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Eucharistic Hope in a Commodified World

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An abstract of
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Abstract

Eucharistic Hope in a Commodified World

By Antonio Eduardo Alonso

A remarkable range of contemporary theological reflection on consumer culture in the United States shares a common conviction that the central task of theology is to respond, resist, or reshape consumer culture. Significant works dedicated to the topic take a similar shape. They first articulate ways in which Christianity is under unique threat by consumer culture. They then advocate for a turn to the Christian tradition for a scripture, doctrine, or practice that might sustain a Christian response to those threats. And in many of these narratives, the location *par excellence* of that response is the Eucharist. Christian hope, they argue, is found in our effective cultivation of practices of everyday resistance to the market.

In this dissertation, I argue that reducing the work of theology to resistance and centering Christian hope in a Eucharist that might better support that resistance undermines our ability to talk about the activity of God within a consumer culture, binds grace to human activity, and instrumentalizes the Eucharist into ethics. By reframing the question in terms of God's activity in and in spite of consumer culture, I argue for a mode of theological reflection on consumer culture and Eucharist that sees their interrelationship in light of the unique challenges that American consumerism poses to Christian thought and practice.

With an angle of vision shaped by Michel de Certeau's insight into the tactics of everyday life and Walter Benjamin's way of seeing "theological" wishes and desires invested in fallen commodities, I offer a theological account of consumer culture that recognizes not only its deceptions but also traces of truth in its broken promises and fallen hopes. And informed by Louis Marie Chauvet's insight into the tension between the corporality of the sacraments and a Eucharistic presence that is permeated with the absence of the Risen Lord, I argue also for a vision of the Eucharist that takes seriously its this-worldly materiality even as it makes promises this world cannot keep. Eucharistic hope in a commodified world, I argue, is an eschatological hope that flourishes in and in spite of our ability to resist the market.

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Pace e bene.

Antonio Eduardo Alonso
4 October 2017
Feast of St. Francis of Assisi

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Introduction

Resist. This exhortation animates and unites a remarkable range of contemporary theological reflection on consumer culture in the United States. Theologians from disparate perspectives, commitments, and disciplines share a common conviction that American consumerism runs against the grain of the Gospel and is in need of a distinctly Christian reform. While they describe the nature and scope of the problem in distinctive ways, their narratives take a similar shape. They first detail ways in which particular dynamics of consumer culture threaten Christian anthropology, thought, or practice. They then retrieve from the Christian tradition a scripture, doctrine, or practice that might respond to that threat more effectively. And often the source and summit of their hope for a Christian practice to fund such resistance is the Eucharist. The central task of theology, in this vision, is to seek out ways to respond, resist, or reshape the consumer culture that threatens all that Christians hold dear. Christian hope—implicitly or explicitly—is found in our effective cultivation of practices of everyday resistance to the market.

In the pages that follow, I call into question this exclusive focus on resistance. There are urgent and compelling reasons to object to resisting resistance as the primary mode of thinking about consumer culture. My own commitments to those reasons are woven deeply into these pages, often through the cautions and convictions of scholars who have already made substantial contributions to the conversation: the market projects the myth of an autonomous consumer freed from all constraints while it masks its own cultivation, manipulation, and deferral of our desire; marketing strategies pair a product with an entire way of life indirectly related to the product itself, making promises they will never keep; advertisements shape our imaginations in ways that malform our self-

perception and distort human identity; the market disciplines our desire in ways that ultimately work against desire for God. Perhaps even more urgent are the ethical critiques: companies go to great lengths to veil structures of production and mask the power imbalance between corporations, workers, and consumers; we are increasingly severed from the harmful conditions under which our products are made; goods appear to us as if from nowhere and as if made by no one; the market depends on processes that oppress the poor nearby and far away. These critiques expose a consumer desire that is aimless, manipulated, and misshapen. And they reveal also the profound ethical implications of our own purchasing patterns intentionally hidden from our view. These dynamics do indeed run against the grain of the deepest impulses of the Gospel. They are worth resisting.

Thinking outside a logic of resistance, then, is shot through with the risk of ignoring or relativizing these concerns. It runs against the grain even of my own initial Gospel-shaped impulse: How can we *not* resist? Doesn't anything other than resisting bless the excesses of a culture that so often mutes the cry of those on whom the market depends to sustain its own power? Shouldn't theological reflection follow whatever promising path lit by scripture, tradition, or practice might lead us to identify, create, and support better tactics of everyday resistance to the market? Shouldn't practices at the heart of our tradition—like celebrating the Eucharist—ground us in a greater prophetic resistance to the market? How can a theology in such a terrain be true if it is not in some sense prescribing a way to reform consumer culture? I intend neither to evade these concerns nor to offer any easy absolution from them.

And yet there are reasons to question resistance as the exclusive mode of theological reflection on consumer culture. One reason is the very ease with which *any* form of resistance to a consumer culture is so easily co-opted by the market. Dissent is itself a crucial component of a consumer culture. When icons of the most piercing critiques of capitalism—from Karl Marx to Che Guevara to Pope Francis—can be pressed into a t-shirt, a poster, or a collectible book to proclaim our resistance to the market, when marketing campaigns for desktop computers invest their advertisements with prophetic figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi to inspire us to *think different*, and when the purchase of everything from pure coconut water to an organic cosmetics product promises a revolution, we need not look far for evidence of the ways in which cultures of resistance in their myriad forms are themselves manifestations of the very orthodoxy of a market logic. Rebellion against a consumer culture often ends up reinforcing what it denounces.

Religion is hardly exempt. The market is remarkably adept at imitating religious desire and absorbing theological critique in ways that render religious objections to it ineffective. Papal encyclicals that incisively and prophetically diagnose the sins of contemporary consumerism and books of daily devotions that promise freedom from the anxieties of the market qualify for Amazon Prime two-day delivery; progressive theological activists and neo-conservative traditionalists who each provide their own liturgical maps to resist the structures of the world quickly take the shape of brands that promise distinctive ways of marking Christian identity over and against the wider culture and one another; and a wide body of literature that resists consumerism—indeed even a counter-cultural hymn, sermon, or prayer—is often dependent on and subject to the

forces of the same market against which their most penetrating critiques are lodged. Whether theological proposals for resisting the ills of consumer culture center on re-reading Matthew 25, rooting oneself in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola, buying more fair trade coffee, re-learning what Augustine has to say on desire, singing more songs about justice, or embracing a handsomely packaged contemporary articulation of Benedictine principles for the twenty-first century, the commodification of dissent signals the limits of *any* proposal—theological or otherwise—that promises a clear recipe for resistance exempt from a market logic.[1]

Yet while the commodification of dissent should temper our enthusiasm for prescription, what drives my resistance to resistance is more fundamentally a theological conviction about the activity of God at work in the world. In the pages that follow, I argue that reducing the work of theology to resistance and centering Christian hope in a Eucharist that might better support that resistance undermines our ability to talk about the activity of God within a consumer, binds grace to human activity, and instrumentalizes the Eucharist into ethics. By reframing the question in terms of God's activity in, through, and in spite of culture—rather than apart from it—I argue for a mode of theological reflection on consumer culture and Eucharist which sees their interrelationship in light of the unique challenges that American consumerism poses to Christian thought and practice.

A vision beyond resistance sees the church *as it is* rather than indulging in fantasies about the church that never seem to touch the ground. It sees a church that has never been free of the market and a market that has never been free of the church. It

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[1] The phrase *commodification of dissent* originated in Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland, *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from The Baffler* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).

makes space for attentiveness to moments when the church has negotiated the market—from the making and marketing of the modern Christmas to the invention and expansion of a religious book trade—without ceasing to be a means of grace in the world. It sees histories and practices complex enough to fit multiple narratives, including narratives of declension that see in them the market's manipulation of Christian thought, desire, and practice. But it sees also the fissures and contradictions at the heart of the church's relationship with the market, insisting that grace is not confined to those moments or those practices when Christianity adequately resisted its processes, but even when it tried and failed to do so. It sees a church enmeshed in a market it helped create and continues to sustain but which exceeds the boundaries narratives of resistance set for it.

Such a vision allows us to see God at work in the myriad ways in which people live theology through commodities: *veladoras*, statues, and holy cards of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* at the basilica gift shop in Mexico City; family bibles, daily devotionals, and spiritual journals; Lourdes water, miraculous medals, and rosaries peddled outside the grotto and online; *Jesus is my Homeboy* t-shirts, *WWJD* bracelets, and *God is not a Republican or a Democrat* bumper stickers; recordings of Gregorian chant, praise and worship choruses, and folk hymns; and home altars crafted over a lifetime comprised of a range of religious kitsch from shrines, churches, grocery stores, and more. However imperfectly, these objects and practices make manifest people's desires, hopes, joys, fears, hurts, anxieties, remembrances, and expressions of gratitude through objects that are neither exempt from market forces nor ancillary to ways in which faithful people experience God in the practice of everyday life. Even in their commodified state, they

testify to a theology embodied in and practiced through the limitations and possibilities of culture.

A vision beyond resistance also sees the ways in which Christianity is poured into the forms of the world. Religious longings, desires, and dreams do not merely disappear into a consumer culture but find their way onto a range of cultural forms of art, music, and media. Ecclesial traditions are re-appropriated at the altars of television talk show hosts and transcendent unveilings of technological devices. Intercessory prayer takes the form of Facebook posts and Instagram memes. This transfer reveals consumer culture doing one of the things it does best: abstracting sacred objects and faithful practices from the communities in which they were formed and putting them to new use. There is much to lament about that transfer for the communities from whom such practices are severed. Yet seeing beyond resistance makes space for the cravings for redemption which surround us even through misshapen desire and false appearances that are reducible neither to the distorting processes of commodification nor confined to our effective resistance to them. This way of seeing approaches consumer culture not only in terms of its delusions, but also in terms of the truths of its fallen hopes and dreams. It sees commodities not merely as monuments to false desire, but also as objects that bear collective hopes that may be only indirectly visible through their cracks.

And finally, a vision beyond resistance sees the Eucharist as it is. It sees not merely the market's clear insinuation into contemporary Eucharistic practices in churches where the ethos of consumer culture is most brightly on display and enthusiastically embraced, but also the ways in which all churches in a consumer culture exist as a commodity on the shelves of the marketplace whether we like it or not. It sees that even

our most faithful prescriptions for a counter-cultural Eucharist—whether in the shape of the Tridentine rite, the twentieth-century liturgical renewal, or any of the many alternatives made in the name of resisting consumer culture—cannot claim to transcend culture completely without denying their own captivity to a market in religious beliefs and practices. It sees a Eucharist that can be and often has been commodified in ways distant from our deepest hopes for it. It is finally an eschatological vision—a vision untethered to human activity in the Eucharist—that insists that in and in spite of that commodification the Eucharist remains the Bread of Life.

The work of the pages that follow, then, strives toward this new way of seeing. I begin by surfacing the pattern that undergirds current literature on consumer culture and religion (chapter 1). Through attentiveness to the writings of Geoffrey Wainwright, William T. Cavanaugh, and Vincent Miller, I show that despite their different diagnoses and solutions to the dynamics of contemporary consumer culture, they presuppose a logic that limits the ways in which we might think theologically through the ambiguities of culture. This logic centers on convictions that shape and reflect a much wider range of literature on the topic at its deepest levels: that the primary task of theology *vis-à-vis* consumer culture is resistance; that a meaningful contrast can and must be drawn between consumer culture and Christianity; that the privileged site of that resistance is a Eucharistic one; and that the Eucharist should be celebrated in particular ways to shape such resistance. I argue that remaining on the level of resistance limits our ability to see the activity of God in consumer culture, church, and Eucharist. What is needed, I argue, is not solely theologically-backed resistance, but a distinctly theological account of consumer culture.

The work of Michel de Certeau informs such an account. An accent on resistance in current theological literature on consumer culture has driven a narrow application of Certeau's distinction between tactics—the inventive and unpredictable practices of people in their daily lives—and strategies—the grids of power which structure them. This paradigmatic appropriation of Certeau's work uses his notion of tactics to describe a mode of Christian resistance that can persist without overthrowing the strategic grid of consumer culture. Situating tactics within the wider body of his work, I argue that they were not, for Certeau, primarily signs of resistance, but signs of absence: living realities that pulse within and against systems of strategies that can never quite contain them (chapter 2). Reading tactics through a hermeneutic of absence opens a space for a theological account of consumer culture that takes seriously the irreducibility of our experiences, even those on the contemporary marketplace.

While Certeau's work implicitly invites attentiveness to the practices of everyday life that slip beyond the grid of market logic, and while he is frequently invoked in literature on consumer culture and theology, Certeau himself was silent on the topic. To extend Certeau's insights into a consumer culture, I explore the commodity fetish as Karl Marx first articulated it and as Walter Benjamin distinctively expanded it in order to give a theological account of consumer culture that recognizes not only its deceptions, but also traces of truth in its broken promises and fallen hopes (chapter 3). Benjamin's way of seeing "theological" wishes, dreams, and desires invested in fallen commodities provides a way to take seriously the pervasive and even dangerous forces of commodification while still leaving a space for traces of the activity of God irreducible to the efficaciousness of human resistance. Attentive to all that resists assimilation into the grid

of a consumer culture, I offer a close reading of the material, historical, and theological significance of three fragments of my own everyday life: my grandmother's *altarcito*, the hymnals of my childhood, and a series of discarded Apple products. I attempt to take seriously my own embeddedness in the market in a way that neither smooths out the distortions of the market that shapes these objects nor absolves me of my own misshapen desires and perplexing contradictions. I listen for truthful cries of hope at work in and in spite of them.

If confining theological reflection on consumer culture to resistance limits our sense of the activity of God at work in the world, pressing Eucharistic practice into the service of that resistance unwittingly limits our conception of the activity of God at work in the Eucharist (chapter 4). Contemporary theological reflection on consumer culture makes specific claims about the ways in which Eucharist effects, shapes, and inspires resistance to the market. A dominant strand in twentieth-century liturgical theology shares similar convictions about the formative nature of the Eucharist against various forces of Western culture. Absent empirical evidence to support their arguments, some liturgical theologians have turned to the social sciences to verify their claims. But a circular logic constrains much of the social scientific reflection on the liturgy, merely confirming assumptions about the formative potential of the Eucharist with which the scholars began. And so not only are their fundamentally empirical claims unverified by empirical evidence, but when the Eucharist is pressed toward concrete ethical ends it is already caught up in a logic that instrumentalizes the Eucharist: grace, sacramental or otherwise, depends on us. Eucharist comes to be measured against its ability to fund our effective cultural resistance in a way that puts grace at the mercy of a human activity in

the Eucharist that cannot claim to stand completely outside a market logic even as we place our deepest hope in a grace that does.

Eucharistic hope in a consumer culture is finally an eschatological hope that flourishes in and in spite of our ability to resist the market (epilogue). Informed by the work of Louis-Marie Chauvet, I take seriously a Eucharistic practice that confronts us with the paradox of the corporality of a faith that is always mediated through the body of culture, tradition, and nature, on the one hand, and the present absence of the Risen Lord irreducible to any of these, on the other. To consent to the former accepts that, in a fallen world, the materiality of the Eucharist—from bread and wine to hymnals and ritual books—will always be enmeshed in the material of that world, including its immanent complicities and captivities to the forces of the market. To consent to the latter grounds us in an eschatological hope that transcends them, a hope that sees the activity of God at work in and in spite of the brokenness of a Eucharistic practice inescapably captive to the logic of a consumer culture. Eucharistic hope then is not finally located in our effective resistance of consumer culture, but in the promise of the ordinary and even the sinful made holy by a God who transcends our most faithful efforts of mending the brokenness of the world.

Seeing beyond resistance, then, does not rule out a space for practices of everyday resistance. Nor does it nihilistically celebrate the futility of that resistance in a way that absolves us from working for justice in a fallen world. Instead it opens a space for myriad faithful responses to the graciousness of a God who works through our hands and feet in the world, including acts of everyday resistance to an ever-intensifying grid of market power. But it confesses a still deeper hope that God's activity is never confined by or

identical to that work. It imbues Christian practices in general and the Eucharist in particular with an eschatological humility which frees us to invest in them more deeply. It accepts that even our most faithful tactics of resistance are incomplete. And it acknowledges that Christian hope does not finally depend on them. It sees the commodification of the world—and even of the church and the Eucharist—but insists that it is never total. Amidst the mess of a commodified world rather than apart from it, seeing beyond resistance finds traces of a Eucharistic hope which flourishes in its gaps.

1

The Resistance

In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville sought and received the permission of his French government to set sail for the United States to embark on a study of the American penitentiary system. For nine months he crisscrossed the country, visiting virtually every state and major city. He interviewed everyone from the president in Washington to slaves in the South. And on rare occasions he even fulfilled his promise to visit American prisons. Immediately upon his return to France, he handed off the preparation of a report on the American penitentiary system to a trusted colleague. Meanwhile, Tocqueville began work on a topic that had unexpectedly ignited his passion during his American sojourn far more than its prisons: the rapidly shifting landscape of the New World in the wake of the marketplace revolution and Jeffersonian democracy.

Among the myriad things that captivated Tocqueville's attention about the New World in the early part of the nineteenth century was the relationship between Americans and their things. "A native of the United States clings to this world's goods as if he were certain never to die," wrote Tocqueville, "and he is so hasty in grasping at all within his reach, that one would suppose he was constantly afraid of not living long enough to enjoy them. He clutches everything, he holds nothing fast, but soon loosens his grasp to pursue fresh gratifications."[1] With the eye of an outsider, Tocqueville diagnosed the American subjects of his study with a "strange melancholy" that haunted them even amidst their extraordinary abundance.[2]

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[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Volume 2* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 72.

[2] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Volume 2*, 74.

Tocqueville was neither the first nor the last observer to be struck by Americans and their interest in material goods. Nor was he the first or the last to render an opinion on the matter. For decades, scholars across a wide array of scholarly disciplines have increasingly devoted their efforts to analyzing and understanding the significance of consumption in American life. Historical, cultural, and economic studies reveal vastly different ideas about the history, meaning, and practice of American consumerism. These range from the ways people forge identities to the ways they deny them; the ways they display social status to the ways they subvert it; the ways they exercise agency or are robbed of it. What emerges is a picture of American consumption that is ambiguous, contested, and filled with nuance.[3]

Relative to the ambiguity that runs through studies of American consumerism more broadly, the level of consensus among theologians who have considered

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[3] Some examples of the sense of ambiguity that pervades individual studies of consumerism and, even more, the conversation as a whole: Thorstein Veblen coined the term "conspicuous consumption" as a way to explain the ways in which conscious attempts to display status through material goods serve as a way to secure social mobility. See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, ed. Martha Banta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Against economic theories that presume rational consumers and universal values, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood argue that goods serve ways in which people engage with one another and make visible the categories of culture. See Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (London; New York: Routledge, 1986). Pierre Bourdieu has argued that consumption does not merely reflect differences, but serves to construct and legitimate them. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*: *A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984). Against Veblen's thesis, in his study of material culture in mid-nineteenth-century etiquette, Robert Fitts argues that middle-class households valued uniformity and conformity over conspicuous displays. See Robert K. Fitts, "The Archaeology of Middle-Class Domesticity and Gentility in Victorian Brooklyn," *Historical Archaeology* 33, no. 1 (1999): 39–62. Diana Wall's studies of tableware consumption in the nineteenth century show the complex ways in which middle-class women negotiated shifting domestic roles. See Diana diZerega Wall, "Sacred Dinners and Secular Teas: Constructing Domesticity in Mid-Nineteenth Century New York," *Historical Archaeology* 25, no. 4 (1991): 69–81. Against narrow accounts of the distorting powers of contemporary consumer culture, T.H. Breen highlights the way in which rights, freedom, and patriotism were gradually projected onto material goods in the years leading up to the American Revolution. Breen reveals the liberative potential of consumption in American history. See T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno argue that culture industry manipulates the desires of consumers for its own ends, turning consumers into passive recipients. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

consumerism is striking. This consensus centers around convictions that American consumerism runs against the grain of the deepest impulses of Christianity and is in need of reform. While significant works from the fields of theology and Christian ethics define the nature and scope of the problem of consumer culture in distinctive ways, these narratives take a similar shape. They first articulate ways in which Christian anthropology, thought, or practice are under unique threat by particular aspects of consumer culture. They then advocate for a turn to the Christian tradition for the retrieval of a scripture, doctrine, or practice that might sustain a Christian response to those threats. And in many of these narratives, the location *par excellence* of that response is the Eucharist.

The purpose of this chapter is not to lay out more clearly the threats that contemporary consumerism poses to Christian thought or practice. Nor is it to refute that there is an urgent constellation of concerns gathered under the phrase "consumer culture" to which Christians should be attentive. This case has already been made by a variety of scholars to whom I will point appreciatively throughout this work. They have given voice to an instinct that Christians across ideological and denominational commitments share: that the impulses of American consumerism do not fit neatly with a life lived in the shape of the Gospel. My effort in this chapter is instead to surface the pattern that undergirds current literature on consumer culture and religion in order to discern the presuppositions that fund it and the logic that sustains it.

Over the course of the twentieth century, a strand of liturgical theology emerged that saw Eucharistic practice as both endangered by and the cure for the ailments of various dynamics of Western culture. While more broad in its scope, this form of

liturgical reflection on the relationship between Christianity and culture anticipated in logic and in form later theological reflection on the discrete category of consumer culture. This vision of Eucharist as a resource for Christian cultural resistance is particularly evident in the work of Geoffrey Wainwright. Wainwright's lament encompasses what he calls the "sickness of Western culture," in which he includes globalization, secularization, and consumerism. For Wainwright, while liturgical practice may be under threat by the forces of Western culture, the Eucharist is nevertheless the most significant Christian resource to shape ethical living that resists the damaging qualities of it. Eucharist is both refuge from culture's distortions and a remedy for them.

The shape of Wainwright's Eucharistic hope against the distortions of Western culture receives greater definition in the work of William T. Cavanaugh. Cavanaugh has written on the topic of consumerism with clarity and conviction. He explores with the greatest precision over a wide range of works the kind of pattern paradigmatic of the wider body of literature I am seeking to uncover. Of particular interest to the present study is the way in which Cavanaugh seeks to recover a "theopolitical imagination" in opposition to what he argues are false imaginations shaped by processes of globalization. And at the foundation of the theopolitical imagination he seeks to recover is the Eucharist. For Cavanaugh, Eucharistic practice has the potential to serve as a counter-politics that resists, among other things, the logic of the market.

Where Cavanaugh and Wainwright, each in his own distinctive way, argue for the recovery of a robust Eucharistic counterculture, the most thorough critique of the limits of such a counterculture in the face of contemporary consumerism is found in the work of Vincent Miller. Miller everywhere emphasizes the pervasive and relentless force of

consumer culture as a threat not only to Christian thought and practice, but more crucially to any explicitly Christian objection to it. For Miller, the market's ability to commodify even our most sincere religious condemnations of it must temper any enthusiasm we might otherwise have for the subversive power of Christian countercultural resistance, Eucharistic or otherwise. Miller argues that Christians cannot offer responses from outside of consumer culture, only from within it. Yet while Miller implicitly rejects the possibility of Eucharist as counter-politics, he too locates a more subdued hope for a Christian response to contemporary consumerism in the Eucharist. For Miller, the Eucharist supports a range of modest everyday Christian tactical resistances to the ever-intensifying grid of market power.

In this chapter, I show that the common shape of these diverse narratives is not limited to the thought of Wainwright, Cavanaugh, or Miller. They instead manifest a logic that runs through a much wider discourse in literature concerned with Christianity and perceived distortions of Western culture in general and consumer culture in particular. I show that despite different diagnoses and solutions to the dynamics of consumer culture from a Christian perspective, theologians who take up the question presuppose a logic that limits the ways in which we might think theologically through the ambiguities of culture.

Liturgy and the Threats of Western Culture

While there is little scholarly consensus around the complex origins of contemporary consumerism,[4] there is widespread agreement that it intensified in

[4] Several contrasting studies testify to the contested nature of the origins of contemporary consumerism. Chandra Mukerji argues that a culture of materialism that gave rise to the Industrial Revolution emerged as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. See Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). Lorna Weatherill

unprecedented ways over the course of the twentieth century as the Industrial Revolution gave way to unprecedented mass production. By the early part of the twentieth century, we find evidence that a concerted effort to shape American desire toward greater consumption is well underway: "The community that can be trained to desire change, to want new things even before the old have been entirely consumed, yields a market to be measured more by desires than by needs," writes Paul Mazur of Lehman Brothers in 1928, "And man's desires can be developed so that they will greatly overshadow his needs."[5] Mazur was among the earliest businessmen to articulate the work of marketing as an "educational force" centered on the stimulation of new desires and the amplification of old ones to turn the power of consumer desire into actual purchases.[6] "Potentially," writes Mazur, "needs and desires can be translated into demand without end."[7] In the

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argues that the foundation of a consumer society is evident in Britain before 1780 in the growth of internal trade in earthenware and china. See Lorna Weatherill, "The Business of Middleman in the English Pottery Trade Before 1780," *Business History* 28, no. 3 (July 1986): 51–76. Beverly Lemire locates the development of consumerism in the British manufacture and consumption of ready-made clothing between 1750–1800. See Beverly Lemire, "Developing Consumerism and the Ready-Made Clothing Trade in Britain, 1750–1800," *Textile History* 15, no. 1 (January 1984): 21–44. T.H. Breen emphasizes the influence of late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century British consumerism on later American consumerism. See T. H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690–1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 4 (1986): 467–499. Ben Fine has called into question the very possibility of locating the origin of consumer society in history at all in light of the fact that it cannot be meaningfully isolated from a variety of other factors that allow us see what is being consumed and why. See Ben Fine, "What is Consumer Society" in *The World of Consumption: The Material and Cultural Revisited* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

[5] Paul M. Mazur, *American Prosperity: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: The Viking Press, 1928), 24–25.

[6] Mazur, *American Prosperity,* 224. Throughout his work Mazur writes of the way in which marketing "educates" the desire and purchasing patterns of the consumer: "Advertising is an education force. If effective, desires increase, standards of living are raised, purchases are made; purchases create production, production creates purchasing power, and the circle can be made complete if desire is at this point strong enough to convert that power into actual purchases."

[7] Mazur, *American Prosperity*, 43.

decades since Mazur articulated this agenda, the advertising industry has successfully taken it up with strength, creativity, and vitality.[8]

The forces that conspired to shape this culture of American consumer desire intensified at the same time the twentieth-century Liturgical Movement in the Christian churches was gaining strength. Despite seething condemnations of modern theories of authority, inspiration, revelation, and dogma that culminated with the creation of an anti-modernist oath, the liturgical reforms of Pope Pius X in the first decade of the twentieth century perhaps unwittingly fueled a burgeoning movement toward liturgical reform that had begun in the early nineteenth century among Benedictines at Solesmes abbey in France.[9] While the most significant outward sign of the movement's success was visible in the substantial reforms of the Roman Catholic liturgy at the Second Vatican Council, the Liturgical Movement had wide ranging influence across Christian denominations.

Perhaps because the Liturgical Movement reached its fullest expression alongside a strengthening American consumer culture, anxieties over the way consumerism has affected liturgical practice have often driven liturgical scholarship in the decades that followed. Liturgical and sacramental theologians have not taken up the discrete category of consumer culture with the precision or substance of ethicists and political theologians. But evidence of their disquiet for its degrading power over Christian thought, practice, and imagination as well their confession of hope in a Eucharistic remedy to the problem saturate liturgical conversations about the relationship between liturgy and culture. These

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[8] See especially Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940*, Reprint edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Marchand looks at the development of advertisement in relation to consumer desire and self-image in the early to mid-twentieth century.

[9] Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2011), 21 / Yves Congar, *Vraie et Fausse Réforme dans l'Église*, Revised Edition (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968).

narratives consider ritual practice in general and liturgical practice in particular to be under constant threat by the forces of Western culture. Celebrated faithfully, however, Eucharistic practice has the power to resist the sinfulness of culture and shape ethical living in the world.

Nowhere is this vision of Eucharistic resistance more prominently featured or more consistently developed than in the systematic liturgical theology of Geoffrey Wainwright. Wainwright grounds his liturgical approach to culture in an appropriation of H. Richard Niebuhr's categories of ways in which Christianity relates to surrounding culture.[10] While Wainwright favors Niebuhr's "Christ the transformer of culture," category, he rejects the fixity of Niebuhr's perspectives and insists that Christian believers must be open to a range of potential attitudes toward culture depending on time, place, and circumstance. For example, Wainwright argues that there are times when society is "so totally dominated by values which run directly counter to God's kingdom," that Niebuhr's first type, "Christ versus culture," is "clearly the appropriate attitude."[11] Wainwright values the ability of liturgy to function in a way that both sifts and inspires the surrounding culture. At different cultural moments, Christian worship may need to negate, resist, fight, purify, and elevate aspects of it.[12]

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[10] See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1975). Niebuhr's well-known typology offers five ways in which Christianity has historically responded to its surrounding culture: Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ transforming culture. "Christ transforming culture" is Niebuhr's *via media* amidst the other positions. More than mere critique, condemnation, or naïve acceptance of culture, in the spirit of "conversionists" like Augustine and Calvin, it emphasizes the need to convert the values of culture that have been corrupted by sin toward the glory of God.

[11] Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 390.

[12] Geoffrey Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," in *Embracing Purpose: Essays on God, the World and the Church* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 289.

Among those things Christian worship may need to resist with greater force are, for Wainwright, "the sickness of Western culture," "the modern age,"[13] globalization,[14] dechristianization,[15] and secularization.[16] He sees the Eucharist as a potent remedy for each of these ailments. Wainwright acknowledges that a gap between Christian liturgy and scripture—ethical failure due to human sin—will always be present. And he takes seriously the danger of turning Christian worship and ethics into a conditional debt owed to God.[17] Yet despite these cautions, he consistently argues that if a positive correspondence is lacking between Eucharistic vision and ethical behavior in the world, the sincerity and the effectiveness of the liturgical act itself is called into question.[18]

Wainwright sees evidence of the need for liturgical sincerity in scripture. He points especially to three of the great prophetic denunciations of Israel's worship in the Hebrew Bible: The rejection of sacrifice in favor of an embrace of mercy in Hosea (Hosea 6:6); Amos's condemnation of the people's worship and his desire for justice and righteousness (Amos 5:21–24); and the exasperation of Isaiah over the futility of worship accompanied by a command to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow (Isaiah 1:10–17). Each of these implies a condition placed on the worship of the people: "Your sacrifices are unacceptable *unless* you practise steadfast love."[19] These preoccupations of the prophets over the lack of correspondence between worship and living and the conditions they place on worship are

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[13] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 280.

[14] Wainwright, "Babel, Barbary, and Blessing," in *Embracing Purpose,* 29.

[15] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 394.

[16] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 265.

[17] Geoffrey Wainwright, "Eucharist and/as Ethics," *Worship* 62, no. 2 (March 1988): 123.

[18] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 399.

[19] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 400–401. Emphasis in the original.

carried through to the New Testament. In Mark, when the house of prayer is desecrated it becomes a den of robbers (Mark 11:17). In Matthew, one is not to make an offering to God until peace has been made with the brother (Matthew 5:23). For Wainwright, these scriptural foundations in the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament make plain that sincere worship depends on ethical action in the world.

Wainwright sustains his argument for an ethical condition placed on Christian worship through a contemporary reflection on the prophetic Eucharistic witness of Colombian priest Camilo Torres. An early forebear of what would later become liberation theology, Torres saw a chasm between the Mass he celebrated week by week in his community and the revolutionary struggle of the Colombian people: "The Christian community cannot worship in an authentic way unless it has first effectively put into practice the precept of love for fellow man."[20] In light of a lack of support from the wider church for his concrete efforts toward revolution, Torres forfeited his sacramental privileges to celebrate the Eucharist until justice could be restored. Wainwright sees in the witness of Torres a powerful example of prophetic sincerity. Torres is willing to renounce his privilege to celebrate the Eucharist precisely because there is a lack of correspondence between the Eucharist and the life of the worshippers in the world. Wainwright sums up the demand for liturgical sincerity in the words of liberation theologian José Castillo: "Where there is no justice, there is no Eucharist."[21] For Wainwright, worship unaccompanied by just Christian ethical action in the world is not sincere worship.

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[20] Quoted in Wainwright, *Doxology*, 402. See also, Camilo Torres, *The Complete Writings and Messages of Camilo Torres*, trans. John Gerassi (New York: Random House, 1971), 325.

[21] As quoted in Wainwright, *Doxology*, 402. Original: "Donde no hay justicia no hay eucaristía," in *Estudios eclesiásticos* 52 (1977),: 555–590.

Just as *sincere* worship depends on ethics, Wainwright argues that the *effectiveness* of worship to mediate blessing depends on the way in which a rite expresses a worshipper's devotion to God.[22] While he wants to avoid making the grace of God dependent on human response, Wainwright nevertheless emphasizes that the reception of grace does depend on the active engagement of the recipient.[23] To protect the gratuitousness and autonomy of God's grace, however, Wainwright argues that any failure of the sacraments to bear fruit is on the human side.[24] Appealing to Romans 6, Wainwright emphasizes that the baptismal life depends on human engagement. While human sin causes worship and daily life to be out of sync, Wainwright writes, Christians should still undertake a continual examination of conscience so that worship and behavior match: "To deny that need is to fall into antinomianism."[25] The effectiveness of worship is called into question if the action of Christians in the world is incongruous with it.

The sincerity and effectiveness of worship, Wainwright argues, rest on a distinction between the sacred and the profane. While some of the elements of the world are brought in to worship as elements of confession, intercession, or prayers for transformation, there remains, for Wainwright, a strong distinction between the Eucharist and the world. The liturgy holds a sacred character which is distinctive from the world outside.[26] The "high moments" of worship give us glimpses of the kingdom that "clarify our vision and renew us in appropriate patterns of behavior."[27] While our ultimate hope

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[22] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 403.

[23] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 403.

[24] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 403.

[25] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 404.

[26] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 405.

[27] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 405.

rests in a dissolution of sacred and secular—of the earthly and heavenly cities—between the times, we need the sacraments which offer an opportunity for new life and transformation. For Wainwright, the liturgy is the "symbolic focus of all our service to God."[28] When the rites "serve their purpose," they are a recreative paradigm for human attitudes and behavior.[29]

For Wainwright, the Eucharist is a privileged paradigm for shaping ethical engagement in the world. The Eucharist, he writes, "allows us to learn, absorb and extend the values of God's kingdom."[30] As the representative of all meals, Eucharist should be celebrated in a way that it "reveals the kingdom of God to be food and drink, *only upon condition that* their use embodies justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."[31] The Eucharistic meal "responsibly celebrated" exemplifies and provides exemplars for learning and experiencing justice, peace, and joy.[32] For Wainwright, this is not a vague metaphorical paradigm, but one which sets the very conditions for concrete ethical action in daily life, excluding those values which are not consonant with the values of the kingdom.[33]

Against sociological and anthropological approaches to ritual that stress only its ability to stabilize a society, Wainwright argues that Christian worship has the potential to do just the opposite: it can incite revolution.[34] Liturgically confronted with prophetic demands like those found in the Magnificat as well as other scriptures and prayers that

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[28] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 408.

[29] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 406.

[30] Wainwright, "Eucharist and/as Ethics," 134.

[31] Wainwright, "Eucharist and/as Ethics," 135.

[32] Wainwright, "Eucharist and/as Ethics," 135–136.

[33] Wainwright, "Eucharist and/as Ethics," 136.

[34] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 426–427.

call for ethical action, Christians are "expected to align themselves with the revolutionary action of God for the universal implementation of the inaugurated kingdom."[35] Worship not only demands our embrace of the positive correspondence between human welfare and ultimate salvation, its scriptures, prayers, and hymns also help us discern appropriate forms of justice and peace in our own time.[36] For Wainwright, The Lord's Supper should "prompt Christians…towards a fair distribution of the divine bounties at present made tangible in the earth's resources."[37] The liturgical pattern of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation clarifies what shape Christian efforts toward justice in the world should take.[38] Liturgy does not merely stabilize: it empowers action.

Wainwright is particularly sympathetic to concerns Joseph Ratzinger expressed both prior to and during his pontificate as Benedict XVI, that a permissive relativism pervades Western culture and runs contrary to the true, the good, and the beautiful of Christian faith. Wainwright shares Ratzinger's anxiety that certain qualities and features of the liturgical renewal were lost to the "spirit of the age."[39] Among the qualities lost in Western culture more broadly and in Christian liturgy in particular, Ratzinger laments especially a crisis of art of "unprecedented proportions."[40] In music as in visual art, this crisis is the result of experimentation and radical artistic freedom. In Ratzinger's account

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[35] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 427.

[36] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 427–431.

[37] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 427.

[38] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 430–431.

[39] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 265.

[40] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 130.

of secularism, a gradual loss of a telos in the Creator has caused these cultural losses.[41] No longer centered on the *gloria Dei*, artistic expression has become an end in itself.

Whereas in true Christian worship the logos takes precedence over the ethos, Ratzinger argues that this has been reversed in contemporary Western culture.[42] Through a reflection on Exodus 32, Ratzinger warns of two dangers which Christendom needs to hear anew. First, unable to cope with or understand the otherness of God, we constantly risk bringing God into our own world on our own terms. In other words, we place ourselves above God.[43] Second, we risk worshipping the golden calf. Rather than being open to God in worship, our communities close in on themselves. No longer centered on God, the Christian liturgy becomes a self-affirmation of the community.[44] Such a liturgy is at best "pointless, just fooling around," or at worst "an apostasy in sacral disguise" which leaves only emptiness and frustration.[45] Yet even as the worship of the church is under pervasive and constant threat by relativism, if celebrated properly, it can be a remedy for it.

For Wainwright, what is urgently needed to support such a remedy is a liturgical theology that clearly articulates principles of what Ratzinger calls "art ordered to divine

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[41] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 260. See also Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 148. The epitome of this cultural loss for Ratzinger is rock music. Assuming a cultic character through which people are released from themselves, rock music offers the experience of a form of false worship in direct opposition to Christian worship. Wainwright makes clear that although the threats Ratzinger describes are artistic, these are paradigmatic of wider threats to Christian culture and liturgy. See also Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy* (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 1986), 97–126 and Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 94–146.

[42] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 281. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 115.

[43] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 281; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 22

[44] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 281; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 22

[45] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 281; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 22

worship."[46] Art ordered to divine worship is art that makes clear the precedence of *logos* over *ethos*.[47] When these are reversed, art is a purely subjective expression of personal will.[48] When they are properly ordered, they ground the cosmic character of the liturgy.[49] Among the practical signs of a liturgy in which the logos takes precedence over the ethos, Ratzinger strongly advocates for the recovery of the preconciliar liturgical practice of the priest facing *ad orientem*, "facing in the same direction, knowing that they were in a procession toward the Lord."[50] Neither closed in nor gazing at one another, they "set off for the *Oriens*, for the Christ who comes to meet us." [51] Ratzinger similarly emphasizes kneeling and bowing as a way to remember the spiritual attitudes essential to faith which run contrary to secular culture.[52] For Wainwright as for Ratzinger, a responsibly celebrated Eucharist, "has the potential to operate in those ways towards a contemporary culture that is marked by a false and debilitating relativism at the intellectual, social, moral, and religious levels."[53] Put another way, Eucharist is source and summit of Christian cultural resistance.

Eucharist as Counter-politics

Where Wainwright expresses concern for the degrading impact of Western culture on Christian practice more generally, William T. Cavanaugh reflects with greater

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[46] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 269; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 131.

[47] Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 155.

[48] Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 155.

[49] Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 155.

[50] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 271; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 80.

[51] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 271; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 80.

[52] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 277–278; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 194, 205, 206.

[53] Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," 265.

precision and depth on the relationship between Christianity and culture over a wide range of writings. From his study of the Chilean church under the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet to his exploration of the Western Church in light of processes of globalization and consumption, Cavanaugh develops a political theology that sees Eucharist at the foundation of a distinctly Christian form of resistance to structures of sin.

Cavanaugh advocates for what he calls a "theopolitical imagination" as an antidote to globalization.[54] He argues that the state, civil society, and globalization are disciplined and interrelated ways of imagining space and time.[55] These disciplined imaginations organize bodies around narratives of human nature, desire, history, and destiny.[56] These ways of imagining, however, are false and even heretical. Cavanaugh exposes the false theologies of space and time that absorb the true Christian imagination and replace them with a robustly Christian one. What is urgently needed, argues Cavanaugh, is a retrieval of resources from the richness of the Christian tradition to open a radical re-imagining of space and time that will more adequately counter the sinful forces which would otherwise discipline our imagination. At the heart of this imagination is his notion of Eucharistic practice as counter-politics that, he argues, has the capacity to narrate an alternative vision of the world.

Exposing the false theologies of space and time and discerning in their place a Eucharistic theopolitical imagination is the foundation of Cavanaugh's analysis of

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[54] In *Torture and Eucharist*, Cavanaugh calls this a "Eucharistic" or an "eschatological imagination." William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998). See, for example, pp. 65, 234, 206, and 250. Several years after that work he defines this more precisely as a "theopolitical imagination."

[55] William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Christian Practices of Space and Time* (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2003), 1–2.

[56] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 2.

consumer society. Lamenting the way in which Christians often find themselves in a reactive stance toward current economic realities, Cavanaugh engages Christian resources, and in particular the Eucharist, to alter the terms of contemporary economic life.[57] Guiding his quest toward an alternative economic space is a desire for market transactions which more adequately contribute to the flourishing of each person involved, judged according to the way in which such transactions participate in the life of God (viii).

While Cavanaugh does not reject the free market as such, he insists that, from a Christian perspective, a free-market ideology is fundamentally a myth. Cavanaugh refers to Adam Smith's definition of the free market economy as one in which exchanges are both voluntary and informed (2–4). If a seller intentionally withholds information to deceive a buyer or if the state interferes in a transaction, an exchange cannot be free. However, both of these criteria are defined by a *negative* freedom: freedom *from* external coercion and freedom *from* deception. The free market has no positive telos toward which desire is directed and it remains agnostic on the question of the origin of desires, wants, or preferences (5–6).

In light of an exclusively negative freedom and the absence of a telos which marks every free market transaction, Cavanaugh turns to Augustine to provide a lens through which to reflect on a proper relationship between freedom and desire. For Augustine, freedom is not merely a negative freedom *from* something, but a positive freedom *for* something (7–8). Augustine therefore offers a starkly different account of desire than that of the free market. Rather than operating from the assumption that human

[57] William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), viii. Subsequent references appear in parentheses within the text.

beings have wants which are expressed through acts of choice on the market, for Augustine, desire originates both inside and outside the self (10). Desire is a social production, a "complex and multidimensional network of movement that does not simply originate within the individual self but pulls and pushes the self in different directions from both inside and outside the person." (9) True desire—desire for God—must be distinguished from false desire. The central question distinguishing between the two is "to what end the will has been moved" (11). True freedom emerges not from following whatever desires we have, but from learning to cultivate right desires through a discernment of the telos of our desire (13).

Here again, for Cavanaugh, the absence of external force does not guarantee freedom in exchange if the desire is severed from God. In Cavanaugh's reading of Augustine, such desire is ultimately desire for nothing: "To desire with no *telos*, no connection to the objective end of desire, is to desire nothing and to become nothing" (14). Through the eyes of Augustine, Cavanaugh diagnoses the aimless pathologies of twenty-first century shoppers who buy something in order to fill an emptiness, but the object quickly turns into a nothing. And so the endless search must continue (15).

In the absence of any objective quality of the good on which the free market depends, Cavanaugh argues that we are left to arbitrary power (16). The marketplace projects the image of an autonomous consumer who has been freed from all constraints. But in projecting that image the marketplace masks its own creation and manipulation of desire (16–17). Contemporary marketing strategies pair a product with an entire way of life indirectly related to the product itself (17–18). The emergence of transnational corporations intensifies the concentration of power away from the consumer (20).

Surveillance allows marketers to gather substantial amounts of data on our purchasing patterns and personal histories which enables them to anticipate our desires (18–20). Even if we were to unplug the television and silence the radio, our visual landscapes and social environments remain saturated with advertisements.

For Cavanaugh, an ethical question emerges in light of this imbalance of power heavily weighted toward corporations. As consolidations of corporations have shifted production overseas, they are able to pay scandalously low wages (20–21). From the vantage point of the free market, a person working for $.30/hour in El Salvador is "free" to enter into this exchange (21). However, such "freedom" depends on masking the power imbalance which strips away our ability "to judge an exchange on the basis of *anything but* sheer power, since any *telos*, or common standard of good, has been eliminated from view" (24). For Cavanaugh, we must push toward a recognition that true freedom is not a negative freedom, but one which privileges the very telos of human life which the free market goes to great lengths to deny.

Cavanaugh notes a curious turn at work in consumer culture which subverts many condemnations of it: it thrives not on attachment to things, but on detachment from them (34). While many decry consumerism as an inordinate attachment to material things (greed), such objections misread the problem and oversimplify the solution (34). Consumer culture depends on consumers living in a constant state of dissatisfaction with what they buy. The heart of a consumer culture is not in having the object of our desire, but in the endless pursuit of satisfaction (35). All of the relationships between consumer and product are made to end: "Once we have obtained an item, it brings desire to a temporary halt, and the item loses some of its appeal" (47). Yet not only are we

fundamentally detached from objects which will never fulfill our restless desire, we are also detached from the circumstances of their production which often make such objects available at the great expense of human beings a world away (42–44). Finally, this detachment is manifest in what Cavanaugh sees as a lack of "authentic" life in suburban America. For Cavanaugh, this lack of authenticity is evident in the widespread availability of music and food from around the globe with little connection to the places and peoples in which they originated (44–45).

The pressing concern for Cavanaugh is the way in which consumer culture, like religion but with far more strength, serves as a powerful system with the capacity to train the way in which we see the world (47). In ways that resemble the great faith traditions, consumer culture trains us to transcend the material world (48). Yet it accomplishes this by creating perpetual dissatisfaction with material objects which have been invested with countless myths and aspirations promising status, freedom, and love (48). Like a spiritual discipline, consumerism not only serves as an outward identification of the images and values of a community, it also allows us to identify ourselves with peoples and cultures throughout the world (49–50). Yet this is a disembodied abstraction that ultimately severs us from the very people to whom we imagine we are connected through a material object which conceals the reality of the communities from which it came (50).

The relationship between the global and the local is a central tension for Cavanaugh that has analogues with the enduring philosophical problem of the relationship between the one and the many. Globalization is not merely an economic and political phenomenon, but also "a way of seeing, an aesthetic that configures space and human subjects in peculiar ways" (59). Although Cavanaugh acknowledges the potential

for a secularized catholicity in longings for worldwide community, he argues that globalization is a *false* catholicity because it abstracts human relations from the local, rendering the particular disposable (60). Through an initial appearance of seemingly endless choice, marketers work to convince us that what we are buying is truly *different*. But the differences are only superficial, designed to shape desire toward particular goods while actually working to dissolve differences (60). The market endlessly masks a profound homogeneity and the particular becomes an abstraction. Globalization is endlessly collapsing the particular into the universal.

Hans Urs von Balthasar provides Cavanaugh with a solution for globalization's universal and particular dualism which resists reducing the latter to the former. For von Balthasar, theological solutions to the question either absorb the One into the many or absorb the many into the One (76). Christianity is the sole solution to the problem because Christ is the concrete universal (76). In Balthasar's aesthetic, Christ is the unique center through which differences are not annihilated, but revealed. Without Christ, nothing is unique (76–77). For Cavanaugh, Balthasar "suggests an aesthetic in which the particular is given its particularity precisely by incorporation into the universal" (86). While globalization has abstracted the particular in such a way as to collapse it in to the universal, the concrete universal re-situates the human person at the center of the economy and rejects the human subject as a depersonalized consumer (86). This aesthetic insinuates itself in concrete, local practices which sustain "forms of economy, community, and culture that recognize the universality of the individual person" (86). In such practices, we are able to realize the universal body of Christ in every economic exchange (87–88).

If Augustine and Balthasar offer a more adequate way to think through the processes of the market, the deepest contours of Cavanaugh's hope for a Christian response to the various threats of economic globalization is one he first develops in his book *Torture and Eucharist*: Eucharist as counter-politics. In that work, Cavanaugh shows how the Pinochet regime used torture as an instrument to discipline the social body and script the social imaginaries of the Chilean people.[58] Torture and the disappearance of physical bodies created, legitimized, and sustained the regime. Cavanaugh describes the ways in which the church ceded power over bodies to the state in the early years of the Pinochet regime and retreated into a mystical ecclesiology that severed the temporal from the spiritual.[59] Narrowly emphasizing its jurisdiction over the care of souls, the church as a visible, social body disappeared. Rendered invisible, the church lost its ability to respond meaningfully to the torture. Ultimately, however, through a reclaiming of a political practice of the Eucharist—especially through the use of the discipline of excommunication from the table—the Chilean church became, in Cavanaugh's telling, a visible social body capable of resistance made manifest (253–264).

Cavanaugh draws a stark contrast between the logic of torture and the logic of the Eucharist. Torture is revealed to be an anti-liturgy that actualizes the power of the state, effecting fearful, isolated, and docile bodies at the hand of the regime (206). It creates victims. Eucharist, on the other hand, is shown to be the true liturgy that actualizes the suffering and redemption of the body of Christ in the body of the church, effecting resistance to the power of the state (206). It makes witnesses, martyrs. While the effects

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[58] Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* See especially Chapter 1, "Torture and Disappearance as an Ecclesiological Problem," 21–71.

[59] Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist.* See especially Part II: "Ecclesiology," 203–52. Subsequent references to *Torture and Eucharist* appear in parentheses within the text.

of the Eucharist can be and often are hidden by human sin, through Eucharistic practice, Christians are called to conform their everyday lives to a Eucharistic imagination, one which disrupts the imagination of violence that underwrites the logic of torture.[60] Used strategically, Eucharist holds more power to imagine time and space than that of the anti-liturgical discipline of the state (229). Participation in the Eucharist confirms us in an eschatological imagination which separates the church from the sinful world (250).

Cavanaugh fleshes out this notion of a Eucharistic theopolitical imagination by drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau. As part of a larger distinction he draws between strategies of the powerful and the tactics of the weak,[61] Certeau highlights the difference between place and space. For Certeau, place is a stable location, a concrete, identifiable point on a map.[62] Space, on the other hand, is a "practiced place."[63] That is, space is produced by the ensemble of practices actualized in a place. "Spatial stories" are, for Certeau, the practices of everyday life through which a stable place is made a fluid space. They are metaphors that "traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them."[64] For Cavanaugh, Eucharist is the central Christian spatial story that redefines time and place. It is the foundation for the spatio-temporal imagination that Cavanaugh seeks to retrieve.

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[60] See especially Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, Chapter 5: "The True Body of Christ," 205–52.

[61] This, as we shall see, emerges as an even more crucial point of departure for Vincent Miller. The following chapter is dedicated to exploring the complexities of the significance of this distinction for Certeau within the wider body of his work.

[62] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117–18 / Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du Quotidien 1. Arts de Faire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 172–75.

[63] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117 / *L'Invention du Quotidien* 1, 173.

[64] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 115 / *L'Invention du Quotidien* 1, 173. Spaces are analogues to what Certeau calls "tactics," a point I explore more deeply in the following chapter.

This Eucharistic spatio-temporal imagination emerges strongly in Cavanaugh's writing on globalization. Like the contrast he draws between the logic of torture and the logic of the Eucharist in Pinochet's Chile, the contrast Cavanaugh makes between the logic of the marketplace and the logic of the Eucharist involves a stark and total opposition. The modern nation-state becomes a "false copy" of the Body of Christ while the Eucharist is the true practice which binds us as and to the Body of Christ.[65] It narrates an alternate story about material goods and makes possible alternate forms of economics.[66] Unlike the processes of consumer culture which depend on detachment and assimilation into a consumer spirituality, the Eucharistic liturgy is taken up into the larger Body of Christ; we do not merely consume the body of Christ, we are consumed by it.[67] Unlike the liturgies of the state, the Christian liturgy transgresses the borders of the nation state and unites the worshippers in the transnational body of Christ.[68] Unlike the market's stress on private contract and exchange, the Eucharist puts the accent on divine gift.[69] Unlike the capitalist economy's positivist vision of every individual seeking his or her own private good, the divine economy lets humans share in the divine life by being incorporated into the Body of Christ on earth and in heaven. And unlike the unity of the state which depends on the collapse of the local and particular into the universal, the movement of the Eucharist gathers the many into one without merely subordinating the local to the universal. The whole Christ is present in each Eucharistic community.

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[65] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 47. Central to distinguishing the *true* Body of Christ from the *false copy* represented by the modern nation-state is the discipline of excommunication, which gives an outer limit to define the community gathered at table.

[66] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 94.

[67] Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, 54–55.

[68] Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy*, 121.

[69] Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, 54–55.

Despite these sharp distinctions, Cavanaugh argues that he does not intend to imply a Eucharist severed from the politics of the state, but one deeply engaged in it. While Cavanaugh has clarified that his Eucharistic imagination is not rooted in a naïve romanticism for a liturgical Golden Age, he nevertheless seeks a retrieval from the tradition to promote what he calls "Eucharistic sociality."[70] Cavanaugh relies on the work of Henri de Lubac to argue for the recovery of the rich threefold synthesis of the meaning of the phrase *corpus verum* (true body) found throughout patristic writings but lost over the course of the ninth-century Eucharistic controversies. Originally used to describe historical, sacramental, and ecclesial realities, *corpus verum* gradually came to center narrowly on the relationship between Christ and the Eucharist, ultimately severing the Eucharist from the church.[71] By the twelfth century, the church was no longer *corpus verum,* but *corpus mysticum* (mystical body). *Corpus verum* came to be used exclusively to describe the Eucharistic elements.

The recovery of the earlier patristic understanding of *corpus verum* grounds Cavanaugh's vision of a social and active Eucharist with political implications. For

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[70] Joel Halldorf and Fredrik Wenell, eds., "Eucharistic Identity in Modernity," in *Between the State and the Eucharist: Free Church Theology in Conversation with William T. Cavanaugh* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 170.

[71] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages: Historical Survey*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, trans. Gemma Simmonds CJ, Richard Price, and Christopher Stephens (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) / Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum – L'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Âge*, Second Edition (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1949). Henri de Lubac argues with great precision that, prior to the twelfth century, the term "mystical body" (*corpus mysticum*) applied to the sacrament while "true body" (*corpus verum*), proceeding from the Pauline tradition, applied to the church. De Lubac details the three ways in which the rich Eucharistic synthesis of the Fathers used the phrase "body of Christ" to describe historical, sacramental, and ecclesial realities. However, at the height of the ninth-century eucharistic controversies, that which was "real" came to be starkly contrasted with that which was "mystery." Not only did this result in the ultimate rejection of the triple synthesis of the Fathers, but the emergence of an exclusive emphasis on the "real" presence of the sacrament meant that the term *mystical body* was no longer adequate to describe the Eucharist. In the process, singular emphasis was placed on the relationship between Christ and the Eucharist and the Eucharist became severed from the church. The crucial insight de Lubac offers is that for the first millennium, the Eucharist "made the church," yet by the end of the Eucharistic controversies, the church "made the Eucharist."

Cavanaugh, the Eucharist is precisely that which transcends sacred and secular. Not merely a model to be exported from the Eucharistic table to the tables of the world, the Eucharist is a social activity that "arranges bodies in public space" in particular ways.[72] For Cavanaugh, Eucharistic politics is at its heart *kenotic*: "just as the Body of Christ was broken and given away for the sake of others, so the Eucharist only is what it is when it is broken, given away, and consumed."[73] It spills over the altar table to perform the body of Christ in the world.[74] Like Wainwright, Cavanaugh sees a deep ethical imperative in the Eucharist. If the Eucharist remains quarantined in a separate sacred sphere, argues Cavanaugh, it ceases to the be *corpus verum*.[75]

Responding from within Consumer Culture

Where Cavanaugh and Wainwright seek to resist the delusions they perceive in contemporary culture through countercultural Eucharistic practice, Vincent Miller views any theological proposals that claim a distinctively Christian response to contemporary consumer culture with a heavy hermeneutic of suspicion. Implicitly rejecting the kinds of stark contrasts Cavanaugh draws between contemporary society and Christianity, Miller goes to great pains to make clear throughout his analysis of American consumerism that his is not an account of religion *against* consumer culture. The commodification of dissent has made such accounts impossible. And so he works to discern the fate of religion *in* consumer culture.[76]

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[72] William T. Cavanaugh, "The Church in the Streets: Eucharist and Politics," *Modern Theology* 30, no. 2 (April 2014): 392.

[73] Cavanaugh, "The Church in the Streets," 401.

[74] Cavanaugh, "The Church in the Streets," 391.

[75] Cavanaugh, "The Church in the Streets," 402.

[76] Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 1. Subsequent references appear in parentheses within the text.

For Miller, consumer culture is not a particular set of ideologies. Instead, it is primarily "a way of relating to beliefs—a set of habits of interpretation and use—that renders the 'content' of belief and values less important" (1). While most theological responses to consumer culture lie in retrieving or developing a more adequate anthropology or ontology from which the Christian community might respond to it, such proposals ignore two crucial aspects of contemporary consumer culture: its non-intentional dimensions and its relentless ability to commodify our dissent (18). Not only does contemporary consumer practice frequently cut against the grain of the deeply held values of consumers, denunciations of its excesses are easily sold back to us in the form of books, movies, and other media.[77] In the maze of a consumer culture, desires for simplicity, balance, and clarity, for example, take the form of simple earth-friendly packaging in soap or body lotion. Magazine covers promise ten mindful exercises to find relief from the anxieties of contemporary culture. In other words, the market sells us relief from the very culture it works to sustain.

In light of the non-intentional aspects of consumer culture and its pervasive ability to commodify virtually anything, Miller is concerned about the ways in which consumer culture alters our relationships with religious beliefs, narratives, and symbols. Miller draws on Michel Foucault and Talal Asad to gain insight into the way in which discourse "need not be internally consistent or coherent in order to have important effects" (22). Because the non-intentional dimensions of practices work mostly below the level of conscious awareness, responding to the excesses of consumer culture lies not in the

[77] For a series of piercing satirical essays that illuminate the commodification of contemporary dissent—from the birth of the rebel consumer to the countercultural promises of *Wired* magazine—see Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland, *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from The Baffler* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).

retrieval of meaning, but in attending to social structures and practices which reshape Christian symbols and practices (26).

Miller uses the work of Kathryn Tanner to complicate traditional concepts of culture that define it as a coherent set of meanings that directly inform social practices. Tanner demonstrates the impossibility of completely isolating Christianity from other religious traditions as well as the world in which it exists (23–26).[78] Similarly, Foucault's accent on the pervasiveness of relations of power reveals the problems inherent in theological proposals which attempt to sacralize religious practices and traditions in such a way that they seem immune to the contamination of consumer culture (21–23).[79] Taken together, the work of Tanner and Foucault implicitly cautions against a tendency among many advocates of a Christian counterculture to express longing for a golden age in which Christianity once functioned as a coherent culture. Instead, it reminds us that consumerism stands in a long line of cultural dynamisms with which Christianity has wrestled throughout its history.

Giving sustained attention to Marx's commodity fetish, Miller identifies commodification as the most troubling threat of twentieth-century consumer culture for religious thought and practice (35–39). Marx distinguished between *use value* (the clearly identifiable value of an object in relation to its social function) and *exchange value* (an immeasurable value caused by a rupture which takes place when an object is produced for exchange).[80] Commodification is the progressive dynamic by which all commodities

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[78] See also Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1997).

[79] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) / Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998).

[80] Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 319–29.

become valued in exchange and take on an aura of self-evident value abstracted from their actual use. Not only is every exchange reduced to a question of maximum returns, but the commodity conceals the conditions of its production. While the market has a persistent ability to transform virtually anything into a commodity, it also demands constant abstraction wherein objects must function outside their original contexts.

Miller locates the crucial structural site for the rise of the commodity fetish in the single-family home. The Fordist revolution led to an unprecedented growth in productivity which depended on an accompanying economic transformation. By the end of the twentieth century, the home, once primarily a site of production, came to be governed by consumption (41). Increasingly autonomous from the extended family, the rise of the single-family home contributed to social isolation, narrowing political and social concern, and the fragmentation of culture (48–54). Domestic production provided by the extended family was exchanged for an assortment of new appliances and consumer goods while the support structures it provided were exchanged for insurance and an education-based meritocracy. Severed from the extended family, previous markers of class and ethnicity were replaced with the anxiety of establishing an individual identity. Marketers exploited and encouraged this evolution, working to fill the void left by social isolation with an endless array of new products, services, and clothing (51).

Most concerning for the efficacy of any kind of religious resistance is that theological dissent, like any other kind of dissent, is hardly impervious to the power of commodification. Consumer culture's insatiable appetite commodifies sacred goods deeply tethered to a religious tradition, easily severing them from their original contexts (32). Rosaries become necklaces and the chanting of monks in a far-off monastery

becomes mainstream listening (74–81). Neo-traditionalist nostalgia serves as a powerful illustration of the way in which ancient (or seemingly ancient) practices and décor are abstracted from their context and put to new use enacting idealizations of the past (80–81). In a way reminiscent of Cavanaugh's concern for the collapse of the global and the local, Miller notes the way in which particularities are smoothed out so that the coherence of religious traditions becomes a mere palette of resources available for any purpose, regardless of their original contexts and communities of origin. For Miller, this is the dark cloud which hangs over all theological responses to consumer culture: how does religion adequately respond when even all of its goods, and even the ideas that might enable resistance, are so easily reduced to commodities (98)?[81]

Miller's account of consumer desire demonstrates how consumer culture works to structure desire systematically. He argues that modern marketing constructs desire through a complex process of seduction and misdirection. Like Cavanaugh's emphasis on detachment, seduction encourages consumption by "prolonging desire and channeling its inevitable disappointments into further desires" (109). Misdirection refers to the ways in which marketers encourage consumers to see their purchasing "as a way of enacting profound values and fulfilling serious desires" (109) by associating a product with an entire way of life unrelated to the product's use value. Seduction and misdirection conspire to fragment desire, focusing not on attachment to material objects, but on the

[81] To demonstrate the impervious nature of consumer culture, Miller points to the way in which the 150th anniversary of the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* was turned into a marketing opportunity when a special edition of the book was placed next to cash registers to encourage impulse purchases. How could even the most well-articulated theology survive the imperviousness of commodification when one of the most penetrating critiques of capitalism in history has failed? Carefully detailing the process by which commodified elements of culture alter value and turn consumption into an imaginary act wherein even the most profound longings for justice and transformation easily become commodified, Miller shows that religion itself is hardly immune from the process. See Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 18.

actual *act* of consumption, exploiting our deepest longings by attaching them to objects and safeguarding their never-fulfilled promises.

Like Cavanaugh, Miller notes that it is not *differences* between consumer desire and religious desire that are most troubling, but the ways in which its *similarities* have the effect of imperceptibly dulling the subversive potential of Christianity. Consumer desire bears a striking resemblance to Christian desire even as the former subtly distorts the latter (128). Mimicking the restlessness which characterizes the mystic ascent, consumer culture takes the desire for God into its own domain and uses it to its advantage (126–130). Where Cavanaugh saw Augustine as a helpful lens through which to reflect on a proper relationship between freedom and desire, Miller argues that Augustine's restlessness is ideal material for consumer culture because it trains us to enjoy that very restlessness; any fulfillment might actually be met with resistance. Further, consumer culture redirects our eschatological longings for justice. Like religious desire, consumer desire resembles our deepest longings for transcendence, justice, and self-transformation (144).

Also like Cavanaugh, Miller turns to the work of Michel de Certeau to ground a response to consumer culture. But Certeau emerges for Miller not to support the recovery of anything that resembles Cavanaugh's robust spatio-temporal imagination. Instead, Certeau emerges to offer modest relief from Miller's relentless account of the strengthening grip of consumer culture. Miller uses Certeau to help him evaluate what politically and religiously significant agency we might have in a commodified world (153–162). Certeau distinguished between the *strategies* of social and institutional power and *tactics*, the "art of the weak," through which people "make do" in their everyday

lives. Through an emphasis on tactical practices, Certeau draws attention to the creative ways in which consumers make use of that which they are given in ways which may subvert the strategic intent. While Miller is drawn to Certeau's emphasis on the creative *bricolage* of consumers, he voices three hesitations. First, emphases on tactical responses tend to romanticize subcultural resistances (158–159). Second, any meaningful tactical agency which is necessarily dependent upon strategic operations of power is limited (159–162). Finally, the *bricolage* of contemporary consumers offers very little potential for resistance because objects come to consumers already deeply commodified (162).

Despite these cautions and constraints, Miller values the political significance of cultural consumption implicit in Certeau's work for the potential it has to uncover a popular religious *bricolage* within consumer culture. Noting Robert Orsi's study of the way in which devotion to St. Jude emerged through a complex mix of resistance and accommodation made manifest in the creative practice of second-generation immigrant daughters and acknowledging significant contributions from Latino/a popular religion through the work of scholars such as Orlando Espín and Roberto Goizueta, Miller notes that "the postmodern liquefaction of culture is not complete. There are surfacing ancient (and perhaps new alternative) cultural systems that preserve robust tradition" and provide material "for a complex engagement with culture" (174). In short, Miller wants to hold on to what he understands to be Certeau's value of popular agency, while arguing that "traditions, institutions, and stable communities remain valuable as locations (perhaps not strategic places) where the elements of the tradition are preserved and handed on with a level of complexity that would be stripped away if they were mediated by the culture

industries" (176). Thus, he emphasizes the potential for religious traditions to mediate alternative desires through which Christians can shift the dominant culture (174).

Miller concludes by noting a series of ways in which contemporary Christians might engage consumer culture through tactical practices. He urges us to demystify the conditions of commodity production and cultivate practices of mindfulness about the origin of the products we consume. Lauding the efforts of a pastoral letter by the Catholic Bishops of the South that investigate the origins of chicken processing for the way in which it pays special attention to the workers, farmers, and factory managers involved in the process, Miller argues that this work is a "model tactic" for countering the dynamics of commodification (185). It is a tactical resistance from which all Christians can learn to investigate the origins of their food products so they become more than anonymous commodities. Similarly, by participating in the making of goods, we can gain greater insight into the origins of products and strengthen our own tactical agency in a way that has the potential to decommodify them.

Finally, among the tactical responses which might meaningfully counter the processes of commodification, Miller locates particular hope in the Eucharist. While he acknowledges that Eucharist has been celebrated throughout the rise of consumer culture, he nevertheless argues that it remains valuable as a tactical response to commodification (202). He sees the Christian liturgy as a uniquely powerful way to stabilize the relationships between doctrines and symbols through practice (201). For Miller, the ritual, communal, and institutional contexts of the Eucharist provide an alternative to the private spaces and choices of the individual consumer (201).

Yet, for Miller, the success of the liturgy's ability to be an effective response depends on its ability to be consciously understood as such (202). A lack of understanding of the logic of the liturgy hinders its ability to resist the logic of the market (215). Miller therefore advocates that conflicts between a liturgical logic and a market logic be emphasized and explained (202–203).[82] According to Miller, while the *Novus Ordos* (the Roman Catholic Mass as revised following the reforms of the Second Vatican Council) is an improvement over the Tridentine Rite, it is still "widely perceived as boring and repetitive" (215).[83] At the same time, Miller warns of the risks of attempting to compete with the market in such a way that the values of the marketplace determine the liturgical act (205).

Miller highlights the ways in which the reforms of the Second Vatican Council have at times helped and at other times hindered a tactical response to the market. On the one hand, Miller argues that the emphasis in Vatican II's liturgical constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the full, conscious, and active participation of the liturgical assembly is particularly suitable to countering the passivity of a "consumer model" of liturgical engagement (214). On the other hand, he expresses concern for the ways in which the preservation of preconciliar forms of liturgical architecture, with its emphasis on the primary altar, suggest habits of engagement consonant with television viewing. And clerical control of the liturgy often robs the assembly of meaningful agency, especially devotional practice (218).

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[82] While Miller offers no specific explanation on how sharpening the contrast between a liturgical logic and a market logic might take place, he presumably intends that this should occur in catechesis and preaching on the liturgy.

[83] This appears to be anecdotal.

Finally, Miller makes a variety of pastoral suggestions which might enhance the Eucharist as a more meaningful tactical response, including retrieving the complexity of ancient church designs to counter the passivity encouraged by many liturgical spaces; the retrieval of certain devotional practices and symbols that emphasize an individual exercise of agency; the allowance for local variation on liturgical posture; the encouragement of local, rather than mass-produced art in liturgical space; and better liturgical catechesis to encourage deeper agency. These tactics of everyday resistance are, for Miller, signs of Christian hope within an increasingly pervasive grid of strategic market power.

A Shared Concern, A Wider Paradigm

Wainwright, Cavanaugh, and Miller share a common concern for the degrading power that consumer culture has over Christian thought and practice. While the distinctive ways in which each author defines the nature of the problem should not be easily collapsed into one another, a similar structure emerges. Each scholar shows particular dynamics of contemporary culture to be a threat to Christian thought or practice. Each seeks resources in the Christian tradition to respond to that threat. And for each the Eucharist is central to this response of resistance.

Wainwright sees the various corruptions of Western culture as threats to Christian liturgy. Like Joseph Ratzinger, Wainwright believes that even as the liturgy is under threat by these forces, a proper retrieval of particular liturgical practices—like the presider facing *ad orientem* or taking postures such as kneeling and genuflecting—is the remedy for them. Further, worship is invested with the power to shape concrete ethical

action. Both its sincerity and effectiveness must be continually evaluated against its ability to support this connection.

Cavanaugh shows how the market thrives on a negative freedom and the denial of a telos. Augustine emerges as way to articulate a positive freedom and a telos directed toward God. Globalization has abstracted the particular in a way that collapses it in to the universal. Hans Urs von Balthasar's aesthetic provides a way to resituate the human person at the center of the economy and reject the human subject as a depersonalized consumer. The market depends on the perpetual detachment and dissatisfaction of its consumers. The Eucharist resists this detachment by taking the one who consumes into the larger Body of Christ.

Miller persuasively identifies the threats that consumer culture poses to Christianity through processes of commodification, seduction, and misdirection. Yet despite his piercing critiques of contemporary theology's attempts to work outside of cultural processes by offering uniquely Christian remedies, in a less robust way he also introduces his own Christian solutions to the problem of consumer culture. And precisely because Miller is so attentive to commodification's potential grasp over his own project, his conclusion is necessarily the most tentative: we are reduced to a series of tactical responses.

The common shape of these arguments is paradigmatic of a much wider body of literature concerned with economics and religion. Daniel Bell contrasts the logic of capitalist anthropology with a distinctively Christian one. He argues that the retrieval of a more adequate Anselmian atonement theology calls Christians to shape their lives in

ways that reflect the divine economy of abundant generosity and unending charity.[84] Tom Beaudoin contrasts the logic of contemporary branding—which he contends offers a distorted sense of human identity—with a properly ecclesial identity. He argues that a more adequate exegesis of scripture and the retrieval of ancient spiritual practices support the reintegration of spirituality and economics in a way that counters brand logic.[85] Michael Budde argues that the cultural ecology shaped by global cultural industries undermines Christianity, making Christian formation profoundly challenging. Budde argues for an ecclesiology rooted in the radical nature of the Gospel which embodies a more aggressive formation to create radically countercultural communities.[86] And Stephen Long argues that the market reduces the true, the good, and the beautiful to a value based on usefulness in contrast to the church which holds these forth in beauty without reduction of the usefulness of formal value.[87] Through the work of Thomas Aquinas, Alasdair MacIntyre, and John Millbank, Long argues for the recovery of a "residual tradition" that might shape an economic order informed by justice and charity.

Even those who might seem to work from a different theological worldview share elements of this pattern. In her exploration of the practical implications of her own systematic theology for the global economy, Kathryn Tanner advocates for the concrete reform of the global economic system in light of the laws of God's economy of grace. Central to Tanner's argument is the way in which God's self-giving to humanity, without

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[84] See Daniel M Bell, *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012).

[85] See Tom Beaudoin, *Consuming Faith: Integrating Who We Are with What We Buy* (Lanham, Md.: Sheed & Ward, 2007).

[86] See Michael Budde, *The (Magic) Kingdom of God: Christianity and Global Culture Industries* (Boulder, Colo; Oxford: Westview Press, 1998).

[87] See D. Stephen Long, *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000).

loss to God, runs throughout the Christian story.[88] Tanner argues that human relations should be structured in a way that imitates God's self-giving accompanied by a recognition that we can only return what we have already been given, as in the Eucharist.[89] While she rejects easy moralizing arguments based on economic matters in scripture or individual Christian values, she nevertheless insists that differences between qualities of capitalism like competition and the presumption of property rights and the non-competitive, gratuitous nature of grace must be clearly emphasized.[90] Tanner argues for a radically new imagination centered on the life of the Trinity to discern viable alternatives to current economic practices. She calls for a variety of Christian interventions in the global economy and makes concrete suggestions for how this might manifest itself on issues of labor, trade, environment, and poverty.[91]

Graham Ward's reflection on the city as a site of theological reflection resonates particularly strongly with the work of both Cavanaugh and Miller. Like Miller, Ward is dissatisfied with the inadequacy of responses to consumer culture which either retreat from culture, reject it, or see religion as mere cultural expression.[92] Ward therefore seeks a response to consumerism that is both *within* and *beyond* postmodernity, one that relates both positively and negatively to postmodern reality.[93] He advocates for a deep listening to and engagement with postmodernity, but, at the same time, leaves space for a critical

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[88] Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 63–75.

[89] Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 68.

[90] Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 68. See chapter 2, "Imagining Alternatives to the Present Economic System," 31–85. Chapter 1 of Tanner's work, "An Economy of Grace?" is dedicated to exploring the kinds of methodologies she rejects as insufficient ways to think through the relationship between Christianity and capitalism.

[91] Tanner, *Economy of Grace*. See chapter 3, "Putting a Theological Economy to Work," 87–142.

[92] Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 43–44.

[93] Ward, *Cities of God*, 70.

voice which proclaims a particular Christian vision of justice and peace. As with Cavanaugh's theopolitical imagination and Miller's tactical responses, Ward's proposal depends on the work of Michel de Certeau to ground his response. Ward turns to Certeau's concept of "rational utopias" to argue that churches have the potential to open a Eucharistic space excessive to institutional places. That Eucharistic space confirms us in an alternate desire.[94] As a Eucharistic body, we are rehearsed in a process, Ward argues, which stands outside the logic of consumerism.

Wainwright's particular anxieties for the degradation of liturgical practice and the hope of Eucharistic resistance reflect those of many twentieth- and twenty-first-century liturgical theologians. Mark Searle charged North American individualism and anti-ritualism with a loss of ceremony and ritual in Roman Catholic liturgy.[95] In his ethnographic work, Searle lamented the way in which the postconciliar Roman Catholic liturgy seemed to be succumbing to the pernicious forces of Western culture when it should be able to "inure Catholics against the negative aspects of their wider culture."[96] Aidan Kavanagh decried the way in which the North American liturgy was increasingly enculturated with a middle-class piety informed by values such as consumerism and comfort in affluence.[97] No longer grounded in the radical demands of the Gospel, it risked losing its ability to be a strong a counter-cultural practice.[98] The anxiety of many liturgical theologians is perhaps best summed up in Kavanagh's declaration that "Liturgy

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[94] Ward, *Cities of God,* see especially chapter 6, "The Church as the erotic community," 152–81.

[95] Mark Searle, "The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life," *Worship* 60, no. 4 (July 1986): 332–333.

[96] Searle, "The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life," 333.

[97] Aidan Kavanagh, "Liturgical Inculturation: Looking to the Future," *Studia Liturgica* 20, no. 1 (1990): 102.

[98] Kavanagh, "Liturgical Inculturation," 102.

either dies at the hands of the Trendy, or it slays them."[99] For many Western liturgists, the former possibility seems increasingly more likely than the latter.

Finally, a range of literature has emerged over the last decades focused on liturgy as ethical formation. James K. A. Smith expresses concern for the way in which a host of cultural liturgies aimed at glorifying the self in fact counter-form the People of God, competing with the Christian liturgy that glorifies God.[100] Smith draws on aesthetic qualities of metaphor, narrative, poems, and studies to argue that the drama of worship must be engaged in ways that demand and empower transformation of the world into the image of the kingdom of God. And the strength of the conviction that ethics should be grounded in the liturgy is perhaps evidenced nowhere more strongly than Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells Blackwell's decision to shape *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* around the structure of the Eucharist.[101]

A Wider Paradigm, A Shared Logic

These diverse narratives disclose a deeply embedded conviction that underwrites the arguments and defines their common shape: the central task of theology *vis-à-vis* consumer culture is to respond, resist, or reshape it. Framing their narratives in terms of resistance, these theologians work in a prophetic register to contrast Christianity and the processes of late Western capitalism that conspire to shape desire, thought, and practice in ways that run contrary to a distinctively Christian identity. After they identify the

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[99] Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style* (Collegeville, Minn.: Pueblo Books, 1990), 104.

[100] See James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009).

[101] Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006).

threats that consumer culture poses to Christian identity, they place their hope in a Eucharist that might better resist it.

Theological conviction around the need for Christian resistance to consumer culture rests on the presumption that a meaningful contrast can and must be drawn between consumer culture and Christianity. While Geoffrey Wainwright offers a sweeping critique of Western culture rather than an incisive account of its complexities, he nevertheless gives voice to a concern born of pastoral experience that many liturgical theologians share — that there is an external force or set of forces in Western culture that undermines the fullness of all we hope the Christian Eucharist to be. William Cavanaugh implicitly confirms Wainwright's theological suspicion by unmasking the ways in which the state, globalization, and consumer culture function. Where Wainwright draws a stark boundary between the *sacred* of the Eucharist and the *profane* of the world, Cavanaugh draws a series of more detailed and nuanced, but equally forceful contrasts: between false imaginations shaped by processes of globalization and true imaginations shaped by the Eucharist; between false desires of consumer culture and true desire for God; between the false catholicity found in longings for worldwide community that depend on abstraction and the true catholicity found in longings that refuse abstraction; between the false promises of the market and the true promise of the Body of Christ. In each of these cases, as Cavanaugh presents them, the wheat is separable from the tares.

While Miller goes to great pains to caution precisely against such clear contrasts, his methodological frame of resistance prevents him from working wholly outside the logic he critiques. Like Cavanaugh, he draws distinctions between Christian desire and consumer desire. He warns of the dangers of the similarities between the two even as he

presumes their difference. Miller's quest is marked by a series of investigations of theologians, beliefs, and practices that might better strengthen Christian agency amidst the seemingly totalizing process of commodification. Miller raises a thinker, belief, or a practice only to discard them on account of their commodification. If it has been commodified, it cannot help us resist. And if it cannot help us resist, it is of no value. In the end, Miller reluctantly accepts marginal, tactical *bricolage* for its potential to decommodify goods. In so doing, he lands on a more modest version of Cavanaugh's argument: some Christian practices, and the Eucharist in particular, have the ability to support Christian resistance against the distortions of consumer culture.

The hope for resistance that Wainwright, Cavanaugh, and Miller share rests on a further presupposition that Christian Eucharistic practice makes possible concrete ethical resistance and that the effectiveness of the Eucharist should be measured—at least in part—by its ability to support that work. For Wainwright, the liturgy has the ability to negate, resist, fight, or purify the sinfulness of the surrounding culture. The Eucharist is the privileged recreative paradigm for shaping ethical engagement in the world that allows us to absorb and extend the values of the kingdom to the world. Indeed, both its sincerity and its effectiveness *depend* on our ethical action in the world. For Cavanaugh, the Eucharist trains us in a theopolitical imagination that resists the state's discipline of our imagination. The Eucharist confirms us in a logic that challenges the logic of the market and makes possible alternate forms of economics. Similarly, for Miller, the ritual, communal, and institutional contexts of the Eucharist provide alternatives to consumer spaces. While liturgy can hinder Christian resistance, a proper understanding and celebration of it supports our ability to better resist the logic of the market. For Miller,

Eucharistic practices that do not support individual agency should be replaced with ones that do.

Another presumption follows, then, that there is a proper way to celebrate the Eucharist that supports this kind of resistance. Wainwright consistently notes that a "responsibly" or "properly" celebrated Eucharist shapes ethical engagement in the world. Yet he only occasionally hints at what constitutes a responsible or proper liturgy. He points to scriptures, liturgical texts, and hymnody that call forth ethical action in the world. And he notes the way in which the liturgical form of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation clarifies ethical obligations. But the most concrete of Wainwright's prescriptions are those he inherits from Joseph Ratzinger. Ratzinger describes apophatically the qualities of a properly celebrated liturgy: it is *not* one in which the otherness of God is minimized nor is it one in which the community is at the center. Put positively, a properly celebrated liturgy is one in which the otherness of God is sought above all else. Some practical examples that support this liturgical vision are found in the priest facing *ad orientem* and in liturgical postures such as kneeling and bowing. For Wainwright as for Ratzinger, these help us remember Christian attitudes that run contrary to the messages of the surrounding culture.

Ironically, while Miller implicitly shares Wainwright's hope for the Eucharist as a base for cultural resistance, his prescriptions for what kind of Eucharist might fund that resistance are virtually the opposite of that of Wainwright and Ratzinger. Miller's liturgical vision is one which stresses the individual agency of members of the liturgical assembly. His insistence that the *Novus Ordo* is "boring and repetitive" implies the need for a liturgy that is more engaging and therefore centered on appealing to the needs of the

community to encourage their participation and so inspire their resistance. Miller rejects preconciliar forms of architecture—the very kind that would support a liturgy with the priest facing *ad orientem*—for the ways in which they emphasize clerical control of the liturgy and rob the assembly of meaningful agency. In their place, he argues for the recovery of liturgical spaces that counter the passivity of preconciliar practices. Miller's desire for an allowance for local variation of liturgical posture in the Roman Catholic Church contradicts Ratzinger's enthusiasm for a more uniform implementation of liturgical postures like kneeling and bowing, particularly evident in liturgical reforms promulgated during his pontificate as Pope Benedict XVI. Finally, Miller emphasizes the need for better liturgical catechesis to encourage deeper agency. While Wainwright and Ratzinger would likely be sympathetic to the need for better liturgical catechesis, it seems clear that they would not share his concern for fostering deeper individual liturgical agency.

While Cavanaugh is perhaps the most robust in his articulation of a theopolitical imagination in relation to the dynamics of globalization, he is also the most oblique in suggesting what kind of a Eucharist supports such an imagination. In *Torture and Eucharist*, he points to three concrete examples of Eucharistic resistance that make the church visible: the excommunication of the torturers of the Pinochet regime; the social programs of the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* which, Cavanaugh argues, knit people back together in a way that was shaped by a Eucharistic eschatology; and the martyrdom of Sebastián Acevedo, whose death made visible the true body of Christ in the form of the movement it inspired.[102]

[102] See especially Cavanaugh, "Chapter 6: Performing the Body of Christ," in *Torture and Eucharist*, 253–81.

The visibility of Christian Eucharistic witness in the face of globalization, however, is less clear. While Cavanaugh points out that the ethical imperative of the Eucharist might be particularly responsive to the commands of Matthew 25,[103] for example, he provides few clear links between how Eucharistic practice might shape that response in concrete practice. If Cavanaugh sees excommunication or martyrdom as a valuable mode of making visible the Eucharistic body in a world shaped by the false desires of globalization as he did in the context of Chilean torture, he does not make that connection. Indeed, Cavanaugh's extension of his Eucharistic argument in the face of torture to the complex processes of globalization begins to suggest the limits of Eucharistic resistance. The political dimensions of the Eucharist effective in witnessing against the clear sinfulness of liturgies of torture may have less force in the everyday ambiguities of participation in the global economy. Unlike a murderous military dictatorship, a consumer culture features tares that are more tightly intertwined with the wheat.

These convictions—that the fundamental task of theology in the face of consumer culture is resistance; that a meaningful contrast can and must be drawn between consumer culture and Christianity; that the privileged site of that resistance is a eucharistic one; and that the Eucharist should be celebrated in particular ways to inspire and sustain such resistance—together form the deep structure of the prevailing paradigm for Christian theologians' critique of consumer culture. They shape individual accounts of how Christianity might relate to consumer culture and, even more, the conversation as a whole. And they lay bare the anxieties of scholars in a wide range of fields not directly

[103] Cavanaugh, "Eucharistic Identity in Modernity," 170–171.

centered on consumerism who feel its pervasive pressures and so seek tactics of resistance that might offer some flickers of hope in an endlessly commodified world.

Reframing the Question

The forces which shaped the dynamics of American consumption that so captivated Alexis de Tocqueville as he traveled the New World in the middle of the nineteenth century have intensified and expanded in ways unimaginable to him nearly two hundred years ago. From a theological perspective, contemporary capitalism's relentless ability to abstract religious practices from their native contexts to make use of them for virtually any purpose, the market's embrace of even our deepest theological dissent, and the ethical implications of American consumerism for the poor at home and throughout the world make Tocqueville's early concerns seem both prescient and modest.

Theologians rightly share a deep and abiding concern for ways in which consumer culture has distorted Christian thought, desire, and practice. Without diminishing the force of their critiques and without denying a need for practices of Christian resistance, I will argue that remaining only on the level of resistance obscures our ability to see the fullness of consumer culture, church, and Eucharist. Caught in an instrumental frame, language of resistance unwittingly makes grace dependent on human activity, leaving little room for the activity of God amidst commodified beliefs, goods, and practices of everyday life. What is needed is not solely theologically-backed resistance, whether it comes from outside or inside consumer culture. Reframing the question in terms of God's activity through culture rather than apart from it, I will strive toward a theological account of culture and Eucharist which sees their interrelationship in light of the unique challenges of contemporary consumer culture.

2

Hope Beyond Resistance

A shared logic of resistance to consumer culture has led many theologians to the work of the late French Jesuit Michel de Certeau.[104] Most of this attention has centered on *The Practice of Everyday Life*, a book written near the end of his life. In its inaugural chapters, Certeau draws a distinction between the inventive practices of people in their daily lives and the grids of power which structure them. The former he calls tactics, the latter, strategies. Theological appropriations of this distinction have tended to use Certeau's notion of tactics to describe a mode of Christian resistance that can persist even without overthrowing the strategic grid of consumer culture.

There is a gap, however, between Certeau's extensive body of work and this limited use of it. Across a diverse set of writings, Certeau relentlessly draws the gaze of his reader to what is missing. The practice of writing is, for Certeau, always founded on a rupture between a primordial unity and a present construction that cannot contain that unity. Writing depends on absence. A gap between the social body and discourse on it, between a historical event and the account given of it, or, in Certeau's explicitly theological work, between the person of Jesus and testimonies about him, is the precondition for writing. This gap, which finally eludes all discourse—whether in the key of history, theory, or theology—possesses Certeau's work. It animates both his early and explicitly theological work and his later work which seems to have left theology behind. Works from every period share a logical structure in which some absent real is the source

[104] An earlier and slightly redacted version of this chapter first appeared as an article: Antonio Eduardo Alonso, "Listening for the Cry: Certeau Beyond Strategies and Tactics," *Modern Theology*, March 1, 2017.

and precondition of a discourse that bears witness to it even as it cannot contain it. This same logic informs *The Practice of Everyday Life.* In this work, Certeau is not merely writing about resistance: he presents quotidian tactics as signs of living realities that pulse within and against systems of strategies that can never quite contain them.

A historian by training, Certeau everywhere emphasized the ways in which interpretations of history and theology are haunted by presuppositions linked to contemporary concerns. The same is true for interpretations of theories of practice and culture. I make the case in this chapter that contemporary anxieties drive the tendency among some theologians and Christian ethicists to extract "tactics" from Certeau's wider body of work. The need to resist consumer culture that so shapes current literature on consumer culture and religion drives a narrow application of Certeau's distinction, reducing the fullness of his complex heterological project and limiting its potential for theological reflection on consumer culture.[105] I argue that for Certeau tactics are not primarily signs of cultural resistance but signs of absence. Re-reading tactics through a hermeneutic of absence, I argue, opens a space for theological reflection on consumer culture that extends beyond Christian tactical resistance.

The Tactics of Everyday Life

In the first chapters of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Certeau grieves the way in which totalizing theories of experts tend to present consumers as passive and fully determined by structures of power. Satisfied with constant classification and calculation, they create categories and taxonomies that turn a blind eye to or flatten out that which

[105] "Heterologies" is a word Certeau coined to describe discourse "on the other." See especially, Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). See also, Luce Giard, "Epilogue: Michel de Certeau's Heterology and the New World," *Representations* Vol. 33 (Winter 1991): 212–221.

cannot be captured by even the most meticulously fabricated systems. Reflecting theoretically and necessarily at a distance, Durkheim, for example, is able to propose an entire social theory based on the sacrificial practices of the Arunta in Australia without ever having to leave his desk. Certeau insists that theoretical reflection must not keep practice at a distance, but instead leave its place of privilege to give adequate attention to countless deviations which fall outside its gaze. If, as the work of Michel Foucault has demonstrated,[106] the grid of power has become more pervasive and more extensive,[107] Certeau is committed to showing how society resists being completely reduced to it by illuminating the myriad ways in which people constantly and creatively manipulate mechanisms of discipline, conforming to them "only in order to evade them" (xiv/xl).

Certeau's focus is not on individual subjects but on their modes of operation. Multiform and fragmentary, quotidian practices form an *anti-discipline* to which Certeau dedicates his work. Certeau attempts to situate the operations of contemporary consumption "in the framework of an economy, and to discern in these practices of appropriation indexes of the creativity that flourishes at the very point where practice ceases to have its own language" (xvi–xvii/xliii). He insists that we must differentiate between the action of the grid of power and the space in which consumers exercise an artistic *bricolage* within that grid. Certeau advocates for a shift from understanding people as *consumers*, who are passive and docile, to understanding people as *users*, who

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[106] See especially, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995) / Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998). See also Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage, 1980), a collection of essays and interviews translated into English centered on Foucault's understanding of power relations.

[107] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984), xiv / Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du Quotidien 1. arts de faire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), xxxix–xl. Subsequent references appear in parentheses within the text. Page numbers for the English translation are listed first.

creatively intervene in the grid of power in order to reorganize it. Users, writes Certeau, engage in "*poaching*…in countless ways on the property of others" (xii/xxxvi). Certeau seeks to emphasize diverse *ways of using* rather than *what is used.*

To shift the focus, Certeau resorts to a distinction between *strategies*, the seemingly totalizing plans of power structures and large institutions, and *tactics*, the quotidian practices of those who appear to be dominated by strategies that creatively turn structures of power to their advantage (xix/xlvi). On the one hand, a strategy is the "calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment'" (xix/xlvi). On the other hand, a tactic is "a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality" (xix/xlvi). Everyday activities such as cooking, talking, and reading have the potential to be tactical practices which insinuate themselves into the strategic enterprise (e.g., the forces of the market or the government), making use of that which is given to them in ways unanticipated and unintended by the grids of power which structure their everyday lives.

Central to this distinction is the exercise of space. While a strategy assumes, privileges, and depends upon a circumscribed place, a tactic is characterized by the absence of such a locus; instead, it must play within an imposed terrain, manipulating and diverting the spaces already created by the strategy. Because it has no place, it depends on time, always seeking opportunities that must be seized "on the wing," manipulating events to turn them into opportunities (37/61). While confined to the vocabulary established by the strategic process, people nevertheless have innumerable "subtle,

stubborn, resistant" (18/35) ways of using language which can never finally be reduced to the imposed system and which fall outside its purview. Strategies establish their power in places; tactics intervene in that power through a clever use of time and opportunity. Tactics are momentary victories of time over place.

Two examples help Certeau illuminate his distinction. First, he points to *la perruque*[108] among factory workers France. *La perruque* is a worker's own tactical pursuit concealed as work for his employer (24–28/43–49). Writing a love letter on company time or temporarily using an item from the workplace for personal use, the worker diverts time in the space given to her. It is work that is "free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit" (25/45). In a place defined by the institution where uniformity is presumed, the worker creatively makes use of this established space to "put one over" on the established order (26/45). From the strategic vantage point of a supervisor, *la perruque* is more modest, more subtle, and more difficult to survey than merely stealing materials from the supply closet or falsely calling in sick to work. Instead, *la perruque* insinuates individual, inventive, unpredictable practices into the clearly defined space of industry which it cannot see.

Perhaps the most lucid illustration of Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics, however, emerges as he identifies the limit and potential of two vantage points from which we see. Looking down from a tall skyscraper, the voyeur, like a god lifted out of the city's grasp, believes he is able to see the whole (92/140). Placed at a distance, this is the perspective of the theoretician who takes great pleasure in looking down because,

[108] The literal translation of *la perruque* is "wig." Colloquially, however, it refers to a practice among employees of using the resources of their employer for personal use.

exalted above the masses, he is able to transform the world below into a text which satisfies his desire for an "all-seeing power" (92/141).[109] On the other hand, from the city streets below, the walker, wandering the manifold routes that the map does not know, makes use of fragmentary spaces. Placed in the thick of urban life, hers is the perspective of ordinary practitioners (93/141–142). Power, like the skyscraper, is "bound by its very visibility." (37/61). The ability to enact strategies is powerful, but it is constrained precisely by the nature of its power. Tactics are absent from theories precisely because they are the art of the weak. They always operate *from below*, invisible and unknowable from above. From below is where visibility begins.

These are the practices of everyday life, the quotidian activities that finally evade the strategic gaze. Irreducible to even the most carefully elaborated map or the most dense model of statistical data, the city wanderer turns and detours, tries out and transgresses, actualizing possibilities unknowable and unimaginable to the one perched above. Theories and data flatten these tactics, turning them into a legible text in order to explain them. But even the best theories cannot anticipate the limitless diversity of diversions, subversions, and even forbidden steps. These remain invisible from above. And even the visibility that *begins* from below is incomplete, a momentary glimpse of a fraction of the whole. Yet the walker below is not bound by the imaginary totalizations afforded by the view of the one who has escaped the city's grasp.

Tactics as Resistance

For theologians whose studies center on Christian engagement with North American culture in general and consumer culture in particular, Michel de Certeau's

[109] Certeau here intentionally echoes Michel Foucault. See Michel Foucault, Chapter 8, "The Eye of Power," in *Power/Knowledge*, 152 / Michel Foucault "L'oeil du pouvoir," a preface in Jeremy Bentham, *Le Panoptique* (Paris: Belfond, 1977), 16.

distinction between tactics and strategies has often served as a prism through which to discern spaces of everyday resistance within the structures of the world. Certeau's emphasis on the creative interventions of users in their daily lives has inspired theologians to consider ways in which Christian practices may subvert the strategic intent of the market even as they necessarily work within it. Whether they embrace, reject, or qualify the distinction, theologians who appropriate Certeau's dialectic tend to evaluate the tactics of everyday life against the agency they offer ordinary people in a world otherwise defined by the totalizing strategy of market power.

Few theologians have been as full-throated as Stanley Hauerwas in their call for an alternate tactical ecclesial space to the world. Against the modern notion that the church *possesses* a social ethic or offers an external frame of moral reasoning to the world, Hauerwas argues that the church *is* a social ethic.[110] That is, the church is not primarily a system of belief, but a social strategy concerned with how to be in the world.[111] For Hauerwas, to call the church a social ethic is to distinguish it from the world on the basis of the Christian narrative. The church is the place where the "story of God is enacted, told, and heard," where it is "lived and spoken."[112] Christians are not called merely to be "morally good," but to be faithful to the story of God by "finding our lives within that story."[113] Through the narratives, traditions, and practices of the church, Christians cultivate and make central particular dispositions and virtues that reveal to the

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[110] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 99.

[111] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1989), 43.

[112] Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 101–102.

[113] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 102.

world "a space and time in which we might have a foretaste of the kingdom."[114] The church, then, is called to be a "countercultural phenomenon, a new *polis*,"[115] that offers an alternative to the politics of the world.[116]

For Hauerwas, to claim this counter-political space for the church, however, is not to claim an ontological difference from the world. In Hauerwas's ecclesiological hermeneutic, church and world are relational concepts, not metaphysical ones. Their differentiation is based only on the church's choice to believe and the world's decision not yet to "make the story of God their story."[117] By being the church—by telling and remembering the Christian story and cultivating Christian virtues—the church helps the world know what it means to be the world. Through its worship, governance, and morality, the church tells the world the truth by pointing toward the reality of the kingdom of God.[118]

For this reason, Hauerwas argues that the church must not withdraw from the problems of the world, but develop resources to stand as a witness to the Gospel in the world.[119] Hauerwas insists that this does not mean the church is set *against* the world. Instead, it shows "what the world is meant to be as God's good creation."[120] Through patient faithfulness to the kingdom of God, the church resists the injustice of the world on its own terms: "Such resistance may appear to the world as foolish and ineffective for it

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[114] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 106.

[115] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 30.

[116] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 75.

[117] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 100–101. The influence of John Howard Yoder is particularly evident in this distinction. See, for example, John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1971), 116.

[118] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 98, 100.

[119] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 102.

[120] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 100.

may involve something so small as refusing to pay a telephone tax to support a war, but that does not mean that it is not resistance."[121] This resistance, however minute, makes clear a Christian social witness that leaves a space for the miracle of change in the world. For Hauerwas, the church is a community based on the kingdom of truth in the face of a world that has not yet accepted that truth.[122]

Certeau's tactic/strategy dialectic has emerged as a way for Hauerwas to articulate his ecclesial vision against mounting critiques that his image of the church is overly sectarian or fideistic. Like his own vision of church and world, Hauerwas sees tactic and strategy in "sharp contrast" to one another.[123] For Hauerwas, the church exists tactically in and is surrounded by the strategic conditions given it by the world. It plays on an alien terrain organized by laws and spaces neither fully determined nor controlled by the church.[124] After Christendom, relinquishing its claim to Constantinian power, the church can only be a tactic: "It must operate in isolated actions taking advantage of opportunities without a base where it can build up stockpiles for the next battle. It has mobility, but it gains mobility only by being willing to take advantage of the possibilities that offer themselves at given moments."[125] This is why Hauerwas rejects any critiques of his work that suggest his ecclesial vision must be accompanied by a withdrawal from the world.

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[121] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 106.

[122] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 115.

[123] Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom? How the Church Is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1991), 17.

[124] Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 17. Hauerwas argues that any critic who sees in his writing an exclusionary sectarian vision of the church has mistakenly presumed the church to be a strategy, not a tactic. For Hauerwas, situating church as a tactic on the "foreign or alien grounds" of the world overcomes this misreading.

[125] Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 18.

Indeed: "There is no place to which it can withdraw."[126] An understanding of the church as tactic grounds his conviction that the church must resist the strategies of the structures of the world.

In his analysis of the relationship between Christianity and contemporary politics, Luke Bretherton shares Hauerwas's reading of tactics as resistance even as he dismisses such tactical resistance as an inadequate way to think about how the church should operate in political life.[127] Bretherton argues that tactical *bricolage* only ever remains "a form of oppositional subcultural resistance rather than opening up possibilities of a genuinely shared world of action."[128] To make plain his objection to a tactical understanding of the church in the face of the strategies of the world, he repeats John Howard Yoder's theological critique of *bricolage*: "There is nothing in *bricolage* worth dying for."[129] Bretherton argues that tactically "making do" with the social space given to the church by the world is profoundly pessimistic; worse yet, it lacks the missiological impulse of the church in obedience to God.[130] Tactical Christian political witness situates the church in an immanent frame that does not leave adequate space for the in-breaking of grace.[131] A theological account of political engagement, he argues, "does not seek only

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[126] Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 18.

[127] Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 190.

[128] Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 109, n. 42.

[129] Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 191. See also John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (London: SCM Press, 2003), 194.

[130] Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 191.

[131] Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics,* 191. Bretherton often conflates his critique of Certeau with his critique of Hauerwas; Certeau himself never used the idea of tactic to describe the church. Further, neither Hauerwas nor Bretherton engages Certeau's explicitly theological writings. As I will attempt to make clear below in my discussion of Certeau's theological discourse, it is not the *church* that is a "tactic" for Certeau, but the myriad Christian practices that endure with an absent referent.

to transgress the prevailing hegemony but acts in expectation of its transfiguration."[132] For Bretherton, tactics are inadequate to the eschatological orientation of Christian witness which must always be open to the sovereign activity of God in the world. [133]

Where Bretherton critiques a tactical understanding of the church for the lack of an eschatological frame, William T. Cavanaugh has found the work of Certeau useful precisely as a way to frame his vision for a distinctly eschatological and richly Eucharistic theopolitical imagination in opposition to what he argues are false imaginations shaped by processes of globalization. Cavanaugh sees particular value in Certeau's spatial metaphors. Certeau contrasts "trajectories," temporal movements through *space*, with the ways in which these movements are represented as *place* on a map.[134] Situated within the framework of Certeau's larger dialectic, *space* is tactical and *place* is strategic. Flattening the fragmentary ensembles of practices and itineraries of a traveler into a map makes the space of a trajectory intelligible, permitting us to see the whole. But it does so only by erasing that which it represents.[135] For Certeau, it is *stories* that transform places into spaces, constantly organizing the changing relationships between the two.[136] Cavanaugh sees the Eucharist as a theological performance of what

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[132] Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 191.

[133] For further objections to Certeau, see Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 192. Bretherton argues that Certeau has an "intrinsically agonistic and violent understanding of the relationship between those forced to deploy tactics and the holders of strategic power." Bretherton argues that the military metaphors Certeau uses are not accidental, but intrinsic to his understanding of tactics. For Bretherton, this normalizes violence, leaves no room for the in-breaking of the kingdom, and cannot genuinely value the peace of the kingdom. This charge, I believe, is overdrawn; military metaphors comprise a relatively small portion of the ways in which Certeau describes strategies and tactics in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Bretherton also argues that conceiving of the church/world relationship using Certeau's dialectic establishes a false dichotomy between the two that fails to take seriously the church's embeddedness in the world.

[134] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 35 / *L'Invention du Quotidien 1*, 58–59.

[135] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 35 / Certeau, *L'Invention du Quotidien 1*, 58–59.

[136] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* 118 / *L'Invention du Quotidien*, 174.

Certeau calls a "spatial story," a reconfiguration of place which produces a new kind of space:

> The Eucharist not only tells but *performs* a narrative of cosmic proportions, from the death and resurrection of Christ, to the new covenant formed in his blood, to the future destiny of all creation. The consumer of the Eucharist is no longer the schizophrenic subject of global capitalism, but walks into a story with a past, present, and future.[137]

Thus, this Eucharistic performance is a performance of tactical resistance to the dominant map of the global marketplace, one that transgresses spatial and temporal barriers and unites the church on earth with the church in heaven.[138] Thus, Eucharistic practice has the potential to serve as a counter-politics that resists, among other things, the logic of the market.

In Vincent Miller's account of the fate of Christian thought and practice in a consumer culture, it is at the point in his narrative when commodification's grip seems most absolute that Certeau emerges to offer limited relief. Given the non-intentional aspects of consumer culture and its pervasive ability to commodify virtually anything, Miller is concerned about the ways in which consumer culture alters our relationships with religious beliefs, narratives, and symbols. Reflecting on the agency of contemporary consumers, Miller sees in Certeau a counterbalance to totalizing panoptical accounts of power like those of Michel Foucault.[139] Yet while he welcomes Certeau's emphasis on the creative *bricolage* of consumers as a relief from the pessimism of many cultural

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[137] William T. Cavanaugh, "The World in a Wafer: A Geography of the Eucharist as Resistance to Globalization," *Modern Theology* 15, no. 2 (April 1999): 192.

[138] William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Christian Practices of Space and Time* (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2003), 117–18. See also Cavanaugh, "The World in a Wafer." Graham Ward makes a similar use of Certeau to argue for a more adequate theological response to the contemporary city. See especially Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 73–74.

[139] Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 155.

critiques of consumerism, he is sober in his evaluation of everyday tactical responses because they risk romanticizing subcultural resistance; they are limited by its dependency on the strategic operation of the market; and their usefulness in resisting the market is constrained by the commodification of goods.[140] Further, through a brief reflection on some of Certeau's explicitly theological writings, Miller worries that Certeau's embrace of Christianity as a series of tactical responses to the Gospel that work outside the strategic organization of the church risks stripping such practices of their Christian specificity.[141]

Yet despite these hesitations, Miller values the political significance of cultural consumption implicit in Certeau's work for the potential it has to uncover a popular religious *bricolage* within consumer culture. In short, Miller wants to hold on to Certeau's value of popular agency while arguing that religious institutions are still sites that have the potential to mediate desires that resist the market.[142] With a cautious embrace of Certeau, Miller concludes with ways in which contemporary Christians might engage consumer culture through a series of tactical responses to commodification. These range from exploring the origins of the products we consume to a more faithful commitment to the fullness of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council.[143]

While each of these theologians stresses different dimensions of Certeau's dialectic, puts it to use in variety of ways, and engages his wider work to varying degrees, they have in common a presupposition that tactics are, for Certeau, primarily about

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[140] Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 158–62.

[141] Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 176–77. I consider this critique of Certeau in my appraisal of his explicitly theological work below.

[142] Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 174–76.

[143] Miller, *Consuming Religion*., see especially chapter 7, "Stewarding Religious Traditions in Consumer Culture," 179–224.

resistance. Hauerwas uses tactics to ground his quest for an alternative ecclesial space that might finally resist the strategies of the world. He reads Certeau in light of his own church/world dialectic and sees in Certeau a similarly sharp contrast. Bretherton forcefully rejects the theological potential of tactics as a way to conceive church practices, but he nevertheless shares Hauerwas's appraisal of tactics as practices of resistance. Cavanaugh provides perhaps the most nuanced reading of Certeau, appealing persuasively to Certeau's spatial metaphors to ground his own vision for a theopolitical imagination. Yet Cavanaugh uses tactical spatial stories primarily to plot alternative spaces of resistance to the strategic mapping of the world. Finally, while Vincent Miller expresses skepticism about the potential of tactics to resist the market, they become the foundation for the theological resistance he seeks.

The Practice of Everyday Life Revisited

Several factors set the conditions for the dominant reading of Certeau that has taken hold in theological reflection on culture, one that interprets tactics as a sign of the potential for everyday resistance in the face of an ever-strengthening grid of power. Certeau's own binary formulation as it emerges in the first several chapters of the book suggests an unnecessarily tight boundary between strategies and tactics that seems to place them in opposition. This has invited attempts by theologians to seek out tactics, or even advocate for the creation of new ones—something Certeau resists in his own work even as his language at times seems to authorize it. The English translation of the book's title, *L'invention du quotidien* (*The Invention of the Everyday*) has had the effect of

softening Certeau's emphasis on the *inventive* qualities of daily life.[144] And the French release of the book, as indicated by its subtitle "1. arts de faire" (*The Art of Doing*), was accompanied by the release of a second volume, "2. habiter, cuisiner" (*Living, Cooking*). The two volumes were released simultaneously in France and were intended to be read as a pair. But the second volume was not translated into English until over a decade after the release of the translation of the first volume. Perhaps because of this lag, the second volume has received comparatively little attention from the Anglophone academy.[145] However, Certeau's theoretical reflection in the first volume is based on research compiled in the second volume. And that research offers crucial insights into the trajectory of his project.[146] While these forces conspire to lend support to a reading of tactics as resistance, the circumstances of its production and, in particular, the latter chapters of *The Practice of Everyday Life* itself, which offer a far more nuanced narration of the way in which the ruses on the margins of the everyday are found in practices like writing and reading, suggest that reading Certeau's work only as a program for resistance

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[144] In the preface to the English translation of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Certeau knowingly reflects on the "invention" of translation itself: "the art of translation smuggles in a thousand inventions which, before the author's dazzled eyes, transform his book into a new creation." Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, ix.

[145] Luce Giard notes that at the time of the publication of the English translation, the American publisher had judged the second volume "too closely linked to something specifically French to interest the American public." Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Vol. 2: Living and Cooking*, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), xlii.

[146] Because the second edition was not translated into English until 1998, perhaps giving the impression that it was a sequel compiled after his death, it has received comparatively little attention in the United States. Certeau's own first line in the French edition of the first volume testifies to the fact that he saw it as the first of a two-volume project: "The research published in these two volumes…" Certeau, *L'Invention du Quotidien 1*, xxxv. In addition to eliminating the original subtitle, to accommodate the initial decision not to publish a translation of the second volume the English translation alters the opening words of the first chapter: "This essay is part of a continuing investigation…" Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xi.

flattens out both the fullness of what he intends by tactics and obscures the tactics he embodies in his own writing.

What finally became *The Practice of Everyday Life* began as an extensive research program on the study of culture and society conducted by Certeau and several colleagues at the invitation of the French Department of Research at the State Office for Cultural Affairs.[147] Although Certeau was given considerable freedom to define the parameters of the research, the sole request from the Department was that Certeau pursue his investigations in relation to their work. Certeau, however, sought to distance himself from the Department's previous studies, which had relied on significant quantitative analysis of data based on age, gender, and a variety of other categories to paint a coherent picture of cultural consumption and leisure practices in France. Luce Giard, with whom he worked closely on the project, notes that a significant reliance on quantitative analysis would have gone against the grain of Certeau's historical and cultural sensibilities, allowing "everything that interested him to escape: the individual operations and customs, their sequences, and the changing trajectories of the practitioners."[148] In order to fulfill his contract while remaining faithful to his own methodological commitments,

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[147] Following the events of 1968 in France, Certeau had emerged as a thoughtful commentator on political expression and participation as a result of a series of articles he had authored for the Jesuit journal *Études*. These essays raised his profile beyond his native guild of history and outside his Jesuit circles. These writings are found in Michel de Certeau, *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) / Michel de Certeau, *La Prise de Parole et Autres Écrits Politiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1994). In the preface to the original French edition of *L'Invention du Quotidien*, Luce Giard notes that the director of the Department contacted Certeau, "argued, persuaded, and prevailed," to draw attention to the Department's work. Certeau, *L'Invention du Quotidien 1*, viii. This introduction, found in the French version of the first volume, is missing from the English translation of the first volume. A revised version is reprinted in the English translation of the second volume. Certeau, Giard, Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Vol. 2*, xviii.

[148] Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Vol. 2: Living and Cooking* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), xix / *L'Invention du Quotidien 1*, x.

Certeau therefore defined his work *against* the work of the Department of Research at the French State Office for Cultural Affairs.

Thus, *The Practice of Everyday Life* is not merely a critique of theory in general, but, more immediately, a summary of Certeau's criticisms of the Department's approaches to the study of culture and consumption. Certeau intended to make visible the limits of statistics in a field in which great enthusiasm had emerged for the ability of graphs, charts, and maps to tell an intelligible story of contemporary consumption. When Certeau introduces his strategies/tactics binary for the first time in the text, it is immediately preceded by a blistering critique of these methodologies. And the resignation in his own language as he introduces it is plainly formulated in relationship to the critique of the methodological misunderstandings he is striving to overcome: "I *resort* to a distinction between tactics and strategies."[149] This resignation tactically signals his own hesitations as well as the gap he inscribes on the page even as he writes it.

Placed in this context, Certeau's penetrating critique of statistical inquiry and theories which claim to see precisely what they occlude is brought into clearer view. The plea to leave safe places of objective security and step onto the ground of the city street was not new to Certeau's work. In an earlier work reflecting on the plurality of culture, Certeau had already signaled a commitment to shifting cultural conversations from products to the ways in which people make use of them, insisting that theory take seriously "different ways or styles of socially marking the gap opened up by a practice in

[149] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix / Certeau, *L'Invention du Quotidien 1*, xlvi. Emphasis is mine. Certeau displays similar ambivalence toward this distinction throughout the book.

a given form."[150] *The Practice of Everyday Life*, then, was not the fabrication of a theory meant to support the cultural resistance of everyday people. It was a way to clarify a thread of concern for theoretical reduction which runs throughout his writings and to sharpen previous methodological critiques *vis-à-vis* the research of the Department which had commissioned his work. It is most fundamentally a series of essays rejecting, through a variety of tactical approaches, studies that find only what is homogenous and that neglect, obscure, or distort all that is not. And the inaugural binary which preceded his writing set the conditions for its articulation: the demarcation of his work *against* the work of the Department.

The second volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life* testifies to the larger aims of Certeau's research trajectory. Its ethnographic work deals with the "fine art of dwelling"—quotidian experiences such as living in a neighborhood, cooking, and homemaking.[151] This practical documentation, which informed the theoretical framework found in the first volume, reveals remarkably little attention to the kinds of conscious tactical resistance to the grid of power present in so many appropriations of Certeau in relation to contemporary culture. Instead, it is dedicated to the subtle "*murmuring* of the everyday"[152] that, in addition to essays by the collaborators themselves, includes unedited interviews offered without commentary in an attempt to leave space for such murmurings to find some limited place on the page. The essays in the second volume of *The Practice*

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[150] Michel de Certeau, *Culture in the Plural*, ed. Luce Giard, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 145 / Michel de Certeau, *La Culture au Pluriel* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1998), 220.

[151] A third volume, never completed, was to be dedicated to language, the "fine art of talk."

[152] Pierre Mayol, Chapter 1: "The Neighborhood,'" in *The Practice of Everyday Life, Vol. 2*, 7 / Pierre Mayol, Chapitre premier: "Le quartier," in Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *L'Invention du Quotidien 2. habiter, cuisiner* (Paris: Gallimard Education, 1994), 15.

of Everyday Life both reflect and sustain the work of the first volume, pleading for an attentiveness to all the ways in which practice exceeds theory.

While prevailing interpretations tend to frame Certeau as an antidote to Foucault, this hermeneutic has had the effect of both overestimating the significance of tactics as resistance and of flattening the complexity and opacity of the thought of both thinkers. Although Certeau's formulation of tactics as a kind of "anti-discipline" is an intentional echo of *Discipline and Punish*, the connection between the two is easily overstated. Certeau's research project had begun even before *Discipline and Punish* was published. And his interest in the inventiveness of practice emerged many years prior to its publication.[153] Further, Certeau, an appreciative yet often ambivalent reader of Foucault, knew as well as any close reader of Foucault that resistance is sewn into his theoretical reflection on relations of power.[154] Indeed, central to Foucault is the presence of resistance as the precondition for any exercise of power.[155] This is why Certeau names his work as both "consequence" of and "reciprocal" to Foucault's analysis, one which traces the "tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised."[156] To the degree that Certeau is offering a critique of Foucault, it is not to show resistances absent in Foucault's work. It is more subtly a

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[153] See especially Certeau, *Culture in the Plural* / *La Culture au Pluriel.*

[154] Certeau elsewhere calls Foucault "brilliant (a little too brilliant)." Certeau, "The Black Sun of Language: Foucault," in *Heterologies*, 171.

[155] See especially, Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 95 / Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la Sexualité 1: la volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 125–26: "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power…[The existence of power relationships] depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network." The centrality of resistance to sustaining relationships of power is itself absent in many appropriations of Foucault.

[156] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 96 / *L'Invention du Quotidien 1*, 146. Subsequent references are in parentheses within the text. Page numbers for the English translation are listed first.

critique of the panoptical view from which Foucault writes. Even so, while Certeau offers a compelling critique of *Discipline and Punish* in a later essay, he calls "remarkable" Foucault's use of panoptical discourse "as a mask for tactical interventions within our epistemological fields."[157] In Foucault, Certeau sees strategic modes of thinking deployed in tactical ways.

Evidence of a more convergent relationship between Certeau and Foucault emerges in a more integral way, and, I will attempt to show, in a way that is more in continuity with Certeau's wider body of work, in the latter chapters of *The Practice of Everyday Life* where Certeau turns his attention to the strategic power invested in the act of writing. Certeau extends and deepens Foucault's insights into the governing power of the archival apparatus to the entire scriptural economy on which modernity is written.[158] The modern discipline of writing, made possible by technological reproduction, has recorded the voice of the people "in every imaginable way."[159] And it is in turn mediated to us by radio or television. Yet in its very documentation, in the very presence it claims to mediate, the voice of the people is lost (132/196). Its recording is its repression. Because it is always determined by a system which has colonized and mythified it,

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[157] Certeau, "Micro-Techniques and Panoptic Discourse: A Quid pro Quo," in *Heterologies*, 191.

[158] See especially, Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage, 1982), 129 / Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du Savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 170–171: "The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale…Far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of discourse, far from being only that which ensures that we exist in the midst of preserved discourse, it is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration."

[159] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 132 / *L'invention du quotidien 1*, 196. Subsequent references appear in parentheses within the text.

observed and archived it, edited it and fine-tuned it, a pure voice is no longer accessible (132/196).

Any act of writing is, for Certeau, an act of erasure. A blank page sets limits on its production, isolating subject and object (134–135/199–200). The text constructed upon the page is not a world *received*, but a world *created*. A strategic activity, writing transforms what is received into a product invested with a power that masks the absence that its production demands. It is a practice that depends on the production of differences and so manifests absence in its very performance: "It spells out an absence that is its precondition and its goal" (195/282). When we write, we sacrifice presence so a sign can emerge in its absence. Writing is always articulated on this loss, an endless moving away from that which made it possible. It is no longer something that speaks, but something that is made (134–135/199–200). Modern writing, Certeau warns, will never take the place of presence (161/235).

Yet rather than demand a naïve retreat from the strategic grid of power, Certeau acknowledges that such a withdrawal is impossible. It is precisely through the loss required in making ourselves legible to others that we come into being as subjects. It is a sacrifice without which we would not be known. In the risk of making ourselves intelligible, we give our bodies over in exchange for meaning, "on the obscure desire to exchange one's flesh for a glorious body, to be written, even if it means dying, and to be transformed into a recognized word" (149/ 219). Identity is made possible, then, only by our assimilation into the grid of power. When we submit our bodies to the system, we trade our singularity to be turned into texts for the legibility of others. We become bodies only by conforming to its codes: loss is the condition of identity's possibility (147/216).

But even as the body is conscripted into text, its assimilation is never total. In our exchange for legibility, at the very limit of our conscription into the scriptural apparatus, a *cry* breaks out, "a deviation or an ecstasy, a revolt or flight of that which, within the body, escapes the law of the named" (149/219). It is a cry that testifies to the excess of our experience and the pain of sacrificing difference: "'There are' everywhere such resonances produced by the body when it is touched, like 'moans' and sounds of love, cries breaking open the text that they make proliferate around them, enunciative gaps in a syntagmatic organization of statements" (163/238). In the marginalia of everyday life is a lapse which "insinuates itself into language" (154/226). It is all that the graph, the chart, and the archive will leave out: the babbling of a child, the language of dreams of the possessed, the fragments of glossolalia which not even the most careful account of them will ever contain. The cry is, for Certeau, a sign that our conscription into the strategies which structure our daily lives is never without remainder.

This cry lives on in the form of tactics on the borders of every discourse. The writing of *The Practice of Everyday Life* is one of the diverse ways in which Certeau dedicates his work to listening for the ghosts of those voices which still reach us from a great distance. As Certeau moves further away from defining his binary, as his work is less centered on correcting the misunderstandings of the French Department of Culture, and as he begins to model tactics rather than attempt to explain them, his writing becomes less binary. His own cry grows more audible. And this cry is one that does not seek out ways to resist the grid, but one that insists that, even as we are necessarily conscripted into it, something escapes that resists assimilation. Tactics, in their fullest manifestation, may be about a kind of resistance. But it is not a resistance we seek, identify, or create. It

is rather a resistance that *exists* in the gaps, losses, and excesses that resist the full containment of the power apparatus (scriptural, theoretical, cultural), whatever our intentions. As signs of the incompleteness of strategic operations, tactics are cries of hope that human experience cannot be reduced to the places prepared for them by the strategies of the structures of the world.

Listening for the Cry in History

The Practice of Everyday Life is only a fragment of the diverse ways in which Michel de Certeau dedicates his oeuvre to listening for cries that silently reach us from a great distance. As with many French intellectuals of his time, Certeau was impacted by the revolutionary student riots of 1968. Yet though these events intensified old questions and awakened new ones about the relationship between culture, theology, and history, the tools that Certeau would bring to bear on their interpretation were not new. His commitment to the careful study of the primary sources of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century mystics, his engagement with the newly emerging psychoanalytic work of Jacques Lacan, and his deep knowledge of the work of contemporary theorists like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, had been established in earlier years. Although the breadth of Certeau's work among various economies of knowledge resists easy categorization, a sustained attentiveness to what he would eventually resort to calling *tactics* unites these diverse strands: the gaps, fissures, and excesses of history, theory, and theology.[160]

[160] While Certeau's interpretation of the events of 1968 brought him to national prominence, a rupture in his work in the years that followed should not be overstated. In the years prior, he asks similar questions in different forms. See for example, "Culture and Spiritual Experience," trans. J. E. Anderson, *Concilium* 19 (1966): 3–16 / Michel de Certeau, "Cultures et Spiritualités," *Concilium* 19 (1966): 518–537.

While the content of Certeau's distinctly historical work continued to center on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century mystics after 1968, its form began to center on his exile from them those mystics.[161] Certeau's own early explorations of Jean-Joseph Surin and other mystics began with assumptions and beliefs that ultimately proved inaccurate and needed to be abandoned.[162] Foremost among these was the perception of a close proximity between the objects of his study and himself: "Knowing them better revealed them as strangers…In the very realm where some commonality of language, some Christian understanding, had been assumed, they proved unrecognizable" (439/155). The more Certeau approached these figures, the more he saw the radical otherness of their ideas, feelings, modes of perception, and systems of reference (439-440/155-156). In choosing to study Surin, for example, Certeau realized that he made himself a subject "vis-à-vis the space formed by the traces [Surin] left behind" (441/158). As his relationship with the object of his study changed from a presumption of familiarity and an accompanying desire to domesticate him to a confession of an increasing isolation from him, so too did the orientation of Certeau's research change from a quest for the preservation of a recoverable "truth" of history to one structured by a missing presence (440/156).

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[161] Certeau's earliest historical investigations into sixteenth-century spiritual reform, especially the work of Peter Faber, paved the way for his study of seventeenth-century Jesuit Jean-Joseph Surin, a figure who would accompany Certeau throughout his career, implicitly and explicitly, as a source of both historical and theological reflection. Peter Faber was the subject of Certeau's doctoral dissertation. Pope Francis recently commended Certeau's work on Peter Faber in a 2013 interview for a variety of Jesuit journals. See https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130921_intervista-spadaro.html, accessed April 11, 2017. English translation published in *America Magazine,* Antonio Spadardo, "A Big Heart Open to God," *America Magazine*, September 30, 2013, http://americamagazine.org/pope-interview, accessed April 11, 2017.

[162] Michel de Certeau, "History and Mysticism," in *Histories: French Constructions of the Past: Postwar French Thought*, eds. Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt (New York: The New Press, 1998), 439–40 / Michel de Certeau, "Histoire et mystique," in *L'Absent de l'Histoire* (Paris: Maison Mame, 1973), 153–67. Subsequent references appear in parentheses within the text. Page numbers for the English translation are listed first.

In his systematic treatise reflecting on the limits of the writing of history, Certeau insists that history is fundamentally marked by a gap between the author and his or her object. Making the past intelligible depends on an initial lack:

> The violence of the body reaches the written page only through absence, through the intermediary of documents that the historian has been able to see on the sands from which a presence has been washed away, and through a murmur that lets us hear—but from afar—the unknown immensity that seduces and menaces our knowledge.[163]

Denying this gap, the historian turns a blind eye to the act of endless differentiation which characterizes the endeavor and renders the subject other (35–38/56–61). Founded on an inaugural rupture between past and present, the writing of history continues to repeat this act, persistently driving its object "back into the dark," which it "seeks, honors and buries" (2/14). At issue is not whether events happened or how they happened, but the impossibility of overcoming the gap that writing about the event demands. Certeau rejects the illusion that the historian can resuscitate the past through a more careful exhumation of knowledge. Historiography, insists Certeau, can never finally resuscitate anything. It is instead a "labor of death and a labor against death," which claims to encompass the past while simultaneously denying its limits and absences (5/19). The historian struggles against death by trying to close the gap between past and present. Yet it is precisely this effort that puts the past out of reach as a living reality. The interpretation of the historian is not an act of remembering but a production of forgetting.

To write history, then, is to generate it. Beginning with present determinations, the historian exerts his power only by looking backward. He carefully stages a chronology of the past, dividing history into periods, selecting what can be understood

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[163] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 3 / Michel Certeau, *L'Écriture de l'Histoire* (Paris: Gallimard Education, 2002), 15. Subsequent references appear in parentheses within the text. Page numbers for the English translation are listed first.

and what must be forgotten, privileging one set of documents over countless others, and analyzing its failures and successes to teach a lesson in the present: "*he plays the role* of the prince he is not" (8/22). Inscribing himself in history, the historian limits the number of possibilities in order to create a coherent narrative. But the ideologies of the present are always invested in its production and can never be eliminated from it (28/48). Reading the past is always driven by a reading of current events; its interpretation is constantly haunted by presuppositions linked to contemporary anxieties (23/40).

But the assimilation of the past by the historiographical operation is never total. Even as the writing of history depends on the burying of the real, fragments of all that has been repressed by the historian return on the edges of every discourse. Here, then, is a glimpse of a reality that plays the same role as what Certeau would later call tactics:

> Whatever this new understanding of the past holds to be irrelevant—shards created by the selection of materials, remainders left aside by an explication—comes back, despite everything, on the edges of discourse or in its rifts and crannies: "resistances," "survivals," or delays discreetly perturb the pretty order of a line of "progress" of a system of interpretation (4/17).

The *retoure du refoulé* ("return of the repressed") are traces of the cry emitted when a person or an event is transformed into a text to fit into the grid of history. These are fissures in language, breaches in the text, lapses in syntax, and inarticulate noises which have no intelligible content (230/273–274). Eluding the discipline of meaning, they are neither true nor false because they begin before such a distinction can be made. They are murmurs which insinuate themselves into the text at the point at which the fiction of a metaphor cannot put into words its insurmountable alterity (236/281–282). Never fully erased by the historiographical operation, a remainder of what has been forgotten lives on in the form of these traces on the margins of historical discourse.

Certeau's critique of historiography is a summons to the margins of historical discourse, to the murmur that lets us hear. No longer shaping an empire, the historian must become a "prowler" who works on the borderlines (79/109). She does not deny her strategic power, but accepts it, acknowledging a fundamental debt to what she has silenced (346/418). She does not fill the gap on which her work depends, but embraces it and manifests it in her performance. This historical prowling is evidenced in what she selects for the content of her study, "zones of silence," like madness, possession, and sorcery. But, more crucially, it is shown in its form. Bringing forth differences, leaving room for conflicting testimonies, and explaining her decisions, she destabilizes the possibility of a single truth of the history she writes. She makes room for all that that writing stabilizes: the slips, deviations, hesitations in the fragility of spoken language, "all that escapes one's control" which finally "allow writing to begin again."[164] The historian's task, Certeau would later write, is not to speak the truth, but to diagnose the false.[165] Throwing light on the historian's proximity to religious and political power, Certeau's reflections on historiography plead for an epistemological self-consciousness among historians which acknowledges absence, ambiguity, limits, and gaps and which displaces the work of history to the margins.

Certeau's insistence on the insurmountable alterity of history was not accompanied by a nihilistic retreat from writing it, but by a deeper immersion in it. The two works which most lucidly demonstrate Certeau's commitment to this work are his

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[164] Michel de Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing: From the Body to Writing a Christian Transit," in *The Certeau Reader*, ed. Graham Ward, trans. Saskia Brown (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 214 / Michel de Certeau, "Du Corps à l'Ecriture: Un Transit Chrétien," in *La Faiblesse de Croire* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 263.

[165] Michel de Certeau, *Histoire Psychanalyse: Entre Science et Fiction* (Paris: Gallimard, 66) / "History: Science and Fiction," in *Heterologies*, 200.

two most significant historical works. *The Possession at Loudun* and *The Mystic Fable* are compelling because they allow Certeau to *show* precisely that to which his theorizing can only gesture. Certeau reveals what it means to write on the margins of historical discourse through his choice of subjects: the fragmented cries of the possession of Ursuline nuns in a French village in the seventeenth century in *The Possession at Loudun,* and the emergence of mystic speech in the wake of a shattered Christian language in *The Mystic Fable*. In each, Certeau tells the story of this murmuring on the margins. Even more, he *shows* it by inscribing the exile of his subjects on the page through myriad tactical subversions which destabilize his role as historian and manifest the limits and gaps of his work.

It is particularly significant how Certeau's analysis of the possession of Ursuline nuns in Loudun anticipates so many of the themes he would not reflect on theoretically until several years later.[166] From its first words, Certeau acknowledges a limit that most

[166] A plague ravaged the city of Loudun in 1632, claiming 3,700 of its 14,000 citizens. With no known explanation or treatment for it, the plague traumatized the people of Loudun, upsetting the city's mental, intellectual, and spiritual structures and provoking a search for an explanation. Within a local convent of Usruline nuns, signs of demonic possession presented just as the last cases of the plague were documented. In light of the vast amount of source material about the event, especially a series of polemical pamphlets from the seventeenth century attempting to explain the possessions, the story of the possessions has captured the attention of historians and authors for centuries. Its substantial body of interpreters has included Alexandre Dumas, Alfred de Vigny, Jules Michelet, and Aldous Huxley. Krzysztof Penderecki composed an opera based on the possessions, *The Devils at Loudun* (1969), and Ken Russell created a film, *The Devils* (1971). Certeau was keenly familiar with the events at Loudun in light of his early research into Jean-Joseph Surin, who figures prominently in the story. See especially Michel de Certeau, *Correspondance* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966). Certeau also dedicates a chapter to the possessions in *The Writing of History:* Certeau, "Le langage altéré: La parole de la possédé," in *L'Écriture de l'Histoire*, 286–315 / Certeau, "Discourse Disturbed: The Sorcerer's Speech," in *The Writing of History*, 244–68. Based on Certeau's work, Michel Foucault was also drawn to the study of Loudun. See Michel Foucault, *Les Anormaux: Cours au Collège de France, 1974–1975* (Paris: Seuil, 1999). The ambiguity surrounding the possession, the volume of source material, the vastly conflicting interpretations of the event, and Certeau's own deep historical knowledge of the seventeenth century all make Loudun an ideal narrative through which to show how he imagines the writing of history.

historians go to great lengths in attempts to overcome: *History is never sure*.[167] Certeau makes clear that he will never be able to resuscitate the truth of Loudun: " [This book on Loudun] refers to a reality that once had a living unity, and *no longer is*. It is, in short, broken by an absence. Its form is in proportion to what it tells: a past. That is why each of its halves says what is missing from the other, rather than its truth."[168] Attentive to the way in which the inaugural event at Loudun authorizes an infinite series of meanings and a plurality of testimonies, Certeau allows diverse voices to emerge in all their ambiguity through the substantial quotation of primary sources without attempting to resolve contradictions or heal conflicts. To draw attention to the myriad tactics and gaps that fall outside the grid, Certeau emphasizes the centrality of categorization and classification to the organization of the discourse at Loudun for they establish strategic points of reference and delimit regions. Throughout, Certeau makes himself a sign of that which is lacking by consistently leading the reader down a particular path which seems to provide an answer to the mystery shrouding the possession, only to back away and show how the event can never be reduced to the interpretation he has knowingly insinuated. And at the conclusion of an exhaustive and meticulous study, Certeau does not attempt to fill the gaps to which he has drawn our attention. Instead he confesses the limits of his own undertaking.[169] The possession at Loudun permits a plurality of interpretations, but all finally attest to the absence, in the text, of the inaugural event.

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[167] Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1 / Michel de Certeau, *La Possession de Loudun* (Paris: Gallimard Education, 2005), 11. "History is Never Sure" / "L'Histoire n'est Jamais Sûre," is the title of the introduction.

[168] Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*, 8 / *La Possession at Loudun*, 24.

[169] Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*, 227 / *LaPpossession de Loudun*, 421.

Loudun is a rejection of voyeur-like accounts of history and practice that deny gaps and absences in order to endow them with coherent interpretive power. It is an implicit dismissal of stable canons of knowledge and the authority ascribed to the ones who write them. Through constant differentiation, the writing of history against which Certeau presses is a labor of death against death. It claims an exhumation of a past that can never be resuscitated. It denies the alienation it creates. It insists that history is always sure. Leaving out testimonies which conflict with the narrative it is attempting to construct, it resolves any tensions and fills in every gap along the way. At the site of the possessions at Loudun, Certeau surrenders these false interpretive powers.

If *The Possession at Loudun* anticipated much of his later theoretical work, Certeau's final (and incomplete) work serves as his most complex synthesis of it.[170] *The Mystic Fable* is a particularly compelling testimony to the theme of absence which runs throughout Certeau's work. Mystic speech is born out of the perceived silence of a seemingly absent God. Out of the humiliation of the Christian tradition—the breakdown of sacramental, scriptural, and institutional authorities—mystics do not reject the ruins around them, but remain there (I:25/42). Absence is not something to be overcome. For Certeau, *la mystique* is foremost a quest for a common speech after its breakdown, the

[170] Between the publication of the first volume of *La Fable Mystique* in 1982 and his death in 1986, Certeau worked on two additional volumes. As with all of Certeau's unpublished manuscripts, the second volume was entrusted to his colleague Luce Giard. Giard organized and edited the second volume, which was published in 2013; the English translation was published in 2015. A third volume remains incomplete. Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume One: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 25 / Michel de Certeau, *La Fable Mystique 1: XVIe–XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 42. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the text. The English translation is listed first. "I" refers to first volume, "II" refers to the second: Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable, Volume Two: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Luce Giard, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015) / Michel de Certeau, *La Fable Mystique, 2: XVIe–XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013).

invention of a language.[171] Characterized by withdrawal and virtuosity, rapture and rhetoric, Certeau argues that *la mystique* is the "sacrifice of the language that can only *say* it by effacing itself" (I:15/27) which attempts to make "readable an absence that has multiplied the productions of desire" (I:13/25). Even as he commits himself to the task of writing this ambiguous history, Certeau admits that his work "emerges from a mourning," which draws upon an "unacceptable and insurmountable division" (I:3/11). Certeau confesses that he is the "last comer in the cemeteries in which the remainders of so many prior operations lie in heaps" (II:4/22–23). His study is founded on the very relationship of that which escapes him (I:10/21).

A hodgepodge of material, mystic discourse produces an excess that survives only in fragments. These cries breaking through the text in a variety of opaque traces exceed commentary:

> From Teresa of Avila to Angelus Silesius, mystic discourse does not cease producing that excess: in alliterations, rhymes, assonances, rhythms, vocalizations —effects of an excess of saying over the said. This musical continuum, which does not "fit" into the text of the commentary, refers to an enjoyment without discourse (*gozar sin entender lo que goza)*, but not without sound. This saying of suffering survives only in fragments, like the snatches of a refrain or a conversation in memory: lapses of voices without context, "obscene" quotations of a body, and noises in suspense all seem to certify, by this disorder of impressions, that there is otherness, and at the same time they seem to expect indefinitely, from an impossible presence, that it should transform the traces that it has left into its body. (II:143/229–230).

These murmurs, utterances, and interjections from the wounded mystic body are the mystic *saying itself* (II:142/229). For Certeau, the avatars of mystics retain something irreducible (II:14/38). Certeau sees each mystic document as a laboratory "in which

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[171] By *la mystique* Certeau means a "new science," (analogous to "physics"), distinct from the later label of "mystical" which was used pejoratively to distinguish from "theological." The English rendering of *la mystique* as "mystics" is problematic for the way in which it is easily misunderstood as referring to historical persons who were mystics. See Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume Two*, 8–14 / *La Fable Mystique 2*, 29–38.

specific 'gestures' are described as those of a dance on a stage" (II:22/50). These gestures are not found in their content, but in the scientific and aesthetic styles through which mystics insinuate themselves in history (II:22/50). Mystics perform a particular set of operations on a field that is not their own. In other words, their operations are tactical on the terrain of the strategic "authorities" on which they operate. Like the tactical bricolage of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *la mystique* is about the conversion of language in such a way that effects its displacement (I:119/265).

Though necessary to his project, demarcating *la mystique* as a field of study both produces and is blind to the countless overflows and excesses that will always be present in such a codification. "Something has been lost that will not return," Certeau writes, "Its writing is based on an absence and produced nothing but simulacra, however scientific" (I:10/21). Yet in spite of his relentless cautions, Certeau dedicates his work to analyzing mystic writings by being attentive to the historical networks of knowledge, body language, and institutions through which mystics express themselves (II:22/50). His work is not found in drawing up a history of mystics, but in entering into the otherness of the "wild science" of mystic speech. "Out of their strangeness (or what remains of it)," Certeau asks, "can something be born?" (II:4/22).

Listening for the Cry in Theology

While his explicitly theological writings comprise a comparatively small portion of his overall corpus, Certeau acknowledges that his other writings are inflected with thoughts about God: "I cannot not deny that I invested my faith in my analysis of history nor 'forget' fictitiously that I am a theologian."[172] And despite attempts to draw tight

[172] Michel de Certeau, "Faire de l'histoire. Problèms de méthodes et problèms de sens," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 58 (1970): 518. Translation is mine.

boundaries around what constitutes Certeau's theological work, Claude Geffré keenly notes, "all of his work has theological significance."[173] That all of his work has theological significance is due not only to the spiritual content of his historical study, but also to the remarkable continuity between his works on history and culture and his theological reflection. The lack of access to the real which funds the historian's account of history or the loss we experience every time we exchange our bodies for intelligibility become, in Certeau's theological writings, the absence of the ascended body of Jesus as precondition for Christian language and practice. In this way, all of his work bears traces of questions about the presence and absence of God.

In his explicitly theological reflections, Certeau emphasizes that Christians are stamped by absence. Christian language begins with and is permitted by the disappearance of its author: "Jesus *effaces* himself to give faithful witness to the Father who authorizes him, and to 'give rise' to different but faithful communities which he makes possible."[174] The founding break (*la rupture instaurutrice*) of the Christ-event permits a plurality of possibilities which do not repeat the event, but which would not be

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[173] Claude Geffré, ed., *Michel de Certeau ou la Différence Chrétienne: Actes du Colloque* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1991), 11. Perhaps reacting against the tendency to dismiss Certeau's Christian identity in appropriations of his work in cultural theory, some theologians have moved in the opposite direction, extracting his explicitly theological writings from his wider project and relativizing the theological significance of his other work. As with any author, but in a particular way with Certeau, no single work is sufficient to grasp the trajectory of his overall project. Both his explicitly theological reflection and his other writings are brought into greater clarity when viewed in relation to one another. For a thoughtful consideration of the theological significance of Certeau's work, see Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, "The Abrahamic Voyage: Michel de Certeau and Theology," *Modern Theology* 12, no. 1 (January, 1996): 1–26. Closely related to the concerns of the argument I develop in this chapter, Bauerschmidt argues that a lack of attention to the theology that "haunts" Certeau's work has both deprived theologians of an important resource for reflection on Christian discourse in the wake of modernity and produced an incomplete understanding of his thought in appropriations of his work outside the field of theology. Indeed, I would further argue that theologians have tended to read his explicitly theological work through the prism of his work in cultural studies in a way that has been reductive to both.

[174] Michel de Certeau, "How Is Christianity Thinkable Today?" *Theology Digest* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1971): 336. This essay originated in a lecture delivered at St. Louis University on May 16, 1971. Subsequent references appear in parentheses in the text.

possible without it (337). The traces Jesus left in his life, words, death, and resurrection gave rise to Christian language and the early Christian community (337–338). They are not expressions identical to the event itself, but neither are they radically discontinuous with it. They are effects of it, modes of its presence in absence. Christian fidelity is tightly bound to the absence of the very body that authorizes it.

The absent body of the ascended Jesus is precisely what makes room for myriad faithful responses to it. It is a generative absence in which the truth of the Christ-event is revealed through new possibilities it opens, shown by differences and hidden by elaborations (337). Because no authority is sufficient unto itself, presence is best suggested by Christianities *in the plural*. Every Christian testimony, authority, and community reveals what it is not (337). Even the closing of the New Testament canon reveals a permissive limit which in turn manifests the need for diverse patristic, liturgical, and theological testimonies (340). To be a Christian is to recognize the limit of any single testimony.

There is a constant temptation, however, to reduce Christianity, whether to *sola scriptura*, the magisterium, a particular community, or a set of doctrines (340). Certeau does not reject any of these authorities, but he insists that Christianity is not identical to any one of them. The differentiation of the Christian community is the very law of its existence; no authority is reducible to the other. Even attempts to take refuge in comfortable dialogue in which particularity is reduced to find common ground masks this persistent desire for an individual authority that might constitute the whole (340–341). The lack at the heart of Christianity, however, is not something to be filled in, but is evidence of its limit. It is precisely through recognizing the limits of our own particularity

as individuals and communities that we confess the need for the testimony of others. Christians are called to be a sign of that which is lacking by recognizing the necessity of other testimonies and by making room for the multiplicity of Christian languages (341). For Certeau, absence is the mode of Christ's presence.

The place and praxis of Christian faith, like the work of historiography, has been displaced to the margins. Christian experience is rooted in both recognizing one's present place and risking a continual departure from it (341–342). While speech and institutions work to define a place strategically, Christian practice transcends it in a way that presses us forward. The perpetual departure of Christian praxis is not an application of doctrine put into action, but is itself a primary locus of Christian expression which cannot be contained or expressed in a formulation (342). The marginality of Christian practice emerges as a kind of tactic which cannot depend on a strategic place. And while the temptation is strong to appropriate this insight to strategically identify, create, or define tactical practice, it ultimately reduces the very hope toward which it drives:

> Any account of analysis of a particular praxis must be "unfaithful" to that action simply because it speaks of it. Moreover, often the more a thing can be said, the less it can be done. At least, the relation of saying to doing is not the relation of container to contained, or of formulation to experience. It is the breaking-down into different elements. The out-going implied by doing is related to the defining or limiting of positions required by *saying*, just as departure is related to place though neither can be reduced to the other (342).

The inventive, anonymous, and unidentifiable diversions and displacements are no less central to the Christian experience than the strategic sites with which it is often identified. Christianity is thinkable only when it is risks abandoning objective securities, forsaking the quest for the ascended body it cannot touch, and embracing a *living* God (344–345). Only new departures testify to the presence of the absence of the ascended Lord.

While in most of his writings Certeau did not rule out language, theories, and institutions as important "grounding points", his faith in their ability to organize specifically Christian departures waned toward the end of his life. As he argued in his study of *la mystique*, since the shattering of Christendom in the sixteenth century, the ecclesial body progressively lost its social body in a way that it could not reconstitute. Once the strategic site of production that authorized Christian discourse, the church ceased to organize distinctly Christian operations.[175] Civil society ultimately replaced the church as the primary site of production. Over the course of the twentieth century, this process intensified. Although the ecclesial site has been displaced to the margins, Christian practices have not been obliterated. They continue in myriad fragmented forms in the world. But they endure with an absent referent. The sacerdotal, sacramental, and social forms of the institution that gave rise to Christian practices are no longer preconditions for them. Fragile and flowing, Christianity no longer speaks apart from the world through the church, but through the forms of the world of which the church is a part.

In light of the kenosis of Christianity, Certeau confesses that any longing, including his own long-held desire, for a distinctly Christian refuge, or any idyllic quest for a lost Jerusalem from which Christianity might speak, has to be abandoned as

[175] Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 218 / "Du corps à l'ecriture un transit chrétien," 267–68.

myth.[176] "The longed-for land," writes Certeau, "dissolving on approach or definitively lacking, such are the experiences which should lead us not to place within our real history, whether laborious or jubilant, but always limited, the poetic signs of a kingdom or a community."[177] Christians, he argues, must abandon not only their strategic quest for an immanent Christian utopia, but also their efforts to identify, fabricate, or explain practices as specifically Christian.[178]

Jeremy Ahearne has expressed concern for the consequences of the seemingly anonymous character of Certeau's vision of Christian practice.[179] Ahearne worries that such practices possess merely a residual structuration of Christian thought and practice in a way that eliminates any compelling reason to identify them as Christian.[180] He argues that such an aphasic view of Christian practice emerges out of Certeau's over-identification with the shattering of Christianity he perceived in his own context.[181] Vincent Miller intensifies Ahearne's concerns, arguing that Certeau displayed an "enthusiasm" for the final shattering of Christendom grounded in the "revolutionary optimism of the time."[182] Like Ahearne, Miller is concerned about the way in which

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[176] See Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 220–221 / "Du corps à l'ecriture un transit chrétien," 272–273. "When describing the possibilities, as they appear to me today, open to the Christian community – either its emptying out if it means to adhere to its initial project, or its transformation into a group without any Christian marker, or else its fragmentation into transitory disseminated operations – I also ask myself what I am doing. Many meetings, friendships, and personal experiences confirm my analysis, but should also preclude it. It also runs counter to my desire, which for a long time held sway over me, to find a solution precisely in this – the lost Jerusalem, a 'Refuge,' as Christian heroes setting out on founding voyages for the borders of the Western world would say."

[177] Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 221 / "Du corps à l'ecriture un transit chrétien," 273.

[178] Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 236 / "Du corps à l'ecriture un transit chrétien," 296.

[179] Jeremy Ahearne, "The Shattering of Christianity and the Articulation of Belief," *New Blackfriars* 77, no. 909 (November 1, 1996): 501.

[180] Ahearne, "The Shattering of Christianity and the Articulation of Belief," 501.

[181] Ahearne, "The Shattering of Christianity and the Articulation of Belief," 503.

[182] Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 175.

Christian practices seen in this light lose their Christian specificity. And Frederick Bauerschmidt has similarly argued that Certeau fails to take seriously the existence of communities—from base communities to Catholic Worker houses—that do in fact provide a distinctively Christian place of departure for Christian praxis.[183]

Any theological appropriation of Certeau's fragmentary vision of Christian practice will need to take seriously these kinds of critiques. Certeau's insights resist easy assimilation into a systematic ecclesiology as much as they resist being transformed into a program for reform.[184] The poetic traces of the kingdom Certeau imagines are a kind of theological tactics. And yet the temptation to translate them into a tactical initiative for Christian cultural resistance or to name a distinctively Christian practice misses both the place from which Certeau narrates the status of Christianity in his own time and the mode of his thought. Certeau's vantage point, here as elsewhere, is from the city street, not the skyscraper. His theological reflection is an attempt to come to grips with how Christianity is thinkable as a fragile and flowing set of dispersed practices after the shattering of Christendom. Neither antagonistic towards nor enthusiastic about this shattering, Certeau simply names the truth of its reality. Indeed, for Certeau, any desire to turn tactics into strategies is a symptom of a persistent longing to claim to be the whole:

> The temptation of the 'spiritual' is to constitute the act of difference as a site, to transform the conversion into an establishment, to replace the 'poem' which states the hyperbole with the strength to make history or to be the truth which takes history's place, or, lastly, as in evangelical transfiguration (a metaphoric

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[183] Bauerschmidt, "The Abrahamic Voyage," 20–21.

[184] In a footnote, Certeau expresses sympathy for the attempt of the magisterium to exert some control: "It is understandable that the hierarchy should set 'checks,' retreating from the open-handed reformist 'adaptation' of previous years in order to mark limits in the dispersed proliferation of Christian 'expressions.' Any institution which refused this course of action would be suicidal. The 'reaction' which at present prevails in the Church is, in this light, perfectly explicable: the refusal to vanish into just about anything…Unfortunately, these gestures arrive too late. The restrictive measures no longer work." Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 238, n.5 / "Du corps à l'ecriture un transit chrétien," 268, n. 5.

> movement), to take the 'vision' as a 'tent' and the world as a new land. In its countless writings along many different trajectories, Christian spirituality offers a huge inventory of difference, and ceaselessly criticizes this trap; it has insisted particularly on the impossibility for the believer of stopping on the "moment" of the break—a practice, a departure, a work, an ecstasy—and of identifying with a site.[185]

Letting go of the strategic impulse to identify, fabricate, or explain practices as specifically Christian is not an abandonment of hope but an expression of it. Because, from below, it is impossible to match the shape of Christian hope with the shape of the church, the fragmented tactics of everyday life bear traces of a hope that is never finally lost even in the absence of the referent which made them possible.

For his unrelenting emphasis on the Christian mourning of an absent body, a more thoroughgoing charge against Certeau's theological reflection is that it is marked by a despairing nihilism. Graham Ward, one of the most careful theological interpreters of Certeau, has wondered whether the lack of a distinctly theological horizon in Certeau's later writings is open to an "endless dissemination, a multiplicity of Christian languages minus the living God, a wandering without direction or promise into ever deepening exile."[186] Ward worries that Certeau denies a space for incarnation and community, fails to relate what is believable with contemporary practices of faith, and refuses to examine sacramental traces in his own project.[187] For Ward, Certeau's "spirituality of departure" lacks a theological foundation to "go out, to be sent, to proceed in the name of God."[188] While he believes that Certeau's heterological exploration was "pushing towards a new

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[185] Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 236 / "Du corps à l'ecriture un transit chrétien," 296.

[186] Graham Ward, "The Voice of the Other," *New Blackfriars* 77, no. 909 (November 1, 1996): 527.

[187] Graham Ward, "Michel de Certeau's 'Spiritual Spaces,'" *New Blackfriars* 79, no. 932 (1998): 439–440.

[188] Ward, "Michel de Certeau's 'Spiritual Spaces,'" 439.

space, a rewriting of the traditional space that is not the denial but the affirmation of tradition," Ward concludes that a nihilistic melancholy haunts Certeau's work.[189] For Ward, only a practicing community of faith can save Certeau's project without it descending into a nihilistic retreat from the absent body of Christ.[190]

Yet conflating mourning and despair—or absence with nihilism—misses the deeper ways in which absence sings throughout Certeau's work as a confession of the inadequacy of strategic sites to contain God. One cannot mourn something that never was; mourning emerges only out of deep knowledge and intimacy in response to a presence that is now physically absent but—exactly in that absence—has made something new possible. And the theological gap toward which Certeau drives so persistently is not a generic nihilistic absence which encourages a permissive relativism, but the absence of the *body of Christ*. It is this generative absence in its very particularity which gives rise to faithful Christian belief and practice.

Confessing that the traces that the absent body of Christ left behind are not identical with that body is, finally, a confession of the utter alterity of God. Certeau's increasing exile from the objects of his historical study is mirrored in the trajectory of his theological reflection. The more he studied Surin, the more he became isolated from him. Similarly, the more he immersed himself in the crisis of Christianity, the more he came to confess the otherness of God. Just as the otherness of the past is always reduced by the historiographical operation and just as the narration of the totalizing grid of power misses the diversions of the city street walker, so too is the theological temptation great to

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[189] Ward, "The Voice of the Other," 527–528; Ward, "Michel de Certeau's 'Spiritual Spaces,'" 440.

[190] Ward, "Michel de Certeau's 'Spiritual Spaces,'" 439–440.

identify individual Christian testimonies with the presence of a body they will never finally contain. Deep knowledge of God, for Certeau, is born not out of familiarity, but out of an acknowledgment of the gap between the absent body and ourselves.[191] For Certeau, this did not result in a nihilistic retreat from God any more than it did a retreat from the writing of history. Instead, it made possible a radical openness to the new forms that his relationship with the subject of his study might take, however fragile and ambiguous they might be in the wake of the ruins of Christendom through which he walked.

Tactics as Hope Beyond Resistance

In the latter chapters of *The Practice of Everyday Life,* Michel de Certeau reflects on the inventiveness of reading. Modernity has hierarchized writing, the production of a text, and reduced "just reading" to the passive reception of a text on which one puts no mark of one's own. Yet reading is a practice that is both tactical and productive. To read is to wander through the strategically imposed system of the text in a way that inevitably alters it. A book is not merely a production by the author, but also by the reader, who "takes neither the position of the author nor an author's position."[192] The reader is everywhere inventing in the text something different than what was intended, combining fragments that permit a plurality of meanings.

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[191] Michel de Certeau, *L'Étranger ou l'Union dans la Différence* (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 1969), 168. Certeau argues that our deepest unity with one another and with God emerges only by confessing our deepest difference from them: "In confessing our inability to know others, we confess at the same time their existence, ours (to which we are returned) and a fundamental reciprocity between us and them. To the extent that we agree *not to identify ourselves with what they can expect from us, and not to identify them with the rewards or assurances we expect from them*, we will discover the sense of *poverty* that funds all communication. This poverty signifies in effect both the desire that binds us to others and the difference that separates us. The structure of faith in God is the same." Translation is mine.

[192] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* / *L'Invention du Quotidien,* 169/245.

In my attempt to destabilize a particular reading of Certeau's notion of tactics, I do so aware of the inventiveness of my own reading and necessarily unaware of the gaps on which my words depend. The questions I raise here, however, do not emerge out of a longing to claim a single "faithful" reading which comprises the whole of Certeau's thought. Nor do they emerge out of a desire to label readings of tactics as resistance "unfaithful." Instead, by proposing a hermeneutic of absence, I hope to make space for readings *in the plural* of what Certeau ultimately resorts to calling "tactics" in order to deepen theological reflection on culture in general and consumer culture in particular. Content with evaluating them against their ability to fund Christian cultural resistance, the dominant reading of tactics reduces the plurality of their meanings to one: resistance. This reading, however, often places scholars in a strategic position, reducing tactics in an effort to explain, identify, or create them, a location that Certeau evades with countless subtleties and ruses even as his binary at times seems to authorize it.

Viewing tactics through the lens of Certeau's wider project helps disclose that, irreducible to theorization or explanation, tactics do not merely illuminate the potential of individual agency, but serve as a sign of that which is lacking—but nonetheless real—in every discourse, and still present precisely in that lack. At every turn, Certeau attempts to hear an unnamable cry that he knows he can never finally make present: he spells out an absence that is his precondition, goal, and constant companion. *The Practice of Everyday Life* serves as a mystagogical reflection on his earlier work, echoing the mysteries made manifest in his writing of history and theology and extending them to reflection on culture in an attempt to show that people are not reducible to passive recipients of the productive apparatus. The distinction between strategies and tactics as it emerges in the

oft-cited early chapters of *The Practice of Everyday Life* is Certeau's least successful illumination of them; what he elsewhere *shows*, here he merely *says*. And there is great loss in the saying.

The shape of Certeau's hope is more substantial than tactics as this-worldly resistance can see. His work does not lend easy support to the illusive hope of everyday resistance. Clasped by the city street and attentive to all that stirs in the everyday, neither does the tactically fragmentary nature of his thought fit comfortably into the strategic grid of a systematic ecclesiology or a grand theory of practice. To the degree that there is a consistency in Certeau's work, it is to show the limits of these systems, to show all they will never see. It is a work intentionally displaced to the edges of history, culture, and theology when the stable ground of previous ways of thinking is passing away. He raises to consciousness a natural inclination toward organization and technologies of control of history, bodies, and God. He acknowledges the apparent totality of the strategic grids of power which structure daily life. But then he dismisses them as incomplete, and in their place makes room for a cry he does not always hear but always trusts is present. Certeau attends to absence as an act of faith, as sign of hope.

Re-reading tactics through a hermeneutic of absence opens a space for a theological account of consumer culture that takes seriously the gaps, excesses, and absences of our experiences, even those in and through the marketplace. Relinquishing the view from the skyscraper, it makes possible attentiveness to the fragmentary, fragile, and ambiguous activities of the street below which evade categorization, exceed theory, and slip beyond the grid of market logic. Listening for the murmurs of the everyday need not result in the legitimization of the clear and present excesses of late capitalism. But

neither can it ignore the theological significance of even those Christian histories, practices, and objects that have driven, sustained, or been transformed by the market. To read consumer culture tactically is to acknowledge that its tares are tightly intertwined with wheat.

The intensification of market forces in recent decades affirms the anonymous and aphasic character of Christian practice Certeau named as he walked through the ruins of Christendom in his own time. If that aphasia is never to be sought, never the goal of a Christian project, Certeau's hermeneutic opens a space in which it can be seen as the way Christianity has been and continues to be poured into the world. Christian longings do not disappear into a consumer culture but find their way onto a host of cultural forms of art, ritual, music, and media. These often reveal consumer culture doing one of the things it does best: abstracting practices from the communities in which they were formed and putting them to new use. There is much to lament about that transfer for the communities from whom such practices are severed. But listening for the cry demands an attentiveness to the cravings for redemption which surround us even through misshapen desire and faithful practices that endure in the absence of the referent that makes them possible.

3

Listening for the Cry in a Consumer Culture

Informed by his ethnographic studies of Roman Catholic devotional sites, Robert Orsi is one of the most outspoken critics of the ways in which religious scholars have often dismissed, relativized, or subordinated the materiality of religious practice.[1] These limits are evident in the absence of any explicit attention to the materiality of everyday religious life in a wide range of histories, ethnographies, and theories. But they are also revealed through works in which scholars acknowledge material practices but then reject them as merely magical, superstitious, or manipulative,[2] or when they highlight particular material objects for their perceived religious authenticity while rejecting others as inauthentic.[3] Indeed, even efforts to contain "material" or "popular" religion from the

[1] By establishing and policing firm boundaries around what constitutes "authentic" religion, many scholars in turn relativize the materiality of everyday lived religion. Theoretical walls erected between the material and the spiritual depend on the possibility of a clear borderline between the two. This impulse is evident in the variety of ways in which scholars attempt to keep distinct—implicitly or explicitly— a range of binary categories in reflection on the material dimensions of religious experience: real/imaginary; transcendent/immanent; machine/nature; self-denial/self-interest; spirit/materiality; private/public; sacred/secular; elite/popular; high/low; official/vernacular; religious/social. To the degree that scholars admit into their studies everyday religious practices that blur these categories, the latter of these pairings often serves as a way to dismiss such practices as defilements of the allegedly pure and authentic religion that characterize the former. In these narratives, religion is preoccupied not with the material, the earthly, or the quotidian, but the transcendent, the mystical, and the extraordinary. The implication is not only that certain objects are set apart from others, but that religion itself can be meaningfully separated from the web of material relationships in which it is expressed. This rupture in turn authorizes the relativization of all the matter of everyday life that is invisible, illegible, or unintelligible in the scholar's framework. See Robert Orsi, "Everyday Miracles," in *Lived Religion in America: Toward A History of Practice*, ed. David D. Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), especially 5–6.

[2] See especially Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, Third Edition (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010), xxxiii.

[3] Handcrafted goods, for example, may be worthy of scholarly attention, but mass-produced goods are not. Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 11.

broader category of "religion" expose the limits some scholars place on the significance or authenticity of material objects in the study of religion.[4]

Even though theological reflection on consumer culture is centered on a material activity—the production and consumption of goods—it likewise reproduces this impulse to relativize or even reject the significance of the materiality of everyday life. As I attempted to show in the first chapter, in the dominant discourse in theological studies, Christian ethics, and liturgical theology, consumerism is narrated as something that is corrupt to the core. To the extent that theologians account for the ways in which consumers interact with commodified goods, they reveal such interactions as manifestations only of our aimless, manipulated, and misshapen desire which needs to be redirected toward a proper Christian telos. Commodified products mediate nothing but deception, they argue, not only about the conditions under which a product was made, but also about the desires of the people who purchase them. Individual desires for

[4] The zoning of boundaries between material and spiritual, sacred and secular, or authentic and inauthentic religious material serves as an implicit judgment not only on particular material objects or practices, but on practitioners themselves. This judgment is revealed whenever material practices are interpreted as regressive, irrational, infantile, or incoherent, and therefore subordinate to official, elite, mature, or authentic Christianity. This judgment often falls particularly forcefully on those for whom objects and images have historically been particularly central: women, children, and the uneducated. The strength of those with the ability to grasp religious truths directly through interior spiritual transcendence is contrasted with the weakness of those who embrace physical aids to the divine. Purchasing a bottle of Lourdes holy water online or a Precious Moments collectible can only be ignorant or contradictory in a hermeneutic through which religion is safely defined as reasonable, consistent, and immaterial. The policing of boundaries between the material and the spiritual is therefore often accompanied by the reification of a hierarchy between more and less powerful. See Orsi, "Everyday Miracles," and McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 8. Leigh Eric Schmidt has summarized the implicit indictment of people engaged in material practices that undergirds a wide swath of scholarship from the field of religious studies: "If only they could see through the manipulation…they would be freer, better human begins, socially and religiously more aware." See Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying & Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 8. Mark Noll has noted a similar sensibility in historical studies of religion. See Mark A. Noll, "Introduction," in Mark A. Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790–1860* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3–29.

commodified goods are destructive, dangerous, or blasphemous. They threaten Christian thought and practice at their deepest levels. The aim of theology, then, is to resist certain goods, redirect our desire for them, or motivate us to purchase purer products. In these narratives, the market is no place of grace. It is a deviance to be resisted.

At stake in confining theological reflection on consumer culture to resistance is not only the loss of all the complex, fragmentary, and ambiguous ways in which people interact with commodities that exceed the limits set for them by narratives of resistance, but also the loss of any ability to talk about the activity of God within a consumer culture. Expositions of myriad corrosive forces of commodification diagnose its pathologies and rightly articulate Christian objections to those pathologies. But in so doing, they also drain consumerism of any positive theological significance and imply that God's grace is confined to the pristine workings of an idealized marketplace that we might make possible in this world.

In the previous chapter, I attempted to show the distinction Michel de Certeau drew between strategic accounts of practice that operate *from above* that flatten out practices of everyday in order to explain them, and tactical accounts of practice that operate *from below* that leave room on the page for recognition of the *cry*: a sign that our conscription into the strategies which structure our daily lives is never without remainder. Despite attempts to carve out a place for tactical resistances, accounts of theological resistance remain fundamentally strategic. Confining their efforts only to unearthing the practices of everyday life that might most effectively resist consumer culture, they miss myriad fragmentary activities that evade categorization, exceed theory, and slip beyond the grid of market logic.

In light of the intensification of market forces in recent decades, there *is* indeed an urgent need for theological reflection on the inextricable relationship between consumer culture and religious practice. Yet this urgency demands more than merely cataloging the troubling dynamics of a consumer culture and seeking refuge from them in some past or present ideal practice. It demands attentiveness to the convictions about God that have played a role in creating and sustaining a market that has scarcely been free of religion, and a church that has scarcely been free of the market. Even more, it demands ways of seeing the activity of God in and through its easily identifiable delusions and debilitations.

To this point, I have resisted offering a concrete definition of what constitutes a consumer culture. This has allowed an attentiveness to the diverse ways in which it receives definition in a wide range of scholarship on the relationship between consumer culture and religion, as well as how such definitions relate to prescriptions for its effective Christian resistance. Those definitions have included everything from the processes of globalization to the strategies of contemporary branding to the working of late capitalism in general. Without intending to collapse the wide range of concerns and interests gathered under the phrases "consumer culture" or "consumerism" into one, my own theological reflection on consumer culture in the pages that follow centers on reading theologically one of its defining features, a feature that most narratives of theological resistance identify as one of the most significant threats consumer culture poses to Christian thought and practice: the phenomenon of the commodity. I understand a consumer culture to be one in which almost every exchange—economic, cultural,

political, and even religious—is marked in some way by the processes of commodification.

While the work of Michel de Certeau implicitly invites attentiveness to all of the activities that slip beyond the grid of market logic, and while he is frequently invoked in literature in consumer culture and theology, Certeau himself was silent on the topic. To extend Certeau's insights into a consumer culture, then, demands a deeper attentiveness to the complex phenomena of the commodity. In this chapter, I explore the commodity fetish as Karl Marx first articulated it and as Walter Benjamin distinctively expanded it. Benjamin's way of seeing "theological" wishes, dreams, and desires embodied in fallen commodities provides a way to take seriously the pervasive and even dangerous forces of commodification while still *listening for the cry* in and in spite of those forces. This way of seeing leaves space for traces of the activity of God in and through the commodified objects and practices of everyday life, traces that are not reducible to the efficaciousness of human resistance. This reflection does not rule out a space for practices of everyday resistance, but accepts that such resistances are also incomplete, and even commodified, and that Christian hope does not depend on their being utterly pure, or entirely other to this world.

The Theological Niceties of the Commodity

In describing what he called the "fetishism" of commodities, Karl Marx revealed the transformation that takes place when a product is transformed into a commodity for market exchange.[5] To disclose the "secret" of this conversion, Marx distinguished between a commodity's *use* value and its *exchange* value. On the one hand, tied to its

[5] Karl Marx, *Capital*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, Second Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 319–29.

physical properties, a product's use value is the clearly identifiable value in relation to its social function and the real human need it fulfills. On the other hand, lacking any clear connection with the physical nature of the product itself, a commodity's exchange value is an enigmatic value that emerges when a product enters the marketplace. Transformed into a commodity, the product seems to take on a life of its own: "So soon as it steps forth as a commodity," wrote Marx, "it is changed into something transcendent."[6] Inscribed into a new world of value that is no longer self-evident and no longer bound to its use, the exchange value exists only in relation to all other commodities. The recreation of the commodity, for Marx, is total. The exchange value ultimately conceals the use value, rendering invisible to us the social processes that produced it. Now, its price is its meaning. The social character of the commodity appears to us "as an objective character stamped upon the product" of its labor.[7] The fetishization of commodities, then—their production *as* commodities—is the progressive dynamic by which goods become valued in exchange and take on an aura of self-evident value abstracted from their actual use.[8]

To comprehend the mystical transformation of a product into a commodity, Marx called for a recourse to the "mist-enveloped regions" of religion.[9] He described the transcendent veiling of a commodity's exchange value in metaphysical and even "theological" terms. A commodity, wrote Marx, is "abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties."[10] Marx saw the ways in which the irrationality that the

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[6] Marx, *Capital*, 320.

[7] Marx, *Capital*, 320.

[8] The word "commodification," never used by Marx, is often used to describe the fetishization of commodities.

[9] Marx, *Capital*, 321.

[10] Marx, *Capital*, 319.

Enlightenment promised would disappear with the death of religion in fact took on new powers with the "theological" enchantment of commodity capitalism. His deployment of the term *fetish* to describe the "fantastic" qualities of the commodity was a clear evocation of primitive religious myth. Like an object made sacred through religious belief and practice, the commodity fetish reveals a false consciousness in need of breaking. Marx used the rhetoric of "religion," then, not only to show the links between Christianity and modern capitalism, but also as a way to expose the complex constellation of myths invested in the fetishized commodity.

Like Marx, Walter Benjamin saw the insinuation of commodities into every aspect of modern life in the early part of the nineteenth century. Yet where Marx's reflection centered on the *false* consciousness of commodity fetishism, Benjamin saw not only its deceptions but also traces of the deepest hopes and desires of people. Where Marx acknowledged but then dismissed the theological qualities of commodities, Benjamin took them seriously, letting them permeate his own vision as he considered the ambiguities of the emergence of commodity capitalism. Benjamin saw the ways in which, as "phantasmagoria," commodities alienated people from their labor and severed producers from their products. But he also saw more: he saw the ways in which commodities registered collective hopes and desires. He saw "revolutionary energies that appear in the outmoded" ruins of culture.[11] And, in myriad forms, he saw yearnings for a world different than it was. For Benjamin, even the most trivial practices and products of

[11] Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, ed. Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas MacKay Kellner, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Routledge, 1989), 175.

modernity were not only evidence of degradation, but also privileged testimonies of utopian possibilities for a better life.[12]

While Benjamin developed this insight in a range of writings over many years,[13] this distinctive way of reading commodities was most fully realized as he wandered the ruins of nineteenth-century Parisian arcades in the pages of his final and incomplete *Das Passagen-Werk* (*The Arcades Project*).[14] Glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors that extended through whole blocks of buildings (A1,1), the arcades were erected as monuments of industrial luxury and elegance. Forerunners of department stores and shopping malls, they were temples of commodity capital (A2,2). Yet already by the beginning of the twentieth century, enthusiasm for these dazzling testimonies to the new and the novel had subsided. Fallen from their original glory, the arcades had lost the glimmer of their initial luster.

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[12] Benjamin's expansion of Marx's commodity fetish was itself rooted in its elaboration by Georg Lukács. From Marx's insight into to the fetishism of commodities, Lukács developed a theory of reification that attempted to show the "sensuous, yet extrasensory" properties of commodities as a way to draw attention to the ability of the commodity form to remold its own image and penetrate itself into every aspect of society. See Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), 83–222. For further reflection on Benjamin's expansion of Marx via his reading of Lukács, see Margaret Cohen, "Benjamin's Phantasmagoria: The Arcades Project," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David S. Ferris (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 199–220 and Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), 70–81.

[13] While traces of this way of seeing theological dreams in commodities are found in a wide range of essays, two notable examples are *One-Way Street* and *Berlin Childhood Around* 1900. *One-Way Street* represents Benjamin's first sustained attempt to theorize the commodity through material montage. In sixty short and seemingly arbitrary fragments, he interprets the everyday expressive content of the world around him as he strolls city streets—from construction sites to public inscriptions on street signs and shop windows—to register the disorientation of reified commodities. See *One-Way Street*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016). In *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, Benjamin recalls his childhood by offering an inventory of memories attached to the enchanted objects of his material world—from cabinets to bicycles to sewing boxes—showing the ways in which the seemingly insignificant material of everyday life bears dreams and wishes. See Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2006).

[14] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2002). Subsequent references appear in parentheses in the text and refer to the convolute number.

For Benjamin, these fallen dream houses of consumerism offered a world in miniature, a reservoir of seemingly insignificant, discarded debris that, through Benjamin's eyes, contained flashes of truth. Where Marx identified a causal relationship between economy and culture, Benjamin centered his fragmentary illuminations in the arcades on the expression of the economy in culture. In them, Benjamin allowed the "rags and refuse" of the past to come into their own (N1a,7) by tending to the expressive character of everything he encounters (N1a,6). Carrying the artistic techniques of "montage into history," Benjamin assembled even the tiniest details of objects to "discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event" (N2,6). In everything from air-balloons to women's fashions, he *empathized* with the "soul" of the commodity (J80,2; J80a,1). Benjamin read the fallen fragments of the world as sites that disclosed weak remnants of the sacred finding expression in countless cultural forms. Put another way, Benjamin read the debris of a consumer culture theologically.

In the debris of these fallen arcades, Benjamin saw *wish images*, utopian wishes for a different future in which new is permeated with old.[15] Even as the commodities—and every other form he encountered—repressed their own human production, they still retained images of the collective consciousness never fully exiled from them. Benjamin

[15] Throughout his writings, Benjamin resisted offering a concrete definition of *wish* or *dialectical* images. Instead, he performed its meaning through his own ambiguous method of montage, juxtaposing images, hints, clues, and citations. For more on the ways in which "wish images" or "dialectical images" emerge in a variety of ways in Benjamin's writings, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991), especially chapter 5; Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995); Margaret Cohen, "Benjamin's Phantasmagoria: The Arcades Project," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, 199–220; Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987); Max Pensky, "Method and Time: Benjamin's Dialectical Images," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, 177–98; and Ted A. Smith, *The New Measures: A Theological History of Democratic Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 33–34.

saw in the past enchantment of shattered arcades archaic residues that revealed yearnings of a past dream world, a paradise in which human beings were reconciled with the material world. For Benjamin, these unrealized desires—whether for reconciliation or for a life free of endless suffering and injustice—were sedimented in the material of everyday life. Transposed onto every commodity and other cultural phenomena (F2a,5), they testified to a "utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions."[16] Through them, wrote Benjamin, the dreaming collective "seeks to both overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production."[17] These traces lived on in new forms that cited the old, "however far removed the thing that left it behind may be" (M16a,4). In the faded glimmer of their promise, they retained these expressions of collective wishes for redemption.

For Benjamin, releasing the testimony of the collective hopes in wish images depended on a mode of redemptive critique that approached them dialectically. Dialectical images, for Benjamin, were both method and subject. Approaching the wishes encoded in fallen arcades as dialectical images bore potential both to reveal their contradictions and to redeem their desires. Through the juxtaposition of the wish image and the failure of the commodity to deliver the utopia it promised, the fallen commodity revealed its own lies. But it also awakened a "not yet conscious knowledge of what has been" (K1, 2). This is what made the debris of history the privileged content of Benjamin's gaze. Precisely in forms that were shattered—where the original glimmer had faded—did this way of seeing come into clearest focus in his work (N4,4). In however

[16] Benjamin, The *Arcades Project*, "Exposé of 1935," 4–5.

[17] Benjamin, The *Arcades Project*, "Exposé of 1935," 4.

corrupted or misshapen a form, commodities testified to the hopes of the dreaming collective. These yearnings became visible in flashes that revealed in the present traces a memory of the past promise that the commodity could not keep. Thus Benjamin imagined his dialectical thinking as a way of "waking up" the collective from its dreaming, not merely to expose lies but also to redeem its desires.

Theodor Adorno articulated the kinds of anxieties that any claims to truth in the collective unconscious should provoke. In his review of early drafts of the exposé for *The Arcades Project*, Adorno expressed emphatic concern that by transposing the dialectical image into the collective consciousness Benjamin risked collapsing the two into one another. Adorno worried that Benjamin drained the dialectical image of its theological character, reducing it to an immanent plane in a way that deprived it of its critical potential. He argued that if the dialectical image was merely the way in which the fetish character of a commodity was perceived in the collective consciousness, then the commodity world may well have retained the ability to reveal itself as *utopia* but it had also relinquished its ability to describe it as *hell*. To recover the dialectical tension and so rescue the liberative potential of its critique, Adorno called for the strong reassertion of the original theological character of the dialectical image: "The restoration of the theology, or better still, a radicalization of dialectic introduced into the glowing heart of theology, would simultaneously require the utmost intensification of the social-

dialectical, and indeed, economic motifs."[18] Without this appeal to transcendence, the dialectical image, he insisted, would cease to be dialectical.[19]

In his response, Benjamin largely agreed with Adorno's comments. Benjamin noted that the latter draft that so troubled Adorno did not wholly replace his earlier articulation of the dialectical image. The latter draft constituted instead an intentional *antithesis* of the *thesis* of the earlier one. The two are themselves a dialectical pair.[20] Benjamin explained that

> [t]he dialectical image… contains the instances, the ingresses of waking consciousness, that it is in fact only through those very points that it can assemble its figure in the same way that many gleaming stars form a constellation. Here, too, then, a connection still needs to be developed, a dialectic conquered: that between image and awakening.[21]

Whether or not Benjamin intentionally worked to address Adorno's concerns as he was developing *Arcades*, the collective unconscious remains thoroughly dialectical in Benjamin's work in a way that it is not in the fascist appropriations of it about which

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[18] Letter, Adorno to Benjamin, 2 August 1935 in Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence, 1928–1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 104–116. Quotation is from 108.

[19] These theoretical anxieties were surely intensified for their very urgent political implications. Adorno notes, for example, the way in which the disenchantment of the dialectical image has been so easily co-opted for fascist ends. Writing in exile in 1935, it is this, perhaps, above all, that informs the urgency and strength of Adorno's comments to Benjamin. Indeed, one not need not look far to see in a range of contemporary political contexts across the world the ways in which over-identifying with the immanent collective unconscious continues to have dire consequences.

[20] Even though Adorno argued that any vision of hell had been repressed and that theology had been removed in the later draft, theological language in general and images of the nineteenth century as hell in particular are far from absent from *Arcades*. "Modernity, the time of Hell," wrote Benjamin as a clear dialectical antithesis to the idea of the "Golden Age" of the nineteenth century. "What is at issue is not that 'the same thing happens over and over' (much less is it a question here of eternal return), but rather that the face of the world, the colossal head, precisely in what is newest never alters—that this 'newest' remains, in innovation. To determine the totality of traits which define this 'modernity' is to represent hell." (*Arcades*, *First Sketches*, G°17). See also "Material for the Exposé of 1935," No. 7: "*Dialectical Schemata* Hell—golden age…The golden age as catastrophe." Further, distinguishing his understanding of the collective unconsciousness from the optimistic ways in which "consciousness of the collective" appeared in the work of Ernst Bloch, Benjamin here echoed Adorno: the past "always presents itself as though annihilated by catastrophes" (*Arcades*, K4, 2).

[21] Letter of Benjamin to Gretel Karplus, 16 August 1935, in Gretel Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *Correspondence 1930–1940* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2008), 153–156; quotation from 155.

Adorno and others have rightly worried. Irreducible to an immanent frame and never simply identical to the collective unconscious, the dialectical image retains its power in its appeal to memories of a lost past not of its own making. For Benjamin, wish-images never realized their utopian potential. And the dialectical image was intensified precisely through its failure to bring about the utopia it promised.[22]

In my own application of Benjamin's insight into the wish-image as a way to awaken the truth of collective yearnings and desires registered by fallen commodities, I intend neither to translate his thought neatly into a Christian systematic framework nor to claim his work as authorization for a project in Christian theology. Benjamin did not identify himself as a Christian.[23] And while his work is saturated with theological images and allusions, I do not appeal to it as a source of Christian theology. Neither does my use of Benjamin emerge out of a longing to claim a "faithful" reproduction of his thought. Instead, I appeal to Benjamin as a way to awaken reflection on the activity of God in a commodified world—especially through the promises it can never keep—activity often muted, relativized, or erased in theological narratives on consumer culture. In other words, I use Benjamin to illuminate what I trust has been there all along.

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[22] Susan Buck-Morss has shown that the central and unresolved tension between Adorno and Benjamin is the way in which Benjamin saw hope for redemption in mass culture where Adorno did not. For more on Adorno's objections to Benjamin's use of the dialectical image and Benjamin's response, see Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 120–24. For reflection on the theological implications of the debate, see Ted A. Smith, "Redeeming Critique: Resignations to the Cultural Turn in Christian Theology and Ethics," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 24, no. 2 (September 2004): 89–113.

[23] For more on Benjamin's complex relationship to religion, see Michael Jennings, "Walter Benjamin, Religion, and a Theological Politics, Ca. 1922," in *The Weimar Moment: Liberalism, Political Theology, and Law*, ed. Leonard V. Kaplan and Rudy Koshar (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2012), 109–21. For more on Benjamin's use of theological motifs, see Michael W. Jennings, "The Will to Apokatastasis: Media, Experience, and Eschatology in Walter Benjamin's Late Theological Politics," in *Walter Benjamin and Theology*, ed. Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 93–109.

The work of Michel de Certeau feels closely proximate here not only for the way in which it invites attentiveness to the absences in every discourse, but also for the way in which its explicitly theological insight into the Ascension offers a foundation from which to think theologically about the wish-image.[24] For Certeau, it is the absent body of the ascended Jesus that makes room for myriad faithful responses that are neither expressions identical to the Christ-event itself nor radically discontinuous with it. In modernity, Certeau argued, the institutional forms that once gave rise to Christian practices were no longer preconditions for them.[25] Fragile and flowing, Christianity no longer speaks apart from the world through the church, but through the forms of the world of which the church is a part. Displaced to the margins, Christian practices continue in myriad fragmented forms in the world, bearing traces of a hope never finally lost even in the absence of the referent which made them possible. For Certeau, each of these inventive, anonymous, and unidentifiable diversions and displacements testified to the presence of the absence of the ascended Lord though none was identical to it. In Certeau's writing, this mode of thought made room for the cry: a sign that our conscription into the grids of power which structure the practice of everyday life is never total. To take seriously the theological potential of the wish image is to leave space for that cry, to listen for traces of the present absence of the Ascended Jesus that can never be completely exiled, even from the refuse of a consumer culture.

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[24] Michel de Certeau, "How is Christianity Thinkable Today?" *Theology Digest* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1971): 337.

[25] Michel de Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing: From the Body to Writing a Christian Transit," in *The Certeau Reader*, ed. Graham Ward, trans. Saskia Brown (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 218 / Michel de Certeau, "Du corps à l'ecriture un transit chrétien," in *La Faiblesse de Croire* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 267–68.

To live in late capitalist consumer culture where nearly every exchange is marked by seemingly infinite commodification and every interaction by a pervasive market logic that intensifies our deepest longings even as it dulls the ability of the church to subvert its very processes is to walk amidst endless mounds of wishes and ruins, even to live those wishes and ruins as the deepest reserves of oneself. Appealing to Michel de Certeau's insight into the tactics of everyday life as signs of the absences that theory and theology cannot contain and the wish images that Walter Benjamin saw as traces of past presences makes possible a hermeneutic from which to approach consumer culture not only in terms of its delusions, but also in terms of the truths of its fallen hopes and dreams.

Attentive, then, to all that resists assimilation into the grid of a consumer culture—even through the ambiguity of commodified goods—in what follows I offer a close reading of the material, historical, and theological significance of three fragments of my own everyday life: my grandmother's *altarcito*, the hymnals of my childhood, and a series of discarded Apple products. I choose these items because of my own proximity to them. Undialectical moralizing is a temptation in every kind of theological reflection. But it seems particularly heightened when the topic is consumer culture: Religious leaders from Benedict XVI to Shane Claiborne long for versions of themselves that are somehow exempt from the machinations of the market. I share those longings. But it is easier to swing clubs at other people's loves while clinging to one's own. By reflecting on objects of personal significance to me, I take seriously my own embeddedness in the market. I attempt to do so in a way that does not ignore the distortions of the processes that shape these objects or absolve the misshapen desires and perplexing contradictions of the one who engages them, but to see the work of God in and in spite of them.

Fragment 1: The Praise of Camp at my Grandmother's *Altarcito*

"With regard to the past," Daniel Berrigan wrote in an essay on modern sacred art in 1962, "it would serve no real purpose here to detail the centuries of vapid, dissociate art which have preceded our own, and which we are in the process of disavowing."[26] Berrigan's relief for the shattering of a devotional Catholic aesthetic in the decade following the Second Vatican Council was not exceptional.[27] For Catholic moderns like Berrigan, many of the most significant religious artifacts of daily devotion were outward signs of all the Council tried to overcome. A gradual accretion of perceived devotional excesses did not fit neatly with the work of bringing the church "up to date" in the modern world. *Aggiornamento* demanded the abandonment of embarrassing superstitious practices like kissing the bone of a dead saint for healing or kneeling in supplication before a weeping statue of Mary. Relics of a "medieval credulity,"[28] such practices were vestiges of a bygone Catholicism in need of modern purification, correction, and reform.[29] Affirmations of divine presence migrated from holy cards, rosaries, and statues to the full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful in the church's liturgy, a real presence verified in ethical living in the world. Enthusiastic for the "authenticity" of modernity and suspicious of the "inauthenticity" of many of the practices of everyday

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[26] Daniel Berrigan, S.J., "The New Spirit of Modern Sacred Art," *The Critic* 20 (July 1962): 30.

[27] See Robert A. Orsi, "'The Infant of Prague's Nightie': The Devotional Origins of Contemporary Catholic Memory," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 21, no. 2 (2003): 1–18. See also Robert A. Orsi, "The Obsolescence of the Gods," in *History and Presence* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2016), 12–47. Even during the Council, some theologians worried that such practices might be mistakenly encouraged or retained.

[28] Upon hearing that Pope John XIII made a stop at a medieval Marian shrine on the eve of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Hans Küng expressed dismay that a "medieval credulity" might mark the spirit of the Council. See Hans Küng, *Memoirs*: *My Struggle for Freedom*, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 268.

[29] Orsi, "'The Infant of Prague's Nightie,'" 6.

Catholic life from the church's recent past, many Catholic moderns thought the coming of age of the church required a thorough suppression of these older forms of devotion.[30]

All that Catholic moderns like Daniel Berrigan hoped Vatican II had quarantined in the past lived on in my Cuban-American *abuela*'s home altar. Compared to accounts of elaborate altars found throughout Latin America,[31] her *altarcito* never stood out as a

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[30] Passions expressed in these debates often lay bare strategies of authentication of reform disguised as concern for aesthetic merit. While this impulse is not limited to U.S. Roman Catholicism of the 1960s, attempts to draw a strong division between the authenticity of modernity and the inauthenticity of the recent past took on particular force in the early years of the postconciliar church. Orsi has summarized the strategy at work in this demarcation succinctly: "modernity is the norm, religions must conform." Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 9. But why? Jay Dolan has argued that part of the reason for the recourse to such an unnuanced distinction is that the reform set in motion by the Council forced Catholics to "solve the riddle of religion and modernity overnight" in a way that the Protestant churches had been attempting for two hundred years. Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985). With little preparation for such a massive undertaking on the local level, strategies of authenticating the present at the expense of the past may have emerged to accelerate acceptance of the changes. To many people, the long overdue maturation of the church demanded nothing less. A wide range of writings enthusiastic for the Council's reforms depict a past characterized by secrecy and dishonesty in contrast to a present characterized by a detached and critical sensibility: "To be original, individual, and creative meant breaking from the past; this became a requirement of personal mental health and (among Americans at least) religious authenticity." Orsi, "'The Infant of Prague's Nightie,'" 16. Some writings of this period even confess a violent impulse toward Catholicism of the recent past. See, for example, Stanley M. Grabowski, "Iconoclasts Anonymous," *Priest* 21 (July 1965): 572–574. In this essay, a fictional priest fantasizes about destroying devotional images in the homes of his parishioners: "Everytime [sic] I have to make a visit to one of these homes with their menageries of statues I tremble with fear of losing control and giving in to the urge to break those horrible representations…The urge to destroy . . . haunts me." Questions about what constitutes authentic religious objects and practices continues to pervade conversations in theology in general and liturgical theology in particular. Martin Marty has noted that in response to the rapidity of the reforms, "a cult of Catholic nostalgia quickly rose to counter them." Martin E. Marty, *An Invitation to American Catholic History* (Chicago: The Thomas More Press, 1986), 18. An amusing example of such resistance to reform is found in a humorous poem written by an anonymous parishioner in a church bulletin of a Midwestern Catholic church in 1965: "Latin's gone, peace is too; singin' and shoutin' from every pew. Altar's turned around, priest is too; commentators yellin': 'page 22.' Communion rail's gone, stand up straight! Kneelin' suddenly went outta date…rosary's out, psalms are in; hardly even heard a word against sin. Listen to the lector, hear how he reads; please stop rattlin' them rosary beads…I hope all changes are just about done; that they don't drop Bingo, before I've won." "A Conservative's Lament," *Holy Rosary Bulletin*, Darlington, Wis., January 31, 1965. Cited in Stephen J. Shaw, "The Cities and the Plains, a Home for God's People: A History of the Catholic Parish in the Midwest," in *The American Catholic Parish*, *Vol. II*, ed. Jay P. Dolan (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 363.

[31] There is a notable absence of scholarly attention to domestic altars, even as Latino/a theologians invoke them frequently. For a photographic essay of elaborate private domestic altars throughout rural Mexico, see Dana Salvo, *Home Altars of Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997). The accompanying essays provide cultural and historical background into the practice. For a wide-ranging study of domestic altars and their significance in the lives of women across cultures and traditions, see Kay Turner, *Beautiful Necessity: The Art and Meaning of Women's Altars* (New York: Thames & Hudson,

particularly impressive site in her home. Tucked away on the dresser in the corner of her bedroom, it appeared more like a resting place for a string of arbitrary religious memorabilia than a legible site of intimate devotion. Comprised of objects seemingly haphazardly arranged on a colorful old bed sheet, her altar was a place where every religious knick-knack she came across at a supermarket or a shrine found a home. Colorful plastic flowers encircled ultrabright images of *la Virgencita*. A pop-up greeting card of the *Niño Jesús* was propped up against a bedazzled crucifix. Modest votive candles and scapulars crowded an elaborately etched image of the Pope. Gaudy Hallmark Christmas ornaments sat on a stack of vivid holy cards. Well-worn prayer books and missals burst with handwritten notes, reminders, and petitions.

Susan Sontag describes "camp" as an aesthetic of exaggeration. Its objects, she writes, are "things which, from a 'serious' point of view, are either bad art or kitsch."[32] Naive and not deliberate, a camp aesthetic is one of "artifice and exaggeration." Its purest examples are unintentional. They rest on innocence. However one defines "camp," the kind of sensibility Sontag narrates comes closest to the way I perceived the eclectic assortment of objects on my grandmother's altar. The aesthetic was one of dizzying excess: Candles pressed up against one another, cards and books stacked layer upon

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1999). See also Kay Turner, "Mexican Home Altars: Toward Their Interpretation," *Aztlán: International Journal of Chicano Studies Research* 13 (1982): 309–327; Gabriella Ricciardi, "Telling Stories, Building Altars: Mexican American Women's Altars in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 107, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 536–52; Mario T. García, "Contemporary Catholic Popular Religiosity and U.S. Latinos Expressions of Faith and Ethnicity," in *Católicos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008): 257–260; and Laura Chester, *Holy Personal: Looking for Small Private Places of Worship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[32] Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp,'" in *A Susan Sontag Reader* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1982), 108. Mark Jordan has similarly drawn this link between "camp" and religious artifacts. See Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 193.

layer, tangled heaps of rosaries. At her altar, there always seemed to be too much of everything.

But for my grandmother, this accumulation, layering, embellishment, and excess was not accidental: it was the primary mode of her expression.[33] Lacking a clearly discernible central visual focus, her *altarcito* gained its significance precisely through its fragmentation and its excess. What seemed to me excessive and arbitrary was, for her, a collection of objects related to histories and stories with particular people, places, and ideas that exceeded the power of any one of these goods. Indeed, the messiness of the religious kitsch that filled the small space on her dresser formed an aesthetic that is the epitome of the kind of vapid art that Berrigan had hoped the Council had finally disavowed even as it disclosed that modernity had not been completely successful in relegating it to the past.

If this excess was the remnant of a premodern sensibility, however, it was the modern market that permitted it to hold pride of place on my grandmother's altar. Her objects testify to the long-lasting and widespread influence of a genre of mass-produced religious commodities that developed in France in the middle of the nineteenth century, *L'art Saint-Sulpice*. Dubbed "catalog art" by its critics, *L'art Saint-Sulpice* emerged as myriad firms began to create and market a range of objects previously inaccessible to most Catholics outside their parishes: statues, crucifixes, rosaries, holy cards, stained-glass, candles, religious jewelry. Smaller congregations who could not afford costly wood or marble statues now could access a remarkable array of religious goods. And the low cost of the objects enabled the faithful to adorn their homes in ways that connected

[33] Kay Turner notes the significance of accumulation, layering embellishment and excess in her study of a wide range of women's altars. See Turner, *Beautiful Necessity*.

material devotional practices with their daily lives. *L'art Saint-Sulpice* quickly developed into a kind of transcendent brand that provided familiarity across a range of objects accompanied by a guarantee that the rendering of every object was free of doctrinal heresy.[34]

By the end of the nineteenth century, material Catholic devotion had been commodified, its diversity smoothed out into a prosaic uniformity.[35] Warmer and more approachable than the baroque statues and paintings depicting blood and suffering that it replaced, it is a style that prizes "artifice, duplication, ornamentation, grandeur, and devotionalism" that strives to imitate the imagined glories of heaven.[36] Colorful, ornamented, realistic painted statues infuse inanimate objects with transcendent potential. Softened facial features render male saints—and even Jesus himself—with less severe, more feminine characteristics. This modern innovation of mass-produced religious art—still recognizable at virtually any Catholic bookstore or shrine throughout the world—is paradoxically the visible manifestation of a premodern devotional material Catholicism that was the unifying aesthetic of my grandmother's home altar.

Among the array of catalog-art statues on her *altarcito* was the sporadic appearance of an exceedingly large itinerant statue of *la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*, the national patroness of Cuba. Embedded in local, national, and international economies, devotions to the Blessed Mother have been made and remade to support a variety of

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[34] This brief summary of the history of *L'Art Saint-Sulpice* was informed by Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 167–73.

[35] In the United States, the genre was given the name "Barclay Street art." Like *l'art Saint-Sulpice*, this was a pejorative term for the mass-produced objects that ultimately became an international style of Catholic art that largely replaced local art. See McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 170.

[36] McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 173.

political, clerical, and market strategies ranging from the construction of national identity to the strengthening of papal centrality. Like the Marys of different names, locations, and appearances across the world, *la Virgen de la Caridad* is inseparable from her national identity. An image likely carried from Spain by early Cuban colonists, *la Caridad* sparked devotion that spread throughout Cuba following the construction of a shrine in her honor in the city of *El Cobre* in the 1640s—where the original image remains to this day. *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* took on particularly powerful significance as a national political symbol when Cuba gained its independence in the nineteenth century.

While first generation diasporic Cubans like my grandmother venerated statues of *la Caridad* in their homes long before they left Cuba, the image took on new layers of religious, social, and political meaning in exile. Indeed, the statue of *la Virgen de la Caridad* venerated at her shrine in Miami—*la Ermita de la Caridad*—is herself in exile. A replica smuggled from a public display in Havana soon after the revolution, it is an image venerated as if it were the original. Indeed, the image's exilic status gives it an authenticity all its own. In his extensive ethnography of the site, Thomas Tweed has shown the ways in which Cuban-American visitors to the shrine turn to *la Caridad* as a shared symbol to "create collective identity, return to a time before displacement, and transport themselves to the homeland."[37] She is an outward sign of hope for the suffering and sacrifice that led Cubans to the United States. In her exile, *la Caridad* fuses religion, diaspora, exile, and national identity.

But even the most careful ethnographies cannot contain her presence. At my grandmother's altar, *la Caridad* was not merely an outward expression of exilic longing

[37] Thomas A. Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 134.

or an external symbol of Cuban Catholicism, but a transient vehicle of divine protection. The large statue was one shared among a community of exiles in Miami who came from the same hometown in Cuba. In times of sickness or mourning, these exiles transport *la Caridad* between their homes to bring protection and healing. Following my grandfather's death, *la Caridad* made her longest visit to my grandmother's altar, keeping watch for nearly six months to ensure her safety and to bring consolation. When her children or grandchildren were in conflict or ill, my grandmother spent hours interceding before *la Caridad* for reconciliation or healing. To *la Virgen de la Caridad*, she offered countless *mandas* and *promesas*, pleas and petitions for favors large and small. And *la Caridad* responded with guidance and support, comfort and consolation audible only to the one who trusts in her presence and who is attuned to her voice. Her healing activity demanded a response to which my grandmother would so often testify in word and deed. The large space left by *la Caridad's* absence when she was needed elsewhere in the community was as striking as her presence.

Mary's presence lived on, too, in a collection of bottles of Lourdes water in the corner of my grandmother's altar. Two of these bottles are nearly full. Distributed by the Oblate Missions of San Antonio, they are branded with an icon of Mary's apparition at Lourdes. Bottles like these are often given in exchange for a donation to the missions, but they are also readily available for purchase at any Catholic bookstore or website selling religious collectables. Almost from the founding of the Lourdes shrine, such bottles filled with Lourdes water became a kind of transcendent commodity in the United States. Legends of miraculous healings of those who bathed in the spring were collected and shared across the world through Catholic periodicals and inspired demand that both

exceeded its availability and increased its value.[38] To prevent the proliferation of counterfeit bottles, the Church turned over the work of bottling the water to mass distributors who in turn created bottles marked with an official logo to guarantee authenticity.[39] For many years, these two bottles from the Oblate Missions offered my grandmother a material link to the shrine, making the apparition at Lourdes present at her home altar. But a third bottle—only half full because it was so frequently used—is more personally significant. An emptied bottle of L'Oreal makeup remover, cleaned out and replaced with Lourdes water, the original label is taped over with a piece of white paper, inscribed in my grandmother's handwriting with the words *Agua de Lourdes*. This is the bottle she carried home after she was finally able to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes several years ago to bathe in the miraculous spring and fill her own bottle at the source. Lourdes water was one of the most transcendent and valuable commodities of the objects on her *altarcito*.[40]

The presence of Lourdes water discloses that my grandmother's altar, like the Eucharistic altar, was not merely decorative, but an active site of prayer, petition, and ritual. The water functioned like a modern relic, invested with healing powers more

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[38] McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 142. For accounts of its power, see, for example, "Another Remarkable Cure by the Water of Lourdes," *Ave Maria* 11 (September 18, 1875): 613; "Miraculous Cure and Conversion by Means of the Water of Lourdes," *Ave Maria* 12 (February 12, 1876): 107; "The Water of Lourdes," *Ave Maria* 9 (July 5, 1873).

[39] Suzanne K. Kaufman, *Consuming Visions: Mass Culture and the Lourdes Shrine* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 174.

[40] The commercialization of the Lourdes shrine in general and its water in particular has often been a source of anxiety for its critics. The more the custodians of Lourdes embraced commercial market strategies, the more the site seemed to accommodate rather than resist the modern world, becoming a potent tool that drew in the gullible masses. Women, in particular, were thought to be particularly impressionable and unwitting victims of the commodification of everything linked to the Lourdes experience. Critiques of Lourdes mirror the critiques of mass-produced catalog art. Viewing Lourdes as soft, sentimental, and feminizing, (male) clerics longed for a return to an austere form of worship and devotion not centered on material devotion. But the proliferation of material practices at shrines like Lourdes expanded despite attempts to control or clarify their power. See Kaufman, *Consuming Visions*, 74–78.

miraculous than clerically-blessed water. Like a sacred homeopathic medicine, it gave her authority over her own healing in ways that exceeded both medical and clerical power. With faith in that power, my grandmother poured it on her wounds and on the wounds of family members, friends, and strangers alike to heal and to comfort. The transcendent promise of healing power, however, comes not from the water alone, but through the faith of the petitioner through the intercession of Mary. The words of Bernadette Soubirous—the woman to whom Mary appeared at Lourdes—testify to the centrality of faith in the healing efficaciousness of the water: "This water is considered as a drug...but you have to keep the faith and pray: this water couldn't do anything without faith!"[41] Trust in the miracles that the Lourdes water makes real accepts that the miracle is rarely an instantaneous one, but one born of ongoing faithful petition and prayer. The water is a vehicle of transcendent healing not in itself, but in the faith of the one making the prayer.

Less visually striking but more internally significant than large statues, colorful ornaments, and multiple bottles of Lourdes water, the preponderance of what comprised my grandmother's *altarcito* is a collection of *printed presence*: a range of printed images of Jesus, Mary, saints and angels, those who have died, as well as words written about them, by them, or to them in the form of holy cards, missals, prayer books, and pamphlets.[42] Economies of colorful holy cards flowed as gifts, mementos, and rewards throughout the twentieth century as the central site of a material Catholicism: "To hold the cards, to pray with them in one's hands, to collect and save them, and to give them

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[41] "The Water," https://en.lourdes-france.org/deepen/the-signs-of-lourdes/the-water.

[42] *Printed presence* is a term Robert Orsi has used to describe the diverse Catholic devotional print economy of the twentieth century. See Chapter 4: "Printed Presence," in Orsi, *History and Presence,* 113–61.

away as gifts was to associate oneself with the universal Church and the communion of saints, as one participated at the same time in the always also local and intimate devotional world of modern Catholicism."[43]

Printed presences were fluid and constantly changing on my grandmother's altar. Some are visible: framed blessings for the family from Rome or documentation of Masses celebrated in honor of deceased relatives from a variety of religious communities; greeting cards with images of Jesus and quotations from scripture, or ones she recently received for Christmas, Easter, or her birthday; missals and prayer books. But the most intimate printed presences on the altar are those not immediately visible: myriad items stuffed inside the well-worn books. A deteriorating *La Imitación de Cristo* and ripped pages of *Libro de Oraciones Católicas* are overflowing with reflections clipped from church bulletins; bookmarks with prayers for morning and evening; holy cards of saints and of friends who died recently or long ago. Mixed in with this holy bricolage is a cacophony of everyday reminders: business cards of doctors, dentists, and hairstylists with the dates and times of appointments; folded papers with phone numbers and addresses; handwritten prayers and quotes; and grocery coupons. The prayer books themselves—their covers and pages marked with countless phone numbers, reminders, and addresses—served as my grandmother's prayer journal, calendar, address book, and file folder. These are the items for which the altar was merely a temporary resting place. They are books my grandmother clutched when on airplanes to visit her children, during bus rides to the grocery store, in taxi cabs to hospital waiting rooms, and in churches for countless wakes and funerals. They are the books she prayed from when she found out

[43] Orsi, *History and Presence*, 118.

that her son and granddaughter were diagnosed with cancer, when her husband died, and through all the daily joys and pains of life.

Turning any object or practice it into a legible text in an attempt to discern its meaning is always destined for failure. This fragmentary glimpse of my grandmother's expanding and contracting altar is at particular risk of such failure. The altar's density, fluidity, and fragmentation resists any single interpretation. The complex webs of meaning and intention, the particular hopes and memories she attached to each object, the circumstances which led her to purchase and then place one object over another, are mostly invisible, illegible, and unintelligible to me. When she died recently, I inherited her *altarcito*. Its objects now rest in my home, juxtaposed with new objects in a strikingly different space, invested with new meanings and longings distant from her own yet still connected to her. Isolating her altar from the rest of her home, the rhythm of her daily life and relationships, and the rich histories which formed it spanning decades and countries, is itself a practice that inevitably alters it, filling it with marks of my own invention. Indeed, these are objects now structured for me by her missing presence. My own reading of her altar is driven by her absence from it.

Whatever its meaning, there was at this altar an entire world, one that cannot be easily romanticized as exempt from market forces nor celebrated as a rebel base of tactical resistance to those forces. Her altar, like any contemporary religious shrine comprised of ambiguous commodities—and even the most traditional, seemingly counter-cultural Tridentine altar is stocked with commodities—was deeply entangled in the processes of a consumer culture. But the presences that the individual items and the collection as a whole mediated to her were made possible by their commodification.

Inscribed into another world of value, their minimal use value became enormously valuable in exchange. Handmade or mass-produced, fair trade or corporate made, purchased at a pilgrimage site or at a grocery store chain, there are no pure objects un-mystified by the machinations of the market. Indeed, my grandmother's *altarcito* testifies to the modern market's ability to commodify everything, even the material of a premodern devotional Catholicism. The diversity of its objects make it complex enough to fit multiple narratives, including ones of decline that find in it the market's strategic commodification of Christian materials and practices.

Yet in and through the strategic operations of the market, something escapes that reveals more than an aimless, manipulated, and misshapen desire for which Catholic moderns would prescribe various methods to reclaim and redirect toward a more proper telos. These were objects through which my grandmother ordered her spiritual life and through which she groped toward precisely that telos, exceeding limits set for the objects by institutions, nations, and markets. In however a distorted way, these commodified objects were for her a material mode of divine presence that bent the boundaries between heaven and earth, sacred and secular, devotional prayer and everyday tasks. They are fragments that made visible and real her desires, joys, hope, fears, anxieties, hurts, petitions, remembrances, and expressions of gratitude through objects that are neither exempt from market forces nor ancillary to ways in which she tasted, saw, touched, and heard God. Her faith was not articulated apart from these objects, but through them, even in their commodified state. This excessive collection of commodities reveals a theology practiced and embodied in and through the limitations and possibilities of culture that

resists even narratives that would measure them by their lack of ability to resist the market.

Fragment 2: Singing About a (Liturgical) Revolution

While undercurrents for reform in the Roman Catholic Church were strong long before the Second Vatican Council was convened in 1962, the Council's legitimization of earlier impulses toward renewal fundamentally changed the outward expression of Roman Catholicism at the local level. Nowhere were these changes more immediately visible and widely felt than in the reforms promulgated by the Council's constitution on the liturgy, *Sacrosantcum Concilium* (1963). Even before the Council had ended, many enthusiastic bishops returned to the United States eager to implement changes sanctioned by the Council. And on the First Sunday of Advent 1964, clergy around the world stood up in front of their congregations—who had largely sat or kneeled in private devotion at Mass for their entire lives—and invited them to participate fully, consciously, and actively in the Eucharist. Viewed through the prism of hundreds of years of prior Roman Catholic practice, intended or not, the result was nothing short of a liturgical revolution.

Perhaps nowhere in church history was a market for materials to serve so many new needs at once created so quickly. Even as laity and clerics alike had just begun to grapple with what the implementation of the reforms might look, feel, and sound like, even a modest adoption of the liturgical changes would require them to make new purchases. Immediate needs included ritual books for the celebration of the Mass, pew cards and missalettes with the texts of the responses so the assembly could participate, liturgical vestments, presiders' chairs, new altar tables and cloths to cover them, tapers for the celebration of the Easter Vigil, and more. Businesses new and old quickly

responded to the seemingly unlimited demand for which there was initially almost no supply. Religious booksellers that had previously sold a wide range of devotional items like rosaries, medals, spiritual books, holy cards, copies of the catechism, and gifts for First Communions now found themselves making room for a whole new assortment of products alongside the old. The church's turn toward the modern world met a market eager to respond to its needs.

Foremost among the need for all things liturgical in the years that followed Vatican II was new music. Catholics, who had previously been silent in the musical portions of the Mass—if there was any music at all—were now invited to sing, even as they had few songs with which to do it. Ministers soon began to ask questions foreign to the impulses of their own tradition: "What will help people sing?" "What should we be singing?" And perhaps most remarkably, "What do people *want* to sing?"

The immediate need for music in vernacular languages found Catholics turning in a variety of directions. Two primary—and often competing—sets of repertoires emerged. On the one hand was a so-called "classical" repertoire: Protestant hymnody and other similar organ-based music as well as newly translated chants of the Catholic tradition. On the other hand was a so-called "folk" repertoire: a new genre of guitar-based hymns and songs influenced by the popular singer/songwriters of the time. The diversity of Roman Catholic churches in the U.S. and even the diversity of ensembles within a single parish resulted in what one hymnal reviewer by 1987 dubbed an "annual processional" of hymnals.[44] Publishers served up hymnals in a variety of genres, forms, sizes, and

[44] Robin A Leaver, "Three Hymnals: Different Denominational Emphasis but One Song?," *Worship* 61, no. 1 (January 1987): 45. This annual processional of hymnals was not limited to Roman Catholic churches. The liturgical renewal was ecumenical and the market it created often transcended denominational lines.

packaging. Musical *aggiornamento* created and depended on a market to do its work effectively.

Advertisements from the period testify to the competitiveness of the new market. Echoing the call of U.S. bishops for a post-conciliar repertoire that was at once musical, liturgical, and pastoral, an ad for the popular missalette *We Celebrate* boasts: "The most comprehensive worship program you can buy…the most musical, liturgical, pastoral, and affordable worship program on the American Catholic scene."[45] The marketing campaign for a subscription series called *Assemblybook* draws on the familiar words of the Second Vatican Council's liturgical constitution to sell its wares: "To participate actively, to be present consciously, to experience worship fully, the assembly needs a special kind of worship aid."[46] Another ad for the same product shows both an openness and a responsiveness to feedback from the bourgeoning market: "Each year, *Assemblybook* gets better. Your input is the reason. You told us you wanted musical notation for every song; we provided it. You told us you wanted a more attractive Order of Mass; we provided it. You told us the songs you prefer; we adjusted the songlist."[47] In the announcement of the publication of *The Collegeville Hymnal*, the Benedictine-run Liturgical Press leverages the considerable liturgical legacy of the order to promote its new product: "Throughout their fifteen-hundred-year history, Benedictines have spread throughout the world their tradition of praising God with music. Now, The Liturgical Press continues this tradition

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[45] J.S. Paluch Company, Advertisement, *Pastoral Music* 15, no. 1 (October–November 1990).

[46] North American Liturgy Resources, Advertisement, *Pastoral Music* 10, no. 6 (August–September 1986).

[47] Epoch / North American Liturgy Resources, Advertisement, *Pastoral Music* 12, no. 4 (April–May 1986).

with the publication of *The Collegeville Hymnal*."[48] And an advertisement for the publication of both *soft*- and *hard*cover editions of the massively popular folk hymnal *Glory and Praise* announces, "Two covers, no waiting…everything you need and nothing you don't." For the first time in history, the Roman Catholic hymnal had become a commodity.

As in any new market, competition led to innovation in content, products, and packaging. As publishers competed for business with an array of temporary and permanent resources, one publisher channeled early debates between proponents of the two predominant repertoires—classical and folk—into a single product that sought to satisfy the needs of all. In 1988, GIA Publications, Inc. published as a single set a combination of hymnals called *Worship*, a hymnal of organ-based "classical" hymnody and *Gather*, a hymnal of guitar and piano based "folk" music. *Worship* and *Gather* brought the two genres together in a single, permanent, visually attractive package that attempted to appeal to the widest market share possible.[49] Perhaps most notably, by organizing, packaging, and presenting it in a format and in a quality consistent with the classical hymnody found in *Worship*, the publication of *Gather* gave legitimacy to the folk hymnody previously found largely in disposable songbooks.

Early advertisements for *Gather* and *Worship* enticed purchasers: "Realize your hopes now!"[50] They boasted of the strength of sales and promised affordable installment pricing. "Since these two hymnals are selling well, we are in the happy position of being

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[48] The Liturgical Press, Advertisement, *Pastoral Music* 14, no. 1 (October–November 1989).

[49] Notably, however, the publisher made the intentional decision to keep the two repertoires in separate books. This has often been perceived as a nod to those who favored traditional repertoires who hoped that the faddish "folk" music might disappear before the next printing. A book that combined the two repertoires from the publisher would not appear for another decade.

[50] GIA Publications, Inc., Advertisement, *Pastoral Music* 14, no. 4 (April–May 1990).

able to extend liberal terms to parishes who want them but have little money in the budget…You can afford the hymnals you really want." Another advertisement promised that "Four out of *five* ingredients of good liturgy can be bought!"[51] In addition to a reverberant worship space, a quality organ or piano, and competent musicians, "*You can* equip the assembly with *Worship* and *Gather*." The only thing that could not be bought was the critical fifth ingredient: "YOUR total commitment to good liturgy must be added to the above." The results, the ad promised, would be amazing!

An early reviewer of the set noted the significance of this new mode of publishing church music: "The fact that *Worship* and *Gather* are two books instead of one reflects the present reality, both in terms of choice and size of collection, but they are part of a single concept and part of a much-needed move toward reconciliation between musicians of various persuasions, and between musicians and the people they are called to serve."[52] The same enthusiastic reviewer called the publication of the two a "publishing triumph."[53] "What we see in Worship and Gather," he wrote, "is a concern for the actual needs of the practical musician through the provision of support material which makes it possible to use the hymns and service music in a variety of ways with minimal administrative fuss." Another reviewer called *Gather* a "milestone,"[54] while yet another promised that when used in tandem with *Worship,* the two would provide a set with a "long 'shelf life.'"[55] The production of the set met a new demand in a competitive and

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[51] GIA Publications, Inc., Advertisement, *GIA Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (Summer 1992).

[52] George Black, "Gather and Worship: One Concept in Two Books and Many Editions," *The Hymn* 42, no. 2 (April 1991): 13.

[53] Black, "Gather and Worship," 13.

[54] Richard Webb, "Gather: A Contemporary Hymnal Supplement of Liturgies, Psalms, and Hymns," *Dialog* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 70.

[55] Frank P. Quinn, "Gather," *Pastoral Music* 13, no. 5 (June–July 1989): 45.

quickly shifting market. Soon *Worship* and *Gather* became brands that would be identifiers of a kind of Catholic liturgical music for years to come.

Such is the story—unknown to me as a grade schooler—of how two books so captivating to me— "the red one" and "the blue one"—ended up in the pews of my childhood parish. Many theologians have lamented the loss of Catholic materiality with the ushering in of the reforms of Vatican II. But that materiality didn't end: it just shifted to new things. Previous generations had holy cards and scapulars and rosaries to mediate presences. And while those still lived on in spaces like my grandmother's *altarcito*, for me, those two hymnals were the primary site of a material Catholicism. As my parents kneeled to pray before Mass began, I would say my prayers quickly so I could sit back down in the pew and flip through the books' contents, looking for my favorite hymns and discovering new ones. Staring up at the number board in the front of the church, I'd locate the hymns of the day in my books to see whether I knew them and to decide whether I liked them. And during the preaching, I'd always return to the books, paging through them to figure out how the hymns were arranged, why we might be singing those hymns that day, when they were written, and who had written them. Those two hymnals were my printed presence.

Gather and *Worship* preached to me. The juxtaposition of the books inscribed me with a theology for which I did not yet have categories. Elaborate anthems attempted on an electronic organ and three chord refrains strummed on a guitar shaped my earliest liturgical grammar. Poetic translations of the psalms set to pulsed chants and imperfect paraphrases set to unsophisticated melodies anchored early images of the psalms in my heart. A metrical hymn taught me to memorize the *O Antiphons* while a folk song helped

me to internalize the Beatitudes. Latin words of Thomas Aquinas set to a haunting plainsong and English paraphrases of Augustine set to a lilting Irish melody planted the early seeds of a systematic theology. Mantras in many languages imported from the Taizé community in France or short choruses carried over by charismatic Catholics from Spain, Africa, and Amsterdam taught me that God had no native tongue. The vast marketplace of sacred music that these books gathered together gave me a sung faith that was Catholic and ecumenical, local and global, ancient and new, a diversity of music possible to hold in one's hands, perhaps for the first time in history.

Paradoxical theological accents seemed to coexist comfortably within the covers of these books. From some of its pages I sang of the transcendence and majesty of an immortal and invisible God, from others that the Lord was near to all who called upon him. From some of its pages I sang that the Lamb was on a throne crowned with many crowns, from others that Jesus was as close as a mother, a father, a teacher, or a friend. From some of its pages I sang that that the Eucharist was a sacrifice in which Christ was both priest and victim, from others that it was a meal where all hungers were fed by bread that was life and wine that was peace. From some of its pages I sang of waiting in joyful hope for the coming of a kingdom that seemed distant, from others of the immanence of a reign that was close at hand. However imperfect, the first words I learned about God were fragments from hymns I sang from these books.

These hymnals, more than anything else in church, gave me a vocabulary with which to cry out before God in the ordinary and extraordinary moments of life. Learning the Canticle of Zachary set to an early American folk melody for morning prayer or the Canticle of Mary set to a Scottish tune marked the hours of my day. A traditional chanted

setting of the Litany of the Saints gave me the power to invoke the whole communion of saints as we processed with catechumens toward the holy waters of baptism at the Easter Vigil. Tender ballads provided me with words to accompany the dying and their families through grief and sadness. African American spirituals and South African freedom songs gave me words to pray for peace when the country was escalating toward war. Haunting melodies gave me a grammar to confess sins and plead for God's mercy. Lush tunes marked the unions of couples and the initiation of newborn babies. From an early age, these hymns accompanied the practice of my everyday life.

Through these books, too, I learned a palpable difference between quantity and quality. I discovered that some books were more beautiful and seemed more valuable than others. While Catholics don't have Bibles in their pews, they do have hymnals. And with all of the Lectionary readings and the words for various rites and occasions tucked in the back, these two hymnals were the biggest books I had ever held as a child. The covers were strong and weighty. Each of them was inscribed with a cross inspired by the Book of Kells. The imprint wrapped across the binding and around the whole book so you feel the cross in your hand as you sing. Unlike the newspaper print of the softcover hymnals we had at school that seemed ephemeral and disposable, the texture of these pages was heavier, brighter, more permanent. These books seemed more important. Yet years later, when the same publisher came out with a groundbreaking new book that combined the two hymnals into one striking volume, I wanted that one instead.

Vatican II was a unique moment in which market and church mingled in a way that made the hymnals I had learned to love as a child a new kind of cultic object. The explosion of hymnals in the decades that followed testifies both to the diversity of market

demand and to the ability of the market to supply that demand in remarkably inventive ways. Like the wider market economy, hymnals have been created and marketed to target almost every demographic and preference. Early "classical" and "folk" hymnals available in hard- and softbound volumes have been expanded, altered, and revised into an even wider range of editions. Available now are hymnals with tailored ratios of repertoires: hymnals with 70% folk music and 30% classical music; hymnals with 80% classical music and 20% folk music; and for those seeking *balance*—a popular trend in the present scene—there are hymnals that claim to have an equal amount of each. To these have been added praise and worship hymnals, hymnals for children, hymnals for teens, hymnals for middle schoolers, hymnals for retirement homes, Spanish-language hymnals, multilingual hymnals, African American hymnals, Vietnamese-language hymnals, and more. And for those who prefer infinite variety or hymnals customized to their particular preferences, there are licenses available to project music or print it in customizable programs. In the space of a mere fifty years, a hymnal—and even the absence of one—has been endlessly commodified. The books that hold transcendent hymns have themselves been changed into something transcendent.

The choice of a hymnal—or the choice of an alternative to a hymnal—has increasingly functioned like a logo for Catholic churches in the United States. Shaping and expressing imagination, emotion, and expectations, hymnals are invested with complex meanings that transmit nonverbal information about their users' shared identity. They signal the brand of the congregation. Musical repertoires and the hymnals that hold them often tell wider stories about the theological commitments of the communities that sing from them. And the publishers of liturgical music strategically deploy branding

power to communicate everything from an embrace of Catholic heritage to the celebration of the vitality of youth. Yet despite outward appearances, both neotraditionalist proponents of a hymnal preserving Latin chant that might finally enchant the secularized world and progressive proponents of a music that proclaims the immanence of a kingdom brought forth through just human action are equally captive to the logic of the market. Both have created and depended on market strategies to carry into the world a theological brand informed by a market logic which they often claim to transcend.

Church businesses were, of course, not new to the Vatican II Church, and neither were critiques of them. As early as 1961, a pastor was heard condemning an emerging market of religious goods: "The main reason why the church goods business is not to be trusted is that it is just what it calls itself—a business: it is in the hands of people who seem to think that their prime function is to make money."[56] Critiques like these have only intensified in the decades since Vatican II: *isn't the church supposed to be against all that?* It is tempting to long for a purified church free from the forces of the market. True Christianity, so many arguments go, is something that should be isolated from and opposed to the market. But if even the goods we use to express such longings for Christian resistance are commodified, we must confess that the church can never entirely break free of the market.

As a person now intimately involved in the creation and publication of hymnals, I often walk through exhibit halls at conferences filled with more music than anyone could ever use. I often stare at an inbox overflowing with emails and notifications of new

[56] John Julian Ryan, "Pity the Poor Pastor," *Worship* 35, no. 8 (September 1961): 562.

products and revisions of old ones with enticing endorsements and compelling promises. And I often find myself longing for a clearer distinction between the wheat and the tares in the work of the companies who make such products possible, even for the ability to discern my own intentions when I submit a piece of music for publication or hope it makes the cut for inclusion in a new hymnal. I live with the ambiguity that a market that often causes me considerable discomfort is one that makes possible the distribution of the music that I write. Indeed, it is what made possible the two hymnals with which I grew up and which I so came to love. And in and in spite of their commodification, those books that I held and that held me, those hymns that I sang and that sang through me, never ceased to be a means of God's grace.

Fragment 3: Salvation in the Shape of an Apple

For countless musicians, poets, and painters—or those who dream of being one—an Apple computer has been, for many years, a muse as compelling as a fishing boat on the shores of Havana was for Ernest Hemingway or the seasons of the year were for Antonio Vivaldi. An Apple promises radical creativity in a world that values controlled conformity. It offers warm human-like intuition in a market of cold unfeeling machines. In a network of aesthetically flat personal computers whose design has often seemed to resemble the stiff businessmen who use them and the mundane work they do on them, working on an Apple is a colorful symbol of resistance, a rebuke of corporate expectations. PCs are for accountants; Apples are for innovators. Purchasing one is akin to paying dues to belong to an alternative counter-culture of artists, rebels, troublemakers, and philosophers, all those tribes yearning to blast free from the mainstream.

Every promise of emancipation from corporate cultural captivity that Apple has ever made has depended on the articulation of an outside villain from which it alone offers unique deliverance. If it was clumsy and confusing MP3 players at the launch of the iPod, ugly and unappealing cell phones at the launch of the iPhone, or bulky and unattractive tablets at the launch of the iPad, the very first enemy at the premier of the first Macintosh in 1984 was IBM, the company that had recently released the first and only viable mainstream personal computer. At the launch of the Macintosh, Steve Jobs, the company's late founder and charismatic leader, sounded an urgent alarm about a dark impending future to the devotees gathered on his anxious benches:

> It is now 1984. It appears IBM wants it all. Apple is perceived to be the only hope to offer IBM a run for its money. Dealers initially welcoming IBM with open arms now fear an IBM dominated and controlled future. They are increasingly turning back to Apple as the only force that can ensure their future freedom. IBM wants it all and is aiming its guns on its last obstacle to industry control: Apple. Will *Big Blue* dominate the entire computer industry? The entire information age? Was George Orwell right about 1984?[57]

Here, Jobs intensifies the high stakes posed by an exterior threat, one that will only continue to dominate and control unless something is done to stop it. He preaches a clear summons to resist. And he promises that the source of that salvation will come from Apple alone: an independent, seamlessly coherent system of belief, one in which simplicity, beauty, and functionality reinforce one another to form an enchanted alternative to the vapidity of the world.

The impending exterior threat and hope for interior salvation from an Apple was rendered in even more vivid imagery in the messianic advertisement for the first Macintosh, one of the most famous commercials in television history. The ad imagines a

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[57] Steve Jobs, Address, Apple Shareholder Event, Flint Center of the Performing Arts, Cupertino, CA, January 24, 1984.

dystopian future controlled by Big Brother. Out of a procession of bald zombie-like white men dressed in gray uniforms, marching in lock-step into a theatre toward a screen with a rendering of a Big-Brother himself preaching of "a garden of pure ideology" and other odd phrases, emerges a young female athlete. Chased by an army of storm troopers, she sprints through the hall to escape them, moving ever closer to the screen with a sledgehammer. Everything about the woman stands in contrast to the rows of frozen-faced men who flank her: her gender, her youth, her blonde hair, her red shorts, her speed, and her bright white t-shirt marked with an icon of a Macintosh. After warming up with several swings of the hammer she wields, with a piercing scream the woman finally releases it into the air toward the screen. Just as the man on the screens announces "*we shall prevail*," the screen shatters and the man on it silenced. A bright flash overwhelms the room. A pan of the rows of the stunned men sitting upright in their chairs with mouths agape cuts to the final scene, the first hint that the commercial has anything at all to do with a computer: "On January 24th, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you'll see why 1984 won't be like 1984."[58] Allusions to Plato's Allegory of the Cave saturate the ad: The men, like prisoners, facing front had mistaken the image on the screen for reality. The woman, like the philosopher, comes from the outside to break the spell. Premiering at the Super Bowl—the very apotheosis of a consumer culture— the message of the ad is clear: Apple promises not only salvation from Big Blue, but deliverance from Big Brother in all its forms.

Promises of liberation from the grayness of corporate conformity and blind consumerism only intensified with future ad campaigns. More than a decade after the

[58] Apple. "1984." Television advertisement. TBWA\Chiat\Day, Directed by Ridley Scott, 1984.

release of the first Macintosh, IBM began marketing their line of computers with the single word *Think.* This served as the perfect symbol of a dominant culture from which to articulate an alternative. And so Apple's *Think Different* campaign promised an even bolder Apple-shaped counterculture against their increasingly bigger brother. With flashes of still shots of luminaries ranging from Martin Luther King Jr. to Mahatma Ghandi, the campaign's inaugural commercial announces the brand in what would become perhaps its most iconic and poetic terms:

> *Here's to the crazy ones.*
> *The rebels.*
> *The troublemakers.*
> *The ones who see things differently.*
> *While some may see them as the crazy ones,*
> *we see genius.*
> *Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do.*[59]

Think Different ads never showed a computer. They didn't need to. They communicated a whole way of life and sanctified it through the power of the sacred and secular icons of American popular culture. And to anchor that promise of a *different* way of life deep in American consciousness, Apple created and sent complimentary posters to public schools featuring celebrities ranging from Nelson Mandela to the Dalai Lama. *Think Different* baptized cultural resistance in the form of a desktop computer. If you wanted to change the world, the only way was to pass through the narrow gate of an Apple.[60]

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[59] Apple. "*Crazy Ones*." Television advertisement. TBWA\Chiat\Day, directed by Jennifer Golub, 1997.

[60] While Apple is perhaps the epitome of marketing a counter-culture, *Think Different* is part of a broader trend. All things alternative began to gain greater cachet in the 1980s just as baby boomers were gaining increasing cultural and economic power. And a range of companies learned how to turn desires for difference and articulations of dissent into a definitive marketing strategy that remains a powerful force to this day. Some of the slogans of the time reveal a desire for difference as the orthodoxy of the cultural moment: "Sometimes You Gotta Break the Rules" (Burger King); "The Rules Have Changed" (Dodge); "The Art of Changing" (Swatch); "This is different. Different is good" (Arby's); "The Line Has Been Crossed: The Revolutionary New Supra" (Toyota); "Innovate Don't Imitate" (Hugo Boss). These slogans

That difference, that aesthetic that brightened the grayness of corporate malaise, that promised to offer some way in which I might resist the strategies and structures of the world, was apparent as I wandered my freshman college dorm for the first time and encountered my very first iMac. Amidst a field of beige and bulky desktops connected to large monitors and a handful of bulky laptops, the iMac—a bright turquoise translucent box you could see into—stood out as much as that woman in red shorts with a sledgehammer in a sea of blank-faced men in that very first Macintosh commercial. It was *different*. And it communicated that difference without a word.

My encounter with that first iMac was reflected in and surely configured by the first ad for it. In it, anxiety-inducing city sounds play as a camera circles every angle of a bulky desktop with its countless peripheral component parts and a mound of tangled wires coming out of the back. As the camera pans to a self-contained virtually cable-less iMac with its clean aesthetic and complementary component parts, the harsh city sounds morph into the soft melodies of chirping birds. You can literally *feel* the difference as you watch the ad, just as I could feel that difference as I looked around dorm rooms of computers and spotted that bright beautiful self-contained box. I wanted one of my own.

When I finally saved up enough money to replace my cumbersome PC laptop with a *beautiful*, *screamingly fast*, and *insanely great* Power Mac G4 tower several years later, I received it invested with all of the promises of cultural revolution that had been

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and countless other illustrations of longings for counter-culture are cataloged in a series of satirical essays that unveil the ways in which dissent is at the heart of the American market. See Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland, *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from The Baffler* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 41. Frank summarizes the dynamic concisely: "Today that beautiful countercultural idea…is more the official doctrine of corporate American than it is a program of resistance. What we understand as 'dissent' does not subvert, does not challenge, does not even question the cultural faiths of Western business…cultural dissent in America…is no longer any different from the official culture it's supposed to be subverting" (44).

inscribed on it and on me over our short lifetimes. And it gave flashes of fulfillment of that promise. What I wrote felt truer on that machine. I felt *different* using *that* computer than I had any other one. It was as if it gave me membership into a counter-culture of poets and artists and musicians of which I wanted to be a part. Owning the right computer, it seemed, was one step closer toward an artist's life. And on it, I wrote—in music and in prose and in poetry—my own hopes and prayers for resistance and future change in the world as strong as any of those promised by an Apple advertisement.

Any momentary fulfillment was, of course, transitory and impossible to retain. The promise of any lasting fulfillment was delayed infinitely and indefinitely into newer and newer products. With each product launch—events celebrated with more auratic transcendence and rubrical fastidiousness than the average American liturgy—there was always something new and necessary to want, something that promised even greater deliverance from some enemy I didn't even know I had: technical, moral, aesthetic. And so that first PowerMac G4 would ultimately give way to a need for the same speed in something portable; then something with more speed with a sharper screen; then something even faster with an even sharper screen and more hard drive space; then something faster still with a still sharper screen, more hard drive space, and a magic touch bar on top. Along the way too, were countless editions of products equally necessary to continue membership in this creative counterculture: iPhones and iPads in different sizes, colors, configurations, and hopes. In the Apple ecosystem, every object is made to work together toward the common good of its users. But every relationship with these devices is also made to end.

Like every other commodity, then, those *iEverythings* lied. The ruins of these discarded electronics that barely boot, now resting in an upstairs closet or in far-away landfills, testify not only to their inability to deliver the utopias they promised, but also to their ability to help grow the very world Apple promised to help us overthrow. The rows of white men in black t-shirts and skinny jeans on the anxious benches of Apple's product launches today look a lot like those men from that first commercial all those years ago, staring up at a man for orders about what they lack, what they need, and how to think. That symbol of a woman rushing toward the screen in a sea of men is neutralized by scarcely a woman—and almost never a person of color—at any Apple unveiling before or since. We stare into the very screens she promised to smash. Apple is now the Big Brother from which it promised deliverance: Their every device tracks our movement at all times through constant surveillance. And the cravings for novelty they sharpened with each passing unveiling are impossible to top, gradually evoking critiques from even the most ardent believers who are increasingly unimpressed by what they see as a lack of innovation in the wake of the loss of the messianic founder.

Yet far worse than the projection of a mythology on which it could never finally deliver are the ways in which that fantasy has masked the abhorrent working conditions under which such products are produced. Apple's processes of production are marked by scandalously low wages, grueling hours, and working conditions so terrifying that many of its factories are covered in suicide nets to prevent over-worked and stressed out workers from leaping to their deaths.[61] The promise of deliverance from corporate values

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[61] See, for example, Paul Mozur, "Life Inside Foxconn's Facility in Shenzhen," *Wall Street Journal*, December 19, 2012; "Light and Death," *The Economist*, May 27, 2010; Ben Sin, "Latest Foxconn Worker Deaths Build Case for Apple to Move Operations from China," *Forbes*, August 22, 2016; Malcolm Moore, "'Mass Suicide' Protest at Apple Manufacturer Foxconn Factory," *The Telegraph*, January 11,

has been made possible by the worst version of those values carefully hidden from our view. Even as the promise of an Apple counter-culture continues to endure, these truths reveal cracks that threaten that myth for those with eyes to see.

To combat the strategies that sustain a countercultural myth like the one inscribed in an Apple, Christian prescriptions for tactical resistance to them might take a variety of practical forms. One might advocate, for example, for the creation of a computer with more ethically sourced parts, constructed under more just labor practices. Another might call for a computer that is less controlling, one that offers a more creative platform that allows us to escape the strategies of the market and promises us some hope for greater liberation from it. And any prescription for Christian resistance to the broken promises woven into a commodity like an Apple computer would likely contrast false desires for commodities that do not last with true desire for the God whose love endures forever.

But if the telos these tactics for resistance claim is different, their promise, their logic, and their deep structure are the same. Indeed, what is most striking about yearnings for cultural resistance expressed in and evoked by the aura of an Apple and those expressed in and evoked by a wide range of Christian theologies is not their difference, but their similarity. Attentiveness to the formation and the maintenance of the Apple fantasy testifies to the ways in which configurations of Christian longings are both expressed in and shaped by the marketing of consumer goods. Longings for resistance—whether in the form of a mass-produced computer or in a cup of fair trade, locally harvested coffee—reveal the signature anxieties of our age. And they bear traces of our deepest hopes for their eventual resolution. A stream of titles of recent Christian books

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2012; and David Barboza, "After Foxconn Suicides, Scrutiny for Chinese Plants," *The New York Times*, June 6, 2010.

from a wide range of ideological perspectives testifies to the ways in which a logic of *thinking differently* captivates the Christian imagination: *The Irresistible Revolution; Sabbath as Resistance; The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation; Resist!: Christian Dissent for the 21st Century*; *The Day the Revolution Began*; *Radical Orthodoxy*; *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion*.[62] What helps the Apple promise endure so powerfully is the way in which the logic of an Apple counterculture and the deep structure that supports it fits so seamlessly with the dominant current of our time. It is so hard to get a critical purchase on the deceptions of countercultures as they are happening because their promises are so familiar to us—as near as the last homily we heard preached or inspirational book we read. At a time when everything worth doing, buying, or praying promises a revolution, far from resisting the market, *thinking differently*—even when it is informed by the Gospel, the Eucharist, or the Pope—is the orthodoxy of a market logic.

And so remedies for Christian tactical resistance end up looking a lot like the strategies they seek to resist. Even the very contours of theologies of resistance are mirrored in those used by shrewd marketers. Both identify the false promises of a dominant culture that disciplines our daily life. And both offer true and compelling warnings that detail the myriad threats they pose to our flourishing. They then contrast

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[62] See Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2016). Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014); Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Sentinel, 2017); Michael G. Long, ed., *Resist!: Christian Dissent for the 21st Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); N.T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion* (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperOne, 2016); John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998); and Sara Miles, *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008).

the lies of the dominant culture with the promises of an alternative that might finally shatter them. But these merely confirm us in a revised version of a fantasy that will never finally deliver the salvation it promises in this world, even with the purchase of the right computer, even with the most sincere and committed forms of Gospel-centered efforts at cultural resistance, even with desires that claim their truth because they are more properly directed toward the living God.

And yet, even in the mess of a world where our deepest hopes for transformation are sold back to us in the form of a product or a prayer, the activity of God is never fully absent. It is neither reducible to the distorting processes of commodification nor confined to our effective resistance to them. Listening for the cry of their testimony, then, is not a cynical act that celebrates the broken myths of commodities or exposes the delusions of someone other than the theologian doing that breaking, but a practice that confesses that the broken pieces of commodities and prayers—even ones that tried and failed to bring about the worlds they promised—still yearn for redemption to new life. Indeed, it is precisely in their fallen state that they testify, not merely as monuments to misshapen, misdirected, or false desire, but as objects that bear collective hopes that are only now beginning to be dimly visible through their cracks.

And so, like a grandmother's *altarcito* that reaches toward heaven through a mess of cheap kitsch, or commodified hymnals that help faithful people sing imperfectly of their hopes to act justly and love tenderly, even the broken promises of a computer company that constructs the very world from which it promised us deliverance—indeed, even Christian proposals for countercultures of resistance that long for transcendence of the material world altogether—reveal more than false fantasies that we must—or even

can through our own effort—finally overcome. They reveal *real* longings for redemption and deep desires for alternatives to the world as it is. The promises they make resonate with something real in us, some need that decaying commodities and even hopes for resistance to them can never finally satisfy, but only deepen. And so—in and in spite of their lies—they release a truthful cry of hope for a reconciliation that is more than we can ask or imagine.

4

The Limits of Eucharistic Resistance

Longings for clear correspondence between worship and daily living run deep in the Judeo-Christian tradition. And occasions when worship seems to have been overtaken by external cultural forces or when a clear gap has emerged between a particular ideal of worship and the actual lives of worshippers have often been a source of lamentation and frustration. In the Hebrew scriptures, Amos rages against sacrifice, festivals, and songs until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. A weary Isaiah can no longer endure the burden of the people's futile offerings while they continue to do evil before his eyes and ignore the widow and the orphan. These prophetic exhortations are sustained in the New Testament. Jesus teaches the disciples that if they stand before the altar and there remember that a sister or a brother has something against them, they must leave and be reconciled before making their offering. An exasperated Paul rejects the false worship of the Corinthians in light of their division, drunkenness, and disregard for the poor. Traces of this impulse are found, too, everywhere from Martin Luther's rage over the corruption of the entire sacramental system in the years leading up to the Reformation to Catholic bishops' denial in recent decades of communion to politicians in the United States for public stances that clash with Church teaching. Despite the wide diversity of how these concerns are expressed and despite rigorous debates over the degree to which ethical conditions should be placed on worship at all, longings for consonance between Eucharistic practice and the practice of everyday life live on in preaching, hymnody, and writings on the Eucharist by everyone from Pope John Paul II to Enrique Dussel.

In contemporary theological reflection on consumer culture, these yearnings live on in a distinctive way, not only as exhortations to resist, but in specific claims that Eucharist effects, shapes, and inspires such resistance. Theologians who confine their reflection on consumer culture to how Christians might better resist it invest Eucharistic practice with the power to do everything from forming Christians in ways that go against the cultural grain of commodification to shaping an entire Eucharistic imagination that resists the logic of the market. Participation in the Eucharist, so these arguments go, has the potential to make us into more just, more ethical, and more distinctly Christian consumers.

Yet even as theologians make what are fundamentally empirical claims about the formative nature of the Eucharist, these claims go unverified by empirical evidence. They leave unaddressed a series of questions that their arguments necessarily provoke: *How* does participation in the Eucharist shape practices of everyday life or ways of imagining that might better resist the logic of the market? Does the Eucharist instruct, discipline, or train us in particular ways? If so, how does such instruction, discipline, or training translate directly into concrete actions in the marketplace? And *what kind* of Eucharistic practice produces in its participants the sort of thinking, imagining, and acting that might make us better consumers? How frequently must we participate in the Eucharist for it to bear such fruit—monthly, weekly, daily? And how might we account for all the cases in which regular Eucharistic participation not only has failed to result in a grand overthrow of the market but has failed to produce even a marginally more responsible consumer?

A dominant strand in twentieth-century liturgical theology shares similar convictions about the formative nature of the Eucharist against various forces of Western

culture. Absent empirical evidence to support their arguments, some liturgical theologians have turned to the social sciences to verify their claims. But because this engagement is largely confined to work in ritual studies centered on small, self-contained cultures, its wider application is limited. In applying the insights Victor Turner gains from his study of the ritual practice of the Ndembu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to liturgical practice in late Western capitalist consumer culture, for example, many liturgical theologians are left doing little more than lamenting the gap between the two. Far from offering any validation for their claims that the liturgy forms people in concrete ways, I attempt to show that a circular logic constrains much of the social scientific reflection on the liturgy, merely confirming the very assumptions with which the scholars began.

Whereas in the first chapter I highlighted the decisive role that the Eucharist plays in the common shape of contemporary literature on consumer culture, in this chapter I argue that consumer culture uniquely lays bare the limits of turning to Eucharist in service of cultural resistance. The pervasiveness of a market logic that absorbs our deepest theological dissent calls into question the very possibility of a Eucharist that might finally resist it. But even if we *could* find empirical evidence that would lead to the perfect Eucharistic liturgy that in turn might finally effect the kinds of this-worldly changes in the lives of its participants that these studies imply, theological concerns should emerge with even greater intensity. Not only are empirical claims about the formative value of the Eucharist to resist consumer culture unverified by anything like empirical evidence, but when the Eucharist is pressed toward concrete ethical ends, it is already caught up in a logic that instrumentalizes it. Whereas in the previous chapter I

showed the ways in which confining theological reflection on consumer culture to resistance limits our sense of the activity of God at work in the world, in this chapter I argue that pressing Eucharistic practice into the service of that resistance unwittingly limits our conception of the activity of God at work in the Eucharist.

A Turn to Eucharist

A turn to Eucharist as the central site of cultural resistance marks the work of each of the three theologians I explored in the first chapter: William T. Cavanaugh, Vincent Miller, and Geoffrey Wainwright. Although each author defines in distinctive ways the nature and scope of the degrading power that consumer culture has over Christian thought and practice, and although each turns to different resources in the Christian tradition to ground his response to those threats, they share in common the embrace of Eucharist as the foundational site of their hope for resistance to the processes of consumer culture.

For William T. Cavanaugh, Eucharist is the foundation for the development of a *theopolitical imagination* that has the power to resist, among other things, the logic of the market. Against the false and heretical ways in which state, civil society, and globalization discipline our imaginations, he argues for an understanding of Eucharistic practice as *counterpolitics* that has the capacity to narrate an alternative vision of the world. Like distinctions he draws between liturgies of torture and Eucharistic liturgies in his earlier work, Cavanaugh in his more recent work on globalization draws a series of similarly stark contrasts between the logic of the marketplace and the logic of the Eucharist. If the modern nation-state is a *false* copy of the Body of Christ, the Eucharist is

the *true* practice which binds us together as and to the Body of Christ,[1] narrating an alternative story about material goods and making possible alternative forms of economics.[2] If the processes of consumer culture depend on detachment and assimilation into a consumer spirituality, the Eucharistic liturgy is taken up into the larger Body of Christ in which we do not merely consume the body of Christ but are consumed by it.[3] If liturgies of the state confine people by constructing walls, says Cavanaugh, then the Christian liturgy transgresses those borders and unites the worshippers as the transnational body of Christ.[4] If the market stresses private contract and exchange, the Eucharist places an accent on divine gift.[5] If a capitalist economy's positivist vision is of every individual seeking his or her own private good, the divine economy allows humans to share in the divine life by incorporating them into the Body of Christ on earth and in heaven. And if the unity of the state depends on the collapse of the local and particular under the universal, the movement of the Eucharist gathers the many into one without merely subordinating the local to the universal. For Cavanaugh, then, the Eucharist provides a "geography" of resistance to globalization.[6]

Vincent Miller locates hope in the Eucharist in his quest for tactical responses to the processes of commodification. Miller sees the ritual, communal, and institutional

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[1] William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Christian Practices of Space and Time* (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2003), 47.

[2] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 94.

[3] William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 54–55.

[4] William T. Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 121.

[5] Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, 54–55.

[6] See especially William T. Cavanaugh, "The World in a Wafer: A Geography of the Eucharist as Resistance to Globalization," *Modern Theology* 15, no. 2 (April 1999): 181–196.

contexts of the Eucharist as uniquely powerful ways to stabilize relationships between doctrines and symbols through ritual practice, providing an alternative to the private spaces and choices of the individual consumer.[7] Where Cavanaugh is silent on the kind of Eucharistic practice that shapes an imagination that might resist consumer culture, Miller offers a series of practical suggestions for how liturgical practice must be shaped consciously to resist the logic of the market effectively.[8] His prescriptions center especially on a more robust embrace of the Second Vatican Council's emphasis on the full, conscious, and active participation of the liturgical assembly. Miller sees this embrace of participation as crucial for countering the passivity encouraged by consumer culture.[9] Among his specific suggestions for ways in which we might enhance the celebration of the Eucharist as a more meaningful tactical response is retrieving the complexity of ancient church designs to counter the passivity encouraged by many liturgical spaces; recovering devotional practices and symbols that emphasize an individual exercise of agency; encouraging local, rather than mass-produced art in liturgical space; and offering better liturgical catechesis to encourage deeper agency. These tactics of everyday resistance are, for Miller, signs of Christian hope within an increasingly pervasive grid of strategic market power.

Finally, throughout his writings in liturgical theology, Geoffrey Wainwright emphasizes the Eucharist as a privileged paradigm for shaping ethical engagement with the world against forces of Western culture that include everything from consumerism to

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[7] Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 201.

[8] Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 202.

[9] Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 214.

secularism. The Eucharist, argues Wainwright, allows us to learn and absorb the values of the kingdom of God.[10] But the ability for the Eucharist to do this work depends on our sincerity in performing effective worship. For Wainwright, worship unaccompanied by just Christian ethical action in the world is not sincere worship.[11] And if the daily actions of Christians are incongruous with their worship, that incongruity calls into question worship's effectiveness.[12] Indeed, Wainwright insists on the need for a test of "ethical correspondence" to determine the authenticity of the liturgy.[13] When the rites truly "serve their purpose," they are a recreative paradigm for human attitudes and behavior in the world.[14] Yet where Miller prescribes an emphasis on the participatory and communal dimensions of Eucharistic practice according to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council as a way to support cultural resistance, Wainwright articulates the need for a very different vision of Eucharistic resistance, one in which the otherness of God is amplified and the community is de-centered.[15] For Wainwright, a more transcendent Eucharist is the most potent remedy for the ailments of Western culture.

A turn to the Eucharist as a way to counter a variety of forces in Western culture marks a wide range of contemporary theologies beyond these three paradigmatic

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[10] Geoffrey Wainwright, "Eucharist and/as Ethics," *Worship* 62, no. 2 (March 1988): 134.

[11] Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 399–401.

[12] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 403–404.

[13] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 245.

[14] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 406.

[15] Geoffrey Wainwright, "A Remedy for Relativism," in *Embracing Purpose: Essays on God, the World and the Church* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 281.

examples.[16] And while some—but by no means all—of these studies specify a *kind* of Eucharistic practice that makes ethical transformation possible, they make empirical claims that are not verified by empirical evidence.

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[16] Eucharist has been invoked by a variety of theologians to counter a series of ills of Western society. Stanley Hauerwas has argued consistently and over a range of works that liturgy forms moral character. For Hauerwas, sacraments enact the Gospel in a way that forms the community in the image of Jesus. See, for example, Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 99, 107–11. See also, Stanley Hauerwas, *Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics, and Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2013), 63. Hauerwas and Samuel Wells's decision to shape *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* around worship reflects and sustains these convictions. While Hauerwas and Wells acknowledge that the Eucharist must not be called into the service of every ethical question that arises in contemporary Christian ethics, they argue that the Eucharist is *training* for discipleship on earth, offering a lens through which to see life that helps us discern the good. Worship, they write, is the key to Christian ethics, "the very way in which God trains his people to take the right things for granted." Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006). See especially 9, 25; quotation from 25. John Howard Yoder has argued that sacramental practices *are* ethics. The Eucharist, for example, is not merely a symbolic sharing, but an act of "economic ethics," an economic sharing among the community that itself critiques social structures. The sacraments in general and Eucharist in particular function as paradigms for ways in which other social groups might operate: "Sharing bread is a paradigm, not only for soup kitchens and hospitality houses, but also for social security and negative income tax." The sacraments, as modes of vulnerable, creative, and provocative presence, he argues, are the primordial ways in which they transform culture. John Howard Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture," *Theology Today* 48, no. 1 (April 1991): 33–44. See especially 4, 35–37, and 44; quotations from 4 and 44 respectively. Yoder expands these ideas in John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001). Enrique Dussel has emphasized an ethical condition placed on the Eucharist to pursue just economic structures. Through the prism of his reflection on the Eucharistic conversion of Spanish missionary Bartolomé de las Casas and the materiality of Eucharistic bread, Dussel argues that to celebrate the Eucharist with bread made possible by the exploitation of workers in a capitalist economy is to risk eating one's own damnation. The struggle for justice, he writes, is the practical condition that makes "it *possible* to offer the eucharistic bread, the 'bread of life.'" Enrique Dussel, "The Bread of the Eucharist Celebration as a Sign of Justice in the Community," in *Beyond Philosophy: Ethics, History, Marxism, and Liberation Theology*, ed. Enrique Dussel and Eduardo Mendieta (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 41–52; quote from 51. In his reflections on consumer culture, Graham Ward locates hope in the potential for churches to open a Eucharistic space excessive to institutional places that might confirm us in alternate desires to those of the wider culture. Ward argues that, as a Eucharistic body, we are rehearsed in a process that stands outside the logic of consumerism. Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001). See especially chapter 6, "The Church as the Erotic Community," 152–181. James K. A. Smith has argued that a host of cultural liturgies that glorify the self—from shopping malls to smart phones—counter-form the People of God, competing with the Christian liturgy that glorifies God. See James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009). To combat these false cultural narratives, Smith insists we must use "countermeasures" in our worship to tell the true story of Christ. Such countermeasures include especially aesthetic qualities of metaphor, narrative, poems, and stories that help engage the drama of worship and ritualized repetition that helps the Christian story sink into our imagination, sanctify our perception, and engender our action. These measures, he argues, demand and empower the transformation of the world into the image of the kingdom of God. James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013). Nicholas Wolterstorff has argued that justice is the condition of authentic liturgy. Grounded in Scripture, Wolterstorff argues that worship acceptable to God is

Evidence of Liturgical Formation?

An impulse that the Eucharist has the capacity to form us in ways that shape ethical living that resists various forces of Western culture is similarly found in a range of works in contemporary liturgical theology.[17] In light of a constellation of claims about the formative potential of liturgical practice that emerged as liturgical theology came in to its own as a discrete field of study in the twentieth century, Mark Searle was among the first liturgical theologians to challenge his own guild explicitly to substantiate its hunches and hypotheses. "We are far too glib," he writes, "in making theological claims about what liturgy is or does. Yet if those claims have any substance to them, they can be verified."[18] Searle notes particular potential in the social sciences to provide such a verification.

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the worship of a pure heart: "And the only pure heart is the heart of a person who has genuinely struggled to embody God's justice and righteousness in the world and genuinely repented of ever again doing so only half-heartedly." Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Justice as a Condition of Authentic Liturgy," *Theology Today* 48, no. 1 (April 1991): 6–21; quotation from 21. For a helpful overview of some of the problems associated with the ways in which liturgical theologians have attempted to think about liturgy and ethics in recent decades, see L. Edward Phillips, "Liturgy and Ethics," in *Liturgy in Dialogue: Essays in Memory of Ronald Jasper* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 86–99.

[17] A wide range of works in liturgical theology reveal an impulse that the Eucharist has the capacity to resist culture or shape and inspire ethical living. Some examples: In a seminal essay on the topic, Don Saliers argues that the patterns of liturgical prayer have the capacity to form and express particular affections and virtues. See Don E. Saliers, "Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7, no. 2 (September 1979): 173–189. In light of the intensification of various forces in Western culture, Saliers was more recently led to qualify this thesis in a way that acknowledges the need for liturgy to bear the seeds of its own self-critique. Don E. Saliers, "Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited," in *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch: Essays in Honor of Don E. Saliers.*, ed. E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 218. Gordon Lathrop has argued that the *ordo* of the liturgy sets out a reoriented map of the world that constantly and repeatedly forms its participants in a renewed worldview. The Eucharist continuously enacts an economic proposal that invites us to make the maps of our economic systems congruent with our Eucharistic maps. A faithful celebration of the *ordo*, he argues, orients us toward a deeper love and care for the earth and for the poor. Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009). See especially Part Three: *Liturgical Ethics*, 97–175. Contrasting the market economy with the economy of grace in the Eucharist, Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff detail how specific liturgical actions such as intercession, thanksgiving, and offering hold potential to overcome the "mimicry" of market exchange. See Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff, *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, & Resurrection* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2007). The assertion of the ethical formation of Eucharistic practice is epitomized perhaps most strongly by the work of Geoffrey Wainwright, whose work I considered above.

[18] Mark Searle, "New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies," *Worship* 57, no. 4 (July 1983): 299.

While he acknowledges that "grace cannot be measured with any precision," he nevertheless holds out hope that the mark grace leaves on people's lives *is* available to the outside observer.[19] And so Searle writes that, while the social sciences must not replace theological reflection on the liturgy,[20] they are essential in grasping what is going on in worship. Further, he insists that the field must engage more and more data about actual liturgical participation.[21] The credibility of their claims, Searle says, depends on it.[22] Both reflecting and responding to Searle's concerns, liturgical theologians have often risen to the challenge, looking to the fields of anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and especially the interdisciplinary field of ritual studies as external validation for claims about the ways in which ritual practice sustains collective Christian identity and shapes Christian thought and action.

Liturgical theologians have found particular consonance between their work toward liturgical reform and the work of anthropologists Mary Douglas and Victor Turner. Douglas and Turner exerted early and substantial force on the field of liturgical

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[19] Searle, "New Tasks, New Methods," 299: "Grace cannot be measured with any precision, of course, but grace, like fleeting events, leaves its mark on people's lives and that mark is as available to the investigator as is the shadow of nuclear war. In other words, if the claim that liturgy is not only of the church but for the church is true, then liturgical celebrations should, in the course of time, at least, make some perceptible difference to those who take part in them. People's attitudes, outlooks, lifestyles and behavior are all open to investigation, as are also their understanding of what liturgy is for, the motives with which they participate, and the account they give of the place it has in their lives. All these are dimensions of what is going on in and through the liturgy. They are all susceptible to empirical research. They are all part of the descriptive or empirical function of pastoral liturgy. On their basis, comparisons can legitimately be made between the theological claims that are made for liturgy and the actual experience of Christian people. How the results of such comparisons are to be evaluated and what use is to be made of them then becomes a matter for theological reflection and critical praxis."

[20] Searle, "New Tasks, New Methods," 294: "The field cannot be abandoned to the social sciences. After all the study of liminality in Ndembu ritual does not offer a better qualification for dealing with the problems of contemporary Christian worship in America than does the study of the Roman sacramentaries…The anthropologist *as* anthropologist is qualified to speak neither of the tradition nor the situation facing the church today."

[21] Searle, "New Tasks, New Methods," 307.

[22] Searle, "New Tasks, New Methods," 302–303.

theology in part because their seminal work in the nascent field of ritual studies emerged alongside the twentieth-century liturgical renewal and in part because they extended their anthropological insights into writings about liturgical reform in their own Roman Catholic tradition. At a moment when many liturgical theologians in the United States were working feverishly to understand, catechize, and implement the fullness of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council in what proved to be an unexpectedly complex and diffuse cultural terrain, Douglas and Turner's conviction that North American culture was adversarial to a ritual logic has often served as anthropological confirmation for what many liturgists sensed in their own labors toward liturgical renewal.

Liturgists have found particular empathy for their own anxieties over the chasm between their vision of liturgical reform and its actual expression on the local level in Mary Douglas's deep frustration with an "anti-ritualism" with which she diagnosed modern cultures.[23] In *Natural Symbols*, Douglas declares a modern revolt against meaningless ritual conformity in favor of rational personal commitment to God.[24] Set in motion by the Reformation, contemporary expressions of American Christianity—Protestant and Catholic alike—evidence a shared impulse, she argues, that "ritualism must be rooted out, as if it were a weed choking the life of the spirit."[25] If ritualism is the "heightened appreciation of symbolic action,"[26] Douglas sees modernity in the final phase of a three-step movement away from ritual. With the first phases—contempt for

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[23] Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, Third Edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2003). See especially Chapter 1, "Away from Ritual," 1–18.

[24] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 1, 4.

[25] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 4.

[26] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 8.

ritual forms and the privatization and internalization of religious experience—complete, we are now experiencing the ongoing process of the end of the symbolic life.[27] Ritual in modernity, writes Douglas, has become denigrated, despised, and contemptible.

Douglas does not narrate the end of ritual merely as a detached observer, however, but as someone who seeks to reclaim the centrality of ritual practice in modernity in general and in her own Roman Catholic tradition in particular. Indeed, the first instantiation of *Natural Symbols* was as a piercing polemical lecture that critiqued the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.[28] Distilling the modern anti-ritual impulse, Douglas laments an anonymous reforming cleric who naively accepts a "Teilhardist evolutionism which assumes that a rational, verbally explicit, personal commitment to God is self-evidently better than its alleged contrary, formal, ritualistic conformity."[29] The resulting degradation of contemporary liturgical reform is the crucible through which Douglas consistently articulates her concern for the poverty of ritual in modernity. "The theologians who should be providing for us more precise and original categories of thought," she writes, "are busy demolishing meaningless rituals and employing the theological tool chest to meet the demands of anti-ritualists."[30] For Douglas, the fact that not even the traditionally highly ritualistic Catholic Church is exempt from modernity's

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[27] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 7.

[28] These lectures were printed in two parts in the journal *New Blackfriars*. See Mary Douglas, "The Contempt of Ritual I," *New Blackfriars* 49, no. 577 (1968): 475–482 and Mary Douglas, "The Contempt of Ritual II," *New Blackfriars* 49, no. 578 (1968): 528–535.

[29] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 4, See also, Douglas, "The Contempt of Ritual I," 476.

[30] This quotation is from the second edition of *Natural Symbols*, which includes several additions and revisions by the author. See Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, Second Edition (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2004), 159. All other notes refer to the first edition.

aversion to ritual both confirms the credibility of her thesis about anti-ritualism and intensifies the urgency to do something about it.

And so Douglas prescribes a cure: a return to a kind of ritualism that entails a deeper appreciation for the symbolic activity for which modernity has developed contempt. Yet though Douglas laments the poverty of rituals in the present—and in the process often reveals a quite fluid definition of what ritual actually is—what seems to bother her most is not so much the end of ritualism, but the replacement of old rituals with new ones. Outlining her case for anti-ritualism in modernity, she critiques contemporary attempts at liturgical reform precisely for their embrace of new symbols.[31] This concern is crystallized in the conclusion of her work when she acknowledges the replacement of old rituals with new ones and grieves the shift: "The apparent anti-ritualism of today is the adoption of one set of religious symbols in place of another."[32] For Douglas, what is needed is not merely a return to ritual in general, but to a *particular kind* of ritual: the fixed and formal ritual practice of the Tridentine Rite whose absence she grieves in light of the implementation of the Novus Ordo.

If Douglas's concern for anti-ritualism gave early social-scientific voice to the frustrations of many liturgical theologians, Victor Turner was among the first to articulate an understanding of ritual that resonated deeply with those theologians' efforts to re-assert the centrality of a ritual practice in a modern terrain that seemed adversarial to it. Ritual, Turner argues, is "prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to

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[31] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 8–9: "Many of the current attempts to reform the Christian liturgy," she writes, "suppose that, as the old symbols have lost their meaning, the problem is to find *new* symbols or to revivify the meaning of the *old* ones." Emphasis is mine.

[32] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 166.

technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical powers."[33] To this early definition, Turner later adds an emphasis on the *dramatic unity* of a ritual, a unity marked by radical obedience to traditional rubrics through which collective action flows. This unity allows the realization of the peace and harmony typically promised to those who participate in the ritual.[34] Finally, in their seminal work on Christian pilgrimage, Victor Turner and Edith Turner further elaborate this definition to highlight the transformative nature of ritual performance and its association with social transitions through distinct phases.[35] Turner's concrete understanding of ritual has made it particularly useful for those in and beyond the field seeking to apply ritual studies to their own work.[36]

Like Douglas, when Turner attempts to apply insights gained from his anthropological work to ritual reform in his own Roman Catholic tradition, he does not do so as an indifferent observer. In a 1976 essay, Turner offers a seething condemnation of postconciliar worship for which he claims the mantle of his own scientific authority: "I do not wish to sound uncharitable toward sincere and devout individuals," he writes, "but science must have a say."[37] In the essay, Turner contrasts the postconciliar rite, which he denounces as a "hackwork of contemporaneous improvisation," with the preconciliar rite,

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[33] Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), 19.

[34] Victor Turner, *The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes Among the Ndembu of Zambia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 269.

[35] Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 243–244. This final elaboration of Turner's definition of ritual—on the transformative nature of ritual performance and its association with social transitions through distinct phases—is informed by the work of Ronald Grimes. See Ronald L. Grimes, "Ritual Studies: Two Models," *Religious Studies Review* 2, no. 4 (1976): 13–25.

[36] See also Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[37] Victor Turner, "Ritual, Tribal and Catholic," *Worship* 50, no. 6 (November 1, 1976): 525. "Catholic by faith and anthropologist by profession," he writes, "I could hardly remain unmoved by the main changes introduced into the Roman Rite after the Second Vatican Council (506).

which he praises as an "organized system of spiritual rational achievements…a work of ages."[38] At stake in the loss of the latter, Turner argues, is not merely the loss of a "magnificent objective creation," but the dissolution of the very ritual bonds which have held the mystical body together in its liturgical worship for generations.[39] The traditional liturgy, liberated from historical determinations,[40] and transcending history, age, sex, ethnicity, culture, economic status, and political affiliation[41] is being replaced, he argues, with a liturgy caught up in "the disintegrative forces of personal religious romanticism, political opportunism and collective millenarianism."[42] And so, like Douglas, but with even greater force, Turner asserts the weight of his own anthropological credentials to the task of resisting the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council.[43]

Without intending to reduce the fullness of their contributions to contemporary thought on ritual in general or its potential to deepen reflection on liturgical practice in particular,[44] I want to argue that when they turn their sights to their own tradition, Turner

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[38] Turner, "Ritual, Tribal and Catholic," 523–524.

[39] Turner, "Ritual, Tribal and Catholic," 525.

[40] Turner, "Ritual, Tribal and Catholic," 524

[41] Turner, "Ritual, Tribal and Catholic," 525.

[42] Turner, "Ritual, Tribal and Catholic," 526.

[43] Turner concludes, "We must not dynamite the liturgical rock of Peter." Turner, "Ritual, Tribal and Catholic," 526.

[44] Indeed, while I challenge both Turner and Douglas's use of their anthropological credentials to make claims about pre- and postconciliar Roman Catholic worship, the fullness of both of their projects has largely gone unengaged by liturgical scholar. It is notable, for example, that while Douglas is most well known for her work tracing the meaning of dirt and the rituals surrounding it in *Purity and Danger*, most appropriations of her thought from the field of liturgical theology are confined to her anti-ritual thesis in *Natural Symbols.* See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002). While *The Ritual Process* is Turner's most thorough and mature treatment of ritual, like Douglas's seminal work in *Purity and Danger*, it has received comparatively less engagement from the field of liturgical theology. And Turner's own thought about ritual continued to evolve over the course of his writings in ways that would challenge his own critiques of postconciliar worship. Indeed, late in his life, Turner increasingly wrote about the *inventiveness* of ritual in ways that

and Douglas are not driven by the richness of their own research or any other social scientific evidence, but by their own opposition to liturgical reform. Each begins with a definition of ritual derived from the premodern cultures they have studied. This is a definition that fits well with qualities of the Tridentine liturgy they so love: a seemingly objective, fixed, and formal ritual practice. Because their experience of postconciliar liturgical practice does not appear to conform to this conception of ritual, they reject it as "not ritual" and its proponents as "anti-ritual." From these claims for ritual contempt in modernity they draw further conclusions about the complete disintegration of religious and social bonds. However, they offer no evidence that modern liturgical practice does not accomplish the kind of social cohesion promised by their premodern ideal. Nor do they show persuasively how importing a particular ritual practice from the past into the present or from a distant cultural context into a diffuse Western context would do the same work. They do not establish that modernity is in effect problematic, only that modern practice is not identical to their ideal. Douglas and Turner, then, are guided less by empirical or anthropological evidence and more by a purportedly objective sense of ritual that in fact simply confirms their own liturgical preferences.[45]

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hold potential for fruitful conversation with liturgical theology. In addition to *The Ritual Process,* see, for example, Victor Turner, "Dramatic Ritual/Ritual Drama: Performative and Reflexive Anthropology," *The Kenyon Review* 1, no. 3 (1979): 80–93, Victor Turner, *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 2001), and *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986).

[45] Douglas and Turner's love of and reverence for the Tridentine Mass transgresses customary practices of anthropological distance. The final sentences of *Natural Symbols* reveal, for example, the ways in which Douglas's concern for anti-ritualism is represents not only the loss of a particular kind of ritual practice in her Roman Catholic tradition, but also a range of theological and ideological commitments she sees bound up with them: "We may well ask why the now elderly radicals rejected religious themes of renunciation, why they disdained the unabashed, sexual imagery of the mystics and the completely counter-rational doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and why the young radicals of today express contempt for the physical body, read the mystics and cultivate non-rationality. The difference surely lies in the respective attitudes to political power, the former seeking and the latter rejecting it. The Churches could worry that their clothes are being stolen while they bathe in a stream of ethical sensitivity. For the current dichotomy

Even as Turner and Douglas's application of their own ritual insight was driven by their *rejection* of liturgical reform, their work paradoxically epitomizes a consensus about the function of ritual that has emerged in liturgical theology most consistently as a way to *advocate* for those very reforms. This ritual consensus—informed also by the work of Clifford Geertz, Roy Rappaport, and Ronald Grimes—centers on assumptions that ritual expresses meaning, regulates social life, shapes identities, preserves tradition, and insures cultural cohesion.[46] Rituals are public, social, and collective performances

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of spirit and matter is an assertion of spiritual values. While preaching good works they would do well to relate the simple social duty to the wealth of doctrines which in Christian history have done service for the same restricted code: the mystical body, the communion of saints, death, resurrection, immortality and speaking with tongues." Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 166–67. In his biography of Douglas, Richard Fardon notes that *Natural Symbols* was a book that allowed her to "set her personal concerns in a wider pattern" and to articulate a "general and explicit vision of the society in which she lives and of the society she would prefer to live in." Richard Fardon, *Mary Douglas: An Intellectual Biography* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 243. Thus while Douglas offers prescient critiques of liturgical reformers who fail to acknowledge their own cultural captivity, she often conflates a wide range of theological and ideological concerns while asserting anthropological authority that fails to acknowledge her own. The chasm between Turner's generous account of the ritual practice of the Ndembu and his blistering account of the ritual practice in his own tradition is striking. However, insight into the relationship between his scholarly work and his theological conviction offers crucial context. Turner's own conversion to Roman Catholicism before the Council was driven primarily by the beauty, seriousness, and formality he discovered in the Church's liturgy that resembled the fixed ritual practice they came to love in Africa. Edith Turner testifies to the multiple layers of emotions that emerged for both of them when the Church began to reform the very liturgy that drew them to it: "Even the church was busy going the way of Durkheim and the sociologists. Why this hardening process had to go alongside the widening of the church at Vatican Two I do not know. By 1968 we found ourselves in the age of the hippie priests and liturgiologists who were determined to get rid of various rites within the Mass. You can guess our reaction. We had fallen in love with the physicality, the materiality of the Mass, and found deep spirituality in it, sensing how the spirit informed material symbols, both things and people. Instead we found a generalized ethic being taught in Sunday schools—"Be nice to Johnny next door"—and soon nobody had the least idea what the consecration was all about, nor the effect of sacrifice; blood became white wine, the body was lifted up flat on a plate so you couldn't see it, and so on. No amount of explaining by laity such as ourselves could get anywhere with the new liturgiologists." Edith L. B. Turner, *Heart of Lightness: The Life Story of an Anthropologist* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 98-99. The timing of the Turners' own conversion so close to the Second Vatican Council make sense of the uncharacteristic anger present in Victor Turner's writings over the reforms that press far beyond anthropological description.

[46] This insight comes from Nathan Mitchell's synthesis of the use of the social sciences in liturgical theology. He calls these shared assumptions about ritual among liturgical theologians the "prevailing consensus of 'what anthropologists (are believed to) think about ritual.'" Based on what liturgists assumed to be the "best" of anthropological research, this prevailing consensus was quickly put to use to ground a variety of claims about liturgical formation and liturgical reform. See Nathan Mitchell, *Liturgy and the Social Sciences* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 24–31; quotation from 24. While Mitchell largely associates this with what he calls "high church" liturgists, evidence of this understanding of ritual extends over a wide range of liturgical writings across the ideological spectrum.

done by heart, shaping not only beliefs but also behaviors.[47] Ritual functions primarily to transcend historical change or to support a smooth accommodation of cultural change.[48] As largely formalized, traditional, authoritative, canonical, invariable, enduring, and repeatable behavior, ritual regulates social life, resists change or improvisation, and rehearses who a community is and who it hopes to become. This understanding of ritual practice as a mechanism of social cohesion has often been deployed in a variety of attempts to emphasize liturgy as a uniquely formative practice with the potential to counter various degrading forces in Western culture.

The influence of this seemingly objective understanding of ritual deeply marks the liturgical theology of Aidan Kavanagh. The first liturgical theologian to substantively engage ritual theory,[49] Kavanagh adopts a formal definition of ritual similar to that of Victor Turner: rituals are formalized behavior patterns, methods of verbal and non-verbal communication essential for the establishment of social relations, and even necessary for biological survival.[50] Like Mary Douglas, Kavanagh grieves a deep anti-ritualism in North American culture that is adversarial to the logic of liturgical practice, a dynamic he

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[47] Mitchell, *Liturgy and the Social Sciences*, 26.

[48] Mitchell, *Liturgy and the Social Sciences*, 61. For a related argument, see also Catherine Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals," *Worship* 63, no. 1 (January 1989): 34.

[49] Kavanagh was the first liturgical theologian to engage seriously the study of ritual as a method for the study of liturgy. In his first substantive essay on the topic, Kavanagh uses insights into ritualization gained from the work of Erik Erikson to argue for the centrality of ritual in sustaining social groups. See Aidan Kavanagh, "The Role of Ritual in Personal Development," in *The Roots of Ritual*, ed. James D. Shaughnessy (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1973), 145–60.

[50] Aidan Kavanagh, "Relevance and Change in the Liturgy," *Worship* 45, no. 2 (February 1971): 59. Kavanagh appeals to different but related definitions of ritual in his writings but rarely uses the same definition or theorist twice. In this case, he adopts a definition from T. T. Paterson in T. T. Paterson, "Emotive Rituals in Industrial Organisms," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences* 251, no. 772 (1966): 437–42. Patterson's definition is as follows: "Rituals are formalized behaviour patterns, methods of communication, verbal and non-verbal, necessary for the establishment of relations among members of a group or between groups; for the relations among organisms of any kind are governed to a large extent by the forms of communication, both expected and required." (437). See also 442: "The basic need is biological survival of the social organism."

calls the "deritualization" of Western culture. Informed by Douglas's work, Kavanagh is profoundly critical of the way in which rational absorption seems to be rapidly replacing meaningless ritual absorption.[51] "Even among Christians who profess to take worship seriously," he writes, "ritual is often regarded as *adiaphora*, unessential, and to be treated warily if at all. Ritual, and by implication rite, seem to be the antithesis of enlightenment and reform."[52] Kavanagh worries that ritual may have already succumbed to the forces of secularization.[53]

Kavanagh narrates the decline of ritual over a range of works, but most notably in his blistering critiques of what he sees as the degrading impact Western culture has had on liturgical practice. Placing greater faith in text than ritual, implementers of liturgical reform have forsaken the radical values of the Gospel, trading transcendence for a mere social gathering in which "we all wound up sitting in a circle with our legs crossed, reciting texts at each other over banks of potted plants, guitars in the background, boring ourselves and everyone else…into insensibility."[54] Rather than confronting us with the truth of the Crucified, the new liturgy, he argues, is now merely a "worship experience" of "vaguely religious storytelling and chitchat, occasionally alleviated by hymns composed around some verses of religious doggerel chosen as often as not to showcase examples of inclusive language."[55] Kavanagh blames the triumph of cultural relevance over ritual obedience on a cluster of values he associates with "middle-class piety." The

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[51] Aidan Kavanagh, "Textuality and Deritualization: The Case of Western Liturgical Usage," *Studia Liturgica* 23 (1993): 70. Echoing Douglas, Kavanagh cites especially the modern emphasis on text as a destructive force toward ritual practice.

[52] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1984), 101.

[53] Kavanagh, "Relevance and Change in the Liturgy," 70.

[54] Kavanagh, "Textuality and Deritualization," 74.

[55] Kavanagh, "Textuality and Deritualization," 74.

middle-class values that comprise this piety include comfort in affluence, participation in approved groups, consumerism, and a general optimism untethered to reality.[56] Enthusiastically inculturated with these values, churches begin to look like shopping malls and worship like a community gathering that obscures any sense of sacramental transcendence.[57] Contrary to the convictions of its participants, the new liturgy has "very little counter-culturalism in it."[58] The radical demands of the Gospel that the liturgy should embody are dulled under the guise of culture relevance.

For Kavanagh as for Turner, at stake in the deritualization of the liturgy is nothing less than the communion of the church itself. This, he argues, is why we must heed the warnings of ritual theorists who have shown that the demise of ritual signals the demise of the social group. While rituals are not substitutes for social relations, they are signs and causes of them, and they are necessary to sustaining them.[59] Deritualization, he

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[56] Aidan Kavanagh, "Liturgical Inculturation: Looking to the Future," *Studia Liturgica* 20, no. 1 (1990): 102.

[57] Kavanagh, "Liturgical Inculturation," 102. The full force of this critique is evident only in Kavanagh's own distinctive language: "Some signs of this in the churches of my own country are the tendency to 'ministerialize' the middle-class laity; to turn the entry rite into an act of gathering and hospitality conducted by such new ministers so as to produce the approved sort of community which celebrates middle-class values of joining, meeting, and 'speaking out'; to use these two endeavours as means to 'create community' (beyond that which the Church already is by virtue of its common baptism into Christ); to move away from the art of ceremony and symbol toward a verbalization as the assembly's main medium of communication within itself. Iconography is disappearing in our new church buildings, giving way to potted plants and shopping-mall-like-spaces. These tendencies obscure a sense of sacramentality of the divine presence as something distinct from and transcending the community at worship. When one adds to this the understandable if often aggressive and ill-considered attempts unilaterally to alter liturgical language and the ways it names God according to conciliar and biblical precedents, which are deeply embedded in the traditions of both east and west, the liturgy becomes perceived by many as less an obedient standing in the alarming presence of the living God in Christ that a tiresome dialectical effort at raising the consciousness of middle-class groups concerning ideologically approved ends and means." Elsewhere, he voices similarly forceful condemnations of an emerging desire for liturgical relevance, one that "ends by subordinating the Passover of Christ to an Easter egg hunt, by cashing in the deposit of faith sustained over centuries in the tactful rhetoric of ordinary believers to buy into an emotional fast-food franchise renamed The Church." Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 103.

[58] Kavanagh, "Liturgical Inculturation," 102.

[59] Kavanagh, "Relevance and Change in the Liturgy," 64

argues, is currently in the process of loosening those bonds and diminishing *communitas*.[60] Adversarial to ritual logic, dominant forms of Western liturgical inculturation are putting the entire existence of the church at risk: [61] "Trading ritual for rationality, the Eucharist fails to socialize and so is transformed from a sacrament of unity into a skirmish of division."[62] For Kavanagh, the future of the church is itself at stake in the loss of its ritual practice.

It is at the moments in his writings when the present state of the world and the present state of ritual are most dire that Kavanagh re-asserts his highest estimation of what ritual can do by appealing to what it once did. For Kavanagh, ritual secures social equilibrium and a cosmic perspective within which basic human needs may be met, minimizes the danger of divisive conflict, and confers a sense of deep psychic awareness on its participants.[63] It offers a coherent and concrete vision of the world that makes it possible to bear the world under existential stress.[64] Ritual is also remarkably productive: the forms of primitive ritual so despised by modernity, he notes, gave rise to world-changing achievements that made civilization itself possible.[65] Indeed, without ritual, the human being is "alone with himself absolutely; amnesiac, without memory, without a

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[60] Kavanagh, "Textuality and Deritualization," 75. *Communitas* is a term coined by Victor Turner to describe the intense social bond experienced through radical equality among participants in ritual. See Turner, *The Ritual Process,* especially Chapter 5: "Liminality and Communitas," 94–130.

[61] Kavanagh, "Liturgical Inculturation," 105. Evidence of the corrosiveness of the middle-class values that liturgically have been so enthusiastically embraced is found, he argues, in a sharp decline in membership in Christianity in the United States

[62] Kavanagh, "Textuality and Deritualization," 75.

[63] Kavanagh, "Relevance and Change in the Liturgy," 60.

[64] Kavanagh, "Relevance and Change in the Liturgy," 60. The language here is that of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Kavanagh. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 16.

[65] Kavanagh, "Relevance and Change in the Liturgy," 60–61.

past shared; without identity, without security, without language and perspective."[66] Ritual, he argues, constitutes the *sole* context capable of supporting sacramental religion.[67]

Echoing Douglas and Turner, then, Kavanagh argues that what is urgently needed in the mess of Western culture is a return to ritual. *Obedience* to rite is, he argues, our most significant hope for countering the prevailing winds of culture.[68] We must cease adapting liturgy to culture, pleads Kavanagh, and instead begin adapting culture to liturgy.[69] While unlike Turner and Douglas he rejects calls for a return to the Tridentine rite,[70] far from deploying ritual theory in a way that substantiates his claims that a liturgical remedy would cure the ills of Western culture, Kavanagh is largely left lamenting the gap between premodern fixed ritual practice and the actual ritual practice he experiences in the postconciliar church. He lacks any kind of positive account of how

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[66] Kavanagh, "Relevance and Change in the Liturgy," 71.

[67] Kavanagh, "Relevance and Change in the Liturgy," 60–61. Kavanagh appeals here to Mary Douglas's insistence that devotion to the sacraments "depends on a frame of mind which values external forms and is ready to credit them with special efficacy." Douglas, *Natural Symbols,* 8–9. See also Aidan Kavanagh, "How Rite Develops: Some Laws Intrinsic to Liturgical Evolution," *Worship* 41, no. 6 (June 1967): 342: Ritual is the "hinge on which personal interiorization of the religious tradition swings," Kavanagh writes, as well as the "experiential source from which a sense of religious identity, dedication, renewed freedom and effectiveness proceeds."

[68] Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite*, 102. "Rite is sustained by rote and obedience far more than by restless creativity, and obedience is a subordinate part of the larger virtue of justice while creativity is not. In our day it seems to require more courage to obey a rubric or law than to break it. Creativity of the Spontaneous Me variety condemns rite and symbol to lingering deaths by trivialization, bemusing those who would communicate by rite and symbol to a point where they finally wander away in search of something which appears to be more stable and power-laden." (102).

[69] Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1990), 103.

[70] While my summary of Kavanagh here may flatten out such a conviction, Kavanagh believed deeply in the need for liturgical reform: "In the some seventeen generations since the sixteenth century, Western civilization in all its aspects—industrial, technological, urban, political, religious, and cultural—has been repeatedly wrenched by a succession of social and cultural revolutions that took place while liturgical evolution, which should have responded to them vigorously, stood still." Kavanagh, "How Rite Develops," 335.

the liturgical ideal he imagines resists and transforms culture or why the liturgies against which he writes do not.

While Kavanagh was the first liturgical theologian to engage ritual theory substantively, Mark Searle has been the liturgical theologian most thoroughly committed to it as a method to study liturgy in general and to ground his strong vision of the formative nature of the Eucharist in particular.[71] Evidence of the prevailing consensus surrounding the definition and function of ritual is found with particular strength and clarity in his thought.[72] For Searle, ritual is patterned, repetitive, predictable, collective, formal, performative, and, most crucially for his liturgical vision, formative.[73] As a privileged way in which we learn to negotiate social interaction, ritual creates new situations by generating, modifying, or sustaining relationships. By demanding submission to its formal constraints, then, ritual effects change in us.[74]

Grounded in this understanding of ritual, Searle describes liturgy with a phrase he repeats like a litanaic mantra throughout a wide range of writings, one that shapes and reflects the convictions and hopes of an entire generation of liturgical theologians: *liturgy is a rehearsal of Christian attitudes*.[75] Attitudes, for Searle, are habitual ways of thinking,

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[71] See especially Searle, "New Tasks, New Methods," and Mark Searle, "Ritual," in *The Study of Liturgy*, ed. Cheslyn Jones et al. (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[72] Searle's understanding of ritual is influenced by a range of scholarship in ritual theory, but most strongly by the work of Roy Rappaport, Erving Goffman, and Jonathan Z. Smith.

[73] Mark Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, ed. Editor Barbara Searle and Editor Anne Y. Koester (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2006), 18–27.

[74] Searle, *Called to Participate,* 18–27.

[75] Searle takes this definition almost verbatim from Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 153. "A rite regularly performed," she writes, "is the constant reiteration of sentiments toward 'first and last things'; it is not a free expression of emotions, *but a disciplined rehearsal of 'right attitudes."*" Emphasis mine. Searle changes only the word "right" to "Christian" in the final phrase to describe liturgy.

judging, and acting. They serve as stable and repetitious ways of relating to ourselves and to the world around us.[76] These attitudes are elicited, formed, and shaped through our participation in the Christian liturgy: "Regular, persevering participation and growing familiarity with liturgy's images and gestures will eventually shape our attitudes, our thoughts, and even our feelings."[77] Demanding our participation, obedience, and submission, the liturgy rehearses us in our relationships to God, to one another, and to the world.[78] This rehearsal requires both repetition and discipline until the attitudes become fully assimilated and perfected in us.[79] Liturgy, he writes, *makes a difference*.[80]

Searle is unique among liturgical theologians of his generation not only for his rigorous use of the social sciences, but also for his use of empirical data to attempt to ground his claims. Through his involvement with the Notre Dame Study on Catholic Parish Life, Searle and his colleagues offer empirical descriptions (via sociological observations and surveys) of liturgical celebrations in thirty-six Roman Catholic parishes in the United States.[81] The conclusions Searle draws from this study about the state of

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[76] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 61.

[77] Searle, *Called to Participate,* 62.

[78] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 25. See also Mark Searle, "Serving the Lord with Justice," in *Liturgy and Social Justice*, ed. Mark Searle (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1980), 32: "The liturgical assembly, then, is the place where justice is proclaimed, but it is neither a classroom nor a political rally nor a hearing. It is more like a rehearsal room where action must be repeated over and over until they are thoroughly assimilated and perfected – until, that is, the acts have totally identified with the part assigned to them. The liturgical action is a rehearsal of the utopian Kingdom first enacted upon the human stage in the meals that Jesus shared with outcasts and sinners. In it we learn to understand the drama of God's justice as it unfolds in our world and to identify with the role assigned to us so that we may play it effectively in our lives and eventually before the throne of God for all eternity, when his justice will be established beyond compromise" (32).

[79] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 62: "Liturgy is ritual: not improvisation but discipline, not spontaneity but practice."

[80] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 23.

[81] The Notre Dame Study on Catholic Parish Life is a sociological study that attempted to describe Catholic parish life twenty years following Vatican II through extensive research into thirty-six Roman

liturgical practice in the United States are bleak. Searle registers his disappointment over the "continuing victory of pragmatism over symbolism,"[82] and he expresses frustration that liturgies in the United States are "mechanical and listless."[83] Suffering from poor presiding, bad music, and the absence of a prayerful liturgical engagement, contemporary liturgical practice, he argues, is largely "dull and lifeless."[84]

Searle uses this critique of poor liturgical practice to mount a wider critique of North American culture in general, citing conclusions both about the effects of culture on the liturgy and the absence of any positive effects of the liturgy on culture. Searle's reading of the data commiserates with the lamentations of Douglas, Turner, and Kavanagh about the rise of anti-ritualism in modernity, but now with the added claim of data to verify it.[85] And he claims to have found liturgical confirmation of the impact of the radical individualism in American culture articulated by Robert Bellah. Informed by Bellah, Searle argues that postconcilar liturgies contain strong evidence that American Catholics are in the process of exchanging their distinctively communal Catholic identity for a more individualistic American one.[86] He writes:

Catholic parishes. It took place in three phases between 1981 and 1989. For the fifteen reports released on the pastoral interpretation and application of the study, see "Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life," 1981-1989, http://icl.nd.edu/initiatives-projects/church-life-research/.

[82] Mark Searle, "The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life," *Worship* 60, no. 4 (July 1986): 317.

[83] Searle, "The Notre Dame Study," 319.

[84] Searle, "The Notre Dame Study," 319.

[85] Mark Searle, "Trust the Ritual or Face 'The Triumph of Bad Taste,'" *Pastoral Music* 15, no. 6 (September 1991): 19–20.

[86] See Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). Bellah's well-known study was released contemporaneously with the Notre Dame study. That Bellah's work is so frequently invoked in Searle's writings, suggests that it exerted a strong influence on how Searle made sense of what was he was seeing in Roman Catholic liturgical life.

> Where liturgy is concerned, this means a growing alienation from precisely that sense of collective identity and collective responsibility which the liturgy might be thought to rehearse. It is a threat to the integrity of the liturgical act. Far from being able to inure Catholics against the negative aspects of their wider culture, the liturgy may be succumbing to such influences.[87]

The dangerous cultural forces of religious privatism, massification (e.g. mass/consumer culture), individualism, and civil religion, Searle argues, are now dissolving the social bonds of the church, replacing shared convictions, and socializing us into patterns of production and consumption rather than rehearsing us into right Christian attitudes.[88] For Searle as for Douglas, Kavanagh, and Turner, nothing less than the future of the Church itself is at stake with this lack of collective ritualization.[89]

While Searle signals an awareness of the limits of previous ways in which liturgical theology has thought about its relationship to culture,[90] his observation of postconciliar practice nevertheless leads him to reassert a vision of Eucharistic formation.

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[87] Searle, "The Notre Dame Study," 332–333. Nathan Mitchell notes the problematic nature of the unspoken assumptions Searle derives from a rather narrow reading of the research: "Searle borrowed a socio-anthropological category (cultural assimilation) in order to make an ecclesiological point (American Catholics are becoming a mere voluntary association). In short, the critique of postconciliar liturgy…quickly became a critique of contemporary culture." Mitchell, *Liturgy and the Social Sciences*, 29.

[88] Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," 28–35: "Most generally and most importantly, the premium placed on cost efficiency and profitability, on functional specialization and expertise creates a society where the dominant values are functional values and where matters of "ultimate concern" are relegated to the private realm…The effect, then, of massification is to reinforce the effects of pluralism, making the individual the sole arbiter of ultimate values and thereby undermining the bonds that create genuine community" (32).

[89] Searle, "Trust the Ritual or Face 'The Triumph of Bad Taste,'" 20. Not only can the Christian Tradition itself not survive without ritual, even God's survival is at risk: "And in the end, I doubt that God can survive without ritual, at least as *our* God, because without public ritual this God of all the earth will become the personal, private, intimate, personal God of each individual and will cease to be a public God at all."

[90] Mark Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," 27: "As we now see more clearly, the worship community is formed not only by liturgy and catechesis, but by the larger culture in which its members live and work…We tend to think too much of what the Church might bring to society and too little of what society is already bringing to the church… We enthuse about what new prayers and new liturgical music might to do [sic] shape the liturgical assembly, overlooking the fact that culture has gotten there before us, unconsciously shaping the attitudes and language of both the experts and the participants."

While Searle never hesitates to offer prescriptions about what is needed for the liturgy to function as it ought, like Kavanagh he consistently emphasizes the need for Christians to approach the liturgy in a more objective way by changing their attitude toward it: We must *trust* in the ineffable richness of our symbols, he says;[91] we must *submit* to the ritual;[92] we must *conform* to the constraints of the rite;[93] we must be *obedient* to the objectivity of the sacraments;[94] we must *surrender* to the demands of the liturgy;[95] we must *relearn* past ways of doing things; we must be more *sensitive* to symbols;[96] and we must *believe* in the efficacy of instituted rites.[97] The emergence of such worship, he argues, will be our only "antidote to the debilitating effects of privatism, individualism, and massification," a celebration of our freedom from the "impersonal and depersonalizing forces that dominate our post-industrial culture."[98] The Eucharist is now under siege by Western culture. But if it is properly celebrated, it will be medicine to heal the ailments of both church and society.

Yet even as Searle attempts to ground his hunches about liturgy in empirical data, there is a mismatch between his research and his claims. Searle begins with an objective vision of what good liturgy should be. And in his survey of postconcilar liturgical practice he finds evidence of practices that contradict that vision. But he has no evidence

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[91] Searle, "Trust the Ritual or Face 'The Triumph of Bad Taste,'" 21.

[92] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 23-24

[93] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 62.

[94] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 36.

[95] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 13.

[96] Searle, "Trust the Ritual or Face 'The Triumph of Bad Taste,'" 19.

[97] Searle, "Trust the Ritual or Face 'The Triumph of Bad Taste,'" 19, 21.

[98] Mark Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," 44.

that the liturgies he observes do (or do not) rehearse Christian attitudes in ways that shape our thinking, judging, and acting. Even without this evidence, he draws conclusions about the effects of the liturgy on its participants: Not only are the liturgies he observes unable to produce positive effects, he writes, but the effects they do produce are potentially dangerous. Yet evidence to support such a conclusion would require far more than empirical descriptions of liturgies. Claims about the *effects* of liturgical practice—regardless of how well they conform to any particular ideal—would require extensive studies of individuals who had participated in those liturgies as well as deep studies of the lives of their communities. And so Searle's use of empirical data from lived liturgies does little more than reveal a chasm between his ideal vision of postconciliar liturgy and its actual expression. The kind of studies that could provide evidence relevant to his claims have not been done.

If the arguments of Mary Douglas and Victor Turner are driven by attempts to *oppose* liturgical reform, the arguments of Mark Searle and Aidan Kavanagh are driven by their attempts to implement those reforms more faithfully. And so while Searle and Kavanagh imagine different liturgical ideals than Douglas and Turner, they are caught up in the same circular logic. Each begins with an ideal model of what constitutes good postconcilar liturgy: an ideal rooted in the rituals of premodern societies (the same premodern rituals to which Douglas and Turner turned to ground their objections to liturgical reform!). They then deploy theory or, in the case of Searle, data, to measure current liturgical practice against that ideal. When they do not find what they're looking for, they prescribe a cure determined by the conception of liturgy that launched their investigation. And while both Kavanagh and Searle draw equally robust conclusions

about the *effects* of the inadequacy of present liturgical practice, they offer no evidence that the liturgies they critique *do not* in fact do the kind of binding, forming, communal work that they claim their ideal does. Like Douglas and Turner, Kavanagh and Searle do not establish the dissolution of the social in modernity. They simply discover that current practice is not identical to their ritual ideal.[99]

Nor do these arguments prove that the implementation of their liturgical ideal will in fact support resistance to the forces of modern Western culture they promise. Each presumes a definition of ritual centered on assumptions that ritual expresses meaning, regulates social life, shapes identities, preserves tradition, and acts as a mechanism of social cohesion that resists any forces that may threaten it. But a narrow emphasis on ritual's role in sustaining social continuity or in supporting cultural resistance to external threats fails to grapple both with the ways in which even the most fixed ritual practices throughout history have undergone dramatic changes and how the Church's own liturgical practice has often reflected rather than challenged its surrounding culture.

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[99] In her survey of the development of the relatively nascent field of ritual studies, Catherine Bell has noted a related predetermined circularity that has often constrained its logic. This circularity is set into motion in the very first move theorists make in their attempt to understand ritual: isolating ritual as a discrete object of analysis. This isolation is authorized only through a bifurcation of *thought* (the conceptual aspects of religion) and *action* (its ritual practices). Proceeding from this inaugural rupture, theorists paradoxically analyze ritual as the very way in which the categories they separate—thought and action—are reintegrated. Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 21. Ritual, then, becomes merely a synthesis of a problem created by the theorist. Rarely explicit and routinely taken for granted in a wide range of works, Bell devotes the first part of her work to detailing how this isolation of ritual as a discrete category of study and the many divisions it in turn authorizes plays out over a wide range of works in ritual theory. See Part I: "The Practice of Ritual Theory," in Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 13–66. Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, and Roy Rappaport are among those Bell critiques. Bell argues that "the dichotomy that isolates ritual on the one hand and the dichotomy that is mediated by ritual on the other become loosely homologized with each other," reifying not only the bifurcation of thought and action, but a whole series of oppositions that this initial division authorizes. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 21. Foremost among the dichotomies this logic permits is a division between a *thinking theorist* and an *acting participant*. Ritual becomes not only an action in which the conceptual dimensions of life converge for the participant, but also the place where they can best be understood by an outsider theorist: "A focus on ritual performances integrates *our* thought and *their* action." (32).

While romantic notions of both ritual and liturgy tend to see them as fixed and unchanging, even a cursory review of liturgical history is saturated with examples of everything from gradual liturgical evolution to full-scale liturgical revolution that calls such claims into question. Far from transcending the cultural moments in which such changes occur, liturgies celebrated throughout history more often than not mirror the political, economic, and social arrangements in which they were celebrated.[100] Neither the Tridentine Mass of the past nor postconcilar liturgies of the present can claim cultural transcendence.

In untangling this logic, my intention is not to dismiss the activity of God at work in the beauty Douglas or Turner found in the Tridentine Mass at a time when the ground seemed to be shifting rapidly beneath their feet. Nor is it to deny that activity in faithful implementation of liturgical reform that drove the theological work of Searle, Kavanagh, and countless others at a time when religious rituals ancient and modern newly competed on a marketplace. Like the wishes found in fragments of a consumer culture, hopes for a Eucharistic practice that might finally transcend the distortions of the world—however imperfectly they find expression—offer a truthful cry of their own, a cry that testifies to longings for redemption and desires for alternatives not only to the liturgy as it is, but to the world as it is. In those longings are traces of my own cry.

And yet contemporary consumer culture reveals the limits of overly-specified claims about the immanent formative power of the Eucharist to make us better consumers

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[100] See, for example, John Bossy, "The Mass as a Social Institution 1200-1700," *Past & Present*, no. 100 (1983): 29–61. Originally published as John Bossy, "Essai de sociographie de la messe, 1200-1700," trans. Marie-Solange Wane Touzeau, *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 36, no. 1 (1981): 44–70; Teresa Berger, "Breaking Bread in a Broken World: Liturgy and Cartographies of the Real," *Studia Liturgica* 36, no. 1 (2006): 74–85.

or our churches more impervious to culture. Indeed, contemporary theological accounts of consumer culture that place their hopes in a Eucharist that might better resist it bear the seeds of their own self-critique: the pervasiveness of a market logic that insinuates itself into every corner of daily life as well as the ways in which our deepest dissent is easily commodified calls into question the very possibility of a Eucharist that might resist it. Prescriptions for a counter-cultural Eucharist in the shape of the Tridentine rite, twentieth-century liturgical renewal, or any of the many alternatives made in the name of resisting consumer culture bear traces of the very logic of the culture it hopes to resist. Far from resisting the market, counter-cultural remedies—Eucharistic or otherwise—are the orthodoxy of a market logic. Even the most seemingly counter-cultural Eucharistic practice—indeed even liturgical theologians who articulate an ideal liturgical form ancient or new as well as those who resist such ideals—cannot claim to transcend the cultural moment completely without denying their own captivity to a market on which the realization of their own Eucharistic ideal depends.

A Contemporary Question, A Traditional Impulse

While a consumer culture lays bare the limits of Eucharistic resistance to culture, these concerns are not merely empirical, but also deeply theological. Even if we *could* find empirical evidence that would lead to the reformation of the Eucharistic liturgy in a way that might finally effect the kinds of this-worldly changes in the lives of its participants that many contemporary studies imply, the logic that undergirds the argument is simply a remake of the old theme about the activity of grace in the sacraments and in the world mirrored in the career of one of the most venerable phrases the church has used to think about the sacraments: *ex opere operato*.

The seeds of what would become the medieval formulation *ex opere operato* were planted early in the tradition as a way to guarantee God's sovereign and gratuitous activity in the sacraments. In the face of the Donatist charge that the validity of baptism depended on the moral purity of the one administering them, Augustine draws on Paul to emphasize the centrality of baptismal identity over the qualities of the minister doing the baptizing.[101] For Augustine, as for Paul before him, the power of baptism is from Christ alone.[102] Human beings are not the *cause of* but the *condition for* grace in the sacraments. Augustine accuses the Donatists of putting God's grace at the mercy of the moral purity of the minister. Because it is impossible to discern outwardly the private ethical character of every minister, the validity of every sacrament is put at risk in such a view.[103] To reassure people that the power of the sacraments is independent of the qualities of the minister, Augustine consistently emphasizes *divine* over *human* agency.[104] The sacraments, Augustine insists, are efficacious not on account of the work of the minister himself (*ex opere operantis*), but through the activity of God in the sacramental rite (*ex*

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[101] The roots of Augustine's conviction are Pauline. See, for example, Romans 6; Galatians 3; and 1 Corinthians 1 and 3. To answer the Donatist controversy, Augustine appeals especially 1 Corinthians. See, for example, Augustine, *Letter to Petilian*, 1.3–6, 10; 2.41; 3.42; 51; 55 and Augustine, *On Baptism* 5.14.

[102] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine,* 1.33: "For even the apostle exclaims, 'Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?'" Translation from Philip Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church Volume II: St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine* (New York: Scribner, 1907), 532. See also, Augustine, *On Baptism*, 5.26.

[103] Augustine, *Letter to Petilian*, 1:9.

[104] Augustine clarifies and intensifies the convictions that emerged in the face of the Donatist controversy even further in *Tractates on John*: "the Lord kept to Himself the power of baptizing, and gave to His servants the ministry." Augustine, *Tractates on John*, 5.8. Translation from Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series, Volume VII St. Augustine: Gospel of John, First Epistle of John, Soliliques* (Cosimo Classics, 2007), 34. Throughout this reflection on John 1:33, Augustine constantly repeats his conviction that the Lord retains the authority of baptism. Augustine's development of this argument in *Tractates* became highly influential in the medieval articulation of the doctrine.

opere operato).[105] The deepest impulse of what would later be given the name *ex opere operato*, then, is one that affirms God's sovereign activity in the sacraments through which God brings about God's own purposes and an assurance that sacramental grace cannot be limited by human failing.

Through the Middle Ages, however, the phrase *ex opere operato* gradually shifted from signaling the limits of the power of the priest in the sacraments to signaling an affirmation of the distinctive qualities of that power and a narrow focus on the specific ritual formulations of the rites that effect it. Evoked by popular practice and shaped by the wider pastoral concerns that emerged alongside it,[106] a logical question surfaced: if the moral purity of the minister is *not* necessary for the efficacy of the sacraments, *what is*? The answer was that the sacraments work *ex opere operato*. But contrary to its original articulation, the deployment of the phrase now centered on the unique power of the ordained minister—a power with which he is invested apart from his personal moral purity—and the particular sacramental formulas he alone enacts. As the sacraments

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[105] The use of both of these phrases to describe modes of sacramental presence was a later development.

[106] As medieval eucharistic piety increasingly defined priesthood in terms of the power of the priest to confect the Eucharist, the phrase *ex opere operato* became a way to clarify the role of the priest in the sacraments as well as a way to articulate the minimum requirements for proper sacramental practice. The unique power of the priest in the Eucharist was solidified at The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) in its affirmation of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Defining priesthood in exclusionary terms, Lateran IV excluded from orders all those except those who ministered at liturgy and insisted that only a properly ordained priest could consecrate the bread and wine at Eucharistic altar. It is in this context that medieval theologians began to appropriate the phrase *in persona Christi* ("in the person of Christ") to describe the role of the priest during the consecration which ultimately led to a shift from the *actions* of the priests to his *person*. Alongside this change in Eucharistic theology, as the church began to structure itself after the political power structures of the time, *cursus honorum* (course of honors/sequence of offices) began to solidly emerge as the church's theology of ordination; all ordained ministries were structured as a ladder of hierarchical advancement. In various ways, contrary to the impulse of its original development, *ex opere operato* collected all of these accretions in a single phrase. For more on Eucharistic development in the Middle Ages, see Joseph M. Powers, S.J., *Eucharistic Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder New York, 1967). For more on the development of sequential ordination, see John St. H. Gibaut, "*The Cursus Honorum": A Study of the Origins and Evolution of Sequential Ordination* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000).

became systematized,[107] far from emphasizing the gratuitousness of grace, *ex opere operato* came instead to emphasize the *dependence* of grace on clerical powers and formulas. Sacraments were defined and practiced according to their minimal requirements: an ordained clergy member, the proper ritual formula, and the absence of any clear obstacle in the person receiving the sacrament. If the rite was done correctly by an ordained minister, grace was bestowed.[108] In popular piety and practice, sacraments

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[107] In his authoritative and highly influential *Sentences* (ca. 1150), Peter Lombard both defined sacrament and systematized the seven sacraments. *Sentences* quickly became the primary theology textbook and remained so through the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Thomas Aquinas builds on Lombard's definition in his sacramental thought.

[108] The debates over *ex opere operato* leading up to and following the Reformation were, of course, rich, complex, and irreducible to easy summary. Thomas Aquinas, for example, is often championed for or charged with enshrining the phrase as an affirmation of priestly power. However, even though the term was widely in use by the time of his own writing, Aquinas uses the phrase remarkably sparingly, and in the *Summa* not at all. In a thorough evaluation of Aquinas's use of the phrase, Edward Schillebeeckx concludes that any kind of magical or mechanical notion of *ex opere operato* is absent in his writing: "the central and essential factor is the meritorious and efficient activity of the historical mystery of Christ. A sacrament, the *opus operatum*, is valid when the ministerial act is an act of Christ (*opus* Christi); it is valid therefore when it is authentic sacramental representation of the acts of the mystery of Christ in and through his ecclesial community. The constitution of the sacramental symbolic act is not dependent on the dispositions of the minister or recipient as long as each has the required intention." Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 82–89; quotation from 89. A paradigmatic example of Aquinas's understanding of *ex opere operato* as one that emphasizes the power of Christ in the sacraments comes in his response to a question posed by Pope Gelasius: "How shall the Holy Spirit, when invoked, come for the consecration of the Divine Mystery, if the priest invoking him be proved full of guilty deeds?" Thomas's response: "It must be understood that He comes, not through the priest's merits, but through the power of Christ, Whose words the priest utters." *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 82, Obj. 5. Translation from the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1947). While Reformers vehemently rejected the phrase for the way in which its medieval expression communicated limitations on God's grace, and while there are among them contrasting ways in which the sacraments receive precise definition, the impulse of the original Augustinian spirit of *ex opere operato* lives on in their theological reflection on the sacraments: namely, that God is the central actor in the sacraments and that the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend on us, but on God's freely given gift of grace. See for example, John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.14.17; and Martin Luther, "On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1970), 192. For more on *ex opere operato* in the Reformed tradition, see G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: The Sacraments* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969), especially 63–78. For more on the consonance between Lutheran sacramental theology and the Catholic formulation of *ex opere operato*, see Steven M Studebaker, "*Ex Opere Operato*: A Proposal for Lutheran and Catholic Unity," *One in Christ* 35, no. 4 (1999): 326–38. The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England strongly echo the early Augustinian definition: "Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their Ministry, both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving the Sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith, and rightly, do receive

took on an almost magical efficacy, acting as remedies for the passive recipient at the hands of priestly power. The sacramental theology that emerged both to explain and to encourage this conviction—highly influenced by philosophical categories—was one that articulated grace in impersonal, mechanical, and physical terms[109] and ignored any role for a human response to that grace.[110] Concretized in Scholastic and Neo-Scholastic manuals, this theology had the effect of severing the sacraments from the fullness of the mystery of Christ, isolating sacramental theology from wider theological discourse, and presenting sacraments as instrumental dispensaries of grace. Whether in the objections of the Reformers to it or in the Council of Trent's affirmation of it—with scarcely a trace of

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the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men." Church Publishing, *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (New York; Greenwich, Conn.: Church Publishing, 1979). For more on ecumenical convergences around the use of the phrase *ex opere operato* when placed in a properly Trinitarian framework, see Kimberly Hope Belcher, "*Ex Opere Operato* and Sacraments of Faith: A Trinitarian Proposal," *Worship* 90, no. 3 (May 2016): 225–245.

[109] Some examples of this instrumental language in Scholastic and Neo-scholastic discussions of sacraments include cause and effect, confer and receive, valid and invalid, licit and illicit.

[110] At the Council of Trent, *ex opere operato* received official doctrinal definition. The phrase itself, like Trent's sacramental theology more broadly, is articulated in negative terms against the Reformers: "If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify, or that they do not confer that grace on those who place no obstacles in its way, as though they were only outward signs of grace or justice received through faith and certain marks of Christian profession, whereby among men believers are distinguished from unbelievers, let him be anathema…If anyone says that grace, so far as God's part is concerned, is not impaired through the sacraments always and to all men even if they receive them rightly, but only sometimes and to some persons, let him be anathema." Council of Trent, Session 7, 3 March 1547, Canons of the Sacraments in General, canons 6 and 7. A narrow interpretation of the intrinsic objective power of the sacraments detached from any emphasis on the recipient intensified from Trent through the nineteenth century. This is evident in magisterial documents like *Mediator Dei*: "This efficacy, where there is question of the eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments, derives first of all and principally from the act itself (*ex opere operato*)" (27); and "Sacraments and sacrifice do, then, possess that 'objective' power to make us really and personally sharers in the divine life of Jesus Christ. (29) Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*. Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1947. http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html Similarly, in Roman Catholic Scholastic and Neo-Scholastic manuals of dogmatic theology, the earliest impulses of *ex opere operato* are virtually absent in favor of polemical arguments against Protestant sacramental thought: "the Sacraments are more than signs instituted for the purpose of nourishing faith. They infallibly confer grace, not only on the predestined, but on 'all who receive them rightly.' Their efficacy is *ex opere operato*, *i.e.*, derived from the objective value of the rite itself, not from the merits of the minister or subject." Joseph Pohle, *The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise*, *Volume 1* (St. Louis, Mo.: Herder, 1915).

its original intention—the invocation of the phrase *ex opere operato* became a symbol of this instrumental mode of sacramental theology and the myriad ritual practices that accompanied it.

Much of the work of contemporary liturgical and sacramental theology has attempted to overcome this *instrumental* understanding of the sacraments for which *ex opere operato* has often served as a kind of shorthand.[111] Perhaps the most thoroughgoing critique of an instrumental interpretation of the sacraments has been that of Louis Marie-

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[111] The work of contemporary sacramental theology has largely centered on overcoming instrumental understandings of the sacraments by retrieving a robust symbolic interpretation of them. See, for example, Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Sacrament of the Encounter with God*. Schillebeeckx reacts against the way in which Neo-Scholastic theologians distilled the sacramental theology of Thomas Aquinas without a deep engagement of the nuance, richness, and complexity of his actual writings. (Schillebeeckx's correction of Neo-Scholastic misreadings of Thomas often appears in footnotes. See for example, 61, n. 16. As I indicated earlier, Schillebeeckx also offers a careful treatment of Thomas's use of the phrase *ex opere operato*. See 82-89). The definition of a sacrament, which Schillebeeckx insists is fundamentally personal and intimate, was wrongly given in terms of physical categories and communicated in impersonal and mechanical language; human beings were understood to be passive recipients of the automatic distribution of sacramental grace (3). Saving Aquinas from many of his interpreters, Schillebeeckx re-examines the breadth of the church's thought on sacrament to recover an understanding of sacraments as a human mode of encounter with God. Sacraments, for Schillebeeckx, are the "earthly prolongation of Christ's bodiliness that make possible a "properly human mode of encounter with God" (44, 6). For Schillebeeckx, every encounter with God is in some way implicitly sacramental. See also Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," in *Theological Investigations, Volume IV* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1973), 221-52. While he centers his reflection more broadly on the category of symbol in general, Karl Rahner similarly rejects as inadequate the minimal and instrumental way in which the Christian tradition has understood both symbol and sacrament, emphasizing instead the centrality of symbolic activity to human nature. All beings are by their nature symbolic, Rahner argues, because they express themselves symbolically to attain their own nature (231, 247). Embodied actions are *real* symbols of the human being who initiates them. While this notion has had wide ramifications for theology in general, Rahner extends this insight to sacramental activity in particular. Just as the Logos—the *real symbol* of the Father—becomes present in the world as flesh, grace becomes present in the world for particular human beings as the sacraments (236). Sacraments are not "mere signs" to remind us of a particular message nor are they arbitrary practices. They are instead ways in which God breaks into the world in a visible way especially appropriate to God's nature which would not quite be complete without this visible manifestation: "The sacraments make concrete and real, for the life of the individual, the symbolic reality of the Church as the primary sacrament and therefore constitute at once, in keeping with the nature of the Church, a symbolic reality" (241). For Rahner, through the sacramental practice of the Church, we recall the Logos as the perfect symbol of God's redeeming love. Other significant twentieth century contributions to the conversation around the centrality of symbol to theology in general and sacramental theology in particular include David N. Power, *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo, 1984) and David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998). The work of Louis Marie-Chauvet is discussed in greater detail in what follows.

Chauvet.[112] Chauvet draws on linguistic theory, philosophy, and anthropology in his piercing criticism of the Scholastic use of the term *cause* to describe the activity of grace in the sacraments.[113] Viewing language as purely instrumental, the metaphysical tradition opened the false possibility of thought prior to language and beyond culture.[114] Testifying to longings for direct unmediated contact with God, it gave ontological priority to thought over language.[115] For the Scholastics, Chauvet argues, language was an obstacle to be overcome. Informed especially by Heideggerian critiques, Chauvet rejects the notion of an independent subject with direct unmediated access to reality. This metaphysical myth overlooks the fact that everything we perceive as real is always already filtered through our linguistic lens.[116] Language is not *instrument*, he argues, but *mediation*. Human beings do not exist before language, but are "formed in its womb."[117] The

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[112] See Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Madeleine M. Beaumont and Patrick Madigan (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994) / Louis Marie Chauvet, *Symbole et sacrement: Une relecture sacramentelle de l'existence chretienne* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987); and Louis Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001) / Louis Marie Chauvet, *Les Sacrements - Parole de Dieu au Risque du Dorps* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Atelier/Editions Ouvrières, 1993).

[113] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7 / *Symbole et Sacrement*, 13. While Chauvet set his sights squarely on Thomas Aquinas to develop his argument in *Symbol and Sacrament*, Chauvet's fundamental critiques of Scholastic theology have more to do with appropriations of Thomas than his own thought. Contrary to the way in which his work has often been used in Neo-Scholastic theology, Thomas primarily treated sacraments as *signs*, not *causes* of grace. And he largely followed medieval interpretations of sacraments filled with references to God's activity in the world. Closer to the multivalent patristic sacramental understanding, Thomas avoided the purely instrumental approach, which would later come to dominate. In *The Sacraments*, Chauvet has softened his critique of Thomas as representative of the problem he seeks to overcome. For a thorough critique of Chauvet's use of Thomas, see especially Bernhard Blankenhorn, "The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet" 4, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 255–294. For a wider critique of Chauvet's critique of metaphysics in general, see Joseph C. Mudd, *Eucharist as Meaning: Critical Metaphysics and Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014). See n.11 for more on Edward Schillebeeckx's critique of misappropriations of Thomas Aquinas in Neo-Scholastic sacramental thought.

[114] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 40 / *Symbole et Sacrement*, 43–44.

[115] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 34 / *Symbole et Sacrement*, 38.

[116] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 33–36 / *Symbole et Sacrement*, 37–40.

[117] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 87 / *Symbole et Sacrement*, 92.

instrumentalization of language causes metaphysics to mistake thought for reality. But because all reality is mediated symbolically through language and the body, the direct access it claims is merely an illusion; the mediation of the symbolic order always precedes us.[118] Language, culture, and desire are not merely tools or obstacles to be overcome, but are themselves mediations that determine what we know.

For Chauvet, this onto-theological inheritance confined Scholastic sacramental theology to instrumental language from which they could not escape, shaping an "objectivist" sacramental theology that has profoundly distorted the way in which the church thinks about sacramental grace.[119] This objectivist thought is impoverished, Chauvet argues, because it applies language of production and value (e.g., talk of work, production, containment, and cause) to describe something that works outside such a logic: grace. Instrumental language prevented Scholastics from grasping grace as *non*-value in a way that diminished the significance of the transformative power of the sacraments in the lives of those who receive them. Scholastic thought misses the ways in which, like manna in the desert, grace stands outside the logic of the marketplace:

> Like *manna* in the desert, which is perhaps its most beautiful expression, grace is of an entirely different order from that of value or empirical verifiability. Its very name is a question: *Man hu?* Its name is "What is this?" Its consistency seems to be that of a "something" which has all the traits of "nothing": something "as fine as frost on the ground" which melts in the sun. Further, the measuring of it resembles a "non-measure": they gather it up—"some…more, some less"; but when they proceed to estimate its quantity, they observe, contrary to all logic of value, that "those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage;" finally, those who, violating the Lord's command, wanted to store some for the future saw that "it bred worms and became foul" (Exod 16:9-21). *Grace as a question, grace as a non-thing, grace as a non-value:* How

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[118] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 98 / *Symbole et Sacrement*, 103.

[119] Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, xiv–xvii / *Les Sacrements*, 6–9.

> can we make sense of this pure sign which begins with a question, other than by choosing the path of *symbol*, the path of non-calculation and non-utility? [120]

At the heart of Chauvet's fundamental sacramental theology is retrieving a symbolic understanding of the sacraments that precedes value in order to overcome all the ways in which economic logic continues to exert force over how we think about grace. Chauvet thus rejects as "nonsense" any interpretation of *ex opere operato* as magical or mechanical. Instead, he affirms that, negatively, it means that God's gift of grace is not confined by the holiness of the minister and that, positively, God's grace is absolutely gracious.[121] For Chauvet, grace, irreducible to explanation, continually exceeds the limits we set for it and defies the laws of calculation.

While twentieth-century liturgical and sacramental theology has gone to great lengths to shrug off its onto-theological inheritance, the impulse that transformed *ex opere operato* from a phrase that signaled the *sovereignty* of grace to one that signaled the *dependence* of grace lives on in a different way in contemporary theologies that see the Eucharist as a remedy for the ills of culture in general and consumer culture in particular. In the Middle Ages a sacramental theology emerged that implied that *if the rite was done right*—according to a particular institutional form—the medicine of grace would be magically (if mechanically) dispensed, and would produce the goods of eternal life. In contemporary theology this logic takes a new form: *If the rite would just be done right*—according to a particular prescription, era, or style—it would shape better, more ethical, and even more holy consumers. Grace becomes quietly dependent on the activity of Eucharistic participants through their ambiguous negotiation of a commodified world

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[120] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 44–45 / *Symbole et Sacrement*, 48.

[121] Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, xv, n.1 / *Les Sacrements*, 7, n.1.

and a market that itself depends on resistance for its very flourishing. Eucharist comes to be measured against its ability to fund our effective cultural resistance. If we who participate in the Eucharist are *not* acting the way in which scholars think we should to be acting—namely, effecting some kind of tactical resistance to the grid of the market—we must be doing Eucharist wrong. *Ex opere operato* reappears under the sign of ethics: grace, sacramental or otherwise, depends on us.

Evidence of this instrumental logic lives explicitly and implicitly in contemporary theology in a variety of inversions. It is found in the attempt to place conditions on the celebration of the Eucharist and demands for a "test" of ethical correspondence to determine the sincerity, effectiveness, and authenticity of Eucharistic practice. It is found in proposals for a Eucharistic counterculture that draw an impossibly stark division between the logic of the market and the logic of the Eucharist. It is found in the desire to *measure* empirically the activity of Eucharistic grace at work in the lives of Christians in the world. It is found in convictions that Eucharistic practice will shape concrete practices of everyday resistance. And it is found also in prescriptions for liturgical practice that have as their aim the resistance of cultural forces and in the bitter condemnations that often accompany them for the ways in which liturgical practice has failed completely to contain culture. However grounded in prophetic injunctions of the scriptures, however fervent their rejection of moralizing theologies which merely compare and contrast Christianity and culture, however deep their insistence that we must avoid the instrumentalization of the sacraments, all of these critiques reveal traces of an impulse long a part of the Christian tradition in a new mode. All of them put grace at the mercy of

people like you and like me who cannot convincingly claim to stand outside such a logic even as we place our deepest hope in a grace that does.

These immanent Eucharistic hopes distort our ability to see the Eucharist as it is. Eucharist pressed into the service of resisting the processes of the world does so only by denying its own this-worldly materiality, forgetting that the Eucharist exists in the world even as it casts its gaze beyond it. The Eucharist, as object and as practice, has suffered profound distortions throughout Christian history. The history of *ex opere operato* narrates one such central misunderstanding: Eucharist was distorted by a logic that confined God's abundant grace by instrumentalizing the body of Christ into economic and juridical categories. This history reminds us that distortions to Eucharistic practice are hardly novel to the emergence of contemporary consumer culture. Yet, more crucially, such a history reminds us that we should no more reject the redeeming presence of God in the distortions of contemporary liturgical practices shaped or misshaped by culture than we should reject God's surprising grace active through disputed Christian Eucharistic practices of faithful people throughout history.

In seeking to expose the limits of the evidence behind calls for Eucharistic resistance and the theological problems that undergird them, my aim is neither to relativize the ethical imperatives of the Christian scriptures nor to shatter the hope of which the Eucharist assures us, but precisely to point toward a more transcendent hope not dependent on our own action often captive to the logic we so want to resist. Indeed, because it would likely be easier for most Christians to identify faithful and frequent participants in Eucharistic practice who are also thoroughly absorbed in consumer culture than it would be to identify those who are effectively resisting the grid of market logic,

and because even conscious acts of market dissent—theological or otherwise—are themselves so easily commodified, measuring Eucharist against its ability to shape more ethical consumers will lead us down a path of denial or despair. More often than not, we must confess the gap between the fullness of our hopes about what the Eucharistic will accomplish and our daily living. The Eucharist, we must admit, can and often has been instrumentalized and commodified in ways quite distant from our deepest hopes for it. Yet even in and through that commodification it remains, by the grace of God, the bread that is our life and the cup that is our salvation.

Epilogue

Eucharistic Hope in a Commodified World

In the spring of 1514, Word and Eucharist transformed Spanish priest, missionary, and slave owner Bartolomé de las Casas in a way that led him to reject decisively the destruction and enslavement of the indigenous people of Cuba.[1] A year after his bloody conquest of the island, Diego Velázquez asked Las Casas to celebrate a Pentecost Mass for the men who now ruled the island. In his role as chaplain to the conquistadores, Las Casas had spent twelve long years complicit in the face of the horrendous violence they had perpetrated throughout the Caribbean. And in that silence, he had gradually grown weary of the devastation and starvation of the indigenous people at the hands of those for whom he would soon bless, break, and share the Eucharistic bread.

In his own account of the transformation, Las Casas tells of setting out for the Río Arimao to prepare his sermon for Pentecost. Having earlier sent off his slaves "to extract gold and to plant crops, to take advantage of them as much as he could,"[2] now sitting at the river, a passage from Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) confronted Las Casas, demanding a response:

> Tainted his gifts who offers in sacrifice ill-gotten goods!
> The Most High approves not the gifts of the godless.
> Like the man who slays a son in his father's presence
> is he who offers sacrifice from the possessions of the poor.
> The bread of charity is life itself for the needy,
> he who withholds it is a person of blood.
> He slays his neighbor who deprives him of his living;

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[1] Bartolomé de las Casas narrates this transformation in the third person in *Historia de las Indias:* Tomo III, cap. 79 in Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Obras Completas*, vol. 4 (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1994), 2080-85. An English translation of this account is available in Bartolomé de las Casas, "Addendum I: Las Casas' Account of His Prophetic Call," in *Bartolomé de las Casas: The Only Way*, ed. Helen Rand Parish, trans. Francis P. Sullivan (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 185–91.

[2] De Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias: Tomo III,* Cap. 79. Translation is mine.

he sheds blood who denies the laborer his wages.[3]

Contemplating through the prism of these words the Eucharist he would soon celebrate for the conquistadores opened Las Casas' eyes. The words provoked from him a confession of his own participation and complicity in the unspeakable injustice and tyranny of those with whom he would soon share the Eucharist. For Las Casas, the link between worship and justice, between daily bread and Eucharistic bread could not be clearer: To continue to sacrifice the bread of the poor would be like killing a son in his father's presence. To celebrate the Eucharist with eyes now open to the plight of the indigenous people would be to sacrifice those very lives on the Eucharistic altar.

The need to preach this truth to the conquistadores burned within Las Casas in the days that followed. But he became convinced that he could neither preach this message to them nor celebrate the Eucharist with them as long as he himself continued to hold native people *encomienda*. And so before he could celebrate the Eucharist and preach his condemnation of the tyranny, he began the risky process of rejecting the practice of enslaving indigenous Cubans, ultimately releasing all of his own slaves. Las Casas refused to continue to sacrifice the bread of the poor.

In his reflection on the relationship between economy and Eucharist, Enrique Dussel narrates the ethical Eucharistic transformation of Las Casas as a contemporary exhortation to those who break the Eucharistic bread in capitalist society to examine their

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[3] Sirach 34:18–22. This translation of the passage as Las Casas quotes it is taken from Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 46–51. See also Gustavo Gutiérrez, *En Busca de Los Pobres de Jesucristo: El Pensamiento de Bartolomé de Las Casas* (Lima, Perú: Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas-RIMAC/Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1992), 72–80. Las Casas omits two lines of the passage in his text. In the NRSV, it appears as Sirach 18:21–26: "If one sacrifices ill-gotten goods, the offering is blemished; the gifts of the lawless are not acceptable. The Most High is not pleased with the offerings of the ungodly, nor for a multitude of sacrifices does he forgive sins. Like one who kills a son before his father's eyes is the person who offers a sacrifice from the property of the poor. The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a murderer. To take away a neighbor's living is to commit murder; to deprive an employee of wages is to shed blood."

own practice.[4] The labor that makes such bread possible, writes Dussel, cannot be severed from the bread of the Eucharist without blemishing the offering. To offer the bread of injustice—bread implicitly snatched from the labor of the poor by our alienation from its production—is to risk eating damnation onto ourselves.

The criterion by which we discern between idolatrous worship and Eucharistic worship, argues Dussel, must extend beyond our own individual or occasional acts of injustice to include also our participation in the structural injustices of culture. Inspired by the conversion of Las Casas, Dussel poses a series of questions to those who celebrate the Eucharist under the strategic processes of late capitalism:

> Can the fruit stolen from the poor, the oppressed classes, the exploited nations, be offered as Eucharistic bread? Have the practical conditions for Eucharistic bread which can be offered to God been met in a system where the wage-earner under capitalism (the successor of the "shared-out" Indian of the sixteenth century) is structurally deprived of part of the fruits of his work? Does the structural sin not stain the bread and prevent one from having a bread that can be offered in justice? How can those who live in dividends from the multinationals in the rich countries…offer the Eucharist?[5]

For Dussel, the answer is clear in the prophetic conversion of Bartolomé de Las Casas: until Las Casas released his slaves, he could not celebrate the Eucharist. For us, as for Las Casas, justice is the "*practical condition* which *makes possible* the Eucharistic

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[4] Enrique Dussel, "The Bread of the Eucharist Celebration as a Sign of Justice in the Community," in *Beyond Philosophy: Ethics, History, Marxism, and Liberation Theology*, ed. Enrique Dussel and Eduardo Mendieta (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 41–52. Dussel's essay appeared first as Enrique Dussel, "The Bread of the Eucharistic Celebration as a Sign of Justice the Community," in Mary Douglas and David Power, *Concilium: Can We Always Celebrate the Eucharist?* (Edinburgh, New York: T&T Clark and The Seabury Press Inc., 1982), 56–65. The citations that follow refer to the page numbers in *Beyond Philosophy*. Several theologians have extended Dussel's argument to raise ethical questions about the celebration of the Eucharist in late capitalist society. See, for example, Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Madeleine M. Beaumont and Patrick Madigan (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), 552 / Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbole et sacrement: Une relecture sacramentelle de l'existence chretienne* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987), 563; Roberto S. Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion: Toward a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2009), 149–151; and Mayra Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press Books, 2015), 23–24.

[5] Dussel, "The Bread of the Eucharist Celebration," 50–51.

celebration which saves."[6] Only bread kneaded in justice, exhorts Dussel, makes possible the Bread of Life.

As a regular participant in the Eucharist in a late capitalist consumer culture, I stand under the judgment of Dussel's questions. As those questions from Ecclesiasticus confronted Las Casas at the Río Arimao, Dussel's confront me and demand a response. Dussel's questions emerge out of a conviction that *justice* must be a condition for the celebration of the Eucharist. They are equally urgent in these final pages of a project centered on the limits of the ability of the *Eucharist* to resist a consumer culture that manipulates and defers our desire; that invests our products with promises it will never keep; that distorts human-identity and self-perception; that works against desire for God. They are questions further intensified by a consumer culture in which we are increasingly severed from the circumstances of the production of the goods we purchase, distanced from the pains and injustices on which the market depends to sustain its power, and often oblivious to the cries of those nearby and far away who make possible our own daily consumption in ways large and small, visible and invisible. It is precisely these kinds of questions that lead theologians to emphasize forcefully and consistently resistance to a culture that distorts desire and absorbs even our most faithful critiques of it. And precisely because I have attempted to be attentive to God's activity in and in spite of these very distortions, Dussel's questions are ones I can neither evade nor ignore. And so they point me toward a hope untethered to human striving, even as I offer no easy absolution from them. They point me toward a hope that calls forth my confession.

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[6] Dussel, "The Bread of the Eucharist Celebration," 49.

Standing under the judgment of Dussel's questions, my own initial impulse resembles the very ones I have so consistently called into question in the preceding pages. I am tempted to catalog all of the clear and present ways in which consumer culture has degraded and distorted contemporary Eucharistic practice. The kinds of easy targets for such a critique that often captivate my attention are those churches that, far from displaying any clear resistance to the market, unapologetically display many of its most obvious trappings: churches with coffee shops and parking attendants and big screens; churches in which if the Eucharist is celebrated at all, it is celebrated with all the efficiency of a fast food restaurant, the bread that becomes life reduced to a single convenient package; liturgies tailored and marketed to respond to the desires, tastes, and preferences of target audiences and key demographics; presiders who trade the formal rubrics of ritual books for a casual and approachable style shaped by the hosts of television talk shows; music centered on entertaining as in the concert hall or the stadium; preaching that smooths out the rougher edges of the Gospel into something like a vaguely-Christian TED talk. All of this (*and more!*) is directed toward a consuming audience for which the Eucharist is but one more product vying for the attention of consumers in a saturated marketplace of transformational promises. It is a list as long as it is easy for me to write.[7] *Here*, I am tempted to insist, is bread extracted from the destitute, bread in which we risk eating damnation onto ourselves. And in their place I am tempted to prescribe a more *just* bread, to call for a Eucharistic practice that decisively and clearly rejects and resists the bread of the injustice in all its forms.

[7] Indeed, many of these are arguments I have made in the past: Antonio Eduardo Alonso, "Consumed: Celebrating Liturgy in a Consumer Culture," *Worship* 87, no. 5 (September 2013): 428–444.

And yet any confident recipe I am tempted to offer as a bread of justice and any Eucharist I am tempted to prescribe that better resists the bread of injustice must contend with the this-worldly nature of the Eucharist. In its significant materiality, writes Louis-Marie Chauvet, the Eucharist confronts us with the corporality of a faith *that is always mediated* through the body of culture, tradition, and nature.[8] In the Eucharist, we stumble against the fact that the intelligible is inaccessible without first passing through the most sensible, earthy elements, like bread—fruit of the earth and work of human hands—that Christ calls his body (154/161). Eucharist is a mystery that cannot be expressed apart from bread. And the materiality of that bread exists as a physical obstacle to any imaginary flight toward God in the Eucharist which is disembodied and severed from our own historical context:

> The "here" of the Eucharistic presence, in its signifying, empirical materiality, refers us to the "here" of faith, duly instituted and duly inscribed *somewhere*. It refers us back to the body—that is, to the historical, social, economic, and cultural determinations, even to the most individual determinations of our desire—as the place where the truth of our faith will come about (405/415).

In the Eucharist, Christ is made manifest in *this* bread, in *this* place, at *this* moment, for *these* people.

The corporal mediation of Christ through signs of bread and wine makes visible the cultural contingency of the Eucharist in a way that shatters the illusion of there being *any* Eucharistic practice completely liberated from the strategies of the structures of the world. If the Eucharist is always inscribed *somewhere*, it is always bound to particular historical, social, economic, and cultural determinations. Through the particularity of the cultural matrices of the world, Eucharistic practice participates in the fullness of that

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[8] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament,* 153, 149 / Chauvet, *Symbole et Sacrament,* 160, 156–57. Subsequent references appear in parentheses within the text. Page numbers for the English translation are listed first.

culture including, at times, we must confess, its sinfulness, its delusions, its broken promises. To acknowledge the corporality of the Eucharist is neither to call the Eucharist sinful nor to equate its contingent captivities with its materiality. But it is to confess that in a fallen world, the Eucharist will always be in some sense enmeshed in that world. For all the ways in which we want to claim the Eucharist as a practice that proclaims and inscribes on our bodies an alternative to the dominant arrangements of the world, we must confess that the Eucharist celebrated throughout history has been deeply bound to those configurations. For all the ways in which we might hope that the Eucharist resists, purifies, or heals the sins of the culture in which it is celebrated, we must also acknowledge the ways in which it performs its very brokenness, whatever else it does.

In a consumer culture, the contingency of the Eucharist provokes my confession that *any* bread I want to identify as the bread of justice is inseparably bound to the bread I want to identify as the bread of injustice. To claim a meaningful isolation of the former from the latter not only covers over the complex and dependent relationship between church and culture to which I have tried to be attentive in these pages, but in so doing it creates an idealized vision of a Eucharist which might live convincingly outside the market. And while it is tempting for me to locate the intrusion of the market only in those churches and those practices in which the ethos of a consumer culture is most brightly on display and enthusiastically embraced, in a consumer culture *all* churches exist as a commodity on the shelves of a religious marketplace and even the most sacred objects through which those churches pray their Eucharist are objects subject to a market that often renders their commodification invisible to those who think they are effectively resisting it. In a culture in which everything worth doing, buying, or praying promises a

revolution, one in which our deepest hopes for transformation are sold back to us in the form of a product or a prayer, any desire to articulate a Eucharistic vision *against* the wider culture or other churches that embrace that culture reveals an implicit assent to the very orthodoxy of a market logic: even Eucharistic counter-cultures can and have been commodified. A confession of the cultural contingency of the Eucharist sees, for example, that the wafers in mass-produced, antiseptic, individualized, pre-packaged communion sets and the bread that is fresh, organic, and locally-sourced—and all that those breads represent about the communities who share them—are subject to a market that has shown a remarkable ability to commodify both. Blessing, breaking, and sharing the Eucharistic bread in a consumer culture finally demands a confession of the illusiveness of any bread of immanent justice I might offer that will finally resist the daily breads extracted from the life of the poor.

I confess, too, that the pervasiveness of a market logic lays bare the limits of the very argument I have attempted to articulate in these pages. In his blistering critique of the Scholastic instrumental understanding of grace and the myriad distorted sacramental practices that for generations flowed from it, Chauvet opens with a question that pervades his work: *why* did the Scholastics formulate the question of grace in terms of causality? Chauvet concludes that the only answer is that they were *unable to think otherwise*: "The only possible answer is found in the never explicitly recognized or criticized assumption that lay hidden at the foundation of the way they set up their problem…They were prevented from doing so by the…presuppositions which structured their entire culture" (7–8/14). Part of the work of this project has been to surface in some limited way the presuppositions that structure contemporary discourse on consumer culture and theology

in general and the limits of calling Eucharist into the service of its resistance in particular. But like Scholastics in their faithful if flawed attempts to articulate an understanding of sacramental grace, I too am unable to think outside the presuppositions that lie hidden at the foundation of the very way I have set up the question of celebrating Eucharist in a consumer culture. And in a consumer culture in which even our most faithful prayers and practices are captive to the forces we so long to resist, I confess that my resistance of resistance bears more of a market logic than I am able to recognize.

This confession, then, is an expression of my deepest hope. The work of Michel de Certeau has helped me listen for cries of hope in a consumer culture through tactics of everyday life that slip beyond the grid of market logic and exceed both theory and theology. The deepest expression of that hope is, for Certeau, bound to an absence. But as I have attempted to show, it is not a vague nihilistic absence, but the absence of the *body of Christ*. It is this generative absence—the absent body of the ascended Lord—in its particularity which gives rise to a fragile and flowing set of dispersed practices found in myriad traces in the world that resist assimilation. Confessing that these traces are never identical to the absent body of the ascended Lord who authorized them is for Certeau a confession of the utter alterity of God. Because it is impossible to match the shape of Christian hope with the shape of the church, Certeau is attentive to traces of a hope in the practices of everyday life, a hope that is never lost even in the absence of the ascended body who made them possible. And so Certeau listens for an unnamable cry that he knows he can never finally make present. He attends to absence as a mode of Christ's presence. He attends to absence as an act of eschatological hope.

The Eucharist grounds us most fully in that present absence. Consenting to the scandalous corporal contingency of Christ in the Eucharist, argues Chauvet, demands also a consent to the presence of the absence of the Risen Jesus. Consenting to the presence of the absence in the Eucharist is not merely a negative reality. It is not the *absence of presence*. *Absence* is that which allows God to move *into* presence. For it is only in the act of respecting that absence that we can recognize Christ symbolically in the body of the Church. To confess our inability to leave mediation behind is to confess the *distance* between God and ourselves, and to admit the impossibility of fully seizing that which is finally beyond our grasp. As it was for the disciples at the Emmaus table, so it is for us at the Eucharistic table: It is only a startling absence—the absence of the *dead* body of Christ—that makes possible the presence of the Risen Christ and the presence of the gathered Body of Christ. It is precisely from the *break* in the bread that they, and we, come to recognize Christ (407/417). Consenting to the presence of the absence at the table of the risen Lord is accepting that break, that gap at the heart of the Eucharist. It is to acknowledge a presence that is always mediated by an absence.

Consent to the presence of the absence of God in the Eucharist is a pneumatological consent. The absence mediated through the church is the work of the Spirit, in whom God comes closest to humankind yet also remains the most distant:

> The Spirit of God is ungraspable, always-surprising, always-elusive; it is the God who cannot be managed, continually spilling over every religious institution; it is the God who is omnipresent, renewing the face of the earth and penetrating to the deepest recesses of the human hearts, but at the same time indescribable according to human categories and without an assignable place among human works….The Spirit is God both in God's absolute difference and in God's most intimate communication with humankind, God as the unknown beyond every word and as the inspirer of the unspoken intimations of the truth of every word before all statements and in the fissures of human discourse (513-514).

The Spirit is the *blank space of God* which, still fully God's self, works against our attempts to manipulate God, keeping us ever open to the question of the identity of God (517/528). Unnamable and unmanageable, investing humanity with the resurrectional power of Christ, in the Eucharist the Spirit "clearly appears as the *agent of the Word's burial in the flesh*, more precisely, after Easter, as the agent of the *disappearance* of the Risen One into the flesh, which is thus sacramentally, of humanity and the world" (526/536). To remain in the presence of the absence of God, then, requires an eschatological openness to the Spirit who calls forth in us a *hymn of silence* and evokes within us those *sighs too deep for words*. Consent to the presence of the absence in the Eucharist, writes Chauvet, demands that we abandon our quest for a *dead* body, and find in its place a Spirit irreducible to our concepts, ideologies, discourses, or experiences about God. It is a consent to an absence we can neither manage nor contain, an absence through which Christ moves us into presence.

As for Certeau in his attentiveness to the absences of everyday life as he walked the ruins of Christianity in his own time, to consent to the present absence of Christ in the Eucharist in a consumer culture is to confess the distance of God not as deficiency, but as hope. If the Eucharist prevents us from indulging in fantasies about a church that might exist outside the market or a Eucharist that might help us better resist it, a consent to the present absence of the Risen Lord roots us in a hope irreducible to its contingent captivities, visible and invisible. It is an eschatological hope that sees the activity of God at work in and in spite of the brokenness of a Eucharistic practice captive to the logic of a consumer culture, at work even in and in spite of the brokenness of that culture itself. The Eucharist holds forth the present absence of all the hopes we have not yet learned to have,

beyond what we can sing, pray, or imagine. It grounds us in the hope of the present absence of the body of Christ that gives rise to the cry of fallen wishes and dreams of a commodified world even as it reveals the brokenness of the promises of that world.

It is precisely in confessing such a hope that Enrique Dussel's questions about the work of justice in the world judge this project most forcefully. A hope that insists it's not all up to us is at constant risk of shrugging off the hardest questions about justice in consumer culture by pleading finitude: If God works in and in spite of our resistance, even in and in spite of our most crass activity on the market and our misshapen desire for all the wrong things, then why do, say, or pray anything at all?

But a Eucharistic hope untethered to human activity neither excuses us from the daily labor of working for the bread of justice nor easily absolves us of our complicities in the daily breads of injustice. Our most faithful responses to the grace of God are found precisely in those daily acts of love and justice that we know will never finally bring forth the kingdom nor even result in a modest overthrow of the market. And so a hope beyond resistance does not cease to call forth our faithful prescriptions for the mending of Eucharistic practice in light of the clear and present excesses of contemporary consumer culture. Neither does it cease to call forth our tactics of everyday resistance to its ever-intensifying power. But it imbues them with an eschatological humility that sees that our most careful prescriptions and our most faithful responses are incomplete and even commodified. It is a hope that does not finally depend on them. And precisely because it does not all depend on us, it is a hope that frees us to invest in them more deeply and with a clearer vision of both their limitations and their possibilities in response to the body and blood poured out for the life of the world.

After the Eucharistic conversion at the Río Arimao that evoked in him a lifelong commitment to fighting the enslavement of the indigenous people of Cuba, Bartolomé de Las Casas continued to celebrate the Eucharist for thirty years before finally condemning publicly the sin of holding African slaves. Too confidently matching the bread he blessed, broke, and shared with the bread of transcendent justice covers over the present absence of the necessary gap between the two. On the one hand, it depends on the illusion of a pure bread we might make possible in this world, and on the other, it limits the activity of the present absence of the Ascended Lord at work in and in spite of our imperfect offerings. To affirm God's sovereign activity in the Eucharist through which God brings about God's own purposes is to hold firm to the promise of a Eucharistic hope that makes present the Bread of Life even through the bread of injustice. The deepest contours of Eucharistic hope in a commodified world are shaped by the same promise of redemption, a redemption that comes in and in spite of our best efforts to resist.

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