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Traditional Culture

and

GLOBAL COMMODIFICATION



Albert Borgmann
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We can think of technology and Christianity as competing forms of life. Technology promises a life of ever greater liberty and prosperity where liberty is the liberation from the limits and burdens of the human condition and prosperity is the variety and refinement of pleasures. Christianity bears the good news of salvation, the assurance that the coming of Christ has enabled us to live a life of grace and love that is affirmed by eternal life in the presence of God.

Both forms of life are optimistic in the face of the troubles that imperil human flourishing and that humans have tried to meet with fortitude. But technology and Christianity differ profoundly in their response to these troubles. Technology seeks to displace them with pleasures and to make fortitude unnecessary while Christianity accepts certain troubles as inevitable and gives us the fortitude to meet them now and the assurance that with God's grace our temporary achievements will gain eternal perfection.

Theology and Christianity compete with each other as bearers of good news, particularly in places where good news is badly needed. But the strange thing is that neither competitor is squarely facing the other. Technology exhibits a pleasant indifference to Christianity while reasonable Christians take technology to be a tool that can serve any form life, Christianity included.

From the beginning, Christianity has been determined to spread its good news to the ends of the earth, and from early on too it has known religious resistance and competition as well as success. Technology as a form of life has usually been allied with the political and social norms of democracy. In this wider sense, it has spread with vigor and confidence in the 19th century and was poised again to assert itself globally after the challenges of fascism and communism had been met.¹ But lately the rise of various kinds of fundamentalism seems to have stopped and even reversed the progress of enlightened technology. It's an apprehension that is shared by reasonable Christians.

They are mistaken, I'm afraid, both about the local harmlessness and the global weakness of technology. Locally, the indifference of technology to Christianity has its complement in the growing irrelevance of Christianity. Globally, the progress of technology, for better or worse, can't be stopped in the long run. To meet the challenges of irrelevance and globalization it is important to grasp the distinctiveness, the power, and the limits of technology. It is also difficult, and one way of dealing with this difficulty is to look at commodification as a defining feature of technology and to bring commodification into relief through its encounter with traditional culture. Technology is so radically novel a form of life that most previous cultures exhibit a common form against the background of technology. I will try to give an outline of that cultural shape, and I will use Blackfeet culture and Christianity for illustration.

In talking about Blackfeet culture, I will draw heavily on James Welch's novel *Fools Crow*.² James Welch's father was Blackfeet, and James knew life on the Blackfeet Reservation in northern Montana. Thus *Fools Crow* reflects Welch's familiarity with Blackfeet life and also the research he did in preparation for writing the book. The novel reveals deep and frank insights into the ambiguities of commodification. Perhaps only an author with the authority of native acquaintance and contemporary experience was in a position to be so insightful and fearless.

I will begin with the structures of time, space, and the social order in traditional culture and then trace the changes these structures underwent at the beginning of the modern era, go on to describe how these structures were given a definitive shape by commodification, and finally suggest how we may reshape these structures to make the world more graceful.

In the beginning, there were no traditional cultures. There was always just one culture that people lived in, and in that culture, there was no break between a tradition and a contemporary state of affairs. Within the one culture, to be sure, there was often a distinction between the present and the olden times, an earlier golden age perhaps or even a time beyond mind or memory when the culture was instituted by a god, a hero, or a sage. But those prior times were present in stories of warning or renewal. Time in traditional culture was storied. The peoples of the book have perhaps the most elaborate stories. The Christian story pivots on the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ. In Blackfeet culture, the pivotal story is of the origin of the sun dance.

Traditional space was centered on a sacred place. On the large scale, western Christendom was centered on the grave of St. Peter in Rome, at the small scale on the village church. The Blackfeet tribe gathered every spring around the sun dance lodge on the Four Persons Butte in northern Montana. In the small, a Blackfeet band was centered on the lodges and sacred bundles.

The social order of storied time and centered space was communal, a surveyable community where people knew and cared for one another and shared their place, their ancestry, their beliefs, and much of their property. Traditional culture, to be sure, was neither isolated nor static. There could be conflict. The Hebrew Scriptures tell of many a clash between Israel and the gentiles. The meeting of cultures could be peaceful and transformative as well. Though the spreading of Christianity was surely aided by social or political expediency, there was also the powerful message of light and life.

A radically different conflict and transformation began at the turn from the 15th to the 16th century. It shattered the culture of storied time, centered space, and communal order. The most obvious indications of the upheaval were the voyages of discovery that gave Europeans the first truly global view of the world, a comprehensive and detailed map of the Earth. As space was being mapped, time was recorded, and history replaced story as the structure of time.

Within the global arena, cultural conflict became more widespread and intense, notably in the forcible spread of Christianity beginning in the sixteenth century and in the inter-Christian conflicts of the wars of religion in the early seventeenth century. However, what has most enduringly impressed modern cultural consciousness is not the destruction of communities and the conflict of cultures, but the shattering of the feudal regimes that had evolved from the original communities. Both the feudal and the communal orders were reconceived as government based on an agreement of autonomous individuals. Monarchy was succeeded by democracy and community by society. Enlightenment is the most common term for this secular event though we typically include the rise of sciences that in their own way helped to transform the understanding of time, space, and

the social order.

An important result of these transformations is the rise of a purely secular world view. Religious convictions continue to be deeply held, of course, but they have been largely torn from their moorings in storied time, centered space, and the communal order. Charles Taylor in his great book has traced the rise of *A Secular Age* and suggested that all religions and traditions face a fundamentally different world where the normal form of culture is plural.³ It's a world of pluralism, multiculturalism, and diversity. Everyone knows that his or her deepest convictions have reasonable alternatives. John Rawls has argued that reasonable pluralism is in fact a condition that "is permanent as it persists indefinitely under free democratic institutions."⁴ We find ourselves forced to acknowledge what Rawls calls "the fact of profound and irreconcilable differences in citizens' reasonable religious and philosophical conceptions of the world, and in their views of the moral and aesthetic values to be sought in human life."⁵ Like Rawls, we think that liberal democracies have found a way to come to fair terms with these differences. We—that includes us reasonable Christians as well as the reasonable people of the Jewish and Islamic traditions and of Eastern religions.

Many of us, moreover, would count ourselves among the mainstream intellectuals who would not think of regarding the Enlightenment as a misfortune. If anything, we are worried about the global fate of the Enlightenment. Observers like Samuel Huntington and Benjamin Barber see a profound struggle between the enlightened democracies and religious fundamentalists, especially the Islamic fundamentalists.⁶ That struggle seems to put Taylor's epochal and global shaking of the foundations into question. Religious fundamentalists do not believe that they confront reasonable alternatives. Their world views appear to be as total and entrenched as traditional culture ever was.

I have said that I disagree with the claim of liberal Christians that they have worked out terms with contemporary culture and with the claim that Islamic fundamentalism (or any fundamentalism for that matter) is impervious to Western civilization. Both of these claims fail to identify today's central cultural force. It's neither science nor democracy but a transformative power that is more concrete and invasive than either. It's the transformation of the material culture through technology—the irresistible leading edge of Western civilization. Technology vindicates science and breaks a path for democracy. Tangible objects and structures are more, of course, than inanimate stuff. They are suffused with expectations and commitments. But the pattern and finality of this transformation is not easy to grasp.

Commodification is increasingly used as a critical term when a collision of the technological with a traditional culture is at issue. There are, however, two problems with commodification as a tool of cultural criticism. The first is with the definition of the term. It draws its usual meaning from economics where it designates the process of pulling some thing or practice from outside the market into the market. It takes a thing or practice that used to be a strand in a communal texture and makes into a commodity that is available for sale and purchase.

But as Karl Polanyi has shown, there used to be markets

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that had none of the alienating and degrading effects critics of commodification want to censure.⁷ Hence the economic definition of commodification needs to be supplemented by one that captures the culturally injurious features of commodification. The second problem is the trajectory commodification traces as it invades a traditional culture. Often, the beginning of that path constitutes a morally mandatory enterprise that imperceptibly changes into questionable ones. These later phases are indeed subject to moral or cultural censure. But since they grow out of a beneficent phase and are part of a deeply entrenched process, they are difficult to isolate and more difficult still to deal with.

The Blackfeet encountered the white culture in different ways. Some encounters were at the level of traditional integration or hostility. Others were encounters with the commodification of western technology. Traditionally, Blackfeet hunting consisted in large part of driving buffalo over cliffs where they fell to their death in great numbers or running them into buffalo pounds where they could be killed at close range. Blackfeet transportation was on foot and by way of travois that were pulled by dogs.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Blackfeet became acquainted with horses and before long had become expert breeders and riders. In their ways, they knew as much about horses as European peasants or Arabic warriors did. It changed their culture, of course. It introduced divisions of wealth among Blackfeet and the ritualized horse raids between the Blackfeet and the Crow and others. It increased the mobility of travel and the comfort of transport. It allowed mounted hunters to run with the buffalo. But the horse was no threat to Blackfeet cultural autonomy.

Fools Crow covers the period from the late fall of 1867 to the spring of 1870. By then horses had been well integrated into Blackfeet culture. The book begins with a horse raiding party by the Blackfeet on the Crow. On a second raid, Fools Crow, the protagonist of the novel, kills Bull Shield, the Crow chief, and takes his magnificent buffalo runner. A traditional cultural encounter of the belligerent kind occurs in *Fools Crow* when a mountain man turns out to be a wanton killer of game. The Blackfeet appreciate his skills as a hunter. He is a worthy adversary and would have overpowered Fools Crow had he not been counseled by the Raven and inspired by his power animal, the Wolverine.

The most interesting and difficult encounter the Blackfeet had within the bounds of traditional culture was with Christianity. Traditional culture was a spiritual plenum, but it was not a hermetically sealed world. There were recognitions, influences, and transformations. *Fools Crow* recalls with reverence and even longing holy men of Christianity and their spiritual power. In the novel, Pretty-on-Top, a Blackfeet who has become a Catholic Priest, represents the meeting of Blackfeet and Christian spirituality. Pretty-on-Top shows genuine concern for the band of the Lone Eaters in the face of a rising smallpox epidemic. Yet Fools Crow, after puzzling over the character of Pretty-on-top, finally finds him soft and suspect.

The encounter of Native American and Christian

spirituality is of course a large and complex issue. There were misunderstandings, brave efforts, and there remain unresolved problems. The Salish of western Montana desperately and repeatedly sent for the Black Robes, hoping to benefit from their power in the struggle with the Blackfeet. The Missionaries tried to make hunters and gatherers into farmers. Their spiritual authority was compromised, being carried along by the wave of settlers and supported by the brutality of the Army. There were attempts at a reconciliation of spiritualities, notably by the Oglala Sioux Black Elk in the teachings recorded in *The Sacred Pipe*.⁸ But these efforts failed not only because of a loss of nerve on the Christian side, but also because Christians on their part have not come to terms with technology.

The spiritual clash of cultures has been widely discussed, of course. But what has escaped attention is the corrosive power of commodification. While the clash of beliefs and ideas led to unresolved tensions, the introduction of tangible technologies had definitive results. Consider the rifle. Shooting game from a distance with bow and arrow was deeply rooted in the environment and tradition of the Blackfeet. They knew where to find the wood for the bow and the arrows, how to fashion a string from rawhide and how to fashion and fit a point to an arrow. Though the bow and arrow culture continued to live alongside the rifles for a while, an arrow could not rival the distance, accuracy, and power of a bullet. Rifles were wonderful things, especially “the long-coveted repeating rifles.”⁹ Early in *Fools Crow*, Welch describes Medicine Stab’s reaction at the sight of a repeating rifle.

He studied the designs of the brass studs in the stock of the gun. He would have to hunt hard this winter. The many-shots cost ten head-and-tail cow robes.¹⁰

The traditional Blackfeet way of boiling meat or berries for soup was to dig a pit, line it with deer skin, fill it with water, and bring it to a boil with heated rocks. Iron kettles made cooking simpler and faster. Steel knives made butchering more efficient. Blankets provided ready warmth. Undoubtedly also the “destroying juice” (vaccination) would have prevented the untold misery that the “white scabs disease” (smallpox) inflicted on the Blackfeet.

We rightly remember the violent aspects of the collision between the Native Americans and the Europeans, the massacres by the Army, the surging waves of miners and settlers, the ravages of smallpox and whiskey. These were the brutal treads of the machinery of commodification. But as James Welch teaches us, the powerful magic of commodities was just as daunting. Fast Horse, the impetuous young warrior, found traditional life boring, and along with Owl Child and others sought the excitement of sex, whiskey, and violence that the encounters with the white people offered.¹¹ But even within the band of the Lone Eaters, dissent and despair rose at the power of the white culture, and *Fools Crow* began to worry that Sun Chief had turned his favor to the Napikwans, the white people.¹²

Toward the end of the book, the fate of the Blackfeet is revealed to Fools Crow on a deerskin by Feather Woman,

the moon goddess. She tries to console Fools Crow about the impending illness and violence that appear on the hide. What concerns Fools Crow most however, is the destruction of the traditional culture from within. He says to Feather Woman:

I do not fear for my people now. As you say, we will go to a happier place, far from these Napikwans, this disease and starvation. But I grieve for our children and their children, who will not know the life their people once lived. I see them on the yellow skin and they are dressed like the Napikwans, they watch the Napikwans and learn much from them, but they are not happy. They lose their own way.¹³

Let me now bring out the pattern of commodification that is implicit in the example of *Fools Crow*. The Blackfeet are more than an example, of course. They are real people, still struggling to recover their own way. They are working to hand down their language, hold on to their art, reduce alcoholism, educate their young people and provide work for them. They have not come to terms with commodification, but neither have affluent Americans.

Consider again the rifle, the iron pot, the knife, the blanket. When implements appear on the scene that are clearly superior to traditional ones in securing food, providing warmth, and preventing illness, it would not be right for a traditional culture to refuse them nor for a technological culture to withhold them. Yet they appear on the scene as if by magic. Although the Blackfeet became expert at using and maintaining rifles, the construction and production of rifles was beyond their grasp. The rifles simply arrived on the wagons of the traders.

Commodification, of course, is not literally magical. It is always twinned with mechanization, and to obtain the pleasures of commodity you have to pay your dues to the machinery. If Medicine Stab wants a rifle, he has to pay with buffalo robes, and to get the robes, he has to work. It only makes sense. What gets glossed over by common sense is the profound difference between the traditional and the technological way of obtaining a tool to kill from a distance. To get a bow and arrows you had to know where the cedars grow for the wood of the bow and the service berry bushes for the arrows. You had to know when to cut the wood, how long to dry the arrow shafts, how to wrap the bow in rawhide, and much more. You had learned all this from your father, and you would teach your son. When the rifle appears, the acquisition of the shooting tool get detached from its context of engagement with a time, a place, and a community.

So with iron kettles. You no longer had to know where to dig the pit and how, what skins were best for lining, what rocks for heating, where to position the rocks in the fire pit, and much more. You had learned that from your mother, and you would teach your daughter. The iron kettle eliminated these skills and practices. Commodification, then, has not only an economic sense—converting things and practices into items for sale and purchase, but also a cultural sense—detaching things and practices from their contest of engagement with a time, a place, and a community. The traditional engagements are superseded by mechanization, and we earn our right to the consumption

of commodities through our service to the machinery of commodification. The magic of commodities and the pleasures of consumption are so powerful that they discipline most everyone to the tedium or stress of technological labor.

Engagement is burdensome, and in large part commodification is so attractive because of the disburdenment it provides. Presumably there wasn't much lamentation at the disappearance of pits and heated stones when iron kettles became available. Disburdenment is a dynamic process, however. It has a morally urgent beginning in the liberation from hunger and disease, but it has no morally definitive limit or end. The machinery of technology provides a channel for all kinds of commodities, and the glamour of commodities blots out the differences between what's necessary, what's sensible, and what's frivolous. Often a traditional culture is offered a bounty of commodities that imperceptibly ranges across those differences. Yellow Kidney in *Fools Crow* remembers the advent of commodious glamour.

When the wagons came filled with crates, the people gathered around and the Indian agent began to hand out small things. Cut beads, iron kettles, knives, bells, the ice-that-looks-back, carrot and twist tobacco, a few blankets. All the chiefs got Napikwan saddles to go with their medallions. Then the Napikwans gave the people some of their strange food: the white sand that makes things sweet, the white powder, the bitter black drink.¹⁴

If this analysis is correct, then no traditional culture is immune to the corrosive power of commodification. But neither are the citizens of the advanced industrial countries where commodification is nearly total and where it continues by way of intensification and refinement rather than by the extension of its territory. Consider the continuing commodification of food. These days people expect food to be available instantly, ubiquitously, and to their individual predilections. What surfaces in this case is a brave new world where storied time, centered space, and the communal order have been displaced by the instantaneous, ubiquitous, and individual availability of commodities. There is still a need for exertion and coordination, but these activities serve the productive machinery, and most people consider such service an unloved necessity.

In the thoroughly commodified world, reality is both more superficial and more captivating than in traditional culture. The pictures on a plasma screen have reduced the excitement of a game or the allure of sex to the thinnest of surfaces, but the glamour of fine-grained color and smooth movement and the perfections of athletic power and erotic shapes as well as the total control I have over the what, the when, and the where of that excitement make for a uniquely sharpened stimulus that touches my desires with unprecedented acuity.

The two-dimensional world of instantaneity, ubiquity, and individualism is indifferent to divinity. It leaves little depth for sacred times and holy places and for communal celebration. Traditional cultures, Christianity included, have been uncomprehending or uncertain in the face of a cultural force that deracinates and preserves them at the same time. The reactions

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have been many and various, but three types stand out.

The first casts its lot with commodification and offers religion as an edifying commodity or as a uniquely powerful method of using the machinery of commodification to one's advantage. Televangelism and some of the megachurches are examples of this, and though they do less overt harm than representatives of the second type, they are spiritually the most depressing response to commodification.

The second kind of reaction is the angry but selective opposition to commodification. Fundamentalists of different denominations reject some of the trappings and behaviors that come with commodification. At the same time they accept the commodification of much else particularly of utilities and health care. This reaction springs in part from well-motivated misgivings about commodification, but too often these reservations are compromised by violence and oppression. Such inexcusable violations of human rights show how hard it is to preserve a traditional culture when it is confronted with commodification. Without an understanding of commodification, cultural resistance becomes irrational and cruel. Commerce is the best secular antidote. Political liberty follows commodious prosperity more often than the other way round.

Finally there is the troubled uncertainty of the mainline churches. They are rightly confident when they fight the injustices that are a frequent, but not an inevitable, consequence of commodification. When they confront commodification itself, they often censure it as materialism. But that's a poorly aimed charge. A plasma screen is a material object, to be sure, but so, and perhaps more so, is a violin. Most often Christianity, when its message goes beyond the call for justice, is proclaimed as a high-minded spirituality that overlies but fails to engage contemporary culture. Commodification cannot be co-opted, neither can it be defeated, nor can it be avoided. It has to be overcome.

Does anything constructive follow from this diagnosis? Here we Christians come to a well-traveled fork in the road. Conventionally we think of Protestants as urging that God breaks into history whether we are ready or not, and we think of Catholics as arguing that we are able to recognize general conditions of grace. Perhaps these are no longer disjoint positions, and if they still are, the Catholic tradition in which I grew up cannot make its case a priori, but has to prove it effectively. Concretely, then, it's a matter of revealing the occlusions of commodification as I have tried to do and of pointing out the openings for a more engaged and blessed life.

For the initial opening, let me invoke *Fools Crow* once again. Early in the book, Yellow Kidney "remembered how the people were happy because the Napikwans promised them many goods in exchange for their land."¹⁵ Late in the book, Fools Crow foresees that his people will be "dressed like the Napikwans, they watch the Napikwans and learn much from them, but they are not happy."¹⁶ It turns out that advanced commodification has a systematic futility built into it. Its goal is the happiness of intense but unencumbered pleasures. So the commodious pleasures are,

but they fade and disappoint us quickly, only to leave us with a craving for yet more pure and pungent pleasures. Now that the social sciences have joined ethics in disclosing this fundamental flaw, people may be more ready to rethink their implication in commodification.

To extricate ourselves, we have to recognize a crucial structural difference between traditional and contemporary culture. Traditionally, there has been a normative continuity between the center and the context of culture. The central and defining monuments gathered and elevated the world at large. They drew strength from the wider culture and in return embodied norms of excellence for the everyday world. Thus the center pole of the sun dance lodge was cut from a young cottonwood tree and represented the vigor and fertility of life at large. The sacred-vow-woman who presided over the sun dance embodied extraordinary devotion and generosity. Similarly, the Eucharist is the elevation of the breaking of the bread, and the house of God affirms and heightens what every house does—shelter humans and mark their place in the world.

It's remarkable and perhaps unique that the most impressive and distinctive creations of contemporary culture fail to constitute models of moral excellence and instructions for the good life. High-rises and highways are more imposing and computers more artful by far than anything traditional culture has produced. But do they teach us the meaning of life? They are, of course, part of the machinery that serves a distinctive form of life, but it's not the good life. In contemporary culture, then, there has to be a contrast rather than a continuity between the centers of moral excellence and the culture of commodification. A contrast is not a conflict and it can be fruitful rather than invidious. Thus to a first approximation, the commodious context affords and secures a space for celebration, and celebration in turn demystifies and contains the machinery of commodification.

Against the background of instantaneity and the restlessness that goes with it, the reading of stories takes time and opens up the history that lies still below the surfeit of commodities. When Fools Crow laments the future of the Blackfeet, Feather Woman replies:

But they will know the way it was. The stories will be handed down, and they will see that their people were proud and lived in accordance with the Below Ones, the Underwater People—and the Above Ones.¹⁷

The written and the printed word used to be a crucial vehicle of information. Most of that function has been taken over by information technology. But precisely within that context the focused reading of texts generates a restful and spacious resonance. Without the creation of a literary tradition, Blackfeet language is certain to disappear and Blackfeet culture is likely to follow. For Christians it's a matter of recreating the culture of the word that they've been blessed with, and the challenge lies chiefly in the domestic area.

The culture of the word can open dimensions that have been compressed and attenuated in the culture of technology. The world of instantaneity, ubiquity, and individualism has a

vector—increasing the variety and acuity of commodities. But it has nothing to say about the beginning and end of all things. It can contain spirituality and history as elevating or entertaining commodities, but even then, it leaves humans stunted and unhappy. Traditional stories and the history of salvation can reverse the order of containment and provide a framework that contains commodification as an originally helpful and ultimately perilous development.

There are still sacred places today that seem to have resisted the ubiquity of commodity and consumption. But many have become commodities of tourism and are frequented by visitors more than by worshippers. Whether a cathedral is a tourist attraction or the house of God depends on whether the celebration of the Eucharist brings it to life or not. The reconstitution of a sacred center cannot hope to gather and reflect the world at large which for better or worse will remain structured by the machinery of technology. There is no possibility of reviving horse raids or city-wide Corpus Christi procession. The presence of the sacred today is more like a beacon than like the sea.

The postcommodification or postmodern ontology of the sacred has to be primarily actual rather than material. When a half century ago you entered a gothic cathedral, the articulation of the material environment inspired a certain action, quiet reflection or festive celebration as it did long ago when Suger of St. Denis dedicated the first gothic church.¹⁸ Today as you enter, you will find a throng of tourists, some gawking, others consulting a brochure, still others listening to a guide. The cathedral regains its sacredness during high mass as when Buxtehude's music makes pillars rise, arches vault, and the faithful attuned to the Eucharist. The actual sanctifies the material. It's not that simple of course as our continuing problems with liturgy show. We should honor and enact what the tradition has given us, and the traditional attains a new splendor in the context of the technological. But the challenges of incorporating local cultures and contemporary arts remain.

In a technological society, the physical location of people is determined by their occupation when they work and by their class when they don't. They can, and they certainly should, live out their deepest conviction in the privacy of their homes. But privacy deprives convictions of their gravity. They need to be shared. Today a community of ultimate concern cannot often be communal in the traditional sense, a gathering of people who share their place and ancestry. It has to be a congregation of the like-minded, gathered from the diaspora of diversity or indifference. But such a congregation does not matter if it is held together by instant messages on ubiquitous screens. It needs a time that has duration and a place that has depth.

I have sketched the constitution of historical time, actual space, and congregational celebration in reverse perspective as though they became visible mainly through the contrast with commodification. But it is the recollection of grace rather than the forethought of analysis that gives us hope. What forethought should contribute is the reordering of our world so that celebration has a more secure and central place in our lives and spreads from

the great occasions into daily and domestic life.

Let me conclude by returning to the competition between technology and Christianity that I began with. What light does an analysis of commodification shed on it? Liberty, implemented as disburdenment from traditions and communities, has yielded pleasures that can be had anytime, anywhere, and in any shape one desires. The ever-increasing variety and intensity of such commodities exert a powerful hold on most of us. But a restless, groundless, and friendless quality haunts this kind of life. We Christians need to respond with the good news of a life that opens up time, recovers a place, and gathers people, and to that extent we must work with all people of good will. Beyond such cooperation we must bear witness to the time that opens up as the history of salvation, to a place that is the house of God, and to a congregation that is the community of saints.

If we are able to do this in our advanced industrial society, we can break the spell of commodification and let go of the envy and wastefulness it is cursed with. Then we will have the economic means and the moral authority to help traditional cultures find a more graceful way into the culture of technology.

ENDNOTES:

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²James Welch, *Fools Crow* (New York: Penguin, 1986).

³Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁴John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 4.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Crown, 1995); Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁷Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Rinehart, 1944).

⁸Joseph Epes Brown (Ed.) *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, (New York: Penguin, 1971 [1953]).

⁹Welch, p. 59.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 97, 193, 194, 255, 256.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 71, 177, 314, 383, 385.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 359.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 359.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 359-60.

¹⁸Erwin Panofsky (Translator and Editor) Gerda Panofsky-Soergel (Ed.) *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and Its Art Treasures* (second edition) Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979 [1141]