection/liberation.

Du Bois also treats "Lay This Body Down." Its lyric forms the epigraph to his chapter on sorrow songs:

> I walk through the churchyard
> To lay this body down;
> I know moon-rise, I know star-rise;
> I walk in the moonlight, I walk in the starlight;
> I'll lie in the grave and stretch out my arms,
> I'll go to judgment in the evening of the day,
> And my soul and thy soul shall meet that day,
> When I lay this body down.

Whose soul is "thy soul?" Is it Jesus? A lost loved-one? Since group-singing would be the typical setting of the song, the singers might be addressing one-another with "thy soul." It is not only individual death but collective death and resurrection implied in "that day." Jonathan Flatley, in his treatment of Du Bois and the sorrow songs,[45] reflects, "Mourning, the songs suggest, in both the experience they solicit and the narratives they tell, is always also a resurrection, an awakening."

The songs elicit a "second sight," the ability to keep two temporal registers in view at the same time. Flatley notes that these "sorrow songs" found new, celebratory life as they were sung during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s. The songs embody

> the paradigm of the antidepressive melancholic aesthetic, inasmuch as they link together a present oppression with those who have come before, demonstrating the history that is "condensed" within one's own emotional life, allowing one to feel as if one's own personal life were "a muscle strong enough to contract the whole of historical time."[46]

Both Du Bois and Flatley analyze the sorrow songs within more modern, secular frames of reference. But the deep Christian spirituality of the songs themselves is grounded in the paradox of the gospel we have been following through its various permutations.

"A muscle strong enough to contract the whole of historical time" is a phrase Flatley draws from Walter Benjamin, a paradoxical figure in his own right. A secular German Jew and an unorthodox Marxist, Benjamin drew the powerful dialectics of his Jewish heritage together with

Marxist historical materialism. In 1940, he fled the Nazis and obtained a visa to emigrate to the United States, but became stranded in Fascist Spain. Despairing of his situation, he committed suicide there, aged 48. But in his final few days, he drafted a brief summary of his life's work, "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Thesis II makes this powerful statement:

> The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Then, like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that.[47]

Like Du Bois and Flatley, Benjamin abstracts overt theology from its Jewish and Christian grounding. But he retains something of its power, merged here with the perspective of Marxist historical materialism in the ongoing struggle for liberation.

Flatley adds the perspective of another Jewish-Marxist philosopher:

> The messianic, Derrida notes, is the thinking of the event to come, an event about which by definition we cannot be certain. It involves "waiting without horizon of the wait" for an "alterity that cannot be anticipated." And paradoxically, the future moment of rupture will only come by virtue of an attentiveness to the past.[48]

All of us can learn from African American, Jewish, and Marxist perspectives on history as a long struggle for redemption/liberation. As the Messiah/Human One, Jesus embraces and seeks to reconcile all our collective destinies.

In the "Observing" section above, I briefly suggested that the paradoxes in the life of Jesus have extended around the world and through human history, owing to the pivotal moment in world history when he lived, died, and rose again. The life of Jesus not only generates paradoxes that can illuminate and guide human lives in all times and places. It also constitutes the axis of human history itself. I say this not in the triumphal sense in which Christendom has sometimes celebrated Christ as the figurehead of empires, and tied Christian missionary ambitions to the machinations of imperial conquest.

Rather, the life of Jesus is "the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are

the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you" (Col. 1:26-27). These words were written in the first decades of the movement, before it was widely noticed, and centuries before it was harnessed by the Roman Empire. Yet the writer sees this mystery having been implicit throughout ages past. It has also been hidden in the ages that have followed, known only through revelation, only as the paradox of Jesus enlightens and enlivens individuals and communities of faith. It is the revelation of "Christ in you." Standing still at this axis, in this mystery, this paradox, one glimpses the turn of the ages: the Human One extends to all humanity in every time and place, and the Messiah calls and draws all into the One.

The life of Jesus draws all history into one mystery. But again paradoxically, "the glory of this mystery" is also the agony of the cross, the recurrent rejection, persecution, corruption, and cooptation of this glory wherever it appears before the powers of every age. God's purposes (ends) continue to work toward peace, justice, and a human society in balance with all creation. Painfully, that outcome (end) lies beyond our reckoning. Still, we can know that the end/ends of history have been revealed in the middle of history, the life of Jesus millennia past. And by the mystery of "Christ in you," that event keeps occurring in all times and places, wherever we experience the paradox that is Jesus.

Søren Kierkegaard was another paradoxical figure. His brief but intense writing career proceeded along two tracks: Christian devotional author and philosopher. While his philosophical books were more widely received and praised, his deep Christian faith informed all his writing. Let us close with his thoughts on paradox, from his *Philosophical Fragments*:

> But one must not think ill of the paradox, for the paradox is the passion of thought, and the thinker without the paradox is like the lover without passion: a mediocre fellow. But the ultimate potentiation of every passion is always to will its own downfall, and so it is also the ultimate passion of the understanding to will the collision, although in one way or another the collision must become its downfall. This, then, is the ultimate paradox of thought: to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think.[49]

What Kierkegaard describes of paradox and passion in *thought* is incarnated in the *life* and Passion of Jesus. And he continues to call, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

5.

Decay in Common

(1/24)

In history as in nature, decomposition is the laboratory of life.
Karl Marx

Almost all of the essays in this continuing journal have started as non-sequiturs that occurred soon after waking, after emerging from the "common unconscious" of the dream world (see the final section of the second essay on anarchism in this volume). These intimations grew into larger autobiographical, biblical, and socio-political reflections that became essays, episodes in a larger process it has seemed most logical to name a journal.

One morning in mid-December 2023 (last month), "decay" loomed up to me and I began to follow that intimation. It readily seemed evident that the word came to me in relation to my seventy-fifth birthday approaching at the end of the month. I do feel a slow decay of vitality, befitting my age. And I live in a senior housing apartment building, where we're all in some state and rate of decay.

But the word also named the general tenor of many trends and events of 2023. It was another hottest global year on record, replete with extreme and catastrophic weather events around the world, driving home the reality of climate change as never before. In addition, the Russian invasion of Ukraine ground on for a second year. In the last three months of 2023, Israel's war on Hamas in Gaza took on genocidal dimensions for the Palestinians trapped there. Refugees from wars, climate crises, and collapsing economies roam in the millions, desperately surging across national borders. Democracies around the world are increasingly degraded by populist demagogues or overturned by outright autocrats. The US election year of 2024 portends acute polarization. Meanwhile, wherever all this is taking us, artificial intelligence and other runaway technologies will get us there faster and more efficiently. Decay, decline, entropy, chaos – all these words might be used to describe our darkening prospect.

Aging, war, social chaos, moral corruption – perhaps these are all outworkings of entropy, the second law of thermodynamics.

This essay will consider "decay" from a number of angles, in both its frightening and its hopeful potentials. It will reflect first on the decay of New York City in the 1970s as I experienced it, and the powerful cultural, economic, and political changes that grew from it. That will lead on to a Christological reflection on the body of Jesus in the tomb,

and its larger historical outcomes. The essay will then reflect on soil science and what it may suggest about decay and regeneration in the common of nature and culture. It will go on to consider how the apostle Paul engaged the second law of thermodynamics within his apocalyptic outlook. The essay will conclude with a brief reflection on truth, as the integrity that resists entropy and fosters life. These reflections connect in various ways with developments in my life during the 1970s, my twenties.

New York City in the 1970s

I enrolled at Union Theological Seminary in New York directly after graduating from Indiana University in 1971 with a degree in zoology. The war in Vietnam was in full force. I had applied for and received conscientious objector status, in case I was drafted for military service. But I wanted to get on with the calling to ministry I had received in 1968, and seminary education had draft deferment status.

When I arrived in New York that fall, construction of the World Trade Center in the Wall Street district was still being finished. The vision for the WTC had been pushed forward by the Rockefeller family starting in the 1940s, inspired in part by the Bretton Woods agreements (1944) among the Allies, which mapped out a US-led world order and global economy for the post-war era. Within New York City itself, the twin towers were politically controversial. The project was viewed as a dubious real estate venture and an over-concentration of business and transportation in an already crowded part of Manhattan. Indeed, it took more than a decade after completion of the towers to fill them with renters. But the global economic assumptions behind the WTC became ever more evident over the succeeding decades.

But New York was falling on hard times by the early seventies. Many businesses had relocated to surrounding counties and states, taking their employees with them. In addition, "white flight" accelerated in response to the growing African American, Afro-Caribbean, and Puerto Rican population of New York. And because the city's manufacturing industry was shrinking, the traditional first rung to immigrant advancement had deteriorated. Welfare and other city service costs grew rapidly while New York struggled with a shrinking tax base. Given its discontinuous geography and other factors, New York could not pursue the "Uni-Gov" solution, a unified government of city and county, that my hometown of Indianapolis had implemented in the

1960s. And New York's composite of five boroughs was already unmanageably large. In 1975, the city's credit rating was downgraded. The federal government refused to intervene and New York teetered on bankruptcy. In October, *The New York Daily News* notoriously ran the headline, "[President] Ford to City: Drop Dead."

The exodus of industry from New York was in some respects a microcosm of a larger exodus of industry and capital from the United States abroad, as multinational corporate investment accelerated by 1970. The "rust belt" began to show in the American Midwest as factories closed and production moved overseas. (See "Richmond, Indiana: 1968 and 2018" in *Into the Common* for perspectives on those changes in my current hometown.) The gold standard for the US dollar (the basis of the international monetary system established at Bretton Woods) was abandoned in 1971. It was replaced by a free-floating international currency exchange system, which quickly jolted international finance into the stratosphere, far from local concerns. The foundations for a truly global capitalist system and an international capitalist class were established. Inevitably, the system maintained one major base in New York, thanks to Wall Street and the World Trade Center.

Of course, even in the troubled mid-seventies, New York continued to host large sectors of wealth, power, privilege, and influence, while economic, social, and moral decay advanced over much of the city. The blackout in July 1977 exposed the frailty of the city's infrastructure and social fiber. I had just returned to New York from two years in Indiana by then. I lived for the coming year at Union Seminary, located in lower Harlem. The evening the blackout began I went out on Broadway and could see and hear the crowds and looting starting uptown. A friend of mine lived next to a precinct house in the East Village. When the lights went out, she heard the uproar next-door, as police scrambled to embark on a night of unknown challenges and dangers.

Having grown up in the white suburbs of Indianapolis, my perceptions of the edgy shabbiness of New York in the 1970s inevitably had their own framing. But my unease was more than compensated by a fascination with the edginess and decay. The city seemed to embody the fading promise of post-war America in the aftermath of the apocalyptic events of 1968, particularly the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy. That was also the year of my mysterious and surprising experience of calling to ministry. Both personally and socially, I had a strong sense in the 1970s of a world ending, and some-

thing new stirring. Global capitalism was not something I readily imagined. But while working part-time in the American Friends Service Committee's New York office, I heard Richard Barnet speak on his new book, *Global Reach: The Power of the Multinational Corporations* (1974, with Ronald Muller) which provided my first inklings of the tectonic shifts afoot.

I graduated from Union in the spring of 1975 and returned to Indiana to begin my first venture in pastoral ministry, with the Noblesville Friends Meeting, just north of Indianapolis. I expected to settle into my calling there. But I also subscribed to *The Village Voice* in order to keep up with musical and other cultural and political currents in New York. I was already an avid listener to both classical and popular music, especially rock music, the lingua franca of (white) youth culture in that day.

In particular, I began tuning into what soon came to be known as punk rock. Shortly before leaving New York in May 1975, I had seen Patti Smith perform briefly at a free concert in Central Park, celebrating the end of the war. She was a revelation, and her first album, *Horses*, came out later that year. I may have been the only one in Noblesville who registered the tremors. The Ramones also debuted that year, with a minimalist, urban-industrial sound and lyrics that were brilliantly moronic. Something new was emerging, and I felt a deep disturbance within myself that resonated with it. My first pastorate was going very well, but I felt increasingly unsettled. I began to sense that my calling to ministry would not play out in anything so simple and straightforward.

Similar musical currents were moving in Cleveland, as well as London and Manchester in England.[50] Along with New York, all these cities were spiraling down economically. By 1977, different punk and new wave bands were generating a variety of affects, some very arty. It appeared that rock music was reaching a new level of self-awareness, even if that spoke only to a small sector of the youth audience. The London-based Sex Pistols seethed with a kind of negationist rage and social anarchy that scorned both the decaying liberal consensus and the fading hippie utopian dreams of that cultural moment. But all I saw around me in Indiana was a sea of leisure suits, polyester, and pandering disco. I was torn out of Indiana and driven back to New York the summer of 1977. I began doctoral studies, commuting out to Drew University in New Jersey. And I returned to part-time work for the AFSC. But I also began soaking up the new atmospherics in clubs like CBGB and Max's Kansas City.

A new fecundity was generating within New York's decay. Will Hermes' book *Love Goes to Buildings on Fire: Five Years in New York that Changed Music Forever*[51] follows the rise of punk-new wave, disco, new salsa, rap/hip-hop, loft jazz, and minimalism – all of which generated around different parts of decaying New York, 1973-77. Similar movements stirred among the other arts. There was some kind of resonance among these aesthetic developments. They seemed to generate somewhere between socio-economic and cultural currents at large and a creative disturbance within – at least for some people, especially those living on the edge in a city on the edge.

In recent decades, affect theory has attempted to describe that resonance, somewhere between the subjective and the objective, self and world. And some leading affect theorists point to the punk scene of that moment as a key event in their personal experience that inspired their later work. Lawrence Grossberg, in *Dancing in Spite of Myself* (1997), offers one testimony.

All these new aesthetic movements grew in part from an economic situation that enabled individuals to live on little money and converge with others in small communities of artistic experimentation. As the experiments began to thrive, they drew in more artists, scene-makers, and people with money. Denizens of Wall Street were quick to recognize the potential for redevelopment of SoHo (a former center of small, loft industries), the East Village, the Lower Eastside, and eventually even burned-out Alphabet City. By the late seventies, the dynamics of decay were giving way to renewed capital investment. Gentrification of old neighborhoods downtown advanced, and by the mid-eighties, "Fortress New York" flexed its muscles, along with the new, finance-driven phase of global capitalist formation, with the WTC as its icon and Arnold Schwarzenegger as its avatar.

My apartment-mates and I were driven out of Manhattan to rough-and-tumble Flatbush Brooklyn in 1978. Our voluntary poverty as graduate students stood out amid the real poverty of our black and Hispanic neighbors. But we were generally tolerated as amiable aliens within their world. In October 1982, I defended my doctoral dissertation. A week later, I left Brooklyn for Berkeley, California with Dorian, my new wife, a modern dancer from the East Village. We were sorry to leave New York, but we knew we couldn't survive the city for the long term in our financial circumstances, which were calibrated to a city that was rapidly disappearing.

Of course, California's Bay Area was entering the full flush of its techno-capitalist boom. Aesthetically, it had jumped from hippie utopianism to yuppie materialism in nearly a single bound, without experiencing the hard times that had been so creative in New York. I was again a Friends pastor. Dorian and I were able to eke our way into Berkeley's housing market with a little cottage in West Berkeley. But renewed restlessness soon overwhelmed me there, as it had in Noblesville. (I have said more about subsequent changes in "An Apocalyptic Life" and "I Am in Common" in *Into the Common*.)

By that time, my original calling into ministry had expanded to include a writing ministry among Friends. With my dissertation becoming my first book in 1986, I was now writing Quaker historical theology, which drew some modest attention among Friends. It was motivated in part by my sense of decay in the Religious Society of Friends. This was not merely a matter of dwindling membership among both liberal Friends meetings and evangelical Friends churches. Rather, it appeared to me that both streams had acculturated to the polarizing dynamics in American society, which by the 1990s came to be known as "culture wars." Generally speaking, the unique prophetic clarity and radical social witness of early Friends had slowly drained out of the Religious Society of Friends over the succeeding three centuries.

In a trilogy of research-based books on early Friends between 1986 and 2000, I attempted to inspire Friends with the spiritual depth and prophetic clarity of our founding generation. I pursued that work mainly at Pendle Hill and Woodbrooke, Quaker study centers near Philadelphia and Birmingham England, respectively. Both centers had been created and sustained through the wealth of Quaker industrialists over the early to mid-twentieth century. By the time I reached them, both were decaying from their earlier heydays, but were generous in providing a place for a friendly if quixotic Quaker scholar. Today, both centers continue to subsist on a much reduced basis.

Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of my efforts, they were increasingly ignored as Friends (along with everyone else) were lifting off into the noosphere of cyberspace, with its global simultaneous Now. Nothing decays in that gnostic realm; it just proliferates into a vast, bewildering maze, perpetually teasing and beckoning a little further. I was glad to retire in 2018 and follow my own personal decay on a shoestring, living in subsidized housing with only Social Security and

Medicare to sustain me in scrappy little Richmond, Indiana. My interest in early Quaker history had always been more about new beginnings amid chaotic circumstances, rather than a reified "Quakerism" or the Religious Society of Friends as such. In retirement I shifted into research and writing on the common, groping toward some new beginning amid the decay and chaos.

Looking back, I recognize more clearly how, like Abraham and Sarah in Genesis, my calling led me into a life of wandering amid empire. In some respects, Abraham is the common man of the ancient Near East of the second millennium, when populations migrated or were pushed by the shifting fortunes of Babylonian, Assyrian, and Egyptian empires. But Abraham is also an acutely singular figure, called to a destiny beyond the fortunes of empires, beyond the horizon of his own life. In my own case, I have much in common with the growing "precariat" of the global capitalist empire in this new, third millennium of the Common Era. Multitudes now migrate and shift among opportunities of full-time or part-time employment, "gig work," or struggle with unemployment. But I opted for precariousness, in faith with my call, which keeps calling me out of Babylon, even if there's nowhere outside Babylon on this planet, and no fulfillment within the horizon of my own life.

Empire and Decay

In their landmark book, *Empire* (2000), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri analyze the dynamics of today's global capitalist empire, with some reference to the similar dynamics of the ancient Roman Empire. In both cases, empire is driven by the constant imperative to expand. But the rambling expanse of its reach produces a permanent state of crisis and corruption within itself. "It is a commonplace of the classical literature on Empire, from Polybius to Montesquieu and Gibbon, that Empire is from its inception decadent and corrupt" (p. 201). The decadence manifests itself morally in many ways, but these are most revealingly seen to be symptoms of systemic decay.

In the case of today's finance-driven capitalist expansion, the sheer corrupting power of money dissolves communities, compromises governments, weakens moral fiber, and turns social relations into equations of equivalence and exchange. Hardt and Negri emphasize that empire has no solid, ontological grounding. Along with the international currency exchange system, everything floats, like Babylon/Rome

seated upon waters in John's vision (Revelation 17:1). Today's empire expands through the *abstraction* of all relations into monetary values, along with its continued *extraction* of natural and labor resources from the lands and their peoples. But it can maintain this expansion and manage its endemic crises and corruptions only through state sponsorships, the coercive power of police forces, and international military alliances to quash larger disruptions in the economic order. And these coercive powers are themselves corrupted and corrupting.

So the decay I witnessed in New York in the 1970s was only a transitional moment toward the new empire taking shape over the following decades, marked politically by the neo-conservative regimes of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and the Reagan-Bush era in the US. Consequently, the negationist rage of the punk moment of 1975-77 became reflexive "hardcore" thereafter, while the swagger of rap and hip-hop remained a minority report in a racist society, often a romance of "gangsta" culture. These simply became new forms of entertainment, recreation, and posture among alienated youth.

Hardt and Negri followed *Empire* with *Multitude* (2004), positing the growing international precariat as the antipode to empire. Multitude is no longer to be framed nationally as "the people" according to liberal political philosophy, or "the masses" or "proletariat" according to classical Marxist ideology which was geared to the industrial capitalism of the past. They suggest that this precarious multitude, surging across borders, experimenting with new forms of cooperative labor, are the driving force of this new era and a disruptive force within empire, which constantly strives to re-contain multitude politically and exploit its pervasive creativity economically. Hardt and Negri completed a trilogy with *Commonwealth* (2009), positing the common as the realm within a global empire that has no "outside." The essays in these journals have been informed by their work, especially *Commonwealth*.

Hard and Negri's work set me on my present odyssey of essay-journaling, in part because I recognized the affinities between their theories and the theologies of ancient tribal Israel, the early Christian movement, and the early Quaker movement. Hardt and Negri themselves point to the early Christian movement as the most trenchant counter to the Roman Empire. At the end of the first chapter of *Empire*, they add,

> Allow us, in conclusion, one final analogy that refers to the birth of Christianity in Europe and its expansion during the decline of the Roman Empire. This process and enormous potential of subjectivity was constructed and consolidated in

> terms of the prophecy of a world to come, a chiliastic [I would say apocalyptic] project. This new subjectivity offered an absolute alternative to the spirit of imperial right – a new ontological basis. From this perspective, Empire was accepted as the "maturity of the times" and the unity of the entire known civilization, but it was challenged in its totality by a completely different ethical and ontological axis. In the same way today . . . [we are] finding once again an ontological basis of antagonism – within Empire, but also against and beyond Empire, at the same level of totality [p. 21].

It goes far beyond the scope of this essay to give a more adequate account of their work, which draws widely upon streams of western philosophy as well as current political and linguistic theory. It's "heavy lifting," but rewards patient, slow reading.

Jesus in the Tomb: A Christological Reflection on Decay

Much biblical scholarship and Christian theology has been devoted to the death of Jesus at the hands of the Romans as a political criminal. And much has been written about the reports of his resurrection from the dead and the rapid spread of his message and movement. But to my limited knowledge, little or no theological reflection has been devoted to the decay of his body in the tomb between those two events. During his life and ministry, Jesus of Nazareth was both a natural and a cultural body: that is, he lived and moved through both natural and cultural processes. At death, Jesus was reduced by the Romans to a natural body, immediately starting to decay.

As the New Testament gospels variously narrate, the friends of Jesus obtain his dead body from the cross and hurry to entomb it before the Sabbath begins at sundown. So the body is in the tomb for one full day, the Sabbath day of rest. At dawn the next day (the third day, counting the day of his death) a few of the women come to the tomb in order to treat the body with herbs, in accordance with Jewish burial rites. They find the tomb open and the body missing, then hear mysterious persons at the tomb tell them that he has risen from the dead. The Gospel of John narrates a direct encounter between the risen Jesus and Mary Magdalen at the tomb. Encounters with other disciples soon follow.

In his reflections upon the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul amply testifies to the "perishable" nature of the physical body and the imperishability of the spiritual body. The body is the site of ontological being and ethical practice. Hence, Jesus is raised as a spiritual body as his physical body decays – even disappears according to gospel accounts. This emphasis upon the body is key to the manner in which the Spirit of Jesus begins moving among physical bodies in widening circles around the Roman Empire. And their bodies, gathering collectively as the body of Christ, become a community of resistance and counter-practices within the Roman Empire.

So the natural-cultural body of Jesus, executed and reduced to a decaying natural body by the Romans, is raised to a cultural-natural body among those who experience him as a living reality among their bodies. (I don't wish to deny the *spiritual* body here, but as a social phenomenon within the Roman Empire, we can call it cultural-natural.) This body grows and spreads, while the Roman Empire will increasingly decay and corrupt.

In the Gospel of John, the moment Jesus discerns that his hour has come, he tells his disciples,

> Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also [12:24-26].

I want to suggest that Jesus employs more than a metaphor from nature here. His death, degeneration, and new generativity are figural in both directions for us today: the realms of both nature and culture.

Soil Science and the Environmental Crisis Today

Reports and data of environmental crisis and decline accelerate today. To amplify the brief comments at the start of this essay, the climate and the seas become ever more heated and unstable. Desertification continues to advance southward from northern Africa, and appears to be starting in the American Southwest. Deforestation also contributes to desertification and the degrading of soils. Increasingly capitalized agribusiness accelerates the pillage of the earth's soil treasury. The

oceans are increasingly polluted, with "dead zones" growing at depth in some places. Discarded plastic threatens sea life. Trawlers rake the sea-beds. Smog reaches critical levels in countries like India and China. The remarkable stability of the biosphere is under growing stress. Nations struggle toward long-term ecological sustainability, but trip over short-term economic dilemmas. Meanwhile, the pervasive empire of finance-driven capitalism continues its relentless processes of abstraction and extraction, a growth imperative in lockstep with population.

In *Life in the Soil: A Guide for Naturalists and Gardeners*,[52] James Nardi explains the formation of soil from the rock, wind, and water of the primal earth. The physical erosion of rock by water, wind, and sun is supplemented by chemical processes, as water combines with carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to form carbonic acid, which slowly eats away at rock. Early life forms begin a vast process, as they live and die on rocks and in water. Their organic decay mixes with particles of rock. Soil begins to develop, which in turn facilitates the evolution of more plant and animal forms. Nardi describes a wide variety of microbes, plants, and animals that live in the soil, abet the processes of decay of dead life forms, mix and aerate the soil, and of course contribute to the process of decay and regeneration with their own bodies. It is estimated that every inch of soil is the product of between 500 and 1000 years of these processes. Thus, the speed with which more than seven billion humans are now degrading the soil and building over good farmland is truly alarming. The food that sustains us and the forests that breathe in carbon dioxide and breathe out fresh oxygen require this great treasury underfoot.

Soil is perhaps the ultimate common of life on earth. It is the substrate of our existence, our ontology, our ground of being. Soil is where all life arises and where all life returns (not counting the bizarre embalming and entombment of human corpses in some societies like my own). Soil teaches us that our embrace of the common life must countenance death and decay.

I have stated a number of times in these essay-journals that the common life today requires an equilibration of nature and culture, a covenantal relationship of human accountability with the planet, its balances and species. This of course is a huge abstraction. "Nature" and "culture" are vast realms of diverse forms. By "nature" I mean the whole universe of physical, chemical, and biological properties and processes. By "culture" I mean all the languages, concepts, practices, institutions, arts, sciences, technologies, economics, etc. that have developed among humans over the millennia. But as vast and diverse as

both realms are, the covenantal imperative to draw them into an evolving, symbiotic relationship is undeniable, given the lethal contradictions that have grown between nature and culture on this planet.

At the end of Deuteronomy, after laying out the provisions of God's covenant, Moses prophesies to Israel, "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity . . . Choose life so that you and your descendants may live" (30:15, 19). It must be admitted that as a species, we are not choosing life, either for our species or for the other species of the earth. Willingly or not, we are caught up in economic processes that reduce the earth to commodities and ourselves to consumers. The direction of our choices is leading to death and adversity, both cultural and natural.

I suggested above that Jesus' comparison of his approaching death to a seed falling to the earth is more than a simple metaphor from nature. It is figural in both directions – natural and cultural – for us today. *Metaphor*, literally "carry over," works in one direction, applying an image from one realm to another realm. A different figure of speech is *metonymy*, literally "change + name," where a part is used for the whole, or an aspect for the thing itself, such as "the White House said today." Perhaps what we are groping after here is more like *synechdoche*, literally "receiving together." Here the part may be used for the whole, or the whole for the part, such as "bread" for "food," or "the army" for "a soldier."

This may seem like an obtuse, linguistic tangent, when hard sciences and new economics are required. But we live in language, the basis of all culture, including the most empirical scientific research. And figures of speech are gestalts that can shape our thinking and our intentions. In the prescientific, figural language of Genesis 1, God speaks the cosmos into being, then creates humans in the midst of it all. We are made in God's "image." That is, we are uniquely figural of God in our gift of language. Language forms our thoughts, by which we *construe* the cosmos, the natural world around us, and *construct* our culture within it.

Hence, human culture is a part of the whole of nature. But at this point in our development, culture acts upon nature so strongly that the relationship is synechdochic: it works in both directions. Our task today is to find culture nested within nature and nature nested within culture. The van Eyck Ghent altarpiece, "The Adoration of the Lamb," portrays the peoples from the four corners of the earth converging at the Lamb in a park-like scene, like a town common, with buildings in the background (for more on this masterpiece, see an early essay in this series, "The Adoration of the Lamb: Figures of the Common," in *Into*

the Common.) The van Eycks developed their figuration based in part upon John's description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22.

Of course, such visual and linguistic figurations do not replace hard science or revised economics and technologies. But they add a much needed visionary dimension beyond the empirical bracketing that those disciplines maintain.

Wendell Berry offers a concrete example of a synechdochic interaction between nature and culture in "People, Land, and Community." He reflects that Amish farming has maintained a sense proportion by remaining within the limits of a horse-powered technology. Tractor farming can also be sustainable. But once it is introduced, "certain necessary restraints and practices . . . must now reside in the character and consciousness of the farmer," even though economic pressure to cast off restraint is much increased. Good farming outlasts the life of the farmer and is sustained in a community of people who depend on each other, who know the value of farming, and preserve memory through instruction, story, and song. "Wisdom accumulates in community like fertility in the soil. In both, death becomes potentiality."[53] Translating Berry's localist wisdom to our global dilemmas is a challenge. But perhaps this massive shift necessarily generates locally. It is already generating from innumerable places around the world, "a movement of movements," as Paul Hawken describes it in *Blessed Unrest* (2007).

An urban example comes from my New York experience. After my housemates and I moved out to Brooklyn in in 1978, I got to know Prospect Park, only a couple blocks from where we lived in Flatbush. Given the economic shambles of New York in those days, the beautiful buildings, recreational areas, and gardens of the park were degraded by lack of maintenance, vandalism, and the city's omnipresent graffiti. And given the area's drug trade and crime rate, it was definitely not a place to roam at night. Still, I noted how trees, shrubs, and other plants and animals carried on growing, covering and holding the soil in their timeless covenant of life and decay.

Though I left in 1982, I have made trips back to Brooklyn to visit friends and check in on the city at least annually ever since. I have been encouraged to see how neighborhood action groups have undertaken sustained initiatives to improve trails, fence off some areas to protect the soil and species, and work with the city to restore and improve the park's architecture.

This is in part a function of gentrification, especially on the Park Slope side of the park, driven by the economic boon of finance-driven capitalism in New York as a global finance center. Similar, perhaps

better and more sustained renewal could happen in an anarchist society. Indeed, there are anarchist aspects to the kind of local activism that has renewed the park (note the second essay on anarchism in this volume). Murray Bookchin has explored anarchism and ecology most insightfully.[54]

By 1980, while still living in Brooklyn, I had deep misgivings about the neo-conservative political undertow in America, which grew in step with the new economic currents, culminating that year in the election of Ronald Reagan as President. But I also wondered if New York and the nation needed an astringent shift, given the moral decline I saw advancing around me in step with the drug trade and drug culture (though I was not anti-drug). As noted early in this essay, moral decadence is best viewed within the horizon of socio-economic decadence, even if individuals remain responsible for their choices. And while I was not anti-disco (the racist and homophobic undertones of that backlash were apparent enough), that scene did seem to pander to a pleasure principle merging rapidly with the death drive. The punk scene of the mid- to late seventies was no paragon of moral virtue or social renewal, but it did act out the contradictions of its cultural moment in a gritty, even spectral fashion. Sex Pistols vocalist Johnny Rotten often performed in bondage clothing, supplied by London's Sex fashion shop, run by Vivian Westwood and Malcolm MacLaren, the band's manager. But what appeared to be a gesture of nihilistic decadence may have implied something larger.

Bondage to Decay and Glorious Freedom

Our present-day perceptions and concerns can sometimes benefit from parallel perceptions from another thought-world. The apostle Paul wrote a letter to the movement around Rome in the late 50s CE, anticipating his travel to that city. As it turned out, he arrived there later as a prisoner and eventual martyr. But his advance letter is his most complete surviving theological statement, befitting an address to the community growing at the very heart of the empire. At the time of his writing, the movement already faced social antipathy from neighbors and episodic persecution from local officials around the empire.

But its relationship with the empire itself was not yet overtly conflictual. Thus, Paul's advice in Romans 13 to get along with civil authority seems rather pragmatic, even congenial, especially in contrast to the Book of Revelation, written in the 90s, where the Roman Empire and its Emperor are vividly portrayed as demonic.

For our present concern, the most salient moment in the letter comes in Romans 8:18-30, when Paul addresses the community in relation to the whole of God's creation. For Paul, this is not a matter of timeless cycles of life but an acute cosmic drama. He accounts present Christian suffering as nothing comparable to the coming glory, which the whole creation eagerly awaits. He portrays the present created order "in bondage to decay," groaning as a woman in labor to share in "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (8:21-22). Indeed, the creation is co-creating with God these children, who are both natural and spiritual/cultural actors.

Meanwhile, Christ's Spirit of freedom already causes the community to groan in solidarity with the rest of creation. As human creatures, they of course participate in creation's natural suffering, death, and decay. But that is supplemented culturally by their experience of social ostracism and growing persecution. It has been suggested that Paul borrows here upon Stoic philosophy's concept of chaos and decay in the natural world. If he is borrowing, he certainly reworks the concept into a very different theological and social framework. In any case, the second law of thermodynamics clearly looms in his ancient, prescientific thinking.

Evidently, early Christian worship in particular was punctuated by Spirit-led "sighs too deep for words" (8:26). Paul perhaps alludes here to an aspect of the *glossolalia* ("speaking in tongues") that he addresses more fully in 1 Corinthians. Nonverbal sighing and groaning connect the human creature with the rest of creation at a deep, existential level.

In 1974, I wrestled with this text as part of my Master's thesis at Union, on biblical understandings of creation/the natural world. This passage is like nothing nothing else in the Bible, or anywhere else I know. Reading it in the 1970s, it seemed to address the growing environmental crisis of my time, more than anything in Paul's day. But even then, on the modest scale of ancient empires and technologies, there was much suffering of creatures other than humans, and some degradation of the earth. The great irrigation systems of Mesopotamia had already produced large-scale salinization of the soil 1700 years earlier. Perhaps Paul's own hardships as an apostle (see 2 Cor. 11), his "share

in Christ's sufferings" (Phil. 3:10), sensitized him to the suffering of all humans and the wider creation.

The "bondage to decay" he attributes to the creation is more than natural processes of death and decay. It is the natural world's "subjection to futility" (8:20). I take "subjection to futility" to mean the vanity with which humans abuse the creatures and the degrade the integrity of the creation. (the Greek *mataioteti* translates as "futility," "vanity," "emptiness," "purposelessness.") This of course looms many times larger now, two millennia later. Subjection to human vanity is the reason why the creation "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (8:19). This is the new humanity which undertakes the covenantal reconciliation of nature and culture (not that Christians have done so well at this over the succeeding two thousand years).

We are dealing here with Paul's apocalyptic consciousness. The word translated "revelation" or "revealing" in the passage just cited is *apokalypsis*. Wherever we encounter "reveal" or "revelation" in Paul's letters, we need to be aware that he refers not to a narrowly subjective experience for personal edification, but one that participates in a fundamental shift of the ages and the entire cosmic drama of God's relationship to creation. Paul's apocalyptic consciousness is not idle speculation on the future, but a present experience of the risen Christ that is personally transforming and socially engaged. It is the future, present and active in the present. Ernst Käsemann, the pioneering interpreter of Paul's apocalyptic theology, writes that in Paul's consciousness, "anthropology is crystalized cosmology." There is no subject-object or self-world split, but a single drama of God's work to reconcile humans with humans, culture with nature, and all things into divine *shalom*.

Following Paul's vision here, I assume that death and decay will continue, even as the earth begins to share in "the freedom of the glory of the children of God." But decay is no longer in "bondage" but "freedom." This begins as we "humans" live into our name, "of the earth," as we embrace the cycles of death, decay, and regeneration that we share with the other species of the earth. The reconciliation of nature and culture begins with us.

This is a *calling* that locates our existence in a process that moves between the "first Adam" ("Adam" meaning "of the earth") and the "last Adam" (see 1 Cor. 15:45-49), between our genesis and our destiny. As Paul summarizes this destiny, "all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his pur-

pose" (8:28). Thus, in this passage, Paul places human calling and divine purposes within the largest, cosmic framing. This has been a guiding passage of Scripture in my life.

I had begun to learn about Paul's apocalyptic consciousness at Union (1971-75). It spoke powerfully to my experience of calling in the midst of the seismic events of 1968. And when I read George Fox's *Journal* for the first time in 1976, while a pastor in Noblesville, I quickly recognized a similar experiential and socially engaged apocalyptic theology. I returned to New York and began graduate studies the following year, in part to undertake a more thorough study of Fox and early Friends, to articulate their apocalyptic project, and explore how it might refocus Friends today. This was a renewal of my call in the circumstances of my life, at age 28.

Truth Decay and the Renewal of the Common Life

Yes, it's a terrible pun. I blame it on T-Bone Burnett and his album, "Truth Decay" (1980, I still have my copy). In June 1977, just before I moved back to New York, I attended an international Quaker gathering in Wichita, Kansas. I met a young Friend there advocating war tax resistance (WTR). His manner was gentle and inviting. But in my experience, the conversation was both a *conviction* of my passive participation in a death-dealing American military-industrial system, and a *call* to active resistance. WTR was a growing phenomenon, owing in part to the war in Vietnam, and in part to the "mutually assured destruction" of nuclear armaments. Nuclear arms had introduced a quantum leap in threats both to the human race and to life on earth generally. My conviction grew when I heard economist Seymour Melman give a lecture in New York in 1981 about America's permanent war economy, and the consequent neglect of the nation's infrastructure.

I lived with this conviction/call without a way forward until I returned to pastoral ministry in Berkeley in 1982 and saw a way to withhold the military portion of my federal income tax. In a letter accompanying our tax return, my wife and I explained to the IRS what we were doing, in adherence to the Quaker peace testimony. By then WTR was drawing more participation, spurred by the Reagan administration's renewal of the nuclear arms race against the Soviet Union. Later in the 1980s, I also participated briefly with the Friends Committee on War Tax Concerns (FCWTC), which produced a *Handbook on Military Taxes and Conscience* in 1988.[55] In one way or another since 1982, I was

able to practice war tax resistance for most of the years that I had taxable income.

If "truth" is based in the Middle English "troth," or faithfulness, then it has more to do with active participation than stated propositions. And action is more complex than ideas. "Truth" is a word early and traditional Friends used audaciously to describe their spiritual experience, their moral lives, and their collective practices of spiritual discernment. In the late 1990s, while analyzing how the early movement coalesced into that complex formulation of truth, I devised a heuristic (demonstrational) model, combining four standard philosophical *theories* of truth into an interactive *hermeneutic* of truth. (That work is included in the last chapters and conclusion to *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience*, 2000). Later, I utilized the same model to analyze how the FCWTC had implicitly manifested all four accounts of truth in their *Handbook*.[56]

In *The Anti-War: Militant Peacemaking in the Manner of Friends* (2016), I drew upon New Testament and early Quaker witness to adapt the same four-part model as a framework for life as peacemaking, covenantal shalom. Such a life amounts to the anti-war, the counter-movement to the violent and exploitative mechanisms of today's global capitalist empire.

Finally, "Peace on Earth: Covenant, Constitution, Technology, and Economics in the Common Life" (*Into the Common*) explores how the 16th- and 17th-century renewal of covenant theology among Protestant reformers was one key factor in the development of modern constitutional, scientific-technological, and economic theories and practices. I applied my truth model to these four quadrants of modern life, showing how they foster truth and generativity in one sequential direction, and foster decay and death in the opposite direction. I can't rehearse that complex thesis here at the end of this essay. But it is worth mentioning, as it frames the structural dynamics of death and life today within a cultural framework that is more familiar to most readers.

To end this wide-ranging essay, I will simply repeat the proposition Moses makes to the tribes of Israel at the threshold of the promised land: "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity . . . Choose life so that you and your descendants may live" (Deut. 30:15, 19).

6.

Melancholy for the Common

(2-3/24)

The common is what we miss. And we keep missing it as we keep looking past it, as we make ourselves into particular individual subjects in search of particular objects: people, things, experiences. But between us as individual subjects, and between various objects, the common abides, like the dark matter of the universe, holding us together. It awaits our attention and our participation. We are most likely to experience the common in *community*. Community is where space becomes place, where individuals become singular ones, in relationship with other ones.

And that relationship happens within the realm of the One. For many of us the One is God, according to some understanding. Or the One may be the universe, or ground of our being, according to some understanding. But in community with one-another in the One, the common is that realm between us. There is *atonement* – at-one-ment – in that realm, where we can repent/turn from our fixed individual interests, identities, and prejudices, where we can forgive/release one-another from our pasts and live radically into the present, finally open to a different future, even an Ending that is all in One.

But as we live in community, we grow in *communion*, not only with one another and in the One, but with the rest of the natural/created world. It is natural as it is in the One of being; it is created as it is the will of God. You can decide which One, or none. But as we expand that communion we begin to perceive, conceive, and receive the common as it subsists and persists between everyone/everything. The private sector owns and does business with vast stretches of the global common, creating goods and services from it to sell or rent. The public sector governs territorial spaces within the global common, calling it a civil society, regulating it for "the common good" in a human-centered sense that often maintains various class, racial, and gendered privileges.

Both the private and public sectors have good roles to play. But both are often rife with corruptions, over-reaching interests, and injustices. They are not evil in themselves. But as long as the common life of all people and all species is not perceived, or is actively repressed, they will be prone to patterns that harden into evil. And we live in a period where that hardening is advancing.

Again, the common is what we miss. It is the ground of all our grieving for what is lost, and all our pining for what is still unfound. It is the ground of our shared melancholy. And paradoxically, our common melancholy is our one, last, great hope. In the words of that most

melancholic singer of my generation, Neil Young, it "it's such a fine line that keeps me searching for a heart of gold" (1972). Emerging at the end of the 1960s, Young articulated the melancholy of my generation's fading hopes for the world and for ourselves. *After the Gold Rush* (1970) and his great guitar epics with Crazy Horse, *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* (1969) and *Zuma* (1975), mapped extensively the melancholy of that cultural moment. Both he and we pinned our hopes on various romantic, social, or political objects and objectives. But the ground of all those hopes was and is the common ground.

This essay explores our melancholy for the common in various historical and cultural settings and as I have known it in my own melancholic wandering.

Russian Melancholy

Sometime in early 1966, at age seventeen, I went on a date with my first love to see *Doctor Zhivago*. I had read a big write-up about it in *Time* magazine, and for reasons I don't recall, I was primed to see it as soon as possible. The film left a spell on me for several days, for reasons I didn't fully understand. There were so many aspects to it: a man caught between two great loves, with guilt, grief, and longing pervading that dilemma; his poetic gift, combined with a vocation in medicine and a love for the people and the natural world; and all the characters overswept by the violent currents of the Russian revolution and subsequent civil wars.

The film was based on Boris Pasternak's novel by the same title, a manuscript smuggled out of Soviet Russia and first published in Italy in 1957. The publication aroused the animus of the Soviet leadership, who viewed it as bourgeois anti-communism. The novel was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, but Pasternak refused the prize, perhaps fearing more trouble with the government – or perhaps because he was not as bourgeois as the West wanted to believe.

I read the novel soon after seeing the film for the first time. And over the years, I've re-watched the film now and then. The spell is not as strong as it was the first time, but I understand it more now. The film prefigured some major aspects of my life. I grieved for a long time when that first love failed. That loss accentuated a melancholy I had known since childhood. My calling to ministry came in 1968, soon after the breakup of that first love. That vocation has drawn me in empathy

toward all kinds of people, in an apolitical, even amoral feeling of commonality. And partly owing to the turbulent national and world events that surrounded my calling in 1968, I have had an abiding sense that my personal subjectivity has some kind of synchronicity with the larger currents around me. That sense first found articulation in an apocalyptic Christian spirituality, and motivates my current explorations of the common.

Doctor Zhivago manifests a powerful Russian cultural affect, *toska*. The word can be translated melancholy or longing, but as Vladimir Nabokov explains, "no single word in English renders all the shades of *toska*." Jonathan Flatley adds that *toska* at its most acute can be great spiritual anguish; at lower levels, sick pining, vague restlessness, yearning; at its lowest level, boredom, *ennui*.[57] We will return to Russian *toska* in a moment, but let us first explore this important personal and cultural affect under the more familiar name, melancholy.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle noted that he found the most extraordinary personalities in politics, literature, and the arts to be melancholic. Aristotle was searching for what motivates politics. Jonathan Flatley focuses on melancholy in order to understand the politics of twentieth-century modernity and modernism, a historical period and ideology that promised so much, yet delivered so many disasters and disappointments. As a cultural affect, melancholy is experienced personally, but circulates more widely in a culture. Thus, affect is neither subjective nor objective, but hovers between.

In the early nineteenth century, the Romantic philosophers employed the term *zeitgeist*, the "spirit of the times," to suggest this dynamic. Thus, Flatley summarizes, melancholy is an affect that mediates between the personal and the political. Walter Benjamin, in his essay, "Left-Wing Melancholy," warned that melancholy can be self-indulgent and nostalgic if it doesn't become splenetic (angry, energized) and connect to a political concern.[58] All these observations on melancholy ring true to my personal experience and my participation in the culture around me.

The Russian novelist Andrei Platonov wrote *Chevengur* in 1927-28, during the civil wars following the Russian revolution, and just before Stalin's horrific regime of forced collectivization and the *gulag*. The full novel remained unpublished until an English translation appeared in 1978; it finally appeared in Russian in 1988. *Chevengur* has received critical analyses from Jonathan Flatley in terms of melancholy, and Fredric Jameson in terms of utopian literature. Growing interest has led to a new English translation published at the beginning of this year.[59]

Jameson calls *Chevengur* a "great peasant Utopia."[60] It transposes the Russian revolution from its urban industrial origins to the Russian steppe, with the civil war and famine of the 1920s as historical backdrop. Flatley views it as an allegory of Russian *toska*, in which the characters embody different varieties of melancholy. They converge at the village of Chevengur, where they find "socialism" or "communism." Thus, as Jameson suggests, *Chevengur*'s Utopia is "regressive or archaic . . . associated with peasants rather than with the advanced industrial technology of so many of the now utterly old-fashioned futurist urban Utopias of the modern age."[61] Platonov narrates the story with both pathos and humor, both in a deadpan style, which can be understood either as modernist irony, or as attunement with peasant affects.

Flatley suggests that all the main characters in the novel are shaped by loss and longing. They interact in a dialectical manner according to what they lack. The different ways each relates to loss maps out the political potentials of melancholy.[62] The central character, Sasha Dvanov, is an orphan. His father has drowned himself in the lake to discover the realm of death, which he had seen in the eyes of dead fish. Sasha starts wandering, converging with others in search of that mysterious thing they lack, "socialism," not knowing what or where it might be. Jameson views this as the basic utopian drive or process: a recovery of other people, of something both forgotten and known since before birth. They arrive at the village of Chevengur, which has been renamed "communism," "a village named in memory of the future." "We've got the end of everything in our town." It's the end of "world history, that's what!"[63]

Another character, Zakhar Pavlovich, displaces his melancholy with an obsessive love for machines, taking pleasure in inventing odd, "needless" contraptions. The "warm fog" of that preoccupation is blown away when he encounters a lonely, starving boy. But his mechanical *elan* returns when he discovers Chevengur. There his inventions are appreciated, because "each has a profession, and that is their soul. Instead of trade, we've set up life."[64]

A Soviet bureaucrat from Moscow comes to investigate the village and finds "no executive committee in Chevengur, but there were many happy, *if useless* people."[65] They erect monuments to one another. One villager remarks, "we eat and make friends; there's your Soviet."[66] Jameson calls this "a Utopia of misfits and oddballs, in which the constraints for uniformization and conformity have been removed, and human beings grow wild like plants in a state of nature . . . whom our

society considers sick but who, in a world of true freedom, may make up the flora and fauna of 'human nature' itself."[67]

But there is a dark side to this Utopia, reflecting the violence of the actual Russian revolution. The villagers kill off the "oppressing element." The middle-class townspeople and kulaks are "ushered into posthumous life in an organized and healthy fashion."[68] But the village itself is eventually slaughtered by a band of marauding Cossacks, for no apparent reason. Jameson suggests that this outcome is "the reality principle that all genuine fantasy must awaken if it is to be daydreamed in the first place."[69]

Sasha Dvanov survives and returns home to drown himself in the same lake where his father died, in order to be reunited with him. Flatley summarizes that the novel is not about the failure of utopia or the impending violence of Stalin; rather it aims to stimulate the reader's own *toska* to go on searching. "We are thereby disabused from any compensatory pleasures we might have gained from *Chevengur* . . . Platonov propels us away from the world of books . . . Instead, it is to other people and to the practice of making friends that we must turn."[70]

Perhaps both Pasternak's and Platonov's novels are meditations on the failing promises of Soviet communism in Russia. But both novels keep the embers of melancholy alive amid the disaster, to rekindle our search for what communism had promised: the common life.

American Quaker Melancholy and Experimentation: Pendle Hill and Friends General Conference

While Andrei Platonov was finishing *Chevengur*, American Quakers were planning a utopian community of their own. Pendle Hill was launched near Philadelphia in 1930, as a Quaker center for adult religious and social study. Its Benedictine balance of physical work, study, and daily worship aimed to nurture community and to equip Friends and others to re-enter the wider world with renewed vision and sustained engagement for service and social action. It also provided Quaker spiritual grounding for the ongoing work of the American Friends Service Committee, which was also based in Philadelphia but engaged in projects around the world.

Over its subsequent ninety years, Pendle Hill has drawn many melancholic individuals, some in life transitions or dealing with personal

losses, others yearning for community or to discover some new channel of work for a better world. It has provided many with the renewal they sought, even as it sent them back into the world. But in that process, the Pendle Hill community often appears to be a collection of "happy, if useless people." I was one such individual who arrived in 1987 at a low ebb. I was powerfully affected by the community and renewed in my calling to ministry. In contrast to Platonov's communist village, perhaps Pendle Hill's utopia has survived so long because it refused to be the thing itself, a destination, but a portal through which people pass and return to the world with renewed utopian aims. Nevertheless, even Pendle Hill lost its most transformative element, the resident program, in 2014. The pervasive effects of techno-capitalism slowly eroded both the financial viability and the utopian appeal of the program. This has perhaps been a postmodern American correlate to marauding Cossacks, slaughtering for no apparent purpose. I briefly pondered some parallels between Pendle Hill and Chevengur in the conclusion to my history, *Personality and Place: The Life and Times of Pendle Hill* (2014).

The Friends General Conference is another modern American Quaker invention, born in 1900 out of the melancholy of Hicksite and Progressive Quaker yearnings for the world (and sorrow for their own dwindling numbers). The biennial Conferences were opportunities to transfigure that melancholy into the spleen of renewed hope and resolve. Friends gathered from their little counter-cultural meetings scattered in a modern American society with very different values and aspirations. The joy of mutual confirmation also offered the opportunity to hear presentations on the world's problems and their solutions. The combination was powerfully renewing, especially when meeting at a seaside resort like Cape May, New Jersey.

In *A Gathering of Spirits: The Friends General Conferences, 1896 – 1950* (2018), I looked at the first half-century of FGC from the perspective of affect theory. I found Flatley's affect theory of melancholy particularly useful in his analysis of the interplay of optimism and disappointment in modernity, and the role of melancholy in that interplay. I found the Conferences to be a powerful invention for the transformation of melancholy into spleen. The Conferences, which became annual in the 1960s and were renamed Gatherings in the 1970s, continue to this day. But attendance has declined as internet-mediated modes of gathering have become more pervasive and compelling, es-

pecially for younger generations of Friends. Friends General Conference is currently shifting its modes accordingly, with results that are uncertain so far.

In the cases of both Pendle Hill and the Friends General Conferences, the Quaker rubric of friendship, going back to the beginnings of the Quaker movement in the 1650s, appears to be a key catalyst to the transformation of melancholy into spleen. Michel Foucauld defines friendship as "a relationship that is still formless." Or perhaps we should say it is polymorphous: friendship can modify or subvert a variety of more socially defined relationships and hierarchies. Reflecting on the "happy, if useless" villagers of Chevengur, Flatley suggests that friendship and usefulness are incompatible. As one of the villagers declares, "we don't work for usefulness but for each other."[71]

It is worth noting that "commodity" means literally something "useful." As producers, our labor is commodified as useful to the business or institution we serve, in order that as consumers we can buy needed or desired commodities. Friendship and community interrupt and modify that equation. For the *Chevengur*'s central character, Sasha Dvanov, socialism amounts to friendship. Or in terms of these essays' ongoing search for the common, community is where the common becomes real and operative in human experience.

English Melancholy: Seventeenth-Century Seekers and Quakers

From early adulthood, I found myself drawn to British music and film, owing in part to a richer expression of melancholy than I typically found in their American correlates. Perhaps it derives from a deeper cultural history – and a greater attention to history. But even a medieval visitor to England from the Continent observed, "they take their pleasure sadly." Not surprisingly, English melancholy also finds its splenetic catharses, such as the roiling rage of the Sex Pistols in the mid-1970s, which also struck major chords for me.

An acute case history in English melancholy and spleen is found in the English Civil War and Commonwealth period of the 1640s and 50s. I have researched extensively the radical religious and political currents of that period and how many of them converged in the early Quaker movement of the 1650s.[72] The English Civil War (1642-48), culminating with the beheading of Charles I at the beginning of 1649,

generated a variety of utopian hopes for political reform, religious liberty, and even the kingdom of God on earth.

During the latter stages of the war, thousands of the most earnest, young hyper-Puritans dropped out from all the proliferating church options to wait for the true church, even the kingdom of God, to appear. Obsessed with personal sinfulness, anxious whether they were predestined for heaven or hell, and desperate for a more authentic religious experience, some met in small, experimental groups, while others just wandered the countryside alone. But all were melancholy, referring to themselves as "mourners after Sion" or "Sion's travelers" (in the sense of travail as much as wandering). Dubbed "Seekers" by observers, the phenomenon was most insightfully described at the time by John Saltmarsh, an Independent minister and chaplain among the most radical regiments of the Parliamentary army, in *Sparkles of Glory* (1647).[73]

To summarize, Saltmarsh describes Seekers as drop-outs awaiting the reappearance of the church in its New Testament purity. They look for apostles who will cut through all the doctrinal controversies of the day and teach the correct doctrine, practice, and church order. They will probably work wonders and miracles like the apostles in the Book of Acts. A new Pentcost will regather the faithful in a visible, orderly and undeniably authentic church. In effect, then, Seekers were conservatives driven to radical conclusions. They expressed the last Protestant hope for "primitive Christianity revived," but sadly aware that chapter-and-verse reconstructions from the New Testament only produced more divisions. (My research suggests that this Seeker type probably predominated in the North, where the Quaker movement began.)

But Saltmarsh also describes a second position he doesn't refer to as "Seeker" or by any other name. (He probably encountered this position among the army regiments, though it probably also predominated in London and other urban centers in the South.) These drop-outs reasoned that God would not lead them back to a New Testament church, which many reckoned had fallen into apostasy by the end of the first century. Instead, they were living at the threshold of a new age of the Spirit. This was a progressive revelation scheme that divided history into three ages. The age of the Law was revealed by Moses and enacted by ancient Israel, but corrupted, as denounced by the Hebrew prophets. That was superseded by the age of the Gospel, revealed by Jesus Christ and enacted by the early church, but which also corrupted over time. These will now be superseded by the age of the Spirit.

Now the Spirit will be bestowed upon "all flesh," as declared by Peter at the Pentecost. The Spirit will teach the true Christian inwardly. The sacraments will no longer be argued over as outward rituals but experienced inwardly. These drop-outs were less concerned to be part of an outward, visible church than to know themselves part of an invisible church, extending beyond the realm of Christendom. In effect, then, we can recognize this second position as an early emergence of modern liberal progressivism. By the latter seventeenth century, Enlightenment philosophy transmuted God's indwelling Spirit into universal human reason, auguring the progressive improvement of the human condition.

This second group may have been called "Waiters." A 1656 tract by the Quaker apostle to London Edward Burrough critiques "Seekers and Waiters" together.[74] This group was perhaps more optimistic, less mournful than Seekers. But as 1649 progressed and it became clear that neither Parliament nor the more radical army were going to enact progressive reform, both Seekers and Waiters were plunged into despair. Among some, it catharted into splenetic rage in the Ranter phenomenon of 1649-50.[75] (That episode is also described in terms of anarchy and anarchism in the "The Anarchist Unconscious, Part I" essay of this collection.) Others kept low and waited, in a still deepening melancholy.[76]

Thus, while Seekers had harkened back to a golden age sixteen centuries in the past, Waiters leaned forward into a golden age just dawning. Neither expectation was fulfilled. But for some, waiting *for* some deliverance by Parliament or the army subtly shifted into waiting *upon* the Lord, sinking deeper into a melancholy that became spleen, not in the reactive fury of the Ranters, which quickly burned out, but fusing anger with sustained, proactive energy.

George Fox, who had been imprisoned for a year at Derby as a supposed Ranter, emerged in late 1651 with a form of spiritual counsel that transformed mournful Seekers and Waiters into empowered Quakers. One version of his counsel is particularly paradigmatic of that transformation. "Oh! be faithful! Look not back, nor be too forward, further than ye have attained; for ye have no time, but this present time: therefore prize your time for your souls' sake. And so, grow up in that which is pure, and keep to the oneness."[77] Thus, the "pure" here is a consciousness radically grounded in the present, which transmutes the "black bile" of melancholy into the energized "choler" of the spleen (following the classical typology of the bodily humors).[78]

Fox taught that the source of that transformation is the light of Christ in each person's conscience. As the light is in every one, it is the *common* of human existence on earth. As it is Christ, it is the *One* who leads each one into an integrative new society, the kingdom of heaven on earth. (See the two essays, "Like Jesus: Living into the Paradox" Parts 1 and 2 in this collection.) With the recent beheading of Charles I, Quakers saw this One emerging as England's true sovereign. The Quaker movement launched a nonviolent liberation struggle they called the Lamb's War, to establish this radically present kingdom in England.

Their struggle was waged primarily against the alienated and alienating spiritual authority of the established church in England, but also confronted other forms of false social authority. As it was angry, early Quaker spleen was a nonviolent attack in parish churches, the streets, and marketplaces. As it was more positive, sustainable energy, spleen initiated and evolved new egalitarian social patterns among Friends and invited others in. It was egalitarian and inviting because the light in each one's conscience is not an individual, subjective experience as such, but one's participation in a socially transcendent experience of the One. As the movement matured, it developed into collective practices to discern the light's leading and making group decisions accordingly. (Again, see "The Anarchist Unconscious, Part I). This is what Fox meant by "keep to the oneness."

Owing in part to the movement's emergence first in the North of England, it favored the Seeker emphasis upon a gathered, visible church. And Fox was viewed by many northern Seekers as the apostle they had awaited. But the movement also embodied Waiter emphases on the Spirit/light poured out on all flesh, beyond any visible gathering, as well as the inward reality of the sacraments. Thus, turning from waiting for political solutions to waiting upon the Lord, early Friends were fused into a radical present that confirmed and disconfirmed both Seeker and Waiter expectations.

Finally, because it emerged in the economically backward North, the movement emphasized domestic life and networks of mutual aid over the larger institutional forms that had grown up in the South. In these aspects, it echoed the archaic, even regressive tendencies of the anti-urban, village-based peasant revolution of tribal Israel in Canaan (and imagined in Platonov's Chevengur). Yet at the same time, its nonviolent struggle and egalitarian ethos augured for progressive patterns that became a vanguard of early modern England. Again, melancholy

becoming spleen in an intensified present both confirms and disconfirms conservative and progressive inclinations. Thus, it is mistaken and self-defeating to assume that revolutions are only progressive.

As with the eventual slaughter of Chevengur, the Quaker Lamb's War suffered heavy losses from official persecution and mob violence, and was slowly recontained. The gut conservatism of the English mainstream was fed up with Quaker antics and wanted to revert to the reassuring verities of life before the Civil War. Meanwhile, England's new capitalist ruling classes had big, progressive plans for an imperial future. The revolutionary moment, what Fox called "the day of visitation," passed and the regularized time of a modern secular society asserted itself.[79]

I spent decades researching and writing on the early Quaker movement, from different angles. It was my long, melancholic search into the past for better answers to the present. I had hopes that a better understanding of Quaker beginnings could help catalyze something similar among Friends today. But I guess I wrote more than most Friends wanted to know. And their mainly sound-byte knowledge of early Friends was just enough to inoculate them against the real contagion. Finally, their sectarian counterpart to secular time, the regular pace of monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings, makes it difficult to perceive the day of visitation.

Of course, something as unique as the early Quaker movement arises only in unique historical circumstances. My research and writing was inspired in part by my experience of America in the 1960s, another unique historical moment, and is dedicated as preparation for the next one. When I quit writing for Quakers about Quakers, I discovered the common and realized that the common life best describes what early Friends, early Christians, and tribal Israel had discovered and enacted in their times and places.

These are not the only commoning movements in world history. They are simply ones I know something about and have learned from. But the common is not a universal; universals tend toward abstract ideas, ideals, and theories, while the common remains concretely perceived and communally practiced. The common life is in common with all life on earth. So it is not humanistic either, except in the literal sense that all life is human life: it arises from and returns to the earth.

Melancholy for a Purpose

Melancholy transmutes into spleen in creative, constructive ways as it finds focus in purpose. Ranters raged spectacularly against the Puritan regime in 1650, but soon flamed out. Quaker spiritual counsel helped a variety of Seekers out of melancholy into an empowered, sustainable sense of purpose. Certainly, new Quakers vented considerable spleen in the Lamb's War revolutionary struggle of the 1650s. But they also found many new purposes in egalitarian community, business, early science and technology during the decades following their defeat. Similarly, my generation vented a lot of spleen in the 1960s especially over racial injustice and the war in Vietnam. In the stalling of those struggles, many found new, sustained purposes in a variety of liberation and environmental movements.

Unlike George Fox, I have no spiritual counsel to transmute today's deepening melancholy. That is not my gift. But I can offer something of my own recent experience and some reflections on it.

I finished my history of Pendle Hill in 2013. I was the last resident program teacher on staff (there had been as many as five in the past). By the time my history (*Personality and Place*) was published at the end of 2014, the resident program had been dropped and I had to seek some new channel for my ongoing call to ministry. I returned to pastoral ministry with a small, rural meeting in Maine. But my ministry there didn't find its way forward. I attributed this partly to the inscrutability of the Maine cultural style to a Hoosier (Indiana native). But I knew it was partly my own demoralized grief for Pendle Hill. After a year, I began conceiving a new Quaker research and writing project, and looking for a way to pursue it at Pendle Hill.

Indeed, the way opened and I spent 2017 at Pendle Hill, intensively researching another twentieth-century Quaker institution, Friends General Conference (mentioned earlier in this essay). The story needed telling and was inspiring in many ways. But I suspected it would not attract or inspire many FGC readers, whose progressivist ideology keeps them leaning into the next big thing.

One day in September 2017, forty-nine years to the month from my original calling to ministry, I was transferring the chapter files into one big book file on my laptop. As I finished, the words "I'm done" came to me, as clearly and as pregnantly as "Be a minister" came in 1968. As I sat there, I realized that my work among Friends was ending. I was free to retire and return to Indiana, to support my mother in her advanced dementia. I moved to Richmond at the start of January 2018, just about able to subsist on subsidized housing and Social Security. I

have found again and again, where the Lord leads, the Lord also provides.

As I began to settle in, I finished a memoir I had begun in 2005, while living in Richmond the first time. Beyond my conscious intentions, this had the effect of putting some final framing around my years of ministry among Friends, and opened me to something new. I began exploring the common. I reviewed the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri – *Empire*, *Multitude*, and *Commonwealth* – which I had read while in Richmond the first time. I also found other sources on the common(s). Moreover, with my grounding in biblical and Quaker studies, I began to recognize the common as the logic and impetus that tribal Israel and the early Christian and Quaker movements had embodied, in their different historical settings. But their faith and mine also suggested that the common requires the focusing perspective and purpose of the One, whether theistically understood or not.

I found the melancholy of my grief for Pendle Hill and for the slow decline of the Religious Society of Friends transmuting into the spleen of renewed purpose. I was disappointed that I couldn't find any Friends who had heard of the common or found my writing on it intriguing. I began to realize that the current commonist ferment is mainly in Europe, and has barely reached Britain and America. So here I have been, holed up in the American heartland, small-town Indiana, writing essay after essay as a journal/memoir of my ongoing discernment of the common. But to paraphrase a great song by Townes van Zant, "Maybe I just have to sing for the sake of the song" (1970). It's been frustrating yet somehow joyful. It has renewed what the apostle Paul called "hope against hope" amid a darkening world.

As I ponder this paradox, I'm nudged to reread Isaiah 8-9. The book of Isaiah as we have it is the compilation of a stream of prophets extending from the eighth to the fifth century BCE. (That stream may have continued further. I have speculated that Jesus and some of those who gathered with him may have participated in it, given how extensively the New Testament quotes Isaiah.)

The original prophet Isaiah prophesied against the religious compromises and social corruptions of his people's faith in Yahweh's covenant. His purpose was to call his people in the kingdom of Judah back to the common purposes their forebears had found as the original tribes of Israel, as they consolidated around this strange god with historic purposes in the world. But as the confederation of tribes had become a monarchy, the purposes of the One/Yahweh were slowly and

subtly subverted to the purposes of the "one" monarch, whose strategies mimicked those of other monarchies and their religions.

As narrated in Isaiah 6, even when he is initially called to be Yahweh's prophet, Isaiah is warned that the people won't listen to him. Finally, in chapter 8, he comes to his "I'm done" moment.

> For the Lord spoke thus to me while his hand was strong upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against; for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over – a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken [Isa. 8:11-15].

The fears of Isaiah's people were real enough: they faced a "conspiracy" of nations against them, with imminent danger of invasion. But Isaiah is instructed to trust the Lord and let the word of the Lord be his sanctuary. Isaiah's original call had taken place in the Jerusalem temple, Judah's sanctuary of the Lord. But now the word of the Lord, not the architecture of the temple, is Isaiah's sanctuary. The radical faith that keeps Isaiah in that One Presence has become scandalous to his people, something that causes them stumble. They stumble at everything he says from that place, if they can hear it at all.

Therefore, Isaiah concludes:

> Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him . . . Now if people say to you, "Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living, for teaching and for instruction?" Surely, those who speak like this will have no dawn! [8:16-20].

Isaiah "closes the book" of his testimony to his people. He will no longer wait for them to respond. They are sealing their own fate. Isaiah will resolutely wait for/upon the Lord and hope in the One. Meanwhile, his people will continue to forsake the divine One in order to

divine various spirits and gods. There's no end to such digressions – but no future either.

But Isaiah and his successors are unique among the Hebrew prophets in their powerful tension between despair and hope, condemnation and consolation. What comes next takes a very different tack:

> But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, the Galilee of the nations [9:1].

This verse segues toward the great prophecy that begins with "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (9:2) declaring the birth of a new king to renew the line of David "with justice and with righteousness." These words are familiar to Christians as one of the Messianic prophecies of Jesus. Matthew and his early Jewish Christian community, probably located in Galilee, quote Isaiah 9:1-2 as their gospel narrates the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (Matt. 4:15-16).

Isaiah 9's sense of a new beginning is a sharp break from Isaiah 8's sense of ending. It may well have been written years later by Isaiah himself or by one of his successors. And notwithstanding later Christian interpretations, they had their own understanding of this prophecy, for their own time and circumstances. But what stands out in either case is that Isaiah sees God's purposes *opening out* in new ways, as they have reached a dead-end in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And these new purposes *extend* into "the Galilee of the nations" (literally the *goyim,* the Gentiles, the peoples), a new common.

The One and the common keep generating new expressions. The movement that formed around Jesus in Galilee and then spread more widely after his death was certainly one of those expressions. Diaspora Judaism has been another. The Christian common has run into its own dead-ends and renewals, much like its Jewish cousins, down to this day. Quakers were one of those commoning renewals. Sadly, it has reached its own dead-end.

Thus, the One is leading me out into another common, for another time. I don't think of it as "progress" as such, but the urgent impetus to counter the progressive subsumption of the planet and its peoples by finance-driven capitalism. We can expect this present impetus both to confirm and to disconfirm various ideas and experiments of our

time. Some of them we tend to view as backward-looking, "conservative," and others as forward-leaning, "progressive." This essay and the ones that have preceded it in my on-going journaling of the common manifest conservative and progressive motives seeking synthesis.

Two States or One Common?

As I write this essay, the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza is an excruciating present. The Hamas attack on Israel from Gaza on October 7, 2023 was not only a murderous and atrocious act of terrorism in its own right. It was surely calculated to provoke the worst possible response from Israel's current right-wing government. Its tunnel system under Gaza was surely calculated to survive the current, horrific Israeli offensive upon its own people. (Of course, as an Iranian-backed organization, I wonder how much Hamas considers Palestinians its own people.) In terms of bloodthirst, this tactic surpasses even those of ISIS, which had surpassed Al-Qaeda, and so on. It makes me think how Palestine and Israel keep creating each other in the worst possible ways (though Israel's power is so overwhelming, the dynamic is also lopsided).

The situation has also led me to reflect on my own experience and evolving viewpoint on Israel-Palestine over the years. I was born the same year the modern state of Israel was founded, in 1948. It has given me a sense of resonance between my personal history and Israel's national history. At the end of my senior year in high school, Israel's victory in the 1967 war brought relief to my Jewish friends, and I shared their feelings. During my first year at Union Seminary in New York (1971-72), I attended a lecture by Ellie Wiesel at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, who spoke movingly on his experience of the Holocaust. It deepened my sympathies for the modern state of Israel.

In 1978, while pursuing graduate work in biblical studies, I participated in an archaeological "dig" at Caesarea Maritima. During my six weeks there I also gained ground-level perspectives on the state of Israel and its occupation of the West Bank. I saw nothing dramatic, just the day-to-day grind of occupation, much less extreme than it became over succeeding years. My work for the American Friends Service Committee in the 1970s had increased my awareness of the Palestinian perspective and the difficulty of working for peace in the Middle East. The AFSC had lost much of its traditional American Jewish support for its mediating efforts.

While I was pastor of the Berkeley Friends Church in the early 1990s, a Reconstructionist Jewish congregation used our meetinghouse for its high holy days observance. I explored with my congregation whether we might rent space to them on an ongoing basis. I liked the rabbi and thought our congregations could benefit from the interface. But an elderly Palestinian member of our congregation who had been driven from her home in Ramallah in 1948 was deeply offended by the idea, and I had to back off from exploring further.

Around that time, I watched a program on PBS on modern Israel, narrated by Ellie Wiesel. It included a brief segment on the Bedouin Arabs subsisting within Israel's borders. Wiesel tersely commented, "Israel has no problems with the Bedouins." It was factual enough but chilling, as I thought of my own country's relationship with its indigenous peoples. I also recall hearing around that same time that President George H. W. Bush had suspended some American aid to Israel, in response to Israeli settlements on the West Bank. But he soon backed away. I suspected it wasn't only American Jewish political influence, but pressure from a sector of the evangelical Christian churches which harbor millenarian ambitions for the modern state of Israel. They advocate strong military support for whatever Israel does to expand its territory, based on the extent of ancient, monarchical Israel.

Ironically, I'm told that most Orthodox Jews were not in favor of a modern state of Israel at the time of its founding. But now Orthodox Jews in Israel are the hard-liners of statist Zionism and often support the harshest policies of occupation, settlements, and prosecution of the war in Gaza. And for its part, the US government has abetted Israel's long descent into a grievous and untenable situation. The US and others keep pressing for a "two-state solution," in which Israel would allow and co-exist with a Palestinian state. But Israel continues to rebuff the idea, realistically doubtful that a Palestinian state would be interested in peace with Israel.

The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber was a Zionist who left Germany for Palestine in 1938. Already in 1925, he had helped create an alternative Zionist organization, *Brit Shalom*, Covenant of Peace. They proposed a binational state combining Palestinian Arabs and Jews. It would be an exemplary society, a model for other nations/peoples living within states.

Over the years, I've become aware of many Jews and Palestinians, within Israel-Palestine and around the world, meeting and working together for peace, for a common life. In so doing, they have turned deep

melancholy into sustained spleen. Yet their efforts are repeatedly *foreclosed* from all sides by militarists and terrorists, much as the commons around the world are *enclosed* by the encroaching interests of capital.

At the end of 2023, as the war in Gaza continued, I watched a video of the Palestinian-American intellectual Edward Said and the Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim in conversation. It also showed Barenboim conducting the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, comprised of young Jews and Arabs, playing Tchaikovsky. I was not thinking of the conflict in Gaza in that moment, but I felt tears coming to my eyes. I wondered if anything so beautiful can happen again.

This essay has traveled from America to Russia to England to Israel-Palestine, on a world-history tour of melancholy and spleen. I will conclude with a simple "Oy!" In Yiddish, it's an expression of grief, short for *oy vey,* "oh, woe!" But in contemporary British usage, it's an expression of angry warning, something like, "Hey, watch it!"

7.

The Once and Future Common

Groping My Way on with Abraham

(4/24)

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness,
you that seek the Lord.
Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.
Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
but I blessed him and made him many.

Isaiah 51:1-2

When I was called to ministry in 1968 at age 19, it set me on a long journey of wandering and sojourns. It began in 1971 with leaving a comfortable life and environment in Indiana to study at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Sociologically, New York opened a much wider world than I had known before. Theologically, Union opened a depth of understanding of where my call had come from and where it was taking me. And even before my graduation from Union in 1975, before my wandering had proceeded any further, the figure of Abraham loomed prominently to me. The mysterious quality of his call resonated with mine. And though I received no promises of land or progeny (I had decided by 1970 that I would not add to the accelerating human population and its impacts on the earth), I had an implicit confidence that if the Lord wanted me as a minister, the Lord would provide for me as needed.

I had no expectations of success or any particular outcomes to my ministry, only to follow as led. The Lord has provided sufficiently for my needs, and spared me the burden and distractions of anything more. The Lord has also spared me the demands and distractions of success, but kept me moving on, both geographically and theologically. Today, my name is known in some circles of the little Quaker world, as an author and minister among Friends, but no one knows who or what I am. I have sloughed off identities. I have attained a liminal personality, at the threshold between worlds: the common. The "Doug Gwyn" people meet is simply "here" from "elsewhere." Now, at 75 years old and surely nearing the end of my journey, with little to show for it, I see more clearly how inconsequential Abraham's journey was, within the horizon of his own lifetime. No land and two sons, one he banished (at Sarah's behest) and the other he almost murdered (at God's behest, apparently).

This essay intertwines Abraham's journey with my own, and it places both of us within the horizon of the common life. Abraham's journey gropes toward the birth of many ancient nations/peoples, but primarily toward the birth of Israel's tribal confederacy. In preceding essays in this series I have described tribal Israel as a commonist society. My own journey gropes toward some form of commonist society, somewhere. I'm not making any special claims for myself. I'm simply one person among many whose call has accentuated the "melancholy for the common" explored in the preceding essay. Hegel called it the "unhappy consciousness," and viewed Abraham as its representative figure. This essay will also contemplate both Abraham's call and my own from the standpoint of Wolfhart Pannenberg's eschatological theology, where the present is an effect of ultimate future, where God invites and draws those who are willing toward "the kingdom of God," an impending common life.

Ur: Beginnings

Before proceeding further, it's perhaps obvious but important to acknowledge that Abraham, Sarah, and their saga are legendary, composite figures, retrojections by ancient Israel through centuries of historical experience and theological reflection. Their story balances the unique destiny of Israel with the broader, common history of its neighbors. That balance is not easy to maintain. It is the paradox also explored in the two "Like Jesus" essays in this collection, where his identities as Messiah/Son of God and as Son of Man/Human One maintain Israel's destiny and the common life in the creative, unfolding, dramatic tension of the gospel narrative.

It is also worth noting that this ancient tension was renewed in contemporary terms in the 1970s, when archeological excavations of ancient Ebla in modern Syria uncovered a large store of clay tablets. The tablets date from the early third millennium BCE. But they mention place names from Mesopotamia and even Palestinian cities such as Megiddo, Hazor, and Gaza. Even more intriguing, personal names such as Ishmael and Abram occur. Initial reports in 1976 sensationally suggested that Abraham of the Bible had been found. Both Christians and Jews were tantalized by these early reports. Statements such as "the ancient Eblaites may have been early Hebrews" suggested to some that

Ebla was part of the Hebrew homeland. The implications sounded sinister to Syria. The Syrian ambassador to Washington complained, "Mr. [Menachem] Begin [then prime minister of Israel] is trying to use the Holy Bible as a real estate register. Today he wants the West Bank. In a few years it may be Aleppo or Damascus."[80]

More careful analyses of the findings soon followed, suggesting that names like Abram (*Abramu* in the tablets) were common in the ancient Near East. Perhaps we can surmise that the figure of Abram/Abraham in Genesis draws upon broader patriarchal legends from Israel's neighborhood. In this sense, Abram may be the legendary forebear of several Semitic peoples. And we will hear his initial call include "multitudes of nations/ peoples."

Martin Buber reflects, "With Abraham what matters is not his character as God finds it, so to speak, but what he does, and what he becomes."[81] Indeed, not only Abram/Abraham comes into focus through the story, but the strange Presence that calls him also gains some definition through the journey. The novelist Thomas Mann describes this process in terms of emerging monotheism. Abraham took "hold upon the manifold and anguishingly uncertain and converted it into the single, the definite, and the reassuring, of whom everything came, both good and evil – the sudden and frightful as well as the blessed usual, and to whom in any case he had to cling." Mann presses the point still further:

> In a way Abraham was God's father. He had perceived Him and thought Him into being. The mighty properties which he ascribed to Him were probably God's original possession. Abraham was not their creator. But was he not so after all, in a certain sense, when he recognized them, preached them, and by thinking made them real? The mighty properties of God were indeed something objective, existing outside of Abraham; but at the same time they were also in him and of him. The power of his own soul was at certain moments scarcely distinguishable from them.[82]

In similar fashion, Wolfhart Pannenberg counters the modern notion that we, as self-evident persons, project a personal god upon the heavens. Rather, it was out of encounter with the divine Presence that the ancients began to conceive themselves more clearly as persons.[83] In 1914, early in his career as a religious philosopher, Martin Buber was asked if he believed in God. He answered, "If to believe in God means to be able to speak about Him in the third person, I do not believe in God . . . But if to believe in God means to say 'Thou' to

Him, then I do."[84] When lecturing, Buber often declined to answer questions about God, refusing to turn God into an object.

Genesis 11:27-32 introduces us to Abraham, Sarah and their family of origin. Sometime early in the second millennium BCE, they grow up in Ur, the first great city of Mesopotamia, on the lower Euphrates (modern Iraq). They are half-siblings who are married but childless. They leave Ur with their father, Terah, aiming for Canaan, but settling in Haran in Aram (modern Syria).

The motivations for such a move, from an early center of civilization on a fertile plain toward the hilly, less prosperous land of Canaan, are not stated. But we do find an anti-urban bias in the prehistory of Genesis 1-11 that sets the scene for the calling of Abraham. After murdering his brother Abel (a shepherd), Cain (a farmer) builds the first city as a protective fortress. A productive agricultural plain surrounding the city would be implied as the economic foundation for such a city. Then, the story of Babel, just proceeding the beginning of our saga, portrays the hubris of ancient cities and empires. Abraham will be portrayed as a man of considerable wealth in herds and flocks. But he keeps to the hills and spurns the cities of the plain, such as Sodom and Gomorrah, inhospitable places.

As Norman Gottwald suggests, Abraham and Sarah may be seen as everyman and everywoman of the second millennium, a period of advancing and receding empires, when conquests, forced migrations, and famines set many families in motion from one place to another.[85] That collective experience also engenders the "melancholy for the common" amid the rising and falling fortunes of empires.

Abraham and Sarah are introduced as Abram ("exalted father") and Sarai ("princess"). Their dual relationship as siblings and married partners is intriguing. Hebrew tradition favors endogamy, so perhaps it's not as surprising as it sounds to modern ears. In any case, their journey has dynamics that are both face-to-face as spouses and shoulder-to-shoulder as siblings. Even though the succeeding Genesis narrative focuses primarily on Abraham and his call, something in that dual relationship is significant. Among other things, it implies the abiding power of matriarchy ("princess") as an undercurrent to a patriarchal world. The sibling relationship also contributes to Abraham's anti-heroic profile. Twice he passes Sarah off as his sister (to the Egyptian Pharaoh and then to King Abimelech of Gerar), for fear that they might kill him to obtain his beautiful wife. These episodes also imply the dilemma of women often used as pawns in the power dynamics of a patriarchal society.

God's call to Abram comes while he and Sarai are still living with their father and extended family in Haran:

> Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" [Gen. 12:1-3].

The Lord calls Abram to "go from" in three ways: "your country" [*eretz*] is his geographical setting; "your kindred" is his family and lineage; and "your father's house" connotes the economic unit in which Abram participates. He is thus invited literally to "walk away" from all that has defined him up to this moment . . . "to a land [*eretz*] I will show you." Abram is called from comfortable certainty to radical uncertainty, a life of faith.

Following this call, Abram will slough off all he has been, except for his life with half-sister/wife, Sarai. And more puzzling, this childless couple are to become "a great nation." By leaving their family in Haran, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." It's an outrageous promise. I can't help thinking of Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein* (1974), when the mad scientist has just seen the corpse come to life. As he exults wildly, the creature looks up at his creator, as if to say, "Who is this guy?"

Nevertheless, "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him" (vs. 4). This is no exploratory journey. Abram and Sarai take all their possessions and "set forth to go to the land of Canaan" (vs. 5). It would seem their thought is to complete the migration their father Terah had intended before settling in Haran. "At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your offspring [seed] I will give this land'" (vss. 6-7). It is important to understand that race and ethnicity were defined to the ancient and biblical mind primarily according to social practices rather biological lineage. "Canaanite" was therefore the social order and religious culture dominating the people of that region at that time. (We will return to this a little later.)

The promise of this land to the "seed" of Abram and Sarai is ambiguous. It connotes both biological offspring *and* those who, like Abram, follow the promise, who journey in faith with this strange, divine Presence. That ambiguity is figured in the long delayed birth of

their child, Isaac. The story attributes him to be their biological offspring. But it finally happens so long after their child-bearing age as to deny it. The point is not a "miraculous" birth as such. Rather, it is that Abram's "seed" abides in God's promise and faithfully follows it. This seed includes but is not limited by biological lineage.

Following this promise, Abram builds an altar to the Lord at Shechem and another one at Bethel. These prefigure the early cultic shrines of tribal Israel. Then Abram, Sarai, and their household move south to sojourn in the Negev. But famine in the land drives them further south, to a sojourn in Egypt, which prefigures Israel's captivity there.

Abram's sojourn in this land occupied by Canaanites – indeed, his entire itinerary, from Ur to his final resting place with Sarah at Hebron in the Negev, is a mapping operation. It is a correlation of personalities, places, and history. I'm reminded of Fredric Jameson's brilliant study of Raymond Chandler's crime novels.[86] Chandler's detective, Philip Marlowe, travels all over the Los Angeles area to many different places, encountering different personalities, of different socio-economic locations, finding clues and traces in his search for missing persons and unsolved murders. Jameson notes how Chandler's narratives map a totality of Los Angeles out of these different persons, places, and social locations.

But in Abram's case, the traces he maps come from a distant future, not the recent past. It is the future of God's promise. These are the *Spuren*, "traces," that come to us from the utopian future, as proposed by the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch. I briefly sketched his work, *The Philosophy of Hope*,[87] in an earlier essay, "The Hope of the Common" (*Into the Common*). Bloch suggests that these traces are detected through the workings of hope in the human heart. The experience overturns the commonsensical world of cause-and-effect and current trends. One learns to expect the unexpected. One does not focus on anything in particular but on all things, and where one stands among them. This is Abram's process of becoming a singular one in relation to the divine One, amid the open field of the common. But this common will not be realized until centuries later, in the tribal confederation of ancient Israel. Similarly to Bloch, but in Christian theistic terms, Wolfhart Pannenberg writes that God invites and draws us from the ultimate future, the kingdom of God.[88]

Along the way, Abram/Abraham also charts his understanding of this mysterious Presence according to his various impressions and divine names he borrows from the cultures around him. He swears by

El Elyon, "God Most High" (14:22); the Lord visits him under the name *El Shaddai* "God Almighty" (17:1); he calls upon the Lord as *El Olam*, "Everlasting God" (21:33). *El* was a generic divine name among Canaanites and beyond, with various such attributes appended (more on that a little later).

I have had a similar sense of my own wanderings over the fifty years from my initial calling in 1968 to my retirement back to Indiana in 2018. As a minister serving in various ways among Friends across North America and in Britain, I mapped the terrain of the Religious Society of Friends, while also mapping the various geographical places and social formations where I served: Indiana, New York City, Berkeley California, Birmingham England, Philadelphia, and Maine. And I sojourned in almost all of them more than once. But what turned out to be a series of sojourns was not my intention. I always intended to settle down. But the Lord kept moving me on (admittedly, working through and beyond my personal neuroses).

The Lord's promise to Abram is repeated and elaborated in Genesis 17. This comes after he has fathered a son, Ishmael, by Sarai's Egyptian maidservant, Hagar. (This was Sarai's idea how to fulfill God's promise to Abram's "seed" through human strategy and the exploitation of her slave-girl.) The Lord promises Abram "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your seed after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant" (17:5-7). The promise at this point is referenced mainly through Ishmael. After Sarah demands that Abraham banish Hagar and her son, Abraham is deeply disturbed. But God promises him that they will be provided for. We are subsequently told that they migrate back to Egypt, Hagar's home, and that great nations and kings will proceed from Ishmael. So the "multitude of nations" is fulfilled through that line, and the "map" of peoples and places is further elaborated.

But the Lord also restates the promise to Abraham's seed through Sarah. "As for Sarah your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her" (17:15-16). Abraham falls down laughing in disbelief that a child can be born to a man a hundred years old and a woman who is ninety. He suggests Ishmael is sufficient to these promises, but the Lord insists on this outrageous future. "Sarah" is probably

a variation on Sarai, "princess." Or it may derive from the Hebrew verb *sarah*, to "struggle," which is the root of the name "Israel," one who wrestles with God.

So this renewed promise establishes the Lord's covenantal aims across a common that includes a widening scope of peoples. Hebrew Scripture will focus the ensuing saga upon Sarah's line and the historical destiny of Israel. But many centuries later, the apostle Paul will assert that all those who like Abraham live by faith in God's outrageous promise (transposed now to faith in the risen Jesus) are also Abraham's seed, seed of the promise (see Romans 4). So the seed of Abraham becomes still greater multitudes in the broadening Christian movement. And centuries after Paul, Mohammed will lay claim to the covenantal promise through Ishmael, and the spreading nation of Islam will encompass many more peoples. Each new expression of this seed will begin with commoning impulses, but will slowly succumb to reified, narrowing reactions to persecution and conflict.

Moriah: Endings

After she gives birth to Isaac in her old age and the boy begins to grow, Sarah is vexed to see her son playing with Hagar's son. She insists that Hagar and Ishmael be cast out, lest Ishmael inherit along with Isaac. As mentioned earlier, this is very distressing to Abraham, but with assurances that God will provide for the boy and his mother, he sends them out into the wilderness of Beersheba. The story goes on to tell how God indeed provides and speaks to Hagar, promising great things for Ishmael.

But Abraham, despite God's reassurances, *doesn't see* this play out. Perhaps it is a troubled conscience that causes him to hear God command him to offer up his only remaining son, Isaac, as a burnt offering. This would function as a psychological expiation of his guilt.[89] But the narrative simply tells us, "After these things, God tested Abraham" (22:1). Perhaps both interpretations are possible. Divine leadings are always filtered through personal psychology. In any case, the narrative simply tells us, "So Abraham rose early in the morning" and set out with Isaac to obey this terrible commandment. Robert Alter suggests that the power of Hebrew narrative derives in part from the way it leaves so much room for us to imagine what its characters are thinking and feeling. He cites this passage as a prime example.[90]

Perhaps the most probing interpretation of the *Akedah*, the "binding" of Isaac for sacrifice, is offered by Soren Kierkegaard, who views it as Abraham's ultimate fulfillment as a man of God. While not denying the abomination of the commandment, Kierkegaard insists that only here does Abraham move decisively beyond the ethical to the truly religious level of existence. Ethics renounce the particular good of egoism for the universal good of moral law. But the ethicist does not discover his or her existence over against God. Love of neighbor is good, but it does not yet see God. The individual cannot find relationship to God through universal goods, but must come to stand in absolute relation to the absolute, an encounter that suspends even ethics.

This "teleological suspension of the ethical," in Kierkegaard's famous phrase, is not a higher ethic. But it is not the abolition of ethics either. It is the dialectical movement to a higher level of existence. It is actually two movements. First, there is the negative motion of "infinite resignation," the willingness to start with Isaac toward Mount Moriah. This is the last moment *prior* to faith. Through that motion, a second moment appears, where "paradoxical and humble courage is required to grasp the whole of the temporal by virtue of the absurd, and this is the courage of faith."[91] Thus, authentic faith is the *last* moment, in which Abraham hears the voice from heaven, stopping him even as the knife is raised. Abraham's authentic faith reclaims both Isaac and the promise. Faith consists in the paradox of renouncing and regaining everything. Kierkegaard's dialectic, in this case and in general, remains personal, even individualistic. It doesn't contemplate Abraham within a larger historical drama. But his insight remains valid for both the individual and collective dimensions of faith.

As for myself, books have been my only "seed" dedicated to the future. I felt clearly led to undertake months and years in producing them, and I sacrificed career possibilities and financial security to follow these leadings. I heard no promises, but I hoped that these books might inspire Friends as I had been inspired, by the radical faith and revolutionary witness of the early Quaker movement. My books in Quaker history have never been about denominational beginnings but charting the patterns that might inform renewed radical faith and witness for new times. Some Friends were reached, but even they tended to hear a confirmation of their "Quakerism," rather than a faith that transcends the declining fortunes of the Religious Society of Friends.

Worse, within my decades of ministry among Friends, I saw authentic faith increasingly regress into ethics. The good eclipses God. Or if

God remains in the conversation, God doesn't measure up very well to the good. This ethical eclipse of the teleological plays out especially in the faith Friends place in "Quaker process," finely tuned practices of group decision-making, doing good by doing it well. But a process without a telos, without a shared, transcendent sense of calling and purpose, becomes a hall of mirrors.

My journey to Moriah had several episodes of renunciation over many years. Finally, by 2017, I sensed I was no longer a Quaker minister. Retiring to Richmond, Indiana and living on Social Security in subsidized housing, among other seniors who had enjoyed fewer opportunities, the same Lord has continued to provide. But I began to perceive the common more clearly, and to understand that tribal Israel, the early Christian movement, and the early Quaker movement had each been expressions of the common life, albeit always in provisional, incomplete, and corruptible ways. I don't think I would have understood this without my years of wandering and a growing depth of study in these traditions.

The Once and Future Common

Many elements in the Abraham saga of Genesis prefigure the beginnings of ancient Israel. But just as we have looked behind and beyond the story of Abraham as we have it in Genesis, we must look below the surface of the military "conquest of Canaan" as described in Joshua and Judges. Abraham's inheritance is richer than that.

In the 1980s, while trying to understand the social-revolutionary dimensions of the early Quaker "Lamb's War," I read Norman Gottwald's massive study, *The Tribes of Yahweh,*[92] for the first time. He reconstructs Israel's "conquest of Canaan" as a revolutionary retribalization of a region dominated by city-states. This revolution was catalyzed by a contingent of liberated Hebrew slaves from Egypt, but it was comprised mainly of indigenous Canaanite tribes and clans, who became a confederation in covenant with a strange god, *Yahweh*. This god was introduced by the liberated slaves, out of their experience of liberation from bondage in Egypt.

I will summarize relevant parts of Gottwald 's reconstruction. He suggests that there probably was a group of slaves somehow liberated from Egypt under the leadership of a figure with the Egyptian name "Moses." But they couldn't have been the hundreds of thousands wandering for years in the Sinai, as described in the book of Numbers. This

relatively small group eventually arrived in Canaan with faith in a strange new god, Yahweh, to whom they credited their liberation from Egypt. They sparked a revolution among an array of marginalized tribes and clans around Canaan, starting in the North, in the hill country around Bethel and Shechem.

Among these groups were a tribe or clan called the *hapirus*, a troublesome element that often fought against the dominant city-states of Canaan, cities of the plains, surrounded by agricultural tracts. These *hapirus* were perhaps "Hebrews," and possibly related to the liberated group from Egypt. But most of the marginalized tribes and clans were unrelated. Gottwald suggests that they controlled the hill country, where Canaanite chariot forces could not dominate, but probably depended mainly on herding and were relatively poor. Their early struggles against the Canaanite city-states may have been in faith with the generic god *El*, whom we hear evoked in Abraham's saga. But the slaves from Egypt brought this new, liberator god Yahweh, who catalyzed a more powerful resistance that began to advance from the hills onto the plains controlled by the city-states.

So, while Hebrew Scripture narrates a story of a single bio-ethnic group overtaking Canaan by violence, Gottwald suggests that "Israel" was in fact a heterogeneous confederation of tribes focused into an evolving faith and set of practices in covenant with Yahweh. But the ways in which Scripture uses both "Yahweh" and "El" (as in Isra-el) for this god suggests a synthetic process at work between the liberated slaves from Egypt and the indigenous tribes. So there was both a bio-ethnic thread (the Hebrews) and a more diverse group that came together as "Israel." Thus, "Israel" is defined by covenantal faith and practices in sharp, revolutionary contrast to "Canaanite" gods, kings, economy, and social norms.

By isolating, then overcoming most of the Canaanite city-states, Israel *retribalized* Canaan. That is, traditional agrarian, village-based, elder-led social forms were reasserted by the indigenous tribes. This revolution was thus both radically new and conservative. While Gottwald doesn't deny armed conflict as part of this process, he emphasizes that the "conquest of Canaan" and the "slaughter" of Canaanites was more a matter of religious, political, and cultural conversion: Canaanites becoming Israelites. This tribal confederation had no king but Yahweh, no standing army, and no temple as a mystifying agency to give royal power divine sponsorship.

So the balancing of a biological heir in Isaac with a more socially and spiritually transcendent faith in God's promises, as we find in the

Abraham saga, prefigures what Israel will become in the promised land. Gottwald suggests that the patriarchal narratives, focused on Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, may be a concatenation of tribal traditions from various groups that were synthesized into faith in an unknown god.

The molding of these traditions would have been carried out primarily by the tribe of Levi, a tribe without a territory, who served as revolutionary cadres among the tribes, to teach the evolving laws and enact the cultic rites that forged and maintained Israel's social solidarity and religious faith. These Levites may have descended at least partly from the liberated slaves from Egypt. Their preaching and teaching over the course of centuries generated stories that gave the emerging faith and practices a sense of depth – not in timeless cycles of nature but in an arc of liberating history. Thus, for example, the anti-urban bias we find in the pre-history of Genesis 1-11 and the Abraham saga derives from the anti-urban thrust of Israel's revolutionary project, where walled fortresses were unmasked as centers of royal-military-priestly hierarchy, of oppression, exploitation, and pestilence.

However, after two centuries of this revolutionary project, faced with military incursions from neighboring Philistines, the tribal confederacy resorted to royal-military leadership and then a legitimating temple priesthood. As time went on, Israel's inter-tribal traditions were reframed as a single bio-ethnic patrimony, and the military successes of Israel's kings rewrote "Canaanites" becoming "Israelites" as a violent, genocidal conquest narrative. This was accomplished as scribes wrote down and reworked Levitical traditions over a much longer period of monarchy, exile, and post-exile, into the form we know today. That process produced its own legitimacy and enriched theological reflection, but it did obscure Israel's revolutionary beginnings.

Certainly, Gottwald's rereading of Hebrew Scripture is radical – but no more radical than the process that produced it in the first place. His work took place before the more recent emergence of commonist scholarship (which still hasn't penetrated biblical scholarship, to my knowledge). But I think we could consider the Israelite retribalization of Canaan as a commonist revolution, a powerful example of an agrarian common life reasserted against centralizing and exploitative power structures.

Even assuming Jesus and his followers took Hebrew Scripture at its face value, the deep structures of its narrative surely evoked in him and them intimations of a commonist revolution. That's what the New Testament gospels describe unfolding in the hills of Galilee – the same

hills where Israel's tribal confederacy had first formed. In addition, my own rereading of Quaker beginnings in the hills of northern England finds a similar commoning impetus, which was both conservative and radically new. Starting in the cultural and economic backwaters of northern England, the movement reasserted domestic networks of family life and mutual aid that supported the revolutionary vanguard of Quaker male and female prophets itinerating around the countryside. As they denounced and made exodus from the hierarchical power of a state-sponsored church, they cut themselves off from England's parish-based economy and society.

But just as Israel's tribal revolution was recontained by a new royal-military-priestly complex, so the early Christian movement was subverted by its own success against the Roman Empire. And early Friends were beaten down by persecution, hedged in as a sect, and went on to become some of Anglo-American capitalism's most vibrant economic and technological innovators. The common is repeatedly raided and enclosed by economic, military, and political powers. But what else can we do but keep rediscovering and reconstituting the common life?

Recalling Wolfhart Pannenberg's eschatological theology mentioned earlier, we can view the kingdom of God that Jesus preached and enacted in Galilee as a common life emerging between Jews and gentiles in Galilee. The kingdom of God/common life is God's future impending upon the present. In contrast to commonsensical cause-and-effect reasoning, the kingdom of God/common life is an effect of the future upon the present. It draws those who perceive and receive it into a radically different order. Addressing the mixed record of the church in subsequent history, Pannenberg summarizes:

> The future of the Kingdom releases a dynamic in the present that again and again kindles the vision of man and gives meaning to his fervent quest for the political forms of justice and love. The new forms that are achieved will, in contrast with the ultimacy of God's Kingdom, turn out to be provisional and preliminary. They will in turn be called upon to give way to succeeding new forms. Superficial minds might think that the political quest is therefore futile. They fail to recognize that the satisfaction is not in the perfection of that with which we begin but in the glory of that toward which we tend. We possess no perfect program but are possessed by an inspiration that will not be realized perfectly by us. It is realized provisionally in the

> ever-renewed emergence of our striving in devotion to history's destiny.[93]

Pannenberg pairs love and justice in the quotation above, but suggests that love is the final norm of justice: "Love is equipped to be the measure of justice because it is not an abstract principle." The mission of the church is to demythologize politics and stir the imagination for social action and change. He adds that in Christian history, this mission has frequently had to come from sectarian movements rather than established churches. (The early Quaker movement would be one example among many.)

But Pannenberg also notes that the church's mission is not always revolutionary. It must not disdain social and cultural heritage. We saw this in the retribalization program of the Israelite revolution in Canaan, the commoning impetus of Jesus' actions in Galilee, and the Quaker domestic networks in northern England. All of these examples are both conservative and revolutionary. Over time, each had social effects we tend to call progressive today. For example, the Quaker emphasis upon the common source of Christ's light within all consciences augured for egalitarian class, race, and gender relations.

Pannenberg acknowledges the many failures of the church. "Precisely because the Church mistakes herself for the present form of the Kingdom, God's rule has often had to manifest itself in the secular world outside, and frequently against, the Church." The function of the church is preliminary and provisional. He accepts some Marxist critiques of the church, but "the Marxist mistake is rather in the illusion that the truly humanistic form of society can be achieved definitely by man." As he contemplates the advancing secularization of society, Pannenberg notes,

> Secular culture is marked by a progressive specialization of human activities. In this culture, it is a major social contribution to give individuals access to the wholeness of life in the presence of the eternal. This is the major contribution of the Church in society. All other contributions are secondary.[94]

As a theologian, Pannenberg's insights focus specifically upon the church in the eschatological perspective of God's ultimate purposes in the creation. But his insights can be generalized to dynamics of the common life in any time and place. His eschatological vision of the present as an effect of the future, working in subtle ways within the reflexive patterns of cause and effect, is crucial to any hope for the common life in today's intensely reflexive technological society.

So I (among many other souls, melancholy for the common) find myself on the journey with Abraham, from Ur to Moriah, groping my way anti-heroically for the common life. But perhaps we can derive from the examples of tribal Israel and the early Christian and Quaker movements some possible characteristics of a newly emerging common life.

First, we "Canaanites" living in urban settings and advanced capitalist societies can listen to and learn from more marginal and indigenous peoples who have maintained traditional patterns of a common life: eldership, kinship patterns, relationship with the land, cultural traditions, faith. We can also learn from reconstructions of the common life in European history, such as Peter Linebaugh's work on premodern Britain (*The Magna Carta Manifesto,* cited in the "Common Law" essay in *Further into the Common* and the first essay on anarchism in this volume).

Second, by implication from the above, we can expect any future renewal of the common life to contain significant conservative elements which may appear retrograde, even reactionary, to a culture inured by secular and techno-capitalist assumptions of "progress." Yet, if these elements are grounded in common spiritual and material resources, they will augur toward a new sense of progress on a common basis. The common life is framed by the earth itself, our true common ground, which must reorient conservatism in terms of conservation. Concomitantly, our common spiritual resource will emerge as the One who calls and draws us into a future that transcends even our best visions and efforts.

Third, by implication from above, this commonist renewal will also be revolutionary. But the revolution will come more crucially from the margins as much as from below. The margins may be geographical, economic, cultural, or spiritual. But they will advance upon the centers, as the tribes of Israel advanced upon Canaanite city-states, as Jesus and his movement advanced upon Jerusalem, and as the early Quaker movement advanced upon Bristol and London.

When the Israelites circled around Jericho, "the power of the Lord" breached the walls. Gottwald suggests the walls were breached from the inside, as the city's inhabitants answered the call of liberation. Similarly, the power of renewed commonist faith and practices will draw out those captivated within the walls of today's economic fortresses. In various ways, passive, alienated "Canaanites" will convert nonviolently to actively engaged "Israelites." Remember nonviolent activist George Lakey's motto: "The more violence, the less revolution."

According to Gottwald's reconstruction, not all of the Canaanite city-states succumbed to the Israelite revolution. But those that resisted and subsisted had to come to some working relationship with the Israelite confederation. And not all tribes fully joined in the Israelite covenant with Yahweh. For example, the Kenites, metallurgical specialists, didn't join in the covenant with Yahweh but worked in league with the confederation. And some individuals and families remained apart as "sojourners" or "strangers" within Israelite society, with recognized rights. So we can expect some centers and some forms of centralization to remain, even usefully so. And not every group and individual will embrace the fully articulated faith and practices of a new commonist society. The goal is not a monolithic and repressive utopia but a messy and continually emergent metatopia.

Fourth, and by implication from above, we can expect the new commonist formation to have significant anarchist features (see the two essays on anarchy and anarchism in this volume). We can already recognize the intuitive, rhizomatic spread of network logic and activism in many anti-capitalist, environmental, and liberation movements today. This dynamic has been abetted by the internet in recent decades, but we must not mistake the internet for a panacea, as it captivates many more than it liberates.

Federal forms of organization were a hallmark of anarchist organizations in the industrial era. But in this post-industrial era, the precariat (an insecure, shifting labor force) has replaced the proletariat (the industrial working class) as the "subject of history" (i.e., the key agent of class conflict). New forms of federation are in progress. In particular, networks of knowledge-based and affective labor begin to assert their own logic and power against the centralizing logic and power of capital investment. Again, the Israelite confederation of semi-autonomous tribes, the subversive spread of early Christian networks within the Roman Empire, and the decentralizing, egalitarian logic of early Quaker organization can all serve as evocative examples. And many other historical examples from around the world can prove instructive.

We can expect a shift of balance from centralized power to local authority, what Paul Goodman called anarchism's option for intrinsic relationship against extrinsic power. This dynamic favors inter-generational bonding, with eldership and mentoring eclipsing management and training. But the conservative bias of eldership should be balanced by two complementary roles. Some form of revolutionary cadres like the ancient Levites will be necessary to teach the larger meanings of this new society and foster its continuing evolution. And charismatic

leaders like the Hebrew prophets can arise from any quarter at any time to disrupt logical processes with fresh revelations from the future. (These counter-balancing roles were earlier explored in the "Axis of Revolution" essay in *Into the Common*.)

And finally, just as Abraham and Sarah in Genesis embody larger, shifting demographics and geography of the second millennium BCE, so we can seek the outlines of their figures in today's demographics and geography. The post-industrial precariat – the unemployed, part-time employed, gig-employed, self-employed, the surging migrants and refugees – collectively evoke the figures of Abraham and Sarah for today. So then, what is the future that calls and draws us together into focus and purpose? There is One who calls and remakes each of us into ones, willingly compelled to grope our way toward a future that remains beyond our present horizon. But along the way, we find our common ground as we converge in that call. Will a future society living in common upon the earth find their forebears in us?

8.

The Common of Creation and Nature

Pannenberg's Dialectic of Theology and Science

(5/24)

The preceding essay drew in part upon the eschatological theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928 – 2014) as I reflected upon the call of Abraham in light of my own call experience. Pannenberg interprets the call as God's invitation from the ultimate future, the end of history, which draws those who are willing into concrete, provisional realizations of the kingdom of God on earth.

I was first introduced to Pannenberg's eschatology ("theology of last things") during my last year (1974-75) at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Pannenberg was probably the most radically integrative Christian theologian of the latter twentieth century. His concise, pungent writing had profound impact on me. I had come to theology from an undergraduate major in zoology.[95] So I had some grounding in modern science and a growing ecological concern. In addition, I had grown up in the shadow of the atomic age. That, combined with looming environmental crises, made "the end of the world" plausible to me in some sense. That plausibility had been created by modern science and technology, handmaids to capitalist expansion.

I never had a literalist interest in the Bible. Already before entering seminary, I had taken some survey courses in the Bible. I learned how historical criticism revealed a larger sense of history behind the history narrated in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. That perspective made the Bible more intriguing to me. In addition, the cosmological and biological evolutionary theories I had learned as a zoology major seemed complementary, rather than contradictory to the biblical accounts of creation. Indeed, the creation story in Genesis 1 offers a developmental model of the natural world in ancient, prescientific terms.

While at Union, I became interested in the apocalyptic literature of the late Old Testament and Jewish intertestamental literature, because it brought all humanity and the whole creation into the realm of God's redemptive activity. As dire and cataclysmic as apocalyptic imagery can be, it is no more dire and cataclysmic than nuclear weapons and environmental catastrophes. I also began tuning in to the experiential apocalyptic of Jesus' parables of the kingdom of God and the letters of Paul. *Apokalypsis* as the *revelation* of last things in present circumstances provided one key to understanding how the resurrection of Jesus produced such earth-shaking power in the early Christian movement. Having learned from New Testament scholars such as Ernst Käsemann, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Louis Martyn, I went on after seminary to apply their biblical insights to the message of George Fox

and the social revolution of the early Quaker movement in seventeenth-century England. All these key orienting developments took place from the latter 1960s to the end of the 1970s.

But only very recently have I discovered Pannenberg's later work that engages modern natural science with the biblical theology of creation. *Toward a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith* (1993) is consistent with his eschatological theology going back to the 1960s. Here he strongly critiques Christian theology for having retreated from the natural world into a subjective spirituality, beginning in the eighteenth century. He barely bothers to critique fundamentalist reaction against evolutionary theology, as it insists upon a literal, empirical six-day creation story (thus unconsciously capitulating to the scientific worldview from the start). But he also challenges modern scientists: does their paradigm of the natural world, as impressive and continually expanding as it is, actually account adequately for reality? An updated creation theology, with updated ethical implications, are urgently needed, given the growing crises generated by modern science and technology. Some kind of unified field, an interactive *common* of creation theology and natural science is required.

Modern science engages in a "methodological atheism." It brackets out transcendent, theological perspectives on the world, relying upon careful exploration and experiment with immanent causes and effects. This method has produced a vast, powerful, and expanding paradigm of reality with major benefits to human life. But the scientific method can become a scientistic ideology when the bracketing becomes a wall against theological perspectives. Scientism has gained popular support, owing to the multitude of goods it provides. And as Pannenberg notes, that drift has been abetted by religion as it has gradually consigned the natural world – and its fate – to science.

The purpose of this essay is to follow Pannenberg's thesis to explore a common realm of science and theology, a dialectic of immanent and transcendent perspectives, where the eons of history and teeming diversity of the natural world find coherence in the oneness of eternity. For Pannenberg, eternity is not a timeless, spaceless realm. Rather, it generates and contains all time and space – from the end.

Law and Contingency

Pannenberg's key point of engagement with natural science regards the role of contingent events in nature. "An event is contingent if a description of it is neither self-evident nor necessary, if it could have happened differently" (9).[96] Science emphasizes the determining regularity of natural laws to the point that the contingency of natural events slips into the background, ignored. "The existence of the whole world is contingent in the sense that it need not be at all. It owes its existence to the free activity of divine creation. So does every single part of the world" (34). Emphasis upon natural laws and empirical evidence renders the worldview of science a closed system. Nevertheless, science "must presuppose a sort of primary miracle, namely, the original explosion or big bang which is supposed to be the starting point of the world process. The question of how this event came about, what perhaps preceded it, cannot be asked in the frame of this design" (89).

Further, in distilling natural laws from observation and experiment, scientific knowledge tends toward abstraction from the physical reality it theorizes. The distillation denatures nature. In the process, it has also become abstracted from the presence of God in creation. Faced with the progressive advance of the scientific paradigm of the natural world, the churches have retreated into the realm of personal religious experience. If they still venture into the natural world, they often look for "God in the gaps" of scientific explanation: the yet unexplained aspects of natural objects and processes. But those gaps are constantly reduced or closed, leading to further religious retreat.

An aside: I'm reminded that more than twenty years ago, I organized a conference for Quakers in the sciences at the Woodbrooke Quaker study center in Birmingham England. One of the presenters, Jocelyn Burnell, who early in her career was part of a Nobel Prize-winning team of astrophysicists, described the religious dilemma of "God in the gaps." Later, in one of our worship sessions, her son, a rising scientist himself, spoke out of the silence. He recalled that he had once visited a Honda plant in Japan, where he was shown in detail its manufacturing processes. He then remarked. "I saw how a Honda is made. But I didn't see how a Honda is created." He left it at that, with the implication that the creative process took place in offices somewhere outside the plant. And even there, the car really has a transcendent source in the intelligence and intentions of its creators. Later in the conference, another participant reflected further, offering the analogy

of the sun shining through the gaps in the clouds. Even if the clouds completely cover the sky within our wide but limited horizon, we know that the sun, the transcendent source of life-giving heat and light, is still there.

Pannenberg pursues the matter of contingency further. The logic of natural law (or any law) is "if A, then B." But science tends to ignore the contingent reality of A's existence in the first place, or that somewhere in time, B followed from A for the first time. This is true, for example, in the laws of biological science. They build upon physical laws, but life did not always exist on earth. These laws took form in time, in natural history (108). He goes on to note that humans also belong to this wider world process. This is a powerful *novum*:

> Indeed, with the inclusion of the human being the state of affairs changes fundamentally. Only with the origin of the human being and with the appropriation of nature by human consciousness does the world process as a whole, retroactively on the basis of the human being, attain its connection in itself. That takes place through human knowledge of nature just as through any alleged dominance over it. Only in this sense is it possible to speak of a history of nature. This is not a history of nature apart from the human being; rather, it is a history of nature directed to the human being. The fact that the connection of the sequence of forms in the world process is demonstrated as a historical connection only from its end, from the human being backward, would correspond only to the manner in which historical connections as such can be constituted, that is, from the end.
>
> This [world process] has its unity rightfully only under the presupposition of God who has ordained the contingent sequence of forms toward the human being so that this sequence can be conceived as a meaningful connection of occurrences backward, a sequence that is shaped and perfected by human recognizing and acting [111-12].

This is a strongly anthropocentric statement, but within a theocentric frame of reference. The second paragraph clearly has in mind the ancient developmental cosmology of Genesis 1, culminating in the creation of humanity, which of course has some resonance with evolutionary history. The human ability to conceive natural history, and even to shape it on this planet to some extent, is an awesome power – and *responsibility*.

However, the weight of this knowledge is not readily perceived by a secularized consciousness:

> History receives its unity on the basis of the experience of divine reality as it has been obtained on the Israelite stage of the human history of religions. God makes each new event throw its light on earlier ones and thus creates the historical connection of which the human being becomes aware already before intervening actively in it [112].

Thus, as a Christian theologian, Pannenberg orients his transcendent sense of history according to the ancient Israelite experience of a God who acts in history, and the Christian inheritance of that outlook (which we will come to a little later).

Eternity, Time, and Eschatology

Pannenberg distills Israelite and Christian witnesses to God and to history into a remarkable understanding of eternity. As suggested above, the creation of the cosmos cannot be conceived as a temporal act. The divine act of creation does not occur in time: "rather, it constitutes an eternal act contemporaneous with all time, that is, with the entire world process. Yet this world process itself has a temporal beginning, because it takes place in time" (100).

He finds a connection between this concept of eternity and Einstein's theory of relativity:

> Eternity comprehends all time and everything temporal in itself . . . The worldview of the theory of relativity also can be understood in the sense of a last contemporaneousness of all events that for us are partitioned into a temporal sequence. The four-dimensional continuum of space and time can be represented symbolically – projected on a three-dimensional image – as a cylinder or (under consideration of the progressive expansion of the world) as a cone or sphere. In these images the entire world process is conceived as a single present. However, it could appear in this manner only from a point of view that would not coincide with any position in the world process [101].

But eternity must not be conceived as the mere sum of all that which is scattered in time. Eternity is also the production of the content of time. This leads Pannenberg to his eschatological perspective on reality:

> What is the relationship of the function of eternity, which comprises all that which is temporal, to the world process itself which takes place in time? Insofar as this is characterized by an increasing unification, eternity enters from the future into time. Of the modes of time, the one closest to the eternal act of creation would not be the past but the future. From the future is the world, even with its already past periods of world process, created [102].

Thus, we can see how his remarks on the role of humanity, quoted earlier, fit into this logic of the end acting upon the past and present. As quoted in the preceding essay, Pannenberg asserts that the present is an effect of the future. This does not negate the logic of law, "if A, then B," where the past determines the present, but it internalizes and counterbalances the law.

This perspective rejects both static and developmental cosmologies: "The understanding of world as creation, therefore, excludes not only an eternal identical order of the world but also the conception of the world process in the strict sense of a progressive development of the self-acting unfolding of a germ that was already sowed in the beginning." Such a progressive view would be "a teleology closed in on itself," excluding any genuine contingency of occurrences in the world process (102). He cites the work of Karl Popper, finding that the scientific worldview, to the extent it is dominated by immutable natural laws, has been influenced by the metaphysics of the Greek worldview, with a static cosmos and a timeless eternity. (Perhaps this explains why science assigns classical Greek and Latin names to planets, moons, and other celestial objects.) The classical bias has contributed to the exclusion of theology from the scientific worldview (33).

I'm not sure Pannenberg sufficiently credits modern science for its own historical sense of the cosmos, as evidenced by books like Brian Swimme's popular *The Universe Story* (1994). And his assertion of an ultimate unification of the cosmos is left unexplained.

Pannenberg's eschatology, his view from the end, derives from Hebrew Scripture, where the sense of contingency is strong.

> New and unforeseen events take place constantly that are experienced as the work of almighty God . . . only on the presupposition of such an understanding of reality is it meaningful, for the Israelite and for the Christian heir of the Israelite tradition, to pray. Furthermore, on this basis faith appears as the behavior that is, in the last analysis, alone appropriate to reality. For the fact that again and again new events take place means

> that one cannot render a final judgment concerning the context in which present and past events and figures stand and from which their significance is to be determined: only the future will reveal what is "in it" [76].

Humanly, we notice some connections between occurrences as they happen.

> However, these connections become visible only from each end of a process . . . Every event throws new light on earlier occurrences; this now appears in new connections . . . [Israelite] thinking implied, one might say, an eschatological ontology: if only the future will teach what is the significance of an event, then the "essence" of an event or occurrence is never completely finished in the present . . . In the last analysis, only the ultimate future will decide about its peculiarity. Therefore the idea of an ultimate future belongs to the logic of this view of reality. Here creation itself would have to be considered from its end; on the basis of the final occurrences, God would have designed the world and its course . . . Only in the eschatological future will we be able to look at creation as a whole and understand it as far as we will participate in the glory of its creator [83].

This eschatological vision of reality underpins the Christian revelation:

> Christianity later was able to conceive of history itself as a unity because for Christians the end of history has already become a previous event. The perfection of the human being has already taken place with the appearance of the new human being in the incarnation of the Son of God. It may be doubted whether the idea of the unity of history can at all be separated from these theological roots [86].

I'm not sure why Pannenberg emphasizes the incarnation of Christ without explicitly including his death and resurrection. In "Tomb with a View" (in *Life in Gospel-Space: A Testimony*, 2020), I explore a chiastic view of history, with the empty tomb of Jesus as its axis. The end is still the full and final truth, but it is revealed as promise from the center.

Scientists themselves sometimes confess a quasi-religious sense of wonder, even awe, at the natural world. But

> modern science is far from pure innocence . . . in fact there has been a strong tendency in modern science toward . . . subjecting the knowledge of the abstract regularities of nature to human use for human purposes . . . to the disposal of human

> groups and societies and to serve the most diverse aims. Using scientific research for ever-extended domination and exploitation of natural resources has deeply influenced the direction of research itself. Modern experimental science not simply observes the natural processes but invades them. Thus it does not leave the change of the natural environment to technological application but starts itself on that line by its experimental techniques [16-17].

This is the only place in the book where Pannenberg ventures toward an environmental concern. Overall, his work might be termed "hard theology" in answer to "hard science," physics in particular. But his insights offer important, reconstructed foundations for a faith that can respond to today's mounting crises.

Another aside: perhaps this essay has been inspired indirectly by reading drafts of a forthcoming book by a Quaker and friend, Brian Drayton. His training and work has been in ecological science, but perhaps his métier is as a naturalist, where the emphasis is on the observation rather than the invasion of the natural world. This sensibility has a long-standing tradition among Friends. It is concomitant with the Quaker spirituality of spiritual discernment, observation of what is happening within and around oneself. Brian's forthcoming book, *The Gospel in the Anthropocene: Letters from a Quaker Naturalist*, combines fascinating vignettes from the natural world interspersed with Christian theology and Quaker faith and practice, toward a more trenchant response to climate change.

Perhaps because he spent his theological career in the university (primarily the University of Munich) Pannenberg doesn't countenance the socio-economic underpinnings of the scientific establishment in the academic world. That realm has been important in maintaining peer-review and accountability in the advance of scientific knowledge. However, in recent years we have seen more cases of scientists falsifying their findings and skirting accountability in the quest to fund ever more expensive research. And universities themselves increasingly bend to the interests of private donors and public funding. Finally, even the name "university" partakes of the universalizing claims to knowledge and power we earlier noted in the ancient creation of money as abstract value (see "Everlasting Sabbath and Commonist Economics" in *Into the Common*). The university enjoys a privileged but domesticated place at the "commanding heights" of a global capitalist order.

Divine Spirit as Force-Field

In "The Doctrine of the Spirit and the Task of a Theology of Nature" (123-36) Pannenberg traces the narrowing role of the Holy Spirit in Christian tradition. He begins by reviewing how in Hebrew Scripture, God's Spirit is the life of all living creatures. Psalm 104 witnesses God's creative and sustaining power throughout the natural order. And all the animals look to God for their life: "when you take away their spirit/breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit/breath, they are created" (vss. 29-30). Similarly, Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 reflects, "all must go to their eternal home . . . the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit/breath returns to God who gave it." Genesis 2:7 witnesses, "the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul/being." The apostle Paul paraphrases this text when he writes, "Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being'" – then adds, "the last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45).

But over the course of Christian history, the role of the Spirit was narrowed drastically to its role in human salvation. By medieval times, the channel of the Spirit was narrowed still further, as a supernatural gift received via the church's ritual sacraments. Luther and Calvin re-affirmed the role of the Spirit in the creation, but neither one developed its consequences for an understanding of nature. Subsequent Protestant theology emphasized the Spirit's role in the Christian's personal faith. This tendency grew along with the Cartesian dualism of spirit versus matter.

Pannenberg further notes that in the Spiritualist Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Spirit was conceived in correspondence to the inner light in the human mind. This paved the way for the Enlightenment's humanistic identification of spirit and mind. By the end of the seventeenth century, Locke had defined spirit in terms of a substance acting in the operations of the mind. And a century later, Hume eliminated the concept of substance and abolished the idea of spirit altogether. In modern times, as scientific explanation has paved over much of the world, the role of the Holy Spirit has often been still further reduced to helping persons accept statements of faith that otherwise seem irrational and unintelligible.

Certainly, I recognize Quaker beginnings in the context of the Spiritualist Reformation. And the early Quaker identification of the Spirit

with the inward Light of Christ in all human consciences is close to Pannenberg's description. But Friends were adamant in insisting that this Light is not to be confused with the human mind or its reason. They believed that Christ's Light is bestowed only upon humans. But George Fox, the central figure in Quaker beginnings, witnessed that this Light/Spirit reveals God's creative wisdom in the patterns of the natural world. And the same Light guides humans to live moderately among the creatures.[97] That insight grew into the collective Quaker ethic/testimony of a "plain" or "simple" life. So the Quaker example both confirms and disconfirms Pannenberg's description of the Spiritualist Reformation.

In order to restore a larger, cosmological understanding of God's Spirit, Pannenberg draws upon the field theory innovated by the English physicist Michael Faraday (1791 – 1867) in his research of electromagnetic fields. Albert Einstein added further theorization from an astrophysical perspective. While classical physics contemplates forces in terms of their effects on bodies or masses, Faraday inverted the relationship between force and body:

> Faraday's grand vision was to conceive of body and mass as secondary phenomena, a concentration of force at particular places and points of the field. The material particle appears as the point where the lines of force converge and form a "cluster" that persists for some time . . . field theories from Faraday to Einstein claim a priority for the whole over the parts. This is of theological significance, because God has to be conceived as the unifying ground of the whole universe, if he is to be conceived as creator and redeemer of the world. The field concept could be used in theology to make the effective presence of God in every single phenomenon intelligible [38].

Thus Pannenberg analogizes: just as physical forces transcend material bodies, so the eternal Creator-Redeemer transcends the cosmos and its history.

But faith remains faith, no matter how far theology advances in "faith seeking understanding," to use Anselm's phrase. And Pannenberg's engagement with natural science by no means attempts a proof of God's existence. As Kierkegaard remarks in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), "God does not think, he creates; God does not exist, he is eternal. A human being thinks and exists, and existence separates thinking and being, holds them apart from each other in succession."

Pannenberg's eschatological perspective asserts the "ontological priority of the future." That leads him to a striking conclusion: "in a

restricted but important sense, God does not yet exist. Since his rule and being are inseparable, therefore, God's being is still in process of coming to be."[98] But this is not a God in development, as suggested by A. N. Whitehead and his successors in process theology. Rather, "what turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along." There is a time yet to come when "God shall be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).[99]

According to Pannenberg interpreter Allan Galloway, this puts a clearer perspective on the message and meaning of Jesus:

> He was neither a reformer or a revolutionary. His single vocation was to proclaim the message of the Kingdom of God and to demonstrate its nearness. But the vocation of his followers is not so restricted . . . The question is this: Did he in that peculiar openness to God which determined his destiny draw the whole world and the whole of history into an orbital system round that destiny? The fact that peoples of all times and of every culture, having duties and responsibilities in their own society of a kind that could not have been conceived in Jesus' day, are nonetheless drawn into that orbit of his faithfulness, is itself a token of the universal significance of his humanity.[100]

Thus, within this eschatological perspective, the significance of the life and destiny of Jesus opens out beyond the realm of historically Christian faith and cultures. I would call this indeterminate "orbital system" the common, rather than "universal." And I would add to Galloway's statement that a field theory of the Spirit integrates the entire natural world into the "orbit of his faithfulness."

Going still further, reflection on Jesus leads Pannenberg to a historically dynamic conception of the Trinity. There is both eternal unity and historical differentiation among the Father, Son, and Spirit. This definition saves Trinitarian theology from passive metaphysical speculation and keeps it historically and socially relevant. The Spirit's work in nature and all humanity finds focus through communities of faith. "The eternal communion of the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit is not something independent of the community of the people of God in the Spirit."[101] (By implication, perhaps it is more appropriate to speak of a *Quadrinity* that integrates humans and nature with the Trinity. I have suggested this in earlier writing.[102] Quadrinity constitutes the fullest, final meaning of atonement).

Galloway notes that Pannenberg not only interprets theology historically, but his interpretation itself is part of a larger historical process:

> To understand any historical phenomenon properly you also need to know what it became in its later out-working . . . Therefore Pannenberg is prepared to look at apocalyptic not in a merely antiquarian way but from his own perspective as a man who knows what it became, *through the action and fate of Jesus,* in the hands of the Greek Fathers, of Augustine, of Joachim of Floris, of the Reformers, of Hegel, Marx and nineteenth-century historiographers. This, in his view, is what a historical understanding of a phenomenon really involves.[103]

Since Galloway's book was published in 1973, we can add Pannenberg's later integration of natural sciences and figures such as Faraday and Einstein into his historical perspective. And of course, we bring our own twenty-first-century perspective into reading Pannenberg: climate change, continuing nuclear threats, and other crises invite a renewed apocalyptic faith.

Jesus and the Law in His Apocalyptic Perspective

The conversation Pannenberg invites with natural science regarding its laws echoes the argument that develops in the gospels between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees, regarding their body of laws. That argument begins in the hills of Galilee and leads all the way to his confrontation with the ruling Sanhedrin in the Jerusalem temple the night of his arrest.

The apocalyptic gospel Jesus preached, often couched in homely parables from everyday life, is best summarized in Mark1:15 (which I have often quoted in these essays): "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." "The time is fulfilled" implies that a certain cumulative moment of cause-and-effect, past-to-present developments has been reached. "The kingdom of God has come near" announces that some radically contingent event impends upon this present. It is a future that his people have hoped for, but have not been able to produce by their own efforts. "Repent and believe the good news" suggests that this impending future becomes a decisive effect in the present as people *turn* to it, from their assumptions of a past-present, cause-and-effect world, and transfer their faith to that in-breaking future.

Like a grace-note that enters the musical notation without altering the time-signature, this future-present subtly alters reality. Jesus insists, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I

have come not to abolish but to fulfill . . . For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17, 20). This righteousness is not achieved by striving even more strenuously than the Pharisees. It comes as one turns and follows this contingent event as it breaks into present circumstances.

Such a life in a present effected by the future has its day-to-day anxieties. But these are rather different from the anxieties of cause-and-effect consciousness. Jesus counsels not to worry today what one will eat or wear tomorrow. Let tomorrow bring its own worries. "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33). The kingdom of God is a future that impends differently from "tomorrow." This provision of life's necessities is not magical. It is based in the sharing communities that were forming around Jesus in Galilee (as suggested in earlier essays, such as "Beyond Counting" *Into the Common*). Seeking first the kingdom of God includes seeking one another.

This is a life of radical contingency. One example comes from early in the Galilean ministry. Mark tells us that on one Sabbath Jesus and his disciples are walking in the fields and the disciples begin snacking on the grain. They are itinerant and living day-to-day, sometimes with hospitable hosts and other times without. Some local Pharisees see this activity and ask Jesus why he allows his disciples to break the Sabbath rest (albeit in a very minor fashion). Jesus answers, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28 – see the two "Like Jesus" essays in this collection for more on the meaning of "Son of Man" or the "Human One"). Thus, Jesus doesn't just shrug off Sabbath law, but places its demands in relation to the demands of the radically contingent life to which he lives and has called his disciples.

To live the life of radical contingency is to live into an eternity that is breaking in from the future, from the end. Mark tells another story near the end of Jesus' life, while he is teaching in Jerusalem. Some Sadducees (the aristocratic elite whom Mark tells us don't believe in the resurrection) pose a wildly hypothetical question about the resurrection. A childless woman's husband dies. She is then married by his brother, who also dies, and then by another brother, who dies as well, and she remains childless. This succession of events fulfills the law's obligation upon the brothers to care for the widowed sister-in-law. But in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be? First, Jesus laughs at the question of marital status in heaven. He then adds, "As for the dead

being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong" (Mark 12:26-27).

The story fits with Pannenberg's understanding of God's future:

> Because there is no future beyond God, his having been the future of his past creatures has not, for him, passed away. He remains the future of the whole of the past and keeps present to himself his having been the finite future of every finite present which has now become past. Thus he keeps his past creatures in the present of his future.
>
> There is a single future for all events. To speak of the definitive unity of the world means that all events are moving ahead to meet, finally, a common future . . . Therefore the unity of all things should not be understood as an eternal cosmos but as something to be achieved by a process of reconciling previous schisms and contradictions. Reconciliation is a constitutive aspect of creation.[104]

Thus, the kingdom of God is the "common future," the destiny of all things in the "compresence" of God's one eternity. Pannenberg's understanding of time and eternity shatters our inherited categories, much as Jesus' teaching was like new wine bursting old wineskins (Luke 5:37). Likewise, the kingdom of God shifts our spatial focus from particular foregrounds to a common background. Jesus enacted the common in his social space as he invited gentiles and scribes, tax collectors and Pharisees.

Conclusion

Just as Jesus came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it, so the vocation of theology is not to debunk science but to fulfill it beyond its law-abiding explanations of reality. For example, perhaps theology looms at the far reaches of quantum physics. The nontheist Marxist cultural critic Slavoj Zizek asks,

> How are we to interpret [quantum mechanics'] so-called "principle of uncertainty" which prohibits us from attaining full knowledge of particles at the quantum level (to determine the velocity *and* the position of a particle)? For Einstein, this prin-

> ciple of uncertainty proves that quantum physics does not provide a full description of reality, that there must be some unknown features missed by its conceptual apparatus. [This was the occasion for his famous comment that "The old one doesn't play at dice."[105]] Heisenberg, Bohr, and others, on the contrary, insisted that this incompleteness of our knowledge of quantum reality indicates a strange incompleteness in quantum reality itself, a claim that leads to a breathtakingly weird ontology.[106]

For Pannenberg, that "breathtakingly weird ontology" is eternity coming to us from our ultimate future. I find his construct of time and eternity a compelling systematic reflection on the apocalyptic message of Jesus and his heritage in the metatemporal faith of his people.

I will close with a wry anecdote Zizek tells of the physicist Niels Bohr. Bohr invited a fellow scientist to his home. As he was leading him into the house, the guest noticed a horseshoe over the door and commented, "I don't believe in that old superstition." Bohr replied, "I don't believe in it either, but I've heard it works even if you don't believe it."

9.

The Music of the Common

Noise, Silence, and Music in Motion

(5-6/24)

Street Legal (1978) is one of Bob Dylan's less critically successful albums. Certainly, after his resurgence with *Blood on the Tracks* (1974) and *Desire* (1975), it was a clunker. And all the more so, given the musical ferment going on elsewhere, with new-wave and punk innovations. I recall critics complaining of his "anti-music," the careless production of songs. And they puzzled, as I did, at the picture of Dylan in Vegas-period Elvis costume on the LP's back cover.

Clearly, something was going on, perhaps something like an earlier cycle in Dylan's creative process. With the amazing sequence of *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965), *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965), and *Blonde on Blonde* (1966), his popular success and critical acclaim reached fever-pitch. But his UK tour in 1966, as documented in Volume 4 of his *Bootleg Series*, seems aimed at alienating his adoring audience. They loved his solo acoustic set, but many howled against the electric set with The Hawks (later renamed The Band). This was not the brilliant folk-rock Dylan had debuted at Newport the previous year, but loud, abrasive, numbing noise. Just before launching into the last song at the Royal Albert Hall in London, he can be heard saying to the band, "Play f***ing loud!" While some negative reactions at Newport seem wrong-headed, the outcry in England seems appropriate, even intended. Dylan appears to have been ready to repel his audience and the quasi-messianic projections that were coming at him from many directions. Soon after the UK tour, he suffered a motorcycle accident and re-treated into seclusion and family life.

Street Legal seems to register a more general crisis, something like what Jesus proclaimed: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15). That is, a moment of saturation had arrived in popular music, and something had to give. The stripped-down, primitive music of punk and some new-wave bands was a reaction against the bloated production and vain-glory that had overcome rock by the 1970s. Dylan's response was different, as articulated by the two major statements on *Street Legal*, "The Changing of the Guards," and "Señor," which appeared together as a single in October 1978.

"The Changing of the Guards" opens with the words, "Sixteen years, sixteen banners united over the field where the good shepherd grieves." Dylan had been a recording artist for sixteen years at that point. The song is layered with codes from the Bible, astrology, Tarot, folk-tale, and more. The protagonist shifts between first-person and

third-person. Dylan himself commented that the song meant different things to him every time he performed it in concert that year (but never after). Dylan interpreter Michael Gray found the song to be an oblique reflection on his musical career, his failed marriage, and more. In the next-to-last verse, Dylan sings, "Gentlemen, he said, I don't need your organization, I've shined your shoes, I've moved your mountains and marked your cards. But Eden is burning, either brace yourself for elimination or else your hearts must have the courage for the changing of the guards." A break with the popular music industry and its wider socio-economic allegiances seems evident. He made public his conversion to Christian faith soon after the song was released as a single in October 1978. (A more compelling rendering of the song by Patti Smith can be heard on her 2007 album of covers, *12*.)

The B-side to the single was "Señor (Tales of Yankee Power)." In concert at the time, Dylan introduced the song as inspired by an encounter with a mysterious old man on a train in Mexico. That comment, along with the song's subtitle, may have been a red herring. Or perhaps it locates his decisive moment of conversion. "Señor" can mean "Lord," and the religious overtones of the song are hard to miss (though I was amazed to find a number of Dylan interpreters either missing or avoiding them).

The song opens with "Señor, señor, can you tell me where we're headin'? Lincoln County Road or Armageddon? Seems like I been down this way before. Is there any truth to that, señor?" Lincoln County, New Mexico figures in legends of the old West and perhaps in the film *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973), in which Dylan had a small role. It establishes the "Yankee" thread. But the biblical image of Armageddon clearly suggests a looming end-point. And does "down this way before" refer to his earlier break in 1966? The song oscillates between lost love and cultural dread. Near the middle of the song comes the line, "Well, the last thing I remember before I stripped and kneeled was that trainload of fools bogged down in a magnetic field." Perhaps the line alludes to the captivity of popular music and radio-play as one factor in his moment of conversion. The final verse: "Señor, señor, let's overturn these tables, disconnect these cables, this place don't make sense to me no more. Can you tell me what we're waiting for, señor?"

Dylan waited no longer. He shed much of his wanna-be hipster audience with his Christian conversion and three overtly Christian albums in rapid succession: *Slow Train Coming* (1979), *Saved* (1980), and *Shot of Love* (1981). He escaped the spectacle of arenas and stadiums,

and was again able to play smaller venues. And personally, Dylan could reground his life in community: a quiet second marriage and a Christian community in California, in place of the folkie community that had nurtured his early musical career in Greenwich Village, New York.[107] The songs on the Christian albums surely grew out of that renewed community life in some manner and degree.

Noise: The Political Economy of Music

That is the title of a book by Jacques Attali, published in French in 1977, and then in English in 1985.[108] Attali is a professional economist who served at that time as a close advisor to Francois Mitterrand, the socialist President of France. In this book, he interprets music as it has interacted with political economy in European history. He provocatively suggests that music not only reflects shifts in political economy but often heralds them prophetically. Fredric Jameson's Foreword to the book summarizes: "The argument of *Noise* is that music, unique among the arts . . . has precisely this annunciatory vocation; and that the music of today stands both as a promise of a new, liberating mode of production, and as the menace of a dystopian possibility which is that mode of production's baleful mirror image" (xi).

Jameson locates Attali in the stream of the Frankfurt School of Marxist cultural theory, in particular Theodor Adorno's socio-musical theories. For example, Adorno suggests,

> If we listen to Beethoven and do not hear anything of the revolutionary bourgeoisie – not the echo of its slogans, but rather the need to realize them, the cry for that totality in which reason and freedom are to have their warrant – we understand Beethoven no better than does one who cannot follow the purely musical content of his pieces . . . If he is the musical prototype of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, he is at the same time the prototype of a music that has escaped from its social tutelage and is aesthetically fully autonomous, a servant no longer [ix].

But a century later, with the bourgeois revolution complete in industrial and bureaucratic capitalism, Schoenberg's twelve-tone system arrives both to articulate and to condemn it:

> This technique . . . approaches the ideal of mastery as domination, the infinity of which resides in the fact that nothing heteronomous remains which is not absorbed into the continuum

> of the technique. It is, however, the suppressing moment in the domination of nature, which suddenly turns against subjective autonomy and freedom itself, in the name of which this domination found its fulfillment.

Jameson explicates Adorno's comment: "Schoenberg's 'moment of truth' is therefore to have replicated the dynamic of a repressive, bureaucratic, and technocratic social order so completely as to offer something like an aesthetic portrait or mirror image of it" (x-xi). With these examples, Jameson prepares the reader to grasp Attali's complex thesis.

Attali uses Pieter Brueghel the Elder's painting, *Carnival's Argument with Lent* (Antwerp, 1559) to set out a dialectic of noise, music, and silence. The painting is an example of the "world landscape" paintings of that period, where a panorama of activity is portrayed from an elevated point of view (I examined an earlier example of this style, *The Adoration of the Lamb,* by the van Eycks, in an essay in *Into the Common*). Brueghel portrays all kinds of people and activities, including music, in a southern Netherlands village, just as Carnival is turning toward Lent. Carnival is portrayed as a procession led by a fat butcher riding a beer-barrel, holding forth a spit with several kinds of meat. He is encountering another procession coming out of a church, led by an emaciated woman sitting on a three-legged chair carried on a cart, holding forth a baker's oven spatula with three herrings. Attali interprets Carnival as celebratory, disorganized *noise* meeting the penitent discipline of Lent as *silence*. *Music* emerges from the encounter between the two.

> Music is inscribed between noise and silence, in the space of the social codification it reveals. Every mode of music is rooted in the ideologies and technologies of its age, and at the same time produces them . . . In this book I would like to trace the political economy of music as a succession of *orders* (in other words, differences) done violence by *noises* (in other words, the calling into question of differences) that are *prophetic* because they create new orders, unstable and changing [19].

> [Music] heralds, for it is *prophetic*. It has always been in its essence a herald of times to come. Thus, as we shall see, if it is true that *the political organization of the twentieth century is rooted in the political thought of the nineteenth, the latter is almost entirely present in embryonic form in the music of the eighteenth century*. In the last twenty years, music has undergone yet another transformation . . . today, music heralds . . . the establishment of a society of

> repetition in which nothing will happen anymore. But at the same time, it heralds the emergence of a formidable subversion, one leading to a radically new organization [4,5].

The subversive and annunciatory potentials of music were recognized as early as Plato's *Republic* (Book 4, Section 424) as quoted by Attali (33-34):

> This is the kind of lawlessness that easily insinuates itself unobserved [through music] . . . because it is supposed to be only a form of play and to work no harm. Nor does it work any, except that by gradual infiltration, it softly overflows upon the characters and pursuits of men and from these issues forth grown greater to attack their business dealings, and from these relations it proceeds against the laws and the constitution with wanton license till it finally overthrows all things public and private . . . For the modes of music are never disturbed without unsettling of the most fundamental political and social conventions . . . It is here, then, that our guardians must build their guardhouse and post of watch.

Attali develops a scheme of four eras in the interaction of European music and political economy: *sacrificing, representing, repeating,* and an emergent *composing* era in Europe and America. His writing is not always very coherent, but it rewards patience. I will attempt to summarize his analysis of these different eras. In so doing, I will need to supply some explanatory links that seem implicit in his writing.

Sacrifice

"Sacrificing" is Attali's term for music and political economy from feudal into early modern Europe. He draws upon René Girard's scapegoat theory of culture.[109] Girard's anthropological studies suggest that cultures grow out of identity, which leads to emulation, which leads to competition and conflict. In traditional societies, retributive violence between conflicting groups can spiral out of control, unless some kind of scapegoat is identified and sacrificed (literally, or symbolically in some manner) to make peace and restore a functioning society. The scapegoat mechanism is thus crucial to cultures if they are not to self-destruct.

Of course, feudal to early modern Europe is the era of religious and cultural Christendom. Many important developments in music took place around the Roman Catholic mass and in the high Reformation

churches. Music accompanied the church's focus on the death and resurrection of Christ as scapegoat, as a substitutionary atonement for human sin. Thus, in feudal and Renaissance Europe, the raucous noise of Carnival meets the repressive silence of Lent, finding synthesis in the musical accompaniment of the Eucharist.

However, outside the church, violence against women, witches, heretics, Jews, Moors, and others played out the scapegoat tactics of European *cultural* Christendom. These are among the many forms of violence the gospel story of Jesus' death was intended to *demystify* and *end*. Renaissance humanism and the multiplying Protestant reformations rent the "sacred canopy" of medieval Christendom, leading to spiraling violence and widespread wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Representation

"Representing" is Attali's term for the succeeding era of music and political economy. The "sweet reasonableness" of the Enlightenment's liberal humanism and the new prosperity of early capitalism curtailed the sacrificial violence of cultural Christendom and its wars of religion. The ascendant merchant classes, the *bourgeoisie* in Attali's French terminology, began to assert new control over European society. By "representation," Attali means the ascent of the musical performer, who represents/performs the composer's musical score. "The artist was born, at the same time as his work went on sale" (47). The performer becomes a star whom the bourgeoisie will pay money to hear – and thereby also demonstrate to others their cultural taste. The first performance spaces outside aristocratic courts and churches emerged in the mid-eighteenth century in commercial inns and shops, before concert halls were built.

Attali quotes from Bach's contract of employment at Leipzig and Haydn's at Esterhazy to show that even in the eighteenth century, composers were still in the role of domestic servants to aristocrats and churches. But the tempered scale that Bach helped codify became dominant over the earlier modal codes, prefiguring the rationalizing social order of early capitalism. "Mozart and Bach reflect the bourgeoisie's dream of harmony better than and prior to the whole of nineteenth-century political theory" (5-6). Thus, the prophetic character of music in Attali's thesis. His use of the term "representing" also alludes

to growth of representative democratic processes – albeit dominated then as now by capitalist economic interests.

In her Afterword to Attali's book, musicologist Susan McClary modifies his thesis somewhat. She suggests that the representative reorganization of music and political economy was already underway in the seventeenth century. But it was still in such a pitched battle against church and aristocracy that it hasn't been recognized by music historians [154-56].

Early Quaker Silence, Noise, and Music

I would add to McClary's point that the early Quaker movement offers an obscure but telling episode in that pitched battle. It fits with Attali's overall dialectic of noise, silence, and music. Quakers were the last radical movement to arise from the revolutionary situation of the English civil war of the 1640s, when popular expectations ran high for religious and democratic reform, even the kingdom of God on earth. But by mid-1649, after the beheading of Charles I, it became clear to radicals that neither the victorious Cromwell and his generals nor the progressive remnant of the purged Parliament would deliver serious reform (see the first of the two essays in this volume on anarchy and anarchism). The Ranter outburst of 1649-50 was pure *noise*, a clamor of blasphemy and vituperation against the Puritan regime taking hold of the nation. Ranter noise thrived in the local alehouse and broke out into the streets. The Ranter inversion of Puritan morality, religion, and social order teetered between sheer nihilism and a mystical *via negativa*.

But other radicals retreated in quiet from the tumult and awaited some kind of divine intervention. Usually labeled as "Seekers" or "Waiters," some of them began to emerge in late 1651 as a movement soon dubbed "Quakers," owing to their physical shaking during their silent meetings. The shaking was a physical manifestation of all the contradictions and violence they had experienced around them and had spiritually absorbed during the preceding decade. All that *noise* was acutely compressed in the penitent *silence* of their meetings for worship, which then burst out into an unprecedented spread of public *noise*: free-form street preaching, public invectives against immorality and unfair market practices, and the interruption of parish church services all over the nation.

All this noise broke forth from both men and women. Not surprisingly, most onlookers equated Quakers with Ranters in these first years. Quakers rejected all formal music and liturgical practices. They

denounced Puritan psalm-singing in meter as "singing David's songs in Saul's spirit." They instead engaged in some kind of free-form *music*: "singing in the Spirit" during their gatherings, but only if divinely led. This was an anti-music, much as their nonviolent cultural revolution, the Lamb's War, constituted an anti-war in answer to the military conflict of the preceding decade.[110]

When the Quaker leader James Nayler and his followers enacted a sign of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Bristol's high street in October 1656, they sang "Holy, Holy, Holy, Hosanna" in this free-form manner. Nayler was tried in December before Parliament on charges of blasphemy, as an alleged false messiah. During a break in Nayler's trial, a young John Locke witnessed an eerie humming among the group around Nayler in a side-room. Nayler himself remained silent.[111] Nayler's trial and punishment, with the spreading persecution of Quakers that followed, constitute the historical moment of eclipse between the beheading of Charles I in 1649, the summary end of the feudal era, and the Restoration of monarchy and state church in 1660, a reversion that nevertheless facilitated more democratic political processes and coherent capitalist expansion over time.[112]

The early Quaker dialectic of noise, silence, and music was enacted distant in time and place from the concert halls and opera houses where Attali's and McClary's representative phase of music eventually succeeded.[113] Attali summarizes, "Before political economy then, music became the bourgeoisie's substitute for religion, the incarnation of an idealized humanity, the image of harmonious, nonconflictual, abstract time that progresses and runs its course, a history that is predictable and controllable" (60-61). That description best fits the baroque and classical periods in music.

But in the romantic period, by 1850, as audiences and orchestras grew, the conductor became necessary, a legitimate and rational organizer of production, a leader and entrepreneur. The concerto soloist was added to dominate the group as a whole, a heroic figure of total power. The star performer became one catalyst for evolving economic mechanisms of exchange, selection, concentration, mass consumption, and profitability. The star system began in earnest in 1830 when Liszt began to play the music of other contemporary composers at his sensational concerts (complete with women paid to swoon in the audience) (66-68).

Popular music also became profitable through the rise of café concerts and cabarets. The popular song moved from the street and the

home to become a spectacle, a representation set in opposition to lived experience (75).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the star system led to a Romantic exacerbation of individualism and a rupture in the processes of representation. Mahler, Schoenberg, Satie and others express this rupture in various ways. They herald the end of representation and the middle-class faith in the social order. A new noise, anti-harmony, announces the end of meaning and intimates the advent of the next era.

Repetition

In Attali's scheme, "repeating" emerges through three key factors. First, musical performance reaches limits to profitability; capitalists stop investing in it. Second, the phonograph provides greatly expanded musical consumption and the stockpiling of music at home. An inversion takes place in which performance becomes the showcase for the phonograph record, a promotion of repetition. And third, radio makes representation free, while offering free publicity for the phonograph record, to be repeated and stockpiled at home (83-84).

Edison himself didn't take his invention of the phonograph very seriously when he patented it in 1877. He thought of it only as a device for recording speech. And his recordings on cylinders survived about only six repetitions. Technological advances were required: the double-sided 78-rpm record in 1908, the LP record in 1948. The jukebox bridged from representation as a final form of collective consumption of music. The record player as a product for private consumption gained momentum only after the Great Depression. Henceforth, "Music became an industry and its consumption ceased to be collective" (87). Repetition marks a major mutation in the relationship between humans and history because it makes the stockpiling of time possible (101).

Black music was colonized by the music industry, reducing the music of survival, resistance, and revolt to a repetitive commodity. Likewise, the music of white youth revolt was quickly domesticated into consumption. "Jobbers" became important intermediaries to organize the rapid rotation of music stockpiles in stores and the concentration of sales on a few big successes. (I recall popular music critics in the late 1970s bemoaning "jobbers" and "bizzers" weeding out the experimentation of punk and new wave groups in favor of the most bankable ones.)

The musician becomes a producer of replicated music, compensated according to sales statistics. The recording star becomes rich and famous, reconfirming the capitalist dream. Meanwhile, recorded music becomes a caricatured double, a simulacrum that replaces the original. (This makes me think of the old logo on RCA records, the dog listening to a gramophone, with the caption, "His master's voice." But who is the "master" now? The entrepreneurial performer, the profit-seeking record company, or capitalism itself?)

Meanwhile, "the listener in front of his record player is now only the solitary spectator of a sacrificial vestige." Recall Attali's characterization of music/sacrifice as the mediation between noise/violence and silence/repression. Thus, "there is no longer a closed arena of sacrifice, the [religious] ritual or the concert hall. The threat of murder is everywhere present" (120). As he continues to apply Girard's theory, Attali finds the dynamics of identity, emulation, competition, and conflict enacted through the mass consumption of repetitive music by private listeners. The threat of violence becomes pervasive. (It makes me think of the violence between mods and rockers in sixties Britain, and the interaction of music with gang violence in the US, from the fifties to the present.)

But even in 1977, Attali finds repetition reaching a saturation point and internal contradiction. The excess of musical products for repetition overwhelms demand. Efforts to stimulate consumption fail, and production continues to proliferate without finding sufficient outlet. Like records pressed from the same mold, their listeners become "copies cut from the same mold, who, animated by the same desires, are unable to satisfy them except by mutual extermination" (131).

Attali's rhetoric is both vague and extreme at such points. But it makes me think of the Beatles' song, "Helter Skelter" (1968). The lyrics are obscure but the music is utterly manic, perhaps expressing the disintegrative forces of that cultural moment and upon the Beatles themselves as they approach their breaking point. In British usage, a "helter skelter" is a fairgrounds ride that spirals down from top to bottom. Paul McCartney later commented that he used that image to express something like the rise and fall of the Roman Empire. "Helter Skelter" became a matter of fixation to Charles Manson and his cult in Southern California. Manson had musical aspirations of his own and received some encouragement from Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys. "Helter Skelter" is believed to have been one inspiration for the Tate-LaBianca murders committed by the Manson "family" in August 1969.

Writing amid this phase of repetition becoming proliferation, Attali concludes:

> A new theory of power is necessary. A new politics also: both of these require the elaboration of a politics of noise and, more subtly, a burgeoning of each individual's capacity to create order from noise, outside of the channelization of pleasure into the norm . . . The only possible challenge to repetitive power takes the route of a breach in social repetition and the control of noisemaking . . . the permanent affirmation of the right to be different, an obstinate refusal of the stockpiling . . . the right to make the free and revocable choice to interlink with another's code – that is, the right to compose one's life [132].

Composition

"Composing" is the term Attali applies to this emergent era of music and political economy. In her Afterword, Susan McClary clarifies his usage. "Composition" has been mystified since the nineteenth century, making the composer a semi-divine being issuing Delphic utterances. Attali returns the word to its basic meaning, "to put together." This demystified but humanly dignified activity can liberate music from both the rigid academy of specialized musical training and the music industry, and return it to all members of society. Individuals can choose to re-appropriate for themselves the artistic means of production and escape the infinite regress of repetition [156]. Writing seven years after Attali, she notes how new wave and punk groups had already manifested these liberative energies – though she also notes how a few of them had been reclaimed by commercial success and the music industry. Meanwhile, in "serious music," she finds minimalism, performance art, and neo-tonality challenging the arid ideology of music produced in universities for seminars. And much of this new music is being produced by groups traditionally marginalized.

In the "Decay in Common" essay in this collection, I devoted considerable attention to Will Hermes' book, *Love Goes to Buildings on Fire: Five Years in New York that Changed Music Forever* (2011). Hermes weaves together the thrilling emergences of rap/hip-hop, punk/new wave, loft jazz, new salsa, and minimalism that took place around different parts of New York City, 1973-78. Amid the decay of mid-seventies New York, creative individuals interacted with their communities, fashioning new music with available means of production. (The Sex Pistols

had better sound than other early punk bands around London because guitarist Steve Jones had stolen better equipment from Rod Stewart's band.[114]) All this fits with Attali's intuitions of composition. All of them, in various ways interrupted the regnant institutions and industries of music with rude *noise*.

But I also noted in that essay that by the 1980s, while gentrification took hold in lower Manhattan and immiseration deepened in upper Manhattan and the South Bronx, a few breakthrough musicians were captured and enriched by the music industry. But the communities that gave rise to these cultural revolutions were either mollified or dispersed by the ascendant globalized order of capital, with New York as one of its centers.

As a globally successful musician, Bob Dylan's self-deconstruction with *Street Legal* in 1978 and his subsequent withdrawal into Christian community was his unique path into this same emergent composition. Most of these various musical innovations evolved in urban communities. They reconfigured the rural folk music that had begun to urbanize in the Chicago blues scene in the 1940s, and then in New York's Greenwich Village and elsewhere in the late fifties and early sixties. In 1952, Harry Smith's set of LP records, *Anthology of American Folk Music,* collected eighty-four folk and blues recordings from the twenties and thirties. These provided a Rosetta Stone for the folk and blues revival of the sixties. Of course, Dylan did more than anyone to make it a commercial success. In *Invisible Republic* (1997), music critic Greil Marcus sketches some of these folk musicians and their rural communities of the early twentieth century. Similarly to Smith's project, Lenny Kaye's double-LP, *Nuggets* (1972) collected garage band recordings from the sixties that inspired him (with the Patti Smith Group) and others in the punk/new wave explosion of the mid-seventies.

The new era of composition is evoked well in a song by Gillian Welch in "Everything Is Free" (2001): "Everything is free now, that's what they say, everything I ever done, I gotta give it away. Someone hit the big score, they figured it out; they were gonna do it anyway, even if it doesn't pay." Commercial success may happen for some, but they were "gonna do it anyway." "I could get a straight job, I done it before. I don't mind working hard, it's who I'm working for." Meanwhile, "If there's something you wanna hear, you can sing it yourself." Though community is not explicitly mentioned in the song, her languid singing evokes the communal sensibilities of traditional folk music. This is not the commercial ambition of "angry young capitalists" on the radio, as Garrison Keillor quips in *WLT: A Radio Romance* (1991).

But then Welch herself did "hit the big score" in critical and somewhat commercial success.

My own quixotic errantry with music illustrates one path of composition. Partly because I was living in New York through most of the seventies and was very attuned to music, I was inspired by these same cultural affects. While in exile from New York for two years (1975-77) and serving as a Friends pastor in small-town Indiana, I began writing and singing my own songs in January 1977. I began singing them to the Friends meeting I was serving. After my return to New York as a graduate student later in 1977, I occasionally busked in Washington Square. I also sang for the Friends Meeting in Brooklyn where I attended in those years.

I always knew my music had no commercial potential: musically it was pretty basic; and the lyrics were too religious for a secular market and too ironic for a religious market. The irony functions as an element of *noise* along with the rudimentary *music* of the songs. And of course, the *silence* of Quaker worship in my communities over the years has been a deep *common* undergirding both the noise and the music. Over the years, singing for the communities where I lived and worked was the most meaningful outlet for me. And while my songs have my own left-handed twist on any given subject, they arise from life in community and reflect back to community.

I began recording my songs in 1999 under the persona The Brothers Doug, since I was singing and playing all the parts myself on a borrowed four-track recorder. Finally, in 2006 I produced a double-CD of songs, *Chronicles of Babylon: Volumes I and II*. The Friends General Conference Quaker Books catalog carried it for a couple years. A young friend of mine suggested I also send the album to CD Baby, which would upload the songs onto various music platforms. I followed his advice, but being mildly Luddite, music platforms were a vague abstraction outside my experience, and I soon forgot about it. In 2020, when a friend told me he had found a song of mine on iTunes, I was puzzled how it got there.

Indeed, since the turn of the millennium, the advent of music platforms, MP3 players, and smart phones has revolutionized music and amplified Attali's prophecies of an era of composition. Today, there are a few megastars such as Beyoncé and Taylor Swift, who garner billions worldwide from their recordings and performance tours, testifying to the abiding power of the music industry and the dynamics of repetition. But the platforms host millions of songs, contemporary and past, from around the world. Musicians range from greater and lesser

stars down to very obscure folk like me. This phenomenon testifies to Attali's theorization of repetition leading to proliferation as well as the new dynamics of composition. Continuing technological permutations have made the means of musical production inexpensive enough for people like me to record their music at home.

As of this writing, I still have a gut-instinct keeping me from putting more recent songs on the platforms. I feel a slight nausea at the prospect of pouring my minor musings into such a vast ocean. But this is more than avoiding a confrontation with my own obscurity. The platforms exist on a financial basis. One pays for access or endures the noise of advertising along with music. The platforms are thus *universal*, in the sense of their world-wide reach and representation, but also in the sense of monetary standards of equivalence and exchange that dissolve all the music they contain into one solution. I become a *particular individual* in relation to this universal, either as a musician or as a consumer. If I listen to a song, algorithms will suggest other songs I might like. This is helpful, but inevitably favors the more popular choices within a given genre.

In 2022 I finally opted to put all my recorded songs on a website, brothersdoug.me. This establishes a *singularity* in relation to the *common*, as opposed to an individual in relation to the universal. But it probably makes the songs even more obscure, since I don't know how to promote the website and very few people have stumbled onto it. The website declares all the songs to be "commonright" instead of copyright. They are free for listening and downloading. But this opening out to the common lacks the mediating element of a community. I rarely perform my songs for my Quaker communities anymore. My life-long penchant for oscillating between various identities and communities has rendered me friendly toward all of them but unknown among each of them.

Thus, while the unsettling irony of my words is a *noise* that becomes *music* in my songs, it remains effectively *silent* in its singularity amid an algorithmic world of equivalence and exchange. But that's okay: I always lacked ambition. ("Point of View on My Work as an Author & Songwriter," appended in *Further into the Common*, reflects on the interaction of those two outworkings of my calling to ministry.)

Recall Jameson's summary of Attali's thesis: "the music of today stands both as a promise of a new, liberating mode of production, and as the menace of a dystopian possibility which is that mode of production's baleful mirror image." Fifty years after Attali's book, music today hovers between the truly new possibilities of composition and the ever

more capitalized machinations of repetition, as exemplified by internet music platforms.

Written in the 1930s, Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"[115] presages some of Attali's analysis of repetition. But Benjamin focuses almost entirely on photography versus painting and film versus the stage. He notes the "massification" of consumption that attends mechanical reproduction (repetition), then adds that socialist movements arose at the same time photography became popularly consumed in the mid-nineteenth century. Writing in Germany as Nazism took over, he notes that Fascism aestheticizes politics. (Certainly, Leni Riefenstahl's filming of a Nuremburg rally, *Triumph of the Will*, 1935, with thousands in neat, uniformed blocks, fits that description.) Inversely, Benjamin suggests that communism politicizes aesthetics. (Sergei Eisenstein's films, such as *Battleship Potempkin*, 1925, dramatize key moments in the Russian revolution, with the masses themselves acting as the rioters.)

Benjamin wrote in a period of high modernism, when these different massifications were in sharp conflict. Forty years later, Attali wrote at the dawn of postmodernity, as masses become more disjointed but networked. But it is not hard to recognize the continuing power of aestheticized politics. A song like "Jesus and John Wayne" by the Gaither Vocal Band propounds both Christian patriarchy and militarism, and feeds into the national politics of the hard right in the US.[116] Today, recorded music accompanies both Republican and Democratic political rallies, instilling group feeling and the political will to power. By contrast, at Quaker, feminist, and anarchist gatherings, music is much more pervasive, often arising spontaneously from small groups as they find themselves. They do promote group feeling and social conviction, but counter to the massified affects of mainstream politics.

Composition and the Common

Attali wrote *Noise* while an economist engaged in renewing state socialism in France. But his intuitions regarding composition augur something sub-state and pre-political. It fits better with Paul Goodman's definition of anarchism, which seeks to "increase intrinsic functioning and diminish extrinsic power" (see the second "Anarchist Unconscious" essay in this volume). In a variety of ways, anarchism maintains faith in a pervasive energy that creates order out of chaos. Anarchism favors small-scale manifestations of that energy, which generally

work best. It is a commonist faith and accounts for much more of the order in society than we normally recognize, precisely because it is so pervasive – so common. Today's era of musical composition is one manifestation of that commoning energy.

Indeed, music is a form of human creativity that participates in God's creation of the universe. (The preceding essay places creation theology in conversation with natural science.) The opening two verses of the Bible (Gen. 1:1-2) assert that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," or "When God began to create the heavens and the earth," "the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep while the spirit of God swept over the face of the waters." The Hebrew verb *merachephet* can be translated "swept," "hovered," or even "brooded." In Hebrew cosmology, "the deep" is the primeval water of chaos. Then God proceeds to speak forth the heavens and earth, beginning with light, which is then separated from darkness.

The linguistic subtleties of the Hebrew narrative leave it ambiguous whether God's word creates form and order out of chaos, or out of nothing. In one case, it is creation of order, or differences, out of chaos. In Attali's scheme we would call it music, or harmony, forming out of noise. In the other case, we could say that God creates order, or differences, out of nothing. In Attali's scheme, we would say that music, or harmony, forms out of silence. Although the text itself doesn't mention silence explicitly, the Jewish rabbinic tradition "heard" it there, suggesting that silence preceded God's creation. Some early Christians "heard" it too. The prologue to the Gospel of John presents the incarnation of the word in Jesus of Nazareth as the beginning of a new creation. In the second century, Ignatius of Antioch added that Christ is God's word "proceeding from silence."[117]

Thus, we can hear resonance between Attali's dialectic of noise, music, and silence and the biblical theology of creation. The biblical theology of creation is intended in part to stimulate human processes of creativity. Just as the ancient agrarian family in tribal Israel found their six days of work and one day of rest writ cosmic in the creation story, so music and other forms of human creativity participate in the same cosmic story, whether or not we know it or believe it. The cosmos is the ultimate common. Attali's intuitions of an era of composition suggest a commoning of music, together with the various forms of community that both nurture it and cherish it. Perhaps this unfolding musical era anticipates a more anarchist society, where networks of communities, focusing on a vast diversity of interests and concerns, begin

to reweave the social fabric in ways the nation-state is decreasingly able to do.

Over the centuries, some have "heard" music in the cosmos, sometimes called "the music (or harmony) of the spheres." The concept goes as far back as the Pythagoreans of ancient Greece. The astronomer and mathematician Johannes Kepler wrote the most extensive account of it in *Harmonices Mundi* (1619). He suggested that the proportions, spacing, and movements of sun, moon, and planets create a music that is physically inaudible. But to the soul it gives a "very agreeable feeling of bliss, afforded him by this music in the imitation of God." The concept has continued to intrigue musicians, from Paul Hindemith's 1957 opera (*Harmonie der Welt*) to Coldplay's 2021 album, *Music of the Spheres*.

Finally, returning to Abraham, who received considerable attention in an earlier essay, it was noted that the etiology for his name supplied in Gen 17:5 is "father of multitudes": *ab* for father and *hamon* for multitude. That alludes to the several lineages that descend from Ishmael and Isaac. The semantic range for *hamon* includes "noise," as in the noise of a disorganized or disgruntled group of people, like the "mixed multitude" that Moses led out of Egypt into the wilderness. But "Abraham" can also connote "father of the people," the *am* is a more coherent collective body, which in Hebrew Scripture designates Israel, the people who live in faith with Yahweh and the Torah. This is the *common*, as a coherent, covenantal set of balances in relationship and function. Multitude is to common as chaos is to order, as anarchy is to anarchism, and as noise is to music. The two keep acting back on each other dynamically. Meanwhile, silence is the transcendent presence that broods over the chaos and keeps speaking it into a constantly evolving order. It is the *qol demamah*, the "sound of sheer silence" Elijah "heard" at the mouth of the cave on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:12).

10.

A Federated Common

(6-7/24)

This essay imagines a polity, a political mode that might best represent, protect, and sustain our common life on earth. Like all the essays in this collection and the preceding two journals (*Into the Common* and *Further into the Common*), this essay comes as it has *occurred* to me. It has occurred as I continue to contemplate the common life and my one life within it. But it has also occurred, both consciously and unconsciously, in relation to the current wars in Ukraine and Gaza, a fateful election year in the United States, and the present acceleration in climate change phenomena.

I have written on covenant and federal constitutionality in some earlier essays, particularly "Everlasting Sabbath and Commonist Economics" and "Peace on Earth: Covenant, Constitution, Technology, and Economics in the Common Life" (*Into the Common*). My interest in biblical covenants and their influence on modern societies goes back to work on *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (1995). I was helped then by the work of Daniel Elazar,[118] among others. And in developing this essay Elazar's work in *Exploring Federalism* (1987), has been important.

I will admit now that I have no expectations that the model presented here will ever be adopted. Whatever its strengths or weaknesses, it seems like a small ice cube in the hell of today's political climate. I simply present it as a *heuristic*, a demonstrational model, offered in hope that it might nudge others more gifted and better placed than I am, to pursue a polity that can preserve and promote the common life. I also want to note that this model by no means abandons my advocacy for anarchism as presented in the first two essays in this volume. I will return to the theme of anarchism at the end of this essay, to suggest that federation could provide the political superstructure most amenable to true anarchism, just as genuine anarchism constitutes the social infrastructure idiomatic to a federal polity.

First, this essay must describe the formation of the modern nation-state and its current postmodern crisis on several fronts. However imperfect and debatable this brief description may be, I hope its broad outlines will make evident the urgent need for a new approach to polity.

Modernity and the Nation-State

The modern era, roughly from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-twentieth, saw the territorial nation-state as the dominant form of polity. Within a given geographical territory, the nation-state pairs "nation," a "people" however heterogeneous, with a "state," a sovereign governing apparatus to create, sustain, and enforce order among its citizens, and to defend it against foreign aggressors. At its best, the nation-state has been a working synthesis between its two elements, though never fully achieved. For example, the United States of America has been one of the most successful nation-states of the modern era. But it enslaved its African American people for nearly a century before finally emancipating them and giving them citizenship. It then continued to marginalize them for another century until the civil rights movement began to achieve full citizenship as a reality – a process that still has far to go. Meanwhile, indigenous peoples were forced off their tribal commons with varying degrees of genocidal violence. Today, Native Americans possess full US citizenship, but also retain a degree of tribal sovereignty.

The creation of the modern state of Israel in 1948 came near the end of the modern era and has been an acutely vexed equation of nation and state. It was preceded by half a century of Zionist aspiration for a Jewish homeland, after two millennia of Diaspora. The motto among some Zionists was "a land without a people for a people without a land." But of course, Palestine had a resident people, even if they were not a discrete nation-state. As Zionist aspirations continued to develop, some were willing to confront this contradiction. The philosopher Martin Buber was among those in the 1920s who advocated a bi-national state shared by Jews and Palestinians (as mentioned in "Melancholy for the Common" earlier in this collection).

That was never going to be easy to achieve. But the racially defined nation-state of Israel that the United States and Britain helped force upon Palestine created a fundamental conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, which has finally exploded into a full-scale war. As I write, that war continues, as the right-wing government in Israel attempts to annihilate the Hamas government in Gaza, at the expense of tens of thousands of innocent Palestinian lives. In effect, the extreme factions in Israel and Palestine have created each other and may yet destroy

each other. Daniel Boyarin has suggested that either Israel must renounce claims to race or Jews must renounce claims to space. The two are deadly together. Kept apart, they create a Jewish identity that is perpetually creative. Diaspora may be Judaism's greatest contribution to a world that has become interdependent.[119]

Nation vs. State in Postmodernity

The resurgence of ethnic, racial, religious, and ideological identities in the postmodern era increasingly challenges the nation-state equation, breaking a very imperfect synthesis into an outright contradiction. Islam (with its various ethnic and cultural outworkings) considers itself the *umma*, a nation that spans many different territorial states. This is itself a very positive concept, like *jihad*, which is basically the "struggle" that comes with living faithfully as individuals and as communities. But that struggle has become more difficult as Muslims live in increasingly secularized nation-states. The vast majority of Muslims around the world are willing to live the struggle nonviolently as peaceful citizens wherever they live. But for some within the dominant Sunni and Shia streams of Islam, it has become a world-wide violent conflict, waged through terror and war. The Islamic Republic of Iran is a major promoter of proxy conflicts against Israel, most notably Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In the United States, the "war on terror" since the attacks of September 2001 also redoubled American support for the state of Israel. But that support has reached a moment of crisis with the current Israeli offensive upon Hamas, and its catastrophic death toll on Gazan noncombatants. Protests in America on behalf of Gaza and Palestine generally have spilled over into anti-Semitic rhetoric in some cases. Some feel that American Jews have exerted too much influence on American policy in the Middle East. But that influence has not been only Jewish. A right-element among American evangelical Christians has pursued a militant pro-Israel agenda for decades, inspired by millenarian schemes of the second coming of Christ. This Christian Zionist element has probably been the most influential, given the right-wing drift in American politics.

Meanwhile, within American politics, Christian nationalism, strongly but not exclusively white in bias, has been a force weakening the nation-state synthesis. The agenda to return the US to a Christian

(and white-dominated) national identity has found strongest expression in the intense bloc of support for Donald Trump's presidential candidacy during the last three election cycles. These *nationalist* impulses are countered by progressive liberals with a *statist* agenda to strengthen federal government (through continued bureaucratic elaboration and increased spending) against the fragmenting dynamics of "states' rights," racism, sexism, as well as various environmental threats.

Statism in unmitigated form showed its character in the early years of Vladimir Putin's presidency, with a vicious war on Chechen Muslims. Putin rules as a classic "strong man" in coordination with a kleptocratic oligarchy. Russian elections are charades, with serious opposition leaders imprisoned and/or assassinated. Now Putin prosecutes war in Ukraine and possibly beyond, to regain the imperial glories of the former Soviet state. Autocratic statism can be seen advancing around the world today. These are basically secular states, repressing ethnic, religious, and ideological minorities with impunity. The Islamic Republic of Iran is a different case, where a religious elite imposes its will through a farcical democratic process, while religious minorities are strongly suppressed. I recall the Ayatollah Khomeini stating emphatically in the aftermath of the Islamic revolution, "Islam *is* democracy." Another statist formulation is today's China, where an ideologically defined communist party elects the president and the state strongly suppresses religious and ethnic minorities such as the Uigurs.

Meanwhile, and just as importantly, nation-states of all varieties have proven unable to defend their sovereign territories against the advance of finance-driven global capitalism. Multinational corporate investment enriches nation-state tax bases through the exploitation of labor and natural resources within their territorial boundaries. It does this more creatively and efficiently than a centrally planned economy usually manages. The resource depletion and environmental impacts of this arrangement are increasingly dire. But nation-states have been unable to achieve any sustainable balance of economy and ecology. And the rapid-fire global disruptions of the worldwide web have further challenged territorial sovereignties on a host of issues.

Thus, the territorial nation-state is a modern political idiom rapidly losing tenability between its two terms. Meanwhile, economy and ecology, both enormously important, aren't even part of the equation. Nation-states simply address them on a haphazard, symptomatic basis. And they are failing badly. A more systemic formulation is urgently required.

Federation was developed in the modern era, preeminently in the United States, as a working model for the nation-state. *But federation is not to be equated with the nation-state*. It has a prehistory and a possible future. Can we imagine new federal arrangements that include but also transcend today's failing nation-states?

Federalism

The federal arrangements synthesized in the 1787 Constitution of the United States of America found their vehicle in the nation-state, but as Daniel Elazar stresses in *Exploring Federalism*, federation and the nation-state are not the same thing. Federation is both a structure and a process of governance; it is both a means and an end for a free, equal, and moral society. Elazar speaks of "the federalist revolution," which is not to be confused with the American Revolution, which broke with British colonial rule to create an independent entity, eventually a nation-state. But the federalist revolution that followed independence was something truly new and still renewing:

> The federalist revolution is among the most widespread – if one of the most unnoticed – of various revolutions changing the face of the globe in our time. In modern and postmodern epochs federalism has emerged as a major means of accommodating the spreading desire of people to preserve or revive the advantages of small societies with the growing necessity for larger combinations to employ common resources or to maintain or strengthen their cultural distinctiveness within more extensive polities.[120]

Elazar describes the differing species within the overall genus of federalism. In particular, *confederation* joins existing polities together to form a common government for limited purposes, usually foreign affairs and defense. A confederation remains dependent upon its constituent polities for it existence. The European Union is a prime contemporary example of a confederation, created primarily to serve shared economic aims. By contrast, a *federation* is "a polity compounded of strong constituent entities and a strong general government, each possessing powers delegated to it by the people and empowered to deal directly with the citizenry in the exercise of those powers" (7).

Note that Elazar uses "general government" instead of "central government." He argues that federation is not to be located on a centralization-decentralization continuum but is predicated on non-centralization, the effective combination of unity and diversity. That combination is more a dialectical tension than a steady state. In US history, for example, the unifying impetus of the Federal government has long struggled with the counter-emphasis upon "states' rights," going back to the Confederate States of America and the outbreak of the American civil war. The confederal motive goes back further, even to the initial break with Britain. Initially, during the American Revolution the colonies drew up *Articles of Confederation*. But after the war, these initial definitions steps led on to a true federal constitution.

Federal arrangements are not limited to nation-states. For example, labor unions have adopted federal forms of organization and interlinkage across industries and even across national polities. Business enterprises have also federated into industrial associations, chambers of commerce, and other forms.

Elazar summarizes that federation is a technology invented to balance between unity and separation, between shared rule and self-rule, in some kind of contractual linkage. It is a framework in which the whole and the parts can gain strength simultaneously, on an interdependent basis (12-14).

Covenant and Federation

Federation has its deepest roots in the biblical covenant tradition. (The Latin *foedus* means "covenant," correlate to the Hebrew *berith*.) The original covenant in this long tradition was the ancient Israelite intertribal covenant, a morally grounded pact among partners who were fundamentally equal, at least in their mutual responsibility for common tasks. As covenant partner, God self-limits so that humans may become free partners. Covenant is a partnership that creates community.

The Israelite covenant design is federal in three ways. *First*, it creates a network of covenants, beginning with the God-human, then weaving a web of human relations in a federal way, through compact, association, and consent. *Second*, it is a commonwealth, a fully articulated federation of tribes, to function under a common constitution and laws (which survive in the documents of Leviticus and Deuteronomy). And *third*, (through the visions of the Hebrew prophets) the covenant opens out to a messianic era, an "end of days" that not only restores Israel's tribal system but also creates a world confederation of nations, each

preserving its own integrity while accepting a common divine covenant and constitutional order (119-20).

Elazar doesn't discuss the revised covenantal forms of the Israelite monarchy or the early Christian movement. In any case, covenantal theology and polity faded during the Common Era. It was rediscovered in the early sixteenth century by the Reformed tradition of the Protestant Reformation, particularly in the reformations led by Calvin in Geneva and Zwingli in Zurich, and then extending into the Rhineland with Bullinger. These Swiss Reformed initiatives converged with the confederal league of cantons that had already begun to form in 1291. Switzerland's mountainous terrain was the "outback" of Europe, where generations of religious and political rebels had fled and created their own alternatives to European feudalism.

The Protestant renewal and spread of covenant/federal theology, theory, and practice continued to develop in Europe and eventually contributed to the framing of the US Constitution. On a new continent, federalism was more free to work out its own logic, without compromise with older, feudal forms of socio-political order. The *Federalist*, a series published by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay to advance the concepts and structures of federalism during the framing process, quotes more from Deuteronomy than all other sources combined (143-44). But the framers of the US Constitution also drew upon Greco-Roman precedents. Elazar fails to mention that the three branches of American federal and state government – executive, legislative, and judicial – reframed the Roman tripartite system – monarchy, an aristocratic Senate, and the various *comitias* representing the plebian citizenry and other constituents. Americans thus reworked a system of *socio-economic hierarchy* into a *functional interaction* of three branches of government in a relationship of checks and balances.

The Federalist suggested that polities come into existence in three basic ways: conquest (force), organic development (accident), and covenant (choice). As Elazar explicates, *conquest* forms polities through territorial expansion or revolutionary change, and tends to produce hierarchical regimes, pyramids of power. Ancient Egypt offers an early example; Fascism and Nazism attempted to modernize it. *Organic* polities evolve from families, tribes, and villages through the interaction of past precedent and changing circumstances. They tend toward a single center of power. The classical Greek polis developed as an organic polity, conceived as natural law and tending to produce oligarchic regimes. *Covenantal* foundings emphasize a deliberate convergence of humans as equals to establish polities of fundamental equality that maintain basic

rights. Constitutions of various kinds produce a *matrix* of polities, each polity itself a matrix compounded of equal confederates. Coming together freely, they retain respective integrities, while bound together in a common whole. Power is thereby diffused among multiple centers or cells within the matrix (2-3).

Elazar expands on the matrix dynamics of federation:

> In a matrix, there are no higher or lower power centers, only larger or smaller arenas of political decision making and action . . . The matrix of decision-making centers is linked through formal lines of authority with both formal and informal lines of communication crisscrossing it. The constitution provides the frame or bare bones of the structure, which is fleshed out by formal and informal institutional arrangements, often overlapping. In this sense, the lines of communication serve as the "nerves" of the overall system.
>
> The great strength of federalism . . . lies in its flexibility (or adaptability), but that very strength makes federalism difficult to discuss satisfactorily on a theoretical level . . . Flexibility leads to ambiguity, which has great operational advantages even as it creates severe theoretical problems.
>
> Six basic ambiguities can be identified in connection with federalism as a theoretical and operational concept: there are several varieties of political arrangements to which the term federal has properly been applied; federalism is directed to the achievement and maintenance of both unity and diversity; federalism involves both the structure and the processes of government; federalism is both a political and a social-cultural phenomenon; federalism concerns both means and ends; and federalism is pursued both for limited and comprehensive purposes [37-38].

Thus, while *Exploring Federalism* focuses mainly on federation in relation to the civic government of nation-states, its analyses open out toward wider applications, which are the purpose of this essay.

Federation in the Postmodern Era

Elazar analyzes the growing conflict between federalism and sovereignty in postmodernity:

> No government (or by extension, office) can claim to be sovereign and hence have unlimited, residual, or final powers . . . the federal principle represents an alternative to (and a radical attack upon) the modern idea of sovereignty . . . In the postmodern era, the sovereignty that modern states exercised has become obsolete. No state can claim to be the sole master of its own affairs; rather, all are more or less dependent upon others. As a result, the original federal conception of power sharing is becoming even more relevant than before [109].
>
> In the modern epoch federalism has had to compete with statism at a disadvantage. But there is every sign that the balance is shifting in the postmodern epoch to allow federalism to come into its own [153].
>
> In the intellectual sphere, the center-periphery model of statehood is being challenged by the champions of a new model, which views the polity as a matrix of overlapping, interlocking unities, powers, and relationships . . . The more than 3,000 ethnic or tribal groups in the world conscious of their respective identities are divided among nearly 150 multiethnic states – over 90 percent of the politically "sovereign" states now in existence. [225-26].
>
> The federal model, as a matrix, is almost indefinitely expandable both in scope and in character of the relationships. That is why where such arrangements have successfully taken root, they usually exist in multiples [229].

Elazar finds federalism best suited to grapple with international issues involving multinational corporations and cartels, though "this may ultimately lead to reshaping the matrix, to having an international dimension that would be more institutionalized than anything we have seen up until now" (264). He might have written more about the potential of federalism to grapple with global economic and environmental issues. But his insights into the postmodern resurgence of ethnic and cultural challenges to the modern nation-state have been amply confirmed during nearly four decades since his writing.

A Federated Common

Today, the global capitalist economic regime and the multiple ecological crises can no longer be treated on an incidental, piecemeal basis by territorial nation-states. *The proposal of this essay is for economy, ecology, and civic life (that is, the lives of citizens in territorial nation-states) to become a federated triad of checks and balances on a global scale.* Each of these three branches would itself be comprised of three functional modes (as is already the case in federal nation-states). This new, expanded covenantal matrix would represent and integrate the common life on earth in a living, evolving manner. Its dialectical triad would probably begin with a great deal of conflict and confusion, before reaching a degree of consciousness, consensus and equilibrium, which would continue to evolve in further cycles of conflict and equilibrium.

That's life, after all. It is good to recall Johannes Pedersen's definition of covenant (quoted as the epigraph to the "Peace on Earth" essay mentioned above):

> Peace and covenant are thus two expressions of the common life of souls. All life is common life, and so peace and covenant are really denominations of life itself . . . If everything that comes under the term of covenant were dissolved, existence would fall to pieces, because no soul can live an isolated life . . . It can only exist as a link of a whole, and cannot work and act without working in connection with other souls and through them . . . The covenant is not a thing to be dealt with as one pleases. It goes deeper than everything else, because it is the presupposition of all life. Therefore, it is holy and has its roots in the divine powers.

Pedersen further defines peace (*shalom*) as totality: the free flow of blessing among all participants.[121] The aim of this essay's proposed federation is that free flow of blessing. It is a constitution that would constitute and keep reconstituting the common life in a manner that was nearly unthinkable before this century but has become compellingly necessary in this century.

Let us now survey the overall terrain of this federated common from the ground up, starting with its ecological branch, then describing its interaction with the economic branch, and finally putting both into relation with the civic branch.

Ecologic

Environmental considerations have generally been the most recent and are still the last considerations for territorial nation-states, federated or otherwise. Anthropocentric concerns, both civic and economic, are the most compelling for insuring prosperity and sustaining a peaceful civil society. Only recently has it become painfully clear that ecological balances and sustainable resource-use are essential to both economic life and civil society. So the motivation for making ecology an equal branch of a federated common is not only an ethical and spiritual matter (although it is both of these); it is also politically pragmatic (that is, imperative to a polity that sustains human and planetary well-being).

The social sciences inform civic policy and economic theories inform economic policy and business decisions. Similarly, in the ecological branch of a federated common, the findings of the natural sciences, particularly ecological science, would inform our understandings of the planetary systems and be applied to resource use, recycling, and waste disposal from the local to the global. So in a sense, the dynamics of the entire biosphere are the constitution of this branch. This perspective has some affinities with the organic basis of polity mentioned above, such as the ancient Greek polis, built on a sense of natural law. But in this case, the organic polity is not extrapolated outward from patriarchal family systems but from the planetary systems of life as a whole, factored down to the entire human family.

It was noted earlier that organic polities tend toward oligarchy. Here, the oligarchic aspect would not be based upon family wealth but something like Peter Barnes' proposal for commons trusts in his *Capitalism 3.0: A Guide to Reclaiming the Commons* (2006). According to his proposal, these trusts would be formed by governments at various levels from global to local, to govern the use of natural resources. The trustees governing the usage would be something like oligarchs, but personally disinterested, appointed to act upon the best understandings and practices of natural and social sciences. They would regulate the use of resources by both the economic and the civic branches, something like the way a central bank regulates the flow of money in a nation-state's economy. Businesses and civic governments would have to pay the trusts for the resources they are allowed to use. And the money collected would be allocated to education and economic empowerment, especially among the poorer and underserved sectors of territorial nation-states (the civic branch).

But in terms of the current state of nation-state politics, it's difficult to imagine territorial governments forming these trusts, ceding control of so many resources, and even having to pay to use them. The ecological branch will probably need to be constructed from the ground up, and from the margins to the centers. There are already many concerned citizens and groups banding together to protect resources, ecosystems, and the indigenous groups still subsisting on those ecosystems. I think, for example, of the "river keepers," diverse coalitions allying with indigenous peoples, working to protect particular river systems from pollution and industrial resource extraction. I have mentioned in earlier essays Paul Hawken's *Blessed Unrest* (2007), which points to the vast array of local, regional, and worldwide groups working for peace, justice, and a sustainable life. These far-flung movements begin to form a mesh that may become self-conscious enough to act with greater concerted purpose. Hawken emphasizes that this process needs to draw upon the wisdom of indigenous peoples, who have retained key insights into the earth and its balances.

Here I am reminded of Norman Gottwald's theories (*The Tribes of Yahweh*, 1979) regarding the Israelite "conquest of Canaan." According to his reconstruction of Hebrew Scripture, a variety of disjointed, marginalized tribes that were already resisting the Canaanite city-states from the hills were catalyzed by a group of Hebrew slaves liberated from Egypt, to become a concerted movement that began spreading onto the plains, isolating the city-states and retaking control of the land. They "retribalized" the land back to a village-based, agrarian society. It was probably a violent struggle to some extent, but overall it was more a matter of people who behaved as "Canaanites" converting to "Israelites," living in covenant with the various tribes and in faith with the strange Hebrew deity, Yahweh. In the process, some city-states were overthrown, but some others adopted various treaties and working arrangements with the Israelite tribal federation, without necessarily joining in the full covenantal faith and practices that Israel had formed with Yahweh. "Israel," a society in a constituted order, grew in covenant with Yahweh, a socially and spiritually transcendent "king" without a temple. "Israel" became hegemonic in "Canaan," transforming its religion and social order.

Today, in my own faith tradition, I have seen the Earth Quaker Action Team, centered in the Philadelphia area, confront PNC Bank to end its investment in mountain-top removal in Appalachia. Since then, they have confronted the regional electrical utility, to shift more resolutely to solar energy and to invest in the manufacture of solar

panels in a poor area of North Philadelphia. In the process they have linked with interfaith and interracial action groups. This kind of campaigning, confrontational and conflictive, but consistently nonviolent in its tactics, holds great promise. It forges links with a wide variety of environmental, peace, and justice movements around the world. The searchable Global Nonviolent Action Database (GNAD) correlates more than 1200 nonviolent campaigns, past and present, around the world.

This process clearly has a very long way to go, but is already underway in a diverse, dispersed manner that is hard for us to see and recognize. *But that is always true of the common life.* As with ancient Israel's covenantal federation of tribes, some mechanisms of coordination, accountability, and strategy would need to emerge. "The Axis of Revolution: A Confederation of Commons" (*Into the Common*) suggests that the confederation (or federation) might develop leadership roles something like tribal Israel's: Levites (i.e., teachers of old/new revolutionary faith and practices), tribal elders (i.e., keepers of sustainable traditions of people with the land and with one another), and prophets (i.e., impromptu speakers arising from any quarter with insight/revelation into the historic moment and what is needed). Such a triad would probably not be as rationalized as the modern checks and balances between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of a federal nation-state. Something more intuitive – even spiritual – might be idiomatic to the ecological branch of a federated common.

In the present political situation in the US and elsewhere around the world, even some large corporations are starting to move congruently with ecologic. Corporations recognize long-term business prospects better than nation-states, which continue pandering to their short-sighted electorates and/or keep padding the bank accounts of their elites. The inadequacies of a nation-state-brokered protection of the commons is demonstrated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which went into force in 1994. The United States declined to sign on. And clearly, the exploitation and pollution of the oceans, especially its fisheries, has continued to escalate during the thirty years of the Convention's existence. The Antarctic Treaty System went into force in 1961. But Australia and Argentina continue to make territorial claims on the continent and the United States and Russia have reserved the right to make territorial claims. These international treaties and conventions have their merits, but they also demonstrate how their nation-state basis proves inadequate if not antithetical to the integrity of the commons.

Economic

From the perspective of the common, it is remarkable that nation-states generally continue to interact with their private sectors on a rather symptomatic and episodic basis. There is merit to letting economic life find its way through the forces of free markets, the laws of supply and demand, and so on. But the giantist logic of multinational corporations, governed by stockholders narrowly concerned with profits, is driven further by the financialist logics of banks, investment houses, derivatives, hedge funds, etc. This trend has seriously compromised national sovereignties, exploited vulnerable populations, extracted resources at alarming rates, and driven smaller enterprises out of business. Communist, centrally planned economies were never very successful, but were finally buried as these dynamics grew in the 1980s. And in any case, they too were premised on modern assumptions of the sovereign nation-state.

A federated common would abandon the modern assumption that the nation-state can regulate its private sector in this postmodern era. Economic life must come into its own, with self-regulating freedom and a new responsibility for itself. And it must do so in relation to the ecologic and civic branches of the federation. This should be seen as an exciting opportunity for a new, creative freedom in the business world. Economic historian Giovanni Arrighi describes today's finance-driven investment as an anti-market, existing in parasitic relationship to the real markets of commerce and industry.[122] This diseased situation must be healed, and the economic sector can do this best for itself. A new parity would need to be found between banking, mega-corporations, and small business, between the violently disruptive predations of high-tech industry and the more traditional sectors of industry, between e-tail and bricks-and-mortar retail, and so on. It might happen in a manner something like the federated matrix of national, state, and local governments. I'm no economist; I know these are very broad-strokes and under-informed proposals. But from the perspective of a common life and how to establish it on a federated, covenantal basis, some things become clear.

As with the ecologic branch, I don't see how this can happen by sheer fiat. The nation-state, the civic branch, would not attempt it and would not do it well in any case. It must be created within the business sector, transforming itself into an economic branch of federation,

growing into relationship with the ecologic and civic branches. And as with the ecologic branch, this probably has to begin from the margins toward the centers, from the small to the large scales of enterprise. And again, this is surely a conflictual scenario, a struggle to be waged by the networking of small enterprise undercutting large enterprise, the margins forming a mesh that encloses the centers, low-budget enterprises concatenating against high-finance. Like the Canaanite city-states, the concentrated wealth and power of some investment banks and large corporations may be toppled. But the aim should be to bring at least some of them into a more balanced and just relationship with federated enterprise. There will always be a need for large-scale enterprise and capital investment.

In "Proposal for a National Common Service" (*Further into the Common*), I reframed the nonprofit sector in the United States as a force for the common life. In the present scenario, the nonprofit sector would surely play a key role in the eventual self-regulating dynamics of the economic branch.

And I haven't forgotten the role of labor in this branch of federation. The federations of labor unions that formed in the modern period have lost much power in the hyper-capitalism of recent decades. Labor is starting to reassert itself, but will not receive much assistance from the present nation-states, or even from the civic branch in a federated common. The federated unions of the past will need to morph into new forms of conflictive relationship with business. But the model of federation across different industries and different nation-states is still a powerful template. As in the business sector itself, new labor networks will need to generate from the small-scale to the large. Otherwise, modernist labor assumptions and tactics will continue to hamper today's postmodern logic. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri suggest, the proletariat of modernity's industrial capitalism has become the *precariat* of postmodern, financialist capitalism: dispersed multitudes of the unemployed, part-time employed, migrants, and gig-workers.[123] Again, I know very little about today's labor relations. But from the perspective of the common life, there is a basic covenantal logic of federation that holds promise. In Pedersen's wording, it is *shalom,* totality, the free flow of blessing among all participants.

Thus, the economic branch of a federated common might generate its own three branches: profit-making business, labor, and nonprofit organizations. All three such branches would need to reach a far

greater degree of self-consciousness, focused purpose, and creative inter-relationship than they presently possess.

Recalling Elazar's definition, federation is both a structure and a process of governance; it is both a means and an end for a free, equal, and moral society. I will repeat his intuitions of a postmodern logic of federation:

> In the intellectual sphere, the center-periphery model of statehood is being challenged by the champions of a new model, which views the polity as a matrix of overlapping, interlocking unities, powers, and relationships [225].
>
> The federal model, as a matrix, is almost indefinitely expandable both in scope and in character of the relationships. That is why where such arrangements have successfully taken root, they usually exist in multiples [229].

This essay's model for a federated common manifests these intuitions. Moreover, the matrix dynamic is inherent with nonviolent methods of creative conflict and social change. By contrast, violent change relies on hierarchical forms of martial organization, which then replicate into political hierarchies. As the Quaker nonviolent strategist George Lakey summarizes, "the more violence, the less revolution."

Again, recalling Elazar,

> The federalist revolution is among the most widespread – if one of the most unnoticed – of various the revolutions changing the face of the globe in our time. In modern and postmodern epochs federalism has emerged as a major means of accommodating the spreading desire of people to preserve or revive the advantages of small societies with the growing necessity for larger combinations to employ common resources or to maintain or strengthen their cultural distinctiveness within more extensive polities [6].

Federalism is "both a means and an end for a free, equal, and moral society." But looking around civil societies today, we find them becoming less free, less equal, and less moral. While various more direct factors are at play, I would suggest that the parasitical dynamics at play in economic life and the accelerating decay of natural and cultural ecologies are the most powerful, if least conscious, factors.

We now turn to the civic branch of a federated common, which like the other two branches, has much to gain in health and vitality from this fundamental reconfiguration.

Civic

The modern territorial nation-state continues to play a vital role in creating and maintaining a civil society within its borders. It does so by defining and enforcing certain minimal boundaries of justice, equity, peace, and morality among its citizens (based in the Latin *civis*). As noted earlier, today's civil governments struggle to define and maintain these boundaries against the rapid disruptions and quandaries of techno-capitalism and amid rapidly declining ecosystems and climatic balances. Even if some degree of equilibration can be attained between the ecologic and economic branches of a federated common, a civic branch will still be necessary for sustaining social order, peace, and justice in specific territories. Some form of the modern territorial nation-state will persist, even if it will be reframed and modified by its dialectical relationship with the other two branches. Hopefully, it will perform its civic role better when no longer grappling unsuccessfully with its economic and ecologic realities.

As Elazar observes, many nation-states have federally structured governments that are little more than window-dressing for autocratic, oligarchic, and other exercises of power. And even the most truly federal nation-states would inevitably respond reactively against a more coherent organization of ecologic and economic realms. In the modern era, French president Charles de Gaulle quipped, "How does one govern a nation with more than 250 varieties of cheese?" The implication seems to have been that the 250 bacterial cultures that create the varieties of cheese reflect a similar range of subcultures and sensibilities within a territorial nation-state. Similarly, in postmodernity, how can the 195 nations presently recognized by the United Nations ever come into federation – even among themselves, not to mention federation with two other branches? Each nation-state, each federation, is inflected with a particular culture of historical memory, political predispositions, spirituality and morality.

That is the dilemma that the World Federalist movement faced as it grew during and after the horrors of World War II. The movement attracted a number of prominent, visionary individuals such as Albert Schweitzer and Albert Einstein. In a letter to a congress of the World

Federalists in 1949, Einstein wrote, "There is no salvation for civilization, or even the human race, other than the creation of a world government."[124] The fatal limitations of the new United Nations were already obvious. But World Federalist initiatives were swept aside by the international consensus and optimism generated by the new, American-led world order mapped out at Bretton Woods during the war. Moreover, anti-communist scare-mongers in the United States condemned it as a "red" plot. Writing forty years later in the 1980s, Elazar briefly remarks that his advocacy for a postmodern federalism "is not a simplistic argument for world federalism – far from it."[125]

The difference now, forty years after Elazar's book, is that a federated common would include but not be limited to territorial nation-states. Their response to federation with economic and ecologic branches that extend both within and beyond their territories would almost certainly be reactionary, especially at first. But their own modern basis of existence is becoming increasingly untenable – owing precisely to the disorganized and unaccountable growth of global capitalism and the decline of the global environment, both within and beyond their borders.

The hope for a *civic* branch in a federated common lies in the *citizens* ourselves. We cannot count on elected and unelected leaders, both officially vested with and personally invested in present power arrangements, to face up to these realities without a great deal of pressure from around and below them.

Already today, we can see peoples around the world beginning to conceive themselves dialectically as *homo civitas* within the civic branch, as *homo economicus* in their lives as producers and consumers within the economic branch, and as *homo sapiens* in their lives as among the other species and within the ecosystems of the ecologic branch. This takes place through the mediations of various cultural and religious traditions, each with its own idiomatic richness. The point here is not to dissolve that richness into a bland, universal ideology (which is never far from the rule of money, that universal solvent). The common life is a life of diversity. But in our endlessly idiosyncratic ways, each one of us, living in our own place in the common, can know the One, the source of all our rich diversity. Common *consciousness* and our *conscientious action* in the common are literally "knowing together," recognizing and responding to the Oneness abiding within and beyond the mind-bending range and dizzying flows of life around us.

But mediating between the "great blooming, buzzing confusion" of the sheer common and the absolute, transcendent perspective of the

One, there are the three – framed here federally as civic, economic, and ecologic. We can hear it in the *Shema* of ancient Israel: "Hear, O Israel, The Lord your God is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4). These three forms of loving were to mediate the relationship between Yahweh and the tribal federation. The three were framed differently in the Trinitarian doctrine that was distilled by Christian theology from the New Testament. The interaction of Father, Son, and Spirit form a powerful dialectic that has played out in both history and in personal experience.

Religious/spiritual traditions and communities of many different kinds – ancient and modern, East and West, animistic and universalizing – have roles to play in this vast process of federation. It has been an illusion of advancing modernity to think that federation can succeed without the grounding and discernment these traditions provide. That illusion was not shared by the framers of the Constitution of the United States. That is one of the most important reasons they opted for a *separation* of church and state. Religious life needs to be free of the state as much as the state needs to be free of religious preferences.

The Three and the One

Thus far, we have groped our way toward imagining how the ecologic and economic branches might organize themselves into three-ness, according to their historical antecedents and present-day divisions. And we have assumed that the civic branch would retain in some form its existing three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. Let us venture still further into the unknown, to imagine how the ecologic, economic, and civic branches might interact federally.

Perhaps the primary mode of interaction, at least in early stages, would be *adjudication* among the claims and demands of the three branches. For example, the commons trusts formed by the ecologic branch would have demands to make on resource use and waste disposal within the territorial boundaries of national, state, and local civic governments. (Indeed, we already see much of this undertaken by various impromptu environmental movements around the world today.) These demands would be met by counter-demands by the economic branch operating in the same territories (again, already commonplace today). Nation-states are not handling these conflicting demands very well in most cases, owing partly to the helter-skelter nature of capitalist

expansion outpacing both civic environmental regulation and environmental activism. Conversely, nation-states in the civic branch would have their own claims to sovereignty over their territory to be checked and balanced with the demands of the other two branches.

Hopefully, the labor and nonprofit branches within the economic branch would already be moderating the buccaneering tendencies of sheer financialist capitalism we see today. Concomitantly, the ecologic branch would have matured from its present, reactive postures through the interaction of conservationist, revolutionary, and intuitive/revealed leadership. The formation and maturation of each branch should contribute to the maturation of the other two.

Again, a covenantal/federal precedent for an initial adjudicating process might be found in the tribal period of ancient Israel. This early period was still a loose confederation of many tribes and clans converging into covenantal union with Yahweh and with one another. (Gottwald suggests that the formulation of *twelve* tribes is probably a creation of the later, monarchical period, when the tribes began to function more as administrative districts within the monarchy.) In the early period, *judges* emerged who were recognized among the tribes for their just discernment. They adjudicated differences between the tribes in their process of convergence in faith and practice. Some judges even gathered impromptu peasant armies from among the tribes to fend off Canaanite and Philistine attacks.

By analogy, through an extended period of adjudication, a body of normative standards and regulations, checks and balances, might be formed to equilibrate relations between the three branches. This is the *constitutional* process, where a confederation matures into a federation. Turning again to the antecedent example of ancient Israel, Gottwald is probably correct in describing the two centuries of the tribal period, before monarchy was established, as a confederation of tribes, still in a process of convergence and coherence. But Elazar is also correct in calling ancient Israel a federation, perhaps because he doesn't differentiate between the tribal and monarchical periods, and perhaps because he views (correctly) the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy as constitutions. But in the form we have them, these documents are later, normative definitions, coming through centuries of social experiment, theological reflection, and revision.

The constitutional process and its continuing refinement might be something analogous to the *legislative* branch of today's federal governments. But we should guard against imposing that model too automat-

ically. It might develop in some other fashion, idiomatic to its unprecedented situation. Perhaps something like an *executive* branch would also evolve out of necessity, to enforce the federation's constitution, perhaps to defend it against nation-states that hold out against the federation. Perhaps that was the logic that led to monarchy in ancient Israel. But we can hear a long line of protest against the excesses and corruptions of monarchy in Hebrew Scripture, beginning with 1 Samuel 8 and extending through the Hebrew prophets. Similar dangers attend the executive branch in the United States today.

In any case, the creation of a federated common cannot be anything as quick and tidy as the formulation of the US Constitution. Nation-states and their citizens will have to re-imagine themselves. The world of business will have to see itself as a functioning, interactive whole for the first time in history. The human race will have to contextualize itself upon the earth, among the vast range of species, and functioning within various ecosystems. The impossibility of such a task is outmatched only by its necessity. Thus, the example of ancient Israel, a true *novum* in history, is useful, not only for its extended process of federation, but also for its powerful dialectic of the common and the One, mediated by the three.

Conclusion

As quoted earlier, Elazar foresees that the creation of an international matrix of federation "would be more institutionalized than anything we have seen up until now." In that vein, he goes on to warn against bureaucratic elaboration, which becomes self-serving and self-perpetuating.[126] (We can see that tendency in American government and the European Union today.) But Elazar is still thinking within the frame of nation-states and their dilemmas, despite of his critiques of them. It seems true that a federated common would generate new matrices that would need to grow to institutional maturation within and between its three branches. But these do not need to be as rigid and alienating as they easily become in the nation-state today. This process must guard against using the nation-state as the template for what federation looks like. As we heard Elazar state near the beginning of this essay, the federal revolution is not to be confused with the American Revolution.

Before closing, I should also note that this scenario does not forget or deny the two essays on anarchism and anarchy that opened this collection. Indeed, the matrix of federation has a symbiotic relationship

with anarchism, just as anarchism has a symbiotic relationship with the common life. There were strong anarchist and anarchic tendencies in the ten years of agitation and nonviolent resistance among the American colonies against the British Empire before the first shots were fired at Lexington and Concord in 1775. (This was noted in the first essay on anarchism.) The genius of American federalism owes more to that creative period than it does to the American Revolution, which established militarism and territorial expansion so strongly in the national consciousness. American federalism also grew in affinity with the anarchist qualities of early capitalism, especially small-scale enterprise, where growth takes place according to unplanned market dynamics.

The common life resides most of all in anarchic and anarchist dynamics, as we find them in nature and in human communities. Federal matrices are an optimal way to limit anarchy and foster anarchism.

Admittedly, this essay has been largely a deductive exercise, applying the logic of covenant/federation, both in theory and in historical example, to the growing crises of today's world. It has severe limitations, as it can only be speculative at this point. But this method offers a counterpoint and alternative to the present posture of reaction against various malignant symptoms in national, economic, and ecologic life. The inductive methods of political, economic, and natural science, based upon empirical measurements of our dilemmas, are not adequate alone. As explored in the earlier essay on creation and natural science, a transcendent perspective is not only legitimate but urgently needed.

11.

Reverse Engineering

Part I: The Technological System

(8-9/24)

Reverse Engineering is a method for discovering by deductive reasoning how a previously made device, process, or piece of software accomplishes a task, starting with little or no prior understanding how it works. It can be used, for example, in repurposing obsolete devices or processes, or in analyzing their design flaws or dangerous outcomes, or in finding how the device or process can interface with other ones. Reverse engineering operates by three basic steps: *deconstruction*, in order to examine constituent parts; *modeling*, using the gathered information into an abstract model, which can then be used as a guide for redesign, reconstruction; and finally, *testing* to discover the validity of the new design.

Of course, reverse engineering is one of many forms of engineering, a word coming from the Latin, *ingenium*: cleverness, ingenuity, natural genius. Engineering combines natural sciences, mathematics, and design processes to solve technical problems, increase efficiency and productivity, and improve systems. Clearly, our world today is largely constructed and facilitated by engineers: civil, mechanical, electrical, cybernetic, chemical, medical, social, and more. Ancient innovations of the wedge, wheel, pulley, lever, metallurgy, and irrigation systems have steadily advanced and integrated toward a modern civilization that is as much a product of engineering as culture and language.

In English, the word was first used in the fourteenth century when an "engine-er" was one who devised military engines; in particular, the siege engines of that day, which included such inventions as the catapult. That military usage continues today in examples such as the US Army Corps of Engineers. The military advances much engineering and technological innovation. For example, the US Defense Advanced Research Agency (DARPA), founded in 1958, has a current budget of four billion dollars and is only one part of the American military research bureaucracy. DARPA was centrally involved with the creation of the Internet, the Global Positioning System, and voice interfaces with computers.[127] I recall in the 1980s, an academic research chemist friend mentioning his difficulties in finding funding that was not tied to military purposes.

A personal aside: my brother, Michael Gwyn, majored in mechanical engineering and then earned an MBA, going on to a successful career in both the engineering and the business sides of the steel castings industry. He innovated techniques in hollow steel casting and owns a few

patents in the field. He served as president of the American Metallurgical Society. I'm proud of my brother and what little I understand of his accomplishments. Our very different vocational trajectories are largely opaque to each of us.

We tend to assign engineering under the more general rubric of *technology*, the application of conceptual knowledge to achieve practical goals in reproducible ways. "Technology" can refer to tools or to the products derived from the use of such tools. In English usage, the word dates back to the seventeenth century, meaning "systematic treatment." It derives from the Greek *technologia*, meaning "knowledge how to make things." The Greek in turn probably derives from the Indo-European *tekth*, to "build" (of wood) or "cut." The ancient Greek *tekton* specifically denotes "carpenter." The related Latin word *texere*, to "weave," is the root of our word "text," a weaving of words.

Technological innovations have contributed to prosperity, comfort, quality of life, convenience, efficiency, and countless medical advances. They have thereby become a decisive factor in economic growth. But they have also contributed to social inequalities, modern total war, and environmental crises. The accelerating pace of technological innovation, especially in cybernetics and the Internet, has become disruptive in both helpful and harmful ways.

"Technological convergence" is an increasingly disruptive dynamic today. The prime example is the smart phone, a convergence of cell phone, video, internet, and wi-fi technologies. "Media convergence" is a particularly acute example. Technological convergence in smartphones and tablets has led media companies to combine various video, podcasts, text, and hyper-link options. This has driven industry mergers, consolidating tech into giant new digital media players such as Viacom-CBS and NBC-Universal. Social media have spurred further media convergence, where individuals become simultaneous consumers, producers, and distributors of content across a user-focused, decentralized, rapidly changing terrain. Transmedia storytelling spreads to narratives across multiple platforms: films become toys and computer games, using different languages (verbal and visual) and media (television, film, comics). Finally, on the political level, media policy attempts to grapple with this rapidly changing media environment, address its harmful social effects, and curb the monopolistic tendencies of media giants.[128]

Of course, advanced technological developments require vast inputs of capital. Technology and capital (the forces and means of production respectively, in Marx's terminology) constantly act back on one

another. An extreme example at the time of this writing is the massive amount of investment capital pouring into a few companies advancing new artificial intelligence technologies. The current overall health of the stock markets is largely due to this one area of trading. Indeed, high tech has been one factor in the shift from industrial production to financial speculation in capitalist formation since the 1960s. The speed and global integration of banking and investment have been facilitated by cybernetics; and conversely, increasingly rarified forms of financial speculation have driven cybernetics in accelerating and disruptive directions.

Scientific analysis and technical innovation have advanced not only in physical, chemical, and electronic realms, but social, economic, and political realms as well. Advanced societies are increasingly governed as *technocracies*. The term implies leadership and organizational structures in both the private and the public sectors according to technical expertise in *bureaucratic management*. (Twenty years ago, a friend of mine commented on the "managementization" of even our little Quaker institutions. I'm not sure that word exists, but the reality is everywhere today.) Neil Postman suggests that we have advanced into "technopoly": "a self-justifying, self-perpetuating system wherein technology of every kind is cheerfully granted sovereignty over social institutions and national life."

> Stated in the most dramatic terms . . . the uncontrolled growth of technology destroys the vital sources of our humanity. It creates a culture without a moral foundation. It undermines certain mental processes and social relations that make human life worth living. Technology, in sum is both friend and enemy.[129]

Technologization and Its Discontents

Already by the end of World War I, a cataclysm of new military technologies, Ernst Jünger suggested that technology had become the real metaphysics of the twentieth century. In other words, "how-to" had become the substance, both spiritual and material, of life. Three subsequent critics of technology are worth reviewing here.

The first thorough critique of this "brave new world" (Aldous Huxley's apt term) came in 1954 with Jacques Ellul's *La Technique ou L'enjeu du Siècle* (*Technique, the Stake/Gamble/Risk of the Century*). It did not attract much attention. An American edition in English translation in 1964 was titled *The Technological Society* and gained more notice, though much of it skeptical. Ellul was a Jewish Protestant Christian, had been a leader in the French Resistance, and utilized Marxist and anarchist theoretical perspectives (we noted his writing on Christian anarchism in Part 2 of "The Anarchist Unconscious" in this volume). Such an individual was perhaps bound to write a book full of challenging paradoxes. His *Présence au Monde Moderne* (1948, published in English as *The Presence of the Kingdom* in 1967) was a prophetic manifesto that set his theological and social agenda for subsequent books.

Ellul was influenced by Karl Barth's dialectical theology. In the aftermath of World War I, Barth had launched a powerful critique of the liberal Christian religion that had tended to bless every new scientific and technological advance as divinely sanctioned progress in history. His neo-orthodox theological agenda was an important corrective to that tendency. Reinhold Niebuhr advanced a similar agenda in America. But as one critic remarked, Barth was better at saying "No" than "Yes." That is, he was better at cultural critique than setting a positive agenda. Barth's influence may be useful in understanding Ellul's approach to technology.

A personal aside: my theological education began in the early 1970s at Union Theological Seminary in New York, which still manifested strong neo-orthodox currents, owing in part to the Reinhold Niebuhr's long tenure there. But by that time, that tradition was combining with the new liberation theologies. Later in the 1970s, I was influenced in my first studies of George Fox and early Quakers by Lewis Benson. Benson too was influenced by neo-orthodox theologians, Emil Brunner in particular. Those formative influences are probably at play in this essay.

In his Introduction to Ellul's *Technological Society,* translator John Wilkinson offers some helpful interpretations of the book. He begins by observing that Ellul's approach is not neatly within the frameworks of sociology, economy, history, or philosophy – except perhaps as a dialectical philosophy of the whole, something like Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where personal psychology and the wider culture interact

constantly. Thus, Ellul applies acute dialectical analyses to the technological society and its effects on humans. For example, he suggests that as technological *means* keep advancing, they also become *ends* unto themselves. Technology becomes its own motivation, orientation, and justification. In addition, the *quantitative* measurements and analyses that drive scientific research and technological advancement become *qualitative* values in themselves. Those values in turn shape further research and advancement. Consequently, we think mainly of technological solutions to technological problems. "The issue is joined: if massive technological intervention is the only imaginable means to turn aside technology from its head-long career, how may we be sure that this intervention will be something other than just some new technical scheme, which, more likely than not, will be catastrophic?"[130]

The book itself is rather unwieldy, often obtuse. Even before it was released, the publisher began to refer to it as "Knopf's folly." I recall that T. Canby Jones, who was another mentor to me when I began studying George Fox and early Quakers, actually threw the book out the classroom window in a fit of frustration while teaching at Wilmington College in Ohio. But Canby recognized something important stirring in it.

Ellul wrote a second book on technology, *The Technological System* (1980, 1977 in French). This is a more coherent, pungent, and compelling treatment. Ellul drew in part upon systems theory as he saw technology integrating into something still more powerful than he had recognized in the 1950s. In his Introduction, Ellul asserts,

> The system presupposes a more and more thorough integration of each element, including man, as an object . . . now, the capitalist system has been swallowed up by the technological system. And the category of commodity – still partly accurate and to be used with caution – does not explain very much. The category of the technicized object is far more crucial and – now – more rigorous. The technological system performs unintentionally . . . Now, anything that is incorporated, or seized, is treated as an object by the active system . . . nothing can have an intrinsic sense; it is given meaning only by technological application.[131]

I can't help thinking of the "borg" in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* television series in the 1990s. A great monolith in space incorporates planets and persons wherever it goes, making them functioning parts of its system, with no apparent leadership. Its credo: "Resistance is

futile." I can't agree with Ellul that "the capitalist system has been swallowed up by the technological system." But as observed above with regard to capital investment in artificial intelligence, the symbiosis between the two systems grows ever more intense, compulsive.

Reflecting back on his earlier work on the technological society, Ellul adds,

> We can thus say that the technological society is one in which a technological system has been installed. But it is not itself that system, and there is tension between the two of them. Not only tension, but perhaps disarray and conflict. And just as the machine causes disturbances and disorders in the natural environment and imperils the ecology, so too the technological system causes disorders, irrationalities, incoherences in the society and challenges the sociological environment [p. 18].

The environmental disorders and social conflicts of the technological system have become much more evident since Ellul's writing. Moreover, the system is *self-augmenting*:

> By self-augmentation, I mean the fact that everything occurs *as if* the technological system were growing by an eternal, intrinsic force, without *decisive* human intervention. Naturally, this is not to say that man does not intervene or play a part; but rather, that he is caught in a milieu and in a process, which causes all his activities, even those having no voluntary direction, to contribute to technological growth, whether or not he thinks about it, whether or not he wishes it [209].

Technology becomes our *environment*:

> People generally conceive of technology as a means of action allowing man to do what he was unable to achieve by his own means. That is true, of course. But it is much more important to consider that these "means" are a mediation between man and his natural environment. This mediation can be either passive or active (clothing, dwellings technological products are screens placed between the body and the surrounding environment). Man has thus created a whole set of mediations all around himself [34].

The technological system becomes a *totality* produced paradoxically by ever greater technological *specialization*:

> The technological phenomenon thus appears, like science itself, both specializing and totalizing. It is an all-inclusive ensemble, in which what counts is not so much each of the parts as the system of relations and connections between them . . .

> This means that from a scientific standpoint, one can study a technological phenomenon only *overall* . . . specialization *entails* totalization . . . totalization is simply the 'flip-side' of specialization [199-200].

In my own ground-level experience, I notice how my friends, mostly middle-class liberal Quakers, keep reacting to particular crises and disasters: "Oh, my! Another war!" "Oh, dear! Another environmental crisis!" I am reminded of Slavoj Zizek's point that liberals tend to look at symptoms, not the system that produces them.[132] Perhaps that narrow vision derives from the comfort and security the overall system affords us.

Meanwhile, the technological system of *means* has less and less *meaning*:

> All the elements of life are bound up with technology (to the extent that technology has become a milieu); and the totalization of technology produces a veritable integration . . . of all the human, social, economic, political, and other factors. Hence human being[s], while not becoming technological objects, robots, and so forth, now receive their unity from the totalizing technology. But the latter cannot provide any meaning; that is its great lacuna. The reconstituted totality is devoid of significance [203-04].

In his Conclusion, "Man in the Technological System," Ellul adds,

> The entire mental panorama in which man is situated is produced by technicians and shapes man to a technological universe, the only one reflected toward him by anything represented to him. Not only does he live spontaneously in the technological environment, but advertising and entertainment offer the image, the reflection, the hypostasis of that environment [313].

As a result, "Man in our society has no intellectual, moral, or spiritual reference point for judging and criticizing technology" (318). Ellul's final verdict:

> The human being who acts and thinks today is not situated as an independent subject with respect to a technological object. He is inside the technological system, he is himself modified by the technological factor. The human being who uses technology today is by that very fact the human being who serves it. And conversely, only the human being who serves technology is truly able to use it [325].

Ellul's analyses are breath-taking, so much so that some readers have scoffed. But what he saw taking shape in 1977 seems abundantly evident in 2024.

Paul Goodman

Technologization has had its American critics as well. Paul Goodman was an anarchist and writer on politics in the 1960s (see the section on his anarchist thought in "The Anarchist Unconscious, Part II" in this volume). Despite being more than a generation older, Goodman analyzed and championed youth revolt. His *Growing up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* (1960) inspired a number of young radicals. He continued to be "the philosopher of the New Left" into the mid-sixties, but grew discouraged as young radicals drifted into neo-Leninist rhetoric and violent tactics.

At the end of that decade, he published *New Reformation: Notes of a Neolithic Conservative* (1970), describing the wreckage of sixties politics as a religious and spiritual crisis which demanded something comparable to the Protestant Reformation. Goodman concludes that "It is evident that, at present, we are not going to give up the mass faith in scientific technology that is the religion of modern times; and yet we cannot continue with it, as it has been perverted. So I look for a 'New Reformation.'"[133] Grounded more in the American pragmatist philosophical tradition, in contrast to Ellul's dialectical critiques, Goodman offers some fresh insights and alternatives. Here is a sampling:

> Whether or not it draws on new scientific research, technology is a branch of moral philosophy, not of science. It aims at prudent goods for the commonweal, to provide efficient means to these goods . . . At present, however, "scientific technology" occupies a bastard position . . . It is half tied to the theoretical sciences and half treated as mere know-how for political and commercial purposes. It has no principles of its own. To remedy this . . . technology must have its proper place . . . as a learned profession important in modern society, along with medicine, law, the humanities, and natural philosophy, learning from them and having something to teach them. As a moral philosopher, a technician should be able to criticize the program given to him to implement [40].
>
> These days, perhaps the chief moral criterion of a philosophic technology is modesty, having a sense of the whole and not

> obtruding more than a particular function warrants. Immodesty is always a danger of free enterprise, but when the same disposition to market is financed by big corporations, technologists rush into production with solutions that swamp the environment . . . Since we are technologically overcommitted, a good general maxim in advanced countries at present is to innovate in order to simplify, but otherwise to innovate as sparingly as possible. Every advanced country is over technologized; past a certain point, the quality of life diminishes with new "improvements." Yet no country is rightly technologized, making efficient use of available techniques [41-42].
>
> The complement to prudent technology is the ecological approach in science. To simplify the technical system and modestly pinpoint our artificial intervention in the environment is to make it possible for the environment to survive in its complexity, evolved for a billion years.
>
> Cyberneticists come to the same cautious thinking. The use of computers has enabled us to carry out crashingly inept programs on the basis of willful analyses; but we have also become increasingly alert to the fact that things respond, systematically, continually, cumulatively; they cannot simply be manipulated or pushed around [44].

Earlier, we heard Ernst Jünger's assessment at the end of World War I that technology had become the metaphysics of the twentieth century. Fifty years on, Goodman describes "the metaphysical emergency of Modern Times: Feeling powerless in immense social organizations; desperately relying on technological means to solve problems caused by previous technological means" (182).

> To break the military industrial corporations and alter the priorities of the budget, would be to restructure the American economy almost to a revolutionary extent. But to meet the historical crisis of science at present, for science and technology to become prudent, ecological, and decentralized, requires a change that is even more profound; it would be a kind of religious transformation. Yet there is nothing untraditional in what I have proposed; prudence, ecology, and decentralization are indeed the high tradition of science and technology. Thus,

> the closest analogy I can think of is the Protestant Reformation, liberation from the Whore of Babylon and return to the pure faith [50].

"Notes of a Neolithic Conservative" comprises the book's final section. There, he draws upon the kind of conservatism he finds in Coleridge, Burke, Gandhi, Buber, and the initial energies of the American and French revolutions. "[I] want a more elementary humanity, wilder, less structured, more variegated. The thing is to have a National Liberation Front that does not end up in a Nation State, but abolishes the boundaries. This is what Gandhi and Buber wanted, but they were shelved" (183). (We heard similar criticism of the nation-state from Daniel Elazar in the preceding essay.)

Writing at the end of the 1960s, observing a defeated and self-defeating New Left movement, Goodman defines his conservative aim:

> My purpose is to show that a coerced or inauthentic settling of a conflict has left an unfinished situation to the next generation, and the difficulty becomes more complex in the new conditions. Then it is useful to remember the simpler state before things went wrong; it is hopelessly archaic as a present response, but it has vitality and may suggest a new program involving a renewed conflict. This is the therapeutic use of history. As Ben Nelson has said, the point of history is to keep old (defeated) causes alive [193].

(This was always my interest in researching and writing on early Friends, not that Friends should return to an earlier form, but that the founding witness in its historical context might inspire renewed forms of witness in our own.) Paul Goodman died two years later, at age fifty-one. He has been almost completely forgotten, amid the headlong rush of techno-capitalism and dramas of nation-state politics over the ensuing half-century. I have come to know his writings through their more recent republications by PM Press, an anarchist publisher.

Neil Postman

Neil Postman's *Technopoly* (1993), briefly mentioned earlier, makes use of a story from Plato's *Phaedrus* as a guiding image in his critique of technology. In that story, King Thamus has misgivings about writing,

one of several inventions presented by the god Theus. Thamus foresees that the written word will destroy memory, deliver quantities of information without instruction, and offer merely the conceit of wisdom without true wisdom. Plato places that critique in the mouth of Socrates, who didn't write. But of course, Plato did write, perhaps demonstrating the truth of Ellul's concluding statement, quoted above ("The human being who uses technology today is by that very fact the human being who serves it. And conversely, only the human being who serves technology is truly able to use it.")

As he develops his critique of modern technology, Postman credits Francis Bacon as an early advocate of technocracy, among the first to see the connections between the emerging sciences and the improvement of the human condition. But as we have advanced into technopoly today, we have lost any comprehensive system of moral, metaphysical, or religious beliefs. Thus, anything becomes believable. Technopoly flourishes where the connection between information and human purpose has been severed. "It is a world in which the idea of human progress, as Bacon expressed it, has been replaced by the idea of technological progress . . . We are a culture consuming itself with information . . . information without meaning" (70).

Ellul viewed Americans as the most conformist people on earth. That surprises us, given all the personal and cultural latitude we claim for ourselves. Yet, within the comprehensive perspective of technology, he has a point. Postman finds the American zest for technology deep in our culture. He quotes from Alexis de Tocqueville's observations of America in the early nineteenth century:

> The American lives in a land of wonders . . . everything around him is in constant movement, and every movement seems an advance. Consequently, in his mind the idea of newness is closely linked with that of improvement. Nowhere does he see any limit placed by nature to human endeavor; in his eyes something that does not exist is just something that has not been tried.[134]

As I reflect on it, perhaps the technological impetus draws upon a much deeper, animal orientation. In *A (Very) Short History of Life on Earth*, Henry Gee notes that during the Ediacaran Era a distinct gut developed in some early animals. A mouth at one end and an anus at the other induced for the first time a distinct orientation and direction of travel, with a head in front and a tail behind. Animals became truly and purposefully *animate*. Indeed, in the gastrulation of the initial ball of cells that grow from the fertilized egg, the gut is the first definite

formation of the mammalian embryo. Perhaps we could say that the impetus of plant life is outward, upward, and downward. But for animals it is a forward, questing impetus. With the development of language and rational intention and planning, human animals today have enacted a particularly acute phase of that primal impetus.

To place all this finally within the purview of the common, we can conclude that the technological system, or technopoly, has effectively *enclosed* the planet. This is most evident, even literally true, with the global circumference of the World Wide Web and its Internet. Its global accessibility has some qualities of a common. Yet it is a gnostic noosphere, a realm of mind, imagination, and desire that denatures us from the common of the earth – even as we use it to advance environmental causes. It also tends to alienate us from one another in our cultural differences, drawing us down into personal and cultural silos, even as we travel far and wide on our little screens. *The technological system is the ultimate enclosure of the common life.*

12.

Reverse Engineering

Part II: Deconstruction and Reconstruction

(8-9/24)

In the 1970s, while Jacques Ellul was in Bordeaux, advancing his critique of the technological system, Jacques Derrida was in Paris innovating a new movement in philosophy, or "theory," called *deconstruction*. Developing out of the structuralist movement of preceding decades, deconstruction unravels written texts (recall the Latin root *texere,* to weave), rather than speculate on abstract philosophical principles. In a manner similar to Ellul's, "The practitioner of deconstruction works within the terms of the system but in order to breach it."[135] In Derrida's own words (1972),

> To "deconstruct" philosophy is thus to work through the structured genealogy of its concepts in the most scrupulous and immanent fashion, but at the same time to determine, from a certain external perspective that it cannot name or describe, what this history may have concealed or excluded, constituting itself as history through this representation in which it has a stake.[136]

Thus, we could call deconstruction an *unweaving* what has been woven into a text. In *The Technological Society*, Ellul had already devoted considerable space to "working through the structured genealogy," the history of technological development. Ellul's "external perspective that it cannot name or describe" was his transcendent perspective of faith, which he did not choose to describe in a sociological book for a wider audience. (In this respect, Ellul's two tracks of writing has some affinities with that of the Danish philosopher/theologian Soren Kierkegaard, whom I explored in an essay appended to *Further into the Common*.)

In my own case, my writing is informed by that same external perspective, which I understand as God or the One, but in relation to the vast diversity of the common. I have been naming and attempting to describe that perspective in essay after essay, but never adequately. In the present system, both poles of that perspective have been "concealed or excluded." That is, the One is *bracketed out* from scientific inquiry, while the wide-open common life is *enclosed*, *bracketed in, propertized* by the techno-capitalist system.

Interestingly, one of Derrida's foundational texts, *Dissemination* (1972), deconstructs Plato's critique of writing (already mentioned in Part I, in regard to Neil Postman in *Technopoly*). Derrida queries, "What law governs this 'contradiction,' this opposition to itself of what is said against writing . . . ?" Interpreting Derrida's query, Jonathan Culler

adds, "Why should philosophy resist the idea that it is a kind of writing? . . . Philosophers write, but they don't think that philosophy ought to be writing."[137] In Plato's case, philosophical truth resides in abstract, universal ideas, unsullied by the concreteness of writing. His ideal types exist in the heavenly sphere, only imperfectly realized in material forms. Writing puts pure ideas into imperfect material form.

As I noted in "Everlasting Sabbath and Commonist Economics" (*Into the Common*), this abstract universalism in Greek philosophy may have been inspired in part by the abstracting and universalizing tendencies of money, particularly after it was detached from a basis in precious metals. That had already been innovated in ancient Greece by Plato's time. Today, we find the same dynamic in the "cash-nexus" between capital and technology, which dissolves and denatures everything it touches. In our lifetime that dynamic has found its apotheosis in the noosphere of the Internet, which "conceals and excludes" – encloses and forecloses – the concrete social and environmental realities of the common life.

Before we return to present-day dilemmas, some historical examples of deconstruction and reconstruction, ranging from ancient to early modern, might serve as evocative examples.

Reverse Engineering 1: Deconstruction and Reconstruction in the Ministry of Jesus

The Gospel of Mark is probably the earliest of the New Testament gospels and evidently the template upon which Matthew and Luke added further traditions about the life of Jesus. Mark begins with the prophetic witness of John the Baptizer. John takes a stand on the banks of the river Jordan, in the wilderness, "clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey" (1:6). He lives almost as an animal, *radically outside* the system, either Jewish or Roman. There, John preaches repentance and offers a baptism of forgiveness from sins. Large numbers of Judeans are "going out" to hear John and receive his baptism. They are seeking some kind of redemption from the steadily crushing weight of Roman occupation and taxation, from the landed aristocracy of the Sadducees and their ruling temple regime, and from the legal elaborations of the Scribes and their middle-class social base, the Pharisees.

The temple sacrificial system and the scribal regulations on life and business were the religious technology of first-century Jewish life, in a struggle for integrity and viability in a hostile Roman environment. The system was built upon the laws of Moses, but centuries removed from the egalitarian, agrarian confederation of tribes they had originally articulated. John's ministry of repentance and forgiveness of sins marks a *negative moment*, a vigorous deconstruction of an unjust and untenable system.

The Gospel of Matthew summarizes John's message: "Repent, for the kingdom of God has come near" (3:2). This is the "external perspective" of John's deconstruction. Matthew repeats Mark's claim that people from Jerusalem and all over Judea are coming to this hear him and be baptized.

> But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" [3:7-10].

Thus, against the regularized time of the work week and the liturgical calendar, and against the regulators of Judean society, John proclaims a singular *moment of truth*, the day of the Lord dawning. John deconstructs the "structured genealogy" (recalling Derrida's words) of "Abraham as our ancestor." Abraham's faith unfolded at a ground zero (see "The Once and Future Common" essay in this collection), nothing like the fastidious moral and cultic system of the Scribes and Pharisees, and even less like the expanding agricultural estates of the Sadducees (Abraham spurned the plains for the hill country). The moment has come, the ax is ready to thin the thicket of their regime and make it God's garden again.

Both Mark and Matthew tell us that Jesus came from his home town of Nazareth, up north in Galilee, to be baptized by John, in what sounds like only a passing encounter. But it seems probable that Jesus spent more time with John, perhaps was even one of John's disciples. Indeed, recall Matthew's summary of John's message: "Repent for the kingdom of God is near." Now hear Mark's summary of Jesus' early preaching in Galilee: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe the good news" (1:15). John's *deconstructive* moment is affirmed, perhaps even more acutely with the phrase,

"the time is fulfilled." That is, present trends have reached a point of saturation, even a breaking point. But the announcement of God's imminent realm is now given a *reconstructive* moment with the imperative, "repent and believe the good news." The breaking point is also a turning point. Something new is unfolding, at least among those who turn, to believe and enact it.

So Jesus returns from John in the wilderness, outside the system, to his home country of Galilee. He will continue to live a liminal, itinerant existence with his own disciples, but actively engaged with society in a project of *reverse engineering*. One revealing moment comes after Jesus' ministry of preaching and healing has begun in various places around his home territory of Galilee. He

> came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him [6:1-3].

Jesus was a carpenter (recalling from Part I the Greek word, *tekton*). He had probably been apprenticed in that trade by his father. Joseph was perhaps dead by this time, as he is not mentioned. But at some point, Jesus had left his town, left his work, and left his family of origin on some kind of journey or wandering that included time with John. (His triple departure echoes Abraham's call in Genesis 12:1.)

Jesus returns as something else: "Where did this man get all this?" Jesus evidently never practiced carpentry again. But perhaps the hours and years he spent at the workbench, with his father and on his own, began a process that led him out of Nazareth and eventually back again. Carpentry is a trade that even today (notwithstanding noisy power tools) can involve significant quiet, meditative time. It is a practice of contemplation, both of the objects of labor and beyond them. The process involves engineering, both backward and forward, to understand how things fit together (or don't) and how to replicate or improve the processes. It is both deconstructive and reconstructive.

And the social context of Jesus' trade was the mixed region of Galilee, with both Jewish and gentile towns and villages. He would have had contact, perhaps even trade, with gentiles from nearby areas. This too entered the meditative process. And when Jesus stayed with John

down on the banks of the Jordan, he encountered a message that deconstructed the lines of bio-ethnic definition and division that perhaps had already disturbed him. It seems quite plausible that Jesus' early formation in childhood and early adulthood as a *tekton*, an ancient technologist with wood, actually began what his former neighbors found so incredible, even offensive, upon his return.

Their mention of his family is also significant. There's no reason doubt that Jesus loved his family of origin. But already earlier in Matthew, when his mother and brothers request to see him, he answers, "'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother'" (3:31-35). This is deconstruction and reconstruction as acute and personal as it gets.

The ensuing ministry of Jesus was a reverse engineering of the bio-ethnic identity and religious edifice that surrounded him. As the preceding quotation suggests, Jesus renewed Jewish faith and practice as an expanding, trans-ethnic movement somewhat like the movement that originally gathered a variety of Canaanite tribes and clans into a revolutionary covenant with Yahweh. (I have described this reconstruction of the "conquest of Canaan" in a number of preceding essays in this series). This reconstructed faith and practice not only survived the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple; it spread with accelerating speed among Jews and other peoples around the Roman empire.

It is important to note that the rabbis who reconstructed Palestinian Judaism after the destruction of the temple are not to be confused with the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. The scribes had their seat of power with the temple priesthood and the Pharisees were hyper-legalists. Neither group had a role in the rabbinic reconstruction of Judaism, the vital faith that survives to this day.[138] It retained a bio-ethnic definition, but within a framework of diaspora that had already been advanced by Jewish communities in several cities outside Palestine.

It is a painful irony that the Romans executed this Galilean carpenter with nails and wood, a brutal technology of terror employed against a perceived political threat. But their "solution" (a favorite term among technocrats) served to initiate the subsequent Christian movement's reverse engineering of the Roman empire. Paul of Tarsus, a tentmaker by trade and the chief reverse engineer to the gentiles, reflects on the greater and more powerful irony of the cross: "None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if that had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8).

Reverse Engineering 2: Deconstruction and Reconstruction in the Ministry of George Fox

The early Quaker movement in England represents another radical deconstruction and reconstruction of an inherited faith sixteen centuries later. Its central figure was George Fox, who grew up in a village in Leicestershire, the Midlands, just off an ancient Roman road, running north-and-south. Fox was the son of a prosperous weaver, whose shop adjoined the house. Christopher Fox was also a devout Puritan and warden of the village's parish church, where George was baptized. But George describes his mother, Mary Lago, as coming from "the stock of the martyrs." That perhaps means she descended from the Lollards, who had suffered greatly in their witness for religious reform in preceding centuries. So young George was formed by weaving and by Puritanism, with some deconstructionist influences on his mother's side. His only education was tutoring by his village parish priest. For whatever reasons, George did not train for his father's business but was apprenticed to a shoemaker in a nearby village.[139]

Nevertheless, weaving seems to have imprinted Fox in important ways that reveal themselves in his subsequent, tireless itineracy across England and beyond. The English Civil War (1643-48) that raged around Fox as he was coming of age was a powerful deconstructive experience in English society. Both church and state violently unraveled in the contest between King and Parliament. Expanding printing technologies had driven much of the ferment of the Protestant Reformation across western Europe. The press facilitated doctrinal elaborations upon the New Testament (in contrast to the legal elaborations upon Torah in Jesus' day). And as the Bible was now available for more people to study, popular religious controversies spread across England. Chapter-and verse "how-to" interpretations of correct church order, sacramental practice, and creedal formulas proliferated in books and tracts.

Meanwhile, similarly to the control of the temple by chief priests and the Sadducean aristocracy, most churches in Europe and in England were controlled by an enfranchised clerical class, together with their aristocratic, royal, or new merchant class sponsors. As the English Reformation struggled against royal conservative control of the

church, Puritan clergy were sponsored by a growing mercantile and middle-class constituency, something like the Pharisees of Jesus' day.

Many of the most earnest young Puritans of the 1640s were strongly affected by the war and by the proliferation of competing versions of the "true church." In Fox's *Journal*, the narrative of his early years reads as if there was no war going on, only inner torment in seeking an authentic faith. At age nineteen the spiritual upheaval sent him wandering the countryside looking for answers. And when he did find a spiritual foundation for his life, the light of Christ as his inward teacher, it only accelerated his travels, now with a highly energized sense of apostolic mission. It is estimated that Fox covered 750 miles on foot and on horseback in the intense months from late 1651 and through 1652 as he catalyzed the Quaker movement in the North. Like a weaver's shuttle, Fox crisscrossed the countryside from group to group of dissidents, creating base communities and networks in a fabric of resistance to the established church.[140]

In a pattern similar to that of Jesus, Fox gathered and sent out a vanguard of men and women prophets who also itinerated around England and multiplied his initial efforts. Their witness was vigorously *deconstructive*. They invaded parish church services to denounce the enfranchised clergy and the national church system. They inveighed in the streets against conspicuous consumption. (At that time, fine apparel was the most common display. The textile industry was the driving force of England's commercial revolution at that time.) They denounced deceptive and manipulative trading practices in the marketplaces. But their witness was also energetically *reconstructive*: they called tender spirits to leave the existing churches and gather in silence to learn from the inward teacher. They inspired new Friends to live, speak, and dress in plain and simple manners, modeling a more modest, Christ-like life. They guided merchants to become exemplars of astute but fair business practices that eschewed haggling and helped establish the one-price system in England.[141]

Thus, Quaker "lifestyle evangelism" together with a highly confrontational public witness generated widespread conflict with their Puritan neighbors and local clergy. It often landed these first Friends in prison. Meanwhile, over the course of the 1650s, a wide range of Quaker women and men published an unprecedented volume of tracts. They utilized the current technology to different ends.

When he wasn't in prison, Fox continued itinerating tirelessly, weaving the advancing and maturing movement into greater coherence

and mutual accountability. This activity reached a decisive point starting in 1666-67, when Fox traveled and met with local Quaker leaders all over England to weave the fabric of a sustainable organizational structure. In this work, Fox and other leaders wove together a number of precedents and experiments from different sectors of the movement (as noted in the first "Anarchist Unconscious" essay). It was the peculiar genius of this weaver's son from the Midlands, who grew up next to a north-south artery, where people and ideas flowed back and forth, to weave together northern rural and southern urban sensibilities into a coherent spirituality and organization.

Over succeeding decades, Quaker business acumen combined with personal frugality to amass wealth and innovate in banking and industry. Friends also emerged as innovators in science and technology. Even while still persecuted pariahs in the 1660s, there were Quakers around the edges of the Royal Society's founding. In the eighteenth century they innovated in various technologies, such as iron foundry. Quaker wealth creation and technical innovation continued in the New World, especially in William Penn's Pennsylvania. As the saying goes, "Quakers came to Philadelphia to do good, and they did very well." The adage captures the eclipse of ends by means, with means implying both the capital means of production and the technological forces of production, in Marx's terms.

But as a group, Friends generally excelled in small-scale business and farming. In the latter nineteenth century, as industrial scale grew, consolidated, integrated, and bureaucratized, many Quaker businesses either folded or sold out to larger enterprises. Friends generally migrated into education and the professions. Still comfortably middle- and upper-middle-class, many became liberal progressives, mildly countercultural to the advancing trends of a technological society. Some were radicalized, particularly during the two world wars and the war in Vietnam. But generally, they tended toward the liberal reaction to the symptoms of the technological system, rather than grappling with the system itself. The Movement for a New Society, founded by Quaker radicals but not a Quaker organization (reviewed in the second "Anarchist Unconscious" essay) mounted more trenchant critiques and activism.

By the late 1970s, the time Ellul's *Technological System* appeared, unnoticed by Friends, it seems the system had more thoroughly penetrated the Religious Society of Friends itself. "Quaker process" became the watchword, replacing the liberal confidence in progress, which had been chastened by two world wars and the atomic bomb. Renewed

emphasis on processes of spiritual discernment and group decision-making renewed some traditional Quaker decision-making practices. The problem, as I experienced it at ground level as a Friend, was that traditional discernment practices had been melded with a post-sixties encounter-group ethos and facile notions of democracy and consensus. The result: everyone gets a chance to speak and a strongly felt emotion trumps everything. Time and again, the process ends with little new clarity, refreshments are served, and we all go back home to our middle-class comforts within an all pervading technological system.

I am describing the liberal stream of the Religious Society of Friends. But the evangelical branch has fared no better. The evangelical renewal among some Friends in the nineteenth century adopted evangelical methods of worship and ministry that departed radically from traditional Quaker practices. But they produced dramatic growth, especially across the Midwest and on to the West Coast. But the growth ebbed as rural and small-town America began to decline in the 1920s.

I spent periods of time as a Friends pastor in Indiana and California. I saw how Friends churches grasped more and more for updated entrepreneurial techniques of leadership and outreach. In particular, during the 1980s and early 90s, I saw how Friends churches in southern California engaged in telemarketing to draw new attenders. It succeeded impressively in a handful of cases, but failed miserably in most. The quest for church growth proceeded into cyberspace after I left California in the mid-90s. All these efforts tended to mainstream Friends. Updated techniques betrayed the unique Quaker faith and practice and threw Friends' lot in with a wider evangelical scene. And evangelical Friends never compete as efficiently or effectively as other evangelicals.

These last few paragraphs may seem like a digression. But they draw upon my historical research and personal observations to illustrate Ellul's analysis of the pervasive and totalizing effects of the technological system.

Reverse Engineering: The Hebrew Prophets

Deconstruction in Isaiah 44

Isaiah 44 is part of the corpus biblical scholars refer to as Deutero-Isaiah. Starting most clearly in Chapter 40, Isaiah, an eighth-century BCE Judean prophet, seems to speak from a different place, at a different time, and in a different voice. He is no longer announcing dire warnings to his people in Jerusalem, but a prophet or group of prophets speaking more encouraging words during exile in Babylon, about two centuries later. Deutero-Isaiah speaks words of comfort, a coming redemption, and a renewal of God's covenant with Israel. Some of the oracles are "servant songs," where the Lord addresses the people collectively as a servant of renewed divine purposes in the world.

The first part of Isaiah 44 is one of those servant songs. It begins,

> Now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you in the womb and will help you . . . For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring . . . Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me . . . who has announced from of old the things to come? Do not fear, or be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! [44:1-8].

With the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, the Jewish exiles no longer have a human king. The Lord is again "the King of Israel," as during the early confederation of tribes, before they adopted monarchy. But as this king is like no earthly king, this god is like no earthly gods. "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god." This is the god of history, of an Exodus of liberation remembered, of present help, toward a future hope. "Who is like me . . . who has announced from old the things to come? . . . You are my witnesses!" (We heard Wolfhart Pannenberg articulate this historical sense of divine action in contingent events in the earlier essay, "The Common of Creation and Nature.") Israel is a chosen servant to this Lord of all history, from beginning to end, and must be ready to enact new divine purposes. And part of Israel's role is to witness this strange god to the world.

This renewed hope is posed in absolute contrast to the ensuing passage, 44:9-20. The exiles have seen idolatry all around them in Babylon. Isaiah declares, "All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know . . . Who would fashion a god or cast an image that can do no good?" He then describes an ironsmith wearing himself out in forming an axe-head.[142] The carpenter then uses the axe to fell a tree. He uses most of the

wood for heating and for baking bread. "The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows down to it and worships it; he prays to it and says, 'Save me, for you are my god!'" Isaiah concludes, "They do not know nor do they comprehend; for their eyes are shut, so that they cannot see, and their minds as well, so that they cannot understand . . . [the carpenter's] mind has led him astray, and he cannot save himself or say, 'Is not this thing in my right hand a fraud?'"

This satire of idolatry makes it sound absurd. But of course, there was a larger social construct around the idol, a plausibility structure that made the image compelling. There were creation myths and other legends that featured the gods represented in wood, stone, and metal. The gods sponsored the royal dynasty and its military establishment. A priesthood operated from a beautiful temple that dazzled visitors. The mention of the ironsmith who creates tools for the carpenter reminds us that this was the late iron age, when metallurgy of various kinds was still the "cutting edge" technology, so to speak. The royal-military-priestly establishments of all Israel's neighbors depended on this technology for the tools of craft-industry and agriculture, for the weaponry of defense against hostile neighbors, and for the mystification of their subjects. It's not really very different from the role technologies play today, except that today's technologies are comprise a vastly more dazzling, proliferated, self-augmenting, and totalizing system. It narrows our vision and shuts down our minds. How many avid smart phone users stop and ask, "Is not this thing in my right hand a fraud?"

Isaiah's key point in these two contrasting passages is that humans create idols, but God creates humans. "Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you in the womb and will help you." This is a god unrepresentable in images, but who speaks and acts in history. This god helps individuals and guides their lives, but their lives are part of a larger people with a larger history, chosen to enact larger purposes. Faith in this god requires wide-open attention and readiness. By contrast, the idolater's attention is narrowed down upon the image, the idol, seeking only personal help. Likewise, today's technological system churns out endless consumer trinkets and personal comforts that narrow our focus, our attention, even our devotion.

Isaiah isn't saying that the work of ironsmiths and carpenters is useless or evil. But their activity is bent to serve the system, not the Lord of history. Isaiah deconstructs the making of an idol, a key tool of that system. Recall Derrida's definition: "To 'deconstruct' philosophy [or in this case, a technology] is thus to work through the structured genealogy of its concepts in the most scrupulous and immanent fashion,

but at the same time to determine, from a certain external perspective that it cannot name or describe." In Isaiah's case, that "external perspective" is the transcendent god, the beginning and end, who remains essentially ineffable. But this god is known among those who listen for the divine word and look for its effects in both personal experience and in wider history. Again, deconstruction is the first step in reverse engineering.

Reconstruction: Micah 4

The prophet Micah was a near-contemporary of the original prophet Isaiah in the latter eighth century BCE. The records of both prophets include a nearly identical oracle (Isa. 2:2-4 and Mic. 4:1-4) of a future redemption that extends from Israel to the ends of the earth. The oracle foresees a time when Israel's Lord will draw together the peoples, teach them how to live together, and arbitrate their differences. In that coming world, "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall all sit under their own vines and their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid" (Mic. 4:3-4).

This vision amounts to an iron-age version of reverse engineering, moving from deconstruction to the second step (described at the start of Part I), posing an "abstract model" – or in this case a prophetic vision – of technological conversion. The cutting edge of swords and spears is retained, but they are re-forged and beaten into plowshares and pruning hooks. Likewise, the techniques and strategies of warfare will be abandoned. Micah's imagery is poetic but aimed to evoke and inspire real technological conversion and social change. The transformation occurs through a reframing of human attention, from human identities, conflicts, and technologies toward the transcendent horizon of divine teaching. This is the same contrast we saw in Isaiah 44.

For whatever reason, Isaiah doesn't include one key element in Micah's prophecy: "they shall all sit under their own vines and their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid." Again, the language is poetic but evokes a major social transformation. As the technological *forces* of production are turned from military to peaceful, productive purposes, so the *means* of production are spread equitably. Everyone has what they need to live a productive and adequate life. Only then can they rest at home, unafraid. This amounts to socio-economic reverse engineering. But again this can advance only through scrupulous,

immanent critique, grounded in local experience, but within a transcendent perspective – in this case, the peoples/nations converging in divinely revealed wisdom.

I recall in the early 1980s, as the Reagan administration launched a second nuclear arms race against the Soviet Union, Micah's image of swords beaten into plowshares inspired a variety of groups to advocate "peace conversion." The New York office of the American Friends Service Committee, where I worked at that time, included a peace conversion program. The movement offered compelling scenarios, such as the many peaceful, productive things that could be accomplished with the same amount of money required to build one B-1 bomber. Around that same time, I heard Seymour Melman speak about the "permanent war economy" that had overtaken the Unites States since the end of the second world war, with its debilitating effects on American infrastructure and other important work to be done. Also, the Plowshares movement was a largely Roman Catholic initiative for peace conversion. It received some notoriety when the Plowshares Eight broke into a defense contractor's plant and hammered parts of some Minuteman II missiles.

But the American people were generally caught up in neoconservative politics, patriotic militarism, and a flood of affordable consumer electronics that dazzled and distracted. Soon the personal computer arrived, promising to save labor. But it instead proliferated labor and general distraction. Soon we were all in its harness. And later, with the rise of Islamic terror and the suspension of military conscription in the US, "peace conversion" disappeared from the American conversation.

My wife, Caroline, teaches Buddhist meditation and offers a dharma perspective. The Buddha taught that humans are given to greed, hatred, and delusion in different proportions, according to individual personality. Through meditation, one may learn to counter these energies with generosity, kindness, and wisdom. This is a more psychological perspective, without the larger social and historical coordinates of the Hebrew prophetic tradition. But when meditation is practiced over time, it can rebuild out from our highly individualized, consumerist condition toward a social reconstruction that chooses life.

Reverse Engineering Today: From Here to Sustainability

Just as Micah could prophesy reverse engineering only in poetic, evocative terms, I can suggest only some broad outlines of how that process might unfold in the future. Some concrete, present-day examples come to mind. Reverse engineering in this larger sense isn't necessarily the remaking of one particular device. Within a technological system it requires the reconfiguration of whole ensembles of technology.

For example, new technologies are underway to recycle carbon waste into new uses, to create a circular "carbon economy" that displaces the headlong linear extraction of fossil fuels from the earth and into dispersed pollution. Disused computers and other electronic equipment are being dismantled to reclaim gold, copper, and other elements. In Britain, even the Bank of England is now engaged with it. Meanwhile, the International Energy Agency estimates that renewable supplies of energy such as solar and wind will replace coal as the largest single source of electricity worldwide by 2025. It is estimated that one hundred billion euros have already been saved in the European Union by new solar and wind capacity since the start of the energy crisis. These are technological fixes to technologically created problems, which we heard critiqued in Part I. But they comprise one important part of the overall project of reverse engineering.

And as noted earlier, economic factors are always part of the equation, whether capital investment in artificial intelligence or more socially inspired inventions to meet economic stresses. I think of the people in London who repurpose steel shipping containers to create low-cost housing. In America, the housing shortage is already forcing more people into existing spaces. We can expect more large suburban houses with large lawns to become multi-family dwellings with solar roofs and large vegetable gardens. It's less than an ideal vision of the future, but as "transition towns" are already showing, creative ways can be found to repurpose the unfortunate choices of earlier generations. The civil engineering that enabled the suburban boom starting in the 1950s can be reverse engineered to enable new forms of civility. Economic expansions have empowered certain technological tendencies. Economic contractions will empower different ones.

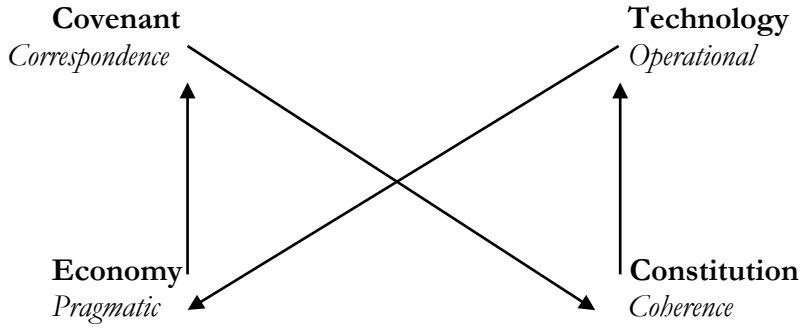
I readily admit, I'm not an active researcher of these trends. The examples I've just cited are mostly derived from conversations, observations, newscasts, Wikipedia, and reading *The Economist*. All I can add is an interpretation of the larger socio-historical dynamics that seem indicative for reverse engineering today. What follows fits with the se-

cond step of reverse engineering described at the start of Part I: "*modeling*, using the gathered information into an abstract model, which can then be used as a guide for redesign, reconstruction."

Flow

In "Peace on Earth: Covenant, Constitution, Technology, and Economy in the Common Life" (*Into the Common*), I traced the Swiss Protestant Reformation's rediscovery of biblical covenant and how it influenced early modern market economics, democratic constitution-making, science and technology. (I also discussed the connections between covenantal theology and modern federal constitution in the preceding essay, "A Federated Common.") I will repeat the most relevant parts of that earlier essay here.

In order to see our situation more clearly, it may be helpful to map these four key elements – covenant, constitution, technology, and economy – in their interactive dynamic. While these elements are currently in an unhealthy relationship, they may be brought into a healthy, integrative, and sustainable interaction, which is their true relationship.



This model utilizes four standard philosophical theories/accounts of truth and forms them into an interactive *hermeneutic* (interpretive framework) of truth. Within this framework, "truth" becomes less a matter of static propositions than *participation* within a hermeneutic flow. We begin in the upper left corner of the square.

Covenant is the historical antecedent and generator of the other three terms of this model. But it also continues as a term in its own right, particularly in religious traditions, but also in secular contexts where socially transcendent values find abiding human commitment. In terms

of truth, this is the realm of *correspondence* theory: an assertion is found to be true if it corresponds to observed phenomena or lived experience of some kind. Thus, covenant has the status of truth where persons experience it as a conviction worthy of commitment. In the Hebrew-Christian tradition, it comes as a divine "call" to faithful relationship with God, leading to focused, sustained activity in the world (see "Called into the Common" in *Into the Common*). In more secular-humanist terms, it may be experienced as a sustained passion and commitment to "peace," "equality," "justice," or other transcendent values that improve the world and make life worth living. But where communities share these commitments or entire nations are constituted under these convictions, a larger, shared coherence is demanded. And so we move to the lower right corner of the chart.

Constitution: in the formation of the Israelite confederation of tribes among marginalized Canaanite groups, a set of laws was required to establish what *constituted* life in covenant with Yahweh and with one another. Hebrew Scripture narrates this as Moses mediating a fully formed set of divine laws to his people, but this was surely a much longer, complex process of spiritual discernment and inter-tribal negotiation. Here we enter the realm of the *coherence* theory of truth: an assertion is deemed true if it fits coherently within a larger body of established truths. The modern scientific paradigm is one such system. The ancient Torah is another. The early Christian gospel began as a renewal within Judaism but soon spread more widely. The New Testament (i.e., the new covenant) documents early Christians discerning the lived, communal implications of their Christian calling/conversion experience, to form coherent, sustainable communities and networks.

The Protestant Reformation was powered by a renewed existential encounter (correspondence) with the divine, no longer mediated by the church's seven sacraments. It quickly generated new forms of doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and civil coherence. But none of these new coherences was able to redefine and consolidate western Christendom. By the latter seventeenth century, Greco-Roman models of democratic governance were integrated with covenantal concepts, creating a manageable coherence, a constitutional settlement. Constitutions are codified in writing and occasionally amended. But in truth, they constantly constitute the body politic. A constitution is more truly a living, dynamic reality among the people it constitutes. The written document is the husk of a living seed. That living reality may be lagging behind the stipulations of a written constitution (as in the case of true racial equality), or it may be forging ahead (as in the case of environmental

activism). Meanwhile, governmental office-electees swear oaths to uphold the constitution. Citizens vote (the Latin *votum* means "vow") for the candidates they feel will best uphold the constitution. Today, voting can seem little more than registering a consumer preference. But the Latin root of the word implies that one personally commits to uphold the constitution in a manner that aligns with a particular candidate or party. It expresses the relationship between covenant and constitution.

With covenant and constitution, correspondence and coherence, we are in the realm of point of reference and frame of reference: covenant's experiential viewpoint interacting with constitution's framework of more or less consensual agreements. But a sustainable life is more than the creation of a meaningful and equitable social order. Productive activity is also required. Here we move to the more overtly active realm of technology and economy, of means and ends, starting at the upper right corner of our chart.

Technology: the existential intensity of the Protestant Reformation tore open the "sacred canopy" of medieval Christendom's pre-scientific, sacramental universe. Reformed emphasis upon the covenant affirmed the universe to be the creation of a faithful creator, with laws that can be relied upon, observed, formulated, and used to human benefit and to the greater glory of God. For example, Francis Bacon, whom Neil Postman noted as an early articulator of human progress through scientific discovery, was the son of a devout Puritan mother. The growth of scientific methods of investigation, together with the technological application of the discovered laws of nature, partake of the *operational* theory of truth: an assertion can be verified as true by means of appropriate operations/methods of testing or utilization. The scientist and the engineer become the priesthood of this desacralized universe, building an ever-expanding paradigm of material reality and a vast, inter-connected world of life-enhancing technologies. But there is danger implicit in this operational universe of means: science and technology can turn an integral "communion of subjects" into a "collection of objects," to borrow the language of deep ecologist Thomas Berry. This objectified world – including humans – becomes grist for a rationalization processes that sociologist Max Weber warned had lost its covenantal basis. But that danger becomes more manifest as these amplified *means* are bent to expanding pragmatic *ends*. We move to the lower left corner of our chart.

Economy focuses and organizes human activity toward productive ends, in order to survive and hopefully to thrive, both individually and

collectively. Capitalist economy is a mode of production that progressively fosters and employs the forces of production (technology) toward these ends. Here we encounter the *pragmatic* theory of truth: an assertion or a proposed activity is verified if it leads to desired results. The interaction of means and ends, of modern technology and capitalist economics, has become an overpowering dynamic that nearly eclipses point and frame of reference in society today. The smart phone and "selfie" become the point of reference within a Worldwide Web of reference, where work and play, production and consumption, converge. Just as constitution continually reconstitutes a stable, relatively just society, economic production continually reproduces the basis for survival and growth.

This brief sketch must suffice within the limits of this essay to suggest the overall dynamic that covenantal theology originally generated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which soon after took on a life of its own, for better and for worse. The arrows in the chart, and the sequence we have followed in describing these four quadrants, are not meant to be temporal or causal. But there is a flow of logical priority among the four. And where that priority is perceived and enacted, the dynamic among the four can be healthy.

Note that the chart includes an arrow pointing from economy back to covenant, completing and renewing the cycle of logical priorities. Here the flow of life through constitutional, technological, and economic dimensions is beheld as a whole and discerned. Is it *true*? Does it act in good faith with our experience of covenant with God and/or our transcendent values? If it is true, it is to be celebrated, confirmed, and recycled through further development. But if it is untrue, unfaithful, then corrections must be made, such as constitutional amendments, technological adjustments, and economic reforms.

In the present technological system, we experience a reverse flow of those logical priorities. The imperative to expansion in a capitalist economy, the need for businesses to grow or die, together with population growth, the ever-expanding needs and desires of a consumer culture, and the military force required to maintain the global economy's resource and labor flows: all these converge to enforce a *pragmatic* agenda upon the *operations* of science and technology. Investment and research funding will favor development that will accelerate the means to those ends. Other technological developments that are less clearly aligned with those ends will be neglected.

This *regressive* tendency from ends to means then acts regressively upon constitutional *coherence*, our frame of reference. The meaning of

constitutions is skewed so that military security becomes more urgent than international cooperation; domestic security means building more prisons rather than meeting human needs and fulfilling civil rights. Financial regulation is eased in order to give banks more latitude; environmental regulations and labor laws are relaxed to give corporations unlimited access to resources and labor. Toward such ends, economic institutions pour hundreds of millions into lobbying and the electoral process to ensure favorable outcomes.

Finally, this process acts back upon *covenant*: religious communities empty out as people forget the covenantal grounding of their faith and become free-floating religious consumers, shopping religions and spiritualities: "spiritual, not religious" or "believing without belonging." So in a pragmatic ploy to survive, many churches become booster clubs for "America first" and to "support our troops" as they enforce the thinly veiled will of an international capitalist class.

This reverse flow of logical priorities produces a *centrifugal* effect upon the human psyche: we live a fragmenting, compartmentalized existence with different worldviews and rules for different aspects of our lives. This contributes to the centrifugal effect upon society in general: racism continues and mutates into new forms, the gap between rich and poor widens, sexual predation proliferates, gender biases stubbornly remain, criminal punishment expands, and militarization grows, both domestically among police forces and internationally. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in their seminal work, *Empire*,[143] note this centrifugal effect, using the term "corruption." Besides moral corruption, it is the tendency of the whole system to degenerate, requiring ever-greater measures of violence to maintain it. Ancient Romans noted it within their empire, and we can see it clearly enough within today's global capitalist empire.

By contrast, when we move with the flow of truth, covenant exerts a *centripetal* effect, drawing elements together. Historical memory deepens the sense of "ties that bind" our individual psyches, our families, faith communities, and social fabrics. Memories of both faithfulness and failure, of both liberation and oppression, inspire both gratitude and rededication to do better now for the future. The renewed conviction of a covenantal reality then inspires rededication to constitutional provisions, to the scientific advancements and technological innovations that serve the common good and not just private interests, and to economic priorities that serve the common life on earth (see Charles Eisenstein's and Peter Barnes' economic proposals mentioned in "Everlasting Sabbath and Commonist Economics," *Into the Common*).

This what "reverse engineering" in the largest, systemic sense can mean today. It reverses the incoherent flow that has overtaken us in the technological system. It reasserts the flow of a living, evolving truth. It renounces the technological metaphysics that Ernst Jünger saw advancing a century ago. If the flow of covenant is metaphysical (I'm not accustomed to using that word), it is an existence called by the One into service within the common. That is, it is grounded in a conviction that becomes a commitment to discover coherence and become stewards of coherent means and ends in the common life of culture and nature together.

This can re-establish technology as a healthy "moral philosophy," to use Paul Goodman's terminology. Indeed, such a recovery amounts to the "new reformation" Goodman was groping toward in 1970.

Afterword

(9/24)

You lose your grip, and then you slip
Into the Masterpiece

Leonard Cohen, "A Thousand Kisses Deep"
from *Ten New Songs* (2001)

That line relates to a comment I heard Cohen make near the time that song was released. For many years, he fretted whether and when he would create his masterpiece. Finally, at some point he realized his life's purpose was to become part of the Masterpiece. Ironically, *Ten New Songs*, the album where he begins to confront his own mortality, is probably the masterpiece of Cohen's great songwriting career.

I resonate with his insight, as I complete this final collection of essays. I have struggled through my years in ministry among Friends to strike the major chords that would contribute to renewed Quaker self-understanding and purpose. My efforts provided some limited benefits among a few Friends, but have always been flawed in various ways. And as time went on, I realized that Friends were concerned about many important things other than what I had to offer. So, as I explained at the start of the Richmond essay in *Into the Common*, I had a moment of clarity that it was time to let it go – to lose my grip.

In returning to Indiana, my home state, I began my present odyssey into the common. Having let go of the sectarian concerns of Quaker ministry and scholarship, I began to contemplate more directly the common life – the life the early Quaker movement was about in the first place. That is the Masterpiece where I find myself slipping as I live into my mid-seventies. It is more than six years now since I moved into the Interfaith Apartments, and I savor all the more the shy beauty and humble grace of my fellow seniors, all of us fading images of glory and shame. All of us losing our grip, slipping one by one into nursing

homes or straight on to the grave, back to the earth whence we came, and hence our common name, "human."

Thus, *Life in Gospel-Space, Into the Common, Further into the Common,* and *Common at Last* are journals of my "slip into the Masterpiece."

* * * * *

And after all my best efforts to map the common in relation to the One, I feel something like Job after his confrontation with God in the whirlwind (see "Job Experience" in *Further into the Common*):

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,

things too wonderful for me., which I did not know.

Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes (42:3,6).

Endnotes

[1] David DeLeon suggests that anarchism is the only true radical tradition in America, though it is less a matter of political philosophy than social fact. European radical traditions have never taken root, never became popular in America. That includes European anarchism, which was aimed more at organizing mass worker-based movements. In America, the fractive and sometimes recombinant polities of religious life may be the most salient expressions of the interplay of anarchy and anarchism. See *The American as Anarchist: Reflections on Indigenous Radicalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 5; note also Robert N. Bellah's Foreword.

[2] Brian Drayton, *The Gospel in the Anthropocene: Letters from a Quaker Naturalist* (Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2014).

[3] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon, 2000, 2013), pp. 37-40.

[4] Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena,* Part I (London, 1646), pp. 57-58, 54. For more on Edwards and the growth of antinomian groups during the civil war, see Gwyn, *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 2000), Chapter 3.

[5] Ronald Hutton, *The British Republic, 1649 – 1660*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), p. 33.

[6] Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 28.

[7] Fox, *To All that Would Know the Way to the Kingdom*, reprinted in *Works* (Philadelphia: Gould, 1831), vol. 4, p.29. (Quoted earlier in "The Inter-Light and the Compass of the Common" essay in this volume). James Nayler, in *Saul's Errand to Damascus* the same year, wrote with much the same wording. Note Fox's quotation from Isaiah 5, the "Song of the Vineyard," the prophet's foundational critique of eighth-century BCE Israel, which was corrupting the "vineyard of the Lord," the traditional tribal land tenure of Israel, with some similar pattern of land enclosure. Isaiah 5:8: "Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room or no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land!" For some perspectives on that ancient history, see Walter Brueggemann, *The Land* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

[8] For more on Winstanley and his Quaker connections, see Chapter 5, "William Walwyn and Gerrard Winstanley," in Gwyn, *Seekers Found.*

[9] Thomas Aldam, Benjamin Nicholson, John Harwood, and Samuel Buttivant, *A Brief Discovery of the threefold estate of Antichrist* (London, Calvert, 1653), Preface, pp. 5-7.

[10] Benjamin Nicholson, *A Blast from the Lord, or, A Warning to England* (London: Calvert, 1653), pp. 8, 10. Nicholson was imprisoned for five months at York Castle for interrupting a local parish church service. He died in the same prison in 1660, one of a growing number of Quaker martyrs.

[11] James Nayler, *A Lamentation over the Ruins of This Oppressed Nation* (1653), in Nayler, *Works* (Glenside, PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2003), vol. 1, pp. 196-97, 203-04.

[12] James Nayler, *To the Rulers of This Nation* (1654), in Nayler, *Works* (Glenside, PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2004), vol. 2, p. 583.

[13] I analyzed the apocalyptic and revolutionary dimensions of the early movement in *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1986); and *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1995).

[14] James Nayler, *The Lamb's Warre* (1657), in Hugh Barbour and Arthur Roberts, *Early Quaker Writings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 106. For a fuller analysis of Nayler's life and ministry, see Gwyn, "James Nayler and the Lamb's War," *Quaker Studies*, March 2008.

[15] Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth: The History of the Causes of the Civil Wars in* England (1668), quoted in Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, pp. 69-70; also see p. 109.

[16] April Carter, *The Political Theory of Anarchism* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1971), Chapter 1.

[17] See "Society" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 7:470-73.

[18] I have worked out that overall socio-spiritual definition in historical and contemporary terms in *A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation* (Philadelphia: Quaker Press, 2014).

[19] For descriptions and critiques of anarcho-syndicalism, see Murray Bookchin, *Remaking Society: A New Ecological Politics*, 2nd ed. (Chico, CA: AT Press, 2023), pp. 191-92; Alex Pritchard, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 34-40.

[20] Robert Barclay, *The Anarchy of the Ranters* (1676) in Barbour and Roberts, *Early Quaker Writings*, pp. 512-44.

[21] For anecdotes of these connections, see Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, Chapter 8.

[22] Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra,* pp. 330-31.

[23] For an extensive study of the nonviolent resistance to British imperial control up to 1775, see Walter H. Conser Jr., Ronald M. McCarthy, David J. Toscano, and Gene Sharp, eds., *Resistance, Politics, and the American Struggle for Independence, 1765–1775* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1986). Arthur J. Mekeel, in *The Quakers and the American Revolution* (York, England: Sessions Book Trust, 1996), details how influential Quakers on both sides of the Atlantic sought to mediate the growing conflict between the British government and the American colonies. Still, *The Many-Headed Hydra* is an important contribution in social history, demonstrating the importance of rebellion and resistance among the under-classes amid the transatlantic expansion of imperial capitalism. That history can inform and inspire present-day struggles for liberation and an egalitarian, anarchist society.

[24] For modern scholarship on these two important figures, see CITATIONS.

[25] Stephen H. Kellert, *In the Wake of Chaos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 13-15. The Lorenz attractor graphic is taken from those pages. I explore chaos theory in relation to the all-embracing common of nature and culture in "Beyond Counting: The Indeterminate Common," in *Into the Common: A Journal in Eighteen Essays* (Philadelphia: Plain Press, 2021).

[26] Paul Goodman, *Growing up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* (New York: Random House, 1960). Goodman's influence is described by James J. Farrell in *The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 119. Farrell makes a number of connections between anarchism and the now forgotten philosophy of personalism. I found a mix of personalist and Quaker outlooks in the founding and history of Pendle Hill, a Quaker retreat and study center near Philadelphia. See Gwyn, *Personality and Place: The Life and Times of Pendle Hill* (Philadelphia: Plain Press, 2014).

[27] Goodman's anarchist writings are collected by his student and friend, Taylor Stoehr, in *Drawing the Line Once Again: Paul Goodman's Anarchist Writings* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010).

[28] Goodman, "Reflections on the Anarchist Principle" (1966), in *Drawing the Line,* pp. 55-56.

[29] Goodman, "Freedom and Autonomy" (1972), in *Drawing the Line*, pp. 57-59.

[30] Goodman, "Anarchism and Revolution" (1970), in *Drawing the Line*, pp. 60-74.

[31] Goodman, "Some *Prima Facie* Objections to Decentralism" (1964) in *Drawing the Line*, pp. 75-88. The objections the essay addresses appear to have come from Goodman's students.

[32] Andrew Cornell, *Oppose and Propose! Lessons from Movement for a New Society* (Oakland: AK Press, 2011). The following trajectory is

taken mainly from his historical overview (Chapter 1), but the book also includes interviews with MNS leaders and some MNS documents. I also include here some MNS pre-history from Chapters 7 and 8 of *Personality and Place*.

[33] George Lakey, *Dancing with History: A Life for Peace and Justice* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2022).

[34] This section is informed mainly by Robert Dockhorn, "Alternatives to Violence Project: An Interview with Steve Angell," *Friends Journal*, July 11, 2007.

[35] I published a history of the first half-century of Friends General Conferences in *A Gathering of Spirits: The Friends General Conferences, 1896 – 1950* (Philadelphia: Friends General Conference Quaker Books, 2018). The Conferences were renamed Gatherings in the 1970s.

[36] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 211. Also see Jacques Attali's meditations on Brueghel's *Carnival's Quarrel with Lent* in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

[37] Vernard Eller was a theologian and member of the Church of the Brethren, a small Anabaptist denomination. His *Christian Anarchy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) appeared slightly before Ellul's book. It contains several problems and I gave up attempting to review it here. But it does appear that his Anabaptist sensibilities, like my own Quaker ones, predisposed both of us to see the anarchist logic of the gospel.

[38] Jacques Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 6-7.

[39] On governance, see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 223-26.

[40] I reflect on my own experience of war tax resistance and Quaker efforts to create a coherent testimony of that form of resistance in "Four Moments of Truth: The Case of War Tax Resistance" in Gwyn, *Wait and Watch: Essays 2000 – 2019* (Philadelphia: Plain Press, 2021), pp. 128-40.

[41] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, pp. 197-98.

[42] *C. G. Jung: Psychological Reflections*, Jolande Jacobi and R. F. C. Hull, eds. (Princeton: UP, 1970), p. 53, 54, 27, 38f.

[43] Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of Man* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), p. 27.

[44] "My Lord, What a Morning" is quoted here from *Rise up Singing: The Group Singing Songbook*, Peter Blood and Annie Patterson, eds. (Bethlehem, PA: Sing Out Publications, 1988, 1992), p. 210.

[45] Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), Chapter 4, p. 254.

[46] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, p. 152.
[47] Walter Benjamin, from Thesis II of "Theses on the Philosophy of History (1940)," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Hannah Arendt, ed. (New York: Schocken, 2007), p. 254. Also see Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History"* (London: Verso, 2016), pp. 78-84.
[48] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, p. 155, quoting from Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 65.
[49] Kierkegaard, Soren (1844), *Philosophical Fragments,* Hong and Hong, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 37.
[50] In *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 1991, 2001), Jon Savage makes these trans-Atlantic socio-economic connections in his framing of the punk phenomenon. Julian Temple's documentary, *The Filth and the Fury: A Sex Pistols Film* (2000), adds further detail on the situation in Britain. In his memoir, *Anger Is an Energy: My Life Uncensored* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), John Lydon (aka Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols) narrates his personal trajectory through those circumstances in London. And in *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), Greil Marcus makes a number of connections between punk and earlier dada art and anarchist movements.
[51] Will Hermes, *Love Goes to Buildings on Fire: Five Years in New York that Changed Music Forever* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011).
[52] James B. Nardi, *Life in the Soil: A Guide for Naturalists and Gardeners* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[53] Wendell Berry, "People, Land, and Community," in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays*, Norman Wirzba, ed. (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2002), pp. 191, 189. Quoted earlier, in "The Adoration of the Lamb: Figures of the Common," in *Into the Common*.
[54] Murray Bookchin, *Remaking Society: A New Ecological Politics*, 2nd ed. (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2023).
[55] Friends Committee on War Tax Concerns, *Handbook on Military Taxes & Conscience*, Linda B. Coffin, ed. (Philadelphia: Friends World Committee for Consultation, 1988).
[56] See "Moments of Truth: The Case of War Tax Resistance," in Gwyn, *Wait and Watch* (Philadelphia: Plain Press, 2021).
[57] Jonathan Flatley, "Andrei Platonov's Revolutionary Melancholia," in *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 160.
[58] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, Introduction.
[59] Andrey Platonov, *Chevengur*, Robert and Elizabeth Chandler, trans. (New York: New York Review of Books, 2023).

[60] Fredric Jameson, "Utopia, Modernism, and Death," in *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 78.
[61] Jameson, *Seeds*, p. 82.
[62] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, p. 161.
[63] Andrei Platonov, *Chevengur*, Anthony Olcott, trans. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1978), pp. 145-46.
[64] Platonov, *Chevengur*, p. 261.
[65] Platonov, *Chevengur*, p. 310.
[66] Platonov, *Chevengur*, p. 166.
[67] Jameson, *Seeds*, p. 99.
[68] Platonov, *Chevengur*, pp. 181-82.
[69] Jameson, *Seeds*, p. 106.
[70] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, p. 190.
[71] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, p. 187; Platonov, *Chevengur*, p. 310.
[72] This work was published progressively in what became a trilogy, examining the early Quaker phenomenon from different angles: *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1986); *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1995); and *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 2000).
[73] For more on Saltmarsh and his exposition in *Sparkles of Glory*, see Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, Chapter Four.
[74] For a summary of Burrough's tract, see *Seekers Found*, pp. 317-18.
[75] For a survey and analysis of the Ranter moment, see *Seekers Found,* Chapter 6.
[76] An obscure writer, probably Sarah Jones, counseled patient waiting in this forlorn state, in *This Is Lights Appearance* (1650). See *Seekers Found*, Chapter 7.
[77] George Fox, Epistle 5 (1652), in *Works* (Philadelphia: Gould, 1831), vol. 7, p. 19.
[78] For more on Fox's counsel and its catalyzing effects on Seekers becoming Quakers, see *Seekers Found*, Chapter 8.
[79] This revolutionary understanding of the early Quaker Lamb's War and its defeat is developed mainly in Gwyn, *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism*.
[80] Quoted by Alan R. Millard, "Ebla and the Bible: What's Left (if Anything)?" *Biblical Review* (Biblical Archaeological Society), April 1992.
[81] Martin Buber, quoted without citation by Harold Bloom, *The Book of J* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 162.
[82] Thomas Mann, *Young Joseph*, quoted without citation by Bloom, *Book of J*, pp. 158, 161.
[83] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, edited and introduced by Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), p. 58.

[84] Buber, quoted in Janet E. Schroeder, *Dialogue with the Other: Martin Buber and the Quaker Experience*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #192 (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1973), pp. 18-19.
[85] See Norman K. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 85-95.
[86] Fredric Jameson, *Raymond Chandler: Detections of Totality* (New York: Verso, 2016).
[87] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (three volumes, 1954-59), (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).
[88] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 53-57.
[89] This interesting psychological interpretation is offered by Silvano Arieti in *Abraham and the Contemporary Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 143ff.
[90] Robert Alter, *The Art of the Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).
[91] Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling,* Walter Lowrie, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 59. Also see Mark C. Taylor's excellent study, "Journeys to Moriah: Hegel vs. Kierkegaard," in Taylor, *Deconstructing Theology*, (New York: Crossroad, 1982), pp. 1-22.
[92] Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250 – 1050 BCE* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1979). I devoted an introductory chapter of *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (1995) to a summary of Gottwald's thesis. It served as preparation for reconceiving Quaker beginnings in their true revolutionary mode, in opposition to the tame, standard framing of denominational beginnings. The book was one of my best efforts, but it made little impression upon Friends. Another step on my own journey to Moriah.
[93] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 80-81.
[94] Pannenberg, *Theology*, pp. 78, 82, 90.

[95] The only thing I did with my degree in zoology was to work for three summers after graduation as a state park naturalist in Indiana. I have reflected in "An Apocalyptic Life" (*Into the Common*) on the importance of that experience.
[96] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Toward a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith*, Ted Peters, ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), p. 9. Henceforth, page numbers from this book will simply be given with the quotations.
[97] For more on Fox's proto-environmental theology and ethic, see Gwyn, *A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation* (Philadelphia: FGC Quaker Press, 2014), Introduction and Chapter 8.
[98] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, Richard John Neuhaus, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), p. 56.

[99] Allan D. Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), pp. 95-96.
[100] Galloway, *Pannenberg*, p. 123.
[101] Galloway, *Pannenberg,* pp. 110-11.
[102] See Gwyn, *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 2000), Conclusion.
[103] Galloway, *Pannenberg*, p. 63.
[104] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 63, 59, 60.
[105] Quoted in Pannenberg, *Toward a Theology of Nature*, p. 40.
[106] Slavoj Zizek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), p. 89.
[107] For Dylan's description of his early years in New York, see his *Chronicles, Volume One* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), Chapter 2, "The Lost Land."
[108] Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi, Foreword by Fredric Jameson, Afterword by Susan McClary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985). Quotations from the book given in this essay will be cited in the text.
[109] At the time of Attali's writing, Girard's main text available was *Violence and the Sacred*, which appeared in English in 1977. Girard wrote much more on his scapegoat theory in subsequent years, explicitly relating it to the Christian revelation.
[110] See Gwyn, *The Anti-War: Militant Peacemaking in the Manner of Friends* (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2016).
[111] See Gwyn, *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1995; London: Quaker Books, 2006), p. 170, and more generally the chapter on the Nayler episode as the decisive moment of the Quaker Lamb's War.
[112] In "The Early Quaker Lamb's War: Secularization and the Death of Tragedy in Early Modern England," in Gwyn, *Wait and Watch: Essays 2000 – 2019* (Philadelphia: Plain Press, 2021), I suggest that the apocalyptic message and nonviolent revolutionary activity of the early Quaker movement both re-enacted the Passion of Jesus and dramatized the rebirth of tragic consciousness in seventeenth-century England (which is most generally recognized in Shakespeare's plays and Milton's poetry). The suffering and defeat of the Lamb's War was a key moment in England's transition toward the liberal Enlightenment and advancing secularization (for better and worse). This parallels the manner in which ancient Greek tragic drama articulated the social and spiritual contradictions that would be resolved later by Greek philosophy (for better and worse).
[113] As the revolutionary Quaker movement precipitated into a coherent religious sect in resistance to the wider secularizing society around it, Friends sustained an anti-music and anti-art, even into the latter nineteenth century. This scandalizes many modern

Friends in their middle-class respectability and art appreciation. But we live in an age of technological reproduction, which has made music and art available to all – and a matter of commodity consumption, as this essay goes on to explore. Early and traditional Quaker anti-music and anti-art were a testimony against the aestheticized worship of the high churches as well as the privilege and exclusive tastes of society's upper classes, who could afford to consume art. The testimony was carried on too long, well after Friends were equilibrating with their environment, religiously and socio-economically. But the deeper socio-historical foundations of their countercultural resistance need to be recognized.

[114] For more on the interaction of punk music with socio-economic decay in London, Manchester, New York, and Cleveland, see Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond*, expanded ed. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2001).

[115] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken, 2007), pp. 217-51.

[116] For an integrative analysis, see Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* (New York: Liveright, 2020).

[117] For more, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, The Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1966), Appendix II, p. 524.

[118] In particular, I refer to *Covenant, Polity, and Constitutionalism*, Daniel J. Elazar and John Kincaid, eds. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980).

[119] Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 258-60.

[120] Daniel J. Elazar, *Exploring Federalism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987), p. 6. Henceforth, quotations and other references from this book will be given in the text.

[121] Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 308 and 263-64.

[122] Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of our Times* (London: Verso, 1994), Introduction.

[123] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[124] Albert Einstein, as quoted in "World Federalism, *Wikipedia* (as of 6/19/24).

[125] Elazar, *Exploring Federalism*, p. 263.

[126] Elazar, *Exploring Federalism*, p. 264.

[127] See *The Economist*, October 18, 2023, p. 72.

[128] See Terry Flew article, "Media Convergence," britannica.com.

[129] Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* New York: Vintage, 1993), p. xii.

[130] John Wilkinson, Translator's Introduction to Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Knopf, 1964), p. xx.
[131] Jacques Ellul, *The Technological System* (New York: Continuum, 1980), p. 12.
[132] Slavoj Zizek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 69.
[133] Paul Goodman, *New Reformation: Notes of a Neolithic* Conservative (1970), new edition with Introduction by Michael C Fisher (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010), Preface, p. 33. Subsequent citations will be give simply as page numbers in the text.
[134] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (NY Doubleday, 1969), p. 404, as quoted in Postman, *Technopoly*, p. 53.
[135] Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 86.
[136] Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (1972 in French); (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 15, as quoted in Culler, *Deconstruction*, p. 86.
[137] Derrida, *Dissemination* (1972 in French); (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p. 158; Culler, *Deconstruction*, p. 89.
[138] I am aided in this understanding by the work of Phillip Sigal, *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).
[139] For a full scholarly biography of Fox, see H. Larry Ingle, *First among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
[140] Hilary Hinds reflects on Fox's itineracy in different but complementary ways in *George Fox and Early Quaker Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), Chapter 5.
[141] For good overall histories of the early movement, see Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964; reprinted, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1985) and Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain, 1646 – 1666* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). My own work on Fox and early Friends has been more in the vein of historical theology: *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox* (1986); *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (1995); and *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience* (2000).
[142] The text as we have it in the the New Revised Standard Version says the ironsmith "fashions it," which seems to imply creating an idol. But a footnote adds that there is scholarly agreement that the text originally had "it" as an "axe," which would make sense as the tool the carpenter uses to hew a tree to make an idol.
[143] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).