

THEOLOGY | CRITIQUE | REVIEW | ESSAY | CULTURE

salt&light

Winter Edition 2020

In this Issue

***...and the rain fell...
Like a Broken Record
Going Home***

Spooky Action and Expectations

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FROM THE EDITOR

The Salt & Light, a publication of Riverwood Presbyterian Church has evolved over the years. It began as a mimeographed single sheet with Rev. John Robertson's thoughts "From the Pastor's Desk" and a church calendar. The next iteration was a monthly newsletter bright with color and photographs and a few articles. Next came a full-scale monthly magazine with articles, features, and even "ads", cultural events in the church. The masthead stated that Theology | Critique | Review | Essay | Culture would all be covered. Putting this together monthly proved daunting for a small church and S&L quickly became bi-monthly, then quarterly. Now, with competition from the internet and screens in every hand, we are a yearly production. In your hand, you hold the 2019 issue, still written by church members, still seeking to hold to the masthead promise for our readers.
In this issue.....

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Chris Gill, a returned warrior, examines the damage of war, physically, psychologically, and physiologically, and the work of God and His church in their healing.

Like a Broken Record pg. 4

Peggy Drinkard's beautiful meditation addresses worry, and the sovereignty of God in her life. It is profound in the simplicity of her God-centered life.

Creator, Savior and King pg. 7

Another God-centered life was that of Melito, the Bishop of Sardis some eighteen centuries ago. We have two parts of a sermon in which he speaks of Jesus. It is literally astonishing, especially being in translation.

Going Home pg. 8

Your editor recently had to make a journey, and his going home journey was fraught with meaning.

Spooky Action and Expectations pg. 11

Dr. Robert Thornton has written a series of brilliant articles in which he views aspects of theology through the lens of Quantum Mechanics, the study of the very smallest things in God's creation. Today, it's quantum entanglement and the expectation of God's justice and mercy.

The Americans: The Search for Identity pg. 15

My wife and I have recently explored, through a television series, *The Americans*, the Cold War that occupied the place in world history our lives also occupied. It depicts a Russian spy/family living as Americans. The article speaks to their search for an identity among many.

Finale pg. 24

The Finale piece is a poem by C. Dale Young about the power of art. Its title is *Portrait in Nightshade and Delayed Translation*. It concerns the prodigal son story and it brought to mind a similar incident in my life. I think you will enjoy, and be intrigued, by it.

Cover Photo from the website:
The Havok Journal, from an article entitled "Why Civilian PTSD,
MST, and Warfighter PTSD Are Each Uniquely Different"
Link to article: <https://havokjournal.com/nation/veterans/page/7/>



...AND THE RAIN FELL...

Chris Gill

And the rain fell and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat on the house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock.
Matthew 7:25

For those in reformed circles, the idea of brokenness is part of how we understand the effects of the Fall and our standing before a Holy God. For those that serve in the military, this reality is very hard to accept as they live and move in a culture that commands the appearance of invincibility. So what happens when a warrior is deeply wounded by their experience in a culture that rejects such a condition as weakness? What happens to the warrior that leaves the service and finds that their experience, abilities, and military identity do not carry them to the jobs they have been told are waiting for them? What happens when a warrior just cannot find the peace to move on to the next thing? Experience has taught me that some warriors will struggle in their work, in their marriage, or in life in general to a point of despair they do not know how to escape. They have burned bridges with friends, they have pushed away their spouses, and even their most trusted friends cannot deal with them anymore. Some of them will, in the midst of this despair, wear a mask to keep the world at arm's length. Others will turn to drugs or alcohol to chase away this unbearable pain they feel. Despair and helplessness will paralyze them leaving a feeling of being alone and stuck. For many,



this is it; the rock bottom, and, God help us, some do not survive.

During a group mental health session, veterans were gathered into a small room and presented a video. In it two prominent televangelists talk about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Reading from Numbers 32:20-22, one of them declares that this passage holds the promise that when one

goes to war for the Lord, they will *return* and be *guiltless*. He says to veterans if “you are suffering from PTSD, you get rid of that right now” by ‘claiming’ this promise of God made to the tribes of Gad and Reuben. The facilitator of the group then asks the veterans their thoughts on this clip. “Does he think we

want to feel this way?” asks one young man. As the facilitator relates this story in an article on veterans’ mental health, he couches the preacher’s attitudes as being representative of Christianity at large. Most thinking Christians I know would see several obvious problems with the use of this passage as a “cure” for PTSD. First, God is specifically addressing the tribes of Gad and Reuben who are balking at the idea of crossing the Jordan to fight for the other tribes immediately after arriving in the land of their own inheritance. This is a

God promises that He will be with His people in war, but there are no guarantees of a return.

specific promise, the promise to return and be guiltless, made to a specific people, in a specific moment in biblical history, and it does not apply to the U.S. military.

Second, it insinuates that PTSD is rooted in guilt over actions in war as if such service was inherently immoral. Clearly, the guilt in this passage would have stemmed from these tribes, Gad and Reuben, not fighting while leaving their brothers, who fought for them, to fight for the land without them. It is not from actions done in war.

Third, this passage is the only promise of a return from war in scripture. In other places God promises that He will be with His people in war, but there are no guarantees of a return. Live or die, that is a galvanizing promise to the heart of a warrior from our Lord.

Finally, PTSD (like depression) are not things to be “cured”. The conditions are a physiological response to this fallen world by bodies that were designed to attenuate stress to keep balance in the face of danger and entropy. That said, this vignette does serve to point to a more insidious problem in the church universal: that of a passive ambivalence. In the course of my work as a missionary to veterans in the Birmingham area, I met with leaders in the faith community about how best to serve the needs of veterans with PTSD and, by extension, others with mental health issues. A typical response was to suggest ways in which I might engage the veterans in their respective congregation, thereby

deflecting the issue to an outside entity. Others responded by rejecting the idea that PTSD is a “disorder” and insisting that warriors just need to be “welcomed home”; often citing programs to recognize service members and veterans on patriotic holidays. Still others would nod along in agreement that something should be done but were unwilling to engage the taboo of “mental illness”. There was also the assumption that the outwardly stalwart veterans in their respective congregations were not really having any issues. Actually, these apparently well put together military men and women were quietly suffering in what should be the safest place to wrestle with their struggles; the church. Often they are already at rock bottom before the crisis becomes apparent. Before their marriage dissolves, before they are arrested in an outburst of that simmering anger, before the aftermath of another veteran suicide.

Finding out and identifying a veteran at rock bottom is really no different than finding any other suffering sheep in a given fold. Shepherds in the church know this all too well. Rock bottom looks different for everyone, and mine was loneliness and homelessness. For various reason, after leaving the military, I was living off very little money and could not afford to rent my own place. I moved from one rented room to another, one couch to another, over a two-year period and burned bridge after bridge with friends and coworkers. For me it was not drugs or alcohol, but a low period where I was sleeping in my car while I was waiting to find out if I was going to lose

...these apparently well put together military men and women were quietly suffering in what should be the safest place to wrestle with their struggles; the church.

my security clearance and, in turn, my job. While it was one of the hardest times of my life, I was blessed to have a faith community that was ministering to me through it all. Ultimately, I landed in the spare room of a church elder who became a father figure and mentor to me. He and his wife opened their home to me for six months. They provided a quiet and beautiful place to rest and be guided to what was next. He helped me to immediately find a new job, and through time and discipleship, he and others led me through the darkest hours of my life. I had real friends to do life with, every day. In a word: fellowship! I have seen too many friends take their own lives or attempt to do so. Many find themselves in the hole of despair sitting atop a cold, damp bedrock of grief and pain. It is awful and terrifying to be at the rock bottom of life.

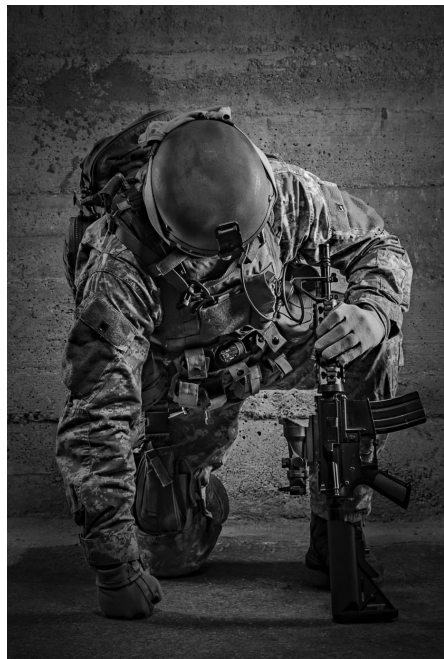
It is in this place where veterans must allow others to come along side and minister to their broken heart. As the pain of military service and isolation of those affected by it comes to a natural conclusion, one finds what can be a blessed truth about being at rock bottom. I once heard a talk given by Dr. Jorretta Marshall in which she made some very profound and beautiful observations about the place where suffering and salvation meet. First, she poses this question, *"How do we remain open to the knowledge and the wisdom of what it means to be deeply wounded **and** loved by God?"* She then points us to Genesis 32, where Jacob wrestles with God and meets the morning wounded and

blessed. We can see this elsewhere in God's word, as we look to Psalms 22, 51, 55, and Job 1:20-21, to name just a few. Over and over, we see God's people crying out to Him in their distress and finding relief in His overwhelming presence. It is clear that even the most powerful men of God in the Old Testament knew the weight of being at rock bottom as we see them cry out to Him over and over. I know, or know of, far too many of our brothers and sisters that have sat at rock bottom with a gun in their hand, desperate for relief from the

anguish they feel. Unable to bring themselves to speak to their loved ones and not knowing that peace found in Christ Jesus.

In our modern age, emotion and suffering have become labels to be disassociated from, rather than valid mechanisms that allow us to process this broken world in which we live. Men, especially, are informed by this world that emotion is weakness that will make them something less. But what about the intense and

masculine ways in which men in the Bible processed emotion? What about the fearless way that these men showed their hearts to the world in word and deed? Abraham became agonizingly resolved to obey and trust in God's promises through grief when called to sacrifice that which was promised (Gen 22). In the very next chapter, we are told that he mourned and wept for Sarah. When David's sin with Bathsheba resulted in a child that would become sick, David went before God and lay on the floor, fasted, and was inconsolable. When the child died, he got up; he washed



LIKE A BROKEN RECORD

Breaking the Habit of Worry

Peggy Drinkard

Lois Tverberg is a scholar and author whose focus is understanding the Jewish world; its roots, its culture, its traditions, its language, and its history, as the background of Christianity. With the insights she garners she enables her readers to better understand the Scriptures and their faith in Christ in light of its original context. I've been reading some of her books for a couple years now and can attest to the leaps and bounds I've experienced in my understanding of Bible-related conundrums I've puzzled over for years (like the Grinch, until my "puzzler was sore.")

Translating texts from one language to another can be tricky business. As Tverberg explains, while we have approximately 400,000 words to choose from in conveying our ideas in English, Hebrew has only about 8,000. The result is that single Hebrew words carry a lot more weight and meaning than individual English words generally carry. Each word must serve to express more. This is particularly true for verbs, which in Hebrew not only convey action but also the action's expected results. When the scriptures say God remembered Noah, the reference goes beyond God's bringing Noah to mind to imply all of God's subsequent activity on Noah's behalf in saving him from the Great Flood.

Another difficulty encountered in translation work is reconciling the tension between literal translation of individual words and the need to convey the author's overall tone and

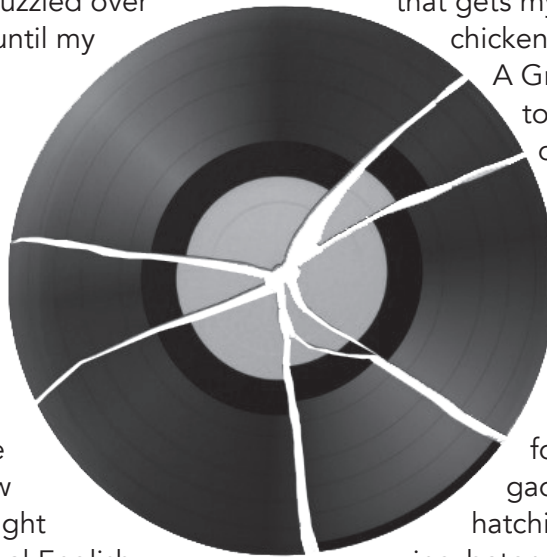
intent in longer passages. Can the translator substitute "whiter than coconut flesh" for "whiter than snow" in a tropical climate where people have never seen or heard of snow and don't have a word for it, or is something lost in that rendering? Another complication for translators arises from the use of idioms. Apparently every language has them, and when they're encountered, strict literal translation leaves a lot to be desired. Consider some of our own idioms:

"that gets my goat," "dressing the chicken," or "kicking the bucket."

A Greek friend once asked me to explain the phrase, "top down" encountered in an English business textbook she was attempting to translate. I've noticed the problem in recent years when trying to decipher meaning from the owner's manuals for foreign-produced electronic gadgets. The manual for hatching chicks with a small

incubator manufactured in China was particularly entertaining, but I'm digressing. Beyond promoting Tverberg's helpful works, these thoughts lead to the main topic I want to address; the dilemma of worry and anxiety in the Christian life. For linguistic clarity I'll explain the idiom "like a broken record" for any millennials or younger readers before proceeding. Idioms can be as confusing across generations as they are across languages. Bear with me, fellow seniors.

When I was a teen we had no phones capable of digitally storing our favorite music on our "play list." Instead, we purchased our music



in the form of “records” (short for recordings) from “record stores.” These records were vinyl disks packaged in cardboard sleeves decorated with photos of the musicians or related art work. Small disks, called “45s” or “singles” generally contained one song per side. 33s, or LPs (long-playing) disk contained 12 or so songs. These disks were etched with three-dimensional “grooves” designed to reproduce the sound waves generated by the musicians’ performance. We placed our disk on a machine called a phonograph, “record player” or turntable. A small, diamond or sapphire-headed needle suspended from an “arm” traversed the revolving disk moving up and down in conjunction with the depth and width of the grooves, thus picking up the vibrations. The needle relayed this information to a cartridge containing coils in a magnetic field. The coils then amplified the vibrations electronically through speakers, and voila, you heard your favorite songs. All this was mechanical and became something of a dinosaur with the advent of digitally reproduced music, though some connoisseurs argue that the sound quality of records is more warm and true to the original performances.

Nonetheless, our outdated device had its flaws, chief of which was the vulnerability of the vinyl disks to scratching. One tried ever-so-carefully to handle the disks in such a way as to keep a scratch from marring the recording, but some of us weren’t as careful as others, and disks inevitably did get scratched. When this happened, as the needle attempted to navigate the grooves a scratch would send it sliding back to the previous bit of grooving, and the result was repetition of the previous word or phrase.

When this happened the song you were blissfully listening to one minute, “Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far...” would suddenly lapse into “...so far away, far away, far away, far away, far away, far away...”

The sense of frustration at the maddening repetition eventually led to the idiom “like a broken record” being used to express any words or actions repeated over and over so as to become annoying. To be “stuck like a broken record” means to keep harping on a matter or to keep making the same mistake over and over again. And that is where “like a broken record” becomes an apt description of how I have handled worry and anxiety for much of my life.

I’ve been a Christian for over 40 years, and a Calvinist for more than 30. You’d think I’d learn more quickly, believing in the absolute sovereignty of God and that God does indeed work all things for good to those who love him. I honestly believe and acknowledge that, for those in Christ, there are no “second causes.” Nonetheless, my “crisis mode” tends to run something like this:

I feel it coming - that ground-swell of anxiety that threatens to undo me when facing a dilemma over which I seem to have no control. At first I scramble. I call on all resources; friends, books, professionals, Google...everywhere searching for the patch to fill the hole, the thumb to plug the leak lest the whole dike gives way. At some point, a stark awareness hits me, like catching a glimpse of something illuminated by lightning, clear and certain, if brief. I don’t have the answer. I can’t “fix” it. This is when the revelation of my limitations looms large and I hit the proverbial wall, forced to face

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Because anxiety is self on its own, it tries to get control. It is unable to relax in the face of chaos. Once one problem is solved, the next in line steps up.

my helplessness. You would think this would be the end of my efforts, but more often than not this is when I dig my heels in deeper and with more zeal and effort widen my search for the illusive solution. I seek to solve the unsolvable like a miner hell bent on finding that sparkling rock in some cave that has long since yielded whatever gold it had to yield.

Sooner or later, though, and so often foolishly later, I cease to struggle. I arrive at wit's end, and now what? It seems to me at this juncture we have two options. The first is despair, a monster I am familiar with, or the second, patience with hope. Isaiah 30:18 says, "Blessed are all they that wait for Him." But waiting can be so hard. Francois De La Mothe Fenelon said, "Nothing is so trying to nature as suspense between a faint hope and a mighty fear." We think it illogical to "do nothing," yet how often in the scriptures have we seen God ask that very thing of His people? When the Israelites faltered as the Egyptians pursued them to the Red Sea, they became terrified. Trapped between Pharaoh's army and the sea, they saw no solution in sight, but what did Moses tell them? "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still." (Exodus 14:13.) Much later in its history a proactive Israel scrambled to hire the Egyptians for help against other enemies. God chastened them, "in repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength." Isaiah 30:15.

I'm not suggesting the Lord never uses us or our resources to solve our problems. He often does, but when we confront them, our initial and subsequent reactions are telling. In Paul Miller's book, *A Praying Life*, he urges a mindset that turns to God FIRST. He explains that anxiety is the result of wanting to be God "while lacking the wisdom, power or knowledge God has." He continues, "A godlike stance without godlike character and ability is pure tension. Because anxiety is self on its own, it tries to get control. It is unable to relax in the face of chaos. Once one problem is solved, the next in line steps up. The new one looms so large, we forget the last deliverance." How true this is. When I marvel at Jesus' disciples for not remembering things he did or said and always worrying about the "next thing," I condemn myself because that is exactly what I do. The broken record syndrome sets in, and I repeat the same scenario with each new problem.

Recently I faced a new dilemma I couldn't solve, and as usual began to get anxious. I am aware Jesus tells us to be anxious for nothing. When I do it anyway the guilt of my disobedience just compounds things. For this particular problem, it soon became a "non-issue" for the answer appeared before I had much time to worry. I am reminded of the quote most often attributed to Mark Twain, "I've seen a lot of sorrow in my life, but most of it never happened." Worry is, among other things, often illogical. It's also damaging to our health, and is a clear indicator of where we're putting our trust. I've been thinking lately of how tired I am

CREATOR, SAVIOR AND KING

Melito, Bishop of Sardis circa 180 AD

Occasionally you come across something that strikes you, touches you, awes you, inspires you so much that you simply must share with others, with everyone. I recently came across a piece of literature that fits those exaggerations. It is amazingly, even in translation, filled with poetic power. Fleming Rutledge, in her book, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ*, called it an "astonishing piece of literary and rhetorical dazzlement.

These excerpts were from a Paschal homily, a sermon on the Passover, by Melito, the Bishop of Sardis, near Smyrna, who died in 180 AD. Melito was known for a number of accomplishments beyond rhetorical dazzlement. He provided the first Old Testament Canon, and was the first to call it that. It matches the modern Old Testament Canon with one exception, the book of *Esther* has since been added. Melito was also known for his high view of Christ, believing, arguing and preaching that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. He taught that both natures were present at the same time, that there was two natures and one Jesus together. Finally, in a time of great persecution of Christians, he wrote, in 169-170 AD, an apology of the Christian religion to the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, seeking to dispel the superstition and rumors surrounding the Faith. His focus was that Christianity would be, contrary to popular belief, a credit to the Empire, and that its adherents would be model citizens. The original work is now in a British museum.

Here are these two beautiful pieces, demonstrating as few have apart from Scripture, the fullness of our Lord.

Creation | Cross

And so He was raised on a cross, and a title was fixed, indicating who it was who was being executed. Painful it is to say, but more terrible not to say....He who suspended the earth is suspended, He who fixed the heavens is fixed, He who fastened all things is fastened to the wood; the Master is outraged; God is murdered.

Resurrection | Savior | King

When the Lord had clothed Himself with humanity and had suffered for the sake of him who suffered, and was bound for the sake of him who was imprisoned, and was judged for the sake of the condemned, and was buried for the sake of the buried, He arose from the dead and cried out, "I am the Christ. Therefore come, all families of men who are defiled by sins, and receive remission of sins. For I am your remission. I am the Passover of salvation. I am the Lamb sacrificed for your sake. I am your ransom. I am your life. I am your Resurrection. I am your light. I am your salvation. I am your King. I lead you toward the heights of Heaven. I will show you the eternal Father. I will raise you up with my right hand."

GOING HOME

Jimmy Hopper

It had been a difficult three weeks. We had gone to Atlanta to be with our grandsons while our daughter and son-in-law traveled to Colorado for a much-needed break/vacation. When we were leaving, something came to mind the Sunday afternoon we left that triggered a memory and a bad case of the blues that I was unable to shake during the drive from Atlanta to Tuscaloosa. Then when we arrived, I began going through the week's mail, and discovered an unexpected complication in one of our investments. It was something I had to handle and was worrisome, and I spent several days dealing with it and a couple of nights awake thinking about it. Then, suddenly, the following week it was handled, and just about the time I could forget about it, I received a telephone call.

It was my oldest daughter Marianne, and she was distraught. Clarke, her husband, had symptoms associated with a stroke. After the symptoms persisted and progressed for three weeks, they went to the emergency room and a CT scan revealed a large mass on his brain. He was medicated to get the swelling down and surgery was scheduled for the next day. Nothing about this seemed to indicate hope in any form. The only possible outcomes seemed to be disastrous. We searched for a way to get there to be with them, knowing that Marianne needed me very badly. Nothing worked. I later made a joke about taking a suitcase to a truck stop and catching a ride to northeast

Tennessee. I was only half joking during those hours of my despair. My wife and I searched for a way for me to get there to no avail. Then my youngest daughter called. She had made arrangements for me to fly up there, using her seemingly endless supply of Delta Sky Miles, and I could leave the next afternoon. So I did. The flight(s) were uneventful, and I was actually in the hospital when Clarke awoke from surgery. I hugged Marianne and she cried a bit on my shoulder before Clarke was brought into the room. I was deeply moved by my daughter's obvious deep love for her husband as they interacted.

Everything initially turned out well. We



were updated by the neurosurgeon, a heavy set, bald, engaging man whose explanations included viewing CT scans before and after and which seemed to be both precise and complete. The growth was large, the size of a golf ball. It was encapsulated and removed intact.

The surgeon believed the growth/cancer to be totally contained. In the next few days there were many ups and downs, a ride of dizzying proportions, but overall it was very satisfactory. Clarke was making a full recovery of his cognitive functions and he dealt with it with courage, aplomb and humor. It was a great story in itself, and it seems that the miracle for which I had prayed together with our family and our Session had happened. But this story is not about that miracle. It is about a simple human endeavor, our urge

Nothing about this seemed to indicate hope in any form. The only possible outcomes seemed to be disastrous.

We landed at the world's largest airport... and into the organized chaos inherent in that operation... that would soon appear to me to be unorganized chaos as my journey home continued.

and need to have a home and to go to it. I was there three days, and make no mistake about it, staying there with family that I loved was an extension of home in my heart. I remembered the portion of the Robert Frost poem: *Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.* I should have called it something you somehow don't have to deserve. I was the one going there, the need was in large part hers and Clarke's, but it all fit very securely into the very substance of home. I had to go there. They had to take me in. None of us thought of deserving. Home just was.

My journey to the actual place-where-I-live home and a place I yearned to be began when my granddaughter drove me to the Tri-Cities airport shortly after noon on the 5th of July. In the small airport's one restaurant/souvenir shop/drug store, I ordered a hamburger and a whiskey and ginger ale for lunch. The hamburger was delicious and the whiskey, well, it had been a tough three weeks. I boarded the small Delta jet and counted 48 total seats, all filled. There was a warning about turbulence, and there was some, but that was of no concern to me. I was glad to be going in the direction of home. In a few hours, my wife would drive to Birmingham to pick me up and I was looking forward to that moment, seeing her face, hearing her voice, especially because I realized that I still had something of the same sense of unease, of discontent, a general ennui that the infernal month had held from the beginning. Added to it was an idea of incompleteness. Clarke was still in the hospital and, though the horrifying surgery was over, there were many things that could still happen, all the way to a malignant reading from the still to come biopsy. I concentrated on the clouds outside the window, praying to handle things as they came.

We landed at the world's largest airport in Atlanta, and into the organized chaos inherent in that operation. It would soon appear to me to be unorganized chaos, as my journey home continued.

My daughter, in her wisdom, had ordered a wheelchair for me in the Atlanta airport, and I found it waiting. I gave the clerk my boarding pass, and she wrote the gate number, 27B, on it, the gate we needed to find. (If you are still reading, you'll soon understand how I remembered these boarding gate numbers.) There was a 2½ hour wait before the flight to Birmingham but I had a book handy, and I was thirsty, but I thought that we needed to find Gate 27B first so that there would be no concern or rush. I sat down in the chair, and away we went. Down the concourse, a long way down, to the intersection where we went down the elevator and got on an underground subway, a fast underground subway. Off we went. At the stop, it was up the elevator and down the concourse in the wheelchair until I saw the 27B gate and the electronic schedule board. As we approached, but before we came to a stop, I saw the Birmingham flight disappear from the board. Shocked, I quickly asked the clerk, before the guy who pushed the wheelchair got away, and she told me that the gate had been changed to 17E. I wrote it on the boarding pass. The chair guy seemed unhappy but away we went.

Back to the chair and down the concourse, down the elevator, on the subway, up the elevator, down the concourse, and finally before me was gate 17E. I looked at the board, then I looked again. There was no Birmingham flight listed. I asked the clerk and he said it had been changed to 2B. What was going on? Three gate changes

in an hour? The wheelchair guy escaped this time and someone else pushed me up to the next intersection, where about 15 wheelchairs waited on pushers. I got one of them and again down the concourse, etc., etc., etc. Eventually we arrived at 2B, and lo and behold, the Birmingham flight was listed. I looked at my watch and saw that I had 36 minutes left of the 2½ hour layover. I had about 16 minutes to find a bottle of water before loading began. I, and the guys assigned to the wheelchair duty, had covered, it seemed, miles of the endless Atlanta airport.

Now at last, I was at the homeward-bound gate. All of the 2½ hour wait had been spent hurrying down various concourses, and I finally boarded the plane. Unlike the first leg to Atlanta, this was a big airplane, and again, every seat was filled. Takeoff was scheduled for 6 PM CST, and the plane was loaded when that time arrived, but the engines were not running. We, the passengers, the community of which I was going to be a member for the next two hours, waited. After fifteen minutes, the pilot appeared in the front and explained. He said there were two members of an air crew who absolutely had to be on the plane to pilot another plane from Birmingham. He said that they were at the Atlanta airport and on the way to the plane. Remembering my earlier journeys through said airport, I silently hoped for a takeoff in another twenty minutes. The engines were still not running nor was the air conditioning on. Two men in Delta uniforms appeared in ten minutes. There was no announcement and they walked down the aisle to the crew quarters in the tail section without an announcement. This must be the air crew members we are waiting for, was my thought and probably the thought of everyone else. No announcement though and nothing else happened. I glanced at my watch. Carolyn should be well on her way to Birmingham. We waited.

In ten more minutes, another man appeared at the front and strode down the aisle. He had the attention of all the 250 or so passengers as he was an Army Officer in

full dress uniform. Tall, starched, perfectly tailored, beribboned with insignia and medals, shoes shined, gloves, he walked the aisle ramrod straight, looking neither right nor left. All eyes followed him until he also disappeared into the crew area at the rear. The pilot appeared again and announced that everyone who had to be on the plane was now aboard. He spoke of the shortness of the flight and said that we would soon be airborne. The engines finally came to life and the plane began to move to the nearest of the takeoff lines as planes waited their turn to become airborne. Our turn came some twenty minutes later. As our plane lifted off the runway, I looked at my watch. It was 6:58 PM CST, the very minute we were scheduled to land in Birmingham.

This flight was uneventful also. I struck up an interesting conversation with a lady who was an executive of a large law firm and who was returning from a vacation in Italy. Forty minutes after takeoff we descended to land in the Birmingham airport. As we landed and taxied to a stop, people unbuckled and stood up in the aisle. Suddenly a silence descended on the plane and its passengers. All eyes were looking out at the tarmac on the right side of the airplane. A hearse was parked some three hundred feet away and between it and the plane, there were five additional Army officers in full dress uniform, including white gloves, standing in formation at the rear of the vehicle. The officer who walked down the aisle before takeoff was speaking to what was apparently the operator of a tractor type piece of equipment with a flat trailer on which rested a casket draped by an American flag. At an automobile parked to the left of the hearse, a young woman stood with an older woman and two small children watching the tableau before them. In turn, the community of passengers watched quietly, both in the plane and in the terminal before the huge glass windows that looked out at the larger scene before them.

As we watched, we discovered within ourselves a deep respect and a sense of wonderment as we realized what we hadn't realized all afternoon. Our homecoming

SPOOKY ACTION & EXPECTATIONS

Robert Thornton

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
Philippians 1:6

Albert Einstein had a problem. From 1930 through 1935 he had a running disagreement with Niels Bohr over some aspects of quantum mechanics (or QM), the branch of physics dealing with incredibly small subatomic particles. Einstein was certain that QM as a discipline was somehow incomplete; that there were missing pieces or hidden variables yet to be discovered. The problem with QM in Einstein's

eyes was that it was probabilistic. Particles occupied multiple locations simultaneously until measured and were defined by probability waves rather than a specific momentum and position. Werner Heisenberg had made it crystal clear that you couldn't

know both the momentum and position of a particle simultaneously. Three centuries of Classical Mechanics, the branch of physics that examines the motion and positions of macroscopic objects, seemed to have been tossed willy-nilly out the window in one short generation when science addressed the microscopic world.

It wasn't that Einstein thought QM was wrong. He was pretty sure it was right. There was just tidying up needed. After all, he'd made a significant contribution to the discipline, the discovery of the photoelectric

effect leading to the quantum mechanical concept of wave-particle duality. He won the 1921 Nobel Prize in physics for his work.

So, to prove his point, Einstein along with two colleagues, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen, published a paper in 1935 based on a thought experiment. It was titled:

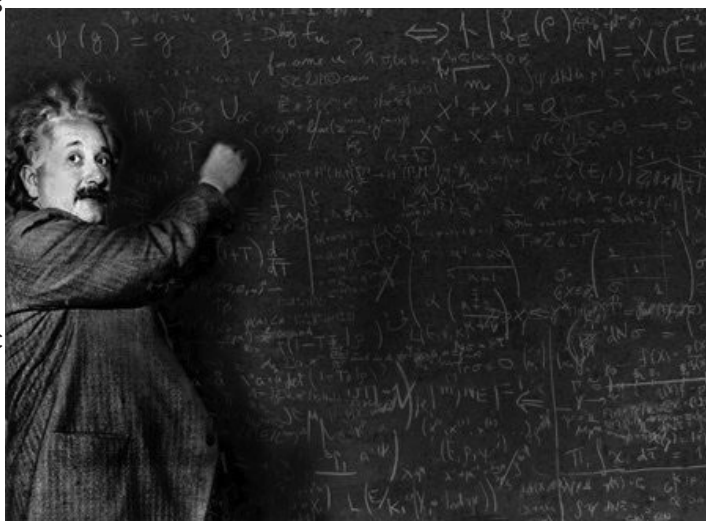
"Can Quantum Mechanical Description of

Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?" The essence of the paper showed that when two subatomic particles with certain "spins" could be entangled (linked in some fundamental way), if you changed the "spin" of one, the other's "spin"

would instantaneously change. And, this would occur even if the two particles resided at the opposite ends of the Universe.

Thus if QM were complete it violated one of the fundamental laws of physics: nothing can travel faster than the speed of light. Einstein ended his paper by saying: "We are thus forced to conclude that the quantum-mechanical description of physical reality given by the wave functions is not complete."

To Einstein's chagrin, quantum entanglement, as the idea came to be known, was accepted



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as one of the tenants of QM. This "spooky action at a distance" - Einstein's derisive name for the phenomenon - was now enshrined in the textbooks of QM forever. In recent years actual experiments have been carried out proving that quantum entanglement really exists.

A quick Google search reveals articles that use words and phrases like "subversive", "reality crisis", "confusion", "unreality rules", and "incredulity" to describe QM. Despite this, Erwin Schrodinger, one of Einstein's contemporaries, said, "Quantum mechanics is the most successful quantitative theory ever produced." To this day, most physicists would agree with Schrodinger's assessment.

Until his death in 1955, Einstein continued to argue that QM was incomplete. Many times he based his argument on intuitive thinking. Feeling that the Universe was deterministic and not probabilistic, he refused to accept the strangeness of the new branch of physics. After all, why would our subatomic world be understood based on a roll of the dice rather than by immutable laws? Einstein harbored expectations based on his impression of how the Universe should operate. He wasn't ready to accept a totally unconventional interpretation. In his thinking there had to be more. He had expectations.

Although we are not geniuses like Einstein, we share one thing with him: expectations rule our lives. We expect the sun to rise in the morning and set in the evening. On a clear night we expect stars to shine. Based

on recurrent observations, our everyday expectations about natural phenomena are easily satisfied.

But, what about expectations regarding human interactions? This can be problematic. Case in point: the O. J. Simpson murder trial. After months of made for TV testimony, the jury finally retired to deliberate. Knowing reactions to the pending televised verdict would fall out along racial lines, TV news services had cameras rolling during watch parties at various colleges and work places. They wanted to catch the audiences' response to the verdict.

Based on the evidence presented at trial, expectations ran high among the majority that Simpson would be found guilty. When the verdict was read "not guilty", people screamed in disbelief, yelled expletives, and openly wept in despair. Whether people believed Simpson was innocent or guilty, reality certainly ran counter to expectations at the conclusion of his trial.

Like many human interactions, our expectations, when God deals with us, are thwarted. Not only are they thwarted; they are bent to His will. We see this glaringly in the Reformed doctrine of Limited Atonement.

If we aren't careful we will fall into the world's concept of atonement. The unregenerate man's expectation of God (if he even believes in God) usually goes something like this: God is the father of everyone on the face of the planet and we are all brothers and sisters. So,

in order for God to be just, He must provide an equal opportunity for everyone who has ever lived to be saved. This belief certainly fulfills our expectation that God somehow must play fair in dealing with humankind. He can't have favorites.

In other words, we see God as we see those statues of Lady Justice, blindfolded and holding a scale in one hand and a sword in the other. The blindfold represents impartiality. And the scales weigh the evidence for and against us. The expectation goes like this: an impartial God disregarding our personal beliefs - it matters not if we're Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Moslem, etc. - weighs out our life. If the "good" outweighs the "bad", we're in. The "in" can be Heaven, Nirvana, Valhalla, or any number of concepts of an afterlife. If the scales tip in the other direction, we face the swift edge of the sword of perdition.

A variation of the above is the expectation that everyone goes to Heaven regardless of his belief or non-belief and with no accounting of sin. Some call this the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. This thinking assumes that if God is good, then He'd never let anyone, regardless of his or her sins, go to Hell. So, everyone gets a free pass. Kind of sounds like an episode of an Oprah Show-- "You get a car, and you get a car, and you get a car!"

A corollary expectation harbored by the unregenerate man regards the death of Christ. This belief states that Christ didn't die for sinners as a substitutionary atonement. Instead, He died as an example of self-sacrificial dedication to God, thus giving us a template on how to live. This demotes the efficacy of Christ's death on the Cross to something akin to the death of Socrates. At best, we can only contemplate the goodness

of Christ and His sayings. And, perhaps vow to follow His teachings.

If there is one thing these expectations have in common, it's the idea that man is in charge of the situation and bears little responsibility for his actions.

What is lacking in this universal thinking is an understanding of the doctrine of sin. This is essential. As we begin to understand the seriousness of sin itself ("...the wages of sin is death..."--Romans 6:23) we begin to understand our need for a Savior. The Bible is clear about our sinfulness. Romans 3:23 states, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This is nonnegotiable. There are no exceptions. Our sin separates us from God because God's standard is perfection and we fail to reach anything even near perfection every day.

Even though we may expect God to weight the good against the bad and give us a "pass", God does not grade on a curve. His standard remains perfection.

Not only do we commit sin, we have a sin nature. We have a natural inclination to sin. We are incapable to living, on our own, a sinless life. This is the Doctrine of Total Depravity. We need a Savior. In our fallen nature we are fugitives from God. We run from Him toward sin. From the time Adam and Eve fled and hid from God after sinning until the present, we as unregenerate people flee in our guilt and shame.

The English poet, Francis Thompson, in the opening lines of his poem, "The Hound of Heaven", rigorously illustrates this sin nature:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways

Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

Our fugitive state as fallen sinners, like the earthy fugitive apprehended by law enforcement, ends only when we are found by God, when we are adopted into the family of God by Christ's atoning work on the cross. This is no other way. As it is written in Acts 4:12, "...for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

As Christians we may be inclined to expect that Christ's atoning work is for everyone or at least everyone who decides to accept Christ's work for themselves. In other words, the redeeming power of Christ's death and resurrection is open for anyone who wants to appropriate it. It's as if we are in a supermarket and are offered a free sample of the newest lobster dish. We are at liberty to accept the dish or reject it. This is the Armenian view of salvation and really regards Christ' death as a potential atonement.

Since we know that everyone is not saved, we have to ask, "For whom did Christ die?" The Reformed answer probably flies in the face of our expectations more than any other aspect of atonement. Like Einstein, we may wonder if the Reformed Doctrine of Limited Atonement is somehow incomplete or in need of a clearer explanation. R. C. Sproul in his book, "What Is Reformed Theology?" stated that: "The doctrine of limited atonement, the L of TULIP, is probably the most disputed term of the five."

So, for whom did Christ die? He died for the elect. Christ died for the chosen church, for those He selected before the foundation of the World--an actual atonement (see Romans 8:28-30).

Our expectations my prompt us to ask, "But, why can't we decide to choose God?" The answer is clear. We were "dead in the trespasses and sins..."—Ephesians 2:1.

I used to think of the sinner in need of God's grace like a drowning man in need of rescue. But, a much wiser fellow Elder pointed out to me that my analogy was wrong. That man isn't being tossed by the waves, in jeopardy of losing his life. He's already at the bottom of the sea. He's fish food. He's dead. When was the last time you saw a dead man make a decision? He doesn't need rescuing; he needs to be made alive again. Paul again tells us: *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Ephesians 2:4-9).

So. We are saved by God's grace--His unmerited favor--through faith. But, because we were dead in our sins even our faith is a gift from God. For His elect, God has

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THE AMERICANS:

The Search for Identity

Jimmy Hopper

We live in this world in certain cultural, intellectual and emotional “weathers.” Things happen in the world that determine, in many ways, the responses we make and the way we feel about life. As it has often been said at Riverwood, “Ideas have consequences” and ideas, at a certain intellectual level, determine in large part the prevalent culture. In my lifetime, much of the cultural weather of America, Europe and a large part of Asia had been generated by two long and savage world wars: wars that had destroyed, to a large degree, the very idea of transcendence, especially in Europe. Naturalism was the new weather, the idea that naturalism was all that there was, that man was essentially a result of self-determination and blind chance. Timothy McVeigh, who in 1995 destroyed the federal building in Oklahoma City with a home-made bomb, quoted Henley’s nihilistic poem, *Invictus*, before going into the execution chamber. The poem begins, “*Out if the night that covers me, black as the pit from pole to pole,*” and ends, “*I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul*” To a large degree, a God who seemed to have allowed, or was helpless to prevent, those maelstroms had been rejected, and the idea that man alone could decide his own future and ultimate fate was consequently accepted and was clung to.

A significant part of the culture in my lifetime had to do with the period known as the “Cold War.” When WW2 was won, and America, and a heavily damaged Europe and Asia, celebrated victory, we barely had time to catch our breath before the “cold war” began. Its dictionary definition is as follows: “*the state of political hostility that existed between the Soviet bloc countries and the US-led Western powers from 1945 to 1989*”. It was a huge factor in dictating the culture during 44 years

of my life. It also contributed a significant ethos to the iron political divisions that exist today. For Americans, the ideologies of the Soviet Union, our recent ally against Nazi Germany, became, and not without cause, evil personified. The Soviet Union began a period of takeovers, particularly in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, converting other governments to Communism, their radical, totalitarian version of socialism. In a world in which atomic weapons had begun to proliferate, a world in which Western culture had changed drastically, “Cold War”, with significant outbreaks of associated “hot wars” in places like Korea and Viet Nam, became the weather of America and the world. To those of us who grew up and/or matured in that forty-four year period, the fears, the ideas, the entertainment, the music, the technology, all of this was our “weather”, all of this had an effect on our



lives.

In our often fruitless search to find intelligent entertainment, Carolyn and I have looked at various television mini-series. *Mad Men* was a huge winner, a view of a materialistic society told through the purveyor of materialism, the advertising industry, a fascinating take on the times in which we had lived. Then we hit on another big winner. A story of Russian spies living as Americans in Washington, D.C., sounded interesting, and a small, but persistent, group of critics insisted that it was a superb work with intelligent writing, great acting, numerous memorial characters, and excellent production values. So we sat down one evening and streamed the first episode of *The Americans*, with the hammer and sickle taking the place of the letter “c” in Americans. It didn’t take long to discover that the critics were right. This was great television. Matthew Rhys and Keri Russell were the Soviet spy couple, Philip and Elizabeth Jennings, and

Her... double life, wife, mother, and murderous spy is going to be at its beating heart of the motivations that drive the drama

they were superb. Many of the supporting parts were also well done, and some were unforgettable. The writing and direction was very good and the series had driving suspense in both action and relationships. So we began to watch, and to say that we were immediately hooked is an understatement. The first episode is described here in some detail since it introduces many of the various themes and outlines, and in more than introductory detail, the main theme of the series, the question of human identity, and to a lesser degree, the concept of evil.

The viewer doesn't get into the story gradually. The series starts in the midst of a KGB mission. It is night, a dark foreboding night, in Washington, D.C. A Soviet KGB officer has defected, and we will learn that the big press conference announcing his defection is scheduled tomorrow. But tonight Philip and Elizabeth Jennings, a "married couple" and KGB officers, together with another Soviet agent, attempt to intercept him, subdue him, and put him on a ship back to the motherland waiting to leave at a particular time, long before the FBI will know that the defector has been taken. The action is gritty, furious, and is played out to the driving rhythms of Fleetwood Mac and "Tusk." We will soon learn that all of the background music is from 1980's popular music, and that a cool, guilty secret among watchers is the incredible appropriateness of the selections and how they match the story.

The Jennings make the capture, but the third agent is badly wounded by the defector, who had a knife. They are unable to complete the mission as they miss the ship by minutes, mainly because Philip insisted on letting the wounded agent out in front of a hospital instead of letting him die in the car. We see a difference in Phillip and Elizabeth's attitudes about trying to save him, and this is emblematic of their varying attitudes toward both their work and the overarching cold war between Russia and America. This also will become a major theme of the series, morphing into their differing values and

attitudes about America.

Elizabeth is incensed about the failure of the mission. It superseded everything, even the death of their comrade, (We learn that he died in the hospital that night.) They return home with the defector in the trunk. The next morning, the scene is a bright American kitchen in the suburbs and housewife Elizabeth Jennings prepares breakfast for her family, for Philip, and their children, their thirteen-year-old daughter, Paige, and their son, Henry, about eleven years old. There is the usual family conversation, and after the children leave for school, Elizabeth, now the suburban American housewife and mother, goes down to the garage as a deadly proficient soldier, to check on the defector/prisoner. Nothing happens of interest. She opens the trunk and looks at him in a particular way that we imagine reflects hatred and disgust and the scene fades to black. But in showing it, and showing her expression, something is established regarding her tricky equilibrium that perhaps couldn't be established any other way. Given this scene halfway through the first hour, we see a basic piece of the motivations that drive the drama. Elizabeth's double life, wife, mother, and murderous spy is going to be at its beating heart. We see very quickly the incredible abyss between their two identities: suburban American couple/parents and incredibly proficient, cold-blooded spies, Elizabeth in the kitchen at breakfast and Elizabeth dealing with the hated defector in the garage. Who are they? Where will they ultimately land?

We quickly gain other information regarding their identity. We learn through conversation and flashbacks that Philip and Elizabeth were trained by the KGB in Russia and were introduced to each other and told of their mission as they finished their training. They will go to America and will be furnished false identities taken from real people who died as children. They will live in deep cover for years until all traces of foreign culture, accents, speech idioms, and cultural backgrounds are gone. They will have children. When they have

reached this point, they will be the Americans of the title, and they will be uniquely qualified for the work they were trained for and will begin their careers as KGB officers, as spies in America.

In a tremendous scene in the middle of the series, we see how they appear to others. A KGB agent has poisoned himself when he was caught with the biological weapon he was stealing and is dying horribly in a sealed hospital room while two FBI agents seated in a glassed in viewing area above the room are questioning him. He doesn't give up their identity but a very real resentment seems to come out as he tells the little that he gives the FBI in his final hours. He says that they look like an American couple, like anybody. He says "they are an American couple living the American dream. No one would ever suspect them. She's pretty. He's lucky."

Early in the series, we meet, or the Jennings meet, a major and fascinating character. Elizabeth bakes up some brownies and the family takes them to the new next door neighbor, Stan Beeman and his wife and family. As they make their introductions, Phillip asks the quintessential American question, "what do you do?" Beeman's answer is that he is an FBI agent. Philip's expression is priceless. "I guess you hunt down bank robbers" is Phillip's next query. "Nope, I'm in counter espionage" is Stan's reply. We see another great facial expression in a simple but brilliant piece of acting by Rhys. So we have two mortal enemies, and we have already seen what this means in this game, smiling at each other over brownies. Identity. Philip knows that they are enemies. Stan does not. If Stan finds out that Philip is a KGB officer, instead of the owner of a travel agency, the game is over. But he doesn't know, and they will become fast friends over the course of the series. They are able to be friends simply and only because they like each other. Further knowledge is the enemy. This knowledge belongs to the viewer and adds to the suspense in many episodes. This close friend/enemy connection is yet another identity quandary.

Their friendship speaks to the way relationships drive the series. The relationship between Philip and Elizabeth is long and nuanced. The story of their long pretend marriage that becomes a quasi-marriage, and the shorter story of a very real marriage is the track that the series runs on. As with real life, it is complex, changed by events and others, and in many ways, thrives under stress. The scene, mid-series, in which Elizabeth and Phillip, atheists using their real Russian names, seek out a Russian Orthodox priest to actually marry in the Eastern Church. There are no witnesses, it is in the dead of night and they are, dangerously, not in disguise. We have watched Phillip's obvious love for her, and have seen the business-like response she has for him. The marriage scene is very moving when she comes to him and wants to marry him in the traditional way, by a priest.

The series is violent, sometimes shockingly violent and there is obviously sexuality as a key part of both the Jennings' success. We quickly discover, even the first ten minutes, that the two are literally involved in a war, a hot war, not a cold war, in which they are soldiers. Elizabeth can only be described on many occasions as bloodthirsty. Philip will kill, and does, to do the job and especially to protect Elizabeth, but his attitude is not the same. Her attitude is that her single-minded devotion to Russia and to her position as a KGB agent seeking Russia's victory transcends ethics, loyalties, and human pity. Both Jennings' use sex as a weapon to gain access, to forestall consequences, and to arrange details. We live in an age of transactional sex but the Jennings' activities are particularly cold-blooded.

A viewer will be amazed at the disguises that the couple use. No spying activity is done as Philip and Elizabeth. A wig, a change of make-up, a different 80's look, and their acting skill makes them into different people. When Philip wears a toupee and becomes "Clark", wooing an FBI secretary, he is literally a different person. Elizabeth is, in turn, a *femme fatale*, an airline hostess, a Mary Kay salesperson,

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and a home-healthcare nurse. The disguises and the lies are essential to their work of deception and of evil, an evil that must not be known.

Evil is brought to the forefront for Elizabeth in an astonishing vignette. Their job is to place a bug in a robotic machine that collects mail in the halls of the FBI. The robot will collect information and be changed routinely. They are downstairs, in the middle of the night, and Philip is working on the installation. They hear sounds and a light comes on in an upstairs office. Elizabeth goes up to investigate and finds an older woman working on the books. She is Betty, the widowed wife of the founder of the shop, and, since her husband died, she hasn't slept well, so she comes to the office at night to work. It is obvious that the mission will not succeed if she lives, so, she must die. This sort of stunning logic undergirds much of their work. Betty understands this also and Elizabeth gives her the entire bottle of heart medicine pills to take. They strike up a conversation as she gradually swallows the pills, and Betty tells of her husband, who was a Christian Scientist who came back from the war as an atheist. As Betty, who has struck a rapport with Elizabeth in the conversation, nears the end, she asks Elizabeth why they kill people. Elizabeth's answer is, "I know this is hard to accept, but it is to make the world a better place." Before Betty dies, she answers quietly, "That's what evil people tell themselves when they do evil things"

The concept of evil is addressed in the series throughout. A tender moment between a mother and daughter, or between a husband and wife, is front-loaded by the evil that is so apparent in what they do. Normalcy is sharpened into a blade when you understand what they did on a mission the previous night. You come to understand, as the bodies pile up, the degree of mental gymnastics required to come back to normalcy or even back to humanity. They are "evil people" and justify it by proclaiming it as necessary, Elizabeth's reason to Betty. The assassin and

journalist, Lance Morrow, in his book, **Evil: An Investigation**, spoke to a "permissible evil." Morrow writes as follows:

*George W. Bush's rationale for the invasion of Iraq in 2003, rested crucially on the argument that it was a necessary evil. Critics of the invasion felt that, on the contrary, it fell within the morally suspect American zone of merely permissible evil proclaimed, * permissible meaning that the Americans gave themselves permission for it, drawing on their immense resources of divine approval, the trust fund that God gave them when they started out. What makes permissible evil such a useful, such an indispensable idea, is the wondrous flexibility and range of "permissibly".* In the same way, the Russians in **The Americans** give themselves permission for evil in that they intend to "make the world a better place," and nothing, no matter how evil, absolutely nothing, is out of bounds to accomplish this sacrosanct ideal. This theme is omnipresent in American entertainment. Think of James Bond, Rambo, Dirty Harry, revenge, justice. The titles are legion.

Religion as a part of American life has its place in the series. **The Americans** is obviously not about a religious conversion, but the writers introduced Christianity in the series early, and strongly. In the second episode, a female operative has obtained an invitation to a party and has "wandered" into the library/office of the Defense Secretary. She observes a small clock on a shelf and the Jennings plan to put a recorder in it. They poison the son of Viola Johnson, the housekeeper, and tell her that he will die unless an antidote that only they have is administered within a few days. Viola refuses and, as a Believer, cites her belief that God will protect them. Elizabeth is shocked and, frankly, is dismayed. It is not as easy to manipulate people who believe in an all-powerful God. As her son's condition worsens, Viola gives in and the recorder is eventually placed.

Christianity becomes a significant theme when Paige, the daughter, is invited to a

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Youth Group at a local church. She is seeking meaning in the way only the young and idealistic can, and the mercy ministries that the church does enthralls her. Her mentor is Pastor Tim, one of the genuine good guys in the series. As Paige's commitment to the group and the church deepens, her parents become deeply concerned. Paige wants to be baptized, and her parents desperately seek to talk her out of it. She is baptized and her parents attend. In one scene, Phillip tears out pages from the Bible she had been given. It is ironic, in a sense, that he does so. He is seeing his daughter moving away from his control, and at the same time, he seems to resent her commitment, a commitment to ideals that he lacks. His wife is committed to country and his daughter to God, and, as one reviewer noted, it would be interesting to see how he felt if he learned that he too could be saved.

Watchers are beginning to see that within the various themes being explored in the series, marriage, parenthood, patriotism, nationalism, proficiency, one that touches them all is that of identity. The initial episode posits Elizabeth as the suburban housewife or the warrior/jailer. We see Russians as Americans. We see Philip wanting to be an American and Elizabeth despising the thought of it. We see the daughter seeking her parents' identity, knowing something is wrong and seeking her own identity in the social work of the Church.

Paige does not remain in the church. The KGB has a 2nd generation plan that they want to initiate. They wish to train and indoctrinate the children of spies, like the Jennings kids, and turn them loose as true American citizens who can pass any investigation, get any job, work without any strictures. The Jennings rebel, then Elizabeth comes around and the combination of Russia, her heritage, her Mother, and her idealism changes Paige's Christian commitment to another type of commitment as she begins training under Elizabeth.

As the assignments grow harder, and the body count gets higher, Philip's disenchantment with the dangerous, stressful, and degenerating life they are living grows. The ideological interactions are profound. In one episode, President Reagan's "evil empire" speech is on television and when he makes that statement, Elizabeth looks at Philip with eyes blazing in anger. He looks away and is not able to meet her gaze. There is a scene at the Beeman's at Thanksgiving dinner and Stan makes a passionate speech about the great freedoms of America and how they aren't available to other places in the world. Elizabeth is obviously stunned and distraught, even though she keeps it to herself. In another brilliant piece, late in the series when everything seems to be closing in on them, Elizabeth is looking in her closet. She sees the long row of outfits with a different pair of shoes under each, as she stares, we see the disgust of her face at what she considers her American decadence. The 80's music chosen is Elton John's "Goodbye to the Yellow Brick Road." Not a word is spoken but I can't imagine a better constructed scent to make the point this one makes.

Philip eventually can take no more and retires to run the travel agency. Elizabeth soldiers on and her stress level increases until she is living on a thin edge of danger and anxiety. Then a new mission, an almost impossible to pull off job of extracting a spy who is being watched, from Chicago. Philip agrees to help, knowing that Elizabeth has no chance without him. They almost pull it off but the agent is killed, and Philip engineers their escape. His help has gotten her attention, and her gratitude.

World events are moving to a resolution also. Gorbachev is coming to power and the opportunity for the Cold War to end seems a distinct possibility. Philip has been recruited by the Gorbachev group to help make it happen at a peace conference in Washington. The KGB wants to sabotage the effort. Elizabeth

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and went to worship the Lord. He then took some food and "went to console his wife" (2 Samuel 12). In the Psalms, David and others openly write about their despair and suffering as they call out to God. Peter wept bitterly after his denials of Christ. Jesus, "a man of such sorrows", knelt in a garden and wept (Luke 22). He felt his emotions and despair so deeply that He, the author of the universe, began to sweat blood. These were not stoic pillars of manhood, but men of quiet strength and dignity leaning into heavy emotion. Scripture is full of men who wore their heart on their sleeve, so it begs the question; why are we so afraid to deal with emotion, to share it? Even ancient literature, such as the Iliad, reveals that the hearts of men have always needed a way to deal with emotions. Achilles wept with Priam at his own vile actions over the desecrated body of Hector and their mutual losses in a pointless war.

I am not suggesting that men need to necessarily cry about everything, but to simply give voice to their burdens in a way that allows them to process the demons of the past rather than be defined by them. Without an outlet, a warrior will inevitably find himself or herself alone and afraid at rock bottom. But even then, there is hope. Dr. Marshall offers this breathtaking statement to those who find themselves in this dark place; *"The good news about being at rock bottom is that there is a Rock. It is a place to rest and gather strength... if that rock is big enough, there will be room for someone to sit with you"*. It is here we find the answer to the church's passive ambivalence to mental health. The

opportunity to come alongside the suffering, whether they be veterans, or just the lonely person in the pew next to you, or the stranger on the street as being part and parcel of a congregation doing life together. Through being outwardly vulnerable and authentic, we can shed the world's view of Christianity as one that treats God's word as a cut and paste blessing mill to be claimed and climb down the holes of despair to comfort and weep with the lost. As the body of Christ, we cannot relegate this burden to pastors and elders alone but seek as lay members to be ready to help bear the cross of another. Christ's power to heal and comfort is manifested in the fellowship of the saints and our willing to *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"*. - Gal. 6:2. This is such a beautiful picture of the church being called to love on, and minister to, the lost and hurting. It is on this Rock that suffering souls can begin to build firm foundations as they call out to a holy and loving God to be delivered out of distress. It is a picture of how the church can come along side in times of pain and affliction. On that firm foundation, as the storms in this world seek to blow us down, being healed in our brokenness, we stand firm as we have been founded on the Rock of our salvation Christ Jesus.

All Biblical text quoted from the ESV.

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of this foolishness, and wondering when, if ever, I am going to stop being anxious and start trusting my heavenly Father? Mulling over these things, the thought came to me, "Why not stop right now?" You might say, "Easier said than done," and you're probably right, but for my part, I'm making a conscious decision to give the record needle a little nudge every time it hits that scratch and begins to repeat the old pattern. The nudge will probably be a short prayer when I see the pattern rearing its head. By His grace I'm asking Him to wean me of worry once and for all, and the pride and self-illusions that generate it. My prayer going forward is to be able to say with David:

*O Lord, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
Like a weaned child on its mother;
Like a weaned child is my soul within me.
O Israel, put your hope in the Lord
both now and forevermore.
Psalm 131*

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had also been the homecoming of a soldier killed in combat who had been traveling with us. We suddenly understood all the delays, the changing of gates, the time required to transport the casket to a gate where this could happen discretely and with dignity. We had waited on two passengers, not two crewmen. We had waited on the soldier in the casket and the officer in charge of his journey back to his loved ones, back to his home. We felt that we had been participating in something important and significant. We were filled with a deep respect for life, for life's institutions, for life's emotions and wonders, for life's relationships. We watched as the casket was brought closer and the five uniformed men lifted it off the trailer and brought it to the hearse. We stood still as the officer in charge of the soldier's final journey spoke to the mother and wife, then knelt down to shake hands with the children. I was too far away to guess their ages, 6 or 8 years old? I hoped that they were old enough to remember the moment. The car and the hearse drove away and the passengers began to disperse.

I left also to find my wife. It was a long walk as she had sought to dodge an airport security guy who wanted her to park in the deck. I was deeply moved to see her after the flight and the scene on the tarmac. I hugged her and we left to find a place to eat together and be together. During the hour-long drive home, I told her of the airport and flight and our unknown passengers and how moving it was. I thought of going home, the home she and I had made and share, and in the warmth and honest security of it. I thought of losing there the feelings of unease and distress that I had struggled with for a month. On the drive, and at evening prayers later, I thought of the soldier and his family, and I thought of home in a deeper sense, the home that transcends this home, the home to which we all aspire, the final home where we, as did Job, will see God. Like Job, I thought as I considered it, "How my heart yearns within me."

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*We felt that we had been participating in
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deep respect for life, for life's institutions, for life's
emotions and wonders, for life's relationships...*

...our expectations of God should be one of declaring eternal condemnation for us all. For we've all been fugitives, dead in our trespasses and sins...But, in defiance of expectations, He has condescended to call us... to be part of His Kingdom

provided everything necessary for salvation. Out of His great love for us, God has given Christ, His Son, to us. We were called. We were atoned for by Christ's work on the cross. We've been given this gift of grace and even given faith, so that we may receive our Salvation. It is all God's work.

If we're truly honest with ourselves, our expectations of God should be one of declaring eternal condemnation for us all. For we've all been fugitives, dead in our trespasses and sins, and deserving hell. But, in defiance of expectations, He has condescended to call us, the elect, to be part of His Kingdom through Christ's work on the cross for us.

So, unlike Einstein, who lived his final years searching for completion based on his expectations, we are resting in Christ, our great expectation being that, as stated in Philippians 3:20-21... "Our citizenship is in Heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."

Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

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There is a choice to be made by them regarding their children and a choice by their daughter to be made about her identity as an American or a Russian who has never seen Russia.

finds out that Philip is helping, and also that the KGB is fighting against legitimate government in Moscow. She helps too, and in fact, her last victim is a KGB woman operative who is there to assassinate the Gorbachev group leader and blame it on the United States.

The ending is an incredibly brilliant coda. Their marriage, the truest thing they have done, brings them down as the Orthodox priest, under questioning and threats of the destruction of his church by the FBI, identifies them by giving a description of the pair, and in doing so, dooms their hard fought for identity as the Americans of the title. Stan Beeman, the FBI agent who is literally Philip's best friend, of course, recognizes them from the drawing immediately. The Jennings close down the operation and plan to leave via Canada to Russia. They are confronted by Stan, in a 20 minute, dramatic confrontation in a parking garage. How does it end? There is a choice to be made by them regarding their children and a choice by their daughter to be made about her identity as an American or a Russian who has never seen Russia. Their choices are fascinating and dramatic.

As a Christian observers, we identified with them to an interesting degree. Marriage is marriage and parenthood is parenthood, and some of the incidents would be familiar to many parents. The fractures in the marriage over ethical identity have the same gritty reality as the missions they take on, as does Philip's deep love for her and Elizabeth's growing love for him. The moments near the end in which both realize they are both on the same side, the side that promises peace, are touching.

As Christians, we identify with Philip and are dismayed, as he is at the carnage with Elizabeth in the often savage killing, oftentimes of people, like the older lady Betty,

who die because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time. On the other hand, when he kills to protect his wife, it strikes a chord with men, and we stop and shake our heads and think, "Wait. What's going on?"

The identity that is most troublesome is nationalism, the one that was essential to the Cold War. Both sides are filled with paranoia, especially the Russian side, and believe they are sitting on the brink of extinction. This is nationalism beyond belief, a nationalism that literally forgives any evil, and allows no other allegiances. There are a number of historical events that happen; we mentioned the "Evil Empire" speech of Reagan. The "Star Wars" American initiative, the attempted assassination of Reagan, the "Mutually Assured Destruction" initiative, all provide startling examples of this dangerous, hand-on-the-trigger paranoia of the two nations. To participate as individuals means putting aside integrity, transcendence, pity, emotion, essentially one's humanity, as the Elizabeth/Betty incident demonstrated. Christians put aside, to a great degree, the providence of God.

As Christians, we look at this in a sense from outside the fray. We as viewers, are fallen, we are nationalistic, we don't even see these identities perfectly, but in reality, we truly know better. We know ultimate identity. We recognize the overwhelming importance of who we really are and we know there can be no other. We will never trade that for something else. Others can search for identities. Those who only operate in the dark can choose among many ersatz identities as they seek to walk in darkness, but the day will come when all is known, and we as Christians can be seen in the Light.

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FINALE

Many years ago, my wife and I took a trip to Washington, D.C. to visit the many art museums there. I was auditing courses in art history and art appreciation and considered our vacation there as part of my education as well as a time to be together and relax. One of our excursions was to the Phillips Collection in a house in downtown Washington. Each room had paintings of a certain type or a certain artist. When we walked into this one particular room, I was stopped, astonished, and undone. The large painting that hung on one wall filled the room with color and light and, to this day, is the most beautiful man-made object I have ever seen. It is set in an open restaurant on the banks of a river. A group of young men and women are laughing, talking, eating and drinking looking over the Seine River. It was Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *The Luncheon of the Boating Party*. When I saw it, I was literally overcome with a sense of both longing and loss, longing for the knowledge of the sheer beauty of life, of being young. The loss was that of youth that has been lost and can't be brought back. The painting seems to me still to be the very essence of life, of youth and beauty. My young and beautiful wife finally pulled me away and we left the glowing room and went back into the sunshine of the day.

The poem below speaks to that same kind of emotional potential in which a painting is shocking in its power of evocation and moves us in strong and important ways. It is ***Portrait in Nightshade and Delayed Translation***, by C. Dale Young.

Portrait in Nightshade and Delayed Translation

In Saint Petersburg, on an autumn morning,
having been allowed an early entry
to the Hermitage, my family and I wandered
the empty hallways and corridors, virtually every space

adorned with famous paintings and artwork.
There must be a term for overloading on art.
One of Caravaggio's boys smirked at us,
his lips a red that betrayed a sloppy kiss

recently delivered, while across the room
the Virgin looked on with nothing but sorrow.
Even in museums, the drama is staged.
Bored, I left my family and, steered myself,

foolish moth, toward the light coming
from a rotunda. Before me, the empty stairs.
Ready to descend, ready to step outside
into the damp and chilly air, I felt

the centuries-old reflex kick in, that sense
of being watched. When I turned, I found
no one; instead, I was staring at The Return
of the Prodigal Son. I had studied it, written about it

as a student. But no amount of study could have
prepared me for the size of it, the darkness of it.
There, the son knelt before his father, his dirty foot
left for inspection. Something broke. As clichéd

as it sounds, something inside me broke, and
as if captured on film, I found myself slowly sinking
to my knees. The tears began without warning until soon
I was sobbing. What reflex betrays one like this?

What nerve agent did Rembrandt hide
within the dark shades of paint that he used?
What inside me had malfunctioned, had left me
kneeling and sobbing in a museum?

Prosto plakat. Prosto plakat. Osvobodi sebya
said the guard as his hands steadied my shoulders.
He stood there repeating the phrase until
I stopped crying, until I was able to rise.

I'm not crazy, nor am I a very emotional man.
For most of my life, I have been called, correctly, cold.
As a student, I catalogued the techniques, carefully
analyzed this painting for a class on the "Dutch Masters."

Years later, having mustered the courage to tell
this ridiculous story, a friend who spoke Russian
translated the guard's words for me: "Just cry. Just cry.
Free yourself." But free myself from what, exactly?

You see, I want this whole thing to be something
meaningful, my falling to my knees in front of a painting
by Rembrandt, a painting inspired by a parable
of forgiveness offered by a father to his lost son.

But nothing meaningful has presented itself. Even now,
after so much time has passed, I have no clue
what any of this means. I still haven't figured out
whether or not I am the lost son or the found.

C. Dale Young

Reading this is an experience in great art, in the art that evoked the poem and the art of the poem itself. We read this as a paean to the stunning power of both. The painting demonstrates power that teaches us our potential for great love and feeling; great art, art that demonstrates the image of God in and on us. The poem demonstrates a search implicit in all men in a fallen world, a world in which the Father's love in its perfection was lost and we search always for its restoration. Perhaps, as His fallen children, we are both. We are the lost son and the found son and the freedom is in the searching.



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