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**P** EACE BE  
WITH YOU

Christ's Benediction  
Amid Violent Empires

EDITED BY

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*Foreword by*  
Willard M. Swartley



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# LIBERALISM: THE NEW CONSTANTINIANISM

Craig A. Carter

## INTRODUCTION

At first glance, it would seem that the book's treatment of being a peace church in a Constantinian world is about fifty years out of date. According to Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, Constantinianism ended one Sunday evening in 1963. In their book *Resident Aliens* they write:

That evening has come to represent a watershed in the history of Christendom, South Carolina style. On that night, Greenville, South Carolina—that last pocket of resistance to secularity in the Western world—served notice that it would no longer be a prop for the church. There would be no more free passes for the church, no more free rides. The Fox Theater went head to head with the church over who would provide the world view for the young. That night in 1963, the Fox Theater won the opening skirmish.<sup>1</sup>

In the fifty years since 1963, traditional Christianity has been steadily losing culture-shaping influence. In my book, *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective*, I argue that Hauerwas and Willimon are correct and we now live in the “post-Christendom era” of the West. Christianity no longer holds a place of domi-

nance in Western culture and is no longer able to impose its religious and ethical beliefs on society either by moral suasion or by coercion.

But this does not mean that we live in a "post-religion era," as many Western intellectuals have been anticipating for well over a century. The "secularization thesis," which held that secularization inevitably follows modernization and the rise of modern science, is now itself comatose.<sup>2</sup> The Iranian Revolution of 1979, the astonishing world-wide growth of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century, and the pervasiveness of New Age spirituality show that religion is not going to wither away any more than the state did under Soviet Marxism. The role of Christianity in such Western countries as the U.S. versus Europe, for example, varies enough to make blanket statements unwise. However, much of the West is not becoming non-religious; rather, it is becoming non-Christian.<sup>3</sup>

Christianity has now been privatized and relegated to the margins of life. Western culture is a melting pot of various religions and spiritualities in which old paganisms mix with Eastern religions and scraps of the scientific outlook to form something new. Oprah is the great guru of late modern religion—a bit of Hinduism here, a Celtic song there plus a Buddhist meditation practice, and a few sayings culled from the words of Jesus and rearranged so as to fit into the Gnostic heresy she advocates.

This is religion in the modern world. You like the beauty of the Catholic liturgy? Fine. But you like the laid back approach to sexuality in the Hindu tantric sex manuals? You can have that too. And you also want to worship the goddess as an expression of your raised environmental consciousness? No problem. It can all fit in because the most important thing is that you "own" your personal spirituality. We have designer clothes, designer babies, and designer religion. People like Oprah Winfrey get rich serving as religious consultants who aid individuals in sorting through the options and choosing what is "best for them" in the flea market of religion.

But there is one characteristic that all the spiritualities, traditions, and practices have in common. They are all essentially private and individualistic. In late modernity, there is also a public religion, but it is not a traditional one like Christianity or Islam. It has to pose as a non-religion because it relegated Christianity to the realm of the private by claiming that all religion must be expelled from the public square. Nevertheless, it functions as the established religion of Western culture. It presents itself as being absolutely true and binding as do all serious religions—even to the point of demanding blood sacrifice. This public religion is the Constantinian established religion of the late

modern West. It is not Christianity but it *is* a derivative of Christianity, a heretical off-shoot of orthodox Christianity sometimes called "Liberalism." Liberalism is the new Constantinianism. But what do I mean by liberalism? To answer that question, we need to examine some history and define some terms.

## **THE RISE OF LIBERALISM**

The early church emerged from its struggle with the persecuting Roman Empire by creating a Christian culture that endured for over a thousand years called Western Christendom. Its high point was the thirteenth century, and it began to decline from the fourteenth century on. Eventually, Christendom was replaced by modernity. Late medieval philosophical trends, the Renaissance, and the Reformation were all important, but the key moment in the creation of modernity was the Enlightenment.

### ***The Enlightenment***

The Enlightenment was a movement in European thought that began to flourish in the seventeenth century and continues to this day. After the devastating Protestant-Catholic Wars of Religion that began after the Reformation and ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, most European intellectuals and politicians came to see traditional religion as a threat to public peace that must be banished from the public square.

As William Cavanaugh shows, this led to the invention of two things: the realm of the private, to which religion was banished, and the modern nation state, which gradually replaced the church in Western society and came to be seen as the source and guarantor of human rights, liberty, justice, and peace.<sup>4</sup> Religion was blamed for all the evils of society, especially for intolerance and violence, while the state was extolled as the rational approach to governing human affairs so as to maximize the happiness of the population. Out of the Enlightenment came the two great modern religions, capitalism and Marxism, both heretical offshoots of Christianity.

Capitalism claims that there are historical and economic laws of the market to which we must conform and that, if we respect freedom of trade and commerce, then prosperity is sure to follow. Capitalism presents itself as the scientific discovery of the laws by which economics works in much the same way as Newtonian physics is a discovery of the laws by which the physical world works. Capitalism claims to be the highest development of civilization to date because,

for the first time, we have begun to manage our political economy according to reason.

Marxism builds on capitalism but sees capitalism as a partly true yet inadequate system; it represents a phase in historical development as if it was final when, in fact, it is not. Marxism claims that there are historical and economic laws which inevitably will assert themselves in history as capitalism destroys itself, the workers rise in revolution, and the utopia of the classless society follows this revolutionary class struggle. Marx also presented his view as a truly scientific system because it claimed to be the first system of political economy to be completely in accord with reason.

What these two ideologies have in common is much more important than their disagreements. First, both claim to be "scientific." They are rationalistic attempts to apply the method of empirical science to all areas of life and to bask in the reflected glow of the prestige of modern technology. Second, both promote "secularism." But what is secularism? It is crucially important to realize that it is not the same as "the secular." Before Christianity, there was no such thing as "the secular" because society as a whole was sacralized. The concept of "the secular" emerges in the thought of St. Augustine.<sup>5</sup>

For Augustine, "the secular" is a way of describing the world in the present time between the first and second comings of Christ in which the kingdom has come, but not yet in its fullness, and entities like the Roman Empire still exist even though they have no eschatological future in the New Heavens and New Earth. Augustine makes room for both a church which is on pilgrimage toward the City of God and also for a City of Man, being built now in this world. The City of God includes all men and angels who love God, while the City of Man consists of all whose loves are disordered by being curved inward or misplaced in idolatry.

The visible, institutional church contains both true and false Christians currently living upon the earth, so it is not identical with the City of God, which contains the true Christians of all ages, past, present, and future plus the holy angels. Some who are part of the earthly, institutional church are really part of the City of Man. The earthly state, on the other hand, is not reducible only to non-Christians and thus is not simply identical with the City of Man. The state contains both believers and unbelievers because Christians live in the church *and* the state during this age—the *saeculum*. The life which believers and unbelievers share on this earth is the realm of the secular.

For Augustine, the secular is neither the sacred (which is the realm of the church) nor is it the profane (the realm of false worship or

idolatry). The secular is not automatically evil just by virtue of being the secular. In fact, Christians who live and work within secular institutions like the state, education, business, or other areas may humanize those areas as they work for justice and a partial peace. Of course, peace can never be perfect and human institutions, such as the state, can never be perfect in this age. Nevertheless, the secular is not for that reason to be abandoned by Christians.

The secular is a stage on which a great drama is being played out and on which good and evil are mixed together. Both the church and the state can reflect elements of both the City of God and the City of Man. The key to understanding Augustine's thought is to keep these four key terms separate and not to let any two of them become identified with each other. The role of the concept of "the secular" in Augustine's thought is to preserve the critical distinction between what is going on around us in history and the future kingdom of God. The concept of "the secular" creates an eschatological tension, which prevents us from seeing any human institution (not the church nor the state or any other human institution) as either completely good or completely evil.

This eschatological tension came close to collapse during the Middle Ages, and this led to the evils of Christendom, for which Augustine was unjustly blamed because he was inadequately understood. In those moments during which Christendom allowed the church practically to absorb the state and its legitimate powers into itself so that the state became virtually a department of the church, the eschatological tension between this age and the future age of the kingdom of God was slackened.

When this tension dissipates completely, the resulting all-powerful church/state becomes demonic. But this eschatological tension can be reduced in more than one way; in modernity the very opposite happens as the state absorbs the functions of the church by privatizing the church and making it irrelevant to political ethics and philosophy. The modern state threatens to become the all-powerful state/church, a mirror image of the Christendom mistake. When the modern state becomes totalitarian, as it has on numerous occasions in the twentieth century such as in the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, it becomes demonic. It must be noted that, despite currently popular prejudices, the scale of evil produced by the modern state/church exceeds greatly the evil produced by the medieval church/state.

The word *secularism* (as opposed to "the secular") has only been in use in English since the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Secularism is an ideol-

ogy that has come to denote the absence of religion and the cultivation of public affairs without reference to God. Whereas “the secular” for Augustine simply denoted the world outside the church, which could be Christian or pagan and was not necessarily profane, “secularism” is, ostensibly, the deliberate exclusion of religion from as much of life as possible. But in reality, it is only a “metamorphosis of the sacred”<sup>7</sup> into a new form of religion that pretends to be “that which comes after the death of religion.”

Both capitalism and Marxism are heretical deviations from Christianity because they deny God, replace the church with the state, deny the reality of original sin, replace divine providence with human reason, and transform the kingdom of God into a utopian myth. Modernity, in both its capitalist and its Marxism forms, celebrates secularism as freedom *from* religion in reaction to the dominance of the church in Christendom. Modernity is thus a reaction against Christendom’s collapsing of Augustine’s eschatological tension in the all-powerful church/state.

But instead of restoring the eschatological tension, it inverts the mistake of Christendom and makes the state dominant instead of the church, thus launching yet another attack on the secular as a space in which both Christians and non-Christians can mingle freely. The state takes over the totalitarian role of the church and proves much more murderous and arrogant. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn said, the biggest problem with Soviet Marxism was that it tried to build a new society while pretending that God did not exist;<sup>8</sup> Marxist atheism is as much a religious position as is Christian belief in God. Christendom and modernity share the same core problem. Both collapse the Augustinian eschatological tension by identifying either the church (Christendom) or the state (modernity) with the kingdom of God.

### **Liberal Democracy**

It is essential to grasp the point that contemporary Western, liberal democracy combines elements of capitalism and Marxism in a synthesis. The division of politics into “left” and “right,” which arose during the French Revolution, means that in liberal democracy the political spectrum consists of different kinds of liberals. Within liberal democracy, everyone is a liberal.

To become dominant, liberalism had to vanquish conservatism. Conservatives wanted to maintain many aspects of the culture of Christendom, such as monarchy, common law, and religion, but they were defeated—earlier and more decisively in France and Germany than in the Anglo-Saxon world—but finally everywhere in the West.<sup>9</sup>

To avoid confusion, it is important to remember that what we call "neoconservatism" today is just a conservative form of liberalism. It fully accepts liberalism in the areas of economics and politics while trying to remain conservative in matters relating to family, civil society and religion. But it is very difficult to straddle the divide between the Left and the Right in this way. Examples of neoconservatives would be Catholics Michael Novak and Richard John Neuhaus, and the evangelicals in the Religious Right. But in the end, they have to be understood as conservative liberals, not as a genuine alternative to liberalism. So, as far as political movements in the West are concerned, Liberalism now reigns supreme.

Left-wing liberals are often called "progressives" and are dominant in the Democratic Party in the United States and in the New Democratic Party in Canada. They tend to stress individual freedom in matters relating to sexual ethics but are conservative in economic matters insofar as they argue for rather more state control and not complete freedom for the market. Left-wing liberalism is comfortable with big government and top-down solutions to social problems designed by experts, and liberals often tend to draw on neo-Marxist theory to criticize unrestrained capitalism. But their use of Marxist theory is done in the name of personal freedom and they believe that the purpose of big government is to empower individuals. Left-wing liberals generally distrust the family and civil society, but they view big government as the ally of the individual who must overcome tradition and the "narrowness" of race, religion, nationality, ethnic background and so on to become a self-realized, autonomous individual, which is the highest goal of liberalism.

Right-wing liberalism (or neoconservatism) is dominant in the Republican Party in the United States and to a lesser extent in the Conservative Party in Canada. If Bill Clinton epitomizes left-wing liberalism, Ronald Reagan epitomizes right-wing liberalism. Right-wing Liberals stress individualism in economic matters (the unregulated market) but not in matters relating to sexual morality. Right-wing liberalism is comfortable with big government and top-down solutions when it comes to issues relating to national security and crime and tends to reject Marxist theory root and branch as being at odds with individual freedom. But in rejecting Marxism it also encourages the growth of "the national security state" through military spending and readiness to resort to violence to protect the economic interests of the state.

Politics in the Western world today revolves around the clashing ideologies of Right and Left. But in the Western democracies, the

Right does not stand for fascism (despite the attempts of left-wing partisans to claim that this is so) and the Left does not stand for Marxism (despite the attempts of right-wing partisans to claim that this is so). Both the Right and the Left share a basic commitment to the empowerment of the self-realizing, autonomous self as the highest good of politics and in this sense are both species of Enlightenment liberalism. The hard totalitarianism of fascism and communism is rejected, but liberalism leaves itself open to a soft totalitarianism of the Absolute State, unlimited by the claims of the family and civil society, seizing total control over the life of its citizens in the name of guaranteeing them their individual freedom.

The key point here is that aspects of Marxism and capitalism have merged together to form contemporary liberal democracy. While the free market has indeed triumphed, the idea of democracy as (relative) economic equality based on the redistribution of income has also triumphed as well.<sup>10</sup> Liberalism combines the ideas of economic freedom (private ownership of the means of production) with personal freedom (the empowerment of individuals for self-realization). Thus the free market and the welfare state come together in a harmonious synthesis in which the All-Powerful State becomes the guarantor of the right of the individual to self-realization. As Lesslie Newbigin put it,

The nation-state replaces the holy church and the holy empire as the centerpiece in the post-Enlightenment ordering of society. Upon it devolves the duty of providing the means for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. . . . If—for modern Western people—nature has taken the place of God as the ultimate reality with which we have to deal, the nation-state has taken the place of God as the source to which we look for happiness, health and welfare.<sup>11</sup>

As the deification of the state progresses, secularism becomes first thinkable, then normal, and finally mandatory. As Karl Barth put it, "Uninterruptedly absorbed in progress toward its own deification, the state feels less and less the need that God should be spoken about. The tasks of popular instruction and education seems to depend less and less on the theologians."<sup>12</sup> The enormous prestige of the state as the guarantor and source of the resources necessary for individual empowerment tends to raise the state to the level of divinity and eliminates the need for theology or any reference to divine revelation.

It should be noted that the self envisioned here is one conceived only as an object in the material world, and the realization sought is

the full realization of the material, space-time self. The self with which modernity concerns itself is thus a soul-less self and the religion of modernity is a materialistic one. Thus freedom is the object of worship, liberalism is the religion, the state is the church, and the state/church takes the place of God in the culture of liberal modernity. As the successor religion to Christianity in post-Christendom Western culture, liberalism is more firmly established today in a Constantinian sense than Christianity ever was in the West and, therefore, teeters much closer to the brink of the demonic.

### THE ESSENCE OF LIBERALISM

But what is the essence of liberalism? What makes liberalism itself and not something else? To understand liberalism, we must examine four central concepts in liberalism: freedom, desire, consumption, and progress.

#### **Freedom**

In liberalism, freedom is defined negatively as “freedom from constraint.” Individuals must be free to do whatever they want. Whether I can do whatever I want is the ultimate test of whether or not I am free. This is very different from the Christian idea of freedom as the will being drawn toward the good. For Christians, being free means doing God’s will and thus fulfilling our true nature as his creatures. As Pope John Paul II put it, in accordance with the mainstream of the Christian tradition, “Acting is morally good when the choices of freedom are *in conformity with man’s true good* and thus express the voluntary ordering of the person toward his ultimate end: God himself, the supreme good in whom man finds his full and perfect happiness.”<sup>13</sup>

To obey the Word of God is to do that for which we were created and to find joy. But to go against the Word of God is to become enslaved to our appetites and to lose our freedom. What I want to argue here is that the liberal notion of freedom is self-contradictory.

An article by philosopher Louis Groarke is the clearest explanation of why this is so and I will draw on it extensively in the following section. He writes:

In this paper I argue that a pervasive “religion as tyranny” view has its roots in a philosophical misunderstanding about human freedom. The established liberal view . . . conceives of freedom primarily in negative terms as freedom of choice or amoral au-

tonomy. I argue that this approach . . . leads inevitably to a wide-ranging indifferentism and that indifferentism is incompatible with Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

Groarke notes that in the age of secularism, religion is portrayed as conservative and reactionary, whereas those who oppose religion in the name of individual autonomy are heroes. Since freedom is seen as “unfettered individual choice” (258), religion is bad because it *imposes limits on choice*. Noting that great thinkers like Aristotle and Aquinas recognize the importance of “first principles,” without which we would have to argue backward forever to justify anything, he says that modernity proposes negative liberty or amoral autonomy as its first principle.

But as soon as you accept a negative concept of freedom as your first principle, religion (as well as all systems of morality) inevitably and necessarily appears tyrannical. So the best way to counter the “religion as tyranny” view is not through “one more attempt to water down the dogmatic or moral content of religion to satisfy the liberal craving for ever more freedom of choice” (259). This is the strategy that liberal Protestantism has been using for two hundred years now, and it has not worked. All that has happened is that the so-called “new atheists,” such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, are calling for the final step of eradicating the idea of God from modern society altogether. Like the Russians retreating in World War II, liberals have tried to fight a war of attrition and prevent total collapse of Christian theology, but the problem is that liberal theology is running out of territory to defend.<sup>15</sup>

Groarke defines liberalism as the belief that “freedom understood as the right to decide for oneself without outside interference is the ultimate political or moral value.”<sup>16</sup> He argues that, as time goes on, liberalism must grant more and more autonomy to individuals or else it risks making itself appear incoherent. This is why those who claim to reject theoretical liberalism, but think that practical liberalism is better than all the alternatives, are deluded. They mistake what can only be a temporary rear-guard action for a permanent solution.

John Rawls, for example, famously attempted to forge a non-contradictory account of liberalism by balancing two competing ideals: the liberal ideal of freedom of choice (which he calls the “right”) and the utilitarian ideal of universal human welfare (which he calls the “good”).<sup>17</sup> His rule is that the right is before the good. But Rawl’s compromise collapses because his definition of freedom does not permit him to assert this rule. Groarke demonstrates this rather easily in the following manner:

Suppose we believe in assertion X. Assertion X might be the Christian view; the Marxist view, the positivist view, the homosexual view, whatever. Suppose that assertion X leads to the conclusion that "y is the good." Call the claim "y is the good" A, and the claim "y is not the good" B. According to liberalism, we are allowed to assert A, but not if this requires us to assert that A is better than B. But asserting "A" is equivalent to asserting "not B." A and B are contradictories;  $A = \text{not } B$ , and  $B = \text{not } A$ . So how can we assert A without simultaneously proclaiming that A is better than B?

If we feel strongly positive about A, we must by the very nature of the case feel strongly negative toward B. Groarke asks, "How can I powerfully feel, for example, that prayer is part of the good life, without feeling with equal intensity that the view that prayer is trivial is seriously flawed?" So the upshot of this is, How is liberalism necessarily more of an open conversation than any other form of ethics or politics? Actually, liberalism tends to suppress vigorous conversation. The tendency is away from strong convictions of any kind. Groarke shows that there is no place in liberalism for those who have strong convictions about what is true, because those who have strong convictions about what is true also have strong convictions about what is false.<sup>18</sup> Liberalism is self-contradictory because it undermines its own first principles, since it has no way to assert that anything actually is true including itself.

Groarke asserts that liberalism is not a true pluralism; it is rather Indifferentism. Indifferentism is the belief that all metaphysical, epistemological, moral, and religious views are more or less equally valid. This means that liberalism is committed to defending the belief that one religion is as good as another, which is very different from (actually incompatible with) saying that minority religions should be tolerated. One can't tolerate what one approves; one simply affirms what one approves and therefore does not need to tolerate it. Thus liberalism is not really tolerant of anything with which it disagrees.

As popularly stated, liberalism has two components: 1) the idea that freedom is non-interference; and 2) the no-harm rule. The crucial problem is that there is no way to deduce #2 from #1. The no-harm rule must be derived from some substantive understanding of human nature and objective values. But this is just what liberalism cannot do. And, to make matters worse, not everyone agrees with the no-harm rule. Nietzscheans, for example, oppose such a restriction of individual freedom and the will to power. If I am superior and can get

away with it, why should I not harm another person? Groarke summarizes the dilemma:

Theoretical liberalism champions freedom understood as non-interference as the ultimate value. If we do not impose order on society, however, some people will likely prey on others. Liberalism obliges us to intervene to curtail this natural chain of events. This seems paradoxical, however. If *non-interference* is the supreme value, we apparently can only preserve non-interference by *interfering*. It turns out, then, that liberal authors are not arguing for *unlimited* interference, but on the contrary for *limited* interference. But then non-interference cannot be the first principle of justice after all.<sup>19</sup>

Non-interference cannot be the first principle because if we have to decide when to interfere and when not to interfere, we must either do so arbitrarily (i.e. when the mob howls) or on the basis of some sort of principle that would be logically before a negative view of freedom and, therefore, would be our real first principle. This means that liberalism is dependent on some other set of religious and/or philosophical convictions that citizens of a liberal democracy happen to hold and is dependent in two ways: first, to convince people that the strong should be restrained from preying on the weak, and second, to determine when to interfere and when not to do so. Liberalism, we must therefore conclude, is inadequate as a public religion.

On the other hand, Christianity posits a very different account of freedom: "Autonomy is freedom of choice *exercised in the direction of an objective good*."<sup>20</sup> Liberal authors believe that freedom exists apart from morality, so they can conceive of free agents acting immorally. But Christians cannot. For Christianity, freedom can never clash with morality because "Only moral human beings are truly free" (267). But, since liberalism excludes all accounts of human nature and human flourishing, preferring to define freedom as freedom from constraint, it cannot distinguish between choices that liberate and those that enslave. Therefore, vice must be protected equally with virtue. Groarke summarizes: "On the liberal account, immoral agents actually are freer than moral agents, for they have more choices" (268). The more immoral you are, the freer you are. This outright absurdity demonstrates the moral bankruptcy of liberalism. By way of contrast, this is what Jesus teaches about freedom:

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31b-32, NIV)

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (8:34-36)

Jesus is clear that real freedom is based on truth and is the opposite of sinning. The truth is Jesus' teaching, so knowing and doing the truth is true freedom. Sin is slavery, not freedom.

By making individual choice absolute, liberalism falls into idolatry, which leads to slavery. Liberals claim that religious believers are still free to believe what they want and that liberal society does not oppress them. But liberals misunderstand Christianity at this point. From a Christian point of view, the individual should *not* believe whatever she or he wants but actually has a duty to believe *the truth*. To believe anything but the truth is to make oneself susceptible to idolatry. So when liberals argue that Christians are free in a liberal society because they are free to believe whatever they want, they fail to see that Christians do not wish to be free to believe "whatever they want." Christians do not understand faith to be an arbitrary or unconstrained act of the human will, which is the only kind of belief allowed in liberal society. From a Christian perspective, liberal freedom privileges idolatry, while disallowing Christianity.

Now we are in a position to see the real essence of liberalism. By divorcing itself from any substantive account of the truth, liberalism has nothing left to substitute for truth but will. As David C. Schindler notes: "If freedom is choice, then the affirmation of things as *intrinsically* good, as having a value independent of any will and therefore as making a claim on the will, is a threat to freedom because it establishes a limit to power."<sup>21</sup> Liberalism denies that things can be intrinsically good because it is committed to the primacy of the will. This means that liberalism is helpless to prevent the triumph of the will. Its own inner logic leads directly to Nietzsche's position that since there are no objective values, the will of the "Superman" must become the source of new values. This also explains why liberalism is so threatened by Christianity. Christianity affirms some things as intrinsically good. With its false view of freedom as freedom from constraint, liberalism sees this as a limitation of the freedom of the individual to choose for himself.

So, in its zeal to protect individuals from religion, liberalism exposes them to the will to power of the strong. To imagine that we are all safe just because we are protected from religion is a stunningly naïve view of the world for people who have lived through the twen-

tieth century. Liberalism is simultaneously too trusting of political power and too suspicious of religious doctrine. Liberalism is a Christian heresy which is incoherent and thus inadequate as a basis for democracy, human rights, peace, and justice.

### **Desire**

Another crucial concept in liberalism is the concept of desire. We all have desires of various kinds—for food, for drink, for security, for sex, for power, for meaning, and for many other things. Liberalism says that our desires are good and should be satisfied.

Christianity, on the other hand, says that it is a bit more complicated than that. This issue was clarified in the Pelagian disputes between Augustine and followers of Pelagius.<sup>22</sup> Augustine says that our desires are good but fallen and so need to be disciplined—not destroyed but disciplined. We were created by God with a desire for God and while it is appropriate to indulge our natural, physical desires we need to do so within the boundaries created by God's law, because if we seek satisfaction of our desires outside those boundaries, they take over our lives and prevent us from finding our ultimate fulfillment in God. In that case, our desires lead us to death. Our true desire—for God—is hidden in our many desires for good things and the challenge is to let desire direct us upward to God, rather than trapping us in this world only. As David C. Schindler puts it in his description of Augustine's understanding of the nature of evil: "At the root of any choice of evil there is thus a half-hearted willing."<sup>23</sup>

The exaltation of choice as good in and of itself is what makes liberalism inimical to the cultivation of the moral life. Both right-wing and left-wing liberalism are at fault here. As Christopher Lasch puts it: "Ritual deference to 'traditional values' cannot hide the right's commitment to progress, unlimited economic growth and acquisitive individualism."<sup>24</sup> During the Enlightenment, the private vices (envy, pride, and ambition) became public virtues because they stimulated invention and production. Human desire came to be seen as historical, rather than natural, and therefore insatiable. In other words, we do not simply have a finite number of needs rooted in our created nature; we have innumerable desires limited only by our imagination. Rather than seeing excessive desire as sinful, liberalism sees it as the generator of economic growth and progress. Adam Smith and his followers thus undermined the Christian understanding of desire and completed the Pelagian rejection of original sin.<sup>25</sup> Unlimited desire leads to unlimited demand and unlimited economic growth and is therefore seen as good.

Christianity sees fallen human desire as being in need of discipline, so that our desires can be directed ultimately toward God.<sup>26</sup> This is the purpose of morality. Our desires must be disciplined or they will lead us to slavery and death. Christianity sees our sexual desires, for example, as perverted by sin and in need of disciplining by chastity and marriage. Modernity, however, sees no reason why sexual desire should be restrained; in fact Sigmund Freud and much of twentieth-century liberal thought views such restraint as unhealthy repression. Liberals see the restraint of sexual desire as the product of social control; thus a hermeneutic of suspicion is applied to any movement or church that dares question the idea that sexual gratification is good in and of itself and should never be limited by anything other than the freedom of others.

Unlimited sexual desire should be understood as one with the desire for unlimited material goods; the sexual revolution is a form of consumerism. Consumerism is the right word because in sexual activity that has been detached from procreation and marriage, sex becomes persons consuming other persons as if they were things.<sup>27</sup> Actually, this makes the sexual revolution the very worst form of consumerism, since it is persons, rather than impersonal objects, that are consumed. Persons become objects that give us pleasure and are valued for the pleasure they give, not for themselves. We see this most clearly in pornography and prostitution, but we can also see it in the culture of casual sex that dominates college life today.

The problem with neoconservatism is not that it wants to protect the most intimate and personal relationships of human beings from being degraded into consumerism or mere contracts. Defending the family, after all, is a way of fighting for humanism as over against capitalist individualism and consumerism. The problem with neoconservatism is that it concedes too much to capitalism by surrendering the whole of economic life to "market forces" and in so doing makes us slaves of those forces that undermine the family.

Ronald Reagan portrayed himself as the champion of "family values," but according to Christopher Lasch, there is no reason to think that he really cared about their restoration. As Lasch observes, "What he really cared about was the revival of the unregulated capitalism of the twenties: the repeal of the New Deal."<sup>28</sup> So the neoconservatives are misguided at best and hypocritical at worst in attempting to defend family values while at the same time defending unrestrained capitalism and the consumerist culture it spawns.

It is important to see, however, that the reason Reagan could not defend the family is not merely that he was hypocritical but also that

his political ideology made it *impossible* for him to do so because capitalism is based on the self-realization of autonomous individuals and on the goodness of unlimited desire. Consumerism wars unceasingly against all limits on desire. And because it encourages unchecked and undirected desire, it is incompatible with the discipline of marriage and genuine community. Theoretical liberalism thus is anti-family, anti-child, and anti-marriage.

Christianity teaches that there is congruence between God's command and our created nature. Yet we fear that if we obey God, we will be stunted, unfulfilled, and miserable. (This was the Serpent's lie to Eve in the Garden.) It takes faith to believe that obedience leads to joy because especially in our fallen condition obedience often leads to self-denial and pain at first. Yet, to disobey causes us to miss out on the joy of total obedience. This is why we are instructed to count it all joy when trials and tribulations enter our lives (James 1:2). Jesus referred to this paradox when he called his disciples to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him because whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for the sake of following Christ will find it (Mark 8:34ff).

Of course, in modernity, from Descartes and Kant on, nature is conceived very differently from Christianity. In modernity, freedom is power to choose arbitrarily; the will of the value-creating human person is fundamental. So, rather than seeing nature as something with which we as creatures must come to terms in some way, liberalism sees nature (including human nature) as just so much raw material that we can conquer, manipulate, and shape according to our will.

### **Consumption/Work**

A third important concept in understanding liberalism is that of consumption, which replaces work in the lives of modern people. The conservative and Christian view of life sees work as a task set by God for human life, a task that is supposed to be rewarding and enriching, though difficult and taxing. In such a world view, work is intrinsically valuable. Christianity's understanding of work derives from the Bible. God placed Adam in the Garden before the Fall and told him to "work it and take care of it" (Gen. 2:15 NIV).

For modern liberals, however, work is a necessary evil. In industrial society, it is often boring, fragmented, and repetitive. Workers often are cut off from the joy and satisfaction of making something useful by the extreme division of labor. For Christians, since the Fall work has become more difficult and more work is required to make a living, yet work is still good and essential to a fulfilling life. For Chris-

tians, struggle is part of life in this world. But for liberals, the goal is to reduce the need to work as much as possible and ideally to eliminate it altogether one day. Here we have a disagreement over what is really most conducive to true humanism: work and struggle or leisure and consumption.

Through work we make material things and these things are useful and helpful. The value of things partly derives from the work of making them, in the Christian worldview. But for liberals, only the consumption of material goods and services has value, so if consumption can happen without human labor by means of machines, that is all the better.

For Christians, leisure is a blessing and the Sabbath is a day of rest for refreshment and preparation for more work. But for liberals, leisure is an end in itself; ideally every day could be Sabbath, in which case, of course, it would no longer have the character of a sabbath. For Christians, work has inherent value and is one of the chief ways by which persons express their personhood. For liberals, work is degrading and meaningless; the meaning of life is consuming things.

### **Progress**

Next we must consider the notion of progress. At the heart of liberalism is the belief in progress. Liberals view Modernity as progress insofar as it leaves Christendom behind. Technological science is the means by which progress happens and is at the heart of modern liberalism. To understand what liberalism means by progress, we must compare four views of history.

First, there is the *cyclical view*. This is the default view of most of the world and the most common view before the rise of Israel and Christianity. Eastern civilization views history as an endlessly repeating circle on the model of the agricultural seasons. The universe is seen as eternal and souls are reincarnated according to how people live during their lifetimes. There is no progress in this view except for individual souls in the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Second, there is the *biblical-Augustinian view*. This view builds on the self-revelation of God to Israel, which culminated in Jesus Christ. The period of history we now live in is the period between the first and second comings of Christ. It is the time for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world. We bear witness to the kingdom, but we do not bring it into being for that is the work of Christ. This period of history will come to an end with the second coming of Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead and bring into being the union of Heaven and Earth and the renewal of all things.

Third, there is the *utopian view*. This view can be either secular or religious. It believes that we can build a perfect City of Man, here upon this earth (the Marxist classless society) or a perfect City of God here upon this earth (the kingdom of God). Postmillennialism, the social gospel, liberation theology, and various theocratic experiments from all periods of church history are examples. This view has led to innumerable disasters, bloodshed, and sorrows.

Fourth, there is the *modern idea of progress*. This view sees a continuous and ongoing improvement in the material conditions of life and the increasing self-realization of autonomous individuals. The vision of gradual improvement is modeled on the gradual development of modern science, which is the basis for the technology that gives us material comforts. There is no divine intervention in history, just a continuous development of society by means of immanent forces that will guide us gradually to a greater and greater degree of perfection. As Eugene McCarragher puts it, "Modern political thought rests on the suppression of its redemptive hopes."<sup>29</sup> Just as Augustine perceived the Roman Empire as "a dim archetype" of the church, William Cavanaugh views the modern nation-state as a false copy of the body of Christ that offers an alternative soteriology in the form of the progressive self-realization of autonomous individuals.<sup>30</sup>

By way of summary, we can say that the essence of liberalism is the freedom of the individual to do whatever he or she wants. Freedom becomes a first principle—an idol. But this concept of freedom is not the same as the Christian understanding of freedom. It is actually a heretical distortion of it, which views freedom as choice itself—freedom without constraint, rather than freedom for the good. Liberalism views human desires as good and the indulging of them as the highest goal of life. Therefore, consumption, not work, is the highest good for a human being. Progress is defined as having more and more individuals empowered to realize themselves through consumption of material goods and services. Progress is guaranteed by the market, which produces wealth, and the state, which redistributes it. Progress goes on forever according to liberalism, and we should not expect, nor do we need, a divine intervention in history.

### A BIBLICAL-AUGUSTINIAN CRITIQUE OF LIBERALISM

How do we as Christians respond to modernity and the liberalism which animates it? How can we live in modern, secular, liberal culture as Christians? How do we bear witness to the gospel of Jesus

Christ in a world that views freedom, desire, consumption, and progress this way? Here are five briefly stated suggestions.

### ***Face Up to Idolatry***

First, we must refuse to worship the idol called “the modern state,” which has been invented in modernity specifically as a replacement for the public role of the church. The church of Jesus Christ is a public institution that claims the highest loyalty of her members, who are free to live as citizens of any city, state, or empire they happen to be born into insofar, and as long as, that citizenship does not usurp, replace, or take precedence over a Christian’s ecclesial identity. To the extent that being a citizen of a nation state involves false worship or disobedience to church law, the Christian is placed in a situation in which persecution and martyrdom may be expected, since disloyalty to Jesus Christ is not a legitimate option for a Christian.

George W. Bush did not invade Iraq in the name of Christianity—he invaded Iraq in the name of freedom and democracy, which is to say, in the name of liberalism. What we need to realize is that liberalism is not tolerant. It is at bottom a matter of will and it is a totalizing discourse just as much as any religion ever was or will be. It is a matter of rational argument and, if that fails, cruise missiles. Liberalism is a religion in plain speech—and it demands blood sacrifice. The blood of young Americans killed in battle is shed for the goddess Liberty and she requires regular sacrifice. The blood of Iraqis killed in the invasion of their country is a sacrifice offered to the goddess Liberty to prove our devotion to spreading her message of “freedom.”

As Christians in a post-Christian, Constantinian world, we must worship the God of the Scriptures who does not require blood sacrifice from us. He calls us to put our faith in him and in his Son Jesus Christ, whose death on the cross is the end of sacrifice. The doctrine of creation is an ontology of peace, but it only makes sense in an eschatological framework. The world was created good and only disobedience and self-will brought sin into it and cut human beings off from their creator. The gospel teaches us that, one day, history will culminate in a marvelous divine intervention in which the kingdoms of this world will be transformed into the kingdom of God. Both creation and new creation are historical and we should not expect time and space to end with the second coming. But we should expect the second coming to occur before the kingdom of God can come in its fullness.

### ***Resist the Culture of Death***

Even though we know that we cannot (and should not) create a Christian society or imagine that we can bring in the kingdom of God by political efforts, we should recognize the value of trying to prevent people from exercising the will to power in destructive ways. We must boldly proclaim the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ to our culture and call everyone to repentance, faith, and conversion. But our most important calling is to resist the powers and live our lives without reliance upon violence and death as ways of solving our problems. Insofar as the church buys into the false religion of individual freedom as freedom from constraint, the church will fail in her mission of proclaiming the gospel. We must preach that freedom is found in Jesus Christ alone at all times using words whenever necessary.

We know that, to the world, the Christian message can often seem to be condemning, constricting, and insulting to a "world come of age," which has been "liberated" by modern technology. But we must not be intimidated by the gods of this age who are not real gods; nor can we allow the fear of rejection or mockery to make us trim our message to fit the prejudices of the times, as liberal Protestants constantly tend to do.

We must confront the culture of death at many points, not just on the important issue of unjust war. We must also affirm the sanctity of life from conception to natural death and the right to life as the basic right on which all other human rights depend. We as a culture have a strong tendency to attempt to solve all sorts of social problems with an act of violence. We must say to ourselves, to each other, and to all who will listen that violence is not the solution to our problems—it is the problem! It is no more the solution to the problem of unplanned pregnancy than it is to the problem of how to deal with criminals or with disputes between neighbors. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and he calls us to renounce violence, take up our cross, and follow him.

We must not shy away from the strange paradox of the gospel, that we only find eternal life when we are prepared to lose it for the sake of Christ. We must proclaim that freedom lies on the far side of obedience and that all attempts to pretend that humans are not answerable to God ends in slavery and despair.

### ***Cultivate Desire For God***

In a world full of unfocused and out-of-control desires, we must not fall into the trap of appearing to be preaching a Buddhist-like message that extinguishing all desire is the ideal. Apologists for

modernity love to portray Christians as cranky old kill-joys who hate pleasure and just want to make everyone else as miserable as they are, but this tired old caricature has outlived its usefulness.

We need to ensure that we are heard to say two crucially important things about desire. First, we need to stress that we were created by God as erotic beings whose desires ultimately lead us to God—unless something goes wrong. Second, we need to say that something *has* gone drastically wrong with human desiring, with the result that the goodness of desire has been perverted by human sinfulness. We need to preach that people need not less but more desire.

As C. S. Lewis put it, we fool around with minor things like food and sex when we have been created for eternity and for God. The true liberation of desire is not the autonomous self indulging its appetites but participating in goodness through revelation and learning to discipline desire by turning it toward God. When our greatest desire is for God, all other desires fall naturally into their subordinate and proper places. And when that happens, we find ourselves able to exclaim with the Psalmist: “O Lord how I love your law!” (Ps. 119:97 NIV)

### **Make Peace With Nature**

Liberalism’s destructive tendencies can be seen in many areas of modern life as human beings try to conquer, master, manipulate, and overcome both human and non-human nature. We can see it in air and water pollution, the destruction of biodiversity, global warming, industrial agriculture and the decline of the family farm, the sexual revolution, reproductive technologies, abortion, euthanasia, eugenics, the dissolution of family ties, population decline, and the inability of parts of the Western world even to reproduce themselves, the breakdown of community, loneliness and suicide, the degradation of work into meaningless repetitive activity, the increasing bureaucratization of life, degrading music and entertainment fixated on sex and violence, the total commercialization of life and the ubiquity of advertising. The list could go on and on, but the point is that modern, Western society is at war with nature and that liberalism is at the root of the conflict.

We must humbly confess that this is *our* society that is at war with nature and that we are part of that society. Let judgment begin at the house of God! Let us *show* the way to a future in which limits are accepted and desires disciplined so that we can live in harmony with our environment and in a sustainable manner.

Let us also demonstrate how it is possible to live at peace with our own bodies and to control them with the self-restraint that is the foun-

dation of marriage and family life. Let us reunite what modernity has put asunder, namely procreation and sexual union. Let us turn away from the trend to make human reproduction a matter of technology in such a way that it is torn from the embrace of lovers and put into a sterile laboratory and treated as an impersonal, technical act of making, rather than a personal act of procreation.

This means struggling to extricate ourselves from the consumerism that is destroying us. The church is in such dramatic trouble in the West because we are so enslaved not by capitalism, defined as the private ownership of the means of production, but by the lust within us for luxury, pleasure, and ease of life that fuels the capitalist machine. All forms of Marxist critique mislead us at this point because they all train us to identify external structures as the source of evil and oppression and to ignore our own perverted desires. Liberal theology that brushes aside what the Christian tradition has called "original sin" in favor of seeing sin as originating from unjust social structures has fallen into the Pelagian heresy that the church has battled since Augustine and that has become dominant in modernity. If we ask why the church is growing and healthy in Africa today and shrinking and anemic in the West, we are asking the right question. Do we have the courage to give the answer Stanley Hauerwas gives in his commentary on Matthew? He writes:

The parable of the sower is not often considered by those concerned with the loss of the church's status and membership in Europe and America, but it is hard to imagine any text more relevant to the situation of churches in the West. Why we are dying seems very simple. It is hard to be a disciple and be rich.<sup>31</sup>

Is it not because of our wealth, our luxury, and our resulting sense of superiority and self-satisfaction that we see no need for God? Are we not blinded by wealth, as were so many of the individuals Jesus encountered in the Gospels?

Our problem is, How can we preach what we do not practice? I believe that God will raise up among us witnesses to evangelical poverty—individuals and communities who accept voluntary poverty for the sake of preaching the gospel to the rich—and that it will be these individuals and communities who will preach the gospel with power. Only by forsaking wealth and power can we preach the converting power of the gospel today in North America to the rich (which in this context is nearly everyone). We need to be saved from the corrupting power of greed, the addiction to shopping, and the need for the constant stimulation of new things.

Again Marxism cannot help you, because Marxism lives by the same covetousness as does consumer capitalism. Marxism uses the demon of envy to fuel class warfare and promises the same endless abundance as capitalism even as it accepts the inherent goodness of insatiable desire for material things. But Christianity makes social justice rest, not on envy, but on solidarity of rich and poor within the church. Christianity can preach that the rich should give their money away because riches are only a snare anyway. Christianity says that if we have food and clothes, we should be content (1 Tim. 6:6-8). In Christianity, things are a means to ends, not ends in themselves.

### ***Redefine Progress***

When it comes to the doctrine of progress, some serious demythologizing is in order. Progress sounds good, but there is just one little problem. Progress does not happen. Human nature remains pretty much the same today as it was in the Middle Ages or the Roman Empire or the Old Testament. Human beings are fallen creatures, and to imagine that becoming technologically clever necessarily makes us any more just or self-controlled or obedient to the natural law and to the law of God is just wishful thinking.

Surely, one would think, the myth of progress could not have survived the Holocaust. Surely, there would not be even one reflective person left in the world who would affirm the myth of progress after watching the most scientifically advanced country in Europe, the cradle of the Reformation, the world leader in philosophy, art, and culture, descend into savagery and demonic evil. Yet politicians are eager to be known as progressives, the American Dream lives on, and the masses are willing to believe that the heirs of Bach and Dostoevsky are progressing to greater and greater levels through rock music and “reality” television. How can this be?

People today believe in progress for one simple reason—because they have accepted an overly narrow definition of progress. Progress occurs whenever the gross national product expands, real income goes up, and the standard of living rises. It does not matter if the greatest contribution to the rise in the gross national product comes from increased food production or from increased military spending. It does not matter if suicide rates are up as long as people have more spending power. It does not matter if churches are empty as long as shopping malls are full. Progress is material progress—period. If you narrow it down to nothing but material progress, it is true that we as a civilization have more rich people, and richer rich people, than any other civilization that preceded us.

But is that sufficient reason to call us more advanced than any other civilization? We have used nuclear weapons. We are pushing the ecological limits of the planet in our narrow-minded drive for profit and pleasure, and there are increasing signs that our so-called "progress" is soon going to come to a crashing halt. Yet, the truth is that many of us simply don't care. We want to enjoy the party while it lasts—eat, drink, and be merry, we say, for tomorrow we die. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man" (Matt. 24:38-39 NIV).

There will be no heaven on earth built by science, technology, and human wisdom. This is the dream that always turns into a nightmare. The new heavens and the new earth will come into being only when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory to set up his glorious and everlasting kingdom and between us and that kingdom lies the day of judgment. There is no kingdom without the king and there is no justice without judgment. There is no shortcut to utopia, and this consumer society in which human desire is running out of control is threatening to destroy the good earth upon which we live. Progress is a myth invented by marketers and spin doctors who want to convince us that we can satisfy the insatiable with the finite.

## CONCLUSION

I want to summarize what I have said as concisely as possible. If our goal is to become a true peace church, then all that I have tried to say can be boiled down to this maxim: *If we want peace, we must accept limits.* To acknowledge ourselves as creatures is to acknowledge that we have natural limits—limits to our knowledge, limits to our power, limits to our lifespans, and limits on our ability to change nature. To acknowledge limits is to embrace freedom as obedience, a hierarchy of desires with desire for God at the peak, the responsibility to work and care for the earth, and the hope of the return of Christ.

The essence of modernity is the refusal of limits. Modernity proclaims that humans are god-like beings who can change themselves and the environment at will. It sees all nature as merely raw material to be shaped according to our will. This is why the theology of modernity is the heretical doctrine that freedom means freedom from constraint of any kind. This is what binds together the sexual revolution, eugenics, reproductive technologies, environmental degradation, the exploitation of the poor by global capitalism, and Western consumerism—all are forms of human activity that disregard all lim-

its, whether natural or revealed. They exhibit what Augustine called the *libido dominandi* (the lust for domination).

To reject the modern notion of freedom is to embrace limits in the form of God's Word. So I conclude that, if there is to be any real hope for Western culture—any future for our civilization—it can only come from a return to, and embrace of, law. It is, perhaps, somewhat ironic that, for a liberal culture, it turns out that the good news is the message of God's law embedded in creation and written in Scripture. For an age like ours, law is gospel.

## NOTES

1. Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 16.

2. See the essays in Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

3. For a helpful argument against the myth of the disenchantment of the modern world and for the sacral nature of modern liberalism, see Eugene McCarragher, "The Enchanted City of Man: The State and the Market in Augustinian Perspective" in *Augustine and Politics*, ed. J. Doody, K. L. Hughes, and K. Paffenroth (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005), 261-96.

4. See William Cavanaugh, "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," *Modern Theology* 11:4 (October 1995): 397-420.

5. For an excellent description of the secular in St. Augustine's thought, see R. A. Markus *Saeculum: History and Theology in the Theology of St. Augustine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970). For an updating and defense of his original thesis in the light of recent trends, see *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

6. Emmet Kennedy, *Secularism and Its Opponents from Augustine to Solzhenitsyn* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1-2.

7. Norman O. Brown, as quoted by Eugene McCarragher, "The Enchanted City of Man," in *Augustine and Politics*, 286.

8. Solzhenitsyn discussed this theme in his Templeton Address, London Guildhall, May 10, 1983, "Godlessness, the First Step to the Gulag." For the text of the speech, see *The Solzhenitsyn Reader: New and Essential Writings 1947-2005*, ed. Edward E. Ericson and Daniel J. Mahoney (Wilmington, Del.: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009). For a good discussion of this speech in the context of Solzhenitsyn's thought in this period, see Joseph Pearce, *Solzhenitsyn: A Soul in Exile* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 2001), 247-8.

9. There are, of course, various kinds of conservatism, even if one does not regard Neoconservatism as a legitimate expression of conservatism. Unfortunately, space does not permit us to differentiate between them and consider which kind is most compatible with Christianity. Although it is true that conservatism is in eclipse today, it is also true that Western liberalism is now in serious trouble due to its internal contradictions. This essay as a whole may

be understood to be a modest attempt to clear the ground for the development of a new form of post-secular Augustinian conservatism, which can serve as an alternative to liberalism during the long sad denouement of the modern West and beyond. Given the internal contradictions of liberalism, which this essay attempts to expose, the future of the West, in my view, depends on a recovery and updating of a viable form of Augustinian Conservatism. Contributors to such a project include: G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Alasdair MacIntyre, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Pope John Paul II, and Pope Benedict XVI.

10. This is one of the weaknesses of Francis Fukuyama's thesis about the "End of History." See *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1992). Fukuyama portrays 1989 as the triumph of liberal democracy over Marxism without giving sufficient attention to the ways in which late twentieth-century liberal democracy itself has been influenced by Marxism. It was only by taking up the egalitarian impulses of Marxism into itself in the New Deal that capitalism was able to survive and triumph. Liberal democracy is an attempt to synthesize the equality principle of Rousseau with the Anglo-Saxon principle of individual freedom. Of course, the most important failing of Fukuyama's thesis was the hubris that Western culture is permanent and final, rather than ephemeral and destined to crumble in time like all the other empires of history. It is worth noting that his mistake has been made by apologists for every major empire in the past as well. An essential trait of every major world empire is to believe the lie of its own finality, which is why the sack of Rome, "the eternal city," in 410 AD was such a traumatic event for those who lived at that time.

11. Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 27.

12. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/2*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley et. al., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1957-77), 759.

13. Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* [The Splendor of Truth], first issued in 1993 (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2003), section 72. The italics are in the original.

14. Louis Groarke, "What is Freedom? Why Christianity and Theoretical Liberalism Cannot Be Reconciled," *Heythrop Journal* 47 (2006), 257-74. See also his book: *The Good Rebel: Understanding Freedom and Morality* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002).

15. Interestingly, although Dawkins promotes science as the alternative to religion, his real objections to Christianity actually are liberal and political in nature. In his hands, science becomes a political / religious ideology useful for fighting against Christianity.

16. Groarke, "What is Freedom?", 259-60.

17. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

18. Groarke, "What is Freedom?", 263.

19. Groarke, "What is Freedom?", 266. The italics are mine.

20. Groarke, "What is Freedom?", 267. Italics are mine. See David C. Schindler's excellent treatment of how this point is made in Augustine's writings in: "Freedom Beyond Our Choosing: Augustine on the Will and Its Ob-

jects" in *Augustine and Politics*, 67-96.

21. David C. Schindler, "Freedom Beyond Choosing: Augustine on the Will and Its Objects," in *Augustine and Politics*, 91.

22. For an illuminating discussion of how modernity has been influenced by some of the same Stoic and Pelagian ideas that were vigorously opposed by Augustine, see Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

23. David C. Schindler, "Freedom Beyond Our Choosing: Augustine on the Will and Its Objects," in *Augustine and Politics*, 85.

24. Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1991), 22.

25. Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 52ff.

26. For an account of desire from an Augustinian perspective, see chapter one of William Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007).

27. For a profound and sophisticated alternative to this position, see the writings of John Paul II, especially his early book, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H. T. Willetts (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), and his later Wednesday Catecheses delivered as pope and collected in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. and ed. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).

28. Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 515.

29. Eugene McCarragher, "The Enchanted City of Man," 271.

30. William T. Cavanaugh, "The City: Beyond Secular Parodies" in *Radical Orthodoxies*, ed. J. Millbank, C. Pickstock, and Graham Ward (New York: Routledge, 1999), 182ff.

31. Stanley Hauerwas, *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 129.