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# The Supremacy of Classical Music

Robert R. Reilly | Column

8/30/08

**C**lassical music is the greatest music. This assertion is not based upon my preference or opinion; it is as much a fact as the statement that the noble is higher than the base, or the beautiful than the ugly. I say this because there exists a hierarchy in the nature of reality, including in the world of sound, which is metaphysical. Noise occupies the lowest rung in this hierarchy; it is an undifferentiated mass of sound in which no distinction exists. The lowest kind of music - rock -- comes closest to noise. Classical music exists at the highest rung, because it is the apprehension of reality in sound in the most highly differentiated way possible. It is the farthest from noise.

Classical music uses the natural laws of tonality to exploit fully the inherent potential of the world of sound and, by so doing, reveals the nature of reality and points beyond it to the source of reality itself. No other kind of music does this or can do it. The superiority of classical music is so decisive that I am almost tempted to rest my argument for the superiority of Western civilization based upon it alone.

Tonality is the natural law of the sound world in the same way as, say, gravity is a natural law in the physical world. Gravity operates everywhere in the same way: Things fall when they are dropped, and heavy things require more force to lift than light things. That may be simple enough, but it is *how well* one apprehends the laws of gravity that leads to things like Gothic cathedrals, skyscrapers, and airplanes -- or does not. Some cultures' grasp of the principle of gravity is so tenuous that the sight of airplanes has led them to create cargo cults.

Likewise in music, *how well* the principles of tonality are apprehended can lead to Bach's inimitable counterpoint, the extraordinary tonal architecture of Beethoven's symphonies, or Bruckner's sonic cathedrals -- or to banging on a hollow log with a stick. Is it fair to ask which culture is superior in light of these things? Of

course it is, once you understand the superiority of the things themselves. It naturally follows that the culture that produces them is superior to the one that does not.

The reality revealed by great classical music is so profound that it was thought to be an approximation of the music of the spheres. By sharing in the celestial harmony, this music induces in the listener an inner harmony of the soul and places it in communion with divine truth. As Boethius wrote in *The Principles of Music*,

Music is related not only to speculation, but to morality as well, for nothing is more consistent with human nature than to be soothed by sweet modes and disturbed by their opposites. Thus we can begin to understand the apt doctrine of Plato, which holds that the whole of the universe is united by a musical concord and harmoniously joined together within our own being with that which is coherently and harmoniously joined together in sound . . . .

Great music has consistently been described in this way. Goethe said about Bach's great fugues that "it is as though the eternal harmony has a conversation with itself." What music other than classical can create such a sublime impression that one is eavesdropping on the divine? A more contemporary account of music's role was given by Igor Stravinsky: "The profound meaning of music and its essential aim is to promote a communion, a union of man with his fellow man and with the Supreme Being."

**No one understands this better** than Pope Benedict XVI. In 1985, the then-Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, "Whether it is Bach or Mozart that we hear in church, we have a sense in either case of what Gloria Dei, the glory of God, means. The mystery of infinite beauty is

there and enables us to experience the presence of God more truly and vividly than in many sermons."

How does this happen? Probing even deeper, Cardinal Ratzinger went on to say:

Faith becoming music is part of the process of the word becoming flesh. . . . When the word becomes music, there is involved on the one hand perceptible illustration, incarnation or taking on flesh, attraction of pre-rational powers, a drawing upon the hidden resonance of creation, a discovery of the song which lies at the basis of all things. And so this becoming music is itself the very turning point in the movement: it involves not only the word becoming flesh, but simultaneously the flesh becoming spirit.

Of course, this does not mean you have to like classical music or even prefer it. It does mean, however, that if you do not acknowledge its inherent superiority, you are deluding yourself.

Allow me to offer some analogies. The great Gothic arches in the central nave of the cathedral at Burgos (which I just visited) are a supreme expression of the art of architecture in their seemingly weightless upward thrust, of which the golden arch of McDonald's is the ultimate vulgarization. El Greco's canvas of the Annunciation uses color and form to take the genre of painting beyond itself in a way a billboard advertisement does not. Mouton Rothschild uses grapes in a way that someone only familiar with [Thunderbird](#) could not imagine possible. Higher mathematics exists on a higher plane than the simple arithmetic of which I am capable. These are not criticisms, but simple acknowledgements of reality. However, they will no doubt be resented by those who do not recognize the existence of hierarchy in reality.

This is not an argument against popular music, which Glen Miller, Benny Goodman, Hoagie Carmichael,

Duke Ellington, and many others have shown can be great within its limited means. This is also true of the wonderful American musicals and songs. There is nothing wrong with entertainment or diversion, so long as it is not antithetical to higher ends and does not pretend to be something other than it is. I am reminded of my favorite comic author, P. G. Wodehouse, who said of his efforts, "I believe there are two ways of writing novels. One is mine, making a sort of musical comedy without music and ignoring real life altogether; the other is going right deep down into life and not caring a damn . . . ." Wodehouse knew exactly what he was doing and on what level he was operating. He did not pretend Bertie Wooster was Raskolnikov. Within the genre he chose, he was brilliant.

However, popular music today has become base and often even depraved in its manifestation as rock. Rock music is often musically primitive and therefore uninteresting at best and irritating to the mind at worst. What rock music principally has is a beat. And the beat goes on -- and on, and on . . . The monotony is staggering. This kind of music consistently relies on sheer volume for attention; there is a kind of aural violence in its loudness. Those not content with the mental self-paralysis it induces insist on rolling down their car windows so as to paralyze those around them. The self-indulgence of rock is evident in the exhibitionism with which it is performed. Its grotesque gesticulations are a contemporary *danse macabre* that has as a visual equivalent the nightmare canvases of Hieronymus Bosch. As entertainment it is degraded; as music it is retarded.

If you don't believe me, listen to classical music. Only a gold standard reveals a base metal.

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# Governor Palin Solves John McCain's Religion Problem

Deal W. Hudson | Column

9/1/08

"I've gotten more phone calls in the last two days than I received the entire two months I've been working for McCain." J. R. Sanchez, head of McCain's Catholic outreach in Florida, isn't the only one experiencing this among religious and social conservatives.

One Catholic activist from San Francisco told me she was offering to organize all the pro-life women in the area for a Palin fundraiser. "This changes everything," she said, "my phone hasn't stopped ringing since she was announced." Neither she nor her friends had much enthusiasm for McCain's candidacy. They do now.

Sanchez has also heard from Evangelicals in Florida (they didn't know who else to call) who told him everyone is now energized, from the local pastor to friends and in-laws. Many of them "were going to stay home and not vote." Up to that point, the only grassroots support Sanchez had found in Florida was among the Vietnamese community, which reveres McCain for his war experience. "Now everyone who helped Bush win in 2004 wants to help, too," he said.

Another activist, who had been a leader of Bush Catholic outreach in 2004, told me that religious conservatives had been expecting one of two things: either a safe ideological choice like Governor Pawlenty (who inspired little enthusiasm) or a left of center selection like Lieberman. "Then out of nowhere McCain taps Gov. Palin... campaign morale shot straight up."

In early June, I asked whether McCain was losing the Religious Right. He certainly began the campaign on shaky ground with religious conservatives, and they felt ignored. The situation turned bleak when McCain rejected the endorsements of Rev. John Hagee and Rev. Rod Parsley.

Repairs began on June 28 when McCain met with Billy Graham and his son Franklin, at Graham's home in

Montreat, North Carolina. A week later McCain visited the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City -- pictures of McCain in front of the sacred image flashed around the world in a matter of hours.

In the space of seven days McCain had visited arguably the two most powerful icons in the respective Evangelical and Catholic worlds -- Billy Graham and Our Lady of Guadalupe. The message had gone out to conservative Christian voters that John McCain cared about their support.

But the gesture, by itself, was not enough. Religious conservatives wanted to be reassured that McCain's heart was in his pro-life and pro-marriage positions. The August 16 Saddleback event with Rick Warren provided that assurance. When McCain said, "Life begins at conception," without hesitation or qualification, religious conservatives began reconsidering their level of commitment to the campaign.

Then came the announcement of a pro-life Evangelical Palin as McCain's running mate. Two months to the day from McCain's meeting with Billy Graham, the GOP presidential nominee finally solved his problem with the Religious Right.

What the Obama campaign should be concerned about now is not whether Hillary supporters will flock to Palin, but that the foot soldiers of the Republican Party are back on the field.

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# Isabella and Angelo

Tom Howard | Column

9/1/08

A very tangled situation arises in one of Shakespeare's lesser-known plays, *Measure for Measure*. This is to say nothing particularly arresting; after all, what do we come upon in any of his plays but tangled situations? We all know the agonies and cross-currents in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, of course. (To my own mind, *King Lear* is the greatest of all of the plays; but who will quarrel when it comes to these daunting sweepstakes?)

In any event, in *Measure for Measure*, we find that things lie on the hither side of tragedy. Readers will recall that a tragedy is a story that ends in death; a comedy, strictly speaking, is a story that ends in marriage (or, we may say, in everyone living happily ever after). In his later years, Shakespeare moved on past tragedy and sheer comedy to some plays that have been called "late romances," or, sometimes, "problem comedies." What you find in plays like this is a situation that threatens to whirl down into tragedy but that is plucked up in the nick of time and salvaged.

*Measure for Measure* is such a play. The Duke of Vienna has decided to go off for a break from his onerous duties, and appoints one Angelo, whom he seems to trust, to be his deputy. The joker in this pack is that Angelo, while a generally admirable man, has no self-knowledge. When he steps into power, he suddenly becomes an inquisitor, blithely unaware of his own feet of clay. He sets about rooting up all sin from Vienna.

Now this might seem all very well in theory. But such a draconian scheme has never, alas, worked in our mortal situation. It can't be done. And, to add to the fun, Angelo falls into the very sin on which he has fixed his scrutiny, namely sexual immorality. He wants to expunge all harlotry and fornication from the city -- and then does his best to seduce young Isabella, a very pure maiden indeed. She has come to him to plead for the life of her brother Claudio who has got a certain Juliet

with child, and of course he hails Isabella with the predictable bargain: Favor for favor, lady.

And we are off and running. Angelo is, for the moment, omnipotent, so Claudio is doomed unless Isabella cooperates with Angelo's cynical proposal. At first she is cold. Right: Claudio has sinned, the law looms, so there we are. She, a virgin herself, is not eager to beg on behalf of carnal squalor. But then pity for her brother percolates into her mind. Oh, Angelo. . . . In the course of her efforts to plead with Angelo, we have some of the most touching lines in all of Shakespeare.

She mounts a plea for mercy (at which point we hear Portia's "the quality of mercy is not strained" echoing across from *The Merchant of Venice*):

No ceremony [symbol of power] that to great one's [be]longs--

Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,

The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe--

Become them with one half so good a grace

As mercy does.

Not a chip flies from the enamel of Angelo's rigor. "Your brother is forfeit of the law,/And you but waste your words." Whereupon Isabella reaches for eternal fixities:

Alas, alas! Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once,

And He that might the vantage best have took

Found out the remedy. How would you be

If He which is the top of judgment, should

But judge you as you are?

Outside of Sacred Scripture it would be hard to find a more succinct summary of the human situation and the grace of Christ.

In our own mild and amiable epoch, one does not often hear preaching that so starkly grasps the nettle. We sinners are doomed, having "come short of the glory of God," as St. Paul puts it. In the days when the *Te Deum* was still sung in church, Catholics heard the phrase, "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our judge." This is not a favorite theme in modern catechesis. Our forerunners feared the Last Judgment. They were encouraged to think of the Four Last Things (Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell).

Isabella obviously was well catechized -- and she assumed that Angelo was, too. But that story -- our story -- did not stop with judgment. The remedy was found -- by God, not us. The very One who had the warrant to take the most dire advantage of our plight

was the One who offered His mercy. It cost Him His life (what is that in the Chalice which is offered at Mass?). So, dear Angelo (who comes around in the end), and me: Bring that to mind when you judge another mortal. And recall it often in your prayers, with thanks.

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# The Importance of Borders: Fixing the Immigration Problem in Nine Steps

John Zmirak | Column

9/2/08

**M**y piece last week on immigration flowed from my longstanding policy of spreading oil on the waters -- then setting them on fire. Dozens of thoughtful responses offered a wide array of views on how to strike a Catholic balance between Church and state, mercy and justice, globalism and patriotism.

But the most important question posed by several posters came down to: Okay, Zmirak, what would you actually *do* about the immigration problem? So this week I offer a concrete program.

The goals of U.S. immigration policy ought to be several, with the most important coming first:

- Secure the U.S. border to prevent people-smuggling in an age of international terror, and minimize deaths and injuries at the border -- both among would-be immigrants, and our besieged and outgunned Border Patrol.
- Reduce the influx -- legal and illegal -- of under-educated and low-skilled immigrants (be they from Mexico, Mars, or County Mayo) to diminish the downward pressure on wages for less-educated or less-skilled American workers - - many of whom are Hispanic or black.
- Prevent U.S. employers from reversing decades of social progress in improving the wages and working conditions of the American working class.
- Reform laws and policies that unjustly benefit non-citizens at the expense of citizens, or the wealthiest Americans at the expense of our poorest countrymen.

- Eliminate the most irrational criteria for selecting whom we admit to our country, and instead offer entry to immigrants who meet America's needs.
- Abolish programs that -- intentionally or not -- retard the assimilation into American society of newly arrived immigrants, or perpetuate ethnic ghettos.
- Expose and overturn America's unspoken policy of outsourcing child-rearing to families from other countries.
- Attain a just and charitable outcome for those individuals who have illegally entered, lived, and worked in the U.S. for significant lengths of time -- some of whom have children with American citizenship.

If any reader considers that these goals are inherently unjust, or incompatible with binding, Magisterial teaching, they'd better have a darned good argument as to why. They should take full account of the Church's principle of subsidiarity, summed up here by Pope John Paul II:

Smaller social units -- whether nations themselves, communities, ethnic or religious groups, families or individuals -- must not be namelessly absorbed into a greater conglomeration, thus losing their identity and having their prerogatives usurped. (Sixth Session, Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Feb. 23, 2000.)

That's an excellent description of what happens to local communities when the Federal government neglects its duty to patrol international borders. As a result, overtaxed towns -- from their hospital emergency wards to their public schools -- bear the

brunt of social problems in other countries, radically changing the American towns' cultural make-up and flooding historic communities with newcomers whose customs, language, and civic heritage displace what had come before. Pope John Paul knew whereof he spoke -- remembering the centuries when German princes flooded Polish lands with settlers, as a prelude to claiming those lands.

With this in mind, my critics should show why a democratic government should not first pursue the Common Good within its own jurisdiction -- while showing charity toward foreign residents through generous trade agreements, carefully targeted foreign aid, and voluntary "fair trade" programs through which consumers use their purchasing power to foster economic development abroad. These critics should take full account of the classical Catholic teaching formulated by Aquinas that beyond the stark demands of justice we owe the most to our families, then to our nearest neighbors, then to our countrymen -- and least of all (though still a significant amount) to strangers who are represented by foreign governments.

If people wish to deny this principle, and suggest that (for instance) parents are obliged to deny their own children anything beyond the bare necessities of life and Christian education, for the sake of supporting (for example) foreign missions... well, I doubt they will find many adherents. Or for that matter, anyone willing to marry them and raise offspring in such conditions. So I guess that intellectual mutation is counter-adaptive, and I needn't worry about it too much.

**Granting that the goals** I laid out are not un-Christian, racist, eugenicist, or any of the other pejoratives that so readily fly from the lips of open-borders advocates, one might argue about their prudence. For evidence in their favor, click on the handy links I included in each of my points for supporting studies or testimonies -- and decide for yourself.

For this week, my task is to lay out practical steps for attaining these goals, consistent with the intrinsic

dignity of all the people involved. (I know that at this point I should say "human persons," as a hat-tip to personalism, but it sounds so goofy that I think it uncharitable to readers.)

Here they are:

1. To secure the U.S. border, we must complete a reliable border fence dividing the U.S. from Mexico -- the source of most illegal immigration. This fence should not rely on natural "advantages" such as "impassable" deserts and other hazards likely to claim the lives of desperate migrants. Indeed, in such areas the fence should be doubly secure, since the stakes are especially high -- not just U.S. law, but human lives. We must also track the comings and goings of those who enter on U.S. visas, and overstay them -- such as most of the 9/11 hijackers.

2. Reduce the influx -- legal and illegal -- of under-educated and low-skilled immigrants. This can and should be done by altering U.S. immigration law to focus not on the vastly abused principle of "family reunification" (as extended to include adult siblings and grown-up offspring) but the demonstrated labor needs of the U.S. economy. And there's an easy way to tell what kind of workers our country is short of -- the wages they can command.

If the wages and benefits of unskilled workers and high-school dropouts were soaring, that would indicate a labor shortage and might (all things being equal) justify importing more such workers from abroad. In fact, the wages of the U.S. working class, adjusted for inflation, have been flat for some 30 years.

3. To prevent U.S. employers from reversing decades of social progress by bidding down the wages and conditions of resident workers, cut the immigration totals for unskilled workers to fewer than 100,000 per year -- making space in the economy for young, urban residents to find jobs, form families, and escape the underclass.

4. Reform laws and policies that unjustly benefit non-citizens. While millions of working Americans cannot afford health insurance or attain quality

education for their children, it is simply unjust to allow illegal residents to obtain non-emergency medical care at taxpayer expense, or demand cost-prohibitive bilingual and multicultural programs. For instance, the practice of importing teachers from Mexico into the U.S. to teach immigrant students history using [Mexican textbooks](#) -- as happens in California, Oregon, and Utah.

It is also immoral to offer immigrants affirmative action preferences over citizens. As the law stands now, any non-white illegal immigrant who was legalized by an amnesty would benefit from positive discrimination against a U.S. Army veteran who happened to be white.

5. Eliminate the most irrational criteria for admitting immigrants, such as Ted Kennedy's "visa lottery," which awards the citizenship whose value our soldiers fight to protect in a global bingo game. (See, he's really a Catholic after all!)

6. Reform "birthright" citizenship -- through which a pregnant woman who swims the Rio Grande and gives birth is now the proud mother of a U.S. citizen. This encourages either family break-up or the mockery of our laws.

7. Abolish programs that retard assimilation. This includes ineffective bi-lingual education, but extends through the whole range of "diversity" programs that reward new Americans for continuing to hyphenate their loyalties.

8. Overturn America's unspoken policy of outsourcing child-rearing. Whenever an open-borders advocate tells you that Americans aren't having enough children to [fund Social Security... grow our economy... maintain global dominance, whatever], think about what that really means. He admits that our current culture, tax, and social policies are anti-family -- to the point where Americans are barely reproducing themselves. Instead of reforming *these* policies to

bolster American families, it's easier simply to outsource child-rearing to other countries.

9. Attain a just and charitable outcome for those individuals who have illegally entered, lived, and worked in the U.S. This probably will never entail mass deportation -- but rather a crackdown on employers who exploit illegal workers. As one of the respondents to my last piece wisely suggested, we might well look to *Law & Order* for an answer: Immigrants who report on the companies that illegally employ them could be spared deportation, and granted a fast-track to legal status. The only group of illegals which must be swiftly removed are those who commit other crimes.

As for the remaining millions, as rational human beings they will respond to real-world incentives. When we squeeze out opportunities for them to work on the black market -- without legal protection, safety inspections, health insurance or workman's comp -- through workplace enforcement of labor laws, many of them will return to their native lands where they can actually work. If our Congress could face down the cheap labor lobby, it would mandate the universal use of [E-Verify](#), a currently voluntary government system for checking the legal status of job applicants.

None of these policies are dehumanizing, cruel, or in any way contrary to Catholic teaching. Indeed, they are the *bare minimum* required to maintain our national security, the respect for just and legitimate law, and the well-being of our own working poor.

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# The Other Side of Change: Obama and Saul Alinsky

Mary Jo Anderson | Column

9/3/08

**C**hange and unity -- the two words surely epitomize Barack Obama's campaign for the presidency. Last week's Democratic Convention extolled *change* hourly, in a relentless drumbeat. The only relief came when *unity* was emphasized. What nags at the back of the mind is that the call for "change" and "unity" is not so much an invitation but a command.

I'm a skeptic.

I've learned from covering the United Nations that when radicals cannot get delegates to agree to their terms, they change the *meaning* of those terms. Hence, "health and reproductive rights," though it sounds like innocent pre-natal care, is in reality the UN's goal to press for abortion on demand -- all in the name of doing something noble for the poor and oppressed.

Obama's understanding of "unity" has never been spelled out, but his past mentors -- and even some of his own comments -- paint a worrisome picture.

Obama said last year, "We're building a grassroots movement . . . [to] *unite the country around our shared values*" (emphasis added).

And then at a rally in February: "It is a choice not between black and white, not between genders and regions or religions, but a choice between the past and the future." In the context of the genderless world espoused by the gay lobby that Obama supports, or the Marxist vision of a religion-less world, those remarks about our future take on a different hue. In fact, there's a strong indication that for Obama, "unity" is part of a broader agenda -- a kissing cousin to the Marxist ideal of the undifferentiated collective.

Much has been written about Obama's career as a "community organizer," a benign term that was actually

the brainchild of Marxist agitator Saul Alinsky, whose writings Obama studied and who founded an organization in Chicago for which Obama worked. Alinsky earned his doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1930 and went to work in the state penitentiary. He came to believe that the "social milieu," not personal behavior, was responsible for the plight of the inmates -- and therefore, a changed society would eliminate aberrant behavior. In 1939, Alinsky created his Industrial Areas Foundation, a grassroots agitation organization that found its power in collectivizing working-class poor and idealistic radicals.

Alinsky is well-known for his second book, *Rules for Radicals*, which begins with praise for Lucifer, a rebel who achieved his own kingdom. The book stressed that activists must be "people committed to change." (Sound familiar?) He taught his agitators to avoid the "useless self-indulgence" of despising their own middle-class roots, instead exploiting the contempt they feel: "If we are to build power for change, the power and the people are in the big middle class majority."

He also encouraged radicals to seek "bridges of communication and unity . . . [V]iew with strategic sensitivity the nature of middle-class hang-ups over rudeness or aggressive insulting profane actions. All this and more must be grasped and used to radicalize parts of the middle-class." In the name of "the poor and the oppressed," radicals catapult themselves into power, exploiting the goodwill of the desperate.

Alinsky further instructed: "Moral rationalization is indispensable at all times of action whether to justify the selection or the use of ends or means." Organizers are to drop the appearance of radical agitators and to don middle-class manners and behaviors so as to blend in while espousing their radical visions of the future -- a description that would suit Obama, according to

Joseph Biden's own description of the senator as "mainstream... bright and clean."

The similarities continue in Alinsky's view of the middle classes as "fearful people threatened on all sides" who "cling to illusory fixed points" and who are characterized by "bitterness." Again, this is all familiar: It neatly summarizes the contempt Obama exhibited for the middle class when he derided their values at a swank San Francisco fundraiser by saying, "They get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them . . . ."

Despite this, Alinsky coached his devotees to work with the lower-middle class to obtain

a series of partial agreements and a willingness to abstain from hard opposition as changes take place. They have their role to play in the essential prelude of reformation. . . . This is the job of today's radical - - to fan the embers of hopelessness into a flame to fight. To say, "together we can change it for what we want."

As Obama would do 50 years later, Alinsky used churches and people of faith to acquire a legitimate image (and financial assistance). Alinsky tapped Msgr. Jack Egan for entrée into Catholic Chicago; for Obama, his mentor and pastor was Jeremiah Wright, whose message was never human unity but racial division.

Wright is a proponent of liberation theology, a belief that man will save himself through unified political action. Is it reasonable to assume that the young Obama was formed by his 20 years of friendship with Wright? Can the "change" Obama imagines be the same "change" most Americans want?

Obama's devotion to Wright and radicals like Alinsky is well-known; anyone can pick up *Rules for Radicals* and read it as Obama's playbook. Then-Cardinal Ratzinger offered the ultimate warning against such ideology when he wrote in *Truth and Tolerance*,

[W]here the Marxist ideology of liberation had been consistently applied, a total lack of freedom had developed, whose horrors were now laid bare before the eyes of the entire world. Wherever politics tries to be redemptive, it is promising too much. Where it wishes to do the work of God, it becomes not divine, but demonic.

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# Mom for VP

Danielle Bean | Column

9/3/08

**T**he usual politics aside, there's more to John McCain's recent appointment of Sarah Palin as his running mate and candidate for the vice presidency. While many pro-life and pro-family voters cheered her appointment, some are more hesitant to elect a mother of five children, one of whom is still an infant, to the vice presidency of the United States.

Over at [his blog](#), Steve Skojec summed up the thoughts of some around the blogosphere when he asked,

For someone who is so pro-life, why is she a governor-going-on-VP? She's got young kids. Politics is a profession for workaholics, especially once a candidate is on the campaign trail. If she really is still breastfeeding, she won't be for long! Why is this a good idea and how does it reflect positively on her family values?

I think we can all agree that babies need nurturing. Not just a little bit here and there or at the end of a long workday, but all-day-long loving from a consistent caregiver. Mothers, of course, are the primary nurturers in most families. It's how God designed us.

And this, I suppose, is where some of us get off the train. If Sarah Palin is working, we think, she is not mothering, and that kind of example is an offense to traditional families everywhere.

But do we know that? Do we know the inner workings of the Palin family dynamic? Of course not. We only know what we see.

Here's what I see:

- An extraordinarily talented and motivated mother who has not aggressively sought out political opportunities, but who instead has answered a call to public service, almost by accident.

- A woman who has consulted God and her family every step along the way as she sought balance between serving her family and serving her community.
- Someone who gives voice to an all too often silent majority -- mothers. Mothers of families, large families even, who embrace, nurture, and protect life in all its states and stages. Mothers at home, mothers at work, and mothers everywhere who despair in the face of a culture that all too often fails to recognize the value of their contributions.
- A woman who is unafraid to put her family's needs first -- even if it means breastfeeding under challenging circumstances or holding a press conference while wearing her baby in a sling.
- A mom who makes a bold statement -- a huge statement -- about the value and worth of motherhood by unapologetically combining her family obligations with public service.

We might not understand exactly how Palin answers the call to political life; we might marvel at how she manages to do it, and we might quite readily come to the conclusion that we ourselves could never pull it off.

But that doesn't mean Sarah Palin can't. God, through Sarah Palin, can accomplish what to us seems unconventional, or even impossible.

**I can't help but wonder about** the finger-wagging and tongue-clucking over "propriety" and "a woman's place" that St. Joan of Arc must have endured when she answered God's unconventional call. Only *she* heard the voices that called her to serve God and her

fellow man in unorthodox ways -- and in the end, only *she* could answer them.

God's view is bigger than ours. God's plans are bigger than our own. Might it not take the unique strength and perspective of a woman, and particularly that of a mother, to wake our sleeping souls and at last affirm and protect the dignity and worth of all human life?

In his 1995 Letter to Women, Pope John Paul II encouraged women's participation in society because

Perhaps more than men, women acknowledge the person, because they see persons with their hearts. They see them independently of various ideological or political systems. They see others in their greatness and limitations; they try to go out to them and help them.

In Sarah Palin, I see a politician who not only represents my values with regard to human life, but for the first time ever, a politician who *is one of us* -- a mom in the

trenches. Standing behind her as she speaks, I see a loving, nurturing family that reminds me of my own.

I know that tiny face peeking out from her baby sling. I know the sweet smell of that tuft of hair. I know the preciousness of that gummy grin. The fact that Sarah Palin knows these things too and that she doesn't hide them from the world, even in places where mothers and babies have previously feared to tread, gives me great confidence in her values, her abilities, and her potential as a champion for women, for moms, and for babies everywhere -- at home, at work, and all the places in between.

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# Palin Hits a Nerve

Mark P. Shea | Column

9/4/08

**T**he pictures say it all. No, not the [Tigh/Roslin '08 pictures](#) (though they do make you wonder). I mean [these pictures here](#).

The believers in the Lightworker (i.e., most MSM types) have all of a sudden morphed into upstanding Republican Puritans of a kind not seen since Ozzie and Harriet ruled the earth. So we get pictures of the Holy Family on the one hand and, on the other, a truly [bizarre ritual sacrifice of a 17-year-old girl on the altar of the Party of Compassion](#). The message is pretty clear about where the MSM is trying to go with Palin: She's a scary religious trailer-trash nut, a breeder and the mother of breeders who should just stay in her Alaska log cabin, barefoot and pregnant with her swarming brood of future gun nuts and out-of-wedlock grandkids (like mother, like daughter, doncha know). She prays, not to Obama nor to Gaia nor to the [all-knowing Quantum Field of Intelligence](#), but to God through Jesus Christ. She actually thinks that God hears prayers, even for America. She is, in the words of [Peggy Noonan](#), a feminist of the "How do you reload this thang?" variety rather than of the "I was a victim all my life till my consciousness was raised in Women's Studies at Yale and I learned to be a Professionally Aggrieved Grievance Professional" variety.

The visceral, palpable fear and hatred of her was -- mark this -- instantaneous and took place *before* the Left that is desperately trying to trash her and her family actually knew anything about her. It's a pre-rational thing. Indeed, what drives the search for dirt is the pre-rational decision that she must be destroyed, no matter what the cost.

And so we get, in addition to the ritual media slaughter of Bristol Palin, the astounding spectacle of feminists demanding she forget shattering the glass ceiling, and of the Reputed Party of the Little Guy laughing at Jefferson Smith and his hicks up in the woods. Most of all, we see the [deep, deep hatred of](#)

[children](#) that fills up the empty void where the heart of the Democrat Party used to be. When the chips are down, Herod behaves as he always has when his shot at power is threatened. And so we get the appalling suggestion that "truly responsible" people would have just had Trig Palin killed for failing to measure up to Master Race specs and Bristol Palin delivered to the tender mercies of an abortuary.

To his great credit, Obama himself has told his rabid self-appointed neo-Puritan Inquisitors, "My mother had me when she was eighteen." He's a smart enough pol to know that ritually sacrificing a girl to him is not right and will not win votes for him. But these latter-day Jephthahs are about as smart as the original [Jephthah](#). In their worship of Obama, they are prepared to offer him human sacrifices that he himself never commanded. ([Obama knows](#) the cardinal rule of Democratic politics: that most pro-choice Americans like their ritual sacrifice of children to be kept private, not dragged into the streets where it will frighten the horses.) In their reckless zeal to sacrifice to their god, they show forth the ugliest and most inhuman face of the Left (a face rather like that of Dick Cheney in its willingness, nay, eagerness to "go to the dark side" in order to achieve their goal by whatever means necessary). Consequentialism knows no party boundaries.

[Now, I think there may be real difficulties](#) with the Palin nomination. It appears to be a rather snap decision on the part of McCain, done with little vetting. In a nuclear age, snap deciders make me nervous. Then again, it may turn out to be a great decision. Like [Ross Douthat](#), I'm pulling for Palin because I do think she's the Real Deal, and all my Catholic-Frank-Capra-Jefferson-Smith-loving political sympathies resonate with a person like her. But I also agree with the public ([not private](#)) assessment by Noonan:

Gut: The Sarah Palin choice is really going to work, or really not going to work. It's not going to be a little successful or a little not; it's not going to be a wash. She is either going to be magic or one of history's accidents. She is either going to be brilliant and groundbreaking, or will soon be the target of unattributed quotes by bitter staffers shifting blame in all the Making of the President 2008 books.

I'm tentatively leaning toward "really going to work," since the MSM, in its visceral hatred of her, is already reaching its sell-by date in its attempt to paint her as the Beast of the Apocalypse. I *suspect* the gap between what the audience sees with their own two eyes and what the MSM tells them to see will be so stark that the MSM will lose. But, of course, they will have two months to trash her, and people can be worn down by incessant agit-prop. We'll see.

As far as the "scary religious nut" thing, one of the entertaining stories to watch will be the meme (embodied [here](#) in the marvelously insular prejudices of Alan Wolfe) that "conservative Christians are hideous hypocrites because they didn't gather wood for the auto-da-fé when we pointed out she and her daughter had kids out of wedlock." [Some members](#) of the MSM have already been genuinely (and pleasantly) surprised to find that conservative Christians are not the sexually censorious goons everybody at the office said they were. Such peeks outside the bubble are salutary and can even lead to real conversion, once the unbelieving MSM journo figures out that conservative Christians are remarkably like human beings and that they even believe all that stuff about, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."

But, alas, just as often MSM types will simply duck back into the Bubble, look around at the reassuringly cynical faces of their companions, and explain to

themselves that Palin and her brood of trailer-trash breeders are "getting a pass" because, well, Evangelicals are mainly white, trailer-trash breeders, and conservative Catholics are mind-numbed robots who like to hum "Every Sperm is Sacred." In short, an essential clause of the liberal creed is that conservative Christians are, above all, "poor, uneducated and easily led."

It is this willed blind spot that is, for me, an important wild card in this crazy election. C. S. Lewis remarks that the trouble with making yourself stupider than you really are is that you can often succeed. For months, I've believed that this election belonged to the Democrats to lose. Now, as I watch the sheer, unhinged hatred of Palin and all she represents disgorged reflexively from the heart and soul of Democrat activists, shills, netroots, and journos, I begin to suspect that they may indeed snatch defeat from the jaws of victory by scaring those normal people away with their bile. I think Obama sees the danger too and will marshal all his political skills to tell his worshippers, "Don't stand so close to me."

But the heart has reasons Reason knows nothing of. Obama's worshipers may not be able to help themselves. In their pagan adoration of any god but God, they may not be able to restrain themselves from appalling average people into wondering what they really love -- and what they really hate.

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# Church and State in Presidential Elections

Ronald J. Rychlak | Column

9/4/08

**N**one of this year's Catholic presidential candidates (Sam Brownback, George Pataki, Rudolph Giuliani, Joe Biden, Wesley Clark, Christopher Dodd, Dennis Kucinich, and Bill Richardson) earned a nomination from either of the two major political parties. Arguably, however, the Church had its highest profile in a presidential race since 1960 with this past Democratic primary. Unfortunately, the Church did not come off looking that good.

Sen. Barack Obama took a lot of criticism over the anti-American, racist tirades of his pastor, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright. He seemed, however, determined to weather the storm until Rev. Michael Pfleger, a white Catholic priest from Chicago's South Side, gave a guest sermon in Obama's Church in which he mocked a "crying" Hillary Clinton and made race-based arguments against her candidacy. Obama was forced to leave his church, and he barely limped to the nomination.

This was the first time that most Catholics saw Father Pfleger in action. The flamboyant priest has, however, been a fixture at St. Sabina's parish since I lived in Chicago in the mid-1980s. His Masses feature rock bands, liturgical dances, almost constant music, but not necessarily any profession of the faith. His synthesis of music, showmanship, and social commentary has created a strong following, but it is one based on his personality, not on Catholic teaching. In fact, Father Pfleger may be more important as a political leader than as a religious one.

The Archdiocese of Chicago, like most dioceses, typically limits priests to a maximum of 12 years at any one parish. Father Pfleger, however, has been at his church for over 25 years. When his bishop tried to move him, Father Pfleger refused to go.

According to a recent article by Matthew Rarey in the *Catholic World Report*, the Archdiocese of Chicago has not forced Father Pfleger's hand in part due his

threat to quit and lead his flock away from the Catholic Church, but also -- at least in part -- because he is a significant player in Chicago and Illinois politics. Father Pfleger routinely talks about politics from the pulpit. He also seems to deliver lots of votes for Democratic candidates. Once they are in office, they reciprocate by sending money to important Catholic social programs.

After his performance at Senator Obama's former church, Francis Cardinal George told Father Pfleger to take a couple weeks of extra vacation to think about what he had done. He has returned now, and according to the *CWR* article, he's unapologetically picking up right where he left off. That's problematic from the Church's perspective and from the government's perspective.

**When a priest embraces a political** viewpoint, it can alienate members of the congregation. The Catholic Church does not claim to have the correct political or economic solution to each problem; it speaks to eternal principles. When a priest claims to know the correct political solution to a typical social problem, he is likely going beyond the Church's teachings and potentially creating problems for the Church. (Is his judgment correct? Does he know better than the Church?) What happens to the soul of a potential convert who leaves Mass, never to return, because he was offended by the unsanctioned teachings that he heard?

There can be confusion when a moral issue is also a political matter. Thus, social activists sometimes try to keep priests from speaking out against abortion, euthanasia, fetal stem cell research, and similar issues because they are political in nature. The Nazis also used to argue that Church teachings and sermons against racial policies were inappropriate ventures into politics. These political issues, however, are also moral

issues for the Church. The line can be hard to draw in some cases, but Father Pfleger's liberation theology is clearly beyond the scope of the Church's Magisterium.

In addition to being a problem for the Church, when a priest gets too involved in politics, he can also offend the government. Like most charities, churches are tax-exempt, and donations made to them may be deducted from the donor's income taxes. Donations to political causes, on the other hand, are not deductible. If a church ventures too far into politics, it can lose its tax status. Churches can engage in educational efforts -- even "get out the vote" drives -- but they are not supposed to advance particular candidates or parties. When they do, the government may respond.

Father Pfleger's brand of Catholicism has shifted the balance of power between the bishop and the priest. It has likely driven some people from the Faith (possibly

for reasons completely unrelated to the teachings of the Catholic Church). It could (and probably should) also jeopardize the tax status of his parish. Worst of all, those who attend services conducted by Father Pfleger may think that they are experiencing the full expression of the Catholic Faith, but they are not. They're witnessing Father Pfleger's self-indulgent liturgical abuses and listening to his personal theology. That's the real shame.

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# The McCain-Palin Ticket Renews the Culture Wars

Deal W. Hudson | Column

9/5/08

**W**ith the nomination of Gov. Sarah Palin as the Republican vice-presidential candidate, a fatal blow was delivered to the great myth of this campaign: that religious voters, as we have been told repeatedly, have embraced a broader issue agenda, having left behind their fixation on abortion and marriage.

On the contrary: The thousands of Republicans who raised the roof of the Xcel Convention Center were not cheering about Palin's concern for climate change or the minimum wage. They cheered her for being a traditional woman, a mother, and a pro-life Christian.

The venom suddenly released in the media and the blogosphere was predictable. The spin about a broader issue agenda was forgotten, and the culture wars that were supposedly a thing of the past suddenly reignited.

In my recent book *Onward Christian Soldiers: The Growing Political Power of Catholics and Evangelicals in the United States*, I argue that the influence of religious conservatives in politics was far from over. The issues that fueled the rise of the Religious Right in the late 1970s are still bringing new legions of Christian voters into the political process. The ongoing alliance of religious conservatives with the Republican Party remains secure.

None of the critics of Governor Palin took her to task over global warming. These same pundits who spoke of the so-called "greening" of the religious conservative agenda couldn't restrain their anger at the prospect of a traditional Christian woman being the first of her sex to work in the White House.

**In this respect, the nomination** of Sarah Palin actually brings a different aspect of the culture wars into the presidential campaign: It represents the rejection of the feminist movement and all the promises made in its

name. If Palin becomes vice president, it won't be a feminist who breaks the ultimate "glass ceiling" of American public life; this historic moment will be claimed by a PTA mom with five children who does not fear the intrusion of a Down Syndrome child on her time, energy, or career.

The Palin factor, in this way, introduces something entirely new in American politics. Until now, a traditional woman was never envisioned as the leader of a major political party, because feminism was assumed to be a requirement for women leaders in cultural and political life.

The viciousness of the media attack surrounding Palin's nomination was fueled by its implicit repudiation of the feminine mystique. Whether they are aware of it or not, I believe the thousands of Republicans who cheered Governor Palin were expressing their relief at a woman political leader created outside the mold of Hillary Clinton or Nancy Pelosi.

Thus, the choice of Palin by McCain has a consistency that goes beyond politics into the debate over so-called gender roles. Like the stark contrast that exists between Sarah Palin and the women leaders in the Democratic Party, John McCain and Barack Obama are different breeds of men. McCain is a man who never took any sensitivity training, while Obama's persona and rhetoric are perfectly attuned to the male ideal as established by the feminist movement.

Where Obama is eloquent and emotionally affecting, McCain is brusque and matter-of-fact. Where Obama seeks to satisfy the canons of political correctness ("That's above my pay-grade"), McCain speaks bluntly ("I believe life begins at conception").

Much of the election turmoil over the next two months will be generated, I believe, by the subliminal

challenge presented by McCain's choice of running mate to Obama's embodiment of the feminist ideal.

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[Growing Political Power of Catholics and Evangelicals in the United States](#) (*Simon and Schuster*).

# Missing Mariruthe

Marjorie Campbell | Column

8/29/08

**I took two cars and the whole family** -- including all six children -- to transport the eldest, Mariruthe, to college in the fall of 1972. I was 16 then, and we had just moved from Richmond to Wilmington. "We've been transferred," my father had told me with forced calm, as if pretending "everything is fine" would contain my oppositional outrage. Ripped so abruptly from a social world I loved, I found myself dazed and friendless, a listless high school junior beamed to a foreign planet called Delaware. Then, my older sister abandoned me -- we retraced our tracks south and dropped her off for her freshman year at college.

"You drive," my mother sobbed uncontrollably as we climbed out of the mountains that fall, one child lighter. Mother was bright pink and could not breathe. With a brand new driver's license and a nearly unconscious parent, I was uncertain whether to tackle the highway or set off flares for medical help. Mother managed to swerve the empty station wagon to the shoulder and collapse onto the steering wheel. I managed to slide her from behind the wheel and set off to catch up with my father, now miles ahead of us. Mom sat folded and crumpled next to me, moaning, while I negotiated my first interstate journey.

Over the next year, missing Mariruthe took the stuffing out of my mother. Typically testy, she did not raise her voice against me once that year. Her Irish temper lost its spark. I forgot to talk back and be snide. I lost interest in smoking in the bathroom and devised no new ways to provoke her. We were quiet with each other for the first time in years. "Where did our mojo go?" I wondered.

I discovered her sitting, groggy, silently crying. She never could say what was wrong -- but once I sat next to her and we cried together. My father wrote to me from his business travels confiding that "it's very hard for your Mom to cope with everything without my help" and urging me to "smile." But Mom and I missed

Mariruthe. We found it hard to be happy. Our hearts, filled with melancholy, grew strangely still. We laid down our weapons and let a truce settle upon us.

We talked about Mariruthe -- her roommate, her classes, and her possible new boyfriends. We baked cookies for her and sent care packages. Mom bought me a ticket and sent me to visit for a weekend -- and she gave me Mariruthe's blue bedroom furniture to call my own. We prayed for Mariruthe at Mass, side by side, sometimes lingering. Our hearts, filled with missing, sought God's love anew.

**This morning I remembered all this**, leaning against my own daughter's door jam. I stared into the space now emptied, her body and stuff gone off to college. I was bright pink and could not breathe. I leaned heavily, groggy, silently crying. I felt the stuffing drain out of me.

"Come back," I whispered, my heart twisted with grief. *Come back and steal my tweezers. I won't make you turn off your lights -- or clean your long brown hair out of my tub. You can eat all of the Balance Bars and take my car without asking. It turns out that I actually do love rap music and don't mind it blaring through my bedroom wall one bit. And, yes, I would love to shop with you at Union Square all day on Saturday and I will pay for everything!* "Just come back," I choked, my heart pounding black loss.

"So, this is how missing Mariruthe feels," I moaned, crumpled and folded against the hard door.

What exquisite pain, this business of missing our Mariruthes -- like a fine needle through the heart, leaving a thread cinched and dangling for a sudden memory to yank. I thought of my daughter's thud on the stairway, and her daily yelp, "Mom, you will never guess what happened . . ." -- and the silence blasted a

cold, metallic grip about my chest. "No wonder Mother couldn't drive," I gasped in the morning light, sucking for air between sobs, clinging to my child's spot.

"There is no emptiness like the emptiness of the house from which a child has gone away," wrote Caryl Houselander, pinpointing my mother's pain, my pain. Stripped of our beloved child, we are like Mary -- drained and moaning with a loss we know we must bear. The child must leave -- that person into whom we have poured every ounce of self and devotion, and then more, that person must leave.

And it is in their leaving, in missing Mariruthe, that we are, thereby, made to seek God, I knew. It is when God leaves us, when that exquisite pain of losing divine love brings us to our knees, that we find Him again. I dried my eyes, remembering how missing Mariruthe brought my mother and me toward each other, toward God's love. In her leaving, in the grip of crushing loss,

we were made to seek love again -- and to find in each other the divine we so readily neglected. "I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (16 Jn 7).

"Where are You?" I pleaded into my daughter's absence. "Let me find You again, dear God," I prayed, pushing away from her bedroom, suddenly wondering where my two red-haired, rowdy sons were hiding. I went off to search.

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# 'Greater Than' Is Pretty Great

Elizabeth Scalia | Review

9/2/08

*Greater Than You Think: A Theologian Answers the Atheists about God*

Rev. Thomas D. Williams, L.C., FaithWords, 192 pages, \$13.99

*In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God's existence.*

-- Sir Isaac Newton

**I**t would seem improbable that a Christian might, in a scant 192 pages, bring sound argument and refutation against the not-always-measured considerations of four prominent atheists, who have written four different (though similarly themed) books, but Rev. Thomas D. Williams, L.C., manages to do so with both effectiveness and humor.

His small book is titled, *Greater Than You Think: A Theologian Answers the Atheists about God*, and it is meant to rebut the recent string of best-sellers promoting a "new" intellectualist atheism over the same-old knuckle-dragging faith in the "fairy tale" of a Creator God. Responding to noted New Atheists -- Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel C. Dennett, and most especially Christopher Hitchens -- Father Williams has produced a quick read that manages to point out flaws in simple reasoning and clear errors in the more complex arguments that are often blindsided by the atheist's own prejudice.

Father Williams's book will be unlikely to convince his opponents, or even silence them, but it may well help both believers and unbelievers to step away from a spiritual precipice -- believers because they may consider how their own behavior helps create atheists, unbelievers because it gives them a means to make a thinking choice (and therefore permission, if it's what they are looking for) to believe.

*Greater Than You Think* manages to make short work of the often over-long arguments of the bestsellers, sometimes by foregoing niceties for clarity. Father Williams writes in his introduction:

My own limited experience indicates that atheism -- especially in its more passionate strain -- always has its causes. All the convinced atheists I know do not merely disbelieve in God; they hate Him. He becomes for them an object not of simple indifference, but of the most visceral animosity . . . [which is] always motivated by one of two things: a deep injustice suffered, for which they blame God and cannot forgive Him; or a deep injustice they have committed, for which they cannot forgive themselves.

From there he takes just 27 succinct chapters to demonstrate -- in a simple Q&A format -- how a hatred of God translates into a need to denigrate believers, remove God from the public square, and encourage some truly extreme positions (children "have had their psychological and physical lives irreparably maimed by compulsory education of faith," says Hitchens. "Words like 'God' and 'Allah' must go the way of 'Apollo' and 'Baal,' or they will unmake our world," declares Harris).

While making his case, Father Williams manages to do some necessary (and gratifying) record-correcting on the scurrilous claims that religion and science must be enemies. Quoting scientists from Sir Isaac Newton (see above) to Stephen Hawking, Father Williams rolls his eyes at the eternally offered example of church errors on Gallileo, and wonders why, if the church was

so reactionary against scientific inquiry, "they don't have a whole slew of examples":

The natural sciences grew out of Christian culture. As the sociologist Rodney Stark has so convincingly shown, science was "still-born" in the great civilizations of the ancient world, except in Christian civilizations. Why is it that empirical science and the scientific method did *not* develop in China (with its sophisticated society), in India (with its philosophical schools), in Arabia (with its advanced mathematics), in Japan . . . or even in ancient Greece or Rome? . . . Science flourished in societies where a Christian mind-set understood nature to be ordered and intelligible, the work of an intelligent Creator. . . . Far from being an obstacle to science, Christian soil was the necessary humus where science took root.

**Father Williams also addresses** the origins of the Church and the historical evidence for the existence of Jesus. Here, some might feel Father Williams is at his weakest. Among his arguments for the historical truth of Christ and His intention -- from the beginning -- to form a church, Father Williams touches on Scripture and first-century documents, but he rounds out his case by reminding the reader that, "The fact that there is no record of any contemporary refuting these claims, or asserting that Jesus never lived, is ample historical evidence . . . ."

He is correct, of course, and his point is as valid as any atheist's charge that there are scant secular records substantiating the claims of the early Church. But the argument also allows an opening for the predictable charge that any such refutations were destroyed by the self-interested and tyrannical Church. What this "weakness" in Father Williams's argument demonstrates, though, is that eventually the debate is reduced to one making a choice for either belief or disbelief and simply running on *that* faith.

At times, Father Williams uses simple arguments to good effect, as when wondering whether failures and

quackery in medicine should indict all doctors in the same way that failures within the church are used to indict all believers and belief itself, and he comes off as being both fun and feisty:

Does the mere fact that religion can be co-opted for evil purposes mean that religion itself is evil? By that twisted logic, the fact that science has often been put to use for all sorts of devilry (the atomic bomb, chemical weapons . . . instant coffee) means that science itself must be evil.

Nowhere does Father Williams more clearly enjoy himself than when he takes two chapters to "turn the tables" on the opposition, demonstrating that atheism cannot rightly claim to make anyone more tolerant, a better citizen, or a happier or more generous person. Father Williams usefully articulates the real-world effect of the atheist-utopia daydream: "The removal of God leaves Caesar unchallenged, and easily paves the way for totalitarianism."

Arguments laid aside, *Greater Than You Think* is, finally, an appeal to Christians that we examine our consciences and identify where in our public discourses or private relations we have failed to reflect the teachings of Christ and His Church, and have thus contributed to the building of the kind of raw and offensive stereotypes upon which Dawkins, Hitchens, *et al.* hang their bigotry and call it a reasoned and justifiable hate.

In reminding the believing reader that these men would hate us less if we gave them less to hate us about, Father Williams actually makes his strongest case against atheism, for he demonstrates to the atheists that a true and disciplined faith is not a wild lashing out with wagging finger, but an inward quest; one that insists we look outside ourselves and our own puny concerns, every day, and acknowledge both the existence and importance of lesser and greater beings, and where we have fallen short in our dealings with them.

With such accountability comes something like peace -- an imperfect peace, to be sure --but one that is greater than we think.

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