

The International Institute for Christian Studies ~
“From Ivory Tower to Global Impact”

“After Learning: The Liturgical Consummation of Worldviews”
Part Two

Introduction: How to Give a Pill to a Cat!

1. Pick up cat and cradle it in the crook of your left arm as if holding a baby. Position right forefinger and thumb on either side of cat's mouth and gently apply pressure to cheeks while holding pill in right hand. As cat opens mouth, pop pill into mouth. Allow cat to close mouth and swallow.
2. Retrieve pill from floor and cat from behind sofa. Cradle cat in left arm and repeat process.
3. Retrieve cat from bedroom, and throw soggy pill away.
4. Take new pill from foil wrap, cradle cat in left arm, holding rear paws tightly with left hand. Force jaws open and push pill to back of mouth with right forefinger. Hold mouth shut for a count of ten.
5. Retrieve pill from goldfish bowl and cat from top of wardrobe. Call spouse from garden.
6. Kneel on floor with cat wedged firmly between knees, hold front and rear paws. Ignore low growls emitted by cat. Get spouse to hold head firmly with one hand while forcing the pill down the cat's mouth rubbing its throat vigorously.
7. Retrieve cat which climbed up curtains to the curtain rail; get another pill from foil wrap. Make note to buy new curtains. Carefully sweep shattered figurines and vases from hearth and set to one side for gluing later.
8. Wrap cat in large towel and get spouse to lie on cat with head just visible from below armpit. Put pill in end of drinking straw, force mouth open with pencil and blow the pill into the cat's mouth through the drinking straw.
9. Check label to make sure pill not harmful to humans, drink root beer to take taste away. Apply Band-Aid to spouse's forearm and remove blood from carpet with cold water and soap.

10. Retrieve cat from neighbor's shed. Get another pill. Force the cat's mouth open with dessert spoon and attempt to insert pill.
11. Call fire department to retrieve the darn cat from a tree across the road. Check records for date of last tetanus shot. Apologize to neighbor who crashed into fence while swerving to avoid cat. Call insurance company.
12. Take last pill from foil wrap. Tie the cat's front paws to rear paws with garden twine. Push pill into mouth, while holding cat's head vertically and pour a small amount of water in cat's mouth to wash pill down.
13. Get spouse to drive you to the emergency room, sit quietly while doctor stitches fingers and forearm and removes pill remnants from right eye.
14. Arrange for SPCA to collect the mutant cat from *you know where* and call local pet shop to see if they have any hamsters.

The Mega-Church and Worldview Mistakes

Effectively applying a Christian worldview in personal and professional life, whether as a Christian or an academician, may be just about as challenging as getting a cat to take a pill! Would that it were a dog! Mistakes abound!

And speaking of mistakes, hopefully you will remember the comparison I made in my previous talk between the mega-church and worldview mistakes. If the mega-church mistake consists in the naïveté that ecclesiastical engagement in terms of church attendance and ministerial activity is necessarily life-changing, then the worldview mistake would consist of the equally naïve assumption that our ordinary ways of proclaiming and promoting a biblical worldview will consummate liturgically in the spirit of Romans 12: 1-2. There is the ever-present problem of an intellectually acknowledged but an actually dormant Christian worldview. We shouldn't forget that the demons also believe, and shudder (James 2: 19). I chalked this worldview mistake up to three specific deficiencies in terms of (1) *orthodoxy* and the weaknesses in our understanding the of worldview concept itself and its narrative biblical content, (2) in terms of *orthopathy* and the disregard of matters of the heart and the order of our loves, and (3) in terms of *orthopraxy* and the problem of church's cultural captivity and the impact of secular disciplinary societies on Christians.

This was the bad news. In this address, I'd like to offer some good news in the form of responses to these three aspects of the worldview mistake. There is baseball in heaven! I'll begin with some thoughts toward a redefinition of the worldview concept itself.

Responding to Worldview Mistake 1: Orthodoxy

Redefining worldview. Since I claim that the worldview mistake lay in excessively cognitive and systemic definitions of the concept, perhaps we should begin with a counter example. In chapter one of their book *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday describe the formation of Mao Zedong's worldview in a deeply existential manner. They say that his overall attitude consisted of "one core, the self, 'I,' and that "absolute selfishness and irresponsibility lay at the heart of Mao's outlook." According to the authors, Mao's mind remained lucid until the day of his death (September 9, 1976), "and it stirred just one thought: himself and his power." In Mao's own words, "People like me," he said, "want to ... satisfy our hearts to the full, and in doing so we automatically have the most valuable moral code. Of course there are people and objects in the world, but they are all there only for me."¹

While Mao's mindset contained the intellectual component, it obviously went much deeper and subsumed his entire being and governed his way of life, especially as the chairman of the Chinese communist party for twenty-seven years, ultimately leading to the deaths of 70 million of his own Chinese people and this during peacetime.²

On the basis of [perhaps extreme] examples like this one and especially in the light of Scripture, I have attempted to define, or redefine, the notion of worldview that includes but also exceeds its cognitive aspect. I sketch its

¹ Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York: Anchor House/Random House, Inc., 2006; original copyright, Globalflair Ltd., 2005/2006), p. 13, 616. The authors of this volume, interestingly enough, show how Professor Chen Tu-hsiu, China's foremost Marxist intellectual in the 1920s, was particularly influential in shaping Mao's mindset (pp. 18-19).

² Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, p. 3.

meaning in the more holistic terms of the biblical teaching about the “heart” as foundational to a Christian view of the human person.³

That the heart is central to biblical anthropology is supported by theologians from various traditions including the reformed Gordon Spykman who states that “the *imago Dei* embraces our entire selfhood in all its variegated functions *centered and unified in the heart*” (emphasis mine). Similarly, Karl Barth affirms that “the heart is not merely *a* but *the* reality of man, both wholly of soul and wholly of body” (emphasis his). Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov says that the heart is “the radiating center that suffuses all of man.”⁴

These theological claims about the centrality of the heart are supported by both the Old and New Testaments that teach in a 1000 or so uses that the heart is the core of the human person, fully integrated with our physical being, and serving as the seat and source of the intellect, affections, will, and spirituality. The heart is that inward, incarnate location where we think, feel, choose and worship, determining how we live our lives and what we do with our bodies.⁵ Thus, Proverbs 4: 23 and 27: 19 state respectively that “from the heart flow the springs of life,” and that “the heart of man reflects man.”

Jesus supports this perspective, stating in Matthew 6: 21 that what a person values most as one’s treasure in life resides in the heart, “for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” In Luke 6: 43-45, Jesus also teaches that from the heart flow all our deeds and words. “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart,” the Savior says, “brings forth what is good; and the evil

³ David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), chapter nine. See also J. Mark Bertrand (*Re*)*Thinking Worldview: Learning to Think, Live, and Speak in This World* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007).

⁴ Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 227; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. Harold Knight, J. K. S. Reid, R. H. Fuller (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), III/2, p. 436. Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, quoted in Kristen Michaelis, “Woman and the Salvation of the World: Reflections on the Thought of Paul Evdokimov,” unpublished paper, April 2005.

⁵ The Old Testament uses the Hebrew word “heart” (*leb* and *lebab*) about 855 times and the New Testament employs the Greek term *kardia* some 150 times.

man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”

That the heart is the central place of apprehension and appreciation is also evident in St. Paul who prayed for the Ephesian Christians that “the eyes” of their hearts would be enlightened so that they might understand the magnitude of their position, privileges, and power in Christ (Eph. 1: 18ff). Thus, in the Old and New Testaments, for the Savior, and in the teaching of the Apostle Paul, the heart is the cornerstone of human existence. It is the nucleus of the person about which life orbits. It is “where we are what we,” as St. Augustine put it.⁶

Of course, the notion of worldview arose out eighteenth and nineteenth century European philosophic discourse, having been coined by Immanuel Kant in his work *The Critique of Judgment* in 1790. Worldview is a philosophic concept, not a biblical term, but it just might pinpoint a vital biblical idea. What might have the original worldview theoreticians identified about human nature when they conceived of and employed the worldview concept?

I suggest that they were putting their finger, in an adequate though incomplete way, on the biblical understanding of the pivotal place and crucial role of the heart in human nature and experience. What the heart is and does according to Scripture is what the philosophers were getting at unintentionally in coining and using the term “worldview.” Without realizing it, they were mining an insight from the ore of divine providence, to use Augustine’s language from his Egyptian gold analogy.⁷ Having been excavated by the labor and resourcefulness of the philosophers (perhaps biblical scholars or theologians should have thought of it first!), we can now identify its true origin, ascertain its deeper meaning, and take significant advantage of this valuable nugget of truth

⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. F. J. Sheed, intro. Peter Brown (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), 174 (§10.3).

⁷ St. Augustine, *Teaching Christianity: De Doctrina Christiana*, The Works of St. Augustine for the 21st Century, intro., trans., notes Edmund Hill, vol 11 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 159-160 (§2.60).

expressed in the notion of worldview. In using it Christianly, we must carefully to baptize it in holy water, so to speak, define or redefine it biblically, and transform it as needed into a concept useful for service in the kingdom of God.

With both the biblical teaching about the heart and philosophic common grace of God in mind, I suggest that a worldview is our *kardi-optic*, a deep, inward vision of the embodied heart that, in a Trinitarian manner, unifies the diversity of thought, desire, action and faith and thereby orients a person toward reality and prompts a way of life in the world. The heart of the matter of worldview, in short, is that worldview is a matter of the heart!

Worldview is, thus, an inescapable function of the multi-faceted aspects of the heart and is central to our human nature and identity as the image and likeness of God. A heart-based worldview is a cognitive, but also an affective, volitional, and spiritual construct, integrated bodily. As such, it refers us, in a Hebraic fashion, to the existential condition of the whole person. A worldview is not just an abstract set of beliefs or system of ideas; instead, it defines us, and barring hypocrisy, is embedded and expressed in all aspects of our lives, as it was in Mao Zedong's (with horrific consequences, in his case). Perhaps this is why G. K. Chesterton argued that a worldview is one of the weightiest things about a human being.

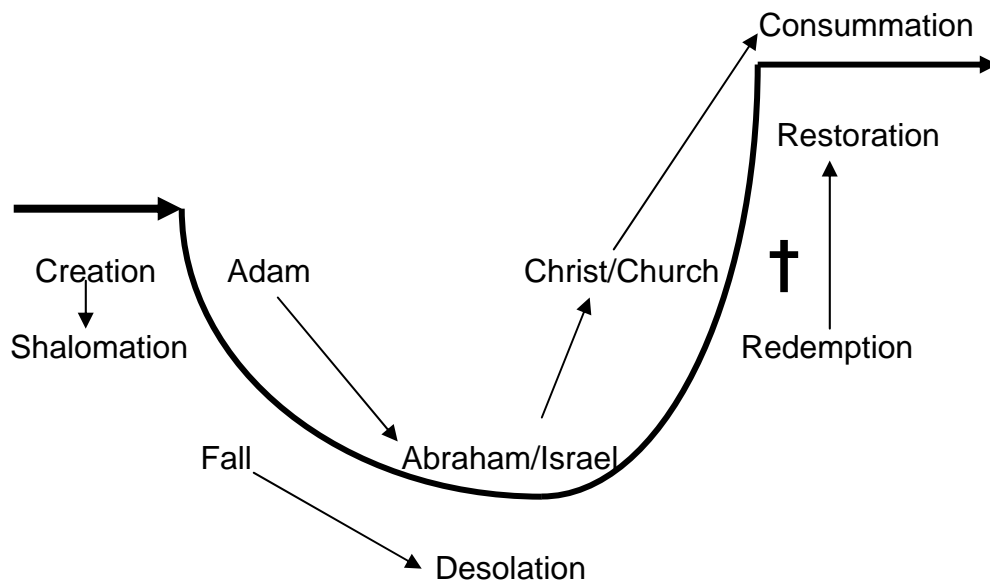
But there are some people, nevertheless — and I am one of them — who think that the most practical and important thing about a man is still his *view of the universe*. We think that for a landlady considering a lodger, it is important to know his income, but still more important to know his philosophy. We think that for a general about to fight an enemy, it is important to know the enemy's numbers, but still more important to know the enemy's philosophy. We think the question is not whether the *theory of the cosmos* affects matters, but whether, in the long run, anything else affects them."⁸

Revisiting the Content of Biblical Worldview. Even if we redefine worldview *kardi-optically* as I have suggested, we still sometimes come up short in our comprehension of the narrative content of a biblical worldview and its essential

⁸ G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, in *The Complete Works of G. K. Chesterton*, ed. David Dooley, vol. 1, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 41 (emphasis added).

terms. The worldview mistake we are addressing here as people of the book is our inadequate grasp of the dynamics of its story and its linguistic implications. If there is anything that shapes a *kardi-optic* as a holistic vision of the embodied heart, it's the stories we tell along with the definitive language and words embedded in those stories. Mastering of a list of doctrinal propositions that summarize a Christian perspective on life is helpful, as is the ability to articulate some biblically-based answers to life's big questions. As useful as these approaches are, they are not entirely sufficient.

The meta-narrative of the biblical canon must dwell in us and we must dwell in it. It inhabits us and we inhabit it as the house of our being in which we think, love, live, and move. In addition, then, to our doctrinal knowledge and biblically based philosophical responses to the big questions, God's story revealed in the account of creation, fall, redemption and consummation, or of creation, incarnation, and recreation, if you prefer an Eastern emphasis, ought to inform and frame our lives as our *kardi-optic*. It should be the royal story we know and understand the best, proclaim with conviction and courage, and apply and perform in all things great or small in daily life. It should be diagrammed, not so much in a linear fashion, but as a "comedy wave."⁹



⁹ Donald Opitz and Derek Melleby, *The Outrageous Idea of Academic Faithfulness: A Guide for Students* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), p. 47.

Hopefully we know this story reasonably well at its largest canonical level, even though there is always room to delve more deeply into its meanings and implications. In addition to saturating ourselves in this broad-based story, we can and should go considerably deeper into the bowels of the narrative itself, to its theological substructure with its plot dynamics, its enriching themes, its literary beauty, its surprising interpretations, and its denouement in Jesus Christ and the church. There are these and other areas in which the neglected discipline of biblical theology could be of significant help in filling in the gaps in our grasp of God's story:

- ❖ The Covenant of Creation
- ❖ The Noahic Covenant
- ❖ The Abrahamic Promise/Seed
- ❖ The Covenant at Sinai (Blessing/Cursing)
- ❖ The Promised Land
- ❖ The Davidic Covenant
- ❖ Prophecy and the Exile
- ❖ The New Covenant
- ❖ The Remnant of Israel
- ❖ The Nations
- ❖ The Incarnation of Jesus Christ
- ❖ The Kingdom of God
- ❖ Ascension of Christ and his cosmic Lordship
- ❖ Pentecost and Pneumatology
- ❖ The Mystery of the Church
- ❖ The *Missio Dei* & spiritual warfare
- ❖ The *Eschaton*
- ❖ The New Heavens & New Earth
- ❖ Doxological purpose of history

For an increase in our insight and deeper immersion into this divinely revealed narrative about God, humanity, and the cosmos, with the hymn writer, we should then sing and pray:

God of grace and God of glory,
On Thy people pour Thy power;
Crown Thine ancient church's story;
*Bring her bud to glorious flower.*¹⁰

Of course, this ancient and flowering story along with its doctrines and propositions come to us in the form of words, comprising the great gifts of truth and knowledge, divinely revealed and illuminated. In this vein, one of my favorite New Testament verses is 1 Corinthians 1: 5 in which Paul writes that believers in Christ are enriched in everything, especially in all speech and knowledge. Here,

¹⁰ Harry Emerson Fosdick (words) and John Hughes (tune), "God of Grace and God of Glory," in *Rejoice in the Lord: A Hymn Companion to the Scriptures*, ed. Erik Routley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 416 (emphasis added).

the Apostle asserts that two of the chief blessings of the gospel consist in the transition from epistemic impoverishment to epistemic wealth, and in a treasure trove of new words given believers by which they can articulate their new knowledge of life and the world.

The categories of the larger biblical story highlight the significance of this new epistemology and philosophy of language. In the beginning at creation, we knew and named the world well; in our sin and rebellion, we misunderstand and erroneously label all aspects of creation; in Christ we are enriched in all speech and knowledge and are able to describe and understand reality correctly once again.

Anglican biblical scholar Sir Edwyn Hoskyns (1884-1937) once observed that if we “Rescue a word ... [we] discover a universe.”¹¹ Of the words in Lancelot Andrews sermons, T. S. Eliot once wrote that Andrews “takes a word and derives the world from it; squeezing and squeezing the word until it yields a full juice of meaning which we should never have supposed any word to possess.”¹²

Rescuing and squeezing the words that are inherent to the narrative of a biblical worldview and its doctrines and propositions ought to be one of the Church’s top catechetical priorities. The church’s teachers and scholars and her agencies of education also have a strategic role to play in the task of naming and explaining human life and the cosmos in godly rather than in pagan ways. To be sure, this is not just the responsibility of theologians or biblical scholars, but of the Christian practitioners in all disciplines who can help us all, students included, re-discover the universe through biblical words and biblically informed words, as

¹¹ Timothy George cites this Hoskyns quote in a blurb on the back cover of Marva Dawn’s book, *Talking the Walk: Letting Christian Language Live Again* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005).

¹² Quoted by Richard H. Schmidt, *Glorious Companions: Five Centuries of Anglican Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 35.

we comprehend more deeply the church's great story about "Who made, who marr'd, and who has ransom'd man."¹³

Responding to Worldview Mistake 2: Orthopathy

If we have a better idea of what a worldview is and of the narrative and linguistic constitution of a biblical worldview, then hopefully we are on our way to getting a cat to take a pill, that is, to a greater degree of faithfulness and effectiveness in applying a biblical worldview, to its liturgical consummation as Romans 12:1-2 specifies. A new and improved orthodoxy, however, must be followed by a new and improved orthopathy as we seek to respond to worldview mistake #2. Thus, when it comes to incarnating a biblical worldview in faith and life, I am convinced of the importance of making the transition from disordered loves and disordered lives to reordered loves and reordered lives which is the heart of the gospel and central to a biblical *kardi-optic* or vision of the embodied heart.

Reordered Love. To be sure, Christ "saves" us and promises us a place with God eternally in "heaven" when we die, or more accurately, in the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 21-22). I would submit to you, however, that this is just the icing on the cake! In Christ, there is also *life after birth* and *life before death*. One of the primary purposes of believing in the gospel which reconnects us to God is that it reorders of our deepest loves and affections and it gives us new purposes and desires ... for our lives in this world here and now!

¹³ William Cowper, "Tirocinium" or "A Review of Schools," *Cowper: Verse and Letters*, selected Brian Spiller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p.353. See the academic works of William J. Dumbrell and Graeme Goldsworthy for help in understanding the ongoing development of God's story in history disclosed in his mighty deeds and words in the tradition of biblical theology. There are also a number of recent popular works that do a good job of telling the biblical story at a deeper level, including Tim Chester, *From Creation to New Creation: Understanding the Bible Story* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2003); Philip Greenslade, *A Passion for God's Story: Discovering Your Place in God's Strategic Plan* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2002); Craig Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Find Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

Our disordered loves give way to reordered loves, as we learn how to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength as required by the first greatest commandment. When we love God supremely and put him first in our lives, we also learn how to love ourselves properly in him, neither thinking higher or lower of ourselves than we ought to think, but to think with sound judgment (Romans 12:3). In learning how to love God and ourselves in the right, reordered way, we also learn how to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, as the second greatest commandment requires. If you are looking for a challenge, then here is a challenge, namely learning how to show concrete care and concern for others as you have concrete care and concern for yourself, especially in light of the love that God has for you and all people. Indeed, in learning how to love God, self and others, we also learn how to love the whole creation and all it contains, not only people, but also all places and things! For these reasons, reordered love implanted in a redeemed heart becomes the distinctive mark, the real tattoo, of the Christian (John 13: 34-35).

Reordered Lives. Reordered love cannot help but reorder our lives in profound and practical ways. Various idolatries give way to a genuine worship of God — in our personal lives, in our vocations, and certainly in church. Intellectual, moral, and physical virtues also begin to replace multiple vices. It's no longer pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust, but rather faith, hope and love, courage, justice, temperance and prudence. Furthermore, the power of God's renovating love breaks the strong chains of our habits and addictions since our ultimate fulfillment is found in God who enables us to enjoy all things in a healthy way. Reordered love also undermines any inclinations toward crime and violence, for now God is the source of our fulfillment and we resort to him, not to various offenses, to secure what we really need. The reordered loves that reorder our lives become the source of the deep meaning of happiness rooted in God who enables us to esteem and enjoy all things well.

Of course, the joy we experience here and now through the gospel is significant, but it is not yet complete. At this point in God's narrative plan for history, we live in between the times of Christ's first and second comings and

much remains to be done. Presently, we have work to do, callings to fulfill, and service to render! Our God-given tasks will entail sacrifice and suffering for Christ's glory and others' good. We are called to a cruciform way of life which is not incompatible with a life of *bona fide* fulfillment in God. We rejoice always and in all things give thanks. In light of these present challenges, we enroll in the school of Christ for the ongoing mending of our hearts. We are his student-learners in a *paideia* (educational) program where the knowledge and practice of the spiritual disciplines are at the heart of the curriculum that we might love well and be found faithful over the long haul.

Josh Hamilton. It's belief over misery. St. Augustine famously said: O Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you! The starting all-star center fielder for the Texas Rangers, Josh Hamilton knows exactly what this means. Currently, Hamilton is one of the best hitters in the American league, perhaps in all of baseball. His batting average is .313 with twenty-one (21) home runs and ninety-three (93) runs-batted-in. For quite sometime, however, Hamilton struggled with drug and alcohol abuse that caused his rapid fall from the top pick in the 1999 amateur baseball draft to a 180 pound phantom of a man in just a few short years. Fortunately, he reversed course and came to faith in Christ. The faith, prayers and example of his wife Katie proved to be the tipping point.

For the last two years Hamilton has waged a successful battle against addiction after many set backs. His deliverance came on October 5, 2006, the day he chose sobriety instead of what was surely certain death. In telling his story in an Q&A format to about 500 fans after the Cincinnati Reds game on Sunday night, June 1 at the Rangers Ballpark in Arlington, Texas, Hamilton stated: "Seeing how she [Katie] took care of two kids and carried herself and the way she handled the situation, that's what helped strengthen me [Josh]. ... It was obviously time for me to end the using [of drugs]."

As a result, Hamilton's loves and life have been radically reordered, giving him with new priorities and purposes: his relationship with God, his sobriety, and

his family are first, followed by baseball and other things. His toughest, roughest days, God willing, are behind him.¹⁴

Responding to Worldview Mistake 3: Orthopraxy

If we want to see a biblical worldview applied successfully in life and the academic vocation, then I have suggested that a redefinition of the concept of worldview is in order, and that we need to deepen our grasp of the narrative, linguistic and theological content of a biblical worldview as well. We also need to give due consideration to the ordering of our loves, for we will not apply a biblical worldview *if we do not want to*, and faithfulness and obedience will be snatched up, fall beside the road, or be choked out by *weeds if there are other things we love and care about more*. If, then, we can improve our thinking and our loving, then perhaps we can also make a little progress on our doing. A little bit better orthodoxy and orthopathy just might prepare the way for a new and improved orthopraxy!

Here we encounter the exceedingly powerful juggernaut of culture — indeed, the juggernaut of cultural captivity and our babylonization — which so often not only gets the upper hand, but also the upper heart and upper head as well! Under the influence of its governmentalities, its government through the power of so-called knowledge, its regimes of practices, its rituals of formation, culture fashions us into its image and steers our conduct into its prescribed direction.

How do we resist the sinister influence of its competing stories, its alternative loves, and its irreligious lifestyles? What is the anti-dote to an overwhelming worldliness that we might be delivered from our cultural captivity and be set free?

¹⁴ Jean-Jacques Taylor, “Lending a Hand: Hamilton was able to quit with help of wife, who never quit believing in him,” *The Dallas Morning News*, Monday, June 2, 2008, pp. C1, 8.

Cultural freedom. Part of the answer has already been given. If we wish to live freely regardless of our cultural context or political environment, by the grace of God we embrace the revealed worldview *kardi-optic* of the Scriptures which conveys the master story of creation, fall and redemption as the essential vision of our embodied hearts. The gospel, generously understood as the entire narrative of the Bible, progressively transforms our hearts and refashions us as the image and likeness of God. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; new things have come. Consequently we see or perceive differently, and we have new loves and affections, new purposes and desires. Essentially we have exchanged an old culture that kept us in bondage for a new culture in Christ and the Holy Spirit that sets us free! Or if you will, we have been graciously captivated by a new, authoritative biblically-based governmentality that governs or steers us in the conduct of our conduct.

Disciplinary society of the kingdom of God. In other words, this new Christian culture is an alternative disciplinary society of its own with various regimes of practices or rituals of formation that have the power to shape the counter cultural resistance identities of Christians since considerable cultural competition lingers, and we are prone to wander, Lord we feel it, we are prone to leave the God we love. What rituals of formation, what regimes of practices, what Christian disciplines will enable us to resist the *Zeitgeist* and set us on the cruciform pathway of Jesus and keep us there?

We need not reinvent the wheel in terms of the Christian disciplines. They have been around for a long time, indeed, since the Old Testament and the early church. In our day and age, Richard Foster appears to be the father of what we might call the current spiritual disciplines movement, especially among Protestants. In his ground-breaking book, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*,¹⁵ Foster explains and illustrates twelve classic disciplines under

¹⁵ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 25th Anniversary edition (New York: HarperCollins, 2002). Subsequent page numbers in parentheses are found in this volume.

three major categories. First, he describes the “Inward Disciplines” of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study (pp. 13-76). Second, he takes a look at the “Outward Disciplines” of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service (pp. 77-140). Third, he reflects on the “Corporate Disciplines” of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration (pp. 141-201). Obviously, Foster has taken Paul’s injunction in 1 Timothy 4: 7b seriously where the apostle says, “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”

Dallas Willard has also followed Paul’s admonition and in Foster’s wake in a work titled *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*.¹⁶ His main point in this book is that “we can become like Christ by doing one thing — by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father” (p. ix).

For Willard, there are two large categories of fifteen total disciplines that make this possible. First, since we are “to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11), Willard believes that the “Disciplines of Abstinence,” comprised of solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice, will help us to “exhale” typical sins of commission that undermine Christ-like character and living (pp. 159-75). On the other hand, such self-restraint creates space in our lives for things that need to be there, “inhaling” as it were, the “Disciplines of Engagement,” such as study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission, which otherwise might be missing in our lives — that is, the proverbial sins of omission (pp. 175-90). Whether of abstinence or engagement, “The spirit of the disciplines . . . is this love of Jesus, with its steadfast longing and resolute will to be like him” (p. 251).

In addition to thinking of the disciplines as inward, outward, or corporate practices as Foster does, or as disciplines of abstinence or engagement as

¹⁶ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988). Subsequent page numbers in parentheses are found in this volume.

Willard proposes, it is also possible to think of them in a third way as either *mandated or prudential*.¹⁷ Practices that are *mandated* in the Bible must be part of every Christian's life. These include worship, prayer, fasting, attention to God's word, communion, fellowship, forgiveness, thanksgiving, confession of sin, giving, hospitality, resting, and so on. At the same time, there are also *prudential* disciplines that are not commanded in Scripture, but we would probably be wise to pursue them — keeping a journal, for example, or spiritual jogging or walking, going on a retreat, fasting from technology, participating in small groups, having a quiet time, and other, similar pursuits. In the midst of our Christian quest to correct living assisted by the spiritual disciplines, let us not forget, as Kathleen Norris reminds us, that "... it is in the routine and the everyday that we find the possibilities for the greatest transformation."¹⁸

Conclusion: The Role of the Church

So, if we have made some mid-course corrections in our orthodoxy, our orthopathy and our orthopraxy with a view to the application or liturgical consummation of a biblical worldview in the spirit of Romans 12:1-2, then how should we make these corrections concrete and consistent? My answer may surprise you. I do not recommend redoubled educational efforts as in more books to read, or lectures to hear, or conferences to attend (as valuable as these things may be). Rather, I recommend that if we wish foster the liturgical consummation of a biblical worldview, then the church and her liturgies are the key. The wild card option that would best promote the application of a biblical worldview in every area of life — getting the cat to swallow that pill — is to be found in the church and her worship.

The trouble is that we don't necessarily see the local church as essential to the liturgical consummation of a biblical worldview. Michael Lindsay has reported in his recent book *Faith in the Halls of Power* that the better educated

¹⁷ *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, s.v., "Spiritual Disciplines."

¹⁸ Kathleen Norris, *The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and "Women's Work,"* 1998 Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 82.

and more “cosmopolitan” evangelicals sustain rather loose, ambiguous relationships with local churches, and instead invest their time and money in other Christian networks and para-church organizations, or perhaps mega-churches, but not in community oriented, local parishes for the most part.¹⁹

In addition to a number of sociologically interesting reasons for this abdication of local churches as centers for worship, spiritual growth and cultural change, especially on the part of allegedly sophisticated evangelical types, one reason for this may be what J. I. Packer has referred to as the “stunted ecclesiology” of evangelical Christianity and its loss of genuine “churchliness.”²⁰ If evangelical ecclesiology is, indeed, rather paltry, then its paltriness might explain why many have overlooked the church as the divinely ordained location for the liturgical consummation of a biblical worldview. Perhaps we need to adjust our perspective.

For about thirty years now I have been haunted by a point made by Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann in his book *For the Life of the World*, the purpose of which is to outline an Orthodox Christian worldview with students particularly in mind. When in the preface to this work, Schmemmann asks how it might be possible to hold the themes of creation, fall, and redemption together in a unified manner as the church’s essential story, he states the following.

It is my certitude that the answer comes to us not from neat intellectual theories, but above all from that living and unbroken experience of the Church which she reveals and communicates to us in her worship, in the *leitourgia* always making her that which she is: the sacrament of the world, the sacrament of the Kingdom — their gift to us *in Christ*.²¹

¹⁹ D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 222-23.

²⁰ J. I. Packer, “A Stunted Ecclesiology?” in *Ancient and Postmodern Christianity: Paleo-Orthodoxy in the 21st Century — Essays in Honor of Thomas C. Oden*, Kenneth Tanner and Christopher A. Hall, eds. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 120-27.

²¹ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), p. 8.

Whatever theological complaints we may be inclined to register against Orthodoxy, a stunted ecclesiology or lack of genuine churchliness, as Schmemmann's volume clearly shows, can not be one of them. In the passage above, Schmemmann asserts that the church at worship is the place and means for inculcating a Christian worldview. Stated in a Latinate ecclesial manner, the formula is *Lex orandi est lex credendi et agendi*, that is, the rule/law of prayer is the rule/law of belief and action.²² The church at worship and in prayer establishes the foundation for right belief, right passion, and right behavior. Liturgical experience and practice issue forth in orthodoxy, orthopathy, and orthoraxy, telling the story, shaping desires, conducting conduct in the way of the cross. While we evangelicals would probably take a more intellectual and bookish approach to catechizing a Christian worldview and way of life, the Orthodox would take an ecclesiological and liturgical one. I believe we have something to learn from them regarding this matter.

However, many of us have been swamped by the regnant, Enlightenment based, individualistic, liberal democratic stories of human identity and purpose, and failed to grasp the gospel of the kingdom of God in its fullness as the countervailing narrative, and the church as an alternative *polis* to the city of man in which it exists.²³ Indeed, the church herself — the *ecclesia* — is its own culture, a new city or nation, its own *polis* and polity. As a “third race,” the church stands in sharp contrast and is the true alternative to every other culture, city, nation, *polis* or polity. The church sustains this identity because it is rooted in the iconoclastic language and renovating categories of divine revelation and its

²² Attributed to Pope Coelestinus or Celestine I (A. D. 422-432). See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), p. 175.

²³ Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 2003), pp. 7-8, 36. Leithart explains that this understanding of the church or *ecclesia* as culture, city, nation, etc is a constant theme in recent theology as seen in “New Testament scholars (N. T. Wright, Richard Horsley, James D. G. Dunn, Krister Stendahl), systematicians (John Milbank, George Lindbeck, Oliver O’Donovan), ethicists (John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas), sociologists of religion (Rodney Stark), historians of early Christianity (Wayne Meeks), and more popular writers (Rodney Clapp, Wes Howard-Brook, Barry Harvey)...” (p. 8). For amplification on this notion, see also James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*, foreword John Milbank (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), pp. 51, 235-39.

alternative *kardi-optic* rooted in triune God and the pillar points of creation, fall and redemption.

According to historian Arnold Toynbee, civilizations are nourished and sustained and their fate determined by what he called “creative minorities.” Recently Pope Benedict XVI adopted Toynbee’s idea and applied it to the church or at least to groups within the church. They have discovered the precious pearl in Christ that gives value to all of life and possess a different mind and heart set, unavailable to the dreariness of secularism. Ecclesial creative (and we might add “faithful”) minorities with their persuasive capacity and joy, the Pope said, are “the wings which carry humanity upwards.”²⁴

According to 1 Timothy 3: 15, the church is the pillar and support of the truth. It is the place where God’s story should be proclaimed and the means through which it is enacted in the world. The church as a creative and faithful minority possesses surprising capacity for influence for at least seven reasons since it is (1) founded upon a distinctive narrative or *mythos* of the works of God that stand in sharp contrast to the modern story of utopian progress or the postmodern accounts of nihilism and despair; (2) offers an alternative form of worship of God the Trinity in contrast to contemporary idolatry and its disfiguring *cultus*; (3) acknowledges a different Lord and King in distinction to current political rulers or empires to which human subjects are obligated to pay homage; (4) proffers a dissimilar form of human redemption in the cross and resurrection of Jesus in contrast to a soteriology rooted in science, technology, or the economy; (5) proclaims an anthropology of human dignity grounded in the *imago Dei* at wide variance to the evolutionary view of people as advanced primates; (6) proposes a charitable and peaceful form of human community (*koinonia*) based on forgiveness and empowered by the Spirit of God as opposed to a human

²⁴ Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) and Marcello Pera, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam*, foreword George Weigel (New York: Basic Books, 2006). My discussion is indebted to two articles online: Rod Dreher, “The Visionary Benedict XVI,” Beliefnet, available at: <http://blog.beliefnet.com/crunchycon/2007/08/the-visionary-benedict-xvi.html> & Jeff Fountain, “Creative Minorities,” YWAM Europe, available at: <http://www.ywam.eu/weeklyword/creative-minorities>. Both accessed July 13, 2008.

sociality characterized by self-love, hostility, and competition; (7) presents a redemptive purpose (*telos*) of mission and service unhampered by suffering or sacrifice that promotes love and justice, meets genuine needs, and introduces others to the commonwealth of the church as a *villanova* (new city).

Because of the unique nature of the *ecclesia*, she also offers to her adherents the privilege of participating in a new, countercultural form of history, language, literature, politics, psychology, sociology, economics, aesthetics, drama, semiotics, and so on. To be sure, the gospel on one level is a personal and pious affair, but it is also the omnipotent power of God unto a salvation that restores the cosmos and human culture, setting history on an eschatological journey that will culminate in a new creation that mysteriously has already made its appearance in space and time in the life and liturgy of Christ's Church.²⁵

In short, then if the church will indeed be the church, neither stunted in its ecclesiology or lacking in churchliness, it will necessarily be the locus of the liturgical consummation of a biblical worldview, and that means this: that by the mercies of God, we present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship. And that we not be conformed to this world, but are transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that we may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1-2).

Epilog: How to Give a Pill to a Dog:

1. Wrap it in bacon.
2. Toss it in the air.

Thank you very much.

U2's Bono once said, "Have the peace of God which passes all understanding in your hearts; have no peace in your hearts with the world as it is."

²⁵ Leithart, *Against Christianity*, p. 32.