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Satan Loves Proof-Texts

Gregory Soderberg

The history of Christian theology is filled with the abuse of Scriptural texts. Among the most heinous of hermeneutical crimes is wrenching a verse or two completely out of context in order to fit the pre-conceived conceptual system of the interpreter. Faithful interpretation, in contrast, pays attention to the entire context in which we find particular verses. Context means not only chapter and book, but also literary genre, historical time period, and place in the process of revelation.

Satan (and his cohorts) loves to proof-text. Every heretic has a verse or two that supports their position. Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and Roman Catholics all have their proof-texts. If we are to interpret God’s Word faithfully, it is helpful to see how Satan misinterprets it. By examining a few instances where Satan (or Satanic forces) actually quote Scripture, a general pattern of Satanic misinterpretation will emerge. Seeing this pattern should enable faithful interpreters to spot errors a mile away. Error is never original. Satan believes in recycling.

The first example of Satanic misinterpretation is found in Gen. 3:1-5. First, Satan asks an innocent question: “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Satan’s first tactic is to cast doubt on what God has said. Heresy always leads to rejecting to the word of God. But notice how Satan has subtly misquoted God. Eve corrects him: “We *may eat* of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest

ye die (emphasis mine).”

Eve, at this point, does not give in to Satan. She corrects Satan’s slanted question. Even though Satan’s question was technically true, he focused on the prohibition. Don’t think about all the other trees God has given you; think about this one tree you can’t have ...

Now that he has cast aspersion on God’s command, Satan goes on to twist the command: “Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

Was this true? Partly. It was patently false that Adam and Eve would not die. Satan lies here. But what about the rest? It is all true. Satan is not just a liar. He does not only tell untruths. He uses the truth whenever it is to his advantage. All Satan said was proven true by subsequent events. But Adam and Eve still died.

Moving to another portion of Scripture, Matt. 4, we see how Satan uses Scripture to tempt the Author Himself. Satan uses God’s words to test the Word Incarnate. Although there are three temptations, Satan only quotes Scripture in one temptation. But, there is a general pattern Satan follows.

In the first temptation, Satan challenges Jesus to turn rocks into bread. Christ, who has fasted for forty days, still has the strength to quote Dt. 8:3, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Satan is tempting Jesus to imitate Moses, to make bread in the desert. But, Jesus, as the greater Moses, knows that Moses’ true power was not his ability to “do” miracles. Rather, Moses’ power lay in his humility and total reliance on God (Nu. 12:3; Dt. 34:10-11).

In the second temptation, Satan tempts Jesus to throw himself from the top of the Temple. This



time, Satan handily quotes part of Psalm 91. Again, Jesus replies with Scripture: “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,” (Dt. 6:16).

The third temptation is pregnant with Satanic theology. Satan takes Jesus to a very high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Satan will give all these kingdoms to Jesus if only Jesus will bow down and serve him. The parallel account in Luke 4:6 allows Satan to boast a little more: “All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it.”

In this temptation, Satan seems to get a little frisky. Does he actually own all the kingdoms of the earth? It looks as if our dispensational brethren might actually be right. Well, phooey, Satan *is* alive and well on planet earth! All poor Jesus can do is quote Deuteronomy again (6:13 to be exact), and this is apparently enough to drive Satan away. Big Bad Satan, who owns all the kingdoms of the world, scared away by a little Bible verse! Actually, this verse reveals that Jesus, meek and mild, is not interested in the kingdoms of the earth. No, Jesus just wants to save souls. Cultures and nations can go to hell, because Satan owns them anyway.

At this point, my tongue is so far in my cheek that I look like a demented chipmunk. Fleshing out a Biblical view of Satan and his role after the resurrection must wait for another time. Suffice it to say that Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus has triumphed over all principalities and powers, including angelic ones (Eph. 1:19-23), and is currently putting all enemies beneath his feet (1 Cor. 15:24-25; Matt. 28:18).

However, returning to Satan’s tactics, we see a clear pattern. In tempting Jesus, Satan held forth some good and desirable thing each time. First, he offered the prospect of food, then of being delivered by God, and then of ruling all the kingdoms of the world. All these are good in and of themselves. Furthermore, these are all things that Jesus would obtain. He ate again. He was miraculously protected numerous times. Finally, Jesus gained and now rules over all the kingdoms of the world.

What Satan did was offer a *good thing, but in the wrong way, at the wrong time*. This is the same tactic Satan used with Eve. We have reasons to believe that God would eventually give Adam and Eve the fruit from both the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. Adam and Eve were little children. They needed to grow up. They

were on probation. But, after they had matured, why wouldn’t they be given the privilege of eating the fruit?¹

In the same way, Satan offered Jesus food before Jesus had finished his period of fasting and temptation (wrong time). Satan offered Jesus miraculous protection, but as a result of foolishly testing of God (wrong way). Lastly, Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world. Because Jesus would eventually gain these kingdoms, *after* he had suffered and died, this was a good thing offered in both the wrong way *and* at the wrong time.

Now that we understand Satan’s basic tactic, the last example of Satanic proof-texting should be obvious. When Jesus is hanging on the cross, there is one last, merciless temptation he must undergo. As Matthew tells us, “Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, ‘He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.’ The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth,” (Matt. 27:41-44).

Matthew is full of Old Testament quotations, and the crucifixion narrative is no exception. In particular, Psalm 22 is quoted or paraphrased at least four times in Matt. 27. One of these instances is the temptation the chief priests and scribes cast into Jesus’ teeth. They quote Psalm 22:8. They know their Old Testament. These were the same fools who knew exactly which town the Messiah would be born in (Matt. 2: 3-6). They knew Psalm 22 was a grand narrative about the Messiah. Like Satan (or perhaps because Satan was speaking through them), they quoted Scripture in assaulting the Messiah.

What pain this must have caused Jesus! Was he the Son of God? Yes! Was this Psalm speaking of him? Yes! Would God deliver him? Yes! ... but not now ... not yet. In the midst of fulfilling this magnificent Psalm, the King of Glory must wait a little longer. This is the moment all of history has been moving toward. This is the meaning of the entire Old Covenant. Like a wave surging toward the shore, cresting and waiting to fall ... he must wait a little longer.

What is his response? The Word responds with a word, with his words: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama

¹ See James B. Jordan, *Primeval Saints*, for more on this neglected topic.



sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). In responding to a Satanic proof-text temptation, Jesus replies with his own words. The satanic tempters threw Ps. 22:8, tempting him to come down off the cross. Jesus conquers the temptation by quoting the same psalm (22:1).

This may not seem like much of a victory, but I can't help thinking that in quoting the first verse of this Messianic psalm, Jesus' hearers (and readers) were supposed to call the entire psalm to mind. Although Psalm 22 begins in desperation and lament, and recounts the cruel sufferings of the Messiah, it doesn't end there. Verse 22 begins the ascent out of the depths when the Psalmist praises God.

The transition from a psalm of lament to a psalm of glorification and redemption is striking. Out of the dust of death (v. 15), the psalm progresses to the glorious hope of redemption, where all the ends of the earth will remember the Lord, and generations will recount his mighty deeds to their children. Is it mere coincidence that Jesus chose the dire first verse of this psalm? He knew that his shame and “roaring” (v. 1) on the cross was only the beginning.

Rather than focusing on what it meant for the second Person of the Trinity to be “forsaken” by the Father (as if God could be separated from himself!), we should recall the hope latent in Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22. Even as he seemed to be forsaken on the cross, surely he did not die in despair. He knew the Scriptures, and therefore he knew, “he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard”! (v. 24). In our suffering, affliction, and temptations, we need to quote the Scriptures ... all of it.

The Cyborgs Are Coming! The Cyborgs Are Coming!

Maurice Hagar

The moral battleground of the 21st century is biotechnology. And by all accounts, the Church is once again ill-prepared for battle. Most of us are ambivalent towards the myriad of bioethical issues swirling about us, while too many of our kids, raised on Transformers and X-Men, show an alarming fascination with one biotech project in particular, cybernetics.

Cybernetics, the science of controlling biological organisms, and the related *cyborg*, an acronym for “cybernetic organism,” which refers to

the melding of biological life with “machine life,” grew out of early work on the space program. A 1963 NASA report, “Engineering Man for Space: The Cyborg Study,” encouraged mankind “to take an active part in his own biological evolution” by reengineering the human species “to create man-machine hybrids” fit for space travel (Clark 1-2). The first, modest step was to fit a lab rat with an automated drug delivery system. Small steps soon gave way to giant strides and today monkeys manipulate robotic arms via neural transmitters. Insects are remote-controlled via brain implants. The brainstem of a lamprey, preserved alive in a nutrient solution, controls a detached robotic body—evocative of the monstrous Head in C.S. Lewis' *That Hideous Strength*. And in humans, artificial vision systems transmit signals directly to the visual cortex of the blind while the paralyzed navigate computers by thought alone. Australian “cyber-artist” Stelarc demonstrates the mind-boggling potential of cyber-technology by plugging in a third arm that he manipulates with enough precision to produce handwriting and then turns his entire body over to audience members with remote controls in a “performance” he calls “The Involuntary Body.”

Cybernetic research now underway includes neural control of mechanical devices from wheelchairs to fighter jets, soldiers with “bionic senses” such as electronic eyes that see infrared radiation and synthetic skins that feel presence and motion, extensions of human bodies in virtual space as remote limbs and eyes are linked over the Internet, enhanced mental capacities such as memory and mood chips, and even neural-neural human communication networks. Linking humans together “opens unimaginable possibilities...who knows what new modes of communication, control, and intimacy we might achieve?” fancies neuroscientist Andy Clark (127).

A related technology, nanotechnology, enables “assimilation...from within, as the body is remodeled, literally cell by cell and sometimes molecule by molecule by microscopic nanorobots.” Nanotechnology is “a real and growing field,” reports John Kilner, director of the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, dedicated to destroying malignant cells, repairing genetic mutations, replacing cellular structures with stronger and more efficient materials, replacing damaged tissue, augmenting physiologic and psychological functions, and removing plaque from arteries (55-8). Biotech consultant Marie O'Mahony adds that a future application of



nanotechnology will be “replacing the organic brain with a machine duplicate” (29).

Such “nightmarish scenarios” are “not the musings of an isolated techno-geek,” warns C. Christopher Hook, director of Ethics Education at the Mayo Clinic and Graduate School of Medicine. “Rather, it has become the vision of our National Science Foundation and Department of Commerce” as “government investment in this project will be second only to the NASA moon-landing program (14-5).” Indeed, “transhumanism,” or “posthumanism,” is “now mainstream stuff,” says *Wired* magazine’s Brian Alexander (244-5).

It goes without saying that the notion of human engineering provokes profound moral and ethical questions—religious questions—as the posthumanists recognize:

As the border between mainstream science and what was once considered the wacky fringe began to blur, a new religion was forming [...] bio-technologists] were busy dismantling religion and the social order that supported it [...] religion had to be usurped by reason [in the] ongoing project of the perfectibility of man [...] quoting biologist John Haldane:] ‘We must learn not to take traditional morals too seriously [...] there can be no truce between science and religion’ (Alexander, 11-7).

Traditional religions are, as Oxford’s Richard Dawkins is fond of saying, “viruses and worms” to be eradicated. Biotechnology is the “new religion [with] the answer to the big questions surrounding death, disease, and human transcendence” (Alexander, 126). “If you don’t believe in God,” explains Alexander, “and you don’t believe in heaven, then what are you supposed to do when you stare into [the] ‘darkness of the grave?’”

The human loathing of death and longing for immortality are clearly “the subtext of science and biotechnology,” admits Alexander (102). “The transhumanists weren’t just afraid of death, they were pissed off by it because death was a pickpocket on a grand scale...an outrage!” (194). Take, for instance, biotech entrepreneur Michael West:

As he sat eating his burger, he looked out the window and saw the town cemetery across the street. Like Paul on the road to Damascus, he was whacked by a revelation: everybody he knew, everybody he loved,

would wind up in that ground someday. Then, boom! Just like that, defiance welled up inside him, a determination that such a future could not be allowed to happen. Death had to be stopped. (Alexander, 105-6).

Stop death? Psychologist Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera approvingly summarizes the roadmap sketched by Hans Moravec, founder of the world’s largest robotics program at Carnegie Mellon University, in his *MIND Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*:

This technological discourse at last implies [...] the possibility and desirability of the transmigration of the mind [soul] into a synthetic body [...] The image of eternal life also survives here, since we would no longer suffer the physical limitations of the flesh, and in a kind of reworking of the Paradise Lost myth, here and now, on earth, not in some vague ‘hereafter.’ [...] There is no doubt that there is a negative valuation of the biological body [...] the cerebral tissue—now simulated—is disposable and can be sucked up by a vacuum [...] The disappearance of the body and the externalization of the mind are [...] inevitable phenomena in the evolutionary process [...] there emerges a new self, one that transcends biological limits via a post-biological self” (Gray 131-4).

Alas, “our end is inevitable,” concludes Ollivier Dyens of Montreal’s Concordia University (94). And UCLA’s N. Katherine Hayles spitefully adds: “I do not mourn the passing of a concept so deeply entwined with projects of domination and oppression” (5).

“Do you feel an identity crisis looming?” jests Clark. “What is the self anyway?” To “hallucinate a central self, some spiritual or neural point wherein our special individual essence resides,” we make “a profound mistake” (Clark 136-9). Hayles explains: “The presumption that there is an agency, desire, or will belonging to the self and clearly distinguished from the ‘wills of others’ is undercut in the posthuman, for the posthuman’s collective heterogeneous quality implies a distributed cognition located in disparate parts that may be in only tenuous communication with one another [...] If ‘human essence is freedom from the wills of



others,' the posthuman is 'post' [...] because there is no *a priori* way to identify a self-will that can be clearly distinguished from an other-will" (2-5). In such a world, each of us will maintain multiple personas (Clark, 183-4), free from "guilt, sexual repression, and frustration" (Dyens, 82-3), to be whatever we choose "from nonsexual to multi-sexual," for example (Paul and Cox, 357).

As we learn more about such possibilities, Clark argues, "it should become clearer and clearer in what ways the goalposts of 'good behavior' must be moved [...] our work-a-day morals and expectations need to change and shift [...] to become more liberal and open-hearted" (Clark 174). Cyborg morals and ethics, of course, will be determined by cyborgs rather than by their human creators," adds Kevin Warwick, professor of Cybernetics at England's University of Reading (307). "Clearly it will not be beyond good and evil," assures Chris Hables Gray, University of Great Falls professor and former NASA Fellow, "but new constructions of good and evil [...] are inevitable" (12). "Cyber-artist" Orlan ruminates on such new constructions: "We are still 'formatted' by Christianity, which always asks us to chose between good or evil; the 'or' permits a designation of the guilty one and a demonization of the other [...] Currently the 'and' seems to me to be the only honourable and productive choice!" (Zylinska 168). "It is daring," boasts physicist Erwin Schrodinger, to give all this "the simple wording that it requires. In Christian terminology, to say: 'Hence I am God Almighty' sounds both blasphemous and lunatic.' Nevertheless, the ability to exert such control could be condensed in the phrase: *Deus factus sum* (I have become God)" (Alexander 31).

And what of the "bio-Luddites" who oppose posthuman evolution? "Only people who count" will "migrate"—and, by the way, one of the advantages of migrating will be "better sex uninhibited by pointless taboos" such as the prohibition of incest (50). Warwick speculates that those left behind will become a human "subspecies still living a wild, uncivilized existence [...] a lesser animal [with] more in common with chimpanzees and cows," and will eventually die out as slaves and criminals (300-4). Thankfully, cybernetics pioneer Manfred Clynes is not so pessimistic, likening posthumans to "those adventurous fish who ventured unto land" and those left behind to "their less adventurous cousins" who "still survive today, in water" (Gray 53).

All this, cautions Hook, "is forging ahead, mostly unknown to the public [...] assuming [...]"

that re-engineering humankind is completely right" (14-5). Ethical questions are dismissed as insulting and offensive. The "moralizing" of the President's bioethics advisory council, for example, is "idiotic" and "laughably stupid." And Alexander reports on an outburst by Douglas Melton, chairman of the department of molecular and cell biology at Harvard University: "This business about announcing you are a bioethicist and you will comment on what is moral and what is not, which real philosophers would never do [one wonders what, then, *do* real philosophers do?] [...] Why can't scientists comment on bioethicists! [...] The arrogance of this is shocking!"

Alexander says researchers deeply resent accusations that they are "somehow less moral than congressmen or columnists or the bio-Luddites." After all, they, too, "have wives and husbands, golden retrievers, mortgages, and cars they'd like to trade in for a new Audi" in addition to "a long history of policing themselves" (146-7). Somehow, though, these nice people failed to discern the immorality inherent in what Alexander calls "the most radical biology of the century."

They could do pretty much any damn thing they wanted [...] just for grins, some swabbed the inside of their own cheeks to get a cell sample. They cultured these cells, shoved them into cow eggs, and stood back to see what would happen. Sometimes, the cow eggs turned the human cells into embryos. 'It was really fun,' one would-be cloner recalled" (116-20).

"Even scientists regarded as conservative," Alexander continues, "saw nothing wrong with experiments like mixing human cells and cow eggs" (145). Therefore, he concludes, "it's best to have as little as possible to do with politicians and moralists" (148)—God's ordained arbiters of morality on earth. The "bigotry" of religion "should not be allowed to influence science, or even religion for that matter," insists Warwick (239). And, what if someone cautions that we, as creatures made in the image of God, are headed down a dangerous road? "Just adopt a look of worried concern and reply, 'Why, that poor deity'" banter Paul and Cox (277).

A few brave souls are erecting signs of caution on the superhighway to posthumanism. Sun Microsystems cofounder and chief scientist Bill Joy, for one, in the April 2000 issue of *Wired* magazine: "It is no exaggeration to say we are on



the cusp of the further perfection of extreme evil.” And as early as 1944 C.S. Lewis penned these prophetic words:

I am only making clear what Man’s conquest of Nature really means [...] The final stage is come when Man [...] has obtained full control over himself. *Human* nature will be the last part of Nature to surrender to Man. The battle will then be won. We shall [...] be henceforth free to make our species whatever we wish it to be. The battle will indeed be won. But who, precisely, will have won it? (59).
[...]

I am not supposing them to be bad men. They are, rather, not men (in the old sense) at all. They are, if you like, men who have sacrificed their own share in traditional humanity in order to devote themselves to the task of deciding what ‘Humanity’ shall henceforth mean. ‘Good’ and ‘bad’, applied to them, are words without content: for it is from them that the content of these words is henceforward to be derived [...] It is not that they are bad men. They are not men at all [...] they have stepped into the void. Nor are their subjects necessarily unhappy men. They are not men at all: they are artifacts. Man’s final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man” (63-4).

The irony of ironies is that, in this age of high-tech terrorism and weaponry of mass destruction, the abolition of God-less man is far more likely to come from his tripping over his own efforts to pull himself up by the bootstraps than from any religious zealot. If God is dead, as God-less man proclaims, then God-less man himself, created in the image of God, must also die.

Nonetheless, the beat goes on. Fifty-one percent of 12,650 respondents to a CNN Web poll indicated they would be willing to host cybernetic implants to improve themselves. “Resistance is futile” sounds the refrain of the Borg collective.

Is the Church prepared to meet this devilish onslaught? Beyond a “vague notion of the unnatural,” we are “at something of a loss to explain why, exactly,” the idea is so insidious, jeers Alexander (154). And Paul and Cox boast: “Theologians of the world, lift your noses from dated texts [...] You are being forewarned and have no excuse for being surprised yet again [...] We

bring it to your attention that science and technology may be about to deliver the Big Show” (415).

Kilner tries to shake us awake with this incisive analysis:

This moment in history is a crucial point for the human race [...] Most frightening about our day [...] is not the development of new technologies. Rather, it is the fact that technologies with this much power are arising at a time when humanity may not be capable of developing them responsibly [...] If humanity is to survive in the future, we must reverse the trends of the past. We cannot continue to be surprised by new technologies—forced to scramble to perform the ethical analysis and implement means of control. We must proactively engage technologies that are surely coming, doing the ethical analysis now and proposing and implementing the safeguards before the technology is unleashed (ix-x).

But never fear! God is still on His throne and we are not panicked by the doomsayers. Nevertheless, as the preserving salt and illuminating light in a dark and decaying world, more than ever we need “men of Issachar”—godly warriors who “understood the times” and “knew what Israel should do” (1 Chronicles 12:32). Let us recommit ourselves to loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, strength, and minds, which excludes our usual intellectual sloppiness and ignorance. Then, and only then, let us boldly engage the enemy alongside the few warriors already on the front lines: the Council for Biotechnology Policy, the Center for Bioethics and Culture, the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, and the President’s Council on Bioethics, to name just a few. And, finally, let us sound ever louder the clarion call for all mankind to “glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” For only in the person of Jesus Christ is our *imago Dei* to be recovered.
Soli Deo Gloria

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Time to Eat

Robert Nash

This past Sunday Sarah and I picked up the 'Four CD Set' recording of the *Cantus Christi* (see Canon Press). The Cantus is a wonderful collection of psalms and hymns that we sing during Lord's Day worship. The songs are beautifully played in four-part piano accompaniment. What a deal for ten bucks!

This evening Sarah put CD number one of the *Cantus Christi* into the DVD player and Psalm 1, "Bless the Man" began to resound from my 27" TV speakers. With that, dinner preparation commenced. Sarah had planned for us to have a hamburger casserole 'thingy' with all the 'fixins'. I took the task of frying the beef. After all, real men love to fry beef. Not to mention the fact that with Sarah being pregnant, the smell of cooking beef is likened to sun-rotting carcass as far as her senses are concerned. As I stood over the stove, wielding my spatula with consummate skill, it wasn't long until I heard the sound of squeals and wheels

gliding across the kitchen floor... One more accompanist had joined Psalm 15, "Lord, Who Shall Dwell Within Thy House."

Apparently Leah had found her way into the baby walker on wheels, also known as "grease lightening." Back and forth, up and down, round and round she goes, blazing paths from Mommy to Daddy and back again. Somewhere in between grease and "grease lightening" we had made it to Psalm 22, "To All My Brothers I'll Declare." I laughed aloud as Leah skated down the hall to take another look at the piano that was seemingly playing itself. As she gazed at the wooden noise maker I imagined her thinking, "I bet Mommy taught that piano to play, and play it better if it knows what's good for it."

I sat at the kitchen table sipping my diet Mountain Dew as Psalm 30, "I will Extol Thee, Lord" filled the living room with reverence. CLANK, CLANK, CLANK, RATTLE, CLANK! My '8-month old wheeled munchkin' had once again found the utility drawer - A big 'no no' in the Nash household. She must have heard the chair creak as I stood (most chairs associated with my presence do creak). She quickly dropped the cheese grater, which was aptly transforming to a "baby grater", and gave an "I think I better make a break for it look." Too late... flick, cry, kiss. The deed is done. Restored and happy she chases her angel back down the hall for one last look at the autonomous piano. Upon her arrival a new tune begins, Psalm 32, "Blest the Man Whose Trespass is Forgiven."

The repugnant smell of sun burnt beef had evaporated and Sarah made her return to prepare the side dishes. "How long until supper's ready honey", I asked. "25 or 30 minutes, it has to bake now", she replied. Psalm 40, "I Waited and I Waited for the Lord."

Soon thereafter I decided to go on a 'midget hunt' and found her in the hallway "spinning her wheels." Once again, like time after time after time before, her shoes had come off. This occurrence had rendered her walking motion futile as slick socks created no friction on even slicker floors. Bending over to rectify the situation, "Sarah", I said. "Where'd we get these daaaa...gurrurr shoes anyway!" Leah looked at me like I needed to be flicked, her gaze was flick enough. Psalm 42 played on, "As the Hart About to Falter."

Supper was now on the table. Psalm 62, "In God Alone My Soul Finds Rest." It was time to give thanks. Leah was asked to be still and pray. She responded perfectly with a smile and watched



attentively as I addressed the Father of fathers. Repentance, thanksgiving, blessing... Restored and happy we give a hearty, "Amen".

Time to eat.

The Da Vinci Code

Maurice Hagar

In March 2003 this heady conspiracy-thriller blasted off with 6,000 copies sold its very first day. Within a week it left the stratosphere and hit the NY Times bestseller list, where it has been a permanent fixture since. And with a Ron Howard movie now in the works that promises to rival Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* shows no signs of reentering earth's atmosphere anytime soon.

The *Da Vinci Code*, according to Dan Brown's Website (www.danbrown.com), is "an exhilarating blend of relentless adventure, scholarly intrigue, and cutting wit" that "heralds the arrival of a new breed of lightening-paced, intelligent thriller...surprising at every twist, absorbing at every turn, and in the end, utterly unpredictable...right up to its astonishing conclusion." Without revealing the plot, which you may want to read for yourself, suffice is to say the book is a smorgasbord of ancient/New-Age spirituality, Gnosticism, paganism, feminism, and goddess worship replete with sex rituals, all tied neatly together in a conspiracy theory to end all conspiracy theories that vilifies 2000 years of Christian history. "The greatest story ever told is, in fact, the greatest story ever sold" (266-7).

More than blasphemy, *The Da Vinci Code* is an alternate or revisionist history in the guise of fiction. On ABC's 20/20, Brown acknowledged that through this work and his other bestsellers he is on a religious mission to change how mainstream America thinks about Christian history. And when asked by Matt Lauer on NBC's Today Show, "How much of this is based on reality?" Brown's response was, "Absolutely all of it...is historical fact."

The same question posted on Brown's Website is answered thus: "*The Da Vinci Code* is a novel and therefore a work of fiction... While it is my belief that the theories discussed...have merit, each individual reader must explore these...viewpoints and come to his or her own interpretations. My hope in writing this novel was that the story would serve as a catalyst and a springboard for people to discuss the important topics of faith, religion, and history." He goes on to say of scholars who discount the historicity of his work: "I obviously

disagree" and "Since the beginning of recorded time, history has been written by the 'winners'... Many historians now believe (as do I) that in gauging the historical accuracy of a given concept, we should first ask ourselves a far deeper question: How historically accurate is history itself?"

This claim is also made in the novel itself by the fictional historian Leigh Teabing:

History is always written by the winners... As Napoleon once said, 'What is history, but a fable agreed upon?' He smiled. 'By its very nature, history is always a one-sided account.'

Sophie had never thought of it that way. 'The Sangreal documents simply tell the *other* side of the Christ story. In the end, which side of the story you believe becomes a matter of faith and personal exploration' (256).

The official Reader's Guide to the book, also available from Brown's Website, helps us make the connection between his fiction and our history:

- Now that you've read *The Da Vinci Code*, are there any aspects of life/history/faith that you see in a different light?
- Historian Leigh Teabing claims that the founding fathers of Christianity hijacked the good name of Jesus for political reasons. Do you agree?
- Has this book changed your ideas about faith, religion, or history in any way?
- Does the world have a right to know all aspects of its history, or can an argument be made for keeping certain information secret?

Such discussions are reportedly occurring all over the country in book reading and discussion groups, which are in turn driving sales of approximately 90 related books both pro and con. Thankfully, as reported by Peter Steinfelds in the June 5, 2004, issue of the NY Times, "By now, Mr. Brown's coy claims to factuality have been pounded to an intellectual pulp. Even the latest publication of the Jesus Seminar, the scholars whose claims to dissect the Gospels did much to prepare the ground



for Mr. Brown's fiction, carries an article on 'The Da Vinci Fraud'.²

Nonetheless, Brown and his mass of adherents continue to blur the line between fact and fiction—postmodern fact-ion. Postmodernism “deconstructs” modernist “metanarratives” of universal, objective truth and constructs local, inter-subjective “worlds of our own making.”³ Realism is replaced by constructionist views of truth and reality; fact is replaced by faction:

- “It is my belief that the theories discussed...have merit, each individual reader must explore these...viewpoints and come to his or her own interpretations.”
- “In the end, which side of the story you believe becomes a matter of faith and personal exploration.”

Such postmodernism, the prevailing philosophy in contemporary Western academia, is particularly evident in the humanities, including history. In a recent graduate-level course in the philosophy of history, the lessons to be learned included:

- History tells us more about the historian than about history.
- Accepted histories are particularly suspect of manipulation.
- History is dynamic, not static, and always subject to revision.
- Development of alternative perspectives is a sign of growth.

Duncan Salkeld of University College Chichester, England, in an analysis of postmodern history (<http://www.ucc.ie/chronicon/salkfra.htm>), draws the same conclusions:

- Historical narratives serve as a kind of framing fiction, therefore the facticity of history is fundamentally undermined.
- All history is written in the present, therefore the ‘past’ has no independent reality, (therefore there is no ‘past’).
- History has no essence or intrinsic priority-driven matter of its own (like facts or laws), therefore the historian has nothing she/he must attend to or respect.

²<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/05/national/05beliefs.html>

³ Translation: “truth is subjective”, Ed.

- Textuality constructs historical knowledge, therefore to construct an historical text is to construct ‘history’ (therefore, history has no extra-textual reality).
- Historians only write interpretations of the past, therefore there can be neither historical knowledge nor truth.
- History is written in conventions of language, therefore histories are relative and convention-specific.
- Meaning does not correspond to real objects in the world, therefore history cannot claim to have anything to do with reality.
- There are no ultimate, neutral values by which to live, therefore history cannot be regarded as a repository of those values (therefore history can offer nothing by way of ethical guidance).
- Modernist views of the past are discredited by theory, therefore theory spells the end of (modernist) history.
- Though language always constitutes the objects of history, historical artifacts may shape historical language, therefore no historical perspective is stable or sufficient.

One “postmodern history” Website captures the situation by explaining, “It’s ‘postmodern’ because *anyone* can contribute and because events can contain conflicting accounts and information.”

“Many historians now believe (as do I) that in gauging the historical accuracy of a given concept, we should first ask ourselves a far deeper question: **How historically accurate is history itself?**” As the covenant people of the God of history, such a sentiment should serve as a call to arms in the cultural battle.

- Our God acts in history for the express purpose of making Himself known to all people: Exod 6:7, 7:5, 14:4, 18, 18:9-11, 29:46; Deut 4:32-35, 7:7-9, 29:2-6; Josh 3:9-13, 4:21-24; 1 Sam 17:45-46; 1 Kgs 8:41-60, 18:36-37, 20:13-28; 2 Kgs 5:15, 19:17-19; Ezra; Isa 37:20, 45:1-6, 49:22-26; Jer 33:3; Ezek 34:27-30, 36:11-38, 37:4-28; Joel 2:26-27, 3:16-17; Matt 9:6, 24:32-33; John 10:37-8; Acts 2:22.
- Scripture conveys objective truth as a permanent record of God’s actions in history: Exod 31:12-13; Prov 2:1-10; Ezek 20:19-44; John 8:32, 13:17; 1 John 2:3-21, 3:14-24, 5:13.
- The aim of Christian ministry is to spread this objective, historical “knowledge of the truth” and to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.” John 17:1-26; Acts 13:38; 2 Cor 10:5; Col 1:2-3; 2 Tim 2:4, 25; Titus 1:1; Heb 10:26; 1 John 5:20.
- God will judge all people according to their knowledge of this universal, historical truth;



Paul summoned “all Israel” to “be assured” that Jesus is both Lord and Christ and proclaimed that Jesus’ historical resurrection “has given proof . . . to all men” of their coming judgment: Ps 96:13; Acts 2:36, 17:31; Rom 1:18, 25, 2:8; 2 Thess 2:10-13.

So, what should Christians do in response to *The Da Vinci Code*? Brown’s Website includes an endorsement by Father John Sewell of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Memphis:

This [novel] is not a threat. This is an opportunity. We are called to creatively engage the culture and this is what I want to do. I think Dan Brown has done me a favor. He’s letting me talk about things that matter.

Amen! Specifically, you should:

- Consider reading the book because your friends and neighbors are.
- Brush up on your Church history. A book such as *Cracking Da Vinci’s Code* by James Garlow and Peter Jones or *The Da Vinci Hoax* by Carl Olson and Sandra Miesel would be a start.
- Prayerfully and lovingly engage your friends and neighbors, earnestly contending for the faith that was once for all time delivered to the saints—Jude 3.

Our sovereign God is working all things out for our good and His eternal glory—*The Da Vinci Code* included. *Soli Deo gloria!*

Liturgical Thoughts & Musical Musings *Gregory Soderberg*

Liturgy is inescapable. It should be obvious that it is not a question of *whether* we will have a liturgy, but *which* liturgy we will have. In pursuing a more Biblical and God-honoring liturgy at Christ Church, we have much to learn, and even more to un-learn. This section of brief thoughts will be more or less devoted to liturgical musings for an indefinite period. My goal will be to distill some of the exciting discoveries I’ve made in endeavoring to become a better musical liturgist for Christ Church.

As Protestants, we need to come to grips with the fact of tradition. As with liturgy, every church has traditions. Every denomination has traditions. The only difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics/ Orthodox is that we like to

pretend we don’t have traditions. As William Chillingworth put it, “the Bible only is the religion of Protestants.”⁴ Besides the fact that this refrain is now a tradition (especially in the fundamentalist South), it is patently false. Where does the Bible say to close your eyes and fold your hands when you pray? As Protestants, we need a broader view. We need to examine our traditions self-consciously and see which ones are Biblically-informed. Notice I did not say we need a verse to support every single tradition. We need to understand the broad, covenantal, patterns of Scripture. God’s revelation is a tapestry. Provincial Americans like me want an engineering manual. We want a how-to book . . . *Liturgy for Dummies*.

In the same vein, Douglas Wilson is worth quoting: “I think it was Jaroslav Pelikan who defined tradition as the living faith of the dead, as opposed to traditionalism, which is the dead faith of the living. A lot of poison is contained in the *ism* of those three small letters. Reason is good; rationalism is idolatrous. Ritual is inescapable; ritualism is refusal to think about what you are doing.”⁵

Speaking of not thinking about what we are doing, why do we receive communion sitting in pews? Where did this tradition come from? In most churches, the answer would be, “Well, this is the way we’ve always done it.” Interestingly, this practice is a modern innovation.

The first people in a thousand years of church history to receive communion in pews were English Independent Puritans.⁶ Both the Scottish and English Presbyterians sat around a table during communion. In New England Independent churches, the minister and deacons would still sit around the communion table, while the congregation sat in their pews.⁷

The English stopped sitting around the table at the end of the 17th century, and Thomas Chalmers

⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1984), 11.

⁵ *Credenda/Agenda*, vol. 16, no. 3, 15.

⁶ Independents were distinguished from the Presbyterians on the one hand, and the Anglicans on the other. They were congregational in matters of government, but still markedly Puritan.

⁷ Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997), chapter 12.



was the first to introduce pew-communion to the Scottish Presbyterian church, in 1819.⁸

It is ironic that those of us seeking to restore a more historic and Biblical liturgy should receive so much flack from those touting the worship of the Puritans as the most pure worship in history. How many of our Southern Presbyterian brothers actually follow the example of the Scottish, Irish, and English Puritans, and sit around a communion table? I have yet to find the church that does so.

Perhaps it's because sitting around a table actually forces us to look at each other, and discern the Body of Christ, namely His Church. We're much more comfortable hunkering down and looking within ourselves, trying to conjure up pious communion thoughts. But that's not the point of communion. Communion is about *fellowship*, around the table of the Lord, with Christ and with his Church. The Puritans understood that.

If, as has become apparent in recent theological discussions in the Presbyterian world, there are good reasons for seeing the sacraments (especially *baptism*) as the mark of a Christian (Eph. 4:4-7), then it would appear that Quakers are not Christians. I was surprised to learn that, historically, Quakers have not practiced either baptism or the Lord's Supper. Later Quakers, however, were split over the issue of whether to make concessions for the sake of evangelism and start celebrating the sacraments.⁹ There are other oddities about the Quakers, but it would appear that we should not welcome them as Christian brothers and sisters to our communion tables.

Although we need to study hard in our pursuit of a better liturgy, there is *no substitute for liturgical practice*. A quarterback can study other great players' throws, learn all about physics and aerodynamics, but the only way to improve is to just throw the ball. Jeffrey Meyers, a pastor and an astute liturgical thinker, concurs, and is worth quoting at length:

“[R]eading theology in the kingdom means reading it in the context of the liturgical worship of the Church. Hearing, reciting, praying, singing,

speaking, receiving, tasting, seeing, and experiencing the Word within the liturgical life of the church will have a formative influence, not just on the sermon, but the Divine Service as a whole. This, I have come to believe, is foundational for theological formulation. Men must experience the liturgical consummation of theology. Theology is doxologically acquired and its primary function is doxological as well. Within the Divine Service theology is given, received, and offered in praise to God. Without this liturgical orientation theology becomes ideology and eventually heresy. And this begins with little ‘heresies’ here and there, born of a man's reading and thinking outside of the context of the worshipping Church, whether it be alone in his study or in conspiracy with others in an academic context.

My recommendations to men who want to learn theology? Of course, books, books, books, and more books! But for every book, a dozen Sundays on your knees and at the Table ... No amount of reading can ever substitute for what is received from God and then offered back to Him in a biblical liturgical worship service. Period. Here I stand.”¹⁰

Our culture is so far gone that we no longer know the difference between male and female. What makes us think we know the difference between good music and bad music? The standard most of us use to determine what music is good is what music we like. Since the 50's (at the least) what we like has been determined by what popular culture has told us to like. Since popular culture is also counter-cultural, it became mandatory for each generation to have their own music. Children had to have different music than their parents. If we pretend to be covenantal in our theology, we need to stop being anti-covenantal in our musical taste.

Just because something is old does not make it therefore better. But, since most of the art and music produced in the 20th-21st centuries has been explicitly rebellious and hostile to the Christian worldview, we need to purify our taste buds before making pronouncements about what good music is. I'm not talking about simply bad lyrics or pornographic paintings. The fact that we can't interpret the meaning and message of music and art without reference to lyrics and F-words shows the depth of our sickness. The *form and structure* of an art-work communicates just as much as the explicit

⁸ Crawford Gribben, *The Irish Puritans: James Ussher and the Reformation of the Church* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2003), 61.

⁹ James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*, 141.

¹⁰ Jeffrey J. Meyers, *The Lord's Service: The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship*, 406-407.



content. We need to learn more about *how* music communicates non-verbally, and *what it means*, before we are aesthetically mature.

The idea of aesthetic maturity is very important in discussing what to sing in church. You have heard it said that we should sing the psalms because they are God's Word. This is true, and is one of the main reason we sing Psalms at Christ Church, rather than cheap imitations of KISS 98.6, COOL 97.7, or GAG 103.4. But, which versions of the psalms should we sing? Why don't we just combine a faithful translation of the psalms with whatever is hip and trendy yesterday? (In trying to be trendy, Christians never manage to keep up with the culture. We only recycle pop culture after it has been around long enough to desensitize us.)

As a preliminary answer, consider the possibility of imbibing the music of another culture for a long period of time, if for no other reason than to get beyond our popular culture provincialism. And since our popular culture is explicitly rebellious, wouldn't it be better to let the musical forms of a more faithful culture sink down into our bones? This is precisely what we are doing in singing the psalm-tunes of the Reformation. Of course the Reformation was no golden age, but they saw much more clearly than we in many theological matters. Let's experience their theology in their music! Then, after we've really come to know and love Reformed music, let's learn the music of Christendom, that rich heritage of the medieval period and Renaissance.

Such proposals are like convincing someone who loves Folger's to try exquisite espresso, or like trying to convince someone to try a \$100 bottle of wine rather than the Gallo Brothers. There really is a difference. Some people just don't know it yet. Some people just can't taste it either. But, whose fault is that?

Tylwyth Teg (The Fair Folk)

Josh McInnis

Ancient British legend speaks of the Tylwyth Teg, a race of remarkable folk who were of stature greater than men, and who far excelled other men in strength and wisdom. However, they did not use their superiority to oppress men, but moved in their own circles with grace, and were seldom seen by men.

Long ago the isles waited for you
Seeking earnestly the first white sail
Bearing your folk from afar.
Over the waves you passed in twelve ships
Leaving your home in the West.
Tall you were, and fair, and proud;
Graceful, fearsome, yet laden with sorrow;
Aloof you were from the affairs of men
Petty and crude were their struggles around you
In this land which you roamed, but this world was
not yours.

Were you enchanted, or human at all?
Elusive and feared, we knew you not as we should.
Suddenly you were gone, disappeared in a moment
From the shores of blessed Ynys Prydein;
No trace of your palaces or woodland homes
Vanished.

Some men whispered you returned to the West
To search for your former home.
A life for a life: we remain here alone.
The land is now ours, and we fill it anew;
Hate, and tears, and worries, and blood.
And you are the remembrance in child's tales
And the haunting of woods and of hills.

Contact Information

Gene Liechty (pastor of Christ Church):
gliechty@carychristianschool.org

Gregory Soderberg (rambling editor):
gsoderberg@juno.com