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## Drawing out the Soul With Sheeps' Gut

*There's only one thing that saints and sinners have in common...that's music.*

*"The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul."<sup>1</sup>*

*"When gripping grief the heart doth wound,  
and doleful dumps the mind oppresses,  
then music, with her silver sound,  
with speedy help doth lend redress."<sup>2</sup>*

*"Music - The one incorporeal entrance into the higher world of knowledge which comprehends mankind but which mankind cannot comprehend."<sup>3</sup>*

*"Sound the note or accent which a brave man utters in the hour of danger and stern resolve, or when his cause is failing, and he is going to wounds or death or is overtaken by some other evil, and at every such crisis meets the blows of fortune with firm step and a determination to endure..."<sup>4</sup>*

Georg Philipp Telemann, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Aram Khachaturian, the Beatles, Stephen Curtis Chapman, Anberlin; musical figures through the ages up to modern times. What have they truly contributed to the world? They never wrote any great moral theses, or expounded on any passage of the Bible to further enlighten those who read it. They never built any great bridges, or invented a machine to aid humans in some way. The work that they leave behind; the thing that we remember them for, is simply their music. Is music just sounds that we listen to; melodies, chords, scales, and rhythms mixed together to create something pleasant to fill empty silence and time? No, music has too prominent a place in our culture and in any other to have so shallow and simplistic a definition. What is it music does to us to make it such a requirement to our lives? In his book, *The Republic*, Plato places a great deal of emphasis on the role of music in his ideal society, and explains that this is because of music's ability to "find [its] way into the inward places of the soul"<sup>5</sup>. In order to understand Plato's outlook on music, it will be helpful to first examine Plato's articulation of the effect of music as a means to "insensibly draw the soul"<sup>6</sup>, and then, in order to see if Plato's statement holds true, give many examples of music's uses and effects from Homer, Shakespeare, Bach, Tolstoy, and finally, the Bible, inspired by God himself.

Plato, who lived from 428-348, was a classical Greek philosopher who, along with his teacher Socrates, and his pupil Aristotle, helped lay the philosophical foundations for western culture.<sup>7</sup> In his *Republic*, Plato forms an ideal society in which there will be no poverty, war, displays of immorality, or any of the other scourges that plague most societies. He focuses for quite some time on perfecting a system of education, for if a child is trained up right and well, consistently improving his mind and soul, will he not maintain this goodness into adulthood? He will. In this model system, music takes a very prevalent place amongst the subjects to be taught. In Plato's opinion, "musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful."<sup>8</sup> Here Plato makes a distinction between music that will have an edifying impact, and music that will have a detrimental impact on the soul. He goes on to explain exactly what the difference is between the two, using the example of modes. To avoid too much detailed explanation, suffice it to say that the modes are a set of scales that are not specific to a particular tone, such as F Major. There are seven modes on the

keyboard. The seven-note scale starting on middle C is an Ionian scale. Going up the keyboard one gets a Dorian scale by starting on the D, a Phrygian scale by starting on the E, a Lydian scale by starting on the F, a Mixolydian scale starting on the G, an Aeolian scale starting on the A, and a Locrian scale starting on the B. Plato believed that there were certain modes that should be outlawed, as they would have a negative effect on the youth of the Republic. For example, when the main character of the dialogue, Socrates, asks which harmonies encourage "drunkenness and softness and indolence"<sup>9</sup>, his knowledgeable friend Glaucon replies that "the Ionian... [is] termed 'relaxed'"<sup>10</sup> and should therefore be forbidden. On the other hand, there are modes that will improve the soul, such as the Dorian and Phrygian, which are those to be used as "the strain of necessity and the strain of freedom, the strain of the unfortunate and the strain of the fortunate, the strain of courage, and the strain of temperance"<sup>11</sup>. Plato does not even need to venture into the realm of song lyrics, for the tune behind the words can itself have such an impact on the soul. Once the soul has been drawn out, it is vulnerable and susceptible to good or bad influences. That is why Plato says it is important to give a child only edifying music to listen to, for only then "will our youth dwell...amid fair sights and sounds, and receive the good in everything; and beauty, the effluence of fair works, shall flow into the eye and ear, like a health-giving breeze from a purer region, and insensibly draw the soul from earliest years into likeness and sympathy with the beauty of reason."<sup>12</sup>

Another use of music is to express sorrow. One of the greatest epics of all time is the *Iliad*, written by the blind bard, Homer, and in this epic, the songs of the city of Troy are lifted up to mourn the death of their fearless and loving hero, Hector. "Once they had borne [Hector] into the famous halls, they laid his body down on his large carved bed and set beside him singers to lead off the laments, and their voices rose in grief – they lifted the dirge high as the women wailed in answer. And white-armed Andromache led their songs of sorrow, cradling the head of Hector...gently in her arms...Her voice rang out in tears and the women wailed in answer and Hecuba led them now in a throbbing chant of sorrow...Her voice rang out in tears and an endless wail rose up and Helen, the third in turn, led their songs of sorrow...Her voice rang out in tears and vast throngs wailed."<sup>13</sup> As the song persists and crescendos in its utter grief, the response of the people of Troy also grows. First, "the women wailed in answer". The women of the city saw Hector as the man who strove to bring their husbands home to them at the end of each battle; their own protector and the protector of their children. They would naturally be the first to join their voices to that of the singing mourner. Next "an endless wail rose up". Now others have joined in and the sorrow is too much to bear. The wail has become constant, the desolation is solid and complete. Finally, "the vast throngs wailed". The entire city of Troy cries out in anguish at having lost their shining star, and their only hope. The songs of Hector's wife, his mother, and his sister-in-law serve to heighten and yet give release to the heartache that an entire people feels at the loss of Hector. Music was the instrument that they used to express their sorrow, for nothing conveys emotion more than music. Many times when we hear a song in a major key, we think of it as "happy", and likewise a song in a minor key as "sad". When Plato asks Glaucon which are the harmonies that express "lamentations and strains of sorrow"<sup>14</sup>, Glaucon replies that "The harmonies which you mean are the mixed or tenor Lydian, and the full-toned or bass Lydian, and such like."<sup>15</sup> Once again, the two men are making reference to the modes. A mode is considered minor if the first and third scale degrees form a minor third (three semitones above the root), which would make the Lydian mode a minor mode. Even in 450 B.C.<sup>16</sup>, musicians understood that a minor scale draws the soul out in sadness for mourning, regret, and all grief. How one lowered note can make such a difference in the sensations! There is no logical explanation for why our souls respond with this particular emotion, and yet almost without exception, sorrowful lyrics are put to a minor key. The song-writer for a melancholy subject would never choose to put the bulk of his song in what is considered a "happy" key when he

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Bach

<sup>2</sup> William Shakespeare

<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Van Beethoven

<sup>4</sup> Republic, book 3, column 399

<sup>5</sup> Republic, book 3, column 401

<sup>6</sup> ibid

<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>8</sup> column 401

<sup>9</sup> Republic, book 3, column 398

<sup>10</sup> column 399

<sup>11</sup> column 399

<sup>12</sup> column 401

<sup>13</sup> Iliad, book 25, lines 845-913

<sup>14</sup> Republic, book 3, column 398

<sup>15</sup> column 398

<sup>16</sup> Approximate date of Plato's writings

wants to draw out the emotion of grief from his listeners. And this instinctive response to a sorrowful sound in music makes music the ideal tool for such occasions as the mourning of Hector in the Iliad.

J.S. Bach used music to tell a story: St. Matthew's Passion. Bach took an entire section of scripture, from Matthew 26:1 through 27:66, and put it to music. Using a complete Baroque ensemble of instruments, and a variety of opera voices, he told the story of Jesus last supper, arrest, trial, and His death. Many times during the arias or choruses, Bach would mold the music to fit the words. For example, when the soprano sings of the tears shed for Christ, the music echoes that idea and in the instruments you can hear the falling tears. Or the alto sings of the terrible beating Jesus receives, and you can hear the rhythmic beat and rip of the scourge on His flesh. Thus a worthy use for music is that of telling a story. This is yet another excellent proof of Plato's theory that music, in its drawing out of the soul, can have a great impact on it. In this case, a very holy and spiritual impact. Someone could read the passion story in the Bible, and learn the story from the words on the page. But by listening to Bach's "great Passion", one can almost experience the story in the first-person. Bach uses the music first to draw the soul away from all distractions – cares, troubles, physical pain – until the soul is completely exposed and vulnerable. And then he presents to the soul the Passion; the story of Jesus' love and sacrifice for every human. The soul is so much more willing to accept this incredible truth now that it has been "drawn out" from its usual place of abode, deep underneath many thoughts and feelings that often obscure or tarnish such purity as the Passion.

In his play, *As You Like It*, Shakespeare gives two different settings of life: the court life and the forest life. He expresses the opinion that forest life is more appealing by the songs he includes in the dialogues. Amiens, the entertainer for the duke Senior who lives in the forest of Arden, sings several songs in praise of his life in the forest.

"All Together Here" (*Amiens*)  
Who doth ambition shun  
And loves to live i' th' sun,  
Seeking the food he eats,  
And pleased with what he gets,  
Come hither, come hither, come hither.  
Here shall he see no enemy  
But winter and rough weather.<sup>17</sup>

And again, this time with a note of bitterness, Amiens sings of the advantage of life in the forest of Arden over life in court. For even with all of its natural hardships, the forest offers none of the treachery and false friends that are so frequently encountered in the close circles of court.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude:  
Thy tooth is not so keen,  
Because thou art not seen,  
Although thy breath be rude.  
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly.  
Most friendship is faining, most loving mere folly:  
Then Heigh-ho, the holly.  
This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky  
That dost not bite so nigh  
As benefits forgot:  
Though thou the waters warp,  
Thy sting is not so sharp  
As friend rememb' red not.  
Heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho, unto the green holly.  
Most friendship is faining, most loving mere folly:  
Then, heigh-ho, the holly.  
This life is most jolly.<sup>18</sup>

Amiens could just as well have stated his opinion that to live in the forest with none of the ambitions and enemies of court life is very pleasing to him. Why did Shakespeare include so much music in his plays? Songs are amazingly frequent throughout his great works of the

stage. He understood that music could make his already masterful works even more fascinating. When you talk, you do not use a monotone voice, saying everything in the exact same tone and at the same volume. If you did, no one would ever listen to you because it would be a very boring pastime. So naturally, we give our voice inflections in volume and tone to make what we are saying worth listening to. Singing, and music in general, is just an amplification of that habit of inflection. While the tones in talking usually do not vary to a large degree, the melodies in songs cover a wide range of notes, providing another level of interest to what could have merely been spoken poetry. This is one reason why Shakespeare used music so freely in his plays. He understood the extra level of awareness he would gain from the crowd. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespeare explains further why songs take such an important place in his plays. "Now, divine air! now is his soul ravished! Is it not strange that sheeps' guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?"<sup>19</sup> Sheeps' gut is what they used in that time for instrument string. After being dried, the strings could be stretched across the frame of a guitar, a lyre, or any other stringed instrument, and then tuned to bring forth beautiful music. When Benedick asks how sheeps' guts can "hale souls out of men's bodies", what he is really saying is that music has an inexplicable ability to pull the soul away from everything ordinary and mundane. This is the Shakespeare's reason for including singing rather than mere recitation in his famous dramas; to pull the souls of his audience into a place of divine freedom where they can be easier reached by the opinions and sentiments of the play he has written. This is very much in agreement with Plato's opinion that music will "draw the soul...into likeness and sympathy with the beauty..." and "rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul".

Yet another use for music is that of eliciting emotion. Leo Tolstoy showed this in his novel *War and Peace*, when a character known as "Uncle" plays a simple peasant song that elicits a deep joy in those listening. "Without looking at anyone, Uncle blew the dust off [the guitar] and, tapping the case with his bony fingers, tuned the guitar and settled himself in his armchair. He took the guitar a little above the fingerboard, arching his left elbow with a somewhat theatrical gesture, and, with a wink at Anísya Fedorovna, struck a single chord, pure and sonorous, and then quietly, smoothly, and confidently began playing in very slow time... The tune, played with precision and in exact time, began to thrill in the hearts of Nicholas and Natásha, arousing in them the same kind of sober mirth as radiated from Anísya Fedorovna's whole being... 'Lovely, lovely! Go on, Uncle, go on!' shouted Natásha as soon as he had finished. She jumped up and hugged and kissed him. 'Nicholas, Nicholas!' she said, turning to her brother, as if asking him: 'What is it that moves me so?'"<sup>20</sup> It is the power of music that moves little Natasha so. These simple sounds that cause such vast and indescribable feelings of ecstasy and delight to well up inside her being as to be almost tangible. Straightforward, unpretentious Russian folk-songs such as *Came a Maiden Down the Street*, or a "favorite hunting song" allowed little Natasha and Nicholas to forget for a brief hour the rushing, complicated world of betrothals, family fortunes and war that they were born into. Plato understood that the most beautiful music is that which has a simply harmony and rhythm. "Then beauty of style and harmony and grace and good rhythm depend on simplicity..."<sup>21</sup> Just as Tolstoy believed that an uncomplicated tune can cause unbounded joy in the souls of the listeners, so Plato believed that a truly lovely song "[depends] on simplicity".

Finally, the highest and best use for music, is the worship of our Creator; for the highest and best use of anything is in worshipping God. But why is music so special that we sing in church rather than sit down and make pottery or plant a garden or wear a particular kind of hat? Why is there such a special place for music on our day of rest and worship? The answer should be obvious. God is concerned with men's souls, and as music draws those souls out, what better instrument to use for the communion of our souls with Him? Many people try to say that the tune behind the words is nice, but it is really only the words that matter. However, while the words are certainly important, oftentimes the thing that truly communicates with the soul on a completely spiritual and emotional level is the music behind the words. There are many recorded incidents in the Bible where men would sing what was in their hearts to God. When God led the Israelites through

<sup>19</sup> *Much Ado About Nothing*; act II, scene III, line 33-34

<sup>20</sup> *War and Peace*, book 7, ch. 7, pgs. 452-453

<sup>21</sup> *Republic*, book 3, column 400

<sup>17</sup> *As You Like It*, Act II, scene V, lines 34-40

<sup>18</sup> *As You Like It*, act II, scene VII, lines 174-190

the Red Sea on dry land and then closed the sea over the Egyptians, the Hebrews first response was to break out in song, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!...The Lord is my strength and my song."<sup>22</sup> "Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances."<sup>23</sup> David, when he feared for his life, would write a Psalm, or song, praying for God to save him and give him strength. David was a gifted musician; so gifted in fact, that when he was still a boy, "whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul,...David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him."<sup>24</sup> In this belief of music as a means to connect the soul of a man to his Creator, Plato is in complete agreement with the Bible. Plato says that a man should use music when "he is seeking to persuade God by prayer...or on the other hand, when he is expressing his willingness to yield to persuasion or entreaty or admonition."<sup>25</sup> Once again Plato has shown his wisdom in his treatment of music.

In conclusion, after taking Plato's theory that music "draws the soul" and comparing it to so many different examples of how music is used, it can be clearly seen that the soul is indeed very gullible to the influence of music, and can be pulled to this abstract place of openness where it can be improved or injured. Music has been shown to have so many different uses. In education, in the expression of emotions such as sorrow and joy, as well as in the expression of opinions and sentiments, in the telling of scripture, and in the worship of God. And with all of these uses, there is one reason that it is so effective. Music reaches the soul in a way that few or no other form of communication does. To be told that you are loved creates wonderful feelings in the heart, but to have a love song written for you, that intensifies the significance a thousand times. In mourning the loss of a friend, when the grief has been building and building to an agony, release is found in hearing a melody of heartrending sadness that reassures you that you are not alone in this realm of sorrow. Music fulfills some of the most basic needs in our nature by drawing out our souls with sheep's gut.

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Uhland

### Of Knights and Heroes

Two fathers were asked to end their child's life. One man was motivated by a promise from one of his gods that he would receive something in return for the murder of his daughter. The other man was driven solely by faith, obeying an order from his God that seemed to contradict the earlier promise of an heir by asking him to sacrifice his only son. The first man chose to sacrifice his daughter; the second chose to sacrifice his son. However, these two situations ended very differently from each other. The fathers, Agamemnon and Abraham, had different motivations and different states of mind, leaving each with a unique legacy and reputation. One man is remembered as a tragic hero while the other is immortalized as the "father of faith." Why the difference? Though both men obeyed their god, one man became a murderer and the other, a hero. Was Agamemnon wrong in his response to his god? Would Abraham have been mistaken to sacrifice Isaac if God had not interfered? Is it ethical in any situation to end the life of your child? All of these inquiries lead us to more questions regarding human motives, faith in God, and universal ethics.

In Genesis 22, God tested Abraham saying, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."<sup>26</sup> One can only imagine the sorrow, pain, and confusion this

must have caused Abraham. For years he had held on to God's promise that he would be the father of a great nation, and finally, in his old age, he had fathered a son. Now God had asked him to sacrifice this treasured son. Soren Kierkegaard writes of Abraham's situation and the various ways he could have responded to God in the work *Fear and Trembling*.

Kierkegaard states that as Abraham prepared to kill Isaac he could have worried about what Isaac would think of him, and more importantly, of God. He relates a hypothetical scenario in which Abraham throws Isaac to the ground and yells that he is to be killed, assuring him that this is not God's command but that "it is my desire."<sup>27</sup> Kierkegaard then writes that Abraham softly prays, "Lord in heaven, I thank you; it is better that he believes me a monster than that he should lose faith in you." If Abraham had actually acted in this manner, would he have been mistaken? Would this concern for Isaac's perception of God have somehow altered the message of faith the biblical story has? Three other situations are given in *Fear and Trembling*, each one assigning a different state of mind to Abraham and even one to Isaac. Abraham is depicted as depressed after the near murder of his son as well as deeply repentant for even having considered such a horrible act. Finally, Kierkegaard tells us a version in which Isaac finds himself devoid of all faith after the incident on the mountain. These outcomes are all very plausible considering the circumstances. They are even valiant, as in each one Abraham has all intentions of sacrificing Isaac until God interferes. However, Abraham did not respond to God in these ways or behave according to his flesh after such a moment of faith. He feared God and did all that he was asked with a right heart. Romans 4:3a says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Abraham believed that he would be the father to a great nation as God had promised him and so he was prepared to take Isaac's life despite the fact that he was his only child. We need to know, however, that he did what he did with a trusting, obedient heart, having no selfish motives.

Agamemnon's story is drastically different from that of Abraham. In the *Odyssey*, we find out that Agamemnon returned home from the war in Troy only to be murdered by his wife.<sup>28</sup> His wife's hatred for him stemmed from his murder of their daughter before he left for Troy. Agamemnon was given the promise of good winds by the gods in exchange for his daughter Iphigenia's life. He did the unthinkable and killed his daughter to obtain favorable sailing conditions. This tragedy differs from the story of Abraham and Isaac in a few fundamental ways. In Agamemnon's case, he traded his child's life for a worldly benefit whereas Abraham was prepared to sacrifice Isaac simply because it was the will of God.

In today's world, opinions on which action would be the most justifiable would vary greatly. Murder is never seen as a positive thing, but many people will acknowledge that there are times when one man must end another's life. Usually this refers to war or the death penalty. In each of these situations, the person taking the other's life is receiving something in return. For soldiers it is a salary and the hope of peace and safety for their country. When the courts order a criminal killed, they are seeking to provide peace, order, and safety to society. Thus, in each case a benefit is derived from the killing. Agamemnon had much to gain from his daughter's death and much to lose if she lived. The favorable winds would guarantee a speedy and safe journey to Troy, enabling him to defend his brother's honor and aid his troops. This would save many lives, possibly making his daughter's murder an ethical choice to save more people. One could view Agamemnon as making a personal sacrifice for the greater good. "He must nobly conceal his agony, even though he could wish he were 'the lowly man who dares to weep' and not the king who must behave in a kingly manner,"<sup>29</sup> states Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard is referring to the manner in which Agamemnon had to handle the murder of his daughter. He must have longed to mourn over the loss of his daughter like any ordinary man. However, because of his rank and the duty that had compelled her murder, he had to remain strong and stoic in the face of this tragic circumstance. His subjects and soldiers needed him to be confident and positive about the future and the war and not agonizing over his own decisions. Agamemnon was willing to end his daughter's

<sup>22</sup> Exodus 15:1-2 (NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> Exodus 15:20 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> 1 Samuel 16:23 (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup> Republic, Book 3, column 399

<sup>26</sup> Genesis 22:2

<sup>27</sup> *Fear and Trembling*; Exordium, part I

<sup>28</sup> *The Odyssey*; Book III, Line 208

<sup>29</sup> *Fear and Trembling*; Problema I, Sec. 107

life for the benefits promised and it was his choice to sacrifice her for the good of his people.

Abraham, however, was offering up an innocent life in blind obedience to God, with no evident benefit or reason for doing so. It seems that if one must justify one action or the other, it is more logical to justify Agamemnon's personal sacrifice than Abraham's perhaps foolish compliance. Agamemnon had to make a conscious, rational decision. Abraham merely did as he was told and was not even required to go through with the sacrifice. It is this point that is vital to take into consideration when comparing the two situations. Agamemnon actually killed his child whereas Abraham did not. But what if Abraham had killed Isaac? We will examine this question later. There are many other vital details and differences between these two that are very helpful in deciphering who was, in fact, justified in their intents.

Abraham is referred to by Kierkegaard as a "knight of faith" while he refers to men like Agamemnon as "tragic heroes." The difference lies, not in the fact that one actually murdered their child, but in the state of mind each man had. Agamemnon bravely sacrificed his daughter with no hope of mercy from the gods. The situation was black and white for him. He knew what the gods had demanded and he chose to obey. Agamemnon must have had what Kierkegaard called "an immense resignation"<sup>30</sup> when he traded his daughter's life for good winds. This "immense resignation" mentioned by Kierkegaard is essentially Agamemnon's driving determination to fulfill the responsibilities and duties that he possessed as king despite any personal losses. Thus, Agamemnon was a tragic hero due to his dutiful acceptance of the terrible situation at hand. In describing a man like Agamemnon who had been put into Abraham's situation in *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard states that "[he] would not have been cowardly enough to stay at home, nor would [he] have dragged and drifted along the road in order to cause a delay.... But I also know what else [he] would have done. The moment [he] mounted the horse, [he] would have said to himself: Now all is lost, God demands Isaac, I sacrifice him, and along with him all my joy...."<sup>31</sup> Here we see this hopeless determination that Agamemnon possesses, put into a situation parallel to that of Abraham.

Abraham lacked this "immense resignation" possessed by Agamemnon and in its place possessed pure, amazing faith. Unlike an "immense resignation," faith does not require an explanation or reason to be acted upon. It is indeed the lack of any apparent or concrete motivation that makes acts of faith so remarkable. Even in the terrible circumstances that Abraham found himself in "he had faith that God would not demand Isaac from him, and yet he was willing to sacrifice him if it was demanded."<sup>32</sup> These conflicting emotions of believing in the impossible while braving the unthinkable are difficult to comprehend. One can understand why Abraham has been called the "father of faith," and it is incredible how he handled this pitiable position. "He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for human calculation was out of the question, and it certainly was absurd that God, who required it of him, should in the next moment rescind the requirement."<sup>33</sup> Despite this, Abraham believed in God's promise to him and continued to hope. For this reason, he is not the same "tragic hero" that Agamemnon turns out to be. His hope and faith in God's promise lifted him from the realm of the tragic. Even if Isaac had died that day on Mount Moriah, his father would remain a "knight of faith" according to Kierkegaard. For he never abandoned hope of being the father of a great nation, and God would have made a way to fulfill His promise – this Abraham was sure of.

Each detail in the story of Abraham is important in the making of Abraham into a "knight of faith." Kierkegaard writes that if Abraham had seen the ram before drawing the knife, everything would have been the same concretely but Abraham would not be the hero he is. "...he would have gone home, everything would have been the same, he would have had Sarah, he would have kept Isaac, and yet how changed! For his return would have been a flight, his deliverance an accident, his reward disgrace, his future perhaps perdition. Then he would have witnessed neither to his faith nor to God's grace but would have

witnessed to how appalling it is to go to Mount Moriah."<sup>34</sup> It is important to understand that Abraham actually came within seconds of sacrificing Isaac. If he had seen the ram before actually putting the sacrifice in motion how are we to be sure of his intention to act on faith? Kierkegaard suggests that Abraham could have gone so far as to tie Isaac up before being resolved to his sacrifice. If he was then saved from backing out of the act by a ram sent from God, all of his actions would be shameful. For they would have been done with no intentions of obeying God's command, but done out of show, expecting that either God would interfere or that he would ultimately not go through with the sacrifice. However, this is not the case. Abraham's knife was raised and he would have killed his son if the Lord had not interfered. The words of the angel of the Lord recorded in Genesis clearly indicate the motive of Abraham's heart as well as his unwavering resolve to obey God's command. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."<sup>35</sup> He had completely surrendered Isaac's life and his own future to the will of God and was serious about completing the task at hand.

When comparing him with Agamemnon, I believe this is vital information. For many believe the greatest difference between the two fathers to be the reality that one went through with his child's murder, while the other was mercifully spared that horrific act. This is simply not the case. Concerning the determination of each man the situations were the same but the ways in which they were handled differed greatly, as has been shown.

If the outcome of the two sacrifices is not the greatest division between these two men, how significant is that outcome? What does the fact that Agamemnon went through with his sacrifice while Abraham ultimately did not, show us in our comparison of these two men? In Aeschylus's trilogy *The Oresteia*, we are told of what happened to Agamemnon upon returning from Troy in more detail than provided by Homer. In the book titled *Agamemnon*, we are told of the way in which Agamemnon is murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, as soon as he arrives home. His murder is violent and brutal but his wife is motivated by a tremendous hatred for him that controls her whole being. When asked what drives her insane behavior she alludes to Agamemnon's murder of their daughter, Iphigenia, and demands why they feel they can pass judgment on her. "But he – name one charge you brought against him then," she cried. "He thought no more of it than killing a beast, and his flocks were rich, teeming in their fleece, but he sacrificed his own child, our daughter, the agony I labored into love to charm away the savage winds of Thrace."<sup>36</sup> Clearly the benefit that Agamemnon saw in his daughter's death was not understood by Clytemnestra.

What of Abraham – if he had actually gone through with the sacrifice of Isaac would Sarah have understood, or would she be thrown into a rage mirroring that of Clytemnestra? Would God's will be unjust? Certainly His promise would be fulfilled one way or another but that does not justify Abraham's actions. Just as Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter was viewed as morally and ethically wrong by his wife and many others, countless people would have found Abraham guilty of murder and in the wrong regarding Isaac's life. "The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he meant to sacrifice Isaac."<sup>37</sup> We live in a world of ethics and Abraham would be unable to escape these if he had taken Isaac's life. Or is such an escape possible? A freedom for Abraham from our basic human ethics is proposed by Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling*.

Problema I is begun with the question, "Is there a teleological suspension of the ethical?"<sup>38</sup> By "teleological suspension of the ethical" Kierkegaard simply refers to a deferment of basic human moral standards. Because God had asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, should the ethically wrong act of murder be overlooked? Does Abraham

<sup>34</sup> *Fear and Trembling; Eulogy on Abraham, Sec. 74*

<sup>35</sup> *Genesis 22:12*

<sup>36</sup> *The Oresteia; Agamemnon, Line 1437*

<sup>37</sup> *Fear and Trembling; Preliminary Expectoration, Sec. 96*

<sup>38</sup> *Fear and Trembling; Problema I, Sec. 104*

<sup>30</sup> *Fear and Trembling; Preliminary Expectoration, Sec. 86*

<sup>31</sup> *Fear and Trembling; Preliminary Expectoration, Sec. 86*

<sup>32</sup> *Fear and Trembling; Preliminary Expectoration, Sec. 86*

<sup>33</sup> *Fear and Trembling; Preliminary Expectoration, Sec. 87*

somehow avoid normal ethical boundaries due to his extraordinary circumstances? Kierkegaard believes that he does.

Agamemnon, the tragic hero, clearly remains within usual moral boundaries even though one can view his actions as having merit. “The difference between the tragic hero and Abraham is very obvious.” Kierkegaard tells us, “The tragic hero is still within the ethical.”<sup>39</sup> However, Kierkegaard believes that Abraham’s situation is altogether different. He claims that Abraham transgressed the ethical and found himself outside of it. Kierkegaard claims this with confidence in *Fear and Trembling*. “For I certainly would like to know how Abraham’s act can be related to the universal, whether the point of contact between what Abraham did and the universal can be found other than that Abraham transgressed it.”<sup>40</sup> Here Kierkegaard states that the only way to look at Abraham’s situation regarding universal ethics is to understand that they are totally unconnected. The only viewpoint that can be taken regarding Abraham is one devoid of all natural morals. If this transgression is indeed valid, then Abraham accomplished something in addition to his great faith that has not been paralleled; he accomplished a separation from human morality.

However, does he deserve to be praised as a man who transgressed the realm of the ethical? How did this man suspend one of the fundamental laws that binds together the human essence? On this point, my opinion differs from that of Kierkegaard. I believe his fundamental error lies in this statement, “Abraham’s act is totally unrelated to the universal...[He] is great because of a purely personal virtue.”<sup>41</sup> How could a mortal, flawed man come to possess a purely personal virtue? This seems to be a contradictory concept when considering that all good things come from the Lord. The idea of a completely personal virtue is impossible, as is the notion that Abraham’s act is completely unrelated to the universal. Because Abraham remains a fallen, though forgiven, human being throughout this experience there is an unbreakable tie to the universal that keeps him from entering a totally divine realm. Abraham lives within ethical boundaries that control him. In saying this, however, I am not denying that the situation transcends the ethical. I believe that it does transcend the ethical, but due to the involvement of a completely perfect God and not, as Kierkegaard believes, because of Abraham’s virtue. The ethical boundaries that control Abraham were created and are controlled by God, making His relation to them vitally different.

Because it is God that demands the life of Isaac from Abraham, the act becomes devoid of all impurities. God will never cause a man to sin and therefore, I believe that Abraham could indeed have killed Isaac and been completely innocent of bloodshed. Life belongs to God, and it is His to give and to take away. Because Isaac’s life was asked for by God, the giving of it to Him would not be immoral on Abraham’s part. If Abraham had actually sacrificed Isaac and been held accountable for his blood, then Abraham would have been tempted and directed to sin by God which the Bible tells us is impossible. However, if Abraham would have remained innocent after the murder of Isaac, which I believe to be the case, then universal ethics must have been suspended.

In reversing universal ethical standards regarding murder, it is clear that this situation is remarkable and unique. Contrary to Kierkegaard’s beliefs, I find this outcome to be due to God’s involvement and purity. It was His holy actions that made the sacrifice of Isaac righteous and not Abraham’s own faith in obeying God’s order. Does this “knight of faith” experience a teleological suspension of the ethical? I believe he does, though he is not the cause of the suspension. Would such a suspension have been possible for Agamemnon? Because of the nature of his gods, this notion is unfathomable. As is seen throughout the story of Agamemnon, his deities are flawed and possess human-like natures. These natures bind them to the universal, just as Abraham’s nature did, and make the transcending of natural ethics an impossibility. The gods find themselves in the same place as Abraham, restricted by their imperfections to moral boundaries.

When a being must operate within ethical dimensions, he is controlled by them. But when a Being creates and controls those dimensions, His

involvement in ethical matters causes a suspension of our own finite, human laws. Life without that Being can have only one dimension; one can only expect the possible, and man’s greatest struggles and challenges come from within his own imperfect body. Kierkegaard wrote, “One became great by expecting the possible, another by expecting the eternal; but he who expected the impossible became the greatest of all.” We are reminded here that faith like that of Abraham is what makes a man truly great. Kierkegaard continues writing, “Everyone shall be remembered, but everyone was great wholly in proportion to the magnitude of that with which he struggled. For he who struggled with the world became great by conquering the world, and he who struggled with himself became great by conquering himself, but he who struggled with God became the greatest of all.”<sup>42</sup> We have seen that Agamemnon’s struggle was within himself. He was trapped within an ethical dimension that he could not escape, and the sacrifice of his daughter made him a tragic hero, noble but unjustified in his actions. His situation was hopelessly bound to universal morals because of his finite divinities who could not step outside of the ethical, just as Abraham could not escape the ethical. Abraham, on the other hand, had faith in the impossible and struggled with God. The same God who was able to transcend all human understanding and go beyond what we find to be ethical. Our God is the definition of the ethical and can therefore set it aside and redefine it as He did in Abraham’s case. This truly amazing suspension of the ethical required overwhelming faith on Abraham’s part. Abraham’s struggle with and surrender to the Lord resulted in a faith that continues to astound us and causes us to remember him as a “knight of faith.”

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GBT5, Paper 2 draft  
April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008

*The LORD looks down from heaven on  
the children of man,  
to see if there are any who understand,  
who seek after God.*<sup>43</sup>

## Introduction

What can man know about God? What can we, as finite individuals, discern about the infinite? These questions have been asked in every society and every age. Man exhibits a religious impulse. At the very least, he must have some idea of divinity fixed in his mind. In this, even atheists can be categorized with the rest of humanity, since they define themselves as rejecting the concept of God. But because the search is common to all, myriads of different ideas have sprung up. This presents a problem. On the one hand, we have diverse concepts of what we can know about God. On the other hand, only one concept can be true. But this issue is multifaceted, and can be approached from many different angles. As we see in the Bible, how we stand before God greatly influences what we can know about Him. And God is present to all areas of our humanity, from faith through to experience and reason.

This paper will consider some of the more notable ideas about God put forward in history. To begin with, the ancient Greek pagans provide the classic example of idolatry; their polytheistic system represents not so much of a pursuit for certain knowledge about God as it shows that they fashioned the divine in their own image. Next we consider Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 A.D.). Living in a medieval Christian culture, he sought to bolster faith with reason. His method was to work out truths about God as if they were propositions, in an attempt to give certainty to those truths. Even though he demonstrated the reasonableness of God’s nature, he could not encapsulate God by reason. Finally, David Hume (1711-1776), a skeptical philosopher, rejected all orthodox Christian doctrine. He suspended judgment on much that can be seen and everything that cannot be seen. He believed that nothing at all could be known about God.

Over all of these ideas stands the Bible. What we as Christians know about God primarily comes from it, for it is God’s word. Furthermore, the Bible points to the most profound revelation

<sup>39</sup> Fear and Trembling; Problema 1, Sec. 109

<sup>40</sup> Fear and Trembling; Problema 1, Sec. 109

<sup>41</sup> Fear and Trembling; Problema I, Sec. 109

<sup>42</sup> Fear and Trembling; Eulogy on Abraham, Sec. 69

<sup>43</sup> Psalm 14:2

of all – Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection – and this is how we can ultimately come to know God. Each idea evaluated in this paper will be considered with this in mind. It is interesting to note how the Bible directly interacts with some of these philosophies. For example, in both the Old and New Testaments, God speaks out against just such idolatry as the Greeks practiced. Paul the Apostle debates with the Greek philosophers in Acts 17. The Bible is relevant to every idea, no matter how old or new.

### In the image of man

*And the rest of [the wood] he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god! ...He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"*  
Isaiah 44:17, 20

What was the ancient Greeks’ concept of what we can know about God? In general, the gods cannot be seen by mortal eyes unless they choose to – i.e. by revelation. In the course of Homer’s *Iliad*, Zeus watches over the battling legions of Greeks and Trojans, turning the tide of conflict as his whim dictates. Yet he remains unseen by any mortal, although other gods in the story do in fact disclose themselves. But nevertheless, he shows his will to men by signs and prophecies. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, thunder peals, declared to be “immense, a marvel, flung by the very hand of God!”<sup>44</sup> It is the sound of Zeus summoning Oedipus to death. Throughout Greek literature there are also seers and oracles, proclaiming the dooms of a god to the doomed. Here, a mediator characterizes the relationship between the divine and human; the god communicates *through* a servant. So: although Greek legend is riddled with inconsistencies and exceptions to the rule, it said that humans could only know as much about the gods as those gods choose to reveal.

In the *Iliad*, the gods are at once fickle and serious, rash and wise, weak and powerful. They possess immortality, yet in Book 5, Diomedes the mortal warrior is able to dismay them in combat. The passion of hate rules their actions more than calm deliberation as they take sides in the bitter war: “...So [Zeus] mocked as Athena and Queen Hera muttered between themselves...”<sup>45</sup> Their pettiness can attain to comedy, and it is indeed hard to imagine how the Greeks could have revered this material as they did. We find a more serious tone in the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus. The gods are more true to their supposed natures; Athena acts with characteristic wisdom and the Furies mete out vengeance, as is their wont. Moreover, they play a more clear-cut role as arbiters in the affairs of men. But still they quarrel. Apollo’s urgings to Orestes to avenge his father by killing his mother result in a full-scale clash of wills between two divinities, Athena and the Furies. Aeschylus’s world of immortals is by no means perfect, *because* Aeschylus himself is not perfect. Men created the Greek pantheon of gods; they could not help but leave the indelible marks of their nature upon it. The gods, however much they embody a higher ideal, are still essentially human. There is the irony; the Greek attempt to find the divine from their own imagination left them staring at themselves.

Analyzing the character of these gods serves our theme because it shows what happens when man’s ideas about God start with himself. They were, as Paul said when speaking to the Greeks, created to seek God, “in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him.”<sup>46</sup> And to an extent, the Greeks did feel their way towards God. But they did so by making God into an image, into a fickle being of their own creation. But this was precisely what they should not have done. Paul went on to say, “Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is...an image formed by the art and imagination of man.”<sup>47</sup> They sought God in the things formed by their own imagination, but they found only themselves. The literature we previously looked at showed this in displaying the human character of the gods.

As a concession to the Greeks, some of their beliefs resembled Christian truth, if only in form and not in content. For example, we have seen how one person could function as a mediator

between a god and the rest of mankind, but that does not come close to the profundity of Christ’s role for us. And they certainly believed that they could only know the divine through revelation. But this similarity to Christian revelatory doctrine is obliterated when we consider *what* was revealed. The Greeks needed no enlightenment to know about the gods, for they were the gods’ authors. The only illumination they could obtain was self-knowledge. In Christ, however, God himself is revealed. The Greeks did not know or honor God rightly, much less have a relationship with him. Without the specific revelation of Jesus Christ to show them the way, they were left in the darkness of sin. He was crucified so that we might be freed from our sinful selves to know him as a Lord, a Savior, and a friend.

### Anselm and the human mind

*"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD..."*  
Isaiah 1:18

Skip forward to the twelfth century, and we come to Anselm. He was definitely a follower of Christ, and would agree with much of what has been said about the Greeks. Since he is essentially Christian, we are not so much interested in *what* he believes, but rather *how* he believes it can be known. We begin by looking at his *Proslogium*, where he attempts to reinforce faith by proving God’s existence. His argument runs thus: It is possible to conceive of a being than which nothing greater can be conceived – i.e. a preeminent being. Even if we do not assume that it exists outside ourselves, it can exist in our understanding. Anyone hearing the phrase – “that than which nothing greater can be conceived” – at least has this concept in thought. Furthermore, existence in reality is greater than existence in the mind; a factual God is necessarily greater than an imagined one. But if that than which nothing greater can be conceived is only a concept, then something else greater can be conceived. But that is absurd. Therefore this being must exist in reality. Anselm’s proposition is clever, because it relies solely on reason working in the human mind. While his conclusion is indisputable – God exists – his method is not. Does a concept of something affect reality? If we think of a preeminent being, does that thought necessitate its existence? No. Anselm sits at the feet of Reason, but he is working backwards. Granted, he qualifies at the beginning of the book that he believes first in order to understand,<sup>48</sup> but the foundation of his argument rests on cognition. In other words, he starts with man and ends with God. Man can know for certain that God exists; however, if an act of the mind is our guarantee, then a different act of the mind can conceivably destroy that guarantee. Starting with man can end with man as well as with God. But what, then, is our guarantee for God’s existence? The things that God has created – what Thomas Aquinas called his “effects” – have borne witness to God’s existence and divine nature from time immemorial.

Another treatise by Anselm, the *Monologium*, brings a further aspect of this discussion into focus. Expressly avoiding Scripture, he talks about the nature of God. This directly relates to a question posed at the beginning of this essay – namely, what can a finite individual discern about the infinite? Starting with man’s knowledge of good, and through an exercise of “common sense”, Anselm establishes various attributes of God, including the Trinity, God’s benevolence and justice, and how God responds to man’s belief. Although Anselm had already been taught these doctrines, he expressly writes as if he discovered them through an “independent investigation”<sup>49</sup>. So we take him at his word, focusing on the relationship between God and his Son. Can man actually discern this by his own efforts? Anselm thinks so, although the pagan philosophers did not come close to such a conclusion. But Anselm himself cannot sustain this argument. After considering the “supreme Spirit’s” relation to what is created, Anselm talks about the “expression” of God through which He creates, the Word by which he speaks creation into being. This expression must exist as coeternal with God, because “expressing anything is the same with understanding it.”<sup>50</sup> and if God did not understand anything, he would not be God. This word is one with God, yet it stands in direct association to Him as one of begotten to begetter, Son to Father. Why this should be so is a “mystery”, and it cannot be explained, although it must be believed. So at this point Anselm has abandoned his effort to establish his theology by reason. Now, as was said earlier, he started out by claiming that this would be

<sup>44</sup> *Oedipus at Colonus*, Ln. 1662

<sup>45</sup> *Iliad*, Bk. 8, Ln. 528

<sup>46</sup> Acts 17:27

<sup>47</sup> Acts 17:29

<sup>48</sup> *Proslogium*, Ch. 1

<sup>49</sup> *Monologium*, Preface

<sup>50</sup> *Monologium*, Ch. 32

an independent investigation, the conclusion being one that any logical mind could arrive at. However, Anselm introduces so many preconceptions from philosophical and Scriptural tradition that these statements about the divine Father and Son are simply not deductions. He has not proven that man can reach this destination by his own efforts. In fact, the Bible says that spiritual truths *cannot* be discerned by human endeavor, and hence any purely rational progression.

Now we have received...the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit...The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned...‘For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.<sup>51</sup>

This passage affirms that we do indeed understand the things of God, but how? It is decidedly not by “human wisdom”. It is by a divine gift: the Spirit of God, the mind of Christ. Anselm is intent on circumventing the necessity of revelation, and so he ignores even Scripture, but why should we not listen to the God who speaks? It is the Holy Word breathed by God that points us to Christ, and it is only through Christ that we can even become spiritual to understand these things.

For knowing Christ is absolutely necessary for comprehending the nature of God. 1 John 5:20 says, “The Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true”. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Without his incarnation, we could not have known God as a Trinity. It is the Cross that ultimately shows us God’s justice and righteousness, and it is by the Cross that our sins are taken away, cleansing us for fellowship with God. Further, knowing him in a relational way is intrinsic to the whole process, as Jesus said: “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”<sup>52</sup> Without knowing Christ as our Savior, we have no hope of understanding God, communing with him, and receiving his Spirit.

One of Anselm’s contemporaries, Thomas Aquinas, helped to clarify matters when he responded to this issue of human understanding. He speaks of faith without specifically referring to Christ, but faith is, as it were, man’s part of the picture. The substance of his idea is this: every type of knowledge about God requires faith, even though some kinds may be grasped by reason. By reasoning from his effects, we can know God’s eternal power and divine nature, clearly seen ever since the creation of the world in the things that he has made.<sup>53</sup> The existence of God is plain. However, there is another type of knowledge that reason cannot encapsulate. It is that which brings us to eternal life: the “mystery of the incarnation of Christ”, and the doctrines surrounding it. In the first type, man can see and believe; in the second, he can only believe, and Aquinas refers to this second type when he says, “The unfolding of matters of faith is the result of Divine revelation, for matters of faith surpass natural reason.”<sup>54</sup>

Anselm has not proved that we can arrive at spiritual doctrine unaided, but he has shown that Christian dogma is *reasonable*. We see from him that the tenets of Christianity are not illogical. Even though God need not conform himself to reason, reason conforms itself to Him. Believing in God, we most truly understand.

## Suspended judgment

*So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools...*<sup>55</sup>

Our last philosophy to be considered is peculiar because it has little positive to say on our subject. In fact, withholding judgment is its essence. We are, of course, looking at the empirical skepticism of

David Hume. The work that we will examine does not even concern itself with God very much. But that its point – God is left out of the picture. It is occupied with some of the great questions of life, but it is not a theological tome; Hume named it *A Treatise of Human Nature*. What Hume does say provides a fascinating contrast to what we have previously studied, insofar as he rejects assumptions about God and seeks to cast off the heritage of Christian belief. His work also offers an opportunity for the Bible to respond.

To reach Hume’s understanding of God, we must go back to his starting point in the *Treatise*. To begin, he talks about how the human mind perceives. This opening subject is the foundation for his work; perception holds a key to his search for truth. Later on, Hume asks a fundamental question about cause and effect. What makes something cause an effect? What attribute enables a thing to directly produce something else? When we open our hand and let a ball drop, what makes us so sure that the ball will drop? The answer may seem obvious to us, but Hume is not so sure. Many things that are only closely connected have no such necessary relationship. A rooster may crow at dawn, but the rooster does not produce the dawn. So being immediately associated with something does not prove that there is a causal relationship. Hume looks high and low for some mysterious quality of causality, but he cannot find one. He decides that there is nothing, rationally speaking, that dictates why one thing must cause another.

This has monumental implications. When we touch something, we can no longer say that it is there because we feel it. When we look at the trees, there is no way of telling that they actually exist just because we see them. Our world ceases to possess rational certainty. All that we are left with is the fact that we perceive. Then, if man cannot even know the world around him, much less can he know anything about God. Arguments for God’s existence contain no certainty whatsoever. Even though we can see the starry heavens, we cannot infer that God is their maker. We are trapped inside our perceptions; there is nothing beyond them. Hume is similar to the pagan Greeks in that his knowledge of the world begins with himself, just as their knowledge of God began with themselves. This is in direct opposition to the Bible, where all knowledge begins with God’s revelation. The senses are all that is left to man, and they form the basis and the limit for his understanding. The consequences of this are also similar to the Greek dilemma: Hume’s skepticism starts with man and leaves him staring at himself.

It seems that Hume would turn us into an agnostic. But he is not entirely skeptical. He says:

“Thus the skeptic still continues to reason and believe, even though he asserts that he cannot defend his reason by reason; and by the same rule he must assent to the principle concerning the existence of body, though he cannot pretend, by any arguments of philosophy, to maintain its veracity. Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless esteemed it an affair of too great importance, to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations.”<sup>56</sup>

Hume has drawn back from the abyss. Despite the fact that he attacks the law of causality, he still continues to infer and reason, and he recognizes this. But he does not go much further, grudging certainty only to the visible world, and not to its Maker. So Hume’s philosophy says, “I withhold judgment on the divine because I do not see God and because he is beyond my reason to discover.”

What is the Scriptural response to this? Even if we were to concede that God is beyond our darkened reason, we are not beyond God’s grace. This is why Christ’s work is so important. Paul the Apostle in Colossians says that Christ “reconciles to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”<sup>57</sup> Hume alienates himself by his unbelief and speculation, but in Jesus’ sacrifice, there is reconciliation. Paul goes on to say, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”<sup>58</sup> We must be taken captive by Christ. His cross redeems us from sin, sanctifies us for the presence of God, and enlightens us about God’s nature. Knowing him as a savior is a prerequisite to even comprehending the divine character. And since

<sup>51</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:12-16

<sup>52</sup> John 17:3

<sup>53</sup> Romans 1:20

<sup>54</sup> *Summa Theologica*, Part II of Second Part, Q. 2, A. 6

<sup>55</sup> Romans 1:20-22

<sup>56</sup> *Treatise of Human Nature*, Vol. 1, Bk. 1, Part IV, Sec. II

<sup>57</sup> Colossians 1:20

<sup>58</sup> Colossians 2:8

our very existence is through Jesus Christ,<sup>59</sup> a view of human understanding is incomplete without acknowledging Him as the author of it all. Scripture is clear: without Christ, philosophy is vain and deceptive. Furthermore, by the witness of the prophets and apostles, the testimony of believers, and the work of the Spirit in man's heart, there is certainty in the Gospel. Despite man's foolish unbelief, God's ability to speak to him is greater than his inability to hear.

## Conclusion

*For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords” – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.<sup>60</sup>*

In summary, how did those whom we considered understand God? Each of our subjects was so disparate in thought that they each had to be approached from a different perspective. The Greeks had a fairly orthodox view of divine knowledge, believing that it was attained by the condescension of the gods. But in reality it was by their own hand that the gods existed, and those gods were but a mirror to their human nature. True knowledge of God begins with Christ, but the Greeks did not have that revelation. In Anselm we find someone who believes that God's nature can be known, but by what? Even though Anselm believed in divine revelation, he sought to prove that God could also be known by speculative reason. Yet although God's nature is not contrary to reason, reason itself proves inadequate. Through believing and knowing Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God, we gain the mysteries of God and see the demonstration of his righteousness to the world. Hume is one who sets off on his own, trusting to reason to keep him afloat. Yet by his own admission, it does not. And still he refuses to believe in God. But God can be known, because he has chosen to make himself known through Jesus Christ.

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## An Examination of the Rationality of Theistic Proofs

Philosophers have long aspired to prove the existence of God by means of rational argument. Aristotle and Aquinas used the principles of cause and effect to demonstrate the existence of an “Unmoved Mover” or First Cause. Anselm formulated the renowned “ontological argument,” claiming that the very idea of God necessarily implied His being. Other philosophers, however, notably David Hume, refuted the theistic proofs, maintaining that God's existence could never be demonstrated by means of pure logic. Who was correct? Is it possible to prove the existence of God on entirely rational grounds? More importantly, is it reasonable even to attempt to formulate an “absolute proof” of God's existence?

Aristotle, known simply as “the Philosopher” by many Western thinkers, examined the basic notion of causality in his *Metaphysics*, concluding from his study that God, the “Unmoved Mover,” must exist. Thomas Aquinas, writing over one thousand years later, adapted Aristotle's “Unmoved Mover” argument to Christianity, substantiating it with his own philosophy. The Unmoved Mover or cosmological argument holds that God's existence can be proven because of the necessity of a “prime mover” or ultimate cause of the universe. Aristotle argued that the Unmoved Mover must exist both because all motion in the universe must have a cause, and because the universe itself, as an effect, must have a cause.

Aristotle began by defining “motion” as “*the fulfilment of the movable qua movable, the cause of the attribute being contact with what can move.*”<sup>61</sup> In more lucid terms, motion occurs when that which is potentially movable is actually moved by an agent that is capable of causing movement. Aristotle's definition of *motion* implies the existence of *movents*, or agents that move: “Each kind of motion, therefore, necessarily involves the presence of the things that are

capable of that motion.”<sup>62</sup> The very definition of “motion,” then, indicates that “all things that are in motion must be moved by something.”<sup>63</sup> A rock will not move itself, but its motion may be caused by a shovel, the movent; however, the shovel's movement, too, must be caused by another movent, a man. The man is the ultimate cause of the rock's movement. But how did movement itself originate in the universe? What is the source of all motion in the universe? By definition, motion cannot cause itself; it must be caused by a mover. Moreover, “[I]t is impossible that there should be an infinite series of movents, each of which is itself moved by something else, since in an infinite series there is no first term,”<sup>64</sup> no movent, and thus no motion. Aristotle concluded that “it is reasonable, therefore, not to say necessary, to suppose the existence of . . . that which causes motion but is itself unmoved”<sup>65</sup>; “there must necessarily be something . . . that first imparts motion, and this first movent must be unmoved.”<sup>66</sup> By its very nature, Aristotle alleged, the series of movents producing motion, of cause and effect, could not be infinite; there must exist a first mover, itself unmoved, that initiated motion.

Similarly, Aristotle argued that the existence of the universe necessitated the existence of a First Cause of the universe. Aristotle reasoned thus: Every effect must have a cause, whether it has only a single, immediate cause or a series of causes. A man, for example, is an effect; he was “caused” by his parents, who were “caused” by their parents, and so forth. At this point, however, we encounter a difficulty: Does the series of causes stretch on *ad infinitum*? No, said Aristotle: “[I]f a thing is coming to be, there must be something from which it comes to be and something by which it is generated, and this process cannot go on *ad infinitum*.”<sup>67</sup> An infinite regress of causes is absurd and incomprehensible. The universe, as one vast effect, must ultimately derive its existence from an Uncaused Cause.

Aquinas essentially agreed with Aristotle's theistic proof. Unlike Anselm, Aquinas did not claim the ability to prove rationally and without scriptural aid all of God's attributes, but he did maintain that God's bare existence could be logically demonstrated by the principle of causality. Like Aristotle, Aquinas argued that all motion must necessarily have a first mover; he also asserted that the universe, as one vast effect, must have a cause. Aquinas explained that while reason is inadequate to lead men to a perfect knowledge and comprehension of God, it can nonetheless prove His existence: “[F]rom every effect the existence of the cause can be clearly demonstrated, and so we can demonstrate the existence of God from His effects; though from them we cannot know Him perfectly as He is in His essence.”<sup>68</sup>

The cosmological argument is compelling; the concept of causality seems intuitive, and the notion of an infinite series of causes and effects appears irrational and absurd. However, any argument based on the idea of cause and effect must be inductive. Inductive reasoning begins with the observation of a particular occurrence and derives probable general principles from it. In other words, inductive arguments rely on human experience and observation, which can often be fallible. Inductive arguments, while they may strongly support their conclusions, can never validate their conclusions with absolute certainty; at most, their conclusions are very probable.

The principle of causality – the concept of cause and effect, the idea that every effect must have a cause – is derived inductively from human observation. The Scottish philosopher David Hume devoted much of his work *A Treatise of Human Nature* to exposing the rational impossibility of proving absolutely the principle of causality. Hume observed that “It is a general maxim in philosophy, that whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence”; nevertheless, “This is commonly taken for granted in all reasonings, without any proof given or demanded.”<sup>69</sup> Why should we unquestioningly assume that the idea of causation is founded in intuition? Why should we not subject the concept of cause and effect to the same rigorous analysis that other

<sup>62</sup> *Physics*, 355.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>65</sup> *Physics*, 369.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>67</sup> *Metaphysics*, 746.

<sup>68</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (hereinafter, *Aquinas*), 24.

<sup>69</sup> Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (hereinafter, *Hume*), 52.

<sup>59</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:5

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* (hereinafter, *Physics*), 255.

metaphysical concepts undergo? Hume determined to discover whether “causation” was actually a law so deeply embedded in human belief that it could not be challenged. In fact, Hume resolved that “every demonstration, which has been produced for the necessity of a cause, is fallacious and sophistical.”<sup>70</sup> Hume explained that the idea of causation is based on two relations between objects: contiguity and priority. Whenever men claim that one event has caused another, they base their assertion upon a recognition of the relations of contiguity and priority between the two events. For example, if a man releases a ball from his hand and it then drops, two contiguous events happen in close succession: the prior event, the man’s release of the ball, is said to *cause* the subsequent event, the ball’s dropping. In fact, Hume maintained, all instances of one event’s “causing” another are based on the close succession of a prior event and a following event; throughout their lives, men observe contiguous occurrences and gradually conclude that, since certain events always seem to be followed by the same result, those events must *cause* the results. But can we actually *know* for certain that the hand’s releasing the ball was the cause of the ball’s dropping? Is it not possible that the hand’s release and the ball’s drop coincided purely from chance? In fact, it is not possible to *prove* that if a man releases a ball, the ball will necessarily drop, however likely it may seem; the only answer men can give to the question, “Why will the ball drop if it is released?” is, “Because it always has before.” Yet the mere fact that the ball has always dropped in the past is not in itself proof that it will do so in the future. Hume posited that men had convinced themselves of the idea of causation merely from the constant association of certain successions of events; in short, causation was probably an invention of the mind, and at any rate certainly could not be proven conclusively.

The lack of proof for the principle of causality poses a difficulty to the otherwise persuasive cosmological argument. The concept of causation is entirely empirical in its origin: It is quite probable that certain events actually cause others, but it is possible, even if unlikely, that they do not, and that the idea of “causation” is simply the result of man’s habitual association of the relations of contiguity and priority. The cosmological argument, then, is not entirely convincing, since it is contingent upon the actual existence of the principle of causality. However likely the conclusion of the “Unmoved Mover” argument seems, the argument nonetheless cannot irrefutably prove God’s existence.

Anselm of Canterbury, a medieval Scholastic, devised the ontological argument in his work *Proslogium*. In the introduction to that book, Anselm wrote, “I began to ask myself whether there might be found a single argument which would require no other for its proof than itself alone; and alone would suffice to demonstrate that God truly exists . . . .”<sup>71</sup> Anselm’s ontological argument alleged that God, by definition, must exist, and that it is a logical contradiction to claim that God does *not* exist. Anselm reasoned thus: Even the “fool” of Psalm 14 who says, “There is no God,” can understand what is meant by the phrase *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*; “this very fool, when he hears of this being . . . a being than which nothing greater can be conceived – understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding.”<sup>72</sup> In other words, even if a man denies the *actual* existence of *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*, he cannot deny its existence in his understanding, since his very denial of its actual existence implies that he understands what is meant by the phrase *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*. However, Anselm continues, *that than which nothing greater can be conceived* “cannot exist in the understanding alone. For, suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater.”<sup>73</sup> The very statement “*that than which nothing greater can be conceived* exists only in the understanding, but not in reality” is self-contradictory. On the one hand, a man has the idea of *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*; on the other, the idea that *that than which nothing greater can be conceived* could exist, but does not – in other words, that it could be greater. The result is the logically contradictory statement “*that than which nothing greater can be conceived* can be conceived to be greater.” Anselm concluded that if *that than which nothing greater can be conceived* “can be conceived not to exist, it is not that, than which nothing greater can be conceived.

But this is an irreconcilable contradiction. There is, then, so truly a being than which nothing greater can be conceived to exist, that it cannot even be conceived not to exist.”<sup>74</sup>

Thomas Aquinas concisely summarized the ontological argument thus:

[A]s soon as the signification of the name *God* is understood, it is at once seen that God exists. For by this name is signified that thing than which nothing greater can be conceived. But that which exists actually and mentally is greater than that which exists only mentally. Therefore, since as soon as the name *God* is understood it exists mentally, it also follows that it exists actually. Therefore the proposition *God exists* is self-evident.<sup>75</sup>

Briefly, *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*, or God, must of necessity exist by definition.

Anselm’s ontological proof is certainly logically valid; but is it indisputably sound? Anselm established his argument on two controversial premises: first, that men always understand God to be *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*; second, that existence is inherently greater than nonexistence. Moreover, Gaunilo, a contemporary of Anselm’s, raised a noteworthy objection to Anselm’s superficially convincing proof: when taken to its logical extremes, Anselm’s argument produces surprising results, such as the apparently necessary existence of imaginary, non-existent objects.

Even granted that men always understand God to be *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*, Anselm does not offer any support for the assumption that existence in reality is intrinsically greater than existence only in the understanding. In fact, although the vast majority of humanity would very likely concur with Anselm’s assumption, it is quite probable that some would deny that actual existence is greater than mere mental existence. In other words, Anselm’s assumption is not universally acceptable, and although his proof may convince many or most, it nonetheless falls short of its purpose: the argument does not “require no other for its proof than itself alone,” but instead requires additional reasoning if the assumptions are to be considered sound. Anselm’s ontological argument may demonstrate that God’s existence is very likely, that it is almost completely certain; yet it cannot provide *absolute certainty* – it is not an absolute proof of God’s existence.

Gaunilo of Marmoutier conceived of another difficulty with Anselm’s ontological argument. Instead of attacking Anselm’s premises or the form of his proof, Gaunilo simply attempted to show that the argument resulted in absurd conclusions when applied to areas other than that of God’s existence. Using the form of Anselm’s proof and applying it to an island, Gaunilo asked: If I conceive of an island than which no greater island can be conceived, does it necessarily follow that such an island must exist in reality, not merely in my head? According to Anselm’s logic, the island must indeed exist in reality; if it did not, we could still *conceive* of its existing in reality, which would result in the same logical contradiction that follows from the denial of the ontological argument: We would be forced to say that *that island than which no greater island can be conceived* can in fact be conceived to be greater. Gaunilo’s objection can be applied almost anywhere; the consequence is the apparent existence in reality of a number of objects, such as Gaunilo’s island, that we are unwilling to admit actually exist. Anselm’s reply to Gaunilo is not satisfactory or clear; however, one possible response to Gaunilo’s objection is to distinguish between *that than which nothing greater can be conceived* and *that object of a specific type than which no greater object of that specific type can be conceived*. Anselm could protest that the idea of existence is inherent in *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*; such a being is not merely greater than all objects in a particular set (such as the set of all islands) but is greater than *all objects and beings*, regardless of type. In other words, *that than which nothing greater can be conceived* and *that island than which no greater island can be conceived* are fundamentally different: The latter is only greater than all islands, while the former is greater than *all things* in all categories. Nonetheless, there still exists the difficulty of proving beyond doubt that the idea of existence actually is inherent in *that than which*

<sup>70</sup> Hume, 54.

<sup>71</sup> Anselm, *Proslogium* (hereinafter, *Anselm*), 47.

<sup>72</sup> Anselm, 53.

<sup>73</sup> Anselm, 54.

<sup>74</sup> Anselm, 54-55.

<sup>75</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (hereinafter, *Aquinas*), 21.

*nothing greater can be conceived*, that actual existence is greater than mental existence. Anselm's proof is still not finally convincing.

The cosmological argument and the ontological argument are probably the two best-known and most persuasive arguments for God's existence; yet neither one offers absolute proof – at best, the arguments demonstrate that God's existence is very probable, but not certain. The most common objection to theistic proofs is that they do not provide the absolute rational certainty that seekers pursue. At this point, however, it becomes necessary to examine whether it is actually reasonable to require absolute proof of God's existence, and whether "absolute proof" itself is even attainable.

An absolute proof is one that offers complete certainty; if its premises are true, then its conclusion must, beyond doubt, be true as well. Naturally, the difficulty lies in determining the legitimacy of the premises, or founding suppositions. In Anselm's ontological proof, for example, we can really only object to his premises: the form of Anselm's logic is flawless. How, then, should we go about verifying the truth of Anselm's premises? There is no other way than by offering a separate proof for each premise; once we show that each premise is true, Anselm's conclusion, "God exists," follows naturally and indubitably. We now face a fresh obstacle, however: How can we confirm that our separate proofs for each individual premise of Anselm's argument are valid? Suppose we formulated a proof demonstrating that the statement, "It is better to exist in reality than merely mentally" is true. Our proof of the statement permits us to regard the whole of Anselm's ontological argument with much greater certainty than before we had proved his premise; however, our proof of Anselm's premise must itself be established on its own founding premises or suppositions. How can we be confident that *those* premises are true? We cannot merely trust in their validity; if we seek absolute certainty, we must formulate yet another proof for each premise. Again, our newest proofs are founded on yet further premises, which in turn must be proven, and whose proofs require proofs of their premises, etc.

It appears that we are trapped in an endless cycle: Every proof rests on premises which must be proven true if we are to be sure the proof is true; we must continue proving the premises of proofs *ad infinitum*, since there is never a point at which we can cease and conclude that our founding suppositions require no further proof. It is insufficient to maintain that at some point, premises appear so fundamental and self-evident that they verify themselves and call for no additional reasoning for their acceptance. If we seek *absolute proof*, we must leave nothing in doubt. We must prove every premise; yet it is manifestly impossible to "prove every premise."

In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle examined the nature of proof itself, seeking to reveal the extent of the utility of logical reasoning. The "father of Western philosophy" in fact scorned the notion that absolutely *everything* could be proven, or that absolute certainty required absolute proof in all cases: Aristotle asserted that "not to know of what things one should demand demonstration, and of what one should not, argues want of education."<sup>76</sup> Certain concepts, or "first principles," simply cannot be proven, Aristotle claimed. The most fundamental of the first principles is the law of noncontradiction, which states that "it is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be"; this is "the most indisputable of all principles."<sup>77</sup> Aristotle thought it foolish even to inquire whether the law of noncontradiction could be proven. The law of noncontradiction is one of the "starting-points of demonstration," or one of the "common beliefs, on which all men base their proofs."<sup>78</sup> If the first principles form the basis of all men's proofs, indeed of all human knowledge, "in what way can there be a *science* of the first principles?"<sup>79</sup> Aristotle asked. For if there exists a separate science whose express purpose is to prove the veracity of the first principles, then the "first principles" are no longer first principles; instead, the science proving them must take their place as the foundation upon which all knowledge is built. Yet why should we doubt our new first principles any less than our original first principles? Do they not likewise call for proof? Naturally, the series of proofs "proving" first principles is endless; Aristotle

explained, "[I]t is impossible that there should be demonstration of absolutely everything (there would be an infinite regress, so that there would still be no demonstration) . . ." <sup>80</sup> "Absolute proof" simply cannot be accomplished, it does not exist. In fact, the term "absolute proof" is meaningless, since it requires that we assign contradictory properties to the nature of proof. On the one hand, we state that a "proof" is an argument resting on assumptions and leading to a conclusion; on the other, we claim that there must be an infinite regress of mini-proofs for each assumption – in other words, that our "proof" actually cannot prove anything.

If absolute proof is not possible, perhaps we should turn to Aristotle's first principles. But what are the "first principles," and how can we know that they are true? The first principles simply comprise that universal intuitive knowledge common to all men, those facts that men take for granted, whether knowingly or ignorantly, such as the law of noncontradiction. Classical geometry provides a good example of several first principles: Euclid's axioms or common notions are truths so patently self-evident that they need no proof; indeed, they are the foundation for the whole not only of geometry but of all mathematics. Men simply do not doubt that the whole is greater than the part – they cannot imagine anything different. The first principles validate themselves. As C.S. Lewis explained, "If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved."<sup>81</sup> Also, "It is no use trying to 'see through' first principles. If you see everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see."<sup>82</sup> The very idea of a "proof" assumes the notion of self-verifying presuppositions or first principles; otherwise, proofs lose all meaning and can "prove" nothing.

How do our conclusions regarding the nature of proof and of the first principles affect the question of whether God's existence can be proven? Most importantly, we can eliminate the objection that the cosmological argument and the ontological argument do not provide "absolute proof" that God exists. The very notion of "absolute proof" is self-contradictory; if absolute proof is not possible, why should we require it of God's existence? What remains is to determine whether Aristotle's and Anselm's proofs rest on identifiable first principles. If they do, we should have no more reason to doubt their conclusions than we have to question the Pythagorean theorem.

Aristotle's cosmological proof assumes the existence of cause and effect. The notion of cause and effect is as basic and fundamental as Euclid's fifth common notion, that "the whole is greater than the part." The conviction that every effect has a cause is immovably fixed in the human mind; the everyday actions of those, such as Hume, who trouble to doubt the relation of cause and effect, contradict their claims. In other words, the relation "cause and effect" is a first principle, one of those founding suppositions whose "proof" would necessitate an infinite regress of demonstrations. Once it is apparent that the cosmological argument is established on an indemonstrable first principle, it becomes impossible to doubt Aristotle's conclusion: Every effect must have a cause; the universe is an effect, so it must have a cause; that cause is the Unmoved Mover, or First Cause of all things.

It is slightly more difficult to judge whether Anselm's ontological argument relies on any of the first principles. The idea that "actual existence is inherently greater than mere mental existence" is not quite as obviously intuitive as the concept of cause and effect. In the context of Anselm's argument, however, it is difficult to deny his conclusion. According to Anselm, God is not merely "the greatest conceivable thing," but *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*. *That than which nothing greater can be conceived* either exists only mentally, or both mentally and actually. How can we deny that it is greater to possess both the properties of actual and mental existence than to possess only the property of mental existence? But suppose someone asks, "Can you prove it?" No, we cannot "prove" a notion so deeply embedded in human intellect; it, too, must be a first principle. If we claim to doubt it, we must force ourselves, against our reason, to attempt do so. It appears that the conclusion of Anselm's proof, like that of Aristotle's, is undeniable once the first principles it rests on are identified.

<sup>76</sup> *Metaphysics*, 737.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 737.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 719.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 719.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 737.

<sup>81</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (hereinafter, *Lewis*), 40.

<sup>82</sup> *Lewis*, 81.

The book of Romans declares, "What can be known of God is evident to them; for God has made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world the invisible things of Him are perceived, being understood by means of the things that are created, that is His eternal power and divine nature, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20, my translation). With no further aid, men should be able to comprehend enough of God's nature to conclude not merely that He exists, but even to recognize certain of His attributes, such as His power. Men can offer no defense for denying God's existence; they are "without excuse," including the excuse that philosophers and theologians fail to present "absolute proofs" of God's existence. In fact, the cosmological argument and the ontological argument, established as they are on various of the first principles, offer as certain proof of God's existence as human reason can hope to do. He is a fool indeed who says in his heart, "There is no God."

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GBT V, Paper 2

### An Exhortation to Christian Leaders

There have been certain times in everyone's lives when a situation divides a person morally; where it calls for careful deliberation. In such situations, a decision has to be reached about whether they feel themselves being called toward solving the problem by acting against their morals for a perceived better outcome, or remaining steadfast in their beliefs no matter what the future may hold. Although an average citizen may be able to take the risk of following his own belief, which may be the more difficult road, the leader of a country may not find himself in as comfortable position. On the one hand, he must serve his country for its common good, but on the other hand he is a human being with his own conscience, values, beliefs, and ideas. The good leader's duty to his countrymen is to discover their needs, not their wants. Some would say that, once those needs are fulfilled, the best interest of the state is sought, and ultimately what is right for its people.

Plato searched for the perfect state in his Republic. He described the right men for leading the state as, "those who in their whole life show the greatest eagerness to do what is for the good of their country, and the greatest repugnance to do what is against her interests." Now, a Christian might strive greatly to do what is for the good of the country, but the priority of the Christian in determining the needs of a state may be different from the secular man that Plato describes. First and foremost, he listens to his Lord. During the course of his management, several tough situations may arise, and his only choice in order to preserve the happiness and best interest of the majority, would be to follow a path, questionable to his faith. A conscientious leader would feel driven to be led by his God, but at the same time he would feel obligated to his fellow citizens. For example, during World War II, in 1945, Harry S. Truman was faced with a very difficult decision. As President of the United States of America, and as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Army, he had to decide whether or not to use nuclear weapons in the war against Japan. If dropped on a major Japanese city, the newly invented atomic bomb could put enough pressure on the Japanese Empire to make them surrender and end World War II. Dropping a bomb this powerful would kill hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and seriously injure countless others. However, since America's current plan was just to continue fighting Japan on land and at sea, prolonging a stalemate that had already left millions of soldiers dead on both sides, in the end Truman decided to drop the bomb on the Japanese city, Hiroshima. It not only hit its target, a military base, but also killed men, women, and children. Did our president make the right decision for his people in ordering this offensive strike? What may have seemed at the time to be the best method of attack generally for the American people, becomes quite a conundrum to a Christian who knows the sixth commandment, "you shall not murder". Though decreed centuries ago, the Christian leader knows this commandment still holds as much truth then, as now. Thus the question arises whether a Christian is able to be an effective leader and still follow his faith when he must choose between his God and his state.

In his work, *The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli provides an answer to this question. He holds that a leader must put whatever sense of virtue he has aside in order to become a truly effective ruler. "Everyone admits how praiseworthy it is in a prince to keep faith, and to live with integrity and not with craft. Nevertheless our experience has been that those princes who have done great things have held good faith of little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men by craft, and in the end have overcome those who have relied on their word." In his work, *The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli says that any prince of worth has attained this status by surrendering his integrity, but not regretfully. It is a necessary step to take in order to gain greatness. A leader, aware of this, will be like a fox and a lion. "Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves." He must be clever, but strong; wary, but brave. But Machiavelli, in listing the animals a leader must be like, forgot to compare him to a snake, sneaky and secret. "Therefore it is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them." In Machiavelli's mind, greatness has nothing to do with virtue. As long as a prince feigns the image of a merciful, faithful, humane, religious, and upright man, he will succeed and reach his goals. Since "everyone sees what you appear to be, but few really know what you are", a prince is safe in his lie. It doesn't take much thought to realize that this view is pure deception and deception can only lead to more trouble. Even though this is generally accepted, when a problem comes charging through the doors, sometimes it is easier to take Machiavelli's approach. To be sure about his theory, let's take a closer look at his specific example of Ferdinand II of Aragon.

Ferdinand II was purely a politician. He married his cousin, Isabella of Castile, for no other reason than to solidify his own claims to the crown. Later on in his life, many of his actions dictate a thirst for dominion and political power. Passionate about his leadership, he was intent on building up a great state. In referencing this king, there is one problem that stands out with Machiavelli's argument about lies being the higher road. He has shown that his ideal leader is someone hungry for power, someone who thinks like a Roman, always wanting to expand the borders of his kingdom. But this is where the apple falls far from the tree. The reason for the creation of a state is for the common good of the people. There have been many great thinkers who have taken the time to write down why they believe a society is necessary, ranging from Plato in his *Republic* all the way up to Rousseau in his *Social Contract*, and beyond. Whatever the argument, it is a universal belief that some sort of government must be formed to help the people, to guide them, to protect them, even at times to keep them in line. A state's purpose is not for the benefit of its leader, but rather its people. It is not a selfish pursuit, but a selfless one. Machiavelli's argument fails to strike the bulls-eye. His state's principal goal is to promote its leader, not to support its people. A deceptive leader is no help to his society at all. So, if a Christian seeks to try his hand at leading a country, he can focus on the common good without worrying about the guilt of purposefully sinning. In this area he will not have to compromise between his God and his state.

In the *Gorgias*, there is another argument against Machiavelli's. Not only does a leader, lying about his true character, create a mess for the state, but for himself as well. The argument begins when Socrates and Polus are debating one another about whether it is better to suffer wrong or to do wrong. Polus stubbornly insists that the greatest of all misfortunes is to suffer wrong, while Socrates holds the opposite. "Socrates: I would rather avoid both; but if I had to choose one or the other I would rather suffer wrong than do wrong." How each man chose to answer this question sheds some light on their independent views of life.

Polus takes a shallower approach, considering only the physical effects of doing wrong. He states that, since a sufferer must bear more bodily pain, he would choose the wrong-doer every time, seeing as this man is the one who always escapes any discomfort. Socrates looks deeper. He admits that a sufferer will have to undergo injury due to the awful actions of the wrong-doer, but in the end the wrong-doer must accept greater consequences. His pain goes past the body, and burns the soul. The guilt of his actions that he must face every day of his life will hurt much more than the temporary physical pain of his sufferer. Even if, as Machiavelli points out and Polus agrees, being a wrong-doer and lying about who you are helps you achieve praise and popularity, without a content soul, true happiness,

the life-long pursuit for mankind, is not within your grasp. A happiness that has nothing to do with material accomplishments, but with the kind of accomplishments that put your mind at ease and let that feeling deep down inside, your soul, rest at peace. <sup>8</sup>"Men and women are happy if they are honorable and upright, but miserable if they are vicious and wicked." Even though Machiavelli is not a Christian and does not feel the need to worry about the effects of his sins, his theory of appearing to be virtuous, but behind closed doors living a lie, hinders not only the state, as stated above, but also the leader himself. In order for Christians to distinguish between right and wrong, God has given us a set of laws to abide by and an entire book of examples to learn from. Since it is possible to know when temptation turns to sin, and when free will is abused, we are responsible for our actions. Just as for every action there is a reaction, for every choice there is either a consequence or commendation. So, as Christians, we must be careful about how we decide to handle situations. Therefore, it is important for a Godly leader not to feel obligated to follow Machiavelli's idea of lying, even if it seems it is for the people's best interest. With this in mind he is set up for success.

Niccolo Machiavelli is not the only one to present an argument, which makes it difficult for a Christian to stay in a leadership position. In *The Republic*, Plato forms a society in which the way to reach a peaceful state, and thus the common good, calls for sinful means. He feels that it is necessary to devise an elaborate lie so that his vision of the just state can be created. This so-called lie that Plato puts together is called the Myth of the Metals. It is created to explain to those in the city the reason for their class position. It is brought about when Socrates, Plato's main character, is arguing with Glaucon, a friend, about the manner in which the guardian class should be raised. They conclude that guardians should not obtain or own any possessions, since jealousy may arise. In order to calm the guardians' urge to obtain gold, they will be fed the Myth of Metals. In this lie, it is said the childhood and education that the guardians had received, was only a dream. They were actually formed in the center of the earth, the mother of them all. Everything that they owned, including weapons and craftsman's tools, was also created in the same manner. When the time was right, their mother delivered them to the surface so that they could protect her at all costs, thus the reason for that innate feeling of duty to defend their land. But this <sup>9</sup>"audacious fiction" still does not satisfy the guardian's urge to obtain wealth. The second part of his lie further explains how the jealousy will be controlled.

<sup>10</sup>"Citizens, we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honor; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron." This distribution of metals in their blood will convince them that the class they are in is destined to them. Because of this, Socrates is able to control and keep the designated classes in their places and thus peace flourishes.

Taking a step back, it is now possible to see that Plato believes the answer to our problem of a morally challenged situation is to simply lie and be done with it. Even though lying is a sin in God's eyes and may make the situation more complicated, Plato believes it to be a necessary step to take in founding a city. He believes it is for the common good of the people. If people are to be at peace, then they have to be content with their position in society. They must be kept in line so as not to start any outbursts or insurrections. What easier way to do this, than to stretch the truth in order to reinforce the reasoning behind your class placement. No one has to know, and the society as a whole profits from it. But it is quite obvious that some people will not buy into the belief that a city's foundation can be based on lies. So, Plato gives a rationalization for why he believes it is right.

There are two kinds of lies in this world. The worst kind is the lie of the soul, believing inside yourself what is not true, and not even knowing it is actually a lie. What is commonly known as a lie, is something quite distinct. This consists in telling someone else what the teller himself knows to be false. In Plato's view this is secondary to the true lie or lie of the soul. It is <sup>11</sup>"only a kind of imitation and shadowy image of a previous affection of the soul, not pure unadulterated falsehood." Thus, he calls this merely a "lie in words". Because the Myth of Metals, which many refer to as a noble lie, being a lie for the good, stays only on the tip of a tongue and does not penetrate the soul, it is acceptable to be used as the building blocks of a city. It provides

an underlying sense of unity and a feeling of devotion to the common purpose, which is crucial for a state's healthiness. Thus Plato believes and rationalizes his need for the noble lie.

Take a step back from Plato's incessant reasoning and just take a look at the words; noble lie. The very thought of one is contradictory. According to the Oxford Universal Dictionary, noble means "having high moral qualities or ideals", and lie means "a false statement with the intent to deceive". Yet Plato uses it as the basis for stability within his perfect republic. The concept that a lie so deeply ingrained in society will allow it to remain peaceful may not live up to its expectations. Some may argue along with Plato that there are different truths that should be told to different people. There are truths appropriate for children. A doctor might lie and say that a shot will not hurt, even though it will, so the child will sit still and it will hurt less. There are truths appropriate for drivers. Many drivers' education books contain the statement "Air bags don't kill people. They save lives," despite the fact that under many circumstances air bags have killed or crippled people. While it is true that air bags have saved far more lives than they have taken, they are not promoted on those grounds, but rather with a noble lie. If they were, people might be scared off and discourage their use. Likewise there are different kinds of truths for different kinds of people. But if this is true, then someone somewhere must decide what truths are appropriate for some and not others and thus why it is for the common good, just as Plato decided it for his state or republic. What qualifies Plato to make this decision that lying is in the people's best interest? The Myth of Metals sounds like a promising idea that might give purpose to his city, but in reality, if given an opportunity to be tested, the lie, since they can not live forever, would eventually be found out; just as the myth that the earth is not flat, but round, was discovered. The role of a leader should be to guide and help his people through whatever challenges face them, not to bury the truth in myths that are politically expedient. Plato's premise that lying is a necessity which must be accepted does not bring prosperity to a society. So, since a Christian would not be forced to lie and contradict his faith in order to uphold the common good, he can be a more effective leader than the one Plato created.

Unlike both Plato and Machiavelli, Dante Alighieri, a Christian thinker, in his work *Paradiso*, puts forward a simple argument, which instead of attacking the idea of a Christian as a leader, ends up defending it. The book is a narration by Dante of his journey to reach heaven with Beatrice, his guide. Near the beginning of his travels, they stop on the moon and see a group of faces, gathered together, faint and indistinct. Excitedly, Dante walks closer to one in particular and asks for her life's story and name.

<sup>12</sup>She replies that her name is Piccarda and on earth she was a nun, who worshiped her Lord daily, filled with the Holy Spirit. But soon her brother, Corso dei Donati, came along to cause nothing but trouble. After pressuring her with self-centered arguments, she finally gave in, left the convent, and married Rossellino della Tosa, a man unworthy to demand her hand. After speaking with her for a while, she begins to fade away into the darkness. But as she vanished, questions appeared in Dante's mind. He approached Beatrice and asked her whether it was right that these souls, because they were forced into breaking their vows, should be placed on such a low level. Beatrice replies:

<sup>13</sup>"But our least acquiescence signs a pact  
With force; so did these souls -for to regain  
Their holy house 'twas will, not power, they lacked.

That uncorrupted will which could sustain  
Laurence, and hold him steadfast on the grill,  
And harden Mucius to his own hand's pain,

Would, to the road they had been forced from, still  
Have thrust them back, the moment they were loosed;  
But it is all too rare, that single will."

She says that, although forced, their will could have overcome the obstacles at hand and placed them back where they belonged. Just as St. Laurence, a deacon of the Church of Rome, remained steadfast in his faith even while being grilled alive on an iron frame and eventually dying. Or Caius Mucius Scaevola, after being ordered by Lars Porsena to be burned alive, thrust his right hand into the flame and held it there without flinching. Porsena was so impressed by his bravery that he spared his life. What this nun was lacking was not the physical power to say no, but the will to adhere to her faith. The nun, pressured to

abandon her vows and leave the nunnery, is just like the leader, pressured at times to follow a course of action, which may not agree with his faith, for the sake of the people's best interest. But while the nun's problem is at a personal level, affecting only herself, a leader's decisions ripple into the lives of every citizen, a much greater burden. If what Dante says is true and a leader who chooses the common good over his God, has insufficient faith in God's plan, then feeling guilty about disappointing a society is an excuse. It is a message to God that says, "Because too many people are involved and too much is at stake, I have decided to take matters into my own hands." Take a step back and ask, but what is the point in following God in the first place? Mainly, it is because we owe it to him, as our creator, to put our trust in His Word. But another reason we follow him is because He is our Father and we, his children. He is always there to protect us, care for us, and guide us. His unconditional love for us, even though we, as sinners, throw it back in his face again and again, proves that his plan, whatever the means, ends up in our happiness. At times in life, just as with a leader presented with a moral or spiritual dilemma, the light at the end of the tunnel is difficult to see. It may seem that in that situation at that time for those reasons it is more profitable in the leader's eyes to forsake his faith and make a choice for the common good of the state and everyone in it. But this is exactly what Dante warns us against.

<sup>14</sup>"For if the will won't will, nothing can force it;  
But, as fire acts by nature, it will act,  
Though thousand gales of violence beat across it."

Even though a thousand voices cry out against a leader's decision to follow his faith, he must put his trust in God, disregarding the short sight of mankind, and believe that his choice is the best for the state and himself.

A perfect example in history of the situation which Machiavelli, Plato, and Dante share differing views on is given in the Bible, specifically in 1 Samuel 13. At the time Saul had just been anointed king over Israel and was planning an attack on a Philistine outpost. After gathering three thousand men, he marched upon Gilgal, where the Philistines were located. When they discovered that Israel was now on the offensive, the Philistines in turn collected three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers <sup>15</sup>"as numerous as the sand on the seashore". Needless to say, the Israelites were not about to wait around to see what would happen. They left their camp and hid in any place possible. Samuel said he would come in seven days and light an offering to seek the Lord's favor. Seven days passed, and Samuel never came. Saul, growing anxious and watching his men begin to desert him, decided to take the matter into his own hands and make the burnt offering himself. As soon as he finished, Samuel appeared and realized what had happened. He rebuked Saul. <sup>16</sup>"If you had kept your Lord's command, He would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure." Saul's disobedience cost him his kingdom. He decided not to follow God's wishes, but instead thought that one bad choice, one small sin, to make the offering, would cause the Lord's favor to fall on his men and the outcome of the battle to be in his favor. He thought that if he defied God this once, it would be in the people's best interest, to keep them safe from a Philistine victory. What seemed like a good idea at the time, turned out to come back and haunt him sooner than he thought. In the end he lost his role as leader of the Israelites. Although the consequences of a leader's actions might not be as serious as Saul's, it is easy to see that doing the wrong thing creates more problems than it solves. Since Saul's situation is a special case, because God was more directly involved with the Israelites, His people, it would be helpful to reference the previous example of Hiroshima.

Truman's entire reason for dropping an atomic bomb on the Japanese city was to end World War II quickly and without any more American casualties. A few months before this, America announced "The Potsdam Proclamation" worldwide. It demanded the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces. Because Japan revered their Emperor as a God, and because this Proclamation did not ensure his safety, they stood firm in their decision not to surrender, even after Hiroshima was bombed. Finally, the emperor himself, seeing their danger demanded they cease their samurai-like resistance and yield. Assistant Secretary of War, John McCloy, offered another solution. He argued that The Potsdam Proclamation be re-worded so that Japan could retain their Emperor safely and be given a warning of the atomic bomb in order to bring an earlier and less deadly surrender. It is difficult to say whether or not Mr. McCloy's idea would have

worked. But one important point that can be taken away from this sticky situation is that a Christian leader should exhaust all other possibilities before resorting to the one which contradicts his faith. Instead of taking the politically expedient route, like Plato, or carelessly throwing away any sense of integrity and virtue, like Machiavelli, a Christian leader should be sure that he considers other options and should be certain that the one he chooses is for the right reason; the best interest of the state.

Sometimes life throws very trying situations at us. Sometimes it seems like we must resort to either a crime against god or a crime against man to solve our problems. Sometimes we feel the best way may not be the higher road, but it gets us where we want to go. Theodore Roosevelt, a very significant president in the history of the United States, once said, "If I must choose between righteousness and peace, I choose righteousness." He was not willing to compromise his morals or faith, even if doing so would bring peace. Granted no one is perfect and we all live in a world corrupted by sin, I exhort leaders of all kinds and in all positions, not only those of countries, to remember the moving words of this president and more importantly the sacred words of our Lord and remain steadfast in their faith.

1. The Republic by Plato – Book 3, end of Section 412
2. Exodus 20:13
3. The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli – Chapter 18, beginning (p.79)
4. The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli – Chapter 18, beginning (p.80)
5. The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli – Chapter 18, middle (p.80-81)
6. The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli – Chapter 18, end (p.81)
7. Gorgias by Plato – Section 469 (p.53)
8. Gorgias by Plato – End of Section 469 (p.56)
9. The Republic by Plato – Book 3, end of section 414
10. The Republic by Plato – Book 3, beginning of section 415
11. The Republic by Plato – Book 3, middle of section 382
12. The Divine Comedy 3; Paradiso by Dante – Canto 3, Lines 46-57
13. The Divine Comedy 3; Paradiso by Dante – Canto 4, Lines 79-87
14. The Divine Comedy 3; Paradiso by Dante – Canto 4, Lines 76-78
15. 1 Samuel 13:5
16. 1 Samuel 13:13-14

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To Rule Rightly: The Roles of Power, Virtue and Respect in Effective Leadership

The rattle of gunfire and the rumble of tanks sound amid the roar of an angry mob. Advancing ominously, the rout of humanity tears through barbed wire checkpoints and concrete barriers. They arrive at the palace of their ruler for a final siege. Rather than fire into the mass of assailants, the guards flee or join the now bloodthirsty crowd. As the palace falls, the ministers, advisors and commanders of the reviled leader are slain in its confines. The sovereign himself is drug out for public viewing before facing a gruesome and painful death. Such is the end of one who does not rule wisely and shrewdly in a dangerous and unforgiving modern world.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by warfare and political upheaval. Political administrations rose and fell with alarming regularity in every

corner of the world; precious few nations that have been unscathed by enemies in the past 100 years. What induced success and likewise, failure? What qualities must be a leader possess to survive a harsh world that does not allow for many mistakes? From the renowned political commentator Niccolo Machiavelli, to the ancient philosopher Socrates and the writers of the Declaration of Independence, those who have come before have left guidelines to the answers. A leader must be resolute in his dealings with his opponents, applying ruthless pressure or being diplomatically friendly and charming as needed. He must gain respect and, ideally, the love of his people for his virtuous conduct among them and respect for their basic rights. If he follows such a model, his rule will be successful and productive, his power unshakeable by even his worst foes and his country and people will prosper and live in peace under his guidance.

Italian Niccolo Machiavelli was a diplomat, general, secretary of state, writer and political advisor during his colorful life in Renaissance Italy. Machiavelli served the state of Florence for 15 years, embarking on many great political endeavors. When he was at last banned from his position in the aftermath of a coup, Machiavelli retired to the countryside to write. Of his many works he is best known for his commentary *Il Principe*, or *The Prince*. Because Renaissance Italy was marked by political dogfights with leaders rising and falling in rapid succession, *The Prince* discusses the nature of leadership and what qualities are necessary for a "prince" to rule successfully in a wild environment. As Machiavelli put it, "he who wishes to be obeyed must know how to command."

First and foremost, Machiavelli explained that most importantly a leader should have a reputation for greatness and being strong-minded and thorough. "...a prince ought, above all things, always to endeavor in every action to gain for himself the reputation of being a great and remarkable man." Often there is more power in appearance than in true strength, and Machiavelli believed that a man's reputation defined how his enemies viewed him. "A prince is also respected when he is either a true friend or a downright enemy..." Machiavelli continued. If he is decisive in his actions, a prince will not be second guessed. Indeed he will be respected and perhaps even feared the more because he is a man of purpose. In addition, a prince should not fear to endure some loss in order to achieve the greater good. "Never let any government imagine that it can choose perfectly safe courses; rather let it expect to have to take very doubtful ones, because it is found in ordinary affairs that one never seeks to avoid one trouble without running into another..." A prince who is not afraid of some loss and is able to hide all signs of weakness and camouflage defeat in order to gain victory over his foes, will gain a reputation of greatness amongst men because of his devotion to his ends no matter the consequences.

When reputation is not enough to deter his enemies, a prince must be unafraid to resort to cruelty, making an example of his foes by punishing them mercilessly so that he might not have to punish more rebels in the future. "...a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty; because with a few examples he will be more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, allow disorders to arise." By dealing with rebellions unmercifully, a prince will nip future insurrections in the bud, saving him the trouble of suppressing potential rivals by putting them to brutal and horrible deaths. It is unfortunate when a prince cannot hold power simply through the love of his people for their ruler. "Nevertheless a prince ought to inspire fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred..." admonished Machiavelli. Cruelty may be a necessary element of effective leadership.

Machiavelli cited Cesare Borgia, one of the more famous Italian Renaissance rulers in Italy as a prime example of his style of leadership. Borgia controlled a city called Cesena that was known for its lawlessness and crime. In order to establish law and order, a trusted aide was appointed to rule the city. The aide cruelly and brutally destroyed the lawless element of Cesena through horrible examples of the executions of lawbreakers. As order was restored, Borgia suddenly ordered that his aide be brutally murdered and publicly displayed sending a message to his subjects that both friend and foe alike would keep their peace or suffer the consequences. This swift and decisive act of savagery was enough to quell the unrest of Cesena, bringing peace to the city for many years to come.

However, a leader should not lean on brute force alone in order to keep power. To retain power indefinitely he must endeavor to win the hearts of the people. Machiavelli explained that a prince will always be

tolerated, "...as long as he abstains from the property of his citizens and subjects and from their women." If a prince keeps himself from plundering and destroying the lives of his charges, he will be tolerated, perhaps even loved. Indeed, a leader's very safety depends on the support of his subjects. Speaking of the defense of one's country, Machiavelli asserted that, "...the best fortress is - not to be hated by the people, because, although you may hold the fortresses, yet they will not save you if the people hate you..." Security is found not in a massive military, but in the love and support of one's subjects gained by respecting their property and lives.

Nevertheless, no matter how shrewd a ruler, how smooth a statesman, a man is always subject to happenstance and sudden misfortune. Machiavelli branded this uncertainty as "Fortune." None can escape Fortune's grasp, Machiavelli explained. "...men may second fortune, but they cannot thwart her, they may weave her web, but they cannot break her." A sudden change in public opinion, an invasion in a time of weakness, and an exposed scandal are all brought on by the fickle temperament of Fortune. Despite man's captivity to Fortune, Machiavelli counseled that one need not fear or despair but should hope for the best. "Not knowing the aims of Fortune, which she pursues by dark and devious ways, men should always be hopeful and never yield to despair, whatever troubles or ill fortune may befall them" Machiavelli does not give in to Fortune's happenstance, but forges onward with hope in Fortune's favor.

A "Machiavellian" leader would look much like 13<sup>th</sup> century Italian leader Castruccio Castracani. Born in the small Italian city of Lucca, Castracani was trained under the supervision of Lucca's finest leadership. Rising to power, Castruccio enjoyed a long and successful political reign, elevating Lucca to a position of major power in Italy, conquering many other powerful cities and enriching his own. Lucca eventually rivaled the great city of Florence, who was defeated continuously in their efforts to curb the might of Castruccio's domain. The Florentine efforts were in vain because Castracani's subjects served him with fervor, and because he was a brilliant politician. Indeed Castracani was celebrating one of his glorious victories when he fell ill and died from exhaustion and exposure on the battlefield. Although his life was cut short at 44 years and his kingdom fell apart shortly after under his successor, Machiavelli named Castruccio as the ideal leader. "He was delightful among friends but terrible to his enemies; just to his subjects; ready to play false with the unfaithful, and willing to overcome by fraud those who he desired to subdue...no one was bolder in facing danger, none more prudent in extricating himself." Castracani had a reputation for fierceness and was constantly one step ahead of his foes. He also knew when it was best to take a diplomatic approach and extricate himself from an unprofitable venture. His temperament and appearance were even conducive to a leader. "In stature he was above the ordinary height, and perfectly proportioned. He was of a gracious presence, and he welcomed men with such urbanity that those who spoke with him rarely left him displeased." Machiavelli admired every aspect of this determined and talented leader and claimed that Castracani "...was in every way a prince."

Although it would seem that most leaders are first and foremost concerned with politics and personal gain, many would assert that a leader's obligations are towards his people. The Greek philosopher Socrates was one such advocate of moral leadership. Perhaps the most famous of all Greek philosophers, Socrates projected many radical new ideas and concepts before his untimely death at the hands of an executioner. In one of his classic works, *The Gorgias*, Socrates discussed the nature of leadership and qualities needed by a ruler and orator, with Athens' greatest orators and debaters. A ruler's primary responsibility is towards his people and their enrichment, pronounced Socrates.

Socrates' ideas were not unmet by challenge among the Athenians. Leaders, said the orator Callicles, are people who are "...intelligent in political matters and have courage of their convictions." Leaders are people "...with the intelligence to know how political matters should be handled, and not only intelligence but courage; people who have the ability to carry out their ideas, and who will not shrink from doing so through faintness of heart." Such traits would seem laudable in a strong leader, but Socrates brushed these aside to the surprise of his counterparts.

Rather than pursuing personal gain and power, a truly good leader will be virtuous over all else. Socrates explained, "...a man's duty is to keep

himself from doing wrong, because he will otherwise bring great evil upon himself.” A man concerned with his soul, truth and the afterlife, Socrates believed firmly that a man should center on keeping himself pure in order to ease metaphysical suffering that might be imposed as a result of misconduct. For indeed, a man will suffer when he does wrong Socrates explained. Addressing the difference between a dictator who seizes power through a coup and a man who is punished for attempting one, Socrates claimed that, “...the man who gets away with it and becomes a dictator is the more miserable.” Socrates compared a ruthless and despotic dictator to a sick patient in need of care with a simple question. “...if two men have a disease, whether physical or spiritual, which is the more miserable, the man who undergoes treatment and is cured of his ailment, or the man who has no treatment and continues to suffer?” Socrates chided men who do not mend their ways, calling them non-compliant patients who are fearful of the surgeries involved in finding a cure. A truly good leader keeps himself morally clean and pure in his ways.

The discussion continued. Not only must an orator and dictator be concerned for his own good, but he must also try impart his virtue to his subjects. “...the good orator...will have these ends in view in any speech or action by which he seeks to influence the souls of men...his attention will be wholly concentrated on bringing virtue to birth in the souls of his fellow-citizens and on removing their opposites, unrighteousness and excess and vice.” Socrates judged a leader not so much for his ability to rule but his ability to serve his subjects. A virtuous leader who has been cured of the ailments belittling a dictator should want to impart his enlightenment to his subjects. If he does impart his virtue, Socrates claimed, his subjects will love their leader and follow him to even the most terrible extremes. A noble character will be a benefit to a leader attempting to implement Machiavelli’s ideas of secure leadership, for a man of virtue is loved by his subjects, who are in turn, his best defense against harm.

Many parallels can be drawn between Socrates’ and Machiavelli’s philosophies. Socrates call to the path of virtue is not unlike Machiavelli’s instructions to the Prince for enlightened subjects will love their leader, which Machiavelli said is the leader’s first line of defense. But the difference between these two great thinkers is found at the core of their values. Socrates believed that a man’s responsibility is towards the enrichment his subjects and towards virtue. Machiavelli held that a leader’s primary objective was to gain and hold power over people and states (his allegiance was to himself). How this power is to be used is left to the discernment of the ruler. Indeed, Machiavelli’s examples of great leaders vary from the evil and brutal to the kind and virtuous sovereigns whose reigns benefited their cities and subjects.

One might view Socrates’ position as a non-violent, anti-Machiavellian one that condemns all underhanded dealings. However, the only violence Socrates condemned was that of the despotic tyrants who committed felonies to retain power for their own gain. Nowhere does Socrates condemn the violence that Machiavelli advocated in order to keep rebellion calmed. If a ruler’s first duty is to his people, then it is sometimes necessary to use violence as a tool to rule them and direct them on the path to virtue. However, would Machiavelli’s Prince use his power which he may have gained violently to increase the virtue of his subjects? For, on this point Socrates and Machiavelli’s core values are revealed. As rulers face their trials by fire, the self-serving sovereign will end up like the dictators Socrates condemned but the virtuous, loving ruler will emerge as the paragon of Socrates’ ideologies. It is clear then, that the difference between Socrates and Machiavelli is that whilst Machiavelli looked for outward success, Socrates considered the state of the inner being as well.

Socrates’ concepts of just and virtuous leadership were to evolve into the creed that the American colonists would fight and die for. The thinkers in the American colonies built upon the foundation laid by Socrates and brought fresh ideas on excellence in leadership. Pre-eminent in their writing was an emphasis on the rights of man. In their Declaration of Independence from Great Britain, they highlighted what they considered to be grave violations of these rights. Their letter of rebellion is a warning to the modern leader of what to avoid when ruling a state.

The writers of the Declaration began by establishing that men have been given rights by God. Their famous words still ring true, “all Men are created equal...they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among them are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” Living in a Christian civilization, the writers recognized

that men have been given certain rights by God that cannot be violated without consequence. When a government violates these rights, they provoke their subjects to rebel. As the writers explained “...whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive to these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.” As Machiavelli said, men believe themselves to have certain rights to their “property and women” that they believe should be left alone. Indeed, they will love the leader that leaves them in peace. Men may agree to formulation of a government for their security but when a ruler, “...evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security.” While a ruler has his own goals in mind, he must remember that his subjects also have their own interests that they must protect. The adept leader will learn from the Declaration not to trample upon, but to respect his people.

The grievances the Colonists had against King George III arose as a result of classic Machiavellian errors committed by the King. First and foremost: “He has erected a Multitude of new Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People and eat out their Substance.” The King was, “...quartering large bodies of troops among us.” Finally, George was “...protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States...” George did not heed Machiavelli’s advice to give regard to his subjects, and so had to face impending Revolution. Nor did he attempt to impart virtue to his subjects by dealing with them fairly, per Socrates. Feeling violated, the Colonists, in Machiavellian fashion, rebelled and invited several of Great Britain’s enemies to join in the fight thereby gaining from Britain’s defeat. The modern leader should heed the example of the Revolution, and seek to avoid warlike solutions which too often end in dubious result.

Not only did King George violate the basic laws of leadership forged by his predecessors, he failed to deal adequately with growing crisis. The Colonists complained that he, “...abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.” The King was “...transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete works of Death, Desolation, and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy...totally unworthy of the Head of a civilized Nation.” Rather than instigate a crackdown on leaders of the rebellion and providing an example to other potential rebels as Machiavelli advised, George declared war on his own subjects. Rather than cause a small, dramatic amount of damage for greater good, the King wreaked huge amounts of useless destruction on his own subjects, resulting in the loss of his domain. Machiavelli and Socrates surely would have echoed the Colonists ultimatum: “A Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People.”

Examples of political leadership have been available since the formation of the first state. It is important that the modern leader is able to translate those examples into experiences that will help him rule in the turbulent world of the present. The examples provided by Machiavelli, Socrates and writers of the American Declaration provide a modern leader with complete guidelines for gaining and holding power and using such power to rule well. The 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Ronald Wilson Reagan, provided an example of one such leader.

Reagan fulfilled Machiavelli’s main criterion for effective leadership by building a reputation for fierceness towards his foes and offering friendship to his allies. Early in his presidency, Reagan faced a nationwide strike of air traffic controllers that shut down all air travel in the United States. Rather than negotiate with the strikers, Reagan declared that the strikers had 48 hours to return to work and subsequently fired 11,000 non-compliant workers. This act sent a message to the world that Reagan would not tolerate opposition to his authority and established the reputation of fierceness that Machiavelli called for.

Reagan boosted spending on the military, built new generations of nuclear weapons and missile defense systems and was a firm supporter of Afghan Mujahadeen, Columbian antirevolutionary and British and Western allies in the fight against communism. Reagan knew that trustworthy friends are hard to come by and must be supported at all costs as part of the image of power he needed to succeed. Reagan understood Machiavelli’s creed: that strength lies in one’s reputation.

As Socrates prescribed, Reagan sought to live by a virtuous code and worked towards his subjects' moral betterment as well. The care and reverence with which Reagan treated his country and people created strong support for him which lasted throughout his Presidency. At the beginning of his Presidency, Reagan inherited a country whose values and identity had been rocked by the social upheavals of the 1960's and 70's. Reagan restored his country by reminding Americans of their country's fundamental values. In the words of the Heritage Foundation president Edwin Fuelner, "He took an America suffering from 'malaise'... and made its citizens believe again in their destiny." When Reagan was faced with a scandal following his dealings with the Contra revolutionary group in Nicaragua he confessed wrongdoing and vowed to repair the damage that had been caused. He rebounded from the setback and regained public support. Reagan lived by a code of virtue, and because of this his subjects loved him and gave him their support.

It was however, Reagan's respect for human rights which paved the way for the greatest achievement of his Presidency. His nemesis, the Soviet Union, was brought down because the Communist regime denied citizens the requisite freedom required for economic success. In stark contrast Reagan upheld the standards that the writers of the Declaration had integrated into the United States at its creation. In everything he did, Reagan's respect for human rights influenced his actions; his country and his allies benefited and flourished under a respect for liberty. The Soviet Union paid little heed to the rights of its subjects, suppressing and controlling their citizen's lives and keeping liberty away from those under its control. As greatly as the United States succeeded, so the Soviets failed, facing economic depression and social unrest. Finally, Reagan appealed to his enemies to give in and allow their people the freedoms enjoyed by the US and her allies. In his famous address in Berlin, Reagan called on Russia to free its people with his famous words, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." As the writers of the Declaration declared about Britain, Russia too was "...unfit to be the Ruler of a Free people." The Soviet Union eventually collapsed, as its people rebelled against oppression in order to seek the freedoms that they saw exhibited in Ronald Reagan's America.

Ronald Reagan's life demonstrated the qualities of the effective leader. He built a reputation for strength of purpose, sought to live virtuously, seeking to encourage the same in his subjects' lives and heeding the advice of the Declaration by respecting the rights of man. Because he followed the principles provided by Machiavelli and Socrates, Reagan's rule was long, lasting the maximum amount of terms allowed a President of the United States. He left his country in a position of confidence and respect, his people rich and prosperous and many potential enemies scattered and weak much like Castruccio Castracani did before him. Reagan showed that by implementing the guidelines given by Socrates, Machiavelli and the Declaration of Independence, excellence in leadership is achievable in the modern age.

Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can offer both the greatest of opportunity and the direst of danger. In order that a great leader gain the former and avoid the latter, it is necessary for him to be forceful and strong-handed in his ways, virtuous and kind towards his subjects and treat his fellow humans honorably, that he might be considered, as Machiavelli praised, "...in every way a Prince."

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#### The Role of Morality in Leadership

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts"<sup>83</sup>, declared the prolific playwright William Shakespeare. The entrances and exits of those men who held large roles in the course of history are of great worth to study, for they can teach us how to choose leaders wisely for today. An important question, though, when examining how powerful men conduct themselves, is the issue of morality. There have been many men in positions of leadership who had great power, but little virtue or moral integrity, and others who lived their lives with outstanding moral strength.

There has been long-standing debate over whether moral character ought to play a part in the lives of political leaders. One decided opinion on the subject is found in Niccolo Machiavelli's controversial work on leadership, *The Prince*. Throughout this book of advice to political leaders, Machiavelli emphasizes effectiveness rather than commitment to principle. Speaking of virtues a prince might possess, he says, "I shall dare to say this also, that to have them is injurious, and that to appear to have them is useful; to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite."<sup>84</sup> To Machiavelli, it is not the possession of virtue that is important, but the ability to assume and throw off moral principles as is most convenient.

To begin to respond to Machiavelli's point of view, we must ask how virtue, or the lack thereof, helped or hindered leaders of the past. Perhaps no eras provide more fodder for the study of powerful leaders than the great ages of Greece and Rome. The contrast between men who led with moral principle, for the good of the country, and those who led with only concern for political expediency for themselves can be clearly seen by looking at two pairs of leaders who each rose to power together, yet lacked any resemblance in their character and leadership style – Themistocles and Aristides of Greece, and Tiberius and Germanicus of Rome.

An account of Themistocles and Aristides, Athenian military leaders and statesmen who led Athens through the Greeks' long war with Persia, can be found in the works of the historian Herodotus. He wrote an account of the Greco-Persian wars, in which both men participated, and mentions their roles in that conflict several times. Another author that wrote extensively on Themistocles and Aristides, while drawing on Herodotus as his main source, was the much later Plutarch, whose *Lives* of famous Greeks and Romans are more a series of vignettes illustrating the men's characters rather than comprehensive biographies.

In both of these works, Themistocles and Aristides are considered great men, with extraordinary abilities that enabled their success in guiding Athens, but no two men could be more different. Plutarch notes that they were constantly at odds, beginning even in their school days, and they "invariably opposed each other in their words and actions... this rivalry quickly revealed their respective natures, Themistocles' being resourceful, daring, unscrupulous, and ready to dash impetuously into any undertaking, while Aristides' was founded upon a steadfast character, which was intent on justice and incapable of any falsehood, vulgarity, or trickery in jest."<sup>85</sup> In the end, it can be seen from their lives that the virtuous Aristides had a great advantage over Themistocles, and his strength of character served him well throughout his career.

From his childhood, Themistocles was aimed towards politics, with the ambition to learn all that would advance him in shrewdness and ability. His family was not of high social standing – his mother was a foreigner, and thus he was considered illegitimate – but he refused to let his lower rank temper his ambition or influence others' opinions of him. Plutarch says of him that "there seems to be no doubt that Themistocles' longing for fame laid an irresistible hold on him, and that he was swiftly drawn into public affairs while he was still in the vigour of youth. From the very beginning he was seized with the desire to win the leading place in the state"<sup>86</sup>. He rose rapidly in influence in Athens, although inspiring the keen dislike of older statesmen as a result of his intense ambition.

Aristides, on the other hand, was known from youth to be virtuous and selfless in his commitment to personal principle and his concern for Athen's welfare. Herodotus, writing only about 40 years after Aristides' death, says of him, "I have information of this man's character, and am convinced that he was the best and justest man in Athens."<sup>87</sup> He lived humbly throughout his life, and never displayed the ambition and desire for glory that motivated his rival. Because of his nobility and

<sup>84</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 18

<sup>85</sup> Plutarch, *Aristides*

<sup>86</sup> Plutarch, *Themistocles*

<sup>87</sup> Herodotus, *The History*, 8.79

<sup>83</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene VII, lines 139-142

fairness, he was called “the just” and was esteemed by the people of Athens for this quality.

The ongoing disagreements between Aristides and Themistocles caused continual conflict as they met in the legislative circles of Athens. Aristides felt that Themistocles would become too powerful if unchecked in his proposals to the Senate, and thus felt obligated to always oppose him. Such constant opposition began to be detrimental when on one occasion Aristides successfully blocked a proposal that would have been good for Athens, simply because Themistocles was the author of it. As he realized what he had done, and saw the unfavorable consequences of their rivalry, Aristides exclaimed in regret that it would be better for Athens if he and Themistocles were killed than for their personal conflict to hurt their city. Aristides’ utmost concern was to do the best for the city, and in order to do so, he was open to the ideas of others and criticism of his own plans. Illustrating this further is an example related by Plutarch, of a time when Aristides had proposed a measure in the Senate that seemed likely to be passed. After hearing the speeches in opposition to his proposal, however, and realizing the validity of the objections, he saw that it was not a good measure after all, and humbly chose to withdraw his proposal before it was voted on.

Themistocles’ notable ability was not humility or selflessness, but great talent in persuasion, which he used in his guidance of Athens even as a young politician. The beginning of his great public accomplishments was the feat of persuading Athens to make use of their newly acquired silver mine revenue to build a fleet of ships. This occurred in 493 B.C. during his time as archon, an elected leadership position. Aristides opposed Themistocles in this plan, as they once again came into conflict with each other, but in this case Themistocles prevailed. A commitment to building a navy meant that the citizens of Athens would have to give up portioning out the silver mine revenue among themselves, as well as suggesting that they would have need of ships in the near future. The battle of Marathon, in which the Greeks first defeated the Persian army, occurred early in Themistocles’ life, and at the time he was almost alone in his surmise that war with the Persians would eventually be renewed. So, in demonstrating the need for a fleet, he instead used as a reason a current conflict with another Greek state, rather than mentioning further battles with the Persians. In light of the prevailing opinions in Athens, the fact that Themistocles was able to convince the Athenians that such action would be beneficial is impressive. However, his means of doing so - hiding his real reason of a threat from the Persians and using an unrelated situation instead - provided the beginning of a pattern of deception in his future career.

As war with the Persians loomed once again, Athens had to choose a general to take military command. Themistocles and Aristides were both prominent young statesmen who had participated in the Greek’s great victory at Marathon - Aristides had even served as one of the ten generals at that battle - and either could have been chosen for the position. Themistocles, however, did not flinch at hindering the careers of others to advance his own, as is made evident in his dealings with Aristides. He was adept at doing whatever it took to procure advantageous positions for himself, and after bribing a third candidate to eliminate himself from consideration, Themistocles successfully arranged the removal of Aristides by persuading the citizens to ostracize him - a form of banishment practiced in Athens through yearly voting, where any citizen could be banished for ten years. Curiously, even banishment by the people provided Aristides an opportunity to show his honesty. A favorite tale told of him recounts how, when asked by an illiterate man who was unaware of Aristides’ identity to help him write his vote, Aristides did so, even when the name the man told him to write was his own!

Predictably, with his rivals out of the way, Themistocles gained command of Athens’ military force. However, as the Persian fleet of 600 ships approached, the Athenians decided that Aristides and others who had been ostracized should be allowed to return to aid in the war, to allay fears that they would defect to the Persians. Aristides demonstrated his greatest ability to aid his country by his willingness to set aside his own ambition for a greater good. When he returned from his exile, the Greek forces were on the verge of a major battle at the island of Salamis. Themistocles was unsuccessfully attempting to show the other Greek commanders that a battle at sea was their best option, when Aristides arrived with a supporting opinion. He set aside his dislike of Themistocles to offer his support for the plan, and as a result the Greeks were able to defeat the Persians in the battle of Salamis. While Aristides could have drawn away a significant following

of his own supporters, or clamored for a greater role in the commanding of the war, Plutarch tells us that instead he gave Themistocles “all the aid he could in both in advice and in action, and for the sake of Athens he helped his bitterest enemy to become the most famous of men.”<sup>88</sup> By giving his own loyalty to Themistocles as commander, Aristides united the Athenians behind one leader rather than allowing them to splinter into various factions. Aristides also helped keep peace between the armies of the several Greek states, which were prone to rivalry and disputes over the most honorable positions in battle. Without the unity he fostered, the Greeks would have been incapable of the success that they went on to achieve.

After the war, both men returned to prominence in Athens, but after some time Themistocles began to lose his favor with the people, inciting their dislike by his fame, his talk of what he had done for them, and his creation of monuments honoring himself. He was not concerned with the good of the city but merely the fostering of his own pride. In retaliation, the people of Athens ostracized him. While banished, Themistocles was then falsely accused of having a hand in the death of the Spartan leader Pausanias. He vehemently defended himself, but as his previous behavior had not given grounds for trusting him, the accusations prevailed. This growing hatred on the part of the Athenians and Spartans led him to flee to various cities, and finally to travel to Persia to beg protection from the king, Artaxerxes. His humiliation was so great in having to flee for his life from Greece, that he was forced to travel to Persia disguised as a woman in a curtained wagon. Artaxerxes gave him safety, however, rejoicing to have such a great Greek as Themistocles in his power. Here Themistocles lived for many years, and he became quite powerful in Persia and intimate in the king’s court. However, eventually Persia renewed its war against Athens, and rather than aid the Persians against his own people as the king commanded, Themistocles quietly took his own life by poison. Although he had done great things for Greece, his questionable methods of achieving that success - bribery, deceit, and manipulation - caused him to lose credibility later when he was no longer contributing to Athens’ success, and he was reduced to ending his life in the land of his enemies.

Unlike his counterpart, Aristides remained in power in Athens to the end of his days. Earlier in his life, Aristides had exposed financial dishonesty by several leaders in Athens, which had earned him both hatred from those who had practiced fraud as well as trust from the people. As a result of this reputation for honesty and fairness, he was appointed to assess the taxes to be paid by the various Greek cities and territories. He continued to live simply and honorably until his death in 468 B.C. Aristides’ life was marked with an extraordinary commitment to virtue and dedication to Athens, and this stood him in good stead. While those whom he thwarted in their dishonest plans hated him, he was always vindicated by the appreciation of those who saw his faithfulness. His prominence only increased as time went on, and it was only because of the steadfast trustworthiness that he consistently demonstrated that he was awarded such positions of power even towards the end of his life.

A Roman example of a pair of men who further illustrate such differences of leadership is found in the lives of the Roman emperor Tiberius and the general Germanicus, whose stories are recounted in *The Annals of Imperial Rome* by Tacitus. These men, too, demonstrate the advantages of virtuous leadership, through the negative example of Tiberius, who far exceeded Themistocles in deceit and immorality, and through Germanicus, who like Aristides was a noble man throughout his life.

Tiberius was the stepson of Caesar Augustus through the marriage of Augustus to his mother Livia. He seemed to be favored by Augustus, who had adopted him and presented him to Rome, although the honors were primarily due to the work of his mother. The emperor, however, had not made known his official choice of successor, and Tiberius had a rival for the position in the general Germanicus, another relation of Augustus. Germanicus had also been well liked by the old emperor, having been honored with command of an army in Germany, and having been formally adopted as Tiberius’ son by command of Augustus, in order that he might be part of the imperial family. Either man, and several others as well, might have been chosen, but in A.D. 14, when Augustus was on the verge of death, his scheming wife Livia

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<sup>88</sup> Plutarch, *Aristides*

summoned Tiberius and announced her son as the new emperor the moment Augustus passed away.

With such an inauspicious beginning to his reign, Tiberius had to establish his authority, for he had an unfavorable reputation for debauched behavior that set the people against him from the outset. Tacitus tells us, "he also possessed the ancient, ingrained arrogance of the Claudian family; and signs of a cruel disposition kept breaking out, repress them as he might. Besides, it was argued, he had been brought up from earliest youth in an imperial household... his thoughts had been solely occupied with resentment, deception, and secret sensuality"<sup>89</sup>. He began solidifying his grip on the imperial power by having another rival, Agrippa Postumus, assassinated. Tiberius made a show of respect to the Senate while at the same time exerting his new authority everywhere else. "Tiberius wanted to seem the person chosen and called by the state, instead of one who had wormed his way in by an old man's adoption, and intrigues of the old man's wife"<sup>90</sup>, Tacitus affirms. Despite this, fear of the new emperor prompted servility and uneasiness on the part of the Senate and other powerful men in Rome.

Germanicus was kept out of Rome by his command in Germany, and had difficulties to deal with besides the war there. Several discontented Roman soldiers stirred up a mutiny among the brigades, and petitioned Germanicus to join them in their subversion. They loved this young commander greatly, as well as his wife and young son who had accompanied him to Germany. Although Germanicus vehemently refused the army's offer, and attempted to pacify the men, the situation in the camp grew so dangerous that he was forced to send away his wife and son to safety. Upon seeing them flee, however, the soldiers grew ashamed of their behavior and began to listen to Germanicus. Rather than punish the whole camp, he gave them a scathing rebuke, condemning their unpatriotic, ignoble behavior. Coming from this man whom they idolized, the men became remorseful and begged for mercy. "Admitting the justice of his rebuke, they begged him to punish the guilty, and forgive those who had slipped"<sup>91</sup>, recounts Tacitus. The men, of their own accord, punished the main instigators, and order was restored in the brigade. This restoration was possible because of the reputation Germanicus had already established among his men.

Tiberius feared Germanicus because of his popularity, and appointed him to a governing position in Africa. Although this kept him away from Rome and any chance of attempting to usurp Tiberius' power, Germanicus was still well loved by the people and had a fair chance of eventually becoming Tiberius' successor. This was cut short, however, when he suddenly became ill, and in A.D. 19 he died. Rumor had it that he was poisoned by Calpurnius Piso, the governor of Syria, who was at odds with Germanicus throughout their acquaintance. Some even said that Piso did such a thing at the command of Tiberius. If so, any plan hatched by Tiberius in order to do away with Germanicus' influence failed, for although any threat to the throne was gone, Germanicus' demise only made him more loved and admired. Upon his death, "the province and surrounding peoples grieved greatly. Foreign countries and kings mourned his friendliness to allies and forgiveness to enemies. Both his looks and his words had inspired respect. Yet this dignity and grandeur, befitting his lofty rank, had been unaccompanied by any arrogance or jealousy."<sup>92</sup> Sympathy for Germanicus' wife and children, and sorrow over his early death, gave him almost a martyr's status as the people mourned his loss.

The reaction to Tiberius' death stands in marked contrast. He continued his tyrannical reign for many years, and, like Augustus, he had not made known a choice of successor as his death neared. In A.D. 37, the old emperor became ill, and when one day he seemed to have died, his son Gaius announced himself the new emperor. Suddenly, just afterwards, the seemingly dead old man awoke - but his attendants merely smothered him in his blankets and left him to die. In his death, Tiberius reaped the consequences of his harsh method of ruling Rome. Although throughout his reign his political maneuvering and cruelty kept in check those who might wish to take power, in the end, when he was weak, the lack of loyalty to him personally left him defenseless. The

counsel of Machiavelli, who said that "it is much safer to be feared than loved"<sup>93</sup>, is strongly refuted by the life of Tiberius.

All four of these men – Themistocles, Aristides, Germanicus, and Tiberius – at one time held positions of great power in their nations. However, contrary to Machiavelli's claims, the possession of extraordinary virtue and selflessness in two of them distinguishes them from their counterparts. Themistocles and Tiberius both had success in their time as leaders, but both also utilized habitual deception, bribery, and manipulation to accomplish their ends. While Themistocles helped Greece win the war against the Persians, he used questionable means to do so and was often preoccupied, and motivated, by his own self-importance and desire for glory. This later backfired upon him when he was no longer in favor with his fellow Athenians. Tiberius, although usually accomplishing his ends, was greedy for power and heedless as to whether he was benefiting his people, which led to hatred and abandonment of him in the end. The understanding and ability in politics possessed by these men, which Machiavelli would have commended, was offset by vices that harmed their careers immensely.

Aristides and Germanicus, on the other hand, were models not only in gaining power but also in how they acted while in leading positions. Aristides' commitment to justice and uprightness in his actions, as well as his humility, served him well in keeping the trust of his fellow Athenians. Germanicus, while never gaining as much power as Tiberius and being deprived of the throne which many thought should have been his, was an excellent military commander who was popular and loved, for good reason. Although he had several opportunities to subvert Tiberius' power through the people's great love for him, Germanicus remained loyal, performing his duty to Rome up to his untimely end.

It seems that it can be concluded from these examples that the best ruler is not simply one who is politically adept - although no doubt that is necessary - but it is he who refuses to compromise morally as well. This allows him to best utilize his power, to make wise decisions, and to gain the cooperation and love of his people. The lessons gleaned from observing why Aristides and Germanicus stand out above their counterparts teach us what ought to be looked for in a leader. Humility, commitment to justice, a desire for the good of one's country and people above personal ambition... these are the attributes that make a leader truly one who rules well.

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### **Independence Day**

When the Americans penned the Declaration of Independence, they appealed to the laws of Nature and Nature's God for justification for their actions. They recognized the faulty nature of the British government and decided that it was not only their right but their duty to rebel against it. But this right to overthrow a defective government is an incredibly important right not just for the Americans, but for every individual. We all were born into tyranny, into a repressive government that is contrary to our wellbeing and our very lives. For all of us, there comes a time in which we must decide where to entrust our citizenship; we have a choice to either rebel or to accept the government we were born into. At a certain time, we must choose either salvation or destruction, and that choice is directly related to what city we belong to.

According to Augustine, a great philosopher and theologian, there exist only two cities in heaven and on earth: the City of God and the City of Man. These cities are not constrained by natural barriers or geography, but call people from every nationality and language. Augustine states, "The two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self."<sup>94</sup> While those that live according to the Spirit are justly called citizens of the City of God, those that live after the flesh are citizens of the City of Man. Those that are governed by the City of God have uncorrupted natures and desire to serve God unconditionally, but those governed by the City of Man live after the flesh, their natures degraded by sin. The City of God and the City of Man are distinct nations with their own culture and government, and everyone must choose which city he will belong to. Like the colonists,

<sup>89</sup> Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome*, I.4

<sup>90</sup> Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome*, I.7

<sup>91</sup> Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome*, I.40

<sup>92</sup> Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome* II.69

<sup>93</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 17

<sup>94</sup> City of God, Book 14, Section 28

who had to choose between submission to Britain and submission to their own government, we must carefully consider the qualities of the City of Man and the City of God in order to decide which may justly be our ruler.

From birth, all people are governed by the City of Man. Just as a man born in Greece is governed by the Greek government, everyone is governed by the City of Man initially. The Grecian must participate in all of the duties and advantages that follow from being under Greek rule, and man must participate in the City of Man because he is governed by it. We are born under it by default; our original citizenship belongs to us through no choice of our own. But why are we all not born into the City of God? It is because of the culture of the City of God. Citizens of this city have natures uncorrupted by sin, and they desire to serve its King – God. We do not have this capacity from birth because of our nature that we inherited from Adam. The simple statement “in Adam’s fall, we sinned all”<sup>95</sup> captures the essence of his original sin and its impact on mankind. Through Adam, everyone’s nature was corrupted. Even if it was possible to live a perfectly virtuous life, we would still have a corrupted nature because separation from God, as a vice, would keep us in the City of Man. Paul, while writing to the Romans, explained, “the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men.”<sup>96</sup> We are citizens of the City of Man, already condemned by God. This statement, seemingly unjust, reveals the means to life and redemption. Paul continued his explanation, “For just as through the disobedience of one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many were made righteous.”<sup>97</sup> Christ’s death enables man to become righteous, and therefore we can become citizens of the City of God. While the City of Man governs a man at birth, the cross is the passport wherewith man is able to enter the City of God.

Although all men are originally citizens of the City of Man, a person’s government at death is ultimately chosen of free volition. Every man must choose whether to remain in the City of Man or to become a citizen of the City of God. The Grecian may decide that he would rather be Italian or Austrian, or he can choose to remain Grecian. The choice is his. The Americans had to decide whether to accept the British rule or to institute their own. Passive existence in a country, as Hobbes explains, is acceptance of a government and its power. Those that dwell within a country and live under its laws and borders passively consent to the government and its power. Similarly, although man is originally a citizen of the City of Man, if he remains in it, he accepts its power over him as though he had actively professed his desire to live under its laws. Because of Christ’s death, we are able to become citizens of the City of God by choice. Similarly, the man that remains in the City of Man is not obligated by force but has decided to remain.

In summary, “there are no more than two kinds of human society, which we may justly call two cities.”<sup>98</sup> One city governs those that live according to the flesh, and the other city governs those that desire to live according to God. Of these two cities, man is born into the City of Man. If he is to switch to the City of God, he must decide for himself, and there is no other means to convert to the City of God except through the acceptance of Christ’s death on the cross.

Yet whenever the change of government is considered, the knowledge that rebelling against a government is a solemn and important event should be remembered. Though there existed every reason for the colonists to rebel against Great Britain, their actions were tempered with caution. They state, “Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes.”<sup>99</sup> In this statement, Jefferson echoes a myriad of philosophers. If governments are changed often, or for minor reasons, the political system would inspire no trust or confidence, and its instability would undermine its power. In addition, Romans teaches us that governments are God’s institutions and instruments that should be obeyed. When one rebels against governments, one rebels against the Creator because God has established all authority. Romans warns, “Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.”<sup>100</sup> Man is born into the City of Man, and is governed by it; it is our original government and should be obeyed. There is a natural call of the City of Man. What gives man the right to rebel against its authority? And why does Jesus, while exhorting us to obey the government, desire us to rebel against the City of Man? Jesus

overthrows the natural order, stirring discontent with the people, calling them to rebel against the City of Man. Yet the counsel of wise philosophers and prudence advise us that rebellion is not a wise course of action.

Certain circumstances must necessitate rebellion against the government, and this rebellion is endorsed by God. If a government’s actions portray it to be working toward the good of the people, then it is fulfilling its purpose and should be obeyed. Paul explained to the Romans that a ruler is “God’s servant to do you good.”<sup>101</sup> As Locke said, if a government begins to rule by the sovereign’s arbitrary will against the people, then it ceases to be a government, and so ceases the duty of obeying it. However, an oppressive sovereign does not require the rebellion of the people. Consider that the Israelites remained under Egyptian rule for many years before God called Moses to lead them out. Living under an unjust ruler may be what is best for the people. But this is not always true. The government should still rule for the good of its citizens, otherwise it risks the just rebellion of its citizens. The Americans believed that if the government was no longer concerned with the good of the governed, they not only had a right, but a duty to rebel and to institute a worthy government in its place. How could the British king rule for their good when he lived so far away? John Locke believed that at times overthrowing the government “is no offence before God, but that which He allows and countenances.”<sup>102</sup> Certain circumstances justify the rebellion of the people. The colonists declared that sometimes, “In the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another.”<sup>103</sup> They evaluated the British rule and found that it exhibited many traits that put it in a ‘state of war’<sup>104</sup> with its people. They found that King George III exhibited tyrannical traits by neglecting the colonies, not letting their representatives assemble, establishing an arbitrary government, and by restricting their free trade. The Americans recognized that three of government’s primary purposes is to secure the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness of its people. Government is instituted for the good of the people, and the ruler of the people is to act as a king. Let us consider the merits of the City of God and the City of Man like the Americans did the British, to see which deserves to be our ruler.

Let us consider these two cities’ disposition toward the good of their subjects. The Declaration of Independence lists the grievances of the colonists against the British, one of them being that King George III “refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.”<sup>105</sup> The role of government is undoubtedly the good of the people, but what is the good of the people? The colonists believed it should secure the people’s rights. Plato believed that it should draw people toward “the good,” or virtue. Thomas Hobbes believed that the government is necessary to restrain men’s vices and to keep them from committing egregious acts against one another. John Locke believed that government is instituted to preserve men’s property. There are many goods that government ought to provide. If the City of God and the City of Man are evaluated by the various ‘goods’ just stated, it becomes clear that the City of God rules for its citizens’ good, while the City of Man rules only for its sovereign’s good. Not only does the City of God secure the rights of its citizens, it gives them rights that they do not deserve: the right to be called sons of God. Through Christ, man’s nature can be restored, healing the scars of vice; the City of God draws men toward virtue. As the City of God encourages virtue, it restrains man’s visceral nature, encouraging him to live in harmony with his friends. And with regard to property, what government can more preserve man’s property than that which preserves man’s life? Regarding all of the good that government ought to achieve, the City of God is far superior to the City of Man.

But let us also consider the disposition of the sovereigns of these nations, whether it is toward tyranny or kingship. As already stated, a king “is God’s servant to do you good.”<sup>106</sup> A king’s true end is to secure the good of his subjects. This is the disposition of Christ, who sacrificially died so that mankind could have life, and whose every action is toward the good of His citizens. The City of Man’s sovereign is not a king, but portrays many characteristics of a tyrant. According to John Locke, tyranny is an exercise of “power beyond right.”<sup>107</sup> When a sovereign uses his power of governing to his own advantage, he ceases to rule for the good of the people. What else did Satan do other than

<sup>95</sup> New England Primer

<sup>96</sup> Romans 5:18

<sup>97</sup> Romans 5:19

<sup>98</sup> City of God, Book 14, Section 1

<sup>99</sup> Declaration of Independence

<sup>100</sup> Romans 13:2

<sup>101</sup> Romans 13:4

<sup>102</sup> Declaration of Independence

<sup>103</sup> Declaration of Independence

<sup>104</sup> The Second Treatise on Civil Government

<sup>105</sup> Declaration of Independence

<sup>106</sup> Romans 13:4

<sup>107</sup> The Second Treatise on Civil Government, Chapter 18

further his own good when he tempted Eve? He tempted Eve out of a desire to extract vengeance against God,<sup>108</sup> hoping to further his glory. He saw Christ's undefiled and beloved creation and desired to corrupt it. When a sovereign "acts by his own private will, and uses his power for "his own private, separate advantage,"<sup>109</sup> he ceases to have a right power over the people and becomes "but a single private person without power."<sup>110</sup> Satan has no desire to further man's good. Rather, he "prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."<sup>111</sup> He desires to gain power and shame God by tempting us to corrupt our nature. Why else is he called the "adversary,"<sup>112</sup> "the father of lies,"<sup>113</sup> and "our common enemy?"<sup>114</sup> Satan's actions reveal that his secret intent is to further his own good regardless of the affliction of his subjects. The Americans state, "A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."<sup>115</sup> In such cases, the people do not have a duty to honor a tyrant because a tyrant's actions place the government at war with them. The City of God's sovereign rules for the good of its citizens, while the City of Man's sovereign portrays the characteristics of a tyrant. So next, like the Americans, let us consider if the City of God or the City of Man impart life, liberty, and happiness to its citizens.

First of all, not only does the City of Man not secure man's life, it leaves him in death. According to Augustine, there are two types of death: the death of the body and the death of the soul. He states, "The death, then, of the soul takes place when God forsakes it, as the death of the body when the soul forsakes it."<sup>116</sup> It then follows that the man that has no sin but has no God is in death. Augustine describes further: "the death of the whole man occurs when the soul, forsaken by God, forsakes the body. For, in this case, neither is God the life of the soul, nor the soul of the body."<sup>117</sup> The City of Man keeps men in death by separating him from God. How contrary this is to the City of God whose Sovereign states, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full."<sup>118</sup> By communing with God, the soul is given life, and this is made possible through Jesus. Why else is Jesus called "the way, the truth, and the life,"<sup>119</sup> and "the resurrection and the life?"<sup>120</sup> The City of Man leaves us in death by separating us from God. However, even though those in the City of God shall experience an earthly death, they shall always remain alive in Christ.

Second of all, the colonists believed that they had an unalienable right not only to life, but also to liberty. Those in the City of Man are slave to their flesh and they are at war with God. Those in the City of God become slave to God and follow after His will. Complete freedom can never be attained in either city. But why, then, did Jesus say "the truth will set you free?"<sup>121</sup> Why do we read in Psalms that those in the City of God "will walk at liberty" because they "seek Your precepts?"<sup>122</sup> Augustine believed that when a man sins he corrupts his good nature. Therefore, the damage done to his nature must be healed in order to return to his former nature. He states, "The will, therefore, is then truly free, when it is not the slave of vices and sins."<sup>123</sup> The City of God gives man liberty by restoring his nature. The Lord frees us from death, corruption, and vice, bringing us closer to our unfallen state. The closer a man is to what he is made for, the more free he will be. And yet man is still slave to Christ whose "yoke is easy" and whose "burden is light."<sup>124</sup> By bringing man closer to what he was meant to be, the City of God makes men free.

Third of all, the Americans held dear the right to pursue happiness. Ultimately, the pursuit of happiness is no more than the pursuit of peace, because happiness without assurance of future security is not true happiness. What good is liberty if there is no assurance of future felicity? This, according to Thomas Hobbes, can only be attained through the government. Government, he explained, is necessary because it restrains men from their own nature and provides a means

for them to live in harmony. He believed that men would not be able to live together peacefully without government because each man would look out only for his own interests, even to the detriment of others. The City of God helps to promote an external peace by drawing men toward acts of virtue, but the inner peace that it provides is much greater. When we adhere to God, we can forever be assured of our eternal happiness. There is an assurance of salvation, and a sweet inner knowing that, by serving God, our purpose is fulfilled. We can forever be assured that our government will fulfill its purpose – the good of its citizens. We can freely love the King, who is truly a King, and are no longer at odds with God. The City of God gives us peace through reconciliation with God and the certainty of eternal life. The City of God secures man's happiness.

Because God created mankind, the only city that can best rule toward his end is the City of God. It may be asked: "Why does separation from God bring death?" or "Why does liberty come from the City of God and not the City of Man?" or "Why does happiness come from God and not from our flesh?" It is because we were made for the City of God. Clement, exhorting the Greeks to cast aside their idol worship, proclaimed "for man has been constituted by nature, so as to have fellowship with God. As, then, we do not compel the horse to plough, or the bull to hunt, but set each animal to that for which it is by nature fitted; so...we invite him—born, as he is, for the contemplation of heaven to the knowledge of God."<sup>125</sup> Man's communion with God is an integral part of his nature. Man was made by God and for God. Augustine explains further, "vice is contrary to nature...And therefore, departure from God would be no vice, unless in a nature whose property it was to abide with God."<sup>126</sup> Because man is so "constituted to have fellowship with God," the only government that can rule beneficially to his end is the City of God.

When a man decides to live in the City of God, God enters into his soul, giving him life. He is liberated from the bondage of vices and is given the blessed assurance that he will live forever. Knowing these things, then, how can we help feeling what Clement so eloquently expressed: "does it not appear to you monstrous, that you men who are God's handiwork...and belong solely to God, should be subject to another master?"<sup>127</sup> How could we ever be subject to a tyrant when we rightly belong to the most beloved King?

Once we consider these circumstances and hear the commanding call of God, rebellion is not only right and just, but it is necessary. There is in fact a gross injustice in refraining to rebel against the oppressive City of Man. We must, like the Americans, proclaim that "when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."<sup>128</sup> After observing the shortcomings of their government, the Christians realized their right in overthrowing it, and realized that it was their duty to do so. There was a justness and a necessity in their actions. Clement stated that it would be a grave wrongdoing to despise or even to disregard the gracious offer of God. Though we are born into the City of Man and cannot change but for love and communion with God, we must still make the choice to rebel and declare our allegiance to the City of God and its beloved Sovereign. We must not simply know that the City of God is far superior to the City of Man, but we must act on our knowledge. As Clement so appropriately mentions, salvation can be won through "love and living faith."<sup>129</sup> Today you must choose your own citizenship. Each of us must experience our own Independence Day, where we pledge our "life, fortune, and sacred honor"<sup>130</sup> to another. Let us consider this last exhortation of Clement - "But to you still remains this conclusion, to choose which will profit you most—judgment or grace. For I do not think there is even room for doubt which of these is better; nor is it allowable to compare life with destruction."<sup>131</sup> Jesus desires us to realize our wretched state in the City of Man, to be refined in the fire, and to return to who He originally meant us to be. Jesus stands at the door of our hearts desiring us to enter into sweet fellowship with Him. But this is not possible without throwing off the oppression of the City of Man. So having weighed the disposition of the City of God and its blessings and favor, I beg and exhort you to be saved. Cast off the despotism of the City of Man, and to enter into the great blessings of the City of God.

<sup>108</sup> John Milton, Paradise Lost

<sup>109</sup> The Second Treatise on Civil Government, Chapter 18

<sup>110</sup> The Second Treatise on Civil Government, Chapter 13

<sup>111</sup> I Peter 5:8

<sup>112</sup> I Peter 5:8

<sup>113</sup> John 8:44

<sup>114</sup> Matthew 13:39

<sup>115</sup> Declaration of Independence

<sup>116</sup> City of God, Book 13, Section 2

<sup>117</sup> City of God, Book 13, Section 2

<sup>118</sup> John 10:10-11

<sup>119</sup> John 14:6

<sup>120</sup> John 11:25

<sup>121</sup> John 8:32

<sup>122</sup> Psalm 119:45

<sup>123</sup> City of God, Book 14, Section 11

<sup>124</sup> Matthew 11:30

<sup>125</sup> Exhortation to the Greeks, Chapter 10, Section 200

<sup>126</sup> City of God, Book 2, Section 17

<sup>127</sup> Exhortation to the Greeks, Chapter 10, Section 198

<sup>128</sup> Declaration of Independence

<sup>129</sup> Chapter 9, Section 196

<sup>130</sup> Declaration of Independence

<sup>131</sup> Exhortation to the Greeks, Chapter 12, Section 206

**Humility:**  
The Gateway to Virtue

The name Martin Luther has resounded throughout the halls of history. He was a man who won the hearts of the German people. From his lips rang the cry similar to that of Marcus Aurelius, in the epic film *Gladiator*, "End the corruption that has for so long crippled Rome." Martin Luther was not the first to say it; however, he was dubbed "The Founder of the Reformation". So, why was Luther the first reformer that the people of Europe followed *en masse*? The people trusted Martin Luther because he was a virtuous man. In all the works he wrote, he never profited from them. His generosity was so great that at times it hurt his family. His humility was evidenced by the knowledge that he had the heart to write a German Bible for all who spoke in his tongue when the ability to read Latin was considered prestigious. It was his great virtues that allowed Luther to start the reformation of the Christian church.

What creates virtue within a man? No other person laid out the path to virtue better than Augustine. He said, "Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance." In this statement, Augustine elevates the virtue of humility above all other virtues; claiming it to be essential in a virtuous soul. This is because humility is the unseen cornerstone to the house of virtue.

Most people believe that humility is the product of having a negative self-image. This is caused by viewing and dwelling on one's negative traits. For this reason, the definition of humility has been wrongly defined at times. Close examination of great men in history and classical literature proves that a negative self-image is not true humility.

The results of a negative self-image can be seen in the life of Oedipus. One day, during his reign as the king of Thebes, he was visited by a prophet. The prophet foretold that the kingdom was under punishment because a man had murdered his father and married his mother. Oedipus realized that he was that man. Through no fault of his own, but merely through a series of very unfortunate coincidences, these events had occurred. Nonetheless, it was enough to destroy his mental image of himself. His initial reaction was to gorge his eyes out. A person cannot be expected to act normally under such stressful circumstances. Banished from Thebes, the remainder of his life was spent in bitterness, cursing his sons for not lifting his banishment. His death was the summation of anger and regret in which, to his final moments, he steadfastly refused to forgive his sons. Although Oedipus had a bad self-image, he never achieved virtue or any semblance of true humility.

Another case of a poor self-image that epitomizes the failure to achieve virtue is that of Judas Iscariot. As Jesus' trusted treasurer, he regularly used the money he was given for his own purposes. John 12:6 confirmed this, "[talking of Judas] He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it." When the opportunity finally came, he sold Jesus as well. Soon after he did this, he regretted betraying his friend, returning the well-loved money. Then he hung himself near the place he had betrayed Jesus. Throughout the process of his regret and the destruction of his self-image, Judas failed to show any good.

A bad self-image did not reflect humility because it creates self-hatred. Self-hatred is often defined as a characteristic of humility. An example of this is the connection between wheat and chaff. Wheat is useful, chaff is not. When the plants are young, they are nearly indistinguishable. When chaff grows up, it is inedible, making it useless to the farmer who tills the field. So it is with humility and a bad self-image. From outward appearance, the traits look similar, but a bad self-image merely leads to an inward self-hate that ultimately destroys the person.

Humble conditions and humiliating circumstances do not create humility. These life-time lessons can create humility, but are not a guarantee that the people will learn them. An example from Greek literature is from the story of Odysseus. Odysseus was condemned to be a sea wanderer for ten years. His desire, when he started his journey back home, was to be reunited with his wife. He was a clever man who could deceive people without even trying. During his voyage, he nearly reached his home many times through many trials, but each time the gods stopped him. Once he even was forced to be the lover of a sea goddess. Another time, a Cyclops, whom he had fooled, almost killed Odysseus and his men through Odysseus's own stupidity. Yet, even with all these humiliating events, he still used people, and dwelled only for himself. This is seen when the princess Nausikaa fell in love with Odysseus. Instead of informing the princess that he had no intentions of marrying her and that, in fact, he was already married, he played along. That was until an avenue of escape to home presented itself. Then he left with good winds never to see or think of her again. Although Odysseus spent many years being humiliated in various ways, a humble, virtuous spirit was never formed in this Greek character.

A bad self image, humbling conditions, and humiliating circumstances are not the character traits that describe humility. They did not create virtuous behavior in the three stories of men who could have learned the lessons of humility. In Oedipus' and Judas' case, a bad self-image destroyed instead of reformed their lives. Odysseus was even prouder of his accomplishments after his trials. The reason why they did not create humility was because these men were self-focused. A bad self-image creates a sense of self-pity and anger, which do not create the desire to change. Humble conditions can create a need to be humble, but it cannot break and tame the heart into being humble. Humiliating circumstances creates self pity or the need to justify oneself. If these are not the true traits of humility, then what defines humility based on Augustine's definition?

What is humility? Humility starts when one sees himself through the eyes of another person. When a person reflects upon his character, a humble person will realize that others matter as much as oneself; thus, creating a desire to do good towards others. The humble person does not focus on himself and his own needs, but he will focus on those around him. The truly humble person thinks of others first, even to the detriment of himself.

An example of a humble man is Odysseus's swineherd Eumaios. When Odysseus came back to his kingdom of Ithaca, he was greeted and housed by Eumaios. Since Odysseus was disguised as a beggar, Eumaios had no idea that he was entertaining the king. In the swineherd's perspective, he had given his gracious hospitality to a complete stranger. While clothing and feeding Odysseus, Eumaios held nothing of his material possessions back. His attentiveness to Odysseus' needs showed itself most vividly when he realized that Odysseus was cold based merely on the story Odysseus told. This is a man who thought of other person's needs before his own. A man who treats a king and a poor beggar in the same fashion is a man who had truly obtains humility.

An excellent role model of a lady who showed humility was Sonya from *War and Peace*. Sonya was a girl adopted by her mother's sister. Her life was devoted to serving her foster family, the Rostovs. Self-sacrifice was her strongest quality. Her one reward to her selflessness was a promise of marriage to her cousin Nikolai, whom she deeply loved. The Rostov family had become bankrupt through a series of bad financial decisions. Their only hope of maintaining their wealthy status was for Nikolai to marry a rich heiress. The heiress had been found and had fallen in love with Nikolai. The only impediment to the arranged marriage was Nikolai's promise to marry Sonya. The family, desperately wishing to restore their fortune, asked Sonya to give up her desire to marry her beloved Nikolai. Sonya, aghast at this proposal, finally consented, and against her desire told him that she would not hold him to his promise of marriage. Sonya lost Nikolai, but through her humility she had saved her family's fate and status.

True humility is seeing oneself as a faulty human, while at the same time recognizing and providing for the needs of others. Eumaios gave a total stranger the best hospitality he could, not because he wished to gain anything, but simply because Odysseus was a person in need. Sonya did not hold onto the man she loved because she knew her desire would have ruined the entire Rostov Family. Humility responds to the needs of others before satisfying the needs of oneself.

What defines virtue? Virtue is the idea of doing what is morally right. Anything that satisfies morally right behavior will be considered a virtue. The problem, with this definition of virtue, is that people often have differing opinions on what satisfies morals. Throughout time, philosophers have discounted some morals that others have esteemed as highly valuable. It left the question, what is virtue?

The Philosopher Immanuel Kant believes that virtue comes from a sense of duty. He teaches that unless someone predetermined that he has performed good while actually doing it, he has accomplished virtue. For example, if someone were to stop for a red light, whether or not his action is virtuous would be determined by why he stops. If he stops because he saw other cars coming and is afraid of being run over, he is not virtuous. If he stops because it is the law, and he wants to obey authority, only then would it be a virtuous action. Kant states the concept this way, "Nothing in the world-indeed nothing even beyond the world- can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a good will." The problem with this view is that people have multiple motives. The man who stops for the red light may halt to avoid an accident and obey the law. He also may stop because there is a policeman right behind him. Which motive is he to be judged by? If he is to be judged by all of them, has he met the requirements to be virtuous? For these reasons, Kant's definition fails to properly define virtue. Nor can Kant's definition conform to Augustine's definition because it lacks any need for humility.

A common belief system, which has been taught through many religions, is the concept that people can work their way into heaven through their virtue. If they merely could outweigh their evil works with righteous works, they will be virtuous. This belief is not very different than Kant's. They believe that instead of doing something out of duty, doing it with good intentions will qualify it as a virtue. In the Iliad, Agamemnon may have had good intentions when he killed his daughter. It seemed the only way to travel to Troy, at the time. Instead, his decision cost him more than just the life of his daughter. He allowed a bloody war to proceed that eventually consumed the land of Troy. He only wished to restore his brother's wife, so his intentions were rectified. The end result of his choice was that he started a greater evil than the one he sought to end. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions", Karl Marx so eloquently stated. Good intentions cannot justify a person's crime; one must turn to an alternate source to define virtue.

The virtuous actions that reflect the attributes of humility are joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control. This list is easily recognizable as the biblical reference to "the fruits of the spirit". These virtues can be emulated when one is striving for a goal. However, once the goal is reached and the striving to obtain it had ends, so does the virtue. There must be something else that drives virtue. One virtue, left off this list, is love. Virtue is the product of love. How can one desire peace, when he does not love the other whom he has conflict with? How can one practice self-control when he is not the one who is hurt by not demonstrating it? Paul writes in I Corinthians 13:1, "If I speak in the tongues of man and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." Virtue is driven by love. It is because of love that one pursues others' interests in front of one's own. Virtue is merely a side effect of love.

The loving attitude of men towards their fellows is the driving force that breeds virtue. This kind of love is not prevalent throughout all cultures; for example, an eye for an eye concept does not lend itself toward promoting selfless virtues. The definition of love, that is not virtuous in nature, is the attraction between individuals of the opposite sex. This type of love is lust. When the lust is taken away, the relationship falls apart because it is built on a physical relationship. No, in fact, true love goes beyond the limitations of lust. True love holds no judgment of wrong against a person and embraces all kinds of different people. True love comes from within, it is an attitude. The attitude state, "No matter what the other person has done, one will repay his neighbor with good."

In War and Peace there is a Russian princess named Maria. Maria was a homely girl with an ill-tempered father. At every opportunity, Maria's father would humiliate his daughter and anyone she cared about. Despite her father's behavior, Maria would never speak out against him. She would ignore his malicious teasing and continue to care for him. Maria's father's cruelty became so intense that her brother angrily spoke out against his own father. Yet when her

brother spoke of the problem to Maria, she would not dishonor her father, but dismissed and forgave his rude behavior. Maria's compassion and love was seen in other areas of her life, such as her love for pilgrims. She would often host the poor people, who came seeking holy relics. She fed and conversed with them about their travels. Maria lived a hard life, many people let her down, but she still loved all including her father despite his many faults. Her love came from an inward attitude that forgave, did not keep a record of wrongs, and valued others greater than herself. Maria learned to love her father despite his evil pleasures. Even when he got worse, she still held on to her love for him. This kind of love was despised and looked down upon as a weakness.

This is why so many people have missed virtue. They crave for virtue, but they do not bother to perform the self sacrifice necessary to attain it. Maria's virtue comes from an attitude of love. For this reason, her virtue will never die, but her virtue has become part of her character. As seen with Maria, love is the path that leads to permanent and lasting virtue.

Since a loving attitude is the path that leads to virtue, the question remains, how does one attain love? The answer is through humility. Pride avenges every wrong transgression against it, whereas humility has a short memory of transgressions. The root of pride is that it binds a person to think only of himself. Humility breaks the bonds and shows a person how to see people not as a means to fulfill their own desires, but as fellow humans that need one's attention.

One of the greatest examples of a man whose pride stops him from being virtuous was the Greek general Agamemnon. His task was to command the Grecian armies for his brother, Menelaus. However, in the ninth year of battle with Troy, Agamemnon stole his lower general's concubine. So began the epic Iliad. Achilles was outraged at Briseis' absence. Agamemnon had no need to sleep with this beautiful girl, but he needed Achilles' help to win this war. Instead of making poor excuses for his lust, he could have remedied the situation by taking responsibility for his behavior. His pride kept him from acting in a virtuous manner. Instead, Agamemnon lost one of his best generals over a minor issue, almost costing his brother the war. If Agamemnon had been humble throughout the affair and had sacrificed his own pleasure for the good of his army, he may have saved the Grecian army much misery, pain, and even death.

King David, a model of humility, proves that when a person loses their humility, they lose love and virtue. David came from humbling circumstances which were the roots of his virtue. He was a king that was not born into his position but was appointed by God and anointed by Samuel. One day, while atop his palace, he spied a naked woman and lusted after her. The affair with Bathsheba resulted in her becoming pregnant with the king's child and the murder of her husband, Uriah. The important aspect of this story was that David lost his humility. His motive to have Uriah killed was to hide his selfish acts of lust. During this time, David became malicious and paranoid. It was only when he was confronted and humbled by a prophet did David begin to love again. His virtuous character followed and never ceased until his death, as recorded by the Bible. David repented and never again forgot the source of his strength that allowed him to act humbly, and therefore, virtuously.

The last example of a person who obtained virtue through humility is Natasha from War and Peace. She lived a notoriously self-centered existence. Her natural beauty and charm only helped her win friends. Her life went from one petty pursuit to another, until she was engaged to a military officer, Andrei. The relationship lasted only until he was forced to leave for an extended period. Then the seducer, Anatol, found her affections. Natasha fell for Anatol and tried to run off with him; sacrificing the honor and reputation of her family. Throughout this part of her life, Natasha was egotistical and prideful. Then war came upon Russia, her family lost most of their wealth and social status. During this time, Natasha met the man she was formerly engaged too, Andrei. Realizing her past sins, Natasha repented from her self-centered attitude. She cared not only for Andrei, but for others around her. Her love of all was proven by the fact that the man she loved, Andrei, died, and yet she still loved all. At the end of the book, Natasha became a selfless wife to another man, and became a well-loved and virtuous mother. She had the humility to cast aside her old ways, to love, and to sacrifice everything for those around her. Natasha gained all the characteristics of being a virtuous woman.

It is through humility that one can love. One can not imagine another person's needs, or more importantly, can prioritize their focus on the needs of others over the desires and needs of himself. Thinking of others first requires that humility be the cornerstone of all virtues. Then one has the attitude of love which in turn produces virtues like joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control. Instead of premeditated actions based on duty, as Kant has suggested, virtue will become the automatic habits of humility and of love. There will be no temporary goal that will be present one day and gone the next. It would simply become part of one's character as demonstrated by Natasha. The attitude of love should not incapacitate someone of the means to promote a just life. Instead, the humble man should be the first to gently inform his neighbor of a wrong his neighbor has done. If his neighbor will not repent, then the loving man should not attempt to subvert the consequences his neighbor has invoked. For the truly loving man desires the best for everyone around him, and sometimes the best means his neighbor must suffer in order to learn. However, the loving attitude does not hold wrongs against a remorseful wrongdoer. Once someone has mastered this mindset, humility becomes the start of any virtuous action.

Throughout history, philosophers have sought to define virtue. Yet, they seem to misunderstand humility's role in virtuous action. There have been a few men like Martin Luther, who are well respected and well-loved men, despite their humble stature. Another famous man of humility was Augustine, initially an evil man who repented of his actions, and then gave more to the world through his great writings. They are humble men who gave generously to all. However, Augustine and Martin Luther are uncommon exemplars of true humility glorified. Most humble men are side characters in history. Like Odysseus's Goatherd; Eumaios. Eumaios is a man who conquered something greater than Odysseus. Odysseus conquered men, yet Eumaios conquered himself. Odysseus was a great actor; Eumaios never had to act: humility and love were his nature. However, it is Odysseus that history will most remember. Sonya, from War and Peace, the selfless woman who saves the Rostov family countless times, received an unforgettable recognition for her priceless virtue. In a conversation, with her sister-in-law, Princess Maria, Natasha told Maria that Sonya was not human; instead she was like a plant. She told Maria that Sonya's kind was incomprehensible and alien to the human race. For the same reason that Sonya is described as an alien, is why philosophers misunderstood humility. Humility is never glorified, love rarely appreciated. But, true virtue lies in the selfless love of one's neighbor. This leaves a person with a choice similar to the one the Greek gods left Achilles. Will one embrace the powerful, glorious pride that is so fast and fleeting? Or will one endure the humbling and enduring path that love takes to virtue?

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*If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*  
-Philippians 2:1-5

### **A Greater Love: No One But This**

Friends—good friends, bad friends, tolerable friends—everyone has them, everyone needs them. There are friends, who are more like acquaintances, such as in a business relationship. They are the type of people that everyone needs around. There are the types of friends that one enjoys spending time with, because they are interested in similar things. There are the few who a person is friends with because they satisfy the desires of their flesh. Another kind of friend is one in whom a person confides—a kindred spirit—two people who really love each other and wish the good of each other, through being each other's friend. In his work *The Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes three types of friendship; Perfect Friendship, Friendship of

Pleasure, and Friendship of Utility. The friendship of utility is a friendship between two people that often occurs in business; one that is mutually beneficial. The friendship of pleasure consists of two people that have a general interest in each other, or a particular quality of the other person that they enjoy. This manner of friendship is most often driven by one's desires and passions. The perfect friendship is one in which two good people love one another and wish for the bettering of the other. In this friendship, these persons wish for the production of some good in their friend's life through his friendship with him. Aristotle's friendship of good people being friends cannot be a *perfect* friendship, because the friends are imperfect; a perfect friendship necessitates perfect people. Man is sinful, so he cannot have a perfect friendship. Jesus Christ is the only individual who can have a perfect friendship, because he is perfect. Thus, His forgiveness of man, through His sacrifice on the cross, is a perfect friendship. A man can make every effort to have a perfect friendship with his friend, but will never reach the level of perfection that *Jesus* has in His friendship with mankind, because of his own imperfection. Thus, the highest form of friendship attainable on Earth is that of good people. This type of friendship must include some amount of sacrifice; in order to wish the good of the other person, one must put his friend's desires above his own. The best type of friend is one who wishes the good of another, is willing to sacrifice himself for his friend and who thinks of his friend's interests before thinking of his own.

### **ARISTOTLE AND**

#### **AUSTEN**

Aristotle says, "Now those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves, but in virtue of some good which they get from each other." Aristotle's friendship of utility is based on the utilizing of another person for one's own good. This can be a master using his slave to do hard work, or a poor person befriending a rich person to use his wealth for his own benefits. Utilitarian friendship can be quite selfish—manipulating others' qualities or belongings for the bettering of themselves. However, it is not always one-sided; two or more people can mutually benefit each other. One man may be in need of a certain tool; another loans it to him. The latter may need a tool fixed; the former fixes it for him. Both men are benefited by the relationship. This form of friendship is only wrong when one person selfishly exploits another for his own benefits, to the detriment of the one being taken advantage of. Aristotle says that, "Friendship based on utility is for the commercially minded". If the basis of one's friendship with another is his friend's usefulness for him, it is of utility—this type of friendship is very good to acquire for people who buy, sell and trade goods.

In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, there is an example of the friendship of utility. Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas provide this example. Mr. Collins—an older, undesirable, lower class clergyman who would provide a dull and cheerless life for a young lady, has just proposed to and been quickly (and understandably!) rejected by the lively, vivacious Elizabeth Bennett. Charlotte Lucas invites Mr. Collins to dinner that night and he proposes to her. Charlotte accepts. Miss Lucas decides that a marriage to an undesirable man is better than no marriage at all and a life lived as an 'old maid'. After hearing of this engagement, Lizzy Bennett cannot understand why Charlotte would lower her expectations of marriage enough to marry Mr. Collins for worldly advantage and, "the pang of a friend disgracing herself and sunk in her esteem, was added the distressing conviction that it was impossible for that friend to be tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen." Charlotte might have wished for a marriage much more blissful than the one she chose, but there was not one to be found; thus, she settled for Mr. Collins. Her family's financial position was unstable, so she chose to marry and have a steady financial position. She gave herself a steady income and comfortable home, but not much change of love and happiness, as she is married to Mr. Collins. Charlotte chooses the utilities of a safe, mediocre marriage over a life full of love and happiness.

The second form of friendship that Aristotle describes is the friendship of pleasure: this friendship is one of instant gratification. It is a friendship that is ruled by one's desire and passion. "It is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant", says Aristotle. Friends of pleasure are friends that enjoy each other's company and have similar interests. An example of this is when two people have an interest in a particular hobby, so they get together to do that certain activity together. This is a nice, beneficial companionship that is enjoyed by both of the friends. This is one aspect of the friendship of pleasure. The other aspect is more of a satisfaction of the desires than the first. It is when two people's friendship is controlled by their passion. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Phaedrus is explaining this type of friendship to Socrates, saying, "You

should know that the friendship of a lover arises without any good will at all. No, like food, its purpose is to sate hunger.” This is an example of pleasurable friendship, which consists of people who indulge in their desires for each other. Plato’s *Phaedrus* also says, “The unreasoning desire that overpowers a person’s considered impulse to do right and is driven to take pleasure in beauty, its force reinforced by its kindred desires for beauty in human bodies—this desire [is] all-conquering in its forceful drive.” Socrates is saying that the type of friendship where people give in to their desires can originally be an admiration of another’s beauty, but when passion reigns, conquers reason and flame the fires of desire. It causes men to become gluttonous; giving in to his passion, instead of listening to his reason, as is talked about in the *Phaedrus*, with the charioteer and the horses.

Throughout history, there have been many examples of the friendship of pleasure, one being that of Mr. Wickham and Lydia Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. Lydia is a flighty, selfishly foolish young girl who goes to Brighton with the regiment, to be Mrs. Forester’s personal companion. Mr. Wickham is a charismatically cunning officer in the regiment, who first is interested in Lizzy, but while Lydia is away from her family and uninhibited to satisfy her insatiable desire for men, partakes of this occasion and elopes with her—much to the dismay of all her relations. Lizzy thinks of this relationship as trivial; she thinks, “But how little of permanent happiness could belong to a couple who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue.” Mr. Wickham and Lydia hardly know each other, yet find each other irresistible; thus, they choose *not* to resist each other, which begets them a lot of trouble. Lydia has no money, and no connections that might bequeath her some. Therefore, Wickham is not tempted by her money; only his own desire for her. Wickham cannot promise Lydia a comfortable home or a good amount of money, which concludes that Lydia must want to be married because she desires Wickham. Although the couple may be happy for a while, getting married on the sole basis of one’s passion for another is an undesirable way to conduct a friendship.

The opposing type of friendship that Aristotle explains is that of a perfect friendship. Aristotle says, “And in loving a friend men love what is good for themselves; for the good man in becoming a friend becomes a good to his friend.” A perfect friendship consists of two people becoming friends to better each other; to become a good for one another through their friendship. He continues, saying, “Each, then, both loves what is good for himself, and makes an equal return in goodwill and in pleasantness...for both of these are most found in the friendship of the good.” Good temperedness and enjoyable companionship are the qualities of this friendship, which is the greatest type of friendship, according to Aristotle. Perfect friendship is based on a love for another person. Our philosopher says, “Now since friendship depends more on loving, and it is those who love their friends that are praised, loving seems to be the characteristic virtue of friends, so that it is only those in whom this is found in due measure that are lasting friends, and only their friendship endures.” Mutual pleasantness and virtue are marks of a perfect friendship. Those in a perfect friendship are not void of all pleasure; but it is substantial, unlike that of a friendship of pleasure, because their *love* for each other gives them pleasure; not solely their *passion* for each other. Perfect friends unite in the heartfelt delight, not meaningless pleasure, of each other. Aristotle also comments that, “Goodwill seems, then, to be a beginning of friendship, as the pleasure of the eye is the beginning of love...goodwill is inactive friendship, though when it is prolonged and reaches the point of intimacy it becomes friendship—not the friendship based on utility nor that based on pleasure; for goodwill too does not arise on those terms.” The wish of goodwill for one’s friend will eventually become a *perfect* friendship; the friendships of utility and of pleasure are exclusive of goodwill for the other person.

Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy exemplify a perfect friendship. When they first meet each other, Darcy proves himself to be the most disagreeable man Lizzy has ever met. Darcy falls in love with Lizzy; Lizzy does not know this, until one day, when he confesses his love and proposes to her in a ‘most un-gentlemanlike manner’. Later on in the book, Lizzy visits Darcy’s magnificent home, Pemberley, and falls in love with it. (Unbeknownst to her, the master of this house is still in love with her.) She and her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, are shown around the house by the dotting housekeeper, who has nothing but good things to say about the entire Darcy family. A very awkward and unexpected meeting of Darcy and Lizzy occurs while Lizzy is perusing the grounds there. Instead of acting uncivil like she might have expected of him, Darcy behaves very differently from the prideful, uncaring man she has been acquainted with—he shows himself to be a very gentle, amiable man who insists on having her and her aunt and uncle over for dinner the next night. Lizzy agrees that she

will come, but is quite amazed at the change of his attitude toward her—and everyone else, for that matter. This is indeed quite a bewildering ordeal for Lizzy—her feelings of hatred and rejection begin to change towards Mr. Darcy, as he *proves* himself worthy of her love and devotion in their recent interactions with each other. Darcy still loves Lizzy, which her aunt and uncle observed, when they called upon Mr. Darcy the day after their meeting at Pemberley; “...and soon they drew from those enquiries the full conviction that one of them knew what it was to love...that the gentleman was overflowing with admiration was evident enough.”

But, shortly after this decisive meeting, Lydia runs off with Mr. Wickham. This scandal causes Lizzy to think that she will never see Mr. Darcy again, as her family has been so disgraced. Circumstances turn out much better than one would have thought; instead of scorning the Bennet family, Darcy becomes an “Avenging Angel” for them. Darcy has an income of ten thousand a year, and undisclosed to the family, pays Lydia’s dowry. Mr. Bennet has hardly any money in which to pay Mr. Wickham for his daughter, and is caused to believe that the Uncle Mr. Gardiner is whom he is indebted to, because he paid the dowry. The Bennet family is not indebted to their wonderful uncle, but to the man who they all detest because of his pride and disdainful manner—all but Lizzy, that is, who’s growing feelings for him were quickly dashed upon her youngest sister’s exploitation. The family is impressed with Wickham’s charm and friendliness when they first meet him, then he and Lydia run off together, which makes his charm not so alluring after all. The Bennet family is highly unimpressed with Mr. Darcy at first, yet he is the one who gives of himself for the good of others—even to those whose social position is “so decidedly below his own”. The Bennet family does not realize that this seemingly arrogant and rich young man is actually doing better things for them with his money than Wickham is with his charm! Consequently, Mr. Darcy, who, in actuality is quite humble and benevolent, is the one who conducts his friendships well—in opposition to Mr. Wickham, the one who deceives his friends with his charm and charisma.

Later on in the story, when the new Mr. and Mrs. Wickham come for a visit, after Lydia accidentally tells Lizzy and Jane of Mr. Darcy’s attendance of their wedding, Lizzy discovers this wonderful act of kindness that was made with regard for her family. One day, shortly after Bingley and Jane’s engagement, Darcy tells Lizzy that he “thought only of her” when paying Lydia’s dowry. By the end of this conversation, the two are engaged. This generous amount of money Mr. Darcy provided is a sacrifice for him, which is intended for the good of Lizzy—such is the measure of a perfect friendship.

A perfect friendship, according to Aristotle, is something like this: “Perhaps they should look for friends who, being pleasant, are also good, and good for them, too; for so they will have all the characteristics that friends should have”, says Aristotle. Mr. Darcy and Miss Bennet are pleasant and good as persons. Not only do Darcy and Lizzy enjoy each other, but they love each other and are good for each other. They are also good *to* each other. Darcy sacrificed a large sum of money for Lydia, on behalf of Lizzy. Lizzy forgives Darcy of his past pride and conceit. Sacrifice and love are necessary virtues to reach this standard of friendship; the prerequisite of a perfect friendship is love for the other person, and to love someone requires sacrifice of one’s own desires. Darcy and Lizzy love each other and have sacrificed themselves to be friends as husband and wife; thus, their friendship in marriage is what Aristotle would call a perfect friendship.

#### A PARALLEL

Another example of perfect friendship’s love and sacrifice is Jesus Christ’s death on the Cross. Jesus loves man, so He sacrificed Himself on man’s behalf. This was the perfect friendship, because Jesus is perfect—so everything He does must be perfect. God demonstrated to mankind what a perfect friendship is to be like, by sacrificing His Son on a cross. His perfect Son had to humble himself to become like man, yet in his Incarnation, did not sin—but he bore man’s sin, so that the sinful man could be presented unblemished in God’s sight. The example of forgiveness and sacrifice set by Jesus reminds man of God’s love for Him, and the necessity to love others, because God loves them.

Jesus, who is perfect, was sacrificed on the cross for the good of mankind. This level of sacrifice is unattainable for man, because he is imperfect. If he were to come before a perfect God, he would be rejected. Because man is sinful, he cannot face a perfect God with his sins. It is not possible—only Jesus is capable of facing God, because He is perfect. As a result, *Jesus* became the Mediator in which the Created is accepted by its Creator. Because of this, man is forgiven of his sins. Jesus made a way for man to face God, yet in so doing, died Himself. The glory of the sacrifice is in Christ’s Resurrection—this is what really

enables man to come to God—His triumphant defeat of death. This sacrificing of self is the most perfect kind of friendship attainable on Earth; a sacrifice so profound can only be out of an undying and true love for the recipient of the effects of that sacrifice. Thus, the ultimate form of perfect friendship, which is the sacrifice of self, is really that of true love. This is a different kind of love than that of an Aristotelian perfect friendship. It is going beyond wishing virtue in another person, to complete forgiveness for the wrongs done. A perfect man is the only one able to offer complete forgiveness, or, a perfect friendship, for another man. Man is not perfect, so he is incapable of having a perfect friendship with a friend, as Jesus has. Anyone who lays down his life for his friend gives a glimpse of what the perfectly forgiving love of Jesus Christ is like.

The most excellent form of friendship that is attainable on Earth is Aristotle's perfect friendship, of good people. This type of friendship is not actually perfect, as a *perfect* friendship must consist of perfect people. Aristotle's perfect friendship is when two good people wish for the good of one another through their friendship; the most perfect type of friendship is when perfect people are friends. This type of friendship does not happen on Earth, because man is not *perfect*, rather, *sinful*. Aristotle describes his idea of the perfect friendship as, "...to a friendship of good men all the qualities we have named belong in virtue of the nature of the friends themselves...", which means that a friendship is only as good as the participants of it. He goes on to say, "...for in the case of this kind of friendship the other qualities also are alike in both friends..." meaning that the friends should not only be virtuous, but like-minded in their virtues. Men who are virtuous in the same ways are pleasant and take pleasure in one another. Thus, "Love and friendship therefore are found most and in their best form between such men. But it is natural that such friendships should be infrequent, for such men are rare." A friendship, in which men are good *and* pleasant, is the highest type of friendship attainable on Earth. Although Aristotle calls it a perfect friendship, it is not, because the perfect friendship requires men who are *perfect*, not just *good*. This type of friendship is extraordinary and uncommon, because men of this character are rarely come by. It is a beautiful phenomenon when sinful men come together in harmony and love and become good friends.

An interesting parallel is that Mr. Darcy is an *example* of a perfect friend; while Jesus is the *embodiment* of a perfect friend. But a sinful man's sacrifice *and* love are not nearly as undying as Jesus, the Perfect One's sacrifice *of* love. Because the "perfect friendship" as Aristotle describes it, is of perfection, it is unattainable on Earth, where sin is pervasive. This is why Darcy's sacrifices are not one and the same with Jesus', even though some may believe this to be true.

Everyone has friends and needs friends, but one can observe from Aristotle's explanation of the three types of friendship and Jane Austen's literary examples of them that the best kind attainable on Earth is Aristotle's perfect friendship. This is when good people are friends; Mr. Darcy and Lizzy Bennet have this type of friendship. These two are united in one ultimate purpose—the production of some good in the other, through their friendship and love for each other. The other types of friendship are utility, embodied by Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas, where one uses his friend for his own services, and pleasure; such as the friendship based on the gratification of one's fleshly desires between Mr. Wickham and Lydia Bennet. A perfect friendship must consist of perfect people, so the *truly* perfect friendship is that of Jesus Christ's friendship with man. Because of Jesus' *perfection* and love of man, He made a way for man's sins to be forgiven by a perfect God: He died a perfect death. Dying for one's friend entails self-sacrificial, unending love; thus, the perfect friendship is when one not only thinks of his friend's interests before his own, but loves his friend and sacrifices his own self for the good of him. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."