

**THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:  
EPOCH OF SECULARIZATION OR COSMOS REGAINED?**

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André Malraux (1901-76) famously declared that either the twenty-first century "will be religious or it will not be at all."<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly this declaration should be placed with the pronouncements of other great nay-sayers, the Nietzsches, Kierkegaards, Corteses, and Solzhenitsyns, who, having said something profound but partial, the age in many ways passes by.<sup>2</sup> I assume that what Malraux meant is that the kind of being that at least the European and American world of the twenty-first century will have without religion is a being not worth having. This world has been the subject of savage satire, as in Patricia Highsmith's setting of one of her stories, "Please Don't Shoot the Trees," in a suburban Los Angeles of the future in which, all the children having been raised on too much TV, semi-autism rules. But clearly the twenty-first-century world is more complicated than that, and while semi-autism may be found in parts of it, the most serious reflection on life may be found in other parts. Thus the most likely answer to our question "Epoch of Secularization or Cosmos Regained?" is "both at once." Secularization implies the continuation of processes long in place working for the marginalization or elimination of religion; quest for a more sacral view of the world implies deep reaction to and criticism of these processes.

In this essay, under the assumption that continuing secularization will provoke continuing attempts at resacralization, I would like to take up current protest by select religious thinkers and creative artists against the world we have received, and to consider alternatives they propose.<sup>3</sup> Since in the spirit of Alasdair MacIntyre I think things have gone radically astray, I am more interested in radical thinkers with radical proposals than I am in "business as usual" thinkers.<sup>4</sup> Thus Emmanuel Lévinas intrigues in his insistence that we push beyond the whole inherited liberal tradition of needs, self, politics, and autonomy.<sup>5</sup> Taken for granted is considerable sympathy on my part with those who sense

the inadequacy of the definition of science and enlightenment of recent centuries, not because science and reason are anything but central to life, or the elimination of ignorance and superstition unimportant, but because these things have taken unhealthy forms at the expense of things even more important than themselves. Approved in this regard is the ingenious "science-fiction" writer Richard Powers who holds that science "is about reverence, not mastery": the biomole Ressler in *The Gold Bug Variations* rejects the traditional equation of science with the quest for power. The purpose of science:<sup>6</sup>

was not the accumulation of gnostic power,...accomplishing the sadistic myth of progress. The purpose of science was to revive and cultivate a perpetual state of wonder. For nothing deserved wonder so much as our capacity to feel it.

A common theme of the thinkers I want to consider is the idea that somehow the boundaries of human imagination must be extended to restore some form of affirmation of transcendence, that this world is a bigger place than, say, most of analytic philosophy, logical positivism, or materialism allow. In a searing analysis Romano Guardini (1885-1968) argued that humans once had a fairly clear picture of their place in a larger cosmic schema which has dissolved at the end of the modern world.<sup>7</sup> Now all coherence is gone, and we are "lost in the cosmos."<sup>8</sup> Even those who remain religious in a profound sense exist in a cosmological vacuum. On the assumption that we do live in a sacral cosmos, the question today is whether there is any meaningful way in which at least elements of an earlier cosmic way of thinking, never lost in Orthodox Christianity, might be recovered without those who have lived through the Enlightenment falling into wishful thinking and fantasy.<sup>9</sup> Is a fuller existence than the merely private still available to the religious man? Many things indicate that we are made for community, not for an isolated existence, and that therefore, as Jean Cardinal Daniélou once argued, prayer is a political problem in that it is nurtured or hindered by the forms of the society in which it finds itself.<sup>10</sup> Liturgical prayer, communal adoration of God, the primary place where a cosmic view of things is expressed, is in important senses a public act.

Partly because of my own interests and partly because of limitations of space, I am going to restrict myself to Christian, largely Catholic, criticism of the present and proposals for the future. In quarters, these have become very striking. At the end of his life, perhaps the greatest of the twentieth-century theologians, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-88), spoke of the modern Western soul as an anima technica vacua.<sup>11</sup> In this spirit and that of Malraux, one of the most out-spoken of the theologians of Radical Orthodoxy now gathered at Cambridge University, Catherine Pickstock, describes the contemporary city as a necropolis which denies eternity and transcendence.<sup>12</sup> Others have noted that in the degree that the modernist project, understood as the attempt to sever the present from the past, has formed our public spaces, the gods have been driven off and we have lost our own history.<sup>13</sup> Tremendous pressures are placed on all the religions of the West to accommodate and assimilate to global, commercial, liberal civilization, never to stand in prophetic witness against this civilization. In response von Balthasar declared that Christianity “demonically questions the unification of the world.”<sup>14</sup>

Common sense suggests that the place of religion in twenty-first century Western society will be not unlike that of religion in late twentieth-century society, variegated but with more and more people living a life formed much more by the overtly irreligious culture around them than by the teachings and habits of Church membership. Thus in an obvious sense we have before us an epoch of secularization, with God dead for most people, and with most believers unable to give much of an account of their own history or theology. How could they, for most have been educated in state schools from which study of the religious history and practice of mankind has been systematically eliminated by the lay party? Still, as at the present, some will march to another beat and in some degree refuse to conform. But either they will have to do this in a fundamentalist way, so unconscious of theology and history that they will be unable to sort out the demands of religion from, for instance, those of nationalism or regionalism; or they will do this in the studied manner of groups such as the Cambridge theologians, who in consciously

rejecting many of the leading traits of the larger civilization and in waging war with it from a counter-cultural position within the Church, hold a position which takes much study to understand, let alone to judge. These latter radical thinkers, with their conscious option for a life lived from within the Church rather than one lived on the basis of the assumptions of the larger society, present a very demanding Christianity to the average person, who likely has not been brought up even to have a sense of what the issues are. If the theologians of radical Orthodoxy are right in their understanding of what it means to be “in but not of the world,” the cultural choices made in the West during the past half millennium have to be rethought from the ground up, and virtually everything held by liberal, lay culture brought under judgment.

An urgent question is whether it is possible responsibly to escape a world formed by the disenchantment of many centuries. It seems difficult for a responsible person simply to “walk away from it all,” because the same processes by which humans have come to dominate/destroy the world have produced many advancements for human life. Little that has happened is simply bad, most is mixed in result. There is so much to sort out! Presumably the accommodated Christian ideas of the recent past, the eighteenth-century belief in general progress, nineteenth-century optimism, the very categories of Hegelian historical thought still vigorous in the twentieth century, by which each age has a kind of distinctive spirit, are now revealed as utterly inadequate. Christians at least must reconsider a Biblical view of things, in which until the end opposed tendencies live cheek by jowl, the wheat and the tares growing together, with neither necessarily characterizing any age. While one hopes with the Scriptures that God will be all in all, a question posed by the same Scriptures is whether at the end any will remain faithful. Death and life stand in the closest proximity, the culture of life in the midst of the culture of death. Always in time diametrically different possibilities are present, the re-enchantment of the cosmos beside its secularization. More mysteriously – this is the point of the Augustinian *felix culpa* - there is a profound sense in which it is just the growth of evil that reveals the

fullness of what is at stake in being human. More than standing cheek by jowl, opposed tendencies interrogate and feed one another.

Because the question of regaining – and of the desirability of regaining - a cosmic vision of life seems to me to indicate the complexity of the issues involved, it is the chief concern in what follows. The background is the persistent denial of transcendence, in one or another of its meanings, during the "epoch of secularization."<sup>15</sup> The assumption is that this denial has been detrimental to man. In the words of one of the world's great cultural critics: "Cultures, when profoundly rooted in the human, bear witness to man's characteristic openness to the universal and to transcendence."<sup>16</sup> David Walsh, correctly in my opinion, argues that such specifically modernist enterprises as the hermeneutics of suspicion, deconstructionism, and the critique of religion as wish-fulfillment are based on the transcendent principle of desire for truth, and thus that it is not possible to eliminate the transcendent.<sup>17</sup>

The deepest truth of our age is not that the modern world is over but that we have already passed into the transcendent perspective that enables us to view it as limited. The death of the modern project has reawakened us to eternity. Still, many people seem practically to live without much sense of some larger frame within which human life takes place.<sup>18</sup> We have moved from a medieval or Byzantine situation, in which for instance in painting holy people were presented with a minimum of natural context; through the diminishment of holy figures and the increase of the natural landscape of a Pieter Bruegel the Elder (+1569); to the suggestion of Romanticism that if landscape is not all we see, the divine is but an invisible presence in nature; to a modernism in which we float free of nature and God.<sup>19</sup>

As regards specifically ecclesiastical architecture, modernism has evacuated the idea, found in the earliest Christian basilicas and continuing through the great baroque churches, that the church is a miniature of the cosmos. Under such pressure, the cosmic sense of the liturgy and of liturgical art is constantly eroded.<sup>20</sup> But much more than

modernism is involved here, for the unsettling discoveries of students of culture would suggest a certain incompatibility between beauty and democracy. Concentrated power such as we find in monarchies tends to express itself in and produce aesthetic structures by which to justify itself: thus the prominence of ritual in the life of the medieval court or the public ceremonies of the early modern city. Diffuse power such as we find in democracies tends to express itself in and produce functional structures.<sup>21</sup> This does not mean that concentrated power can not produce great ugliness, but it does mean that aesthetic considerations tend to lose out to functional considerations in democracies, creating aimless public spaces, but also aimless churches.

Against such a situation, whether we are speaking of urban or of ecclesiastical spaces, we have the spiritual reaction, sometimes of religious inspiration, of the architects themselves, attempting in one way or another, sometimes under the label of “organicism,” at least to reconnect architecture with its history.<sup>22</sup> One of the great Christian medieval contributions to the clarification of human life was conceiving of that life as having “the unity of a narrative quest,” as aiming beyond the self to some *telos* or good.<sup>23</sup> But – and this modernism failed utterly to understand - the very concept of exercising a virtue or aiming at the good is only possible within a tradition: “the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity.”<sup>24</sup> Individualism and modernism conceived as deliberate break with the past did not liberate but imprisoned the self. Without transcendence, the individual was buried within the limitations of his or her culture and could have no more dignity than that particular culture allowed.<sup>25</sup>

At least as important as the reaction of these architects has been that of such composers as Arvo Pärt, Henryk Górecki, and John Tavener, who each in his own way reasserts the importance of transcendental realities and gives an example of what a recovered cosmic vision might look like. Tavener is perhaps the most explicit, and has said:<sup>26</sup>

Only human beings are in the image of God and only human beings stand on the border, poised between angel and animal. This points to the human capacity to make signs – to make things which re-present realities of a higher dimension in things.

This is what Tavener understands his music to do. A very intelligent interpreter of Pärt similarly insists that the goal is not rejection of the world, but “recognition of what is most important and enduring.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, like Tavener, Pärt came to doubt the idea of progress in art: the greatness of a work of art depends on the degree to which it takes in the totality of life, not on what contribution it makes to some such thing as “the history of music.”<sup>28</sup> John Nelson, the artistic director of *Soli Deo Gloria* ("To God Be the Glory"), has spoken of his enterprise as anti-Nietzschean, and his interpreter, Robert R. Reilly, writes, as Tavener, of the purpose of art as making the transcendent perceptible.<sup>29</sup> Commonly there has been a religious dimension to the *fuga mundi nostri* of such composers and musicians, a profound dissatisfaction with the disenchanting world that modernism, Communism, and liberalism have achieved. This has taken very different paths, from the so-called "holy minimalism" of Pärt and Tavener to Nelson's neo-romanticism.<sup>30</sup> Their views are spreading among composers turning from the modernist notions which filled so much of the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> Arnold Schoenberg's famous remark that he was "cured of the delusion that the artist's aim is to create beauty" now has become in some quarters contemptible.<sup>32</sup> In the music of Pärt, Górecki, and Tavener we find a flight from the world we have received, but also a way of opening that world to realities long neglected.<sup>33</sup> Tavener speaks of aiming at “ikons in sound.”<sup>34</sup>

Tavener tells of the young woman who introduced John of the Cross to him, before which he had been completely unaware of the idea of transcendent love and “the idea that there are two levels of reality – this world and the world beyond.”<sup>35</sup> From that point, the eventual convert to Orthodoxy began to see his music as “subsumed” by or from God, and worked to eliminate himself from it, that is to undo the whole ego-centered Western

development which had come to center music on the creative artist.<sup>36</sup> His idea parallels that of the film director Krzysztof Zanussi in “The Silent Touch,” in which the young Polish musicologist/guardian angel, Stefan, envisions his function as easing the passage of music and goodness into the world. Eventually Tavener learned the sacred tone systems of Orthodoxy, and came to see all music not composed in these as not sacred, as not having eliminated the ego so precious to modern Western thought.<sup>37</sup> The background here involves the whole history of Western music and liturgy.<sup>38</sup> Pythagoras’ view of the mathematical construction of the cosmos was one expression of the widespread ancient idea that beauty lies in the (mathematical) order of the universe. This was taken into Christian thought by many of the Greek fathers and in the West especially by Augustine, whose *On Music* viewed Christian liturgy against a background of the cosmic harmonies dear to the Pythagoreans.<sup>39</sup> Music expresses the order and harmony of the cosmos. Celestial music will characterize heaven.<sup>40</sup>

From the first there was in Western music a specific alliance between music and philosophy. This alliance survived well into the modern period, and Goethe alludes to it in his idea that man’s music, if it is to be beautiful, must conform to the rhythms and harmonic principles of the universe.<sup>41</sup> Only with Hegel’s idea that music is an expression of the subject, and, especially, Schopenhauer’s idea that music is the primal expression of will, do we have the groundwork laid for “modern music” understood as a repudiation of such cosmic laws and order.<sup>42</sup> Charles Rosen believes that, in spite of all, the alliance between music and philosophy is still found in the idea that score and “the theoretical structure of pitch and rhythm” are so central that “the score may be beautiful irrespective of my realization.”<sup>43</sup>

By contrast to the modern music rooted in Schopenhauer’s categories of will and creativity, Christian liturgy is in its origins overwhelmingly cosmic. In it we do not “make up tunes” or will a world into existence. We join our voices with the angels in praise of a cosmos ordered by and to the Word, whose word the liturgy is. There is a

necessarily objective character to the liturgy, rooted in the idea that it expresses the Logos behind all things. As the single most widely read work of Orthodoxy, compiled in 1782, the *Philokalia*, the very name of which means “love of the beautiful,” understands it, the beautiful is the transcendent source of life.<sup>44</sup> As the heirs of a world created by Protestantism and liberal individualism, as people who tend - if we think of it at all - to think of salvation as something individual, it is easy to miss the social and cosmological character of Christianity itself, all the ways in which it is incompatible with the world that liberal modernity has created.

Initially the Christian hope was the redemption of the entire creation, and this is of what ancient Christian music sings.<sup>45</sup> Many medieval writers closely connected music, peace, and friendship: the way in which music brings people to likemindedness and removes discord recalls Eden and anticipates Heaven.<sup>46</sup> It is this perspective that much of the new Christian music tries to reiterate. A fair amount of recent Church music has itself taken on the flavor of subjectivity and willfulness, has become modern, but arguably whenever people remember what the liturgy is, they will flee these categories. Thus Orthodox composers have had a large presence in the current turn to transcendence, which in long perspective can often be seen as within the tradition of “hesychasm,” the prayer of silence or Jesus Prayer (“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”) characteristic of much Byzantine religious life.<sup>47</sup> But as with hesychasm itself, this is not simply a flight to the transcendent. To use the title of a recent book, the goal of Orthodox liturgy is *Heaven on Earth*, that is, the use of sanctuary space and liturgy to make Heaven present.<sup>48</sup> Thus Tavener’s music attempts to reunite heaven and earth, to return to prelapsarian innocence, to restore the cosmos, to be a suitable vehicle for the vision of the earthly church building as already paradise.<sup>49</sup> Geoffrey Haydon ascribes to Tavener the opinion “that the secret desire of every heart is for the Paradise lost, and that all art is a striving towards that Paradise.”<sup>50</sup> Though Tavener’s music is very different, like Mozart’s it speaks of a creation both prelapsarian and resurrected.<sup>51</sup> As an Orthodox

believer living in the West, his goal is a recapturing after all the disasters of the Enlightenment of the Orthodox vision of the liturgy as the place where earth and heaven are transparent to one another.<sup>52</sup> As the Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann says, the liturgy both makes the universe transparent to God and raises the Church up to heaven.<sup>53</sup>

Such an understanding is found also in the Latin West. Already before Augustine, the Platonic-Pythagorean view of music struggled with Christian incarnationalism as much in theorizing about music as it did in philosophy and theology.<sup>54</sup> The result, *pace* all those histories which see in early Christian music theory, Eastern or Western, mere neo-Pythagoreanism, was “not an overweening desire to escape the flesh, but... the challenge of reconciling the pleasures of musical embodiment with the incarnational religiosity they practice.”<sup>55</sup> This task is central to Augustine’s ever-changing thought. Particularly important is *Confessions* 9.7.16, which chapter “registers the author’s initial realization that the beauty and power of music lie not in the transcendence of materiality in favor of a sublime geometry ‘free of all body,’ but in the stimulation and vivification of the flesh.”<sup>56</sup> We should not be surprised that some living Christian composers of our day in attempting a flight from the world they have received seek not flight *per se*, but some new incarnationalism which gives earth its due but, in a way the music of the modernist, laicist, and Communist experiments failed to do, ties it to heaven.

Though almost all Protestant thinkers have conceded to progressive categories of thought, seeing history itself as linear, some Catholics stand beside their Orthodox brethren in protesting the view of time and human development which has come to dominate the West. According to this, time must take either a cyclical or a linear form, the latter presumptively being the Jewish and Christian preference because expressing the idea that salvation has a history. But the view of the Church Fathers and of medieval thinkers such as St. Bonaventure was much more complicated than this. The fullness which had come in Christ was not something that would be surpassed, one stage in a tale

of progress, but something available for acceptance or rejection in all historical moments. History, at least so far as a human can chronicle, does not have one narrative line for the simple reason that some accept Christ, some close in on themselves. There is not one linear and irreversible direction in which the story of salvation moves. All moments stand equally before God, and in them God's will is both being done and not being done. The Orthodox Romanian student of religion, Mircea Eliade, in the very act of thinking of himself as vindicating the distinctiveness of a supposedly Christian preference for linear views of time, fell into the trap of accommodating to the secularized Western notion that the Christian story is a progressive story.<sup>57</sup> To say that the Christian story or the human story is linear and progressive is ironically tantamount to removing God from history, for it gives a narrative story line such integrity and visibility that anyone can chronicle it, even a Hegel. In the old view, the mystery of the drama of the struggle between good and evil, the drama of salvation, continued until the end of time, and had no clear outcome within history. In the new view of the eighteenth century, there was visible a story almost a fool could write, a story which made sense of secular experience and gave it an integrity apart from God.<sup>58</sup>

Although Tavener presumably would not like the suggestion,<sup>59</sup> the Baroque was an attempt to use matter and material splendor to express the ongoing drama of salvation understood as the Logos of the world, to at once fall down before the transcendent Lord and to find Him in all things.<sup>60</sup> One could argue that much of the Roman Catholic liturgical movement to the present associated with a succession of figures beginning with Prosper Guéranger and Solesmes in the mid-nineteenth century has tried liturgically to reunite the matter and spirit separated first by Descartes, and then by the whole development of a materialistic civilization which has divided life into a secular sphere and an increasingly marginalized otherworldly sphere.<sup>61</sup> Critics of the present Catholic liturgy often point to an unfortunate development following Vatican II in which, especially in those countries like the United States which habitually confuse religion with

taking moral stances, the liturgy was viewed primarily as a teaching instrument rather than an expression of God's glory and our incorporation into that Glory.<sup>62</sup>

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has developed a reading of the whole Christian liturgical tradition which takes into account the distinctive glories of Orthodoxy and of Roman Catholicism, while arguing that in large degree these distinctivenesses are complementary.<sup>63</sup> He follows the Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov in arguing that the Orthodox theology of icons views the cosmos especially according to the iconography of the Pantocrator, which presumes a Platonic or neo-Platonic background, and was the common inheritance of the Greek East and the Latin West in the late antique period and the early middle ages.<sup>64</sup> A great shift occurred when in the Latin world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Aristotelianism replaced the previous neo-Platonic background.<sup>65</sup> By a neo-Platonic background is meant the view that the visible is a shadow of the eternal, that we are meant to rise from and via the former to the latter. This is a very complicated question, but the argument is that whereas Orthodox thought and prayer, rooted in the icon, continues to look toward Easter, that is toward a resurrection we do not clearly see, and toward the Eighth Day, that is toward our final eschatological status, such a stance was increasingly overridden in the West from about the time of the appearance of the Gothic. More and more the Latin emphasis became incarnational, continuing the work begun by Augustine, the crucified Lord replacing the Pantocrator. The icon as a means to see what can not be seen, of looking through a picture to see beyond this world, was increasingly replaced with the telling of the story of the Passion.<sup>66</sup> Historical narrative came to the fore, and the liturgy itself was increasingly conceived not so much as that which restores the cosmos, or as the beginning of the final hymn of thanksgiving, or as a looking toward the East, where the risen Lord has gone ahead, but as a reproduction of the central event of the narrative of salvation, the death of the suffering savior.<sup>67</sup>

Both emphases, cosmic and incarnational, express something central to Christianity, and therefore are found in East and West. Sometimes one has to look a bit, and Ratzinger

suggests that Gothic stained glass, even with its Latin narrative emphasis on showing the history of salvation, especially the history of the last week of Christ's life, performs something of the function of the Greek iconostasis. With the coming of the Renaissance, the West largely lost the sense of "looking through" the icon to the greater reality of which it was the shadow. A new aesthetic sense developed in which beauty was no longer something always beyond the visible, but rather something caught by the thing seen.<sup>68</sup> From this point of view the Baroque, commonly maligned today in East and West, had as a chief goal not exactly the restoration of the ancient perspective, but a new form of it. Now the altar was the icon, the window through which God comes to us and we view the divine realities. Praise of God, thanksgiving, in a Greek Eucharistic sense, remains central. In Ratzinger's view it was positivism, the belief that there is nothing more than the verifiable, that destroyed all these earlier ways of seeing through the visible to something greater but invisible. It is the true enemy of worship. It undermines art itself, which increasingly becomes an experiment with self-created worlds, creativity to no purpose and no object. One wonders whether many of the living composers of sacred music who rebel against a world without transcendence could not come to some form of common ground built on such a reading of what has happened to music and liturgy.

Hans Urs von Balthasar laid special weight on hearing as from the viewpoint of theology the central act of perception. While sight requires distance, hearing beckons us to unsystematized wonder and participation. Both of course allow us to take in the glory of God in the world, but especially hearing is open and vulnerable to the transcendent. The American Catholic theologian Peter Casarella very much agrees. A brief statement of his thinking is in order. He, so to speak, begins where Nietzsche in his announcing of the twilight of cosmic theophany left off. Nietzsche observed that the world is no longer a cipher for transcendence.<sup>69</sup> Few see its forms as God's footprints. This not in the by comparison trivial sense of finding God in babbling brooks, but in finding *kenosis*, death to self, the Cross, as a rhythm or pattern built into the whole cosmos, aimed at its

transfiguration. God's funeral has been prepared in his believers' blindness to his disappearance from the cosmos in this sense, in their no longer viewing the cosmos as cruciform. Taking his lead from Pauline eschatology, Casarella has taken up the extraordinarily difficult task of relating Christ to an "a-cosmic" modern cosmology, that is, to a view of the world which while denying almost all the terms of traditional Christian cosmology, still carries a cosmology, but now speaking the language of infinity, vacuity, coldness, and purposelessness.<sup>70</sup> There is nothing transcendent of which it can be a cipher. Man is not only metaphysically homeless, but since man is no more than an element subject to the same impersonal laws as everything else in nature, the death of God involves the death of man as understood by Christianity, man as in and above nature and as destined to transcendence. Man can no longer be a microcosm of the real.<sup>71</sup>

Casarella thinks the time is premature for a synthesis between theology and science, but rather is interested in the conditions which must be present for a dialogue to be fruitful. From the viewpoint of theology, these center, in his judgment, on the idea that the form of Christ is the form of the world. The idea itself is unfamiliar to many modern people, for a pronounced tendency within Christianity itself since the late medieval world has been in the direction of a religion of "God and the soul," in which the way to the transcendent is conceived of as inward and subjective rather than outward and through the cosmos. Even many Christians look at the cosmos under the categories of modern mechanism and reductionism, rather than under the head of gift, let alone of the idea of Romans 8:22 that all creation is groaning toward transfiguration. The notion of the cosmos as gift is of course an expression of the idea that it is created, but the whole form of modern a-cosmic cosmology implies an uncreated world, and thus the Christian in trying to join science and religion as they now stand is left in the place of trying to put Humpty-Dumpty back together, but with some of the parts missing.<sup>72</sup>

Casarella has given a good indication of how extraordinarily difficult a synthesis of theology and science now is. If in agreeing I may complicate the problem even further,

the modern historian tends to view all proposals that music or architecture express cosmic harmonies, whether of Pythagoras or of Tavener, as expressing the responses of some person or group to their own historical predicament. To put the issue sharply, just as the Baroque had a kind of grandiloquence which both despaired of and expressed the irrationalism and growing egocentricity of early modern thought and decided to win the cultural issue through spectacle, one could argue that Tavener represents an Orthodox church which is profoundly displaced in the modern world, and that what he is really proposing is the abandonment of the whole modern situation in favor of a comprehensive ideology in which Orthodoxy would have recovered its centrality. He has written “I hate progress, I hate development and I hate evolution in most things; but in music particularly.”<sup>73</sup>

Deeply sympathetic as I am to such outbursts, while believing the issues are much more complicated than this, the point is that we now can hardly view such discussions about cosmic harmony, whether we are for or against this harmony, as not at least partly one more aspect of the culture wars which fill our time. Especially historians of Roman Christianity have taught us to suspect that all cosmic schemas are really “propaganda for a uniform religious ethos” or for the legitimization of some elite.<sup>74</sup> Proposals like Tavener’s seem hardly to address, or even be aware of, this “hermeneutic of suspicion.” Additionally, they seem too easily to be trying to put together what the modern experience has undone, simply rejecting modernity and learning no lessons from it. It is all very well for Tavener to say that the Latin musical and religious tradition, with its “culture of the violence of the Crucifixion,” can not be his personally because it does not express the balance and harmony for which he is looking, but an obvious reply is that Tavener wishes to use music to shield us from all the ways in which the world really is broken, as if the only thing music can be about is God.<sup>75</sup> This is the restoration of transcendence with a vengeance. It is hard to see that such a view can find any point in

creation at all, any reason why human beings possess creative powers, any point to struggle in time.

While deeply sympathetic to what Tavener and others like him wish to do, I would warn that they may not have fully considered the question whether it is simply recovery of Paradise the religious person should seek. Is the end simply like the beginning, as Tavener's understanding of Orthodox theology would have it, or has what has happened between the two, in human history, some eternal significance and more status than a bad dream the memory of which is eventually to be wiped away?<sup>76</sup> Is there is anything to René Girard's or Pierre Manent's ideas that Christianity involves certain necessary secularizations of the world? Does the idea that man is a co-creator with God include the idea that in history man as well as God expresses himself and reveals his created possibilities? Is it possible so much to stress the omnipotence and glory of God as to miss the significance of the world of secondary causation?<sup>77</sup> Is it simply that "the end is like the beginning," or does the creation aim at *reformatio in melius*, an end greater than the beginning because participated in by free agents who have chosen God and become like him, matured through struggle in time?<sup>78</sup> To put this musically, is the best music non-linear, non-narrative, repetitive, and ritualistic, or is there something to be said for Bach, that is, for the "speeding-up" starting with the medieval invention of polyphony and proceeding thereafter in tandem with the so-called "time of the merchants"?<sup>79</sup> If "chant is modal music, which means that it doesn't have the powerful drive that much of modern music has to arrive at a final harmonic destination," does this exclude Baroque expression of God's glory?<sup>80</sup> A standing danger of the Orthodox tradition has been its tendency to overly-optimistic anthropologies, often expressed in a distaste for Augustine and for legalism, with a concomitant reliance on conscience, all this owing too much to Plato and not taking the full measure of human depravity.<sup>81</sup> A powerful tendency in Greek theology to see the goal of life as the recovery of Eden, of man's first condition, has fed a certain inability to make much of temporal processes in general, to see the passage of time as

anything more than an irritation, exile.<sup>82</sup> Hence cosmic liturgy itself becomes a temptation to erase time, to neglect history, simply to disapprove of Enlightenment. Always there are degrees, and an interpreter of Pärt's music, which makes much more use of the Latin tradition than does Tavener, has observed that Pärt's music is not purely Edenic: "It carries an oppressive weight upon its shoulders, and is written, if anything, from a post-Edenic position....it recognizes the bitter waste of human failure..."<sup>83</sup>

Certainly, in comparison to the subjective and individualistic categories of modern Western life, Orthodox emphasis on the objective and communal aspects of liturgy is bracing, but I wonder whether there is not a way here in which one might not have one's cake and eat it too. This would be to underline the point that because the liturgy is eschatological, and our best anticipation now of how things will be when God is all in all, does not mean that there is nothing else. The liturgy is the beginning of heaven on earth, the place where we get our best sense of what God is and heaven will be. But as the Jesuits insisted, it is also our daily succor, from which we go out to deal with the world's brokenness. The liturgy is not some kind of cosmic bandage that "makes everything all right." It comes to the local church to build it up in thanksgiving, but this foreshadowing of future glory must not turn us from our earthly task of trying to understand the world of time as it is, both for the mending of its brokenness and the exploration of its possibilities. While it, that is the liturgy, is the place, if any, where in the twenty-first century some sense of a cosmic Christianity will be nurtured, this nurturing will be subject to all the dissonances of the social and political life around it. Therefore, the prudent Christian will, as Daniélou said, at once attend to prayer and politics. His view of religion will not be a private one centered on God and the soul, but a public one which in looking to the Cosmic Christ teaches the world how to give thanksgiving in the midst of living a cruciform life, while disturbing the world with the thought that its ways may not be God's ways.<sup>84</sup>

Worship gives us a share in heaven's mode of existence...and allows light to fall from that...world into ours....worship...lays hold in advance of a more perfect life and, in so doing, gives our present life its proper measure.

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<sup>1</sup> DERRIDA and VATTIMO 1998, deals with the return to religion. Cf. TAYLOR 2002; the assessment for America in WUTHNOW 1993; and for Europe DAVIE 2000.

<sup>2</sup> The classic Nietzschean text on the modern European as someone "who makes everything small" is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and see BISER 2002. HERRERA 1995, is a good study of what was once taken to be an apocalyptic vision, but remains a diagnosis of the contradictions of modernity. Nietzsche and Solzhenitsyn are among the figures brilliantly delineated by WALSH 1990.

<sup>3</sup> See OLSEN 1990, 98-130, on secularization and sacralization as continuing processes.

<sup>4</sup> See my appropriation of McIntyre's thought in OLSEN 2000.

<sup>5</sup> PEPERZAK 1997.

<sup>6</sup> All quotations are taken from LEONARD 2001, 44.

<sup>7</sup> GUARDINI 1998.

<sup>8</sup> PERCY 1983. The allusion to John Donne indicates that the process has long been forming.

<sup>9</sup> On the history of thinking about cosmic harmony see the elegant essay of MCGINN 1996. The exchange of letters between J. G. A. Pocock and Roger Emerson in *Historically Speaking* 2002, 26-28, gives entrance to the debate whether we should speak of the Enlightenment or of Enlightenments.

<sup>10</sup> DANIELOU 1967. See the exposition in OLSEN 1975.

<sup>11</sup> BALTHASAR 1987, 8. Cf. BALTHASAR 1969, 114-15: "the whole of worldly being falls under the dominion of 'knowledge', and the springs and forces of love immanent in the world are overpowered and

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finally suffocated by science, technology and cybernetics. The result is a world...in which power and the profit-margin are the sole criteria, where the disinterested, the useless, the purposeless is despised, persecuted and in the end exterminated - a world in which art itself is forced to wear the mask and features of technique." Balthasar is far from rejecting science and technology: he only rejects them insofar as they develop in terms of a false autonomy of the Baconian sort (knowledge is power) and in terms of a mechanistic understanding of the cosmos. I am guided in all this by SCHINDLER 1993, who links these diverse phenomena to a "lack of a sense of being as gift."

<sup>12</sup> PICKSTOCK 1998, 110, with CIPOLLA 1999, 33. For orientation see MILBANK, PICKSTOCK, and WARD 1999. MILBANK 1993, is a wide-ranging critique of the secular assumptions at the base of much contemporary social and political theory.

<sup>13</sup> See BRADBURY and MCFARLANE 1976; CLARK 1999; and KOLOCOTRONI 1999. GRIFFIN 2002, reminds us that too much can be attributed to modernism: "The period around the first World War was so startlingly innovative that an intimidated public still thinks of it, a century later, as 'modern art.' Terms like 'postmodern' let us evade the recognition that the period was not, after all, decisive. The arts have gone on, and in directions very different from those envisaged by Jarry and Schoenberg and Braque." Definition becomes very tricky, and a sculptor such as Alberto Giacometti's "revolt against the recent past" can be read as a questioning of modernity itself: SCHWARTZ 2002, 22.

<sup>14</sup> KEHL and LOSER 1982, 195, quoted in CAVANAUGH 2001, 340.

<sup>15</sup> DEL NOCE 1970, and BUTTIGLIONE 1991, 207, with FRANK 2000, 19-20.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* n. 70.

<sup>17</sup> WALSH 1999, 121.

<sup>18</sup> COLES 1999, believes the transcendent has largely been excised or tamed by the secular rhythms of life, and that things such as church-going are compartmentalized practices within an overwhelmingly secular existence hardly open to transformation: this was Nietzsche's point when he said God was dead.

<sup>19</sup> UPDIKE 2001, 10.

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<sup>20</sup> MANNION 2001, 4. Every issue of the journal *Sacred Architecture* contains attacks on and alternatives to ecclesiastical modernism. In issue six DOORLY 2002, 18, reflects on the following passage from Le Corbusier, written in 1923: “A great epoch has begun. There exists a new spirit. . . . There is no longer any question of custom, nor of tradition. . . . The Styles are a lie.”

<sup>21</sup> This line of thought and further bibliography may be found in JAEGER 1999, 41-42.

<sup>22</sup> KWINTER 2001, esp. 34-52.

<sup>23</sup> MACINTYRE 1984, 219.

<sup>24</sup> MACINTYRE 1984, 221.

<sup>25</sup> JOHN PAUL II 2000, 8.

<sup>26</sup> TAVENER 1999, 97.

<sup>27</sup> HILLIER 1997, x, and see 23, ”the influence of early music [on Pärt] is not a superficial imitation. . . , still less an escape from modernity, but represents a reconnection with our collective musical unconscious, and is thus as much a way forward as a way back.”

<sup>28</sup> HILLIER 1997, 64-65.

<sup>29</sup> REILLY 2000, 53-54.

<sup>30</sup> TAVENER 1999, 102, explains his dislike for this label. Cf. HILLIER 1997, 12-18.

<sup>31</sup> TAVENER 1999, 91-106, defines and explains his antipathy to modernism.

<sup>32</sup> REILLY 2000, 54, on this and the following, and see STEINER 2001. This is of course not the full Schoenberg story: TAVENER 1999, 13, notes his remark “There’s still plenty of good music to be written in C major.” Cf. SHAWN 2002.

<sup>33</sup> Tavener and Pärt are Orthodox Christians interested in a discipline or prayer of silence that gives space for union with God: HAYDON 1995. The background is set in LITVACK 1994, esp. Part II.

<sup>34</sup> TAVENER 1999, 61, and see HAYDON, 195, 209 and HILLIER 1997, 3-5.

<sup>35</sup> TAVENER 1999, 16.

<sup>36</sup> TAVENER 1999, 22-23, 31, 39, 59, 73-74.

<sup>37</sup> TAVENER 1999, 35-36; HAYDON 1995, 12, 293-94.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. GEVAERT.

<sup>39</sup> For this and the following, see RATZINGER 2000, here at 152-54, and RATZINGER 2001, 3-4; CHADWICK 1990, 78-101, for Platonic/Pythagorean musical theory; and SCHUELLER 1988.

<sup>40</sup> Of the essays in DAVIDSON 1994, see esp RASTALL.

<sup>41</sup> RATZINGER 2000, 136-56, at 154-55.

<sup>42</sup> RATZINGER 2000, 154.

<sup>43</sup> ROSEN 2001, 64.

<sup>44</sup> PALMER, SHERRARD, and WARE 1979.

<sup>45</sup> DANIELOU 1953, 340.

<sup>46</sup> This is a theme running through JAEGER 1994, and JAEGER 1999, as at 55.

<sup>47</sup> TAVENER 1999, 41; HAYDON 1995, 124, 152-53; HILLIER 1997, 6-10.

<sup>48</sup> SAFRAN 1998.

<sup>49</sup> TAVENER 1999, 118 speaking of “the prelapsarian innocence which chant at its best has,” 119-29, with the review by NELSON 2001. See also BULGAKOV 2002, esp. Section I, for a vision uniting Creator and creation; SCHMEMANN 1963, esp. 11-30; and VALLIERE 2001.

<sup>50</sup> HAYDON 1995, 166, and see 216.

<sup>51</sup> BALTHASAR 2001.

<sup>52</sup> ANATOLIOS 2000, an article with a better understanding of Byzantine liturgy than Tavener’s. TAFT 2000, is a riveting account of Western misperceptions of Orthodox liturgy, and Orthodox inability to develop a strategy for facing modernity.

<sup>53</sup> SCHMEMANN 1987, 165, and SCHMEMANN 1963.

<sup>54</sup> HOLSINGER 2001, Part I, gives a provocative, if not always closely reasoned, overview of developments in the late antique period, nicely emphasizing that there was no single Christian view.

<sup>55</sup> HOLSINGER 2001, 30. Holsinger’s antipathy to “platonism” comes out most clearly at 347-48.

<sup>56</sup> HOLSINGER 2001, 72. Holsinger’s treatment is both stimulating and exasperating: what he, 75-76, calls “inconsistency” and “disingenuousness” in Augustine I would call “uncertainty” and “honesty.”

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<sup>57</sup> I explore these issues more fully in OLSEN 2001.

<sup>58</sup> ZAHNER 1999, makes the argument that thinkers like Joachim of Flora, with the idea that salvation history itself has stages, furthered the secularization of the world.

<sup>59</sup> This on the basis of such remarks as that he hates the organ and that Tomás Luis de Victoria is “the only Renaissance composer that I can stand. I love his lack of ornament”: TAVENER 1999, 1, 7, 16, (for quotation), 27, 32, 99-101. He does, 84, note his great preference for original baroque to modern instruments. Especially interesting is his explanation, 55, of why Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* fails as religious music.

<sup>60</sup> DIMOCK 2000, 8-10.

<sup>61</sup> MANNION 2000, 2, one of the most important figures in the contemporary American Catholic liturgical movement, gives an overview.

<sup>62</sup> Thus TOREVELL 2000.

<sup>63</sup> RATZINGER 2000, 115-35, analyzes the history of images and sight in the two traditions.

<sup>64</sup> EVDOKIMOV 1990, as studied by RATZINGER 2000, 115-35, on which the present discussion depends. Both Evdokimov’s and Ratzinger’s views insufficiently take into account the incarnational, non-Platonic, aspects of early Christian music. For corrective see HOLSINGER 2001, Part I.

<sup>65</sup> APPLEBY 2002, treats the period from Gregory I to Bonaventure with greater precision than does Ratzinger.

<sup>66</sup> There are some problems with Ratzinger’s generalizations. Well before the Gothic, “historiated” sculpture and wall-painting narrating the whole salvation story was well-developed in Romanesque art: there are wonderful examples in the Museo Aqueológico in Barcelona, and see BLANC 1998, 217-256, noting 251-54, that, following the Bible, Romanesque sculpture presents the Crucifixion both narratively and cosmically, a sun and moon, personalized with human facial features, implicated in the darkness covering the earth. In the Orthodox East, on the other hand, as at Rila monastery in Bulgaria, we have churches with both icons and narrative frescoes. BELTING 1994 and BESANÇON 2000, fill out the picture in much greater detail.

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<sup>67</sup> For more detail see FASSLER 1993, as at 19, with HOLSINGER 2001, 234-40, 242-48.

<sup>68</sup> SCHINDLER 2001, gives an illuminating exposition of the movement in modern thought from a trinitarian to a theistic view of God, with a concomitant desacramentalization of the world.

<sup>69</sup> CASARELLA 2001, 246. BALTHASAR 1989, 249-79, laid special emphasis on the theme of the glory of the world in the Latin tradition stemming from Vergil.

<sup>70</sup> CASARELLA 2001, 231.

<sup>71</sup> CASARELLA 2001, 246-47.

<sup>72</sup> CASARELLA 2001, 230-31. In the following pages Casarella turns to Bonaventure and the sapiential tradition for alternatives.

<sup>73</sup> TAVENER 1999, 14, going on to say “I have always been drawn more to the archetypal levels of human experience...which is why I think I was drawn to Stravinsky and revolted by Schoenberg. Schoenberg was for me the filthy, rotten ‘dirt dump’ of the twentieth century...I do not respond to the so-called ‘Germanic Tradition’, whose by now rotting corpse – the hideous sound world of its fabricated complexity – smothers archetypal experience that I have always sought.”

<sup>74</sup> HAYWARD 1999, 127, 130-31.

<sup>75</sup> TAVENER 1999, 27.

<sup>76</sup> RATZINGER 2000, 28: “the historical makes its appearance in the cosmic. The cosmos is not a kind of closed building, a stationary container in which history may by chance take place. It is itself movement, from its one beginning to its one end. In a sense, creation *is* history.”

<sup>77</sup> CHENU 1966, 41-42, writes of the period before the Latin twelfth-century and the appearance of the scholasticism so despised by Tavener: “The diffuse Christian spirituality hitherto dominated by the Augustinian view of the universe had seen the omnipotence of God revealed as plainly by the buds of spring as by the flowering of Aaron’s rod...This constricting religiosity, undervaluing secondary causes, had operated within a symbolic vision of the world which tended to let slip the explanation of phenomena by reference to immediate causes and to stress the meaning such phenomena might acquire *sub specie aeternitatis*.” WHITE 2000, ch. 3, at 75-76, cites this passage and further bibliography on the twelfth-

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century “emancipation of nature from the realm of the sacred,” noting that “The marking off of God’s creative activity from that residing in secondary causes permits the exploration of how the system of those causes operates.”

<sup>78</sup> The issues are splendidly set forth in the comparison of the Greek and Latin fathers by LADNER 1967, and see APPLEBY 2002, as at 86-87. I would only add that, even in the form given to it by Gregory Palamas (1256-1359), the negative theology of Orthodoxy allows less to be said about God from the side of the world, sees less analogy between God and creation, than does the analogous theology of Aquinas: HILLIER 1997, 9-10.

<sup>79</sup> HILLIER 1997, 16-17, articulates some of the musical issues. See DOHRN-VAN ROSSUM 1996, 226-31, for reservations about the idea of “merchant’s time.”

<sup>80</sup> MOORE 1996, 108.

<sup>81</sup> TAVENER 1999, submits music to what he calls “tradition,” but repeatedly insists that it is legalism to follow anything more than Christ and conscience: see 29.

<sup>82</sup> To quote TAVENER 1999,36, 98, twice more, “Probably I thought one of the most wonderful things about tradition at this point was the fact that it was non-progressive, there was no development and there was no evolution: it was something that was eternal, it meant that such a thing as innovation simply was not valid”; and “I believe we are incarnated in the image of God in this world in order for us to re-find that heavenly celestial music from which we have been separated. Our whole life is a continuing return to the ‘source’.” See also 107 and 117, the closest Tavener comes to acknowledging a place for historical change. He is not a systematic thinker (something Western, to be despised), and does not seem to realize that authors he quotes approvingly, as, 119, Irenaeus, contradict his notions about the unimportance of development and do not share his “cyclic” views of time: see on this issue, OLSEN 2001.

<sup>83</sup> HILLIER 1997, 178-79, continuing, “But rather than explore these as ‘subjects’, the music concentrates instead on the notion of healing, by seeking out the seeds of transformation which are lodged in each one of us.”

<sup>84</sup> RATZINGER 2000, 21.