

# Reading Packet

## **Related to the “Broad Assessment of Your Parish”**

Spiritual Practice Map from “In Your Holy Spirit” books

Martin Smith, SSJE, “Pastoral Leadership Today”

The lecture is mentioned in the Leadership Assessment. It also has value as a way of thinking about parish development leadership and may therefore also assist you in all your assessment work.

Within the assessments other readings are noted that you may want/need to look at. Especially from *Fill All Things*

## **Related to the work on cultural density**

David Brooks, “How to Leave a Mark”

There is also other reading to do -- chapters 3 and 4 from *Shaping the Parish: A Pastoral Theology of the Parish Church*

## **Related to Individualism – Community & Commitment**

These readings are provided as a way of helping you get your mind and heart into the issues and dynamics of individualism and community in our society and the church.

There are two by Robert Bellah

Bellah wrote “Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life.” The book is available on Kindle. It’s worth reading if you have the time and interest.

“Cultural Barriers to the understanding of the Church and its Public Role” 1991 (Bellah addressed the House of Bishops in 1990 on the same theme)

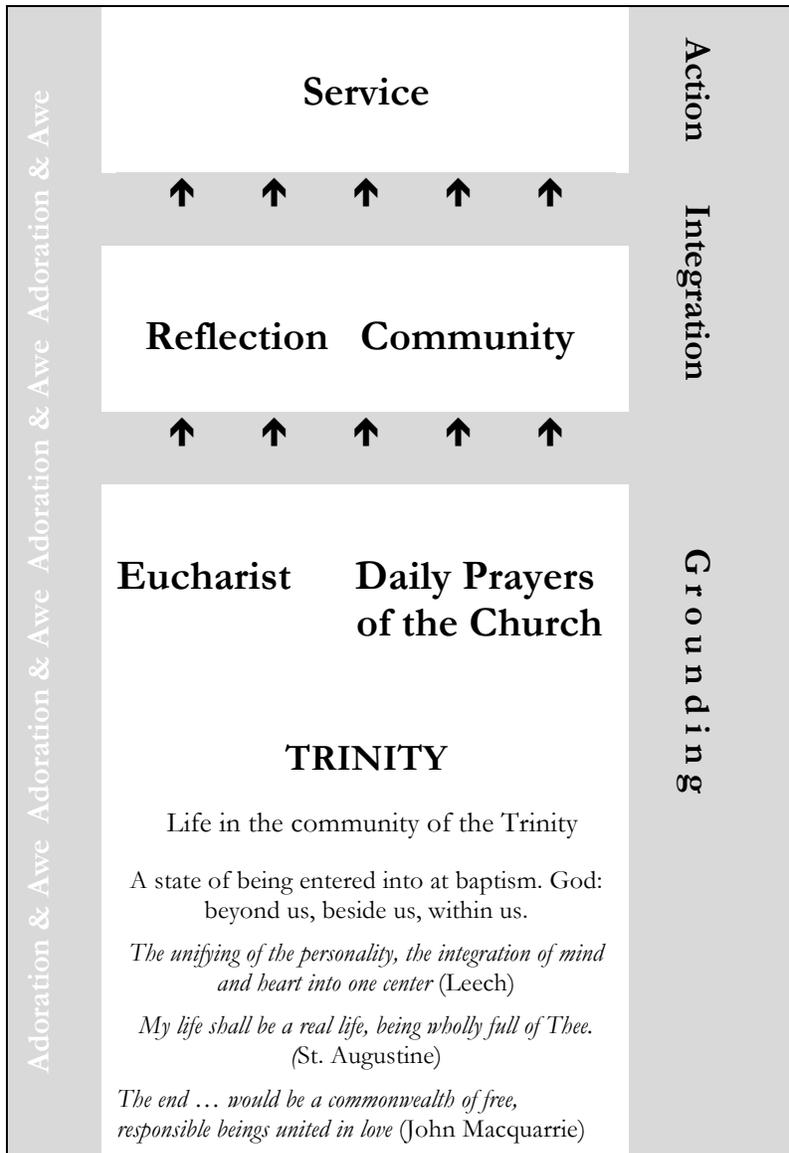
“Individualism and the Crisis of Civic Membership” 1996

David Brooks, “Our Elites Still Don’t Get It” 2017

Ross Douthat, “The Age of Individualism” 2017

“Organizations in a World of Choices” R. Gallagher, Based on Doug Walrath’s book “Frameworks”

Spiritual Practice Map from *In Your Holy Spirit Books*



**Weekly Practice: Holy Eucharist**

The Holy Eucharist celebrated several times each week as to allow people with a variety of schedules to find one that might serve as their weekly spiritual practice.

**Daily Practice: The Daily Prayers of the Church**

There are two things to do here. The first is to equip and support parishioners in saying the Daily Prayer of the Church on their own in the course of daily life. The second is to offer the Daily Office in some routine form on most days of the week.

## **Reflection**

There are two primary acts for the parish to take. One is to offer members assistance in identifying and maintaining ways of being reflective. The second is for the parish itself to engage in reflective processes, ways of listening to and learning from its own life as a community. The beginning place for this is to create an environment with significant space for stillness and silence.

## **Parish Community**

The parish needs to provide opportunities for social life among parishioners and create an environment in which they may find and live what Augustine called a “real life,” a life in which they might be genuine, be open and honest about themselves, and still be in deep relationship with others and God. This is a community where our differences can be expressed and will be accepted; in which we can fight with those we love without fearing the loss of the relationship.

## **Serve**

The parish can hold in front of its members the moral vision of Christian Faith. The primary place, the most effective place, of service for the Christian is in his or her daily life. We serve within our friendships, families, work, and civic life. The parish can help members identify how they serve, how they may better serve, and the gifts each brings to that task. The parish can also have at least one service ministry that is done as a parish. This is a call to a wise and generous love.

## **The Process of Change**

The parish can provide a foundations program that equips people to take responsibility for their own spiritual life and moral action in daily life. It can also model an approach to change or experimentation and learning from experience. It can teach methods that allow people to face change.

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## **From:**

*In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice*  
Robert A. Gallagher, published by Ascension Press, 2011

*In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*  
Michelle Heyne, published by Ascension Press, 2011

## **Available at:**

<http://episcopalbookstore.com/product.aspx?productid=5619>

<http://episcopalbookstore.com/product.aspx?productid=5620>

# PASTORAL LEADERSHIP TODAY

*A public lecture given by Br Martin L. Smith SSJE at the General Seminary, New York, on April 14 1997, during a session of the College for Bishops*

I would like to begin this lecture with a preamble which signals that we are aware of beginning to accustom ourselves to the post-modern climate. That sounds a little pompous, but these points can be put simply. I can quote Neils Bohr, the celebrated physicist, "Every sentence that I utter should be taken by you not as statement but as a question." Truth seems to have made its escape from dogmatic assertions demanding submission. Truth has reappeared somewhere else as an event occurring in conversation within communion, when we engage and respond to a speaker whose words constantly imply the questions, "Is this so? What is your experience?"

Then I could pass on the dictum, "In the post-modern world every sentence should end with the phrase *et cetera*..." We are learning to face the radical incompleteness and partialness of any and every statement. Every statement cries out for amplification and correction from other standpoints than the one the speaker is occupying at that moment. So let us listen for the unexpressed "*et ceteras*," as well as the unexpressed question marks. And thirdly, as we cross the post-modern divide, we are learning to be a little more realistic about claims to objectivity. All standpoints are more personal and prejudiced than we were taught to think was proper. We have to recover from the embarrassment of that discovery and realize that, once we are aware of them, we can afford to be more friendly towards our prejudices. The literary critic Anatole Broyard used to tell his writing students, "Hang on to your prejudices they are the only taste you have got...Paranoids are the only ones who notice anything anymore." In thinking as in life, if you do not fix a starting point, you'll never get started. Kenneth Grahame, the author of *Wind in the Willows*, once showed his awareness of how much of ourselves we are displaying in any kind of lecture or essay in these charming words. "You must please remember that a theme...is little more than a sort of clothesline on which one pegs a string of ideas, quotations, allusions and so on, one's mental undergarments of all shapes and sizes, some possibly new but most rather old and patched and they dance and sway in the breeze and flap and flutter, or hang limp and lifeless and some are ordinary enough, and some are of a private and intimate shape and rather give the owner away and show up his or her peculiarities. And owing to the invisible clothes line they seem to have some connection and continuity."

Our theme this evening is Pastoral Leadership. A good deal of what I will say focuses on episcopal ministry, but I hope it is not difficult with a little recalibration of scale to apply many of the insights to pastoral ministry at the level of the parish. And in stringing out my proposals -questions -I throw up items of an intimate shape that give the owner away. My particular line, or bias, is to pursue the topic from the standpoint of what could be called roughly, interiority, or spirituality. Its what I'm used to, and it could be useful, so long as everyone recognizes that it is one lens among many for surveying a topic with many aspects.

Viewing the topic of pastoral leadership through the lens of spirituality is not the same as investigating the 'devotional life' (post-modern discourse is full of 'air-quotes') appropriate to men and women in leadership, although the equation spirituality = devotional life is regrettably entrenched in most parts of the church. Spirituality is a complex of practices and values concerned with the divine urge for our freedom. Spirituality is about setting about being set free. How do we set about living freely in the Spirit? Spirituality is not a realm of concepts and ideals but is embedded in praxis, actual ways of practicing freedom. We need lots of practice to be set free. And the consensus of all the wisdom traditions of spirituality, eastern and western, is that freedom is intimately related to awareness, to what we allow ourselves to admit into consciousness, of what we are prepared to know and face, what we don't want to know, what we repress, what we banish, or what we hand over to others to know so that we won't have to. In our Gospel of John, Jesus tells

us that it is the truth that will set us free. The *Pneuma*, the Breath of God, our Advocate, the One on our side, is the Spirit of Truth.

To approach the issue of pastoral leadership in the church from the standpoint of spirituality then, is to raise the question, "How do those who are called to this ministry break through to the truth of their identity and find spiritual freedom in and through the exercise of their vocation?" And the answers are bound to be related to the question of awareness. "In order to be on the way to being free as a woman or man who is a pastor/leader what do I need continually to learn to be aware on How do I practice the full consciousness that enables me to live this identity authentically?"

That this is a traditional understanding of spirituality can, I think, be verified. A good example would be the book "On Consideration" written by St Bernard of Clairvaux for a former monk and pupil of his who was elected pope at a turbulent time when the population of Rome were in the middle of one of their frequent revolutions. The book was intended to help him hold steady and make sense of his role in the midst of very complex pressures. The fascinating thing about the book is its comprehensive range. His counsel deals with a whole spectrum of issues, about his political and social responsibilities, about comprehensive reforms as well as theology and prayer. It is fraught with a vivid sense of the inevitable and unresolvable conflicts, tensions and polarities of the life of leadership. He wants Eugene to "consider" the whole scope, the big picture. Consideration is active, searching awareness that integrates insights gained from every area of the field of experience. "As opposed to contemplation which deals with truths already known, consideration seeks truth in contingent human affairs where it is difficult to perceive." (Elizabeth Kennan) "It imparts knowledge of divine and human affairs. It puts an end to confusion, closes gaps, gathers up what has been scattered, roots out secrets, hunts down truth, scrutinizes what seems to be true and explores lies and deceit. It decides what is to be done and reviews what has been done." (VII 9)

It is intriguing to discover that Bernard's insights into the pressures experienced by pastoral leaders and the counsel he gives, have in many instances a startlingly contemporary relevance. For example, the book begins with the subject of the dangers of being overburdened as a result of the tendency of the pastoral role being what we call today 'overdetermined,' saturated with an excess of superimposed responsibilities. He warns that stress will lead to the dangerous condition of "numbness"; pruning his schedule is necessary. He goes on to warn of the distortion of the pastoral office by the invasion of litigation. This constant arbitration in legal disputes is wrecking the ministry of oversight and has to be resisted. He deals with the question about what to do about a corrupt and incompetent staff that he has inherited by insisting that the only remedy is to replace them with trained and trustworthy people. Bernard even anticipates our very contemporary pastoral theme of the importance of ministering to oneself. It is encouraging to find that this isn't a piece of modern psychobabble but a traditional ascetical counsel. So he emphasizes the necessity of Eugene carving out some leisure in order to practice consideration, and he puts it in terms of including himself as part of the flock he is called to pastor. "I praise your devotion to humankind, but only if it is complete. Now, how can it be complete when you have excluded yourself? You too are a man. For your devotion to be whole and complete, let yourself be gathered into the bosom which receives everyone... You also drink with the other from the water of your own well. Therefore remember this and not always, or even often, but at least sometimes give your attention to yourself. Among the many others, or at least after them, you also have recourse to yourself" (Bk 1 4:5)

The wide-ranging and comprehensive scope of this pastoral treatise helped me realize that pastoral leadership, especially in its form in the episcopal office, requires a spirituality of wide-ranging and integrated awareness. To be a bishop is to require spiritual tools which relate to the vocation of sustaining an over-arching, inclusive and comprehensive vision. Let us take this a little further.

The standpoint of interiority encourages us to take our images and metaphors seriously, to internalize and amplify them so that they resonate deeply. The episcopal office has at its heart a simple image. The *episkopos* has oversight. We need to feel the image in our bodies and not just rationalize it. The image is one of the body elevated or raised up so that the eyes can take in the full view of a situation, impossible if one remains at ground level. An overseer literally can see over a situation of collective endeavor from a vantage-point that enables him or her to take in the whole scene. Those of us brought up to be familiar with old-fashioned factories can envisage those elevated booths which enabled an overseer to view a range or system of machines so that he or she could continually monitor the system. At the beach the lifeguards have elevated seats in order to have the panorama necessary for their task. The episcopal office is a charism of panorama, or integral view. The office is a vantage point for gaining a vision of the whole situation of a substantial Christian community, a situation that is unlikely to be so clear to specialists focussing on a particular dimension of mission, or to those who are wedded to the claims of a particular locale. The spirituality of episcopacy is especially a spirituality of panorama, or taking in the big picture. The bishop is entitled to ask all the questions that can be asked. She or he has the guardianship of all the questions. So the spirituality of a bishop should be a spirituality committed to the pursuit of a wide-range of consciousness and awareness.

The other image for pastoral leadership is, stating the obvious of course, the shepherd. We consciously carry over from an archaic herding culture an image of the pastor, the herder of sheep, supervising their breeding, birthing, nurture, shelter, their movements to and from pasture. There are many resonances and implications in this *symbol* and one of the most significant ones is the maintenance of the integrity or completeness of the flock. The force of the archaic image depends on our awareness of the artificiality and precariousness of a flock of sheep; it is in real and constant danger of unraveling, dissipating and scattering, from the intrusion of predators and the lack of any natural force to keep the group together. Sheep wander. A flock is an unnatural and unstable entity. It requires constant arduous and unflagging work to sustain the flockness of the flock, sometimes dramatic intervention, always the work of patrol and the defining of the boundaries and orientating the collective movement. The image only works if we see that spiritual community also is something made. It has no instinctual existence. A church is something God continually creates, and we co-create and co-recreate it with God as fellow workers. And the church's pastors are ministers with special responsibility for the promotion of the fullness, wholeness and integrity of the community. So from the beginning the bishop's ministry has been both an agent of and a prime symbol for the church's unity, its integrity and cohesion. And he or she is the agent of and prime symbol for the church's constant striving to realize catholicity, inclusiveness, all-embracingness.

All this states the obvious. Pastoral leadership is active co-responsibility with Christ for inciting, sustaining and guarding the church's life as community. Episcopal pastoral leadership is the particular responsibility for sustaining community at the inclusive level of a diocese, which is a collective large enough to represent, to a greater or lesser degree, the church's catholicity or inclusiveness and wholeness.

Pastoral and episcopal spirituality must then consist in those practices of "consideration" (to use Bernard's term) or integrating consciousness that keeps the pastor/bishop capable of viewing and seeing the big picture on behalf of the community, taking in the full range of evidence and growing in the capacity to integrate more within his or her field of awareness. And we can say right away that it must involve a considerable readiness for conflict because many of those who are committed to a particular part of the scene or a particular aspect of it are not likely to see the view or gestalt of the whole which the bishops must cultivate precisely because they are called to sustain the overview.

I am almost tempted to say much of the loneliness of being a pastoral leader and a bishop is that this vocation to the "overview" is precisely what most people cannot be expected to grasp. Only a

few get to see the whole from a vantagepoint of awareness that can integrate evidence from all parts. The frustration of a bishop is the continual struggle against partial and limited views, standpoints that prevent the holders from taking in a full range of evidence. It is a frustration as old as the new testament, as we see from the exasperation of Paul in the letters to Corinth. Paul as apostle is appalled when leadership is being seized by or given to people who are committed to narrow slices of reality and lack the ability to take in connectedness and wholeness. "I hear there are divisions among you." We can see today the contradictions and confusions that arise in the cases where partisans and ideologues are elevated to the episcopate. A terrific dissonance occurs because of the contradiction between this mentality that depends on splitting off and the spiritual demands of the office itself.

Bishops tell me that they realize that not a great deal in parish or academic life actually serves as much of a preparation for the office of bishop and this makes sense too. Only the actual experience of having the overview gives you the overview. A bishop therefore has to develop a sense of identity with the help of fellow-bishops and other insightful people in the face of very widespread and inevitable misapprehensions and distorted views of what a bishop is. In fact this is one of the prime tasks of episcopal spirituality. To keep on doing the work of discernment in the midst of a force field of projections, stereotypes, precedents, traditions and popular assumptions about leadership and pastoring, many of which are highly distorted and distorting. The work of spiritual awareness is to grow in the capacity to identify these often almost invisible forces in the environment of society, in the church and in ones' own psyche. Journalists and politicians have their ideas what a bishop should be, different constituencies within the clergy and laity have their ideas, the episcopal predecessors had theirs and left them around as spectral forces with an afterlife of several generations, and so on.

Classic spirituality had at its heart the discipline of discernment through what was called the "manifestations of thoughts." The ancient form of spiritual direction was not asking advice about prayer but articulating one's experiences to a wise person, especially spelling out concerns that had a particular obsessive character in which one seemed to be being pulled in one direction or another by a kind of undercurrent. The idea was to bring to consciousness if possible the source of this undercurrent working against freedom. The practice is still indispensable and we will need both private and group settings in which to do it. And one can easily imagine how it might help by identifying in the environment and in the psyche forces that are exerting a distorting influence on the experience of being a pastoral leader.

From my conversations with bishops I can easily come up with examples. Let us think of the misconceptions that exert a distorting influence on the business of being a pastor. One very common one is the notion that the business of pastoring is personal one-on-one (telling expression!) care of an individual who has a problem, is undergoing some kind of personal transition, or is in 'spiritual need.' When one is doing that one is exercising one's role as a pastor. A slightly more sophisticated version extends one-on-one to include a family in need or in transition. In that case being a pastor is one of the hats a bishop, for example, wears. He is also an administrator, liturgical president, teacher etc, etc. All these are common misconceived as separate roles into which with more or less versatility he steps one after another. The bishop is 'being a pastor' when he leaves his desk, quits his meetings, to rush to the bedside of the sick wife of one of the priests of the diocese to be with the couple in their hour of need. "At last" the bishop may say, harking back to his or her days as a parish priest, "I have the chance to be a pastor again." Or the onlooker says to herself, "I now realize that Bishop X can be a pastor when he chooses to be ..."

Well, there is probably no need to develop the scenario in more detail. No doubt the training given to new bishops keeps on underscoring the crucial transition from a ministry that is devoted a lot of energy to the personal care of individuals, couples and families to a ministry that engages with a

large system or institution, the diocese as a whole. But I suspect it takes a tremendous amount of awareness before one has seen right through the distortion. The distortion is treating 'pastoring' as a discrete activity. The key thing about the identity of pastor is that pastor makes a better adjective than a noun. It is not that the role of bishop tends not to leave much time for being a pastor, except for occasional troubleshooting, or 'nurturing' (blessed buzzword) her or his staff. Rather being a pastor is what a bishop is being in everything a bishop does, insofar as that contributes to her or his sustaining the overview and promoting the health and integrity of the larger whole. In fact a pastoral leader might be more faithfully pastoral in the hours spent toiling in administration that makes for progress, working with consultants, laboriously renewing vocational discernment processes with representatives from all over the diocese, than in personal ministries that seem pastoral in the popular view.

Another variant is to identify the role of pastor with the special responsibility that a bishop has for the ordained clergy. Of course, (so this version goes) the bishop cannot possibly be everybody's pastor but he or she must be the personal pastor of all the clergy. That there is some truth in this notion is obvious but the dangers perhaps are more hidden. Just now we are in a transitional phase halfway between an outmoded clericalism and a not-yet realized understanding of ministry as the responsibility of all the baptized. I suspect the present notion of the bishop as pastor of the clergy will have to be looked at again and again as part of examination of the tenacity of clericalism. I took part on a Tuesday in Holy Week in the renewal of priestly vows in a diocese. All the clergy were present with the bishops. But what does it mean for bishops and clergy to renew their vows as pastors, with the laity of the church utterly absent from the solemn gathering except for the cathedral verger, the organist and one or two volunteers helping with the luncheon? What does this say theologically about our conception of pastoring? I was taken aback to be told by a liturgical expert that this liturgical ceremony was invented by the Vatican authorities in the upheavals of the early seventies when the loyalty of the parochial clergy seemed more and more at risk and it seemed good to create an occasion when they could all be seen renewing their solidarity with the hierarchy. Did we do well as Anglicans to adopt this Roman ceremony in this form?

Beneath misconceptions of pastoring there is a strong undercurrent of prejudice fueled by the value allotted to psychotherapy in our culture. Real pastoring is seen as a transaction between persons in private. By contrast activities that concern the community are often downplayed or disparaged as "bureaucracy" or "social activism" or "maintaining the institution. "

Another distorting undercurrent present in the force field of the contemporary pastoral environment is the association of pastoring with affirmation. Listening carefully to conversations we soon begin to pick up the link many people have made between pastoring and saying yes, pastoring and making someone in a situation feel affirmed and good about themselves etc Here pastoring has become a kind of style, specifically a style that precludes refusal. There is a chorus of pain in the church about how 'unpastoral' its processes are, such as the ordination process. No doubt there is a tremendous amount of ineptness and confusion in many of these processes and they call for constant reform. However the link with affirmation is a cultural contamination. "Let your yes be yes and your no be no" said Jesus, and there is nothing to suggest that we do not have to say no as often as we have to say yes. Experienced bishops who have run the gauntlet of this prejudice remind us that authentic pastoring involves a great deal of saying no to a great number of bids, proposals, claims, entitlements, fantasies, and even sound and holy ideas that have to wait their turn. Care for the whole invariably means the careful refusals that keep things in proportion, husband resources, assign priorities intelligently, and so on.

Well, these and many other currents and projections are at play in the pastoral environment and a contemporary pastoral spirituality will be concerned to help us bring them into the sphere of

consciousness so that they can be seen for what they are, understood, and so that we can gain a measure of freedom from them. And this work will have to be done in constant conjunction with the bringing to awareness of what each of us as pastors bring into play, the projections, needs, distortions, and ideals that are largely unconscious. For example, an authentic pastoral spirituality will constantly seek to examine what my inner needs are doing to the business of my pastoring. I do not think most of us were equipped with a spirituality of vocation that fully acknowledged the extent that we are motivated in ministry by needs. We bring desires to ministry that cry out for fulfillment, and God, so to speak, exploits our recruitability. Most of us have to be pastors out of some inner drive and God is involved in that, messy though it often is, and gives us the Spirit of truth to transform and convert those desires. But that process of conversion involves an asceticism, a discipline of facing and bringing to consciousness the needs we bring to ministry. Needs that are not acknowledged join the shadows and work from behind as demands.

A major element in the spiritual direction of pastors is precisely this bringing into the consciousness and prayer of these inner needs. The need for intimacy motivates us towards personal care of others; if that need is not faced and attended to in the rest of our lives it will intrude upon and distort our pastoral relationships. Some of us are motivated by a deep inner need to reform and correct. We are the enlightened children who will correct the errors and heal the wounds of our parents. Unless we face into that and channel this zeal specifically everyone who comes our way will be subjected to our need to be enlighteners and teachers.

Most obviously a bishop who has not faced quite deeply the part his need to be admired has played in drawing him into ministry is in for a rough ride. Those who obstinately withhold that liking and admiring are going to excite deep rage in him or crushing resentment and depression, all aspects of the same reaction. And of course they will withhold it from anyone exercising pastoral leadership, since a pastoral leader cannot affirm every claim or fulfil every projection, since she has responsibility for the health of the whole rather than the gratification of each part. The demand to be liked can take over; in that case gratifying and affirming all comers will involve abdication of pastoral responsibility for the larger whole.

Pastoral leadership today also requires an area of spiritual awareness that is specifically opening up because of the changes in consciousness that are taking place in our day. The spirituality of pastoral leadership has always been grounded in the gifts of ever-widening empathy, the capacity to identify with and therefore engage with the varied and different elements of the whole. Its most famous expression in scripture is in the passage in I Cor. 9 where Paul speaks of his empathic engagement with the radically different constituencies of Jews, gentiles and those he called 'the weak', those at an immature level of religious awareness, in order to win them. "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings." I have heard many pastors groan at this passage, as if it seemed to propel them into an impossible over commitment or held up an unattainable ideal of versatility. Or I have heard it used in a rather sarcastic tone about pastoral leaders who tend to agree with the last person who spoke to them in a kind of spineless and unprincipled affirmation. "I am afraid our suffragan bishop has turned out to be one of those 'all things to all men' type; where does he really stand on anything?" But authentically this passage points to the type of spirituality we are exploring aloud. To be responsible for catholic community, we need the spiritual gift, the charisma, of a versatility of empathic identification with the distinctive constituents of the whole, many of which, because of the way they are embedded in a situation with less perspective, do not see that they need one another, as illustrated in Paul's image of the body whose various parts are tempted to think that they can do without the other organs.

What is becoming especially clear today as we cross the post-modern divide is that this empathic versatility strictly depends on the pastor's consciousness of his or her own particularity and

limitation of standpoint. In all sorts of ways we are having to become conscious of the inevitable partiality, bias and restrictedness of our own life-stance. It is fascinating to watch this process happening among pastoral leaders, and being chaplain to the house of bishops has given me hundreds of occasions to observe it. Suddenly it dawns on a leader that his racism is not a matter of personal hostility to people of color, but is rooted in unconscious, unacknowledged unearned white privilege. You can see leaders turning into heterosexuals and some of them even recognizing their heterosexism. Until recently there were no heterosexuals. There was only sexuality, and then some 'perverts' did unspeakable things in some marginal twilight world of unreality. Now the visibility of gays and their claims to have being change reality; the majority sexuality has become one of the ways of being sexual instead of the only one. With the advent of every new woman bishop into the House, the maleness of the House is revealed more vividly and embarrassingly. What used to be how bishops were, what used to be the being of bishops, is now being shown up as how men have acted out being a bishop, not at all the same.

It is an authentic spiritual paradox that the more one brings into consciousness about the narrowness and bias built into one's own experience and identity and viewpoint, the more one is set free to identify with and enter into alliance with those who differ from oneself. Only when has undergone the spiritual death whereby one brings into consciousness and then relinquishes the claim to have *the* take on reality, can one actually begin to empathize with others' take on reality, and in communion with them actually experience more reality. Now part of my motive for tackling the question of pastoral leadership from the standpoint of interiority is that the changes in consciousness that are taking place among us today mean that the connection between the way a pastor behaves and his or her own interiority is becoming more obvious and public. The awful thing is that what we refuse to be conscious of, more and more people can read. The advent of feminism is teaching more and more people to read our fear of women and our incorporation of patriarchal bias; in this new literacy theological rationales have become paper thin, and more and more people can see through what used to seem so substantial, especially arguments from tradition. Actually because a critical mass of people can now 'see through' behaviors dictated by unconscious bias, in an almost automatic social process credibility is being withdrawn from leadership that is not based on wide-ranging and searching self awareness.

Our reflections have lead us into an area of engagement with the changes in consciousness that are occurring with such amazing rapidity at this epoch. Christian spirituality is bound to give priority to Jesus' mandate to discern the signs of the *times* and the spirituality of pastoral leadership requires the capacity to engage with changes and developments at the interior level, at the level of soul. It would take many hours of conversation for us to explore these issues but let me finish this lecture by taking one example of the kind of critical meditation, or 'consideration' we need to engage in as pastoral leaders.

Anglican spirituality is always at risk from the bias towards stability, a kind of homeostatic spirituality in which the Spirit constantly restores order, balance and all godly quietness and virtue in a world peaceably governed by a providence that sets in order all things. If things are changing, prayer expresses confidence that the plan of salvation is being carried out in tranquillity and that all things are being brought to their perfection. It is beautiful, but it does not provide us with the essential tools for coming to terms with our actual experience at the end of the millenium. We are in the throes of tumultuous and unprecedented changes and an intractable ecological crisis in which the peaceable governance of providence is not exactly what springs to mind. Pastoral leadership in this context is going to need spiritual resources that empower us to integrate into our overarching vision the powers of chaos and accelerating trajectories of change.

There are historic spiritualities in the Christian tradition, ascetical and mystical traditions, that experienced the soul as a sphere of passionate conflict, where a great contest continually occurs between our desire to break through to transformation and our fearful need to stay the same. It is

these spiritualities that have received most confirmation and amplification from modern psychology. We have our work cut out to use these resources and others to forge a spirituality in which consciousness of this drama taking place within ourselves will better empower us to lead. For it is in this contest on the macrocosmic scale that pastors will be exercising their leadership of our communities.

It is an irony of language that one of the meanings of the word pastoral is "pertaining to a tranquil rustic scene." A pastoral painting depicts an idealized landscape of calm and beauty with nymphs and shepherds. Now our pastoral scene is in violent contrast, one in which we coming to terms with the necessity of chaos and the inevitability of conflict in communities that evolve or perish. On a train journey here to New York last year I read Michael Crichton's sequel to *Jurassic Park*, a novel called *The Lost World*. One of the characters a mathematician called Ian Malcolm discusses how complex systems such as corporations learn to adapt or face extinction. He goes on to say this.

*But even more important is the way complex systems seem to strike a balance between the need for order and the imperative to change. Complex systems seem to locate themselves at a place we call 'the edge of chaos. We imagine the edge of chaos as a place where there is enough innovation to keep a living system vibrant, and enough stability to keep it from collapsing into anarchy. It is a zone of conflict and upheaval where the old and the new are constantly at war. Finding the balancing point must be a delicate matter -if a living system drifts too close, it risks falling over into incoherence and dissolution; but if the system moves too far away from the edge, it becomes frozen, totalitarian. Both conditions lead to extinction. Too much change is as destructive as too little. Only at the edge of chaos can complex systems flourish.*

This passage, in which chaos theory is being filtered down to the popular level through mass-market literature, is remarkably suggestive about the role of pastoral leadership. It is scary to realize that chaos is vitally central in God's creation and that is why leadership has to be pastoral, a ministry of encouragement and guidance. Pastoral leadership will take its stand at the place of discernment in this "zone of conflict and upheaval where the old and the new are constantly at war." The episcopal charism of maintaining unity will not consist in repressing the war between the old and the new, but encouraging and continually recentering a community in which we know that both the resources of stability and the risks of change come from the Spirit. What kind of spirituality will enable pastoral leaders to live consciously at the edge of chaos?

# How to Leave a Mark on People



*Barry Chin/The Boston Globe, via Getty Images*

**Firefighters last month at the wake for Joe Toscano.**

***By DAVID BROOKS***

Joe Toscano and I worked at Incarnation summer camp in Connecticut a few decades ago. Joe went on to become an extremely

loving father of five and a fireman in Watertown, Mass. Joe was a community-building guy — serving his town, organizing events like fishing derbies for bevvies of kids, radiating infectious and neighborly joy.

Joe collapsed and died while fighting a two-alarm fire last month. When Joe died, the Incarnation community reached out with a fierce urgency to support his family and each other. One of our number served as a eulogist at the funeral. Everybody started posting old photos of Joe on Facebook. Somebody posted a picture of 250 Incarnation alumni at a reunion, with the caption, “My Family.”

Some organizations are thick, and some are thin. Some leave a mark on you, and some you pass through with scarcely a memory. I

haven't worked at Incarnation for 30 years, but it remains one of the four or five thick institutions in my life, and in so many other lives.

Which raises two questions: What makes an institution thick? If you were setting out consciously to create a thick institution, what features would it include?

A thick institution is not one that people use instrumentally, to get a degree or to earn a salary. A thick institution becomes part of a person's identity and engages the whole person: head, hands, heart and soul. So thick institutions have a physical location, often cramped, where members meet face to face on a regular basis, like a dinner table or a packed gym or assembly hall.

Such institutions have a set of collective

rituals — fasting or reciting or standing in formation. They have shared tasks, which often involve members closely watching one another, the way hockey teammates have to observe everybody else on the ice. In such institutions people occasionally sleep overnight in the same retreat center or facility, so that everybody can see each other's real self, before makeup and after dinner.

Such organizations often tell and retell a sacred origin story about themselves. Many experienced a moment when they nearly failed, and they celebrate the heroes who pulled them from the brink. They incorporate music into daily life, because it is hard not to become bonded with someone you have sung and danced with. They have a common ideal — encapsulated,

for example, in the Semper Fi motto for the Marines.

It's also important to have an idiosyncratic local culture. Too many colleges, for example, feel like one another. But the ones that really leave a mark on their students (St. John's, Morehouse, Wheaton, the University of Chicago) have the courage to be distinct. You can love or hate such places. But when you meet a graduate you know it, and when they meet each other, even decades hence, they know they have something important in common.

As I was thinking about my list of traits, Angela Duckworth of the University of Pennsylvania shared with me a similar list, titled, "What causes individuals to adopt the identity of their microculture?" She had a lot of my items but more, such as a shared

goal, like winning the Super Bowl or saving the environment; initiation rituals, especially those that are difficult; a sacred guidebook or object passed down from generation to generation; distinct jargon and phrases that are spoken inside the culture but misunderstood outside it; a label, like being a KIPPster for a KIPP school student; and finally uniforms or other emblems, such as flags, rings, bracelets or even secret underwear.

Thick institutions have a different moral ecology. People tend to like the version of themselves that is called forth by such places. James Davison Hunter and Ryan Olson of the University of Virginia study thick and thin moral frameworks. They point to the fact that thin organizations look to take advantage of people's strengths

and treat people as resources to be marshaled. Thick organizations think in terms of virtue and vice. They take advantage of people's desire to do good and arouse their higher longings.

In other words, thin institutions tend to see themselves horizontally. People are members for mutual benefit. Thick organizations often see themselves on a vertical axis. People are members so they can collectively serve the same higher good.

In the former, there's an ever-present utilitarian calculus — Is this working for me? Am I getting more out than I'm putting in? — that creates a distance between people and the organization. In the latter, there's an intimacy and identity borne out of common love. Think of a bunch of teachers watching a student shine onstage

or a bunch of engineers adoring the same elegant solution.

I never got to see Joey T. fight a fire. But I watched him run a bunch of the camp reunion fishing derbies. If you'd asked him, are you doing this for the kids or for yourself, I'm not sure the question would have made sense. In a thick organization selfishness and selflessness marry. It fulfills your purpose to help others have a good day.

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## **Cultural Barriers to the Understanding of the Church and Its Public Role**

By Robert N. Bellah

### **Note**

An earlier version of this essay was presented to the (August) 1990 Annual Meeting of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church. A similar presentation was made two months earlier to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

*The Lockean myth upon which American social life is based presents a fundamental challenge to the churches. The freedom of the solitary individual and the establishment of government by social contract have repercussions for political, economic, and religious life. Christian leadership is faced with the difficulty of communicating the deep social realism of biblical religion to an individualistic culture. This individualistic heritage, so susceptible to defining the human as relentless market maximizer, has reduced the notion of common good to that of the sum of individual goods. "Consumer Christians" may see the church as simply existing to "meet their needs," but having no claim to their commitment and loyalty. The church's calling is to demonstrate how different its understanding of human existence is from that of the surrounding culture.*

### **The Legacy of John Locke**

There are difficulties inherent in some of the central presuppositions of American culture for the understanding of the church, of priesthood, and so necessarily of the episcopacy. These difficulties present problems for the bishop as leader in the church and in society. In the successor book to *Habits of the Heart* (1985) which my four co-authors and I are presently completing, entitled *The Good Society* (1991), we develop the commonly accepted idea that if there is one philosopher behind the American experiment, it is John Locke. Locke, as we know, begins with a state of nature in which adult individuals who have worked and gained a little property by the sweat of their brow, decide voluntarily to enter a social contract through which they will set up a limited government, one of the chief responsibilities of which is the protection of their property. There are many peculiarities about this myth, which is one of the fundamental myths of origin of American society (fortunately, not the only one). Where did these adults come from? Did they have no parents? Who took care of them when they were little? How did they learn to speak so that they could make their social contract? Locke leaves us in the dark about all these matters.

Our founders were certainly devoted to the idea of the freedom of the individual, but they linked that freedom to an understanding of economic life that would have consequences they did not expect. It is remarkable how much of our current understanding of social reality flows from the original institutionalization at the end of the eighteenth century (the "founding") and how much of that was dependent on the thought of John Locke. Locke's teaching is one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful, ideologies ever invented. Indeed, it is proving to be more enduring and influential, which is not to say truer, than Marxism. It promises an unheard of degree

of individual freedom, an unlimited opportunity to compete for material well-being, and an unprecedented limitation on the arbitrary powers of government to interfere with individual initiative.

Locke exemplifies the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the act of appropriation by the solitary individual of property from the state of nature. Government is then instituted for the protection of that property. Once men agree to accept money as the medium of exchange, the accumulation of property is in principle without any moral limit. Locke rejects all limits on the freedom and autonomy of individuals other than those they freely consent to in entering the (quite limited) social contract. He specifically attacks the patriarchal family, arguing implicitly for the rights of women and explicitly for the lack of obligation of children to parents. Limited government exists to provide a minimum of order for individuals to accumulate property. All traditional restraints are rejected and nothing is taken for granted that is not voluntarily agreed to on the basis of reason. That is an overly condensed but not unfair statement of Locke's position, or at least how Americans have come to understand Locke's position. In many respects this vision has turned out to be as utopian as Marx's realm of freedom.

The Lockean myth conflicts with biblical religion in essential ways. It conflicts fundamentally with the Hebrew notion of covenant. The covenant is a relation between God and a people, but the parties to the covenant, unlike the parties in the Lockean contract, have a prior relation: the relation between creator and created. And the covenant is not a limited relation based on self-interest, but an unlimited commitment based on loyalty and trust. It involves obligations to God and neighbor that transcend self-interest, though it promises a deep sense of self-fulfillment through participation in a divinely instituted order that leads to life instead of death.

Again the Lockean myth conflicts profoundly with the Pauline understanding of the church as the body of Christ. If through participation in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ we become one with his body, members one of another, we are freed from the bondage of sin and enabled to live in harmony with God and our neighbor. Christian freedom is very different from the negative Lockean freedom to do whatever we want as long as we do not violate the limited contract entered into on the basis of self-interest.

The problem is that the Lockean notion of contract does not exist only in the economic and political spheres. It influences our understanding of all human relations, including both family and church. With respect to the family, a legal scholar has recently written, "Instead of the individual 'belonging' to the family, it is the family which is coming to be at the service of the individual." With respect to the church, the Lockean contract model, itself historically descended from, though I think a profound perversion of, the Protestant idea of voluntarism in the church, has become widely accepted. Consumer Christians shop for the best package deal they can get, and when they find a better deal, they have little hesitation about switching.

In a Lockean culture it is very hard to get people to see that the church is objectively there, rooted in the very structure of reality, and that our membership in it is formative of our very identity. Even American Catholics have been known to say, "As long as I'm all right with Jesus, I don't need the church," and such a sentiment is widespread in Protestant churches. One wants to know how they know they are "all right with Jesus," but I am afraid the answer is clear

enough: they know if they “feel” they are all right with Jesus. In a Lockean culture religion becomes radically subjective and privatized. But how can such subjective Christians understand the role of the priest or the role of the bishop? How can they understand leadership in the church, or, dare we use the word, authority? Clearly the answer is, not very well.

Under these cultural conditions, the teaching role of the church is placed under a considerable strain, and tact and prudence are certainly necessary. It seems to me the first problem is at the same time theological and sociological – how to communicate the deep social realism of biblical religion to an individualistic culture. To understand, in our bones, so to speak Paul’s great organic metaphor of the body of Christ is to understand that there are many gifts, that we all have our gifts and the body cannot function without all of us, but that the gifts are nonetheless different.

The role of the priest, and of the bishop who represents priesthood in its fullness, is a special calling. We are all called and yet we are not all called in the same way. The priest is called by God and ordained by the church to represent, in the administration of the sacraments and in the preaching of the Word, the objective reality of God’s presence in the world. The priesthood, and therefore the episcopacy, carries an objective authority that cannot be shirked, even when, as individuals, those who carry this authority may feel uncertain and unworthy. We know enough about the prophets in the Old Testament and the disciples in the New Testament not to confuse the calling with the individual merit of the called.

Yet it is this whole complex of ideas that Americans have great difficulty in understanding. If religion is a purely private matter, and essentially a matter of subjective feeling, then one person’s feelings are as valid as another: there is nothing objective against which to test them. Thus there can be no such thing as authority in religion. Indeed, to individualistic Americans there is little sense of valid authority in any sphere, certainly not in politics, or even in law. Perhaps the only exception is science, where something indubitably objective is generally admitted. Even within the family any notion of legitimate authority is remarkably weak.

It is indeed an exacting discipline to try to be the church in a culture such as ours. All the assumptions upon which we could rely, which we could take for granted in other times and places, are missing. It is therefore necessary to demonstrate, in the face of cultural skepticism, what a community of loyal and committed believers is really like. In the midst of a culture of divorce, it is also very important that we have families who can demonstrate what lasting commitment and mutual devotion in family life are really like. In fact, the church, in manifesting its own essence, strengthens all those communities that are based on loyalty and commitment, on covenant rather than contract.

But in demonstrating what the church as the body of Christ is really like to an individualistic culture, we have the delicate task of showing that the stereotypes of the culture are mistaken. In its mistaken stereotype of authority, an individualistic culture confuses it with power, with the exercise of arbitrary coercion. Authority is based on consent, and consent is gained through persuasion, not coercion. Even God, Creator of all that is, has dealt with us through persuasion, through his prophets, and through his crucified Son. He does not arrange for everything on this earth to turn out right, as some immature believers wish he would, but leaves us free to make our mistakes and to accept his freely offered grace. So leadership within the church,

though it carries a legitimate authority, also recognizes the legitimate gifts and concerns of everyone within the body of Christ.

As I understand it, authority belongs to the whole church, just as Karl Rahner says that it is the church itself that is the essential sacrament. But bishops and priests have a special responsibility to represent that authority, which comes from God and belongs to the whole church. Thus in including the laity in the decision-making process, the bishops do not dilute their authority, they enhance it. Yet, unlike a democratic official, the bishops do not just represent the opinions of the people, whatever they happen to be. What is particularly difficult for an individualistic culture to understand, within the church or without it, is that the authority with which the bishop speaks is not his own, that it is his obligation to represent as best he can an authority that transcends us all, that is the authority of reality itself. It may be precisely the responsibility of the bishop or the priest to say things that most people do not want to hear, not because of arbitrary opinions of his own, but because that is what he understands God to be saying to us now. But just because of the caricature of authority in our culture, where it is generally confused with the arbitrary exercise of power, it is especially important that the bishops make clear that they speak out of their understanding of Scripture and tradition as part of the obligation of their role, not out of any desire to exercise personal power. And it is important that they remain in dialogue with those whose opinions differ, both because new light can come from any quarter, and because without conversation there can be no persuasion.

Words are very important. I believe the task of interpreting Scripture and tradition to our society and applying them to our present need (and I agree with Hans-Georg Gadamer that if we cannot apply the words to our present situation we have not understood them) is particularly urgent today. Biblical literacy is in decline in our society, and it is part of the responsibility of the church to restore it. But I know as a teacher in a secular institution what others probably have also discovered as teachers in a sacred institution, that we teach most powerfully by what we are, whatever we say. If there are many of us who do not understand very well what it is to be a Christian today, then it is probable that there are some priests who are not entirely certain about what it is to be a priest, and there may even be some perplexity about what it is to be a bishop here and now in this society.

Nevertheless. I hope bishops will have the courage to be what they are as authentically as they understand what that is, and will not be too intimidated by the confusions of our culture, or will not fall back too readily on our central cultural stereotypes of leadership – the manager or the therapist. For if we are to demonstrate what the church is as a community based on unlimited loyalty in a covenant, and membership in the same body, we must all, with the grace of God, fulfill the particular gifts with which we have been entrusted, to the best of our ability. Bishops have indeed been pastors, prophets, and leaders in this society in a way that demonstrates what the people of God is. The remaining part of this essay will attempt to encourage them to continue what they have been doing, not only in the church but in public life as well.

### **The Totalitarian Authority of the State**

One of the ironies of a Lockean culture is that it has unleashed such extraordinary energy that, like the sorcerer's apprentice, it seems to have gotten beyond human control. This is true in

the economy as I will discuss in a moment, but it is also true in the state. The uncontrolled forces of economic and technological dynamism have led in the twentieth century to the rise of a defensive nationalism to try to control the chaos, but this in turn has led to the rise of totalitarian statism, one form of which was destroyed in the Second World War and another form of which only recently (1989) we saw crumble before our eyes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But we have not in the United States so far faced the degree to which we have participated in demonic nationalism and statism.

In 1990-1991 the United States was involved in one of the most serious international crises since World War II. In August 1990, Saddam Hussein took our attention away from bringing the cold war to an end, and we found ourselves mobilizing again instead of demobilizing. It would certainly have been preferable if we could have avoided a major military crisis for a few years after the collapse of Communism, but history does not often act as we might wish. In the face of the military aggression of Iraq against Kuwait, Americans were torn between the impulse to adhere to and strengthen the international rules of the game as we hoped they might work when the United Nations was first established, and the impulse to go it alone at whatever cost to ourselves or others. Each day we anxiously watched for signs of which way things were going. But regardless of how things developed in the Middle East, there are features of the national security state that came into existence at the beginning of the cold war that must be challenged, that must not be sheltered from criticism by this Gulf crisis. Because we are faced with a ruthless and repellent aggressor, we cannot let ourselves off the hook and suppress what the theologian Johann-Baptist Metz calls the 'dangerous memories' of our own past.

In our democratic certainty that we always represent the good and the right, the United States has traditionally fought its wars with particular ferocity. In the Second World War, in the light of the correct perception of the evils of our enemies, we engaged in actions that rivaled the worst horrors of this most horrible of centuries. I am thinking of the carpet bombing of Dresden and Hamburg, of the use of napalm in Japan, where in one night in Tokyo we incinerated 185,000 civilians far more efficiently than the Germans were able to do in Auschwitz. And we were, of course, the only nation to use atomic bombs against defenseless civilian populations, indeed, the only nation to use them at all. While the Russians are apologizing for so many horrors in their own past, it might be well for us to make some apologies of our own.

But what concerns me even more at the present is that national mobilization on a totalitarian scale did not end in the United States at the end of the Second World War. Rather we saw the emergence of the cold war as the dominant preoccupation of the executive branch of government in the years of the Truman administration leading to a new and unprecedented level of centralized state power, one the Lockean founders of our republic would have been horrified to see.

The report written in 1950 by Paul Nitze for the National Security Council (NSC-68) became a kind of blueprint justifying the emergence of a national defense state within a state for the next 40 years. Nitze's logic was that America had to use Soviet means to counteract the Soviet threat. The ironic consequence was to create a powerful apparatus of centralized authority outside the normal constitutional structures of democratic accountability that curiously mirrored the Stalinist state itself.

I am personally involved in contesting one part of this structure at the moment because my own institution is deeply implicated with it. The University of California manages the Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos National Laboratories where atomic bombs and other advanced weapons systems, including Star Wars, are designed and produced. But university management is a facade for secret and arbitrary decisions, not subject even to scientific review and criticism, and certainly not subject to any ethical debate. The faculty at all nine campuses has voted to end this unholy connection and to urge democratic review and oversight of the laboratories, but it is doubtful if the regents will listen to us.

Up until the present all congressional and public efforts to control the national defense state structure have been successfully resisted in the name of a constitutionally dubious claim of the president's "sole power" over foreign affairs. America had known something close to national mobilization in both World War I and World War II, and indeed Lincoln assumed extraordinary powers during the Civil War. But only since the late 1940s has such a centrally mobilized power as the national security state been able to continue decade after decade to exert powerful and arbitrary influence over every aspect of American society.

In Eastern Europe the churches played a key role in the collapse of totalitarian statism. In Poland, for a long time it was only in Catholic parishes that there was space to question the arbitrary control of Communist state power. Catholics and Protestants both have played key roles in the changes in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania.

The American churches have for a long time raised questions about United States military policy from the position of the ethical understanding of the Christian church. To this day those questions have not been answered. We have made significant advances toward arms control, yet atomic bombs continue to be manufactured on a large scale and new systems, including Star Wars, have only been slowed, not abandoned. What is worse, the quasi-Stalinist structures of the cold war national security state remain in place. They are compatible neither with a democratic nor a Christian understanding of social life. Yet we have not seen a dramatic challenge to the continuation of these structures at a time when their objective necessity, in spite of events in the Middle East, has become doubtful, and when other needs for the resources they consume are so pressing.

The invasion of Kuwait is only one of a long series of disturbing military conflicts in the Third World, though one that concerned us more directly than most because of our dependence on oil. But it is not part of a gigantic worldwide "Communist conspiracy" which was used to justify the creation of the national security state in the first place, and it should not be used as an excuse for its perpetuation. That the United States will need an effective defense establishment for a long time, I do not question. That we need a secret state within a state, I doubt very much. These are questions that it is very hard for politicians to raise, especially in the midst of a military crisis. It is therefore all the more the responsibility of the churches to point out the deeper problems and realities and not be stampeded by momentary feelings.

## The Totalitarian Power of the Market

But the United States today is not only threatened by a quasi-totalitarian national security state. I would argue it is threatened by another kind of totalitarianism, one that, with our Lockean presuppositions, we find it hard to recognize, namely, market totalitarianism. For over a decade now the errors of Lockean economic individualism and thin contractualism have been pushed to unheard of extremes. The result is an unprecedented polarization of wealth and poverty in our society and public evidence of widespread misery which amazes visitors from other advanced industrial nations and reminds them of Third World countries.

In a situation where economic advance had slowed and fewer people were willing to bear the burden of helping the weaker neighbor, the market metaphor has taken on a singular power in the American consciousness.

The weakening of the languages of biblical religion and civic republicanism which traditionally moderated Lockean individualism (*Habits of the Heart* provides a full-scale description of this situation) has led to a situation in which the market maximizer has become the paradigm of the human person.

One powerful version of the market paradigm derives from the teachings of Milton Friedman and the school of economics he founded. In the view of Friedman and his successors, human beings are exclusively self-interest maximizers, and the primary measure of self-interest is money. Economics becomes a total science that explains everything. Alan Wolfe (1989) in his book *Whose Keeper?*, describes the Chicago school of economics, suggesting how in its teachings economics is attempting to become our new moral philosophy or even our new religion:

When neither religion, tradition, nor literature is capable of serving as a common moral language, it may be that the one moral code all modern people can understand is self-interest. If social scientists are secular priests, Chicago school economists have become missionaries. They have an idea about how the world works. This idea seems to apply in some areas of life. It therefore follows, they believe, that it ought to apply in all....

Chicago school theorists insist that the tools of economic analysis can be used not just to decide whether production should be increased or wages decreased, but in every kind of decision-making situation. Thus we have been told ... that marriage is not so much about love as about supply and demand as regulated through markets for spouses. ...and a man commits suicide "when the total discounted lifetime utility remaining to him reaches zero." From the perspective of the Chicago school, there is no behavior that is not interpretable as economic, however altruistic, emotional, disinterested, and compassionate it may seem to others.... (1989:36, 32)

Wolfe cites an extreme example of two economists of this school who argue that a free market in babies would allow the solution of many current social problems in this area. They hold that women should be allowed to sell their babies on the open market and suggest that our

situation would be better if “baby prices were quoted as soya bean future prices were quoted” (1989:37-38). We may not be surprised that the French speak of American capitalism as “*le capitalisme sauvage*,” savage capitalism.

These bizarre ideas are not, unfortunately, just theoretical. They influence many aspects of our lives. They have a powerful influence, for example, on government. Ann Swidler, one of my co-authors in *Habits of the Heart*, when doing interviews for our new book, *The Good Society*, talked to an expert at the Environmental Protection Agency about how they figured the tradeoffs in the costs of human lives saved versus the costs of the safety devices that would save them. Ann suggested: “Some people believe human life is priceless.” The government expert replied, “We have no data on that.”

In spite of a long history of governmental measures taken to alleviate the harshest consequences of rapid industrialization, compared to most other advanced industrial nations, the United States has emphasized economic opportunity for individuals (and corporate “individuals”) at the expense of public amenities. Indeed, David Popenoe (1985), in a book comparing the United States with Sweden and England, says that, relatively speaking, “Americans live in an environment of private affluence and public squalor,” where a “very high standard of private consumption represents a trade-off with public services” (1985:82). Since we have much lower levels of taxation than West Europeans, we can use our “saved taxes” to purchase more consumer goods than English or Swedes of comparable income, but we do so at considerable cost:

The environmental squalor of American metropolitan communities stems in part from their dispersed character and the associated dominance of the automobile. But the relative lack of public funding dooms public services of all kinds – parks and playgrounds, public housing, public transportation – to a level of quality that is meager at best by European standards. The poor quality of older communities, for example the inner-city slums in most older American cities of even modest size, also results from the lack of publicly financed planning efforts to direct urban growth and renew town centers. (1985:82)

Popenoe recognizes that most Americans seem to be not unhappy about “this trade-off of public services for private consumption.” We like our spacious homes and our automobiles, and we don’t like taxes. Yet for all but the strongest, our way of doing things makes us extremely vulnerable:

At least as compared with life in European societies (and Japan) American life is also marked by a high degree of economic insecurity. American society has the character of a gambler’s society: You may hit the jackpot and become really rich (something that is extremely difficult today, for example, in Sweden), but you can also with relative ease find yourself “out on the street.” American employment policies are much less geared to job stability than are European policies. Many health care costs require private payments to the extent that a serious medical problem can be financially disastrous to the individual. And the pressures for ever-expanding personal consumption can quickly lead to indebtedness and even bankruptcy, to cite but a few examples. (1985:84)

Differences between income brackets are much greater in the United States than in Britain or Sweden. Whereas Americans in the top five percent income bracket earn 13 times as much as those in the bottom five percent, the difference in Britain is a factor of six and in Sweden merely three. Yet, as Popenoe points out, even this disparity is not the whole story, for the poor in America can count on much less community support than in Europe.

Thus to be reasonably well-off in the United States with job stability and economic security in old age, is to have a life of great personal freedom and affluence. But to be poor, or even economically marginal, is to be a second class citizen in a way that is not found to be acceptable by the English or Swedish societies. (1985:84)

No sphere is immune to market pressures. A student of mine who is a Lutheran minister brought me a story from a suburban newspaper in the Bay Area:

The members of St John's Lutheran Church have a money-back guarantee. They can donate to the church for 90 days, then if they think they made a mistake, or did not receive a blessing, they can have their money back. The program is called "God's Guarantee" and the pastor is confident it will work. "We trust God to keep his promises so much that we are offering this money back policy," the pastor said....

The program is modeled on a similar program at Skyline Wesleyan Church in San Diego. When my student called this pastor to remonstrate that there was nothing in the Bible compatible with a 90-day, money-back guarantee, the pastor gave a theological defense but also indicated that the program seemed to be popular with the congregation. Unfortunately there are many churches today that see themselves as competing for market shares of believers and will try whatever seems to work to make sure that they compete successfully.

For those of us in the university, these pressures are also very evident. The research university has grown in tandem with the business corporation, yet for all the interpenetration, there has always been a difference in structure and a difference in aims. Now that difference itself is under attack. The prospectus of Stanford University's new Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research states:

Advances in economic theory and empirical analysis methods, developments in organizational behavior, and refinements of managerial technique have reached the point where we can hope to understand the complexities of non-profit institutions – including colleges and universities – to a degree approaching that for business firms.

William Massy, Stanford's vice-president for finance and a member of the School of Business is the chief instigator of this new institute and now holds a professorship in the School of Education as well. Massy, in a recent interview, said: "Ever since I joined the central administration in the early '70s, I have become really fascinated with higher education as an industry where institutions with many interconnections interact in a kind of marketplace."

Massy's new institute has placed high on its list of research questions "an examination of the productivity and cost effectiveness at universities. Are universities delivering the product that the public expects?" Central to this concern is the question of, in Massy's words, "the effectiveness of teaching and learning. What is a good set of measures for each of those?" Much of the public, Massy recognizes, sees university education as primarily "job preparation," and he feels the university is obliged to meet that concern. For him the university is just one more element in the market system:

It's hard to deny that when students come for a particular service, someone will supply it. Tastes have changed: people used to be interested in the classics; now they are interested in making money. In the end, we have fundamental and deep social changes – and they are what they are. I do believe in the market. If there is a demand, we have an obligation to meet it. We need to provide an interesting menu at the university – a menu of where we think the world is going – but we can't dictate what people are going to want. If they don't like the menu, we have an obligation to change it.... (All these Massy quotes are from *Stanford School of Education*, a supplement to the *Stanford Observer*, January, 1989, p. 2.)

In Professor Massy's view, the education industry should be responsive to market demand. If people used to be interested in the classics but now are interested in making money, so be it. He rejects any notion of the university as a community of discourse which might prepare citizens for participation in our common world. In this market model students are seen as consumers with fixed preferences to which we, as teachers, are passively to respond. In this conception of the university, there is no room for the idea that we might have anything to say that would surprise the students, perhaps challenge them to think more deeply about themselves and the world.

Instead education is merely a market for the skills and methods to get ahead in the world. What is clear is that this economic ideology which turns human beings into relentless market maximizers is destructive to everything we can call community, to family, to church, to neighborhood, to school, and ultimately to the world. In *Habits of the Heart* we documented what this kind of thinking does to our capacity to sustain relationships in every sphere, private as well as public. But the final irony is that this apparently economic conception of human life turns out to be profoundly destructive to our economy! If a sense of community would make us poorer, I would still advocate it. But the embarrassing fact is that community turns out to be a much stronger basis for an effective economy than the individualistic pursuit of self-interest. We have only to look at the Japanese case to see that.

Let me give an illustration of what I mean, one that applies particularly to our high-tech industries. The old neo-classical categories of capital and labor no longer apply. The productivity of a high-tech company resides in the quality of its work force, in the competence and responsibility of individuals, but also, critically, in the trust and confidence they have in each other so that they can nurture and support creativity and innovation. What is required today is not "hands," labor in the old sense of routine manual performance. What is required is brains, but not just brains but also persons, persons who trust each other and genuinely enjoy working together. A company that has that will outperform many times over another with the same amount of fi-

nancing and the same kind of physical equipment, but where the workers are not responsible and where no one trusts anyone or is willing to take any risks.

But what is happening to our companies under the logic of interest-maximization? We have over the last ten years seen an advance of what is called the commodification of the corporation. Any effective company will be looked at hungrily by those who would make an immediate profit by buying it, stripping it of its assets, firing managers and employees, and reorganizing for immediate gain. What the commodification of the corporation does is to destroy the corporation as a community, to make everyone suspicious, ready to bail out, looking out for number one, looking to make the next quarterly statement look good at whatever cost so that one can get another job. By strip-mining our most valuable economic asset, namely the creative interaction of people who have grown to understand and trust each other, we sink our long-term economic viability. And then we set up another commission to study American “competitiveness”!

But the principle that cripples our economy weakens every aspect of our lives together. People in our large urban areas are worried about the high cost of housing and the problem of clogged transportation arteries. But if every affluent person is simply intent on buying the best possible house for his or her family with no concern for the provision of low- and middle-income housing in the community, then the cost of housing will soon go out of sight and even the affluent will become indentured servants of their mortgages, while the disappearance of low-cost housing means many will go homeless. If we all think only of our own convenience in driving our individual cars to work, then we all spend ever more time on the freeway breathing the polluted air our cars are creating, rather than working on better public transportation that would serve the good of all.

In short, our individualistic heritage has taught us that there is no such thing as the common good except as the sum of individual goods. But in the complex interdependent world in which we live, the sum of our individual goods produces a common bad, that eventually erodes our individual satisfactions as well.

There is, thus, much to be done if Americans are to see that our market idolatry is not good for our own society and not good for the world. The collapse of command economies in the Communist world in no way justifies the evils of market capitalism operating with no moral constraints. So here, too, where others are slow to speak, it is important for the churches to point out how far our society needs to go to realize the dignity of the individual through shared economic participation in a good community. This again is to demonstrate what the church really is by showing how different its understanding of human existence is from that of the surrounding culture.

## **Conclusion**

Let me close, if I may, by quoting some words of Frederick Borsch, Bishop of Los Angeles, based on a study of Episcopalian parishioners. Borsch argues that there is a new receptiveness to serious theological education. “We can no longer rely on our attractive liturgy nor the warmth of our congregational life to draw people in,” he said. “People are hungry for fellowship to find meaning in life, and they are seeking answers” (*Episcopal Life* 1990:19).

He suggests that parishes today must certainly be alive with the presence of the Holy Spirit, but they must also “be involved with the real problems in our society and seeking to make a difference in their neighborhood and the lives of the people who are there. Our studies show that baby boomers want to know whether the churches are concerned with real societal problems.” Ecology, peace, and social justice are all on people’s minds, and, says Borsch, “I don’t think people expect the church to have answers to all questions, but I do think that people expect the church to be seriously concerned with these questions” (*Episcopal Life* 1990:19).

Borsch emphasized the educational role of the clergy: “It is terribly important that the clergy of the future see themselves as educators,” he said. “All sorts of wonderful people can do the administrating, can do the pasturing – but clergy may be the only people in the parish trained to do the education at a high level – to be the teacher of the teachers, to supply the energy for the whole program” (*Episcopal Life* 1990:19). What Borsch says of the clergy is even more true of the bishops, who are indeed the teachers of teachers. Finally, Borsch emphasized that education is not just for the formation of the individual student, but must move to a new understanding of the formation of the community of faith.

So to sum up my argument, I would say that the bishop as leader must help the whole church demonstrate what it is, to show forth to itself and the world what a covenant community based on faith and love is like. For people caught up in the ideology of self-interest and minimal commitment to anyone else, the very presence of a community based on radically different premises can be salvific. But if the church is to be the church, it must not only practice its beliefs within the community, it must show forth what they imply for the larger society, not to coerce acceptance and not to be swept up into activism at the expense of spirituality, but to hold up an alternative vision of reality, to give witness to what, as best we can discern it, God is saying to the world today. It is our responsibility as clergy, and laity, not only to help the church show forth in its life what we profess by our faith but to engage in public discussion with all others in our society about pressing matters of the common good.

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# Individualism and the Crisis of Civic Membership

by **Robert Bellah, et al**

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## SUMMARY

The authors revisit their best-selling *Habits of the Heart* and discover that in American society individualism has not diminished. Rather, under the influence of neo-capitalism, it has increased.

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The consequences of radical individualism are more strikingly evident today than they were even a decade ago when *Habits of the Heart* was published. In *Habits* we spoke of commitment, of community and of citizenship as useful contrast terms to an alienating individualism. Properly understood, these terms are still valuable for our current understanding. But today we think the phrase "civic membership" brings out something not quite captured by these other terms. While we criticized distorted forms of individualism, we never sought to neglect the central significance of the individual person or failed to sympathize with the difficulties faced by the individual self in our society. "Civic membership" points to that critical intersection of personal identity with social identity. If we face a crisis of civic identity, it is not just a social crisis; it is a personal crisis as well.

One way of characterizing the crisis of civic membership is to speak of declining "social capital." Robert Putnam, who has brought the term to public attention, defines social capital as follows: "By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital -- tools and training that enhance individual productivity -- social capital refers to features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits." There are a number of possible indices of social capital, but the two that Putnam has used most extensively are associational membership and public trust.

Putnam has chosen a stunning image as the title of a recent article: *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital* (*Journal of Democracy*, January 1995). He reports that between 1980 and 1993 the total number of bowlers in America increased by 10 percent, while league bowling decreased by 40 percent. This is not a trivial example: nearly 80 million Americans went bowling at least once in 1993, nearly a third more than voted in the 1994 congressional election and roughly the same as claim to attend church regularly.

For Putnam, people bowling by themselves are a symbol of the decline of associational life, the vigor of which has been seen as the heart of our civic culture ever since Alexis de Tocqueville visited the U.S. in the 1830s.

In the 1970s dramatic declines began to hit the associations typically composed of women, such as the PTA and the League of Women Voters. This has often been explained as the result of the massive entry of women into the work force. In the 1980s falling membership struck typically male associations, such as the Lions, Elks, Masons and Shriners, as well. Union membership has dropped by half since its peak in the middle 1950s. We all know of the continuing decline of the number of eligible voters who actually go to the polls, but Putnam reminds us that the number of Americans who answer yes when asked whether they have attended a public meeting on town or school affairs in the last year has fallen by more than a third since 1973.

Almost the only groups that are growing are support groups, such as 12-step groups. These groups make minimal demands on their members and are oriented primarily to the needs of individuals. Indeed, Robert Wuthnow has characterized them as involving individuals who "focus on themselves in the presence of others" -- what we might call being alone together. Putnam argues that paper membership groups, such as the American Association of Retired Persons, which has grown to gargantuan proportions, have little or no civic consequences because their members, although they may have common interests, have no meaningful interaction with one another.

Putnam also worries that the Internet, the electronic town meeting, and other much ballyhooed new technological devices are probably civically vacuous because they do not sustain civic engagement. Talk radio, for instance, mobilizes private opinion, not public opinion, and trades on anxiety, anger and distrust, all of which are deadly to civic culture. The one sphere that seems to be resisting the general trend is religion. Religious membership and church attendance have remained fairly constant after the decline from the religious boom of the 1950s, although membership in church-related groups has declined by about one-sixth since the 1960s.

Accompanying the decline of associational involvement is the decline of public trust. We are not surprised to hear that the proportion of Americans who reply that they trust the government in Washington only some of the time or almost never has risen steadily from 30 percent in 1966 to 75 percent in 1992. But are we prepared to hear that the proportion of Americans who say that most people can be trusted fell by more than a third between 1960, when 58 per-cent chose that alternative, and 1993, when only 37 percent did?

The argument for decline in social capital is not one that we made in *Habits of the Heart*. *Habits* was essentially a cultural analysis, more about language than about behavior. We worried that the language of individualism might undermine civic commitment, but we pointed to the historically high levels of associational membership in America and the relative strength of such memberships compared with other advanced industrial nations. Whether there has really been such a decline is still controversial, but we are inclined to believe that tendencies that were not entirely clear in the early 1980s when *Habits* was written are now discernible and disconcerting.

We believe that the culture and language of individualism influence these trends but that there are also structural reasons for them, many of which stem from changes in the global economy that have increased the disparity between the rich and poor and threatened the survival of the middle class. The decline in social capital is evident in different ways in different classes. For example, the decline in civic engagement in the overclass is indicated by their withdrawal into gated, guarded communities. It is also related to the constant movement of companies in the process of mergers and breakups. Rosabeth Kanter has recently suggested some of the consequences:

"For communities as well as employees this constant shuffling of company identities is confusing and its effects profound. Cities and towns rely on the private sector to augment public services and support community causes. There is a strong 'headquarters bias' in this giving: companies based in a city tend to do more for it, contributing \$75,000 a year on average more to the local United Way than companies of similar size with headquarters elsewhere."

Kanter points out that the loss of a corporate headquarters in a middle-sized city can tear holes in the social fabric. Not only are thousands of jobs lost but so is the civic leadership of corporate executives. Local charities lose not only money but board members.

Corporate volatility can lead to a kind of placelessness at the top of the pyramid: "Cut loose from society the rich man can play his chosen role free of guilt and responsibility," observes Michael Lewis. "He becomes that great figure of American mythology -- the roaming frontiersman. These days the man who has made a fortune is likely to spend more on his means of transportation than on his home: the private jet is the possession that most distinguishes him from the rest of us.... The old aristocratic conceit of place has given way to a glorious placelessness." The mansions of the old rich were certainly expressions of conspicuous consumption, but they also encouraged a sense of responsibility for the particular place (city, state, region) where they were located.

Moving to the opposite end of the income spectrum, Lee Rainwater, in his classic book *What Money Buys*, shows that poverty -- income insufficient to maintain an acceptable level of living -- operates to deprive the poor not only of material capital but of social capital as well. In traditional hierarchical societies low levels of material well-being can be associated with established statuses that confer the benefits of clientship. In our kind of society, with its fundamentally egalitarian ideology and its emphasis on individual self-reliance, status -- even personal identity -- is conferred primarily by one's relationship to the economy, by one's work and the income derived from one's work. Lacking a socially acceptable income, or any likelihood of attaining one, has long-term consequences for the kind of person one becomes and the kind of life one is likely to live. As Rainwater puts it:

"As people grow up and live their lives, they are engaged in a constant implicit assessment of their likely chances for having the access and resources necessary to maintain a sense of valid identity. People's anticipation of their future chances, particularly as children, adolescents, and younger adults, seems to affect quite markedly the way they relate to others and the way they make use of the resources

available to them. When individuals make the assessment that their future possibilities for participating in validating activities are low and particularly when that estimate is constantly confirmed by others in their world (teachers, police, parents), then the process of searching for alternative validating potentials that result, in deviant behavior is set in motion. When people define their position in life as such that they have 'nothing to lose,' they are much less responsive to the efforts at social control exercised informally by those in their neighborhood and formally by official agencies of social regulation."

By reducing social capital, chronic poverty blocks economic and political participation, and consequently weakens the capacity to develop moral character and sustain a viable family life as well.

When we add to the consequences of poverty the consequences of residential segregation, the situation becomes devastating. We should remember that in spite of fair-housing laws residential segregation for black Americans has remained unchanged in our larger cities for the past three decades. What has changed is that the geographical areas with the highest poverty rates have lost retail trade outlets, government services, political influence and, worst of all, employment that provides anything like an adequate living. Those deprived of social capital have come to be confined to "reservations" that are effectively outside the enviroing society.

As for the anxious middle class, Herbert Gans in *Middle American Individualism* helps us understand what is happening to social capital in that group. Gans has criticized *Habits of the Heart* for being too censorious of middle American individualism. After all, says Gans, the residents of the lower-middle- and working-class suburbs who are more devoted to their family and friends than to civic life are only a generation or two away from the grinding poverty of manual labor among their immigrant ancestors or the backbreaking labor of peasant agriculture in the old country.

The social condition of those not-so-distant ancestors was one of vulnerable subordination, of being kicked around by people who told them what to do. Owning one's own home, taking one's vacations wherever one wants, being free to decide whom to see or what to buy once one has left the workplace, are all freedoms that are especially cherished by those whose ancestors never had them. The modest suburb is not the open frontier, but it is, under the circumstances, a reasonable facsimile thereof.

Among the many ironies in the life of at least a significant number of these middle Americans, however, is that labor union membership had much to do with their attaining a relative affluence and its attendant independence. Yet for many of them the labor union has become one more alien institution from which they would like to be free. Middle Americans are not only suspicious of government, according to Gans, they don't like organizations of any kind. Compared to the upper middle class, they are not joiners, belonging to only one or two associations at the most, the likeliest being a church. While continuing to identify strongly with the nation, they are increasingly suspicious of politics, which they find confusing and dismaying. Their political participation steadily declines.

As a consequence of tendencies that Gans is probably right in asking us to understand, middle Americans are today losing the social capital that allowed them to attain their valued independence in the first place. Above all, this is true of the decline of the labor movement. This decline is due to legislative changes in the past 20 years that have deprived unions of much of their power and influence, and congressional refusal since 1991 to raise the minimum wage from \$4.25 an hour. But, as we see in France and other European countries, where loyalty to labor unions has survived, such attacks can be turned back. Where unions exist in America, union meetings attract 5 percent of the members at most. Lacking the social capital that union membership would provide, anxious-class Americans are vulnerable in new ways to the arbitrary domination they thought they had escaped. One may not even own one's home and one's recreational vehicle for long if one's job is downsized and the only alternative employment is at the minimum wage.

The decline of social capital in American has particularly distressing consequences if we consider what has happened to political participation. In *Voice and Equality*, Sydney Verba and his colleagues have given us a comprehensive review of political participation. Although the data concerning trends over time are not unambiguous, they do indicate certain tendencies. During the past 30 years the level of education in the American public has steadily risen, but the political participation that is usually associated with education has not.

Even more significant is the nature of the changes. Political party identification and membership have declined, while campaign contributions and writing to members of Congress have increased. Both of these growing kinds of activities normally take place in the privacy of one's home as one writes a check or a letter. Verba and his associates note that neither generates the personal satisfactions that more social forms of political participation do.

Further, making monetary contributions correlates highly with income and is the most unequal form of participation in our society. The increasing salience of monetary contributions as a form of political participation, as well as the general tendency for political participation to correlate with income, education and occupation, leads to the summary conclusion of the book:

"Meaningful democratic participation requires that the voices of citizens in politics be clear, loud and equal: clear so that public officials know what citizens want and need, loud so that officials have an incentive to pay attention to what they hear, and equal so that the democratic ideal of equal responsiveness to the preferences and interests of all is not violated. Our analysis of voluntary activity in American politics suggests that the public's voice is often loud, sometimes clear, but rarely equal."

Although unequal levels of education, occupation and income favor the originally advantaged in securing the resources for political participation, there is one significant exception. As Verba and his associates note:

"Only religious institutions provide a counterbalance to this cumulative resource process. They play an unusual role in the American participatory system by providing

opportunities for the development of civic skills to those who would otherwise be resource-poor. It is commonplace to ascribe the special character of American politics to the weakness of unions and the absence of class-based political parties that can mobilize the disadvantaged -- in particular, the working class -- to political activity. Another way that American society is exceptional is in how often Americans go to church -- with the result that the mobilizing function often performed elsewhere by unions and labor or social democratic parties is more likely to be performed by religious institutions."

Although most Americans agree that things are seriously amiss in our society, that we are not, as the poll questions often put it, "headed in the right direction," they differ over why this is so and what should be done about it. We have sought answers by looking at the structural problems that we have described under the rubrics of the crisis in civic membership and the decline of social capital. What are some of the other explanations?

Perhaps the most widespread alternative explanation locates the sources of our problems in a crisis of the family. The cry that what our society most needs is "family values" is not one to be lightly dismissed. Almost all the tendencies that we have been describing threaten family life and are often experienced most acutely within the context of the family. Being unemployed and thus unable to get married or not having enough income to support an existing family due to downsizing or part-timing and the tensions caused by these conditions can certainly be understood as family crises. But why is the crisis expressed as a failure of family values?

It is unlikely that we will understand this phenomenon unless we take account once again of the culture of individualism. If we see unemployment or reduced income due to downsizing as purely individual problems rather than structural problems of the economy, then we will seek to understand what is wrong with the unemployed or underemployed individual. If we also discern that such individuals are prone to having children out of wedlock, frequently divorcing, or failing to make child-support payments, we may conclude that the cause is inadequate family values. In *Habits of the Heart* we strongly affirmed the value of the family and in both *Habits* and *The Good Society* we argued for renewed commitment to marriage and family responsibilities. But to imagine that problems arising from failures rooted in the structure of our economy and polity are due primarily to the failings of individuals with inadequate family values seems to us sadly mistaken. It not only increases the level of individual guilt feelings, it distracts attention from larger failures of collective responsibility.

There is a further consequence of the link between cultural individualism and the emphasis on family values. Families have traditionally been supported by the paid labor of men. Failure to support one's family may be taken as an indication of inadequate manhood. It is easy to draw the conclusion that if American men would only act like men, then family life would be improved and social problems solved. Some such way of thinking undoubtedly lies behind the movement known as *Promise Keepers* as well as the *Million Man March* of 1995. While we share many of the values of these movements, we are skeptical that increased male responsibility will prove to be an adequate solution to our deep structural economic and political problems or even do more than marginally diminish the severe strains on the American family. The notion

that if men would only be men then all would be well in our society seems to us a sad cultural delusion.

Another common alternative explanation of our difficulties is to explain them as the failure of community. This is indeed the case, we believe, but only if our understanding of community is broad and deep enough. In many current usages of the term, however, community means face-to-face groups formed by the voluntary efforts of individuals. Here failure of community as the source of our problems can be interpreted to mean that if more people would only volunteer to help in soup kitchens or Habitat for Humanity or Meals on Wheels, then our social problems would be solved. Habits of the Heart strongly affirms face-to-face communities and the valuable contributions that voluntary groups can make to society. But we do not believe that the deep structural problems that we face as a society can be seriously alleviated by an increase in devotion to community in this narrow sense. We would agree that an increase in the voluntary commitments of individuals can over the long haul increase our social capital and thus add to the resources we can bring to bear on our problems. But to get at the roots of our problems these resources must be used to overcome institutional difficulties that cannot be directly addressed by voluntary action alone.

There is another problem with emphasizing a small-scale and voluntaristic understanding of community as the solution to our problems. Voluntary activity tends to correlate with income, education and occupation. "Joiners" are more apt to be found in the overclass than in the underclass or anxious middle class-with the significant exception of religious groups. This means that many voluntary activities are not so much designed to help the most deprived -- though we don't want to overlook those that are -- -as to serve the interests of the affluent. This is particularly true of political voluntarism.

Thus, dismantling structures of public provision for the most deprived in hopes that the voluntary sector can take over is mistaken in three important respects. The voluntary sector by no means has the resources to take up the slack, as churches, charities and foundations have been pointing out repeatedly in recent years. The second reason is that our more affluent citizens may feel that they have fulfilled their obligation to society by giving time and money to "make a difference" through voluntary activity without considering that they have hardly made a dent in the real problems faced by most Americans. The third reason is that the voluntary sector is disproportionately run by our better-off citizens, and a good many voluntary activities do more to protect the well-to-do than the needy.

There is another sense of community that also presents difficulties if we think the solution to our problems lies in reviving community, and that is the notion of community as neighborhood or locality. Habits of the Heart encourages strong neighborhoods and supports civic engagement in towns and cities. But residential segregation is a fact of life in contemporary America. Even leaving aside the hypersegregation of urban ghettos, segregation by class arising from differential housing costs is increasingly evident in suburban America. Thus it is quite possible that in "getting involved" with one's neighborhood or even with one's suburban town one will never meet someone of a different race or class. One will not be exposed to the reality of life of people in circumstances different from one's own.

The explanations of our social problems that stress the failure of family values or the failure of community have in common the notion that our problems are individual or are social in only a narrow sense (that is, involving family and local community), rather than economic, political and cultural. A related feature that these common explanations of our troubles share is hostility to the role of government or the state. If we can take care of ourselves with possibly a little help from our friends and family, who needs the state? Indeed, the state is often viewed as an interfering father who won't recognize that his children have grown up and don't need him any more. He can't help solve our problems because in large measure it is he who created them.

In contrast, the market, in this mind-set, seems benign, a neutral theater for competition in which achievement is rewarded and incompetence punished. There is some awareness that markets are not neutral, that there are people and organizations with enormous economic power capable of making decisions that adversely affect many citizens. From this point of view, big business joins big government as the source of problems rather than their solution. Yet more than in most comparable societies Americans are inclined to think that the market is fairer than the state.

The culture of individualism, then, has made no small contribution to the rise of the ideology we referred to in *Habits* as neocapitalism. There we drew a picture of the American political situation that has turned out not to be entirely adequate. We suggested that the impasse between welfare liberalism and its countermovement, neocapitalism, was coming to an end and two alternatives, the administered society and economic democracy, were looming on the scene. As it turned out, this incipient pair of alternatives did not materialize, or at least they are enduring a long wait. Instead, neocapitalism has grown ever stronger ideologically and politically. Criticism of "big government" and "tax-and-spend liberalism" has mounted even as particular constituencies, which in the aggregate include most citizens, favor those forms of public provision that benefit them in particular, while opposing benefits they do not receive.

We do not believe we were wrong ten years ago in seeing the severe strains that the neocapitalist formula was creating for the nation. Today those strains are more obvious than ever. But we clearly underestimated the ideological fervor that the neocapitalist position was able to tap. This is ironic, since so much of that fervor derives from the very thing we focused on in our book: individualism. The only thing that makes the neocapitalist vision viable is the degree to which it can be seen as an expression, even a moral expression, of our dominant ideological individualism, with its compulsive stress on independence, its contempt for weakness and its adulation of success.

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<https://www.religion-online.org/article/individualism-and-the-crisis-of-civic-membership/>

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## Our Elites Still Don't Get It

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Robert Gallagher <ragodct@gmail.com>

Fri, Nov 17, 2017 at 7:59 AM

To: Michelle Heyne <michelleheyne@gmail.com>, Robert Gallagher <ragodct@gmail.com>

# Our Elites Still Don't Get It

David Brooks

John Bowlby is the father of attachment theory, which explains how humans are formed by relationships early in life, and are given the tools to go out and lead their lives. The most famous Bowlby sentence is this one: “All of us, from cradle to grave, are happiest when life is organized as a series of excursions, long or short, from the secure base provided by our attachment figures.”

Attachment theory nicely distinguishes between the attachments that form you and the things you then do for yourself. The relationships that form you are mostly things you didn't choose: your family, hometown, ethnic group, religion, nation and genes. The things you do with your life are mostly chosen: your job, spouse and hobbies.

Through most of American history, our society was built on this same sort of unchosen/chosen distinction. At our foundation, we were a society with strong covenantal attachments — to family, community, creed and faith. Then on top of them we built democracy and capitalism that celebrated liberty and individual rights.

The deep covenantal institutions gave people the capacity to use their freedom well. The liberal institutions gave them that freedom.

This delicate balance — liberal institutions built atop illiberal ones — is now giving way. The big social movements of the past half century were about maximizing freedom of choice. Right-wingers wanted to maximize economic choice and left-wingers lifestyle choice. Anything that smacked of restraint came to seem like a bad thing to be eliminated.

We'll call this worldview — which is all freedom and no covenant — naked liberalism (liberalism in the classic Lockean sense, not the modern progressive sense). The problem with naked liberalism is that it relies on individuals it cannot create.

This is the point Yuval Levin made in a brilliant essay published in *First Things* back in 2014. Naked liberals of right and left assume that if you give people freedom they will use it to care for their neighbors, to have civil conversations, to form opinions after examining the evidence. But if you weaken family, faith, community and any sense of national obligation, where is that social, emotional and moral formation supposed to come from? How will the virtuous habits form?

Naked liberalism has made our society an unsteady tree. The branches of individual rights are sprawling, but the roots of common obligation are withering away.

Freedom without covenant becomes selfishness. And that's what we see at the top of society, in our politics and the financial crisis. Freedom without connection becomes alienation. And that's what we see at the bottom of society — frayed communities, broken

families, opiate addiction. Freedom without a unifying national narrative becomes distrust, polarization and permanent political war.

People can endure a lot if they have a secure base, but if you take away covenantal attachments they become fragile. Moreover, if you rob people of their good covenantal attachments, they will grab bad ones. First, they will identify themselves according to race. They will become the racial essentialists you see on left and right: The only people who can really know me are in my race. Life is a zero-sum contest between my race and your race, so get out.

Then they resort to tribalism. This is what Donald Trump provides. As Mark S. Weiner writes on the Niskanen Center's blog, Trump is constantly making friend/enemy distinctions, exploiting liberalism's thin conception of community and creating toxic communities based on in-group/out-group rivalry.

Trump offers people cultural solutions to their alienation problem. As history clearly demonstrates, people will prefer fascism to isolation, authoritarianism to moral anarchy.

If we are going to have a decent society we're going to have to save liberalism from itself. We're going to have to restore and re-enchant the covenantal relationships that are the foundation for the whole deal. The crucial battleground is cultural and prepolitical.

In my experience, most people under 40 get this. They sense the social and moral void at the core and that change has to come at the communal, emotional and moral level. They understand that populism is a broad social movement, including but stretching far beyond just policy. To address it, we're going to need to confront it with another broad social movement.

Many people my age and above seem clueless. Our elected leaders were raised in the heyday of naked liberalism and still talk as if it were 1994. Many public intellectuals were trained in the social sciences and take the choosing individual as their mental starting point. They have trouble thinking about our shared social and moral formative institutions and how such institutions could be reconstituted.

Congressional Republicans think a successful tax bill will thwart populism. Mainstream Democrats think the alienation problem will go away if we redistribute the crumbs a bit more widely. Washington policy wonks build technocratic sand castles that keep getting swept away in the cultural tides.

History is full of examples of nations that built new national narratives, revived family life, restored community bonds and shared moral culture: Britain in the early 19th century, Germany after World War II, America in the Progressive Era. The first step in launching our own revival is understanding that the problem is down in the roots.

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146 COMMENTS

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## The Age of Individualism

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Mon, Dec 4, 2017 at 3:13 PM

# The Age of Individualism

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**Ross Douthat**

MARCH 15, 2014

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/16/opinion/sunday/douthat-the-age-of-individualism.html>

IN the future, it seems, there will be only one “ism” — Individualism — and its rule will never end. As for religion, it shall decline; as for marriage, it shall be postponed; as for ideologies, they shall be rejected; as for patriotism, it shall be abandoned; as for strangers, they shall be distrusted. Only pot, selfies and Facebook will abide — and the greatest of these will probably be Facebook.

That’s the implication, at least, of what the polling industry keeps telling us about the rising American generation, the so-called millennials. (Full disclosure: I am not quite one of them, having entered the world in the penultimate year of Generation X.) A new [Pew survey](#), the latest dispatch from the land of young adulthood, describes a generation that’s socially liberal on issues like immigration and marijuana and same-sex marriage, proudly independent of either political party, less likely to be married and religious than earlier generations, less likely to identify as patriotic and less likely — by a striking margin — to say that one’s fellow human beings can be trusted.

In political terms, the millennials are liberals on the surface, which is why the Pew report inspired a round of discussion about whether they’re likely to transform electoral politics in the short run (no, because cohort replacement is slow, and it’s Generation X that’s actually moving into [positions of influence](#) right now), whether they will push our political debates leftward in the long run (probably, because [youthful voting patterns](#) tend to persist across the life cycle), and whether this gives the Democratic Party a hammerlock on the future (it doesn’t, because political coalitions always adapt and fracture in unexpected ways).

But the millennials' skepticism of parties, programs and people runs deeper than their allegiance to a particular ideology. Their left-wing commitments are ardent on a few issues but blur into libertarianism and indifferentism on others. The common denominator is individualism, not left-wing politics: it explains both the personal optimism and the social mistrust, the passion about causes like gay marriage and the declining interest in collective-action crusades like environmentalism, even the fact that religious affiliation has declined but personal belief is still widespread.

So the really interesting question about the millennials isn't whether they'll all be voting Democratic when Chelsea Clinton runs for president. It's whether this level of individualism — postpatriotic, postfamilial, disaffiliated — is actually sustainable across the life cycle, and whether it can become a culture's dominant way of life.

One can answer “yes” to this question cheerfully or pessimistically — with the optimism of a libertarian who sees such individualism as a liberation from every form of oppression and control, or the pessimism of a communitarian who sees social isolation, atomization and unhappiness trailing in its wake.

But one can also answer “no,” and argue that the human desire for community and authority cannot be permanently buried — in which case the most important question in an era of individualism might be what form of submission it presages.

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This was the point raised in 1953 by Robert Nisbet's [“Quest for Community,”](#) arguably the 20th century's most important work of conservative sociology. (I wrote the introduction when it was reissued.) Trying to explain modern totalitarianism's dark allure, Nisbet argued that it was precisely the emancipation of the individual in modernity — from clan, church and guild — that had enabled the rise of fascism and Communism.

In the increasing absence of local, personal forms of fellowship and solidarity, he suggested, people were naturally drawn to mass movements, cults of personality, nationalistic fantasias. The advance of individualism thus eventually produced its own antithesis — conformism, submission and control.

You don't have to see a fascist or Communist revival on the horizon (I certainly don't) to see this argument's potential relevance for our apparently individualistic future. You only have to look at the place where millennials — and indeed, most of us — are clearly seeking new forms of community today.

That place is the online realm, which offers a fascinating variation on Nisbet's theme. Like modernity writ large, it promises emancipation and offers new forms of community that transcend the particular and local. But it requires a price, in terms of privacy surrendered, that past tyrannies could have only dreamed of exacting from their subjects.

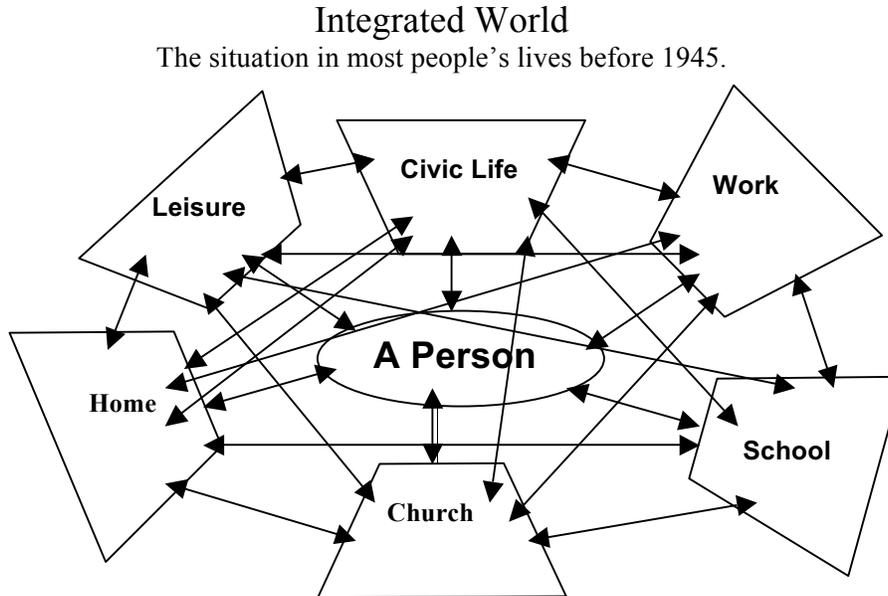
This surrender could prove to be benign. But it's still noteworthy that today's [vaguely totalitarian arguments](#) don't usually come from political demagogues. They come from enthusiasts for the online Panopticon, the uploaded world where everyone will be transparent to everyone else.

That kind of future is far from inevitable. But as Nisbet would argue, and as the rising generation of Americans may yet need to learn, it probably cannot be successfully resisted by individualism alone.

# Organizations in a World of Choices

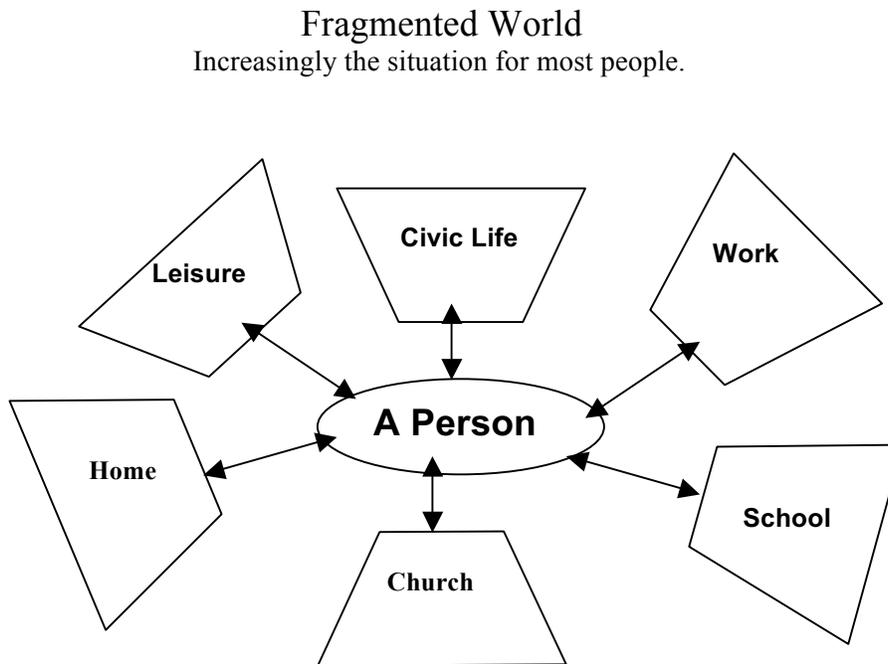
From an integrated and limited world to a fragmented world with choices

-- based on Doug Walrath's *Frameworks*



The elements of life in organic relationships; engaged in mutual adaptation with each other. There are fewer choices. The society can tolerate a few "odd" people (they are our "odd" people). Some are excluded because they are different. Some may opt-out but they are known (not anonymous)

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Each aspect of life has its own values and culture, makes independent claims on people's time, money and energy. There is more choice; more autonomy and more of a capacity to be anonymous.

## Some Adaptations to a fragmented world

- Acting as if nothing's changed
- Withdraw from segments where stress is the greatest
- Restrict ourselves (relationships / physical space) related to where we live
- Choose one segment and devote as much time as possible to it

## What does the fact of the fragmented world mean for organizations?

- The organization can itself *strive to be an integrated culture* which is also open to the world. This is related to productivity, information flow, quality of work life and leadership in shaping and implementing vision.
- The organization can acknowledge that many people's commitments will be short term given the increased mobility, flexibility and demands of their lives. There is a need to structure ourselves so we quickly include people in leadership and teams. Fewer people will maintain long term or lifelong relationships with particular organizations. We need a broader base of participation and leadership in just that group.
- The organization can *take on the task of assisting people to live integrated lives in a fragmented world*. This is a quality of work life issue or in a deeper sense it is a matter of spiritual life.
- The organization can function in a manner that takes into account the fragmentation of employee's lives, e.g. provide day care assistance, show some flexibility in regard to family pressures, encourage personal health, have flexible work hours, have support groups, intentional programs to build relationships, etc.
- The organization can seek appropriate "partnerships" with other sectors, showing an interest in the well being of it's employees and the common good of society.