

A
FATHER
AND
FUTURE
FELON

12 LETTERS FROM JAIL

H. Kirk Rainer



MY HOME
INDUSTRY

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Notes to the reader: the author has taken some liberty to use italics to highlight idioms and key words; examples of key words: *plea bargaining, due process, The State, The Mess, The Madness, conflict and contention*, etc.

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*This project is dedicated to those fathers
who have committed themselves to the care
of their children and even children who
lack a parent and such care.*

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Fellows/Fathers

“Fellows/Fathers” is an expression and description for a simple division of men. Whether jailed men or not, “fellows and fathers” is the two words that I have selected as a convenience of classification.

Understand that either or both of these words do not necessarily imply a friend; whether jailed or not, both friend and foe are found. Anyone can be a fellow and a father; even those not necessarily a father (naturally) can or will assume the mantel of the socially-derived sense of fatherhood. Generally, those who have taken this “mantel” would be thought of as a friend of those whom they mentor or guide; but naturally, there are foes too.

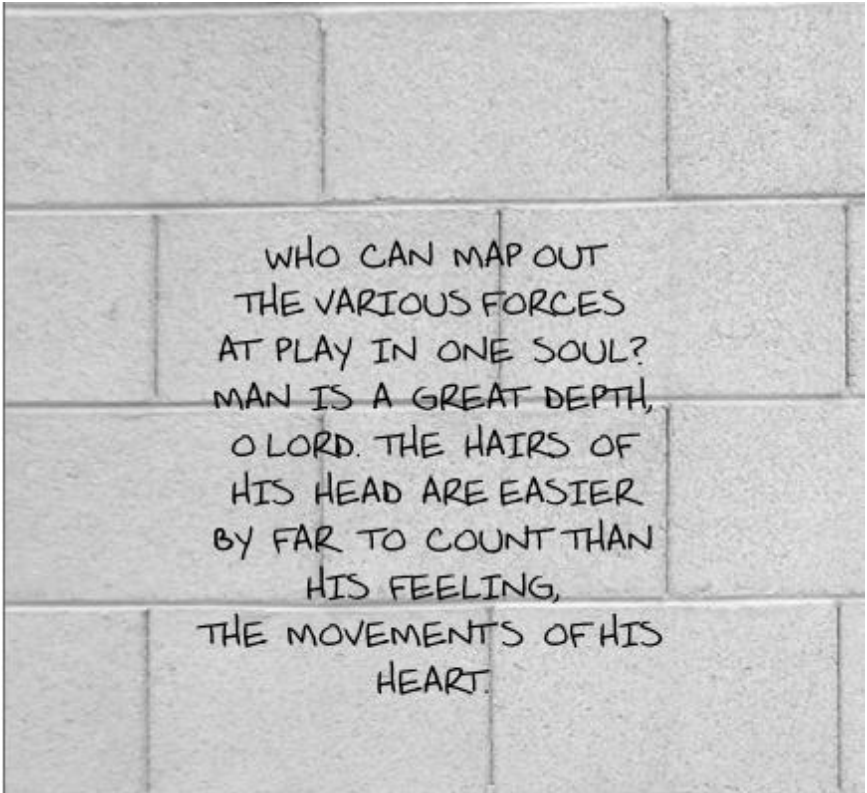
“Fellows” represent all men; whether friend or foe, they are simply fellows. Naturally, these men are fellows (in my book); and socially, these fellows have some form of fellowship with other fellows and fathers.

Fellowship occurs on the bases of friend or foe—and at times, in the confusion of one or the other. A pick-up game of basketball is a basic example where, inside locked gates or not, the combination of friend and foe is competition. Too much competition and too little costs can lead to more foe than friend; infraction or not, a fight ensues over the otherwise form of sports or competition. Some fellows realize that this competition is just another game or sport, but others see it as more than that....

Fellows and fathers are faced with the less apparent or the unobvious too. Behind the obvious and physical features (of competition) is the mysterious, the emotional and spiritual. The less obvious might be thought as a force—though it too has obvious aspects or physical manifestations.

In jail, “a force” may be more a feeling; the obvious, and perhaps “the less obvious”, can be escalated in this environment. Maybe the heightened level of conscience has much to do with

the level of constraints: the physical limitations; the penal restrictions; and a cast system composed of the courts, the counsel, and those “in-charge” of the charged or convicted. The presence of “a force” leads competition to the levels of *conflict and contention* in the internal (to the soul), environmental (the setting) and external (beyond the setting, to life beyond...).



Blocks of Saint Augustine 1 – No source or interpretation is available; but what might be suggested from the quote is that humans are complex—but unwilling to consider, and unable to comprehend, the “depths” of the heart...“the various forces at play” in our thoughts, feelings, words, and actions.

Fore-Words

Roughly a month into my stay in jail, I began the first of twelve letters. The choice of titles had much to do with my reason (or circumstances) for being incarcerated: I was a parent of a past-marriage; and though the courts had dissolved the marriage long ago, the matter of parenting was still being debated (by me)—but prohibited by the courts. I had to accept the possibility that my days as a father might be behind me while remaining dutiful to the possibility that, at anytime, circumstances could change. On the one hand, I am a former-father, but on the other hand, I cannot be anything but a father to my children—at any age.

A few weeks into my ignoble return to St. Augustine (Florida) was more than enough time to put pen (or pencil) to paper¹; and with these circumstances and an article for the local paper, I began memos or letters. Further motivation came from the Billy Graham Evangelical Association for having replied to my letters (or memos). In turn, this organization became the principle party for the letters. Other individuals and institutions will be noted in the book; but for the time being, I offer this organization as an example of those that spiritually *came to visit me when I was in jail*.²

Following the first of these letters (and the initial reply) came each as entitled in this book; carrying the common word or object, “Father”, preceded by an intended adjective—of which the inspiration or influence was probably a combination of timely reading, the alliterative quality, and the mystery of the subconscious, even feelings in a particular moment.

¹ The desire to write was already present; and article (from the local paper) and some writing materials was an opportunity to put words to writing; and so I began what would become 12 letters.

² From the Bible, book of Matthew, chapter 25: “The Sheep and the Goats”.

I did not know or predict what might become of the letters; but only that writing was a privilege considering: my past position as a participating father; my present circumstance for attempting to be a father; and the future for which the very role would ironically determine me a felon. With these fore-words—and a conviction of greater credence than any that law can create—I present this book entitled: *A FATHER AND FUTURE FELON*.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 2 - No source or interpretation is available; but “the highest good” would likely be defined as that done in love. Evidently, the pursuit of real love is the key to living well in time. And speaking of love, consider God in *The Message*, Romans, chapter 1:

The person in right-standing before God by trusting in Him really lives.

Former-Father

How can you be a “Former-Father”? Is it possible to be a father but, because someone or something is determined to illegalize it, being a father becomes a thing of the past? Should you simply consign yourself to be effectively dead to your living children; as though the fact of being their father has somehow been terminated, nullified or otherwise, deemed non-existent? I believe the basic answer to be “No!”

You cannot be a former-father because of the certainty or fact that you are naturally a father. Laws, courts—and even countries—do not last through *the ages*; but, since the beginning of time, a father has been the father; and since *The First Father*³ and his creation, many have become fathers...and remain so through eternity. Not all have been fathers, but for the many that have, they were once and always a father.

Naturally they were fathers because they conceived a child; but more than that, many (and more) may have been socially (fathers). They may have helped the helpless, defended the defenseless, and done much beyond.... With the seemingly endless possibilities of what they did (or did not do), they remain known as father-types because of people....

Naturally, people have been procreated by fathers; but more than that, many (and more) have been socially-supported by fathers too. They may have been helped, defended, and supported in any number of possibilities. With the number of the possibilities of what they received or obtained, people remain known as people because of fathers and their types.

As obvious as the natural relationship and social aspects—having endured since the beginning of time—I have wondered over much time of whether I am a former-father. So to ask the question (or questions) is merely on the basis that I am not

³ *The First Father* is God.

certain. A father cannot be a former-father, but is always a father; but if the laws, courts and countries make being a father illegal, then perhaps I may be wrong. I may have to consign myself to be effectively dead⁴ to my children—irrespective of the relationships, aspects and other facts that cannot be terminated, nullified or otherwise, deemed non-existent.

Since when did being a parent become punishable? Do many parents risk the possibility that caring for their young—naturally and socially—will be punished by laws and courts? Should you resign your role (or abandon or abdicate any association) out of concern that your relationship will be made illegal—or that the basic practices of care and concern will be misinterpreted, maligned or even manufactured as malicious. I believe the basic answer to be “No!”

Parents that I know⁵, and most of the populous of my country in consideration, do not bear this risk—let alone concern themselves with the possibility that their roles will be reduced to the realm of illegal. To consider that they could lose their privilege (and responsibility) of being a parent would be far beyond comprehension. Having conceived their children, parents are naturally positioned to help and defend them. They are parents because they have elected to be parents—to be the caretaker and custodian of these special people in their lives.

Parents that I know were not forced to become parents; they may have made some irresponsible or immature decisions, but they were not forced to conceive children. I know that some cultures, countries and cults have differing circumstances; but my claims rest on the general populous of this country. Being free to choose, they can opt-out of being parents socially—as many

⁴ To mean figuratively or parentally-dead...but not physically....

⁵ Most parents are adults would be shocked by the concept of a legal conviction for socially-acceptable and normal parenting practices.

special people are acutely and painfully aware. Our country has come to know that such a choice is not that uncommon⁶; and in some areas or groups, it is the norm. With the seemingly endless possibilities of what they did (or did not do), these fathers may have chose to opt-out; but then again, they may have chose to be a parent socially—but punished by laws and courts for doing so. They may be acutely and painfully aware that their roles have been reduced to the realm of illegal. Being a parent has become punishable too.

⁶ Our country currently has over 30 million children (or about one-third of the population) who have no contact with their natural fathers.

From Erwin Lutzer in book, *Why Good People do Bad Thing*, p.109-111:

Our society is reeling from the effects of absentee fathers in our homes. About 40 percent of the children in this country live in a home without their fathers, and more than 50 percent face unresolved problems with their fathers. Statistics indicate that in excess of 70 percent of prisoners come from families in which the father was absent.

When a father rejects a child, the message received is, “He does not love me because I am unlovable; I am defective and at the core unfixable.” A father does not have to say the words, of course. All that he has to do is be indifferent, uncaring or absent and the child will get the message.

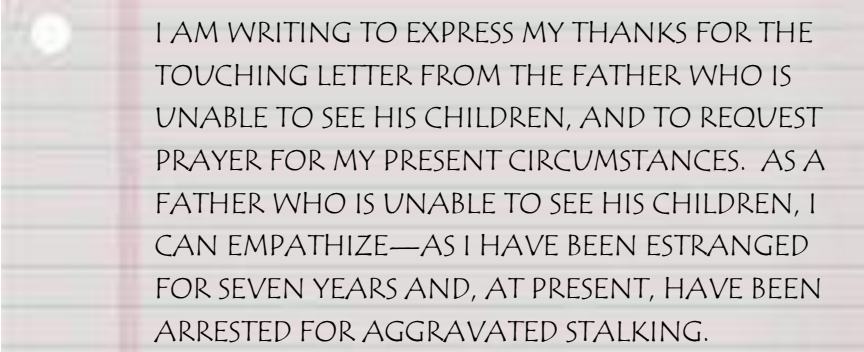
A child’s relationship to his/her father is the strongest predictor of the child’s later success or failure with school and friends.

Fathering has always been dear to God’s heart, since fathering is designed to be the foundation of society. **God is the original Father.**

Prayerful-Punishment

I begin the chapter and book on very elementary reasoning and a simple description: this description of relationships developed naturally and socially; this reasoning that such relationships have long-existed and are very important—even eternal to those called “special people”. My own freedom to choose this elementary reasoning has something to do with firsthand experience as one whose role has been reduced to the realm of illegal...with all the punishment. Such reasoning has consumed me in moments and has prevailed for as long as my role has been at risk.⁷

In my first letter (of the twelve), this present role is briefly described in connection with an article from the local newspaper; a touching story of a father unable to see his children:



I AM WRITING TO EXPRESS MY THANKS FOR THE TOUCHING LETTER FROM THE FATHER WHO IS UNABLE TO SEE HIS CHILDREN, AND TO REQUEST PRAYER FOR MY PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. AS A FATHER WHO IS UNABLE TO SEE HIS CHILDREN, I CAN EMPATHIZE—AS I HAVE BEEN ESTRANGED FOR SEVEN YEARS AND, AT PRESENT, HAVE BEEN ARRESTED FOR AGGRAVATED STALKING.

My role has gone beyond risks but, as will be detailed, involves a pending conviction as a felon on the charge of aggravated stalking.⁸

Stalking is a serious charge; and allegedly stalking your children (and ex-wife) is a serious cause or concern with, or

⁷ Actually my role has proven to go beyond the risk—but has resulted in the status as a future felon (the realization of the risks).

⁸ Aggravated stalking—the “pending conviction”—is the cause and concern behind this book: *A FATHER AND FUTURE FELON*.

without, a formal conviction. Being a proponent of the described elementary reasoning, I do not accept that I could (or would) stalk my family; or in other words, that I would intentionally endanger any or all them at any time for any reason. What the laws and courts describe as “victims” are, in actuality, “special people”. I am not without my own opinion (and disappointments), but I still hold to the fact that they are my family—my “special people”. Others do not hold to the fact however....

Conflict and contention was behind the divorce of some ten years ago (or in 2000); but not for a cause or concern that creates a conviction (or the potential for it). *Conflict and contention* was the choice of one who evidently embraced the idea that a role as father can be punished—and has committed themselves to this idea so as to bring it to conception and, preferably, to “the end”.⁹ Completing “the end” would justify the means; it would rationalize everything that they did (and did not do); it would show that my role is no longer a fact—or perhaps, never existed at all—if that is possible.

The *conflict and contention* that has long prevailed (to the day) is a serious cause and concern for other reasons (beyond legal conviction). The continuing of such behavior or conduct has, like a war, resulted in much pain and sorrow. I characterize the divorce and post-divorce as like a protracted, perpetual war; and the children, as the casualties.... Of all my sorrow, the primary reason (or reasoning) comes in the choices and consequences of such continuing and unmitigated conflict and contention.¹⁰

⁹ The term “the end” is not a definite time or period; but is more a matter of complete and final disparity—irreconcilable differences with each and all of my “special people” through the years of alienation and parental programming.

¹⁰ By “primary reason”, the menacing effects of divorce and parental alienation on children...as children and adults.

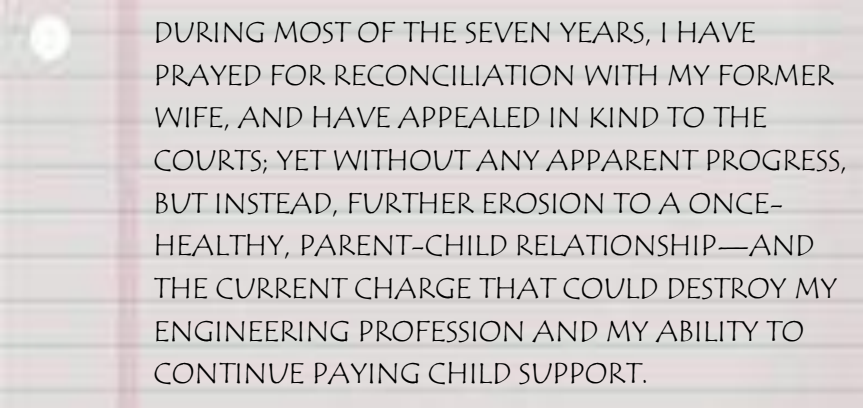
Without the clear and present opportunity to have contact with my children (unless of course, I want to go to prison), my way of dealing with this pain and sorrow is prayer and writing. With what effort has been made toward reconciliation—resulting in further relational disparity and degradation—a prayerful response is all that remains for these special people.

Punishment has been the result or outcome of the divorce and post-divorce conflict and contention—to such levels as to make any attempt at reconciliation not only rebuffed, but seemingly repudiated by more than one of these special people. Further, the punishment has entered into the realm of the illegal—made so by a series of restraining orders and an injunction. The weapons of this war are very lethal and languishing....

Collecting the losses, while giving concern to consequences (yet to occur), should be more than enough to bring me to prayer. Punishment of this kind, described thus far, is certainly part of the losses—but is minor compared with the costs borne on the children. And so I deal with the pain and sorrow—prayer and writing as the way....

Serious-Sorrow

Pain and sorrow is not necessarily a bad thing; especially, if it leads to prayer. Reconciliation is a good thing; but is not always possible between people—even special people. Still, I hope for reconciliation through prayer. Continuing in the first letter, I write:



DURING MOST OF THE SEVEN YEARS, I HAVE PRAYED FOR RECONCILIATION WITH MY FORMER WIFE, AND HAVE APPEALED IN KIND TO THE COURTS; YET WITHOUT ANY APPARENT PROGRESS, BUT INSTEAD, FURTHER EROSION TO A ONCE-HEALTHY, PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP—AND THE CURRENT CHARGE THAT COULD DESTROY MY ENGINEERING PROFESSION AND MY ABILITY TO CONTINUE PAYING CHILD SUPPORT.

“Prayer alone”, as I cannot reason how the courts and my ex-wife could (or would) support reconciliation; but on the contrary, conflict and contention remain the course or conduct that seems to have rendered the desired effect.¹¹ I prefer reconciliation....

But as the letter summarizes, any effort toward reconciliation has led to only “further erosion...” and, with that, further pain and sorrow. Again, pain and sorrow is not necessarily bad—but it hurts all.... The pain and sorrow—the product of conflict and contention—hurts me, hurts them and, most of all, it hurts us! In total, the hurt is applied or spread over all those who are involved as one or more of the special people. Some of these may not have a complete sense (or degree of hurt), but such an effect cannot remain hidden or suppressed—dormant forever.

¹¹ The “desired effect” toward the outcome of “the end”; that is, “the end” to any chance for reconciliation with the children.

I know that pain and sorrow is part of life; it is necessary. So, I'm not attempting to question the basic experience or events at this point¹², but I am trying to offer the possibility to mitigate or limit the degree or depth (of hurt)—especially for the children. The hurt inflicted on the helpless (or defenseless) is the primary reason for reconciliation—as parents are naturally positioned to help and defend their children.

Sorrow is more than a singular event, but is more a chain or series of events. This degree of sorrow may occur when convinced that your desire or objective is well-justified, even righteous—but does not come to any positive outcome or fruition. Frustration or anger can arise over the failure to achieve objectives or desires but, after some length, must lead to sorrow. Perhaps sorrow is the result of exhausted effort.

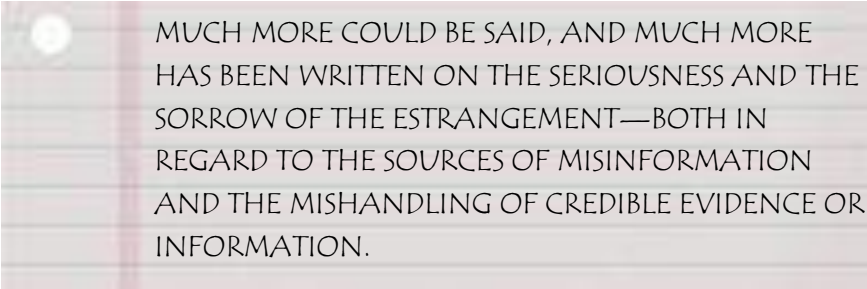
Of course, pain and sorrow is joined in the seriousness of my conviction (legal conviction) and, before that, the years of alienation from my children. In all this time and loss has been all the emotions with all the phases that, unlike a series of events, can reoccur, relapse or even recycle. If I could illustrate the process, it might have some sort of return loop and a diamond to symbolize some kind of decision or condition.¹³ A non-recycling series of events could be less painful, but experience has shown that a “return” is common—and perhaps is necessary.

I have recorded much of the seriousness and sorrow in my writing—and much more in my mind, heart and soul.

¹² Questions (or questioning) the reasons for pain and sorrow has been a practice in the past...much more so than at present; the basic question being, “Why?”

¹³ To illustrate using some kind of flowchart typical to my role as an engineer—with a return loop and a diamond symbol representing a decision point or condition.

Continuing in the first letter, I write:

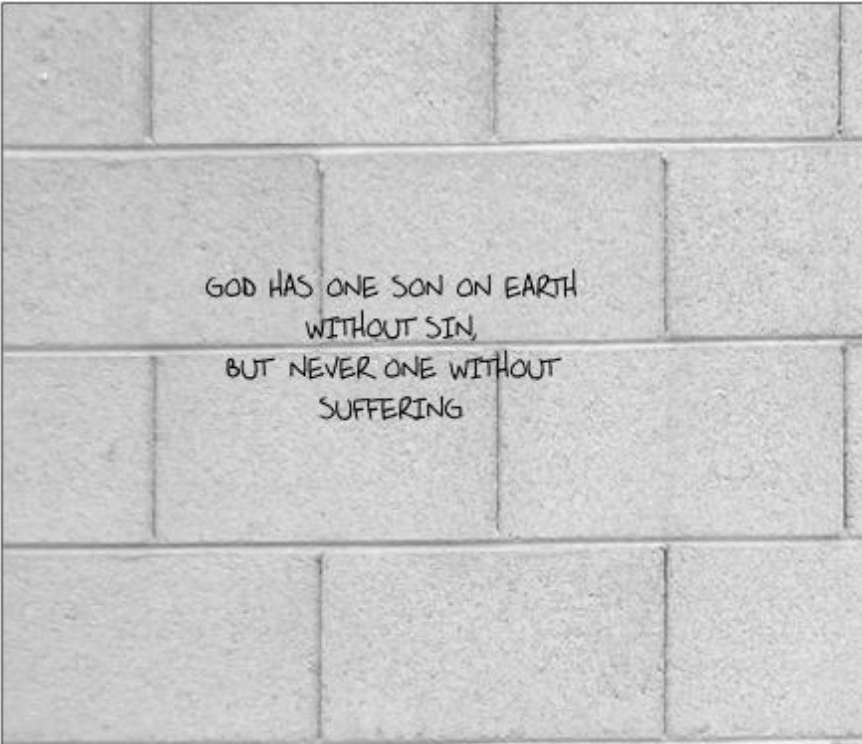


MUCH MORE COULD BE SAID, AND MUCH MORE HAS BEEN WRITTEN ON THE SERIOUSNESS AND THE SORROW OF THE ESTRANGEMENT—BOTH IN REGARD TO THE SOURCES OF MISINFORMATION AND THE MISHANDLING OF CREDIBLE EVIDENCE OR INFORMATION.

Understandably, this writing has been part of my prayers.¹⁴ Further, this writing has served as an outlet¹⁵ in the seriousness and sorrow, the phases and, at this moment, to express much. Finally, this writing has enabled me to learn about the contention and conflict—intermixed with laws and courts—in opposition to reconciliation, in denial of my role, and at cause for unnecessary and unjustified hurt.

¹⁴ Prayer and writing are symbiotic—one inspiring the other....

¹⁵ As writing, and other outlets, can offer relief...just as prayer can offer repose.

A photograph of a brick wall with a handwritten message. The text is written in black marker on a light-colored brick surface. The message is centered and reads: "GOD HAS ONE SON ON EARTH WITHOUT SIN, BUT NEVER ONE WITHOUT SUFFERING".

GOD HAS ONE SON ON EARTH
WITHOUT SIN,
BUT NEVER ONE WITHOUT
SUFFERING

Blocks of Saint Augustine 3 - No source or interpretation is available. Suffering is a necessary part of human life and nature. The book of Job offers the expression: Man is born into trouble as surely as the sparks fly upwards. Trouble is certain to everyone—and suffering with it....

Absent-Aggravation

Jail offered much reason to write and even more to learn in the way of seriousness and sorrow. From the relatively young (referred to as “JITS”) to the aging (like me), hurt could be easily found. Perhaps you have been incarcerated or have experienced an environment that surrounds you with such seriousness and sorrow; a community or cast of “charged and convicted”.

Alleged crimes or charges were not commonly-discussed among the fellows; but the exception was usually around a court appearance—a time and event that seemed to *open the floor* to conversation between or among some fellows in the block.¹⁶ Perhaps this setting was most reminiscent of school gym—where galvanizing occurs among fellows of same age, class and race. Depending on the person or predicament, the conversation could be a spectacle extending over several blocks (again, like school gym...). Anything to break the monotony or divert attention away from the seriousness and sorrow—if that was possible.

Again, a time and event is the variable to voicing charges and such. In my eight days in North Charleston¹⁷, such conversation did not occur (for me). Even without the opportunity (or obligation), I was profiled with a few possibilities:

- In the holding area in North Charleston came an off-the-handcuffs’ comment that I was some serial murderer; but this impulse-profile was most likely the result of too much TV.
- Someone suggested that I was white-collar criminal; something to do with computers, if I recall.
- Finally, someone *got warm* when they said, “Let me guess, you’re in here because of a woman¹⁸....”

¹⁶ A “block” represented about 20 fellows sub-grouped two to a cell. See “Father-Files” for a layout of the block.

¹⁷ “North Charleston”: I spent 8 days in the local jail (where I was arrested) before being extradited to St. Johns County, FL.

¹⁸ *It takes one to know one*; as this statement came from someone who had likewise encountered his own conflict and contention...and hurt.

The details of my charges were shared over time and events—with a first installment in response to the guess that it involved a woman. Looking back, I may have been too quick to respond; but perhaps I just needed to establish my innocence—if just to one or a few who might listen, and might actually believe me. Few, if any, seemed to question or doubt my story.

Most of my conversation (of charges) occurred with my cellmate—the first of which was Ali. He was a young fellow (JIT) who had been charged with home-invasion. When I say young, I mean that he was barely eighteen—not yet out of school. Ali lived (or stayed) not far from an area where I had once lived in Jacksonville. In our introduction, my immediate thought was that he was the same age as my oldest (child). Ali had little contact with his father and had long contended with his mother’s addictions. He was young...with much seriousness and sorrow.

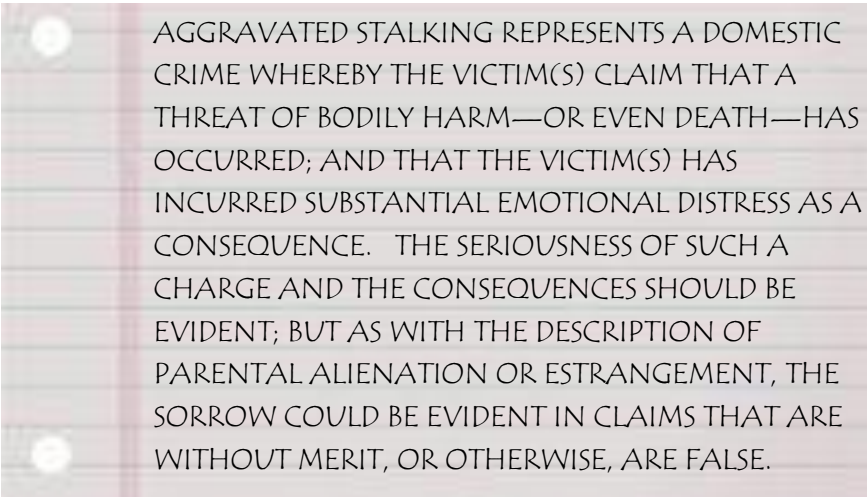
In some unexpected way, time and events allowed me to share and to listen; and, through our introduction, to realize some degree of sorrow and pain among these fellows. This JIT (Ali) was socially older than eighteen; he had been responsible for himself for some time...among many with similar circumstances. In a kind of ironic way, he was in jail because his parents seemingly chose to opt-out; and I shared a cell because I chose not to.... Perhaps our conversation offered some consolation; but it did me well to experience some semblance of being a parent again.

As to the details of my case, Ali’s immediate thought or question may have been: “Since when did being a parent become punishable?” Assuming that he believed my story—as jail may offer many stories—some background was necessary to describe years of conflict and contention, war and the like. Of course, my kind of “war” may have been mild compared to what he described in his young life. Such stories (like his) were not

unusual or uncommon. For while I was able and willing to share and listen, I was also reminded that people don't have to be special to hurt....¹⁹

The stories of others had some similarity: the JITS that had been jilted by those who seemingly opted-out or had launched a war of their own: expressed and evident emotions and anger that, in the energy of youth, was both inexhaustible and irreconcilable. Their war may have *left scars*, but I don't know—as the bleeding had not stopped. Shawn, Adam, Chris and many other names represent some of the *collateral damage* of *foreign wars*.

Further thoughts and feelings were complicated; with each story, I grew increasingly aware of the risks for children without parents (or without socially-involved parents). Their stories and apparent circumstances compelled me to believe that my effort was righteous. But their emotions and anger also caused me to consider what my children might think of me; so while I might be justified, they (the children) might be justified in their rebuffs or repudiation. Still, stalking is a serious charge:



AGGRAVATED STALKING REPRESENTS A DOMESTIC CRIME WHEREBY THE VICTIM(S) CLAIM THAT A THREAT OF BODILY HARM—OR EVEN DEATH—HAS OCCURRED; AND THAT THE VICTIM(S) HAS INCURRED SUBSTANTIAL EMOTIONAL DISTRESS AS A CONSEQUENCE. THE SERIOUSNESS OF SUCH A CHARGE AND THE CONSEQUENCES SHOULD BE EVIDENT; BUT AS WITH THE DESCRIPTION OF PARENTAL ALIENATION OR ESTRANGEMENT, THE SORROW COULD BE EVIDENT IN CLAIMS THAT ARE WITHOUT MERIT, OR OTHERWISE, ARE FALSE.

¹⁹ Recall “special people” to designate those whom you care about; or for that matter, whom anyone cares about....

Better-Bitterness

War and bitterness are close; hence the common term, “bitter-war” (as though war could be anything else).²⁰ But the question may occur in the vein of *the chicken and egg*: which came first, bitterness or war? To which an answer is not possible (I know); for bitterness can prevail through and beyond wars; it can be all consuming—beyond death or the grave.

Being better (not bitter) is what I think of as *taking the high-road*. To be better is to be less culpable in the cause for conflict and contention—less desiring to inflict pain and sorrow on others. Erwin Lutzer describes bitterness as “like a cobra”²¹ which carries out its schemes with cunning, methodical, devious, planning—devoid of emotion or any conscience. I can’t say that *taking the high-road* is altogether a choice; but I can say the basking in bitterness can be empowering...as well as enduring.

In the association of bitterness, the cobra has struck multiple times (that I know of...). In my encounters, the strike has gone well beyond shock—to the degree that I have some sense of what to expect (though I continue to be amazed at how lethal the effect). Other victims of *the cobra* may have had different experiences; but for those that I am vaguely familiar with, the venom has either stunned the unexpected or trapped the helpless and defenseless. I’m just not sure of the number of victims or the total effect to the present—or on the present....

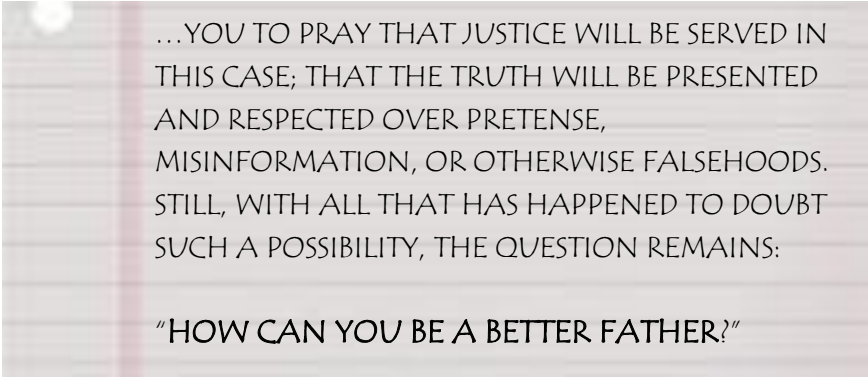
Empowered by bitterness, *the cobra* has been able to band with other creatures or creations, so as to render my role as a parent virtually moot. Through the incidence of multiple bites has been an increasing degree of tolerance—as though to miraculously grow better rather than bitter. Perhaps this *high-*

²⁰ This statement might compare in context with the term “dirty bomb”; have you ever heard of a “clean bomb”?

²¹ The description of bitterness as *a cobra* is used in Erwin Lutzer’s book, *Why Good People Do Bad Things*, “The Roots of Rage”.

road has come as a consequence of exhaustion...coupled with prayer (from many); or maybe the venom is just losing its sting. With either or both (exhaustion or the venom), I have become better—closer to a condition of forgiveness...rather than bitterness.

As to feelings and emotions (or returning anger), I seem to have become increasingly tolerant to the immediate effect (of the strike) amid languishing pain and sorrow in my futile effort to help and defend. If wisdom brings much sorrow²², perhaps sorrow is bringing much wisdom. Yet, I pray; and then I ask:



...YOU TO PRAY THAT JUSTICE WILL BE SERVED IN THIS CASE; THAT THE TRUTH WILL BE PRESENTED AND RESPECTED OVER PRETENSE, MISINFORMATION, OR OTHERWISE FALSEHOODS. STILL, WITH ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED TO DOUBT SUCH A POSSIBILITY, THE QUESTION REMAINS:

“HOW CAN YOU BE A BETTER FATHER?”

Being a better father; now that's the *high-road!* Putting behind the notion of being only a former-father, and pressing on with my prayers in print, I am convinced that even stalking—punishing though it be—is not a crime if it means a parent's choice to naturally and socially care for his children. I did nothing morally or ethically wrong; the courts however....

²² Bible scripture from Ecclesiastes 1:18.

Faraway-Father

A faraway-father is distant from his children; not necessarily in geography, but socially—either by choice or by force. Our country has many fathers who are figuratively-forced far and away from their families. Legal force brings to bear disparate dads through such innovations as no-fault divorce, legal precedence, and post-divorce incrimination. I am one of these parents—portrayed or profiled as “perpetrator”.

Force is applied not only through the outcome or result of divorce, but also by way of criminalization.²³ If a father has any notions of holding to his role and privilege as a parent, he may have to endure a penal system that places little if any value on his intentions—but debases his “daddy-kind” to nothing more than a debtor²⁴. Dads may be guilty by virtue of their gender alone; but so as to develop and ensure “the end”, a crime or criminal charges may be the course in his assignment to anathema.

Adversity finds a new level in the life of the post-parent or faraway-father. Imputed with what may often be untenable debt from the divorce and its consequences, he stands some chance of falling into delinquency. Not only has his role been rigorously removed, but his tax liability has been enormously raised. *Taxation without representation* has resurfaced in the application of child support imposed on a parent facing the dilemma...vaguely familiar to the patriots²⁵ (though himself, an expatriate). But the politic of the day see no failure or fault in this effort for excommunication...or its effect.²⁶ Attempts to support or assist his children in other ways—even to assuage these special people—

²³ Authority is often imbalanced in divorce...lending to abuses.

²⁴ Debtor via child support—a federally subsidized tax system.

²⁵ Referring to the American Revolution...and imposed taxes on The Colonies amid other grievances.

²⁶ Divorce and post-divorce settlements is BIG BUSINESS for the legal community; child-support is another form of tax revenue for the State.

may be condemning to the degree of criminal charges, incarceration and its consequences. He is penalized for attempting to be the parent that he once was—and for which he remains...desiring to be. Such good intentions do nothing to aid his children or to convince the authorities of this worthy cause.

In previous writing, I have referred to the matter of divorce as “The Mess” and to associated methods as “The Madness”. Conflict and contention is the common effect of *The Madness*; and pain and sorrow, a consequence of *The Mess*. Conflict and contention occur from both bitterness and a monumental degree of fear.²⁷ Pain and sorrow come to those who are not inclined or pre-disposed to bitterness and its power; but they have retained a degree of parental prudence or a child-centric perspective.²⁸

As to the special people (once children and now...), bitterness is fuel for personal power where fear is a force:

- Bitterness is behind *The Madness* of this fatherless, single-parent lifestyle; but it may inevitably effect (and empower) each or all of the special people in years to come.²⁹
- Fear has driven rash and risky behavior but, ironically, becomes a second form of power as the custodial parent must do everything to maintain control³⁰ (...as though indefinite control (of the children) is possible).

²⁷ In the basic description of fear is secondary anger over unattained objectives; but also, “the madness” (or fear) that results in rash decisions and risky behavior.

²⁸ Parental prudence...absent of rage; family faithfulness in the true sense of that force called love.

²⁹ The proverbial “bitter pill” swallowed by the next generation—possibly induced as a means of control. If fear is a force, bitterness can be the fuel for power to overcome the present fear.

³⁰ Control is part of the process: never a certainty, but always the objective measured by the level of effort or intensity...with compromises deemed necessary to maintain status quo. Parental compromises (to appease) transfer some power—as a king lord’s over his domain.

In time, the children (or young adults) *learn the ropes*; they may follow (or have followed) the course of a seemingly successful mantra or motto: ³¹

- “Improvise” is simply to make due...in the absence of convention—and the presence of *The Madness* and its conditions, demands and expectations.
- “Adapt” is to adjust and survive through varying methods or positioning that is influenced by family order, gender, threats or weaknesses, personality and other variables.
- “Overcome” is to survive at the least and, in some abstract, succeed—to the degree that success is perceived.³²

Learning the ropes has degrees and differences; each of the special people will progress (or has) for reasons that neither I nor they can (or could) fully understand or comprehend.

In the course of *The Madness* has been the application or designation of “the victim”. Once *the victim* is established, any distance in geography for the faraway-father becomes incidental; he is effectively a million miles away in the context and expected conduct of the restraining order or injunction. Good intentions—or no intentions at all—the portrayed or profiled perpetrator is not doomed to fail as a father; he is just doomed!

You’ll watch them from afar as they grow up with the kinds of psycho-social problems that children who live with their fathers rarely have. You’ll watch from afar, and you won’t be able to do anything about it.³³

³¹ “Improvise, Adapt, Overcome” is the unofficial motto of the U.S. Marines; successful in survival...for those that survive and posthumously for last sacrifices.

³² To “Overcome” or succeed has to be *worked-out* in the life (or lives)—individually, socially, emotionally, spiritually....

³³ Jed Abraham, *From Courtship to Courtroom: What Divorce Law is doing to Marriage*, (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1999), p. 6. (acfc.org)

Whether the designated victim thinks of themselves as “a victim” is also incidental; for once a victim is designated, she is entitled not only to the protection of the law but, when convenient or conducive, is able to marshal the penal system at a beckoned call. If conscience or character is tolerable to lies, *the victim* is empowered beyond bitterness; he is endowed with the privilege to create law (namely, the restraining order) and to violate it in principle.³⁴ Authority or power is subject to abuse—*the victim* is the villain too.

Victim, villain, perpetrator or by any other name, the cast of this war is classified by convenience—without the ability to really confirm *who is who*. Commenting on Jed Abraham’s book, *From Courtship to Courtroom: What Divorce Law is doing to Marriage*, Stephen Baskerville refers to this confusion of the cast (of what he calls “predicament of players”) in court conduct.

Czech dissident Vaclav Havel once wrote that in a true totalitarian system everyone is both victim and perpetrator, the proportion of each being determined by ones placement in the hierarchy. This might describe the *predicament of players* in this newest form of bureaucratic dictatorship (divorce...custody), where even the good family court judges Abraham insists exist. Crooked as fathers rightly see them, we might recall that—were they to uphold their oath of office by administering equal justice and *due process*—they would almost certainly lose their jobs.³⁵

³⁴ “...to violate in principle” is what I have called a *Bait and Switch*: *the victim* may initiate contact (a violation) in a no-contact order; or *the victim* may simply claim that the order has been violated by the perpetrator through pretense or testimony. This testimony is sufficient; and in my experience, other testimony or evidence—even as ordered by the court—is disregarded if contradictory to presuppositions.

³⁵ Stephen Baskerville, Review of *From Courtship to Courtroom: What Divorce Law Is Doing to Marriage*, fathermag.com.

Gutless-Guilt

“Gutless” as to be a coward; it is to choose the perceived safest or secure possibility or position. Perhaps “gutless” would have been the best course for the faraway-father. “Just leave—and don’t ever come back!” Whether you leave mad, remain mad or endure *The Madness*, it makes no difference in the mandate to leave.... The children will survive by their mantra.³⁶

Leaving or going away may not be so easy. Parents may want to be close to their children; they may want to be accessible and available to aid their children when and if possible. Force may be necessary to overcome the naturally and socially imbued practices of parenting. Expedience and rationalizations arrive whereby:

- It may be deemed necessary to imply—or even impose—threats through the exploitation of victim’s rights³⁷.
- It may be deemed useful to leverage the children³⁸; to further their implication in *The Madness* and *The Mess*.
- It may be deemed important to ensure that certain matters or methods³⁹ remain undisclosed to the special people (or certain people)—as deception is deemed justified by some, but could be confusing to others, or worse, condemning still....
- It may be necessary to do whatever is deemed necessary...as “the end” justifies the means.

³⁶ Referring to the earlier “Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome”....

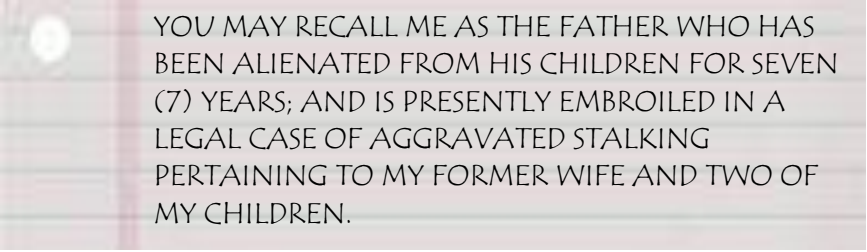
³⁷ I am not discounting or denying “victim’s rights” to protection; rather, the practice of misusing these rights, thus jeopardizing the benefit to real or justified victims.

³⁸ Leverage the children; exploiting parental authority by compelling them to testify; or otherwise, to insist that they accept the other parent as a perpetrator. Forcing or implicating the children is a dangerous proposition because it may cause misplaced guilt for implicating a parent or, otherwise, shame or resentment toward one or both parents. One (or both) parents are destroying trust.

³⁹ Deception, lies and threats may be used in “the matters and methods”; fear lies in the possibility that these matters and methods could be challenged, even opposed if discovered or disclosed.

Expedience elicits “certain matters and methods”; it enables misusing both the penal system and the children as *the end justifies the means*.

In the second of my letters, I begin with some brief description as to “force” that has gone beyond a threat; and some indication as to “the end” that is not yet at its end:



YOU MAY RECALL ME AS THE FATHER WHO HAS BEEN ALIENATED FROM HIS CHILDREN FOR SEVEN (7) YEARS; AND IS PRESENTLY EMBROILED IN A LEGAL CASE OF AGGRAVATED STALKING PERTAINING TO MY FORMER WIFE AND TWO OF MY CHILDREN.

Periodically I will use the term, “former wife”, rather than ex-wife—so as to imply the difference between legal divorce (dissolution) and the naturally and socially-inspired laws that have long preceded and prevailed the present....

In the first month of my stay in St. Johns County, I was re-introduced to some form of *due process*: an arraignment followed by one or more hearings with the intention of compelling the defendant to testify against himself.⁴⁰ Before having much understanding of the term or practice called *plea bargaining*, I plead “not-guilty” as described in the letter.

⁴⁰ “Testify against himself” to describe the practice of prosecuting/convicting through the testimony (or admission of wrong) by the defendant (rather than by trial). The Cato Institute’s “The Case against Plea Bargaining” described *plea bargaining* as “**disposing of...**” the defendant. In the article, “The Problem with Plea Bargaining”, Steven Silberblatt refers to plea bargaining as “**a gigantic extortion racket**”. In their book, *The Tyranny of Good Intentions*, Paul Roberts and Lawrence Stratton describe *plea bargaining* as “**slow torture**”.

THE ARRAIGNMENT WAS OSTENSIBLY TO ENTER A PLEA OF WHICH I PLEAD NON-GUILTY—BASED ON THE FACT THAT I HAVE NOT (NOR WOULD I) THREATEN MY FORMER WIFE AND/OR CHILDREN WITH BODILY HARM OR DEATH. BESIDES THE PLEA WAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO THE JUDGE AND TO BE ASSIGNED A TENTATIVE PUBLIC DEFENDER. I COULD HAVE SPENT MUCH MORE TIME BEFORE THE JUDGE, BUT WITH LIMITED TIME, WAS ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE PROCEDURES (FOR THE TRIAL) AND TO EXPRESS MY CONCERNS.

A chief concern was child-support; being incarcerated—and threatened with further criminalization⁴¹—I was understandably concerned...about this single contribution (and obligation). A plea of “not-guilty” was entered to both charges:

- Violation of Probation (VOP): a misdemeanor from a warrant issued in November 2007.
- Aggravated Stalking: a felony *tacked-on* to the VOP in April 2008—as a consequence of writing my children, sending them monies, and offering to help my oldest who was graduating from high school.

The arraignment for the misdemeanor was uneventful; perhaps the most alarming aspect was how promptly the judge expressed a sentence: before the plea was entered, she offered a fine and one year in *The County*.⁴²

⁴¹ I had been charged in 2006 with Violation of the Injunction; in June 2007, I began one year of probation on evidence that I had attended a ball game to see my children play in the marching band; thus, I violated the no-contact injunction.

⁴² Perhaps “uneventful” but, in retrospect, this case would educate me on court conduct: issuing warrants without legitimate evidence, granting court continuance without legitimate basis, and other

The other arraignment was (or is) much more memorable:

- My former wife’s present husband was in attendance—one of a few patrons in the courtroom, he was immediately noticed—and I was immediately *put on notice* as to his role as messenger.
- The judge did not offer an immediate sentence (as in the other arraignment); but instead, addressed questions or comments...with some tolerance.
- The judge listened to my concerns about child-support and suggested an attorney to appeal for some form of relief.

Having no option for an attorney in the criminal case, I was in no position to obtain counsel for child-support. While her suggestion may have been suitable, it was not sensible—but in keeping with much of what I’ve experienced in the courts (stemming from conflict and contention), “victim’s rights” transfers all the risks to victim-less. As the “lesser of two parents”, I am the less....

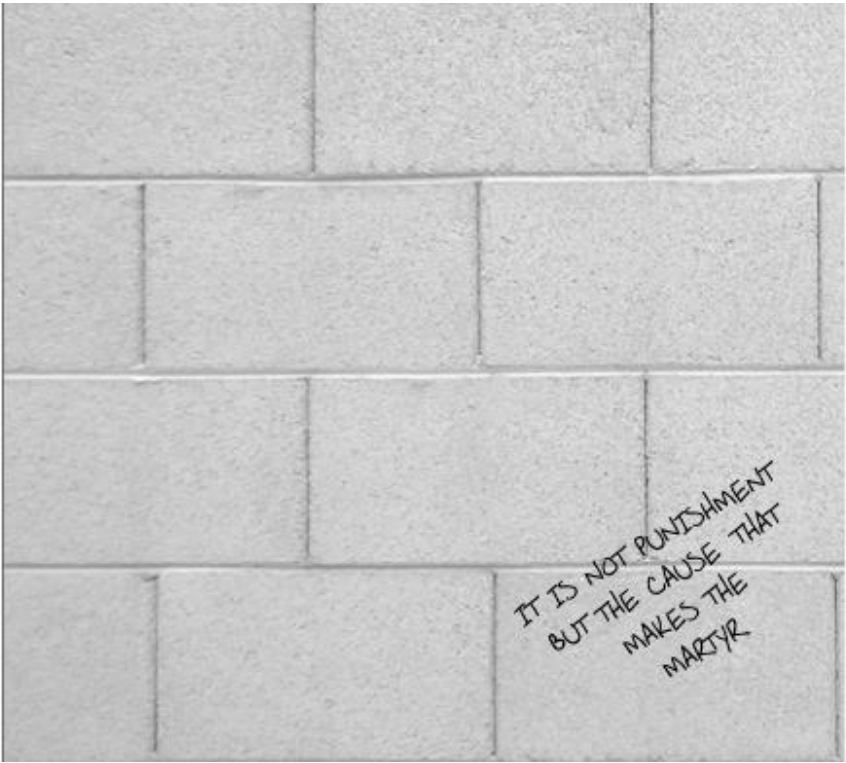
The courts do a grand job of doing just that; they have been the prime mover⁴³—a force against families. Where facts do not measure-up to presuppositions, conduct has been able to contrive whatever is suitable to the case. In an article, “The Rape Reform That Makes all Men Guilty,” Melanie Phillips writes:

It is not uncommon, though, for women to make entirely spurious charges of violence against their ex-husbands just to prevent them from having access to their children. Lawyers say the courts are overwhelmingly disposed to believe them, even when there isn’t a shred of evidence.⁴⁴

allowances in aiding the prosecution toward a collaborated conviction. I was shocked by what I learned....

⁴³ The term “prime mover” is like a *force majeure*—though the granted freedom is one-sided: “the victim” is granted impunity with regard to false testimony among other “rights”, tolerances or allowances; thus, creating a “moral hazard”—or the ability and means to carry out perjury without risks...in complete contradiction to justice.

⁴⁴ From Melanie Phillips, “The Rape Reform That Makes all Men Guilty” *Sunday Times*, July 4, 1999, (acfc.org).



Blocks of Saint Augustine 4 - No source or interpretation is available; but the possibility is that the kind of punishment does not define the martyr—but it is the cause that defines.... I consider the cause to care for one's children of highest priority; the court's however....

Detained-Delinquency

Detained in jail, I was **not** able to fulfill *my single purpose as a parent*; arrested and incarcerated would have some bearing on my future—my restriction to reemployment as an engineer. Delinquency of the debt of child-support would grow during and following my incarceration—lending to thought of *what on earth* my former wife was thinking in *another strike of the cobra*.

Delinquency in jail comes in other forms, of course; it applies to the previously described JIT or juvenile, but could easily include any one in such a situation.⁴⁵ As delinquency is present, so too the antics that go with and beyond high school; and by brief observation, antics of at least a few additional years of life...and perhaps more: pranks, bantering and occasional fights match my recollection of high school, but the setting and circumstances are obviously different. This is jail—presumably a place for those who have violated the law in some way. To recall some degrees of delinquency:

- Cory committed assault with a weapon; but what he was trying to do was protect a friend...while carrying a firearm without a permit.
- Adam took the life of another; but the details were unclear as to how his permitted firearm was discharged at his apartment complex.
- “BOZ” was charged with home invasion; a friend of Ali’s, he cooperated in the attempt to rob a drug mobster.

Much of the JIT delinquency seemed to have involved drug use (or possession) of one sort or another; but then there was Joe—who had sold drugs for most of his life.

Joe was street-savvy (as they say); he had *learned the ropes* of the drug scene and then some.... Claiming to have made (and

⁴⁵ By “Delinquency”: outstanding obligations and/or to have presumably violated the law (to be in debt to the law).

spent) millions, Joe was able to afford much in the way of material possessions and, when necessary, a power-proven attorney. Joe was quite proud of the fact that he had never *done any time* of significance. His profitable profession afforded the benefit to *move money* through the judicial system so as to render the least of punishment...on whatever he possessed at the time. With only one example of selling (versus multiple examples of using), my impression of drug enforcement was that of a very ineffective process—where the inconsistencies in convictions (to the crime) is largely a factor of cash and, in that, the user is punished while the seller is punished less....⁴⁶ Only recently (as of 2009) have I learned of the failing “War on Drugs”...while the prison systems are overwhelmed with drug users.

Due process is another unexplainably matter that, like the drug scene, is noted with limited experience and observation. What is *due process*? Referring again to *The Tyranny of Good Intentions*, Roberts and Stratton:

Due process, no crime without intent, habeas corpus, no self-incrimination, no ex post factor laws, the right to counsel, the right to face one’s accusers, the duty of prosecutors to serve truth make up the *Rights of Englishmen*.⁴⁷ These rights transformed law from the prerogative of rulers into the protector of the people from arbitrary government power.

⁴⁶ From the article, “Every Crime Needs a Victim”, out of 847,000 arrests for marijuana in 2008 (in U.S.), 754,000 were for possession alone. Over half of the U.S. prison population in the result of drug charges; 20% of state prisons and 25% of jails is due to drug charges. The prison population for drug offenses has grown by 1100% since 1980. Costs of drug prohibition far outweigh the benefits.

⁴⁷ *Rights of Englishmen*: from *Tyranny of Good Intentions*, the idea that law flows from the people to whom it is accountable...and not from the unaccountable government; the opposite of the *Rights of Englishmen* is tyranny.” In coincidence with early history, Patriots felt these rights were violated, which subsequently became the primary justification for the American Revolution.

In *due process*, multiple hearings may be the course of many who must wait out the will of the prosecutor. A trial is expensive and, unlike *plea bargaining*, does not assure a conviction. *Plea bargaining*, on the other hand, is a win-win:

- The court (or judge) wins because more cases result in more convictions—lending to public perception that the system is tough on crime where ninety percent or more cases are prosecuted without a trial.
- The council (defense and prosecution) wins because the process of conviction is often collaborated and the verdict compromised through admission of guilt.
- The defendant is said to win because he receives a lesser punishment than he otherwise would have received had he exercised his *Bill of Rights*⁴⁸ rather than forfeited....

Meanwhile, the defendant does not:

- Receive a trial...of which he has the right to...
- Face his accusers...of which he has the right to...
- Exercise the Fifth Amendment...of which he has the right to...
- Remain legitimately innocent until proven guilty...

The defendant endures something well-short of *due process* when he elects—or is extorted—to *plea bargaining*. In effect, the prosecutor is the judge, the jury and adjudicator.⁴⁹

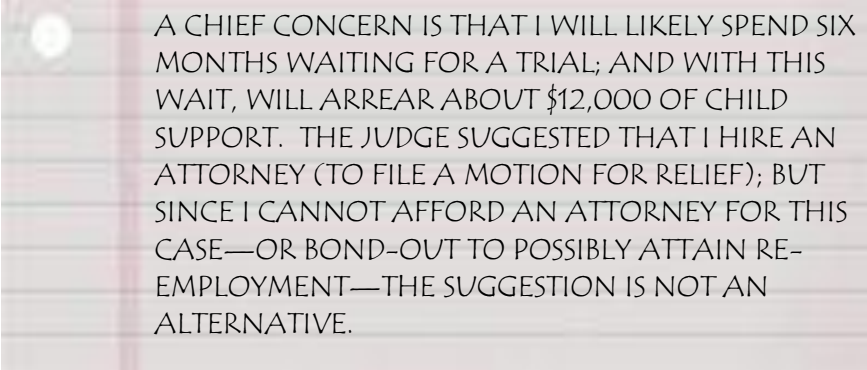
⁴⁸ The 5th Amendment: "...nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without *due process* of law..." (from Wikipedia)

⁴⁹ *Due process* is preempted by *plea bargaining*; the defendant forgoes (or is forced to forfeit...) rights traditionally referred to as *Rights of Englishmen*.

Continuing in my second letter, the chief concern was child support: I may have long been removed as a dad but, by God, I can be a debtor! If my concern could be expressed in word (before a judge), it might go something like this:

Release me from this jail, so that I may return to work and pay my debt for once being a dad. Allow me the means to pay my taxes—my tribute to the king of kids, *The State* and its *special interests*. Unable to fulfill this role and responsibility to my children, I humbly plead that I may at least continue to pay the price that *The State* has placed on their heads....

My imagination aside, I continued in my letter:



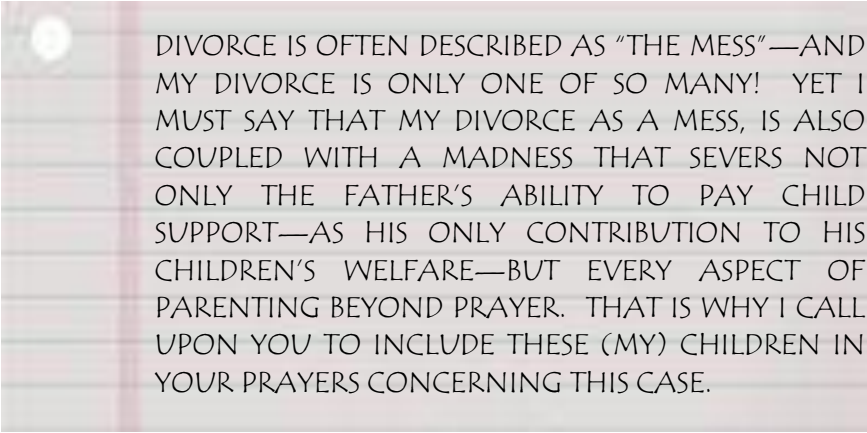
A CHIEF CONCERN IS THAT I WILL LIKELY SPEND SIX MONTHS WAITING FOR A TRIAL; AND WITH THIS WAIT, WILL ARREAR ABOUT \$12,000 OF CHILD SUPPORT. THE JUDGE SUGGESTED THAT I HIRE AN ATTORNEY (TO FILE A MOTION FOR RELIEF); BUT SINCE I CANNOT AFFORD AN ATTORNEY FOR THIS CASE—OR BOND-OUT TO POSSIBLY ATTAIN RE-EMPLOYMENT—THE SUGGESTION IS NOT AN ALTERNATIVE.

Again, her suggestion was suitable (to the courts), but not sensible. But should I expect a court to offer sensible advice when it is complicit in violating the *Bill of Rights*?⁵⁰ I realize that expedience goes beyond the application of *The Madness* and, as with such public institutions, is organic. But I also realize that expedience is **not** doing what is right—or doing *the right thing*.

⁵⁰ *Bill of Rights* referring to the 5th Amendment: “...nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”

Married-Mess

Returning to the now familiar term, “The Mess”, and continuing in the second letter:



DIVORCE IS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS “THE MESS”—AND MY DIVORCE IS ONLY ONE OF SO MANY! YET I MUST SAY THAT MY DIVORCE AS A MESS, IS ALSO COUPLED WITH A MADNESS THAT SEVERS NOT ONLY THE FATHER’S ABILITY TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT—AS HIS ONLY CONTRIBUTION TO HIS CHILDREN’S WELFARE—BUT EVERY ASPECT OF PARENTING BEYOND PRAYER. THAT IS WHY I CALL UPON YOU TO INCLUDE THESE (MY) CHILDREN IN YOUR PRAYERS CONCERNING THIS CASE.

The Mess has made a history alleging “good intentions”, but enabling dangerous ambitions and effecting destructive consequences. Milton Friedman⁵¹ described most social services as an “unholy coalition⁵²” made up of “do-gooders” and *special interests*. Though good intentions could be purported—and even plausible—the truth is that ulterior motives are prevalent and powerful. Perhaps the tactics behind such coalitions is to pose as something more palatable to the public—something that moves the masses.

⁵¹ Milton Friedman: an American economist, statistician, and a recipient of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics.

⁵² Milton Friedman interviewed on *The Open Mind*: “There are the well-meaning sponsors and there are the *special interests* that are using the well-meaning sponsors as *front men*. You almost always, when you have bad programs, have an ‘unholy coalition’ of the do-gooders on the one hand and the *special interests* on the other.

To use the analogy of business: the *front-office* is the “do-gooders” while the *back-office* is the *special interests*. *The Mess* is made-up of no-fault divorce and the federally-subsidized child support system; in the *front-office*, the “do-gooders” offer:

- Individual rights as the pretense of unilateral, uncontested or no-fault divorce; regardless of any vows or commitment of a non-legal variety, the spouse is entitled to dissolve their marriage on their singular opinion and pronouncement that the marriage relationship is irreconcilable.⁵³
- Sustenance of the children’s or remaining family’s welfare—or the duty and obligation of financial support of one’s offspring—is naturally and socially plausible to public perspective.⁵⁴
- Condemnation of negligence and abandonment; again, the biological parent must take responsibility—else, taxpayer’s will bear the costs while the parent goes off *scot-free*.⁵⁵

As to the *back-office*; if you are married, stay married; if you are not married, don’t get married because....

The State is a poor custodian of marriage. As to the sometimes raised “separation of church and state”, why is *The State* custodian of an institution formed by the church? Something obviously changed such that *The State* could absorb yet another part of our personal lives.

⁵³ The marriage is deemed irreconcilable by the plaintiff and their attorney; the defendant (or other spouse) has no say in the matter...or their marriage.

⁵⁴ “Perception” may a key word or description; *The State* would not describe the fact that the children of dissolved marriages are being exploited for tax revenue—treated as property to be awarded....

⁵⁵ Statistics show that parents can be negligent and abandoning—but the danger comes in making generalities, failing to observe social statistics, and using fear or hysteria to *pull* the public into the forum of good intentions/dangerous ambitions and destructive consequences for the children, conventional marriage and the culture at large.

But the ineptness and inability comes as *The State*:

- Can (and does) exercise absolute authority—yet takes no responsibility. The *front-office* fails to consider the conditions and consequences of diluting marriage to a *relationship of convenience*. Individual rights must be given—regardless of the total costs....⁵⁶
- Takes no responsibility; but is seemingly unable or unwilling to consider the cause and effect of related conditions and consequences created by convenient divorce.
- Wears both hats: the *black hat* of a marauder that preys on malcontent marriages while protracting the problem of fatherlessness; and the *white hat* that *rides in* to represent individual rights and parental obligations with all appearance of goodwill and public service...amid its *gilded walls* of justice.
- Has made a mandate that a parent (usually the father) pay for the children—and not the public—but the “business case” falters when considering the overwhelming costs borne to the public by burgeoning divorce and increased single-parent families.

As these social services are well-intended (in the *front-office*), the conditions and consequences have been devastating to marriage and the conventional family. Individual rights to dissolve a mutually-decided marriage leave little if any semblance of a contract, let alone a covenant.⁵⁷ Children displaced by unilateral divorce can be left with the most prevailing legacy that marriage is not worth it. Naturally and socially, marriage is good for a society...and for fatherhood. *The State's* dismantling of marriage has a direct effect on fatherlessness—abandonment or

⁵⁶ The “total costs” to represent the tangible costs to the general public (of divorce and post-divorce custody), and the intangible costs to conventional marriage and family—most of all, the children.

⁵⁷ Church-based marriage can be ceremonially and categorically a sacrament...and could be a covenant—a binding promise.

abdication of the mantel of responsibility. Again, *The State* is a poor custodian of marriage.

If it seems that I'm *beating a dead horse*, then *The State's* work is done; that is, *The State* has killed marriage (an institution) as it was designed to be. But the horse is obviously not dead (yet), as conventional marriage continues on some course or semblance of an institution. Communities continue to benefit from the presence and position of healthy marriages and families—small governments that work well on the basis of naturally, socially, and even spiritually time-tested principles, practices and beliefs.

But the steed of *The State* is believed by some to be in competition—rather than collaboration—with the mare of conventional marriage. The “dismantling of marriage” may be the course of the other institution. Organizations such as *Marriage Savers*⁵⁸ identify divorce as “a grievous blow” to marriage; but *The State* is *a horse of another color*—that may view “the problem” as unhappy people—not convenient divorce. On such perspective, people deserve to be happy and, if need be, can place their pursuit of happiness above a covenant, a contract or any other characterization of conventional marriage. After all, it is their right...under a system of arbitrary law.

Aside the pursuit of happiness (above the virtues of marriage) is those who have *bought-in* to the notion that *The State* cares about their happiness, let alone their family. They should consider the lessons from the epic of *The Trojan Horse*⁵⁹: for what appears to be a *white hate* can always be reversed to a *black hate*; good intentions to bad outcomes, denial and disregard....

⁵⁸ *Marriage Savers'* Michael McManus was quoted as saying...

⁵⁹ By “The Trojan Horse”, the trickery of what appears as a gift or tribute is actually a trap or ruse; and once inside the confines, “Look Out!” The sanctity or refuge of this small government has been compromised, even violated....



Blocks of Saint Augustine 5 - No source or interpretation is available; the horse being an extension of the rider, the will must be analogous to Grace. In the Old Testament, “grace” is similar to goodwill or of finding favor in another—so as to bestow blessings. God’s blessings are freely-given...or by grace...as he wills.

Villainess-Victim

The State is not a good nanny (or parent). If my words have not yet conveyed my sentiments, then perhaps I have pulled-in too quickly on the reins. But to spur on the argument, my belief is that *The State* is again inept; but, more importantly, it is insensitive to the needs of my children.⁶⁰ Not purposely to be morbid, but if any one of my children died tomorrow, those who have claimed some sensitivity to their needs would not care. Plain *horse sense* says that such expressed concerns are merely platitudes endemic in the politic of the courtroom. In the words of one noted for plain sense, “words are cheap⁶¹”.

But what is not necessarily cheap is divorce. Drawing from the statistics of the National Fatherhood Initiative, each divorce cost taxpayers about thirty thousand dollars in 2002; the 10 million divorces, costing over \$30 billion.⁶² The cost driver⁶³ of such enormous public burden has much to do with no-fault divorce—as trends bear-out the correlating rise of divorce per capita. In plain talk, divorce is a booming industry—made so by the *special interests* that have saddled the public on the notion that *individual rights* supersede integrity and, for some, that vows and promises (as words) are cheap.

⁶⁰ Naturally and socially, parents prove best for the care of their children; most if not all State representatives are paid—not *pro bono*.

⁶¹ First recorded by Charlie Chaplin; much later, used frequently by Ross Perot.

⁶² From the publication, *Father Facts*, 5th Edition; cost estimates represent public services during and post-divorce to include juvenile delinquency.

⁶³ “Cost driver” to suggest that, as with any program, the impetus or motivation.

A secondary consequence of uncontested divorce is the devaluing of marriage—as measured in the declining marriage rates per capita. In the article, “U.S. divorce rate falls to lowest level since 1970”, MSNBC.com reported that:

The number of couples who live together without marrying has increased tenfold since the 60’s; the marriage rate has dropped by 30% in the last 25 years....⁶⁴

In keeping with a careless view of “conditions and consequences”, *the divorce industry* places the cart before the horse—the individual before their marriage...and their children. Though coupled with cheap words, the cause for individual happiness is evidently costly—with both tangible costs to the community, and intangible costs to a lot of special people. The illustration of the cart before the horse is only part of it however; what lies in the cart is another trap or ruse (as with *The Trojan Horse*).

The cart is a really a coffer; it is the proceeds from the fleecing of the American family and the gulling of the greater society. As *The State* is custodian of marriage, *special interests* are the benefactors of divorce. While society and culture suffer, the *back-office* is busy carving-up the spoils...under the guise of good intentions.

The charade does not stop with the courts; in some cases, the designated victim is actually the villain. I believe that my special people have had to *learn the ropes* in adapting to *The Madness*; but, in keeping with the maritime theme, *The Madness* has been mastered through the art & craft of a “sell-master”. No, not a “sail master”; but one who is able to masterly sell themselves as being a victim. As to the crew; well, they have been pressed into service aboard a ship flying false colors.

⁶⁴ From the article: “U.S. divorce rate falls to lowest level since 1970”, April 15, 2008, (MSNBC.com).

In his article, “Divorced from Reality”⁶⁵, Stephen Baskerville writes:

Yet patently false accusations of both child abuse and domestic violence are rampant in divorce courts, almost always for purposes of breaking up families, securing child custody, and eliminating fathers. “With child abuse and spouse abuse you don’t have to prove anything,” the leader of a legal seminar tells divorcing mothers, according to the Chicago Tribune. “You just have to accuse.”

The ability to sell *the victim* status does not seem that difficult for some; and by my experience, is merely a testimony away. Thus, I close my second letter:

HIS CHILDREN ARE FAR FROM SAFETY, CRUSHED IN COURT WITHOUT A DEFENDER. - JOB 5:4

⁶⁵ From *Divorced from Reality*: “We’re from the Government, and we’re here to end your marriage.” Stephen Baskerville, 2009, (acfc.org).

Fellow-Father

My association of jail to high school is probably on the basic similarity of a communicable social-setting. These few settings represent a frame of reference: a somewhat fraternal order (though I never belonged to an actual fraternity) where people collect—and may be confined—and somewhat coalesce on a common cause. Jail was a remarkable and unique experience of fellows/fathers and a force of several....

To this point of my letters, I had experienced more than a month in St. Johns County. During that time, I hurt my back: a slipped disk that occurred with a slip in the shower; and pain to put me flat on back and, for a few days, with little ability to stand-up on my own. One example of a “fellow” would have to be the one that came to my aid: in less than an hour after my accident, the pain and immobility was getting worse; it seemed that any effort to move was hampered by the sudden awareness of how often the back is used—or not usable when out-of-joint. He came to my cell, called for the deputy and, in a few minutes, I was up and on my way to the infirmary. With my belongings in hand and some meds for the pain, I was off to a different cell in the medical unit.

The medical unit was quite different: each inmate was in a separate cell; the common area could only be occupied by one person at a time; and the medical condition might not be evident. On the ground floor, I had an amputee next to me; next to him was a fellow with some physical disabilities; and up stairs were some mental conditions of which I knew very little.

One additional benefit of the medical unit was the ability to watch television; and during the stay, I watched: the last in the “Rocky” series; my first and only viewing of CSI; and a campaign speech by then presidential-candidate Obama. With at least two letters underway and the prospect for more, my attention to

associations (of fathers...) was on full-alert—considering the limitations that might be obvious in confinement. These programs were applied to my third letter, “Fellow-Father”, and the apparent pattern of alliteration for all titles to follow. In the months to come, my attention and writing material would turn to: other sources such as the library and newspaper; and with some introductions already, personalities of the fellow inmates, staff, and the local prison ministry.

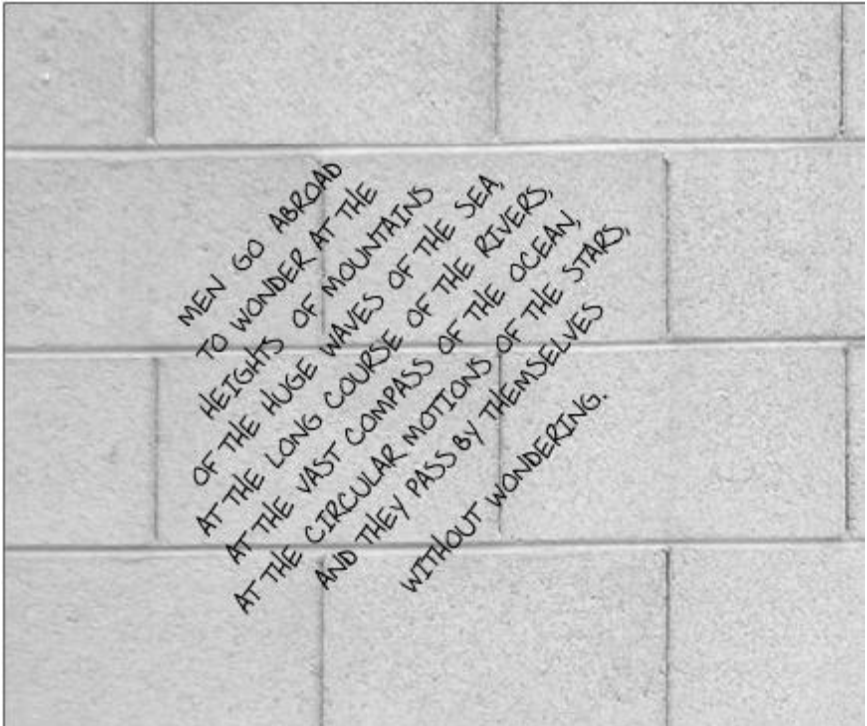
Again, jail was a remarkable and unique experience; it has made an indelible mark on my life, and in that, the desire to write about it both in letter and book. *Brokenness*⁶⁶ that pre-existed my stay was somehow relieved in the sacrifices of incarceration and its consequences. I think that the relief came primarily in seeing the hurt in the lives of these other fellows and, miraculously, the help offered by the prison ministry—fathers of sort. An Irish-born Catholic priest would be the first of such fathers; and, in the months come, encounters or observations enough to write at least a book.

What I observed and experienced might be tacitly compared to the *Promise Keepers*⁶⁷—where diversity is unified and underwritten by purpose, place, and other possibilities. In this forum, the “place” was confined (rather than voluntarily congregated); but the purpose gained predominance in moments where a fellow and father might engage in some aspect, and where “other possibilities” might make a contribution toward “a common cause”.

⁶⁶ Soul, heart and mind may be used interchangeable, but the concept is the inner man; and brokenness is the inner, emotional, and spiritual hurt that has come as a consequence of conflict and contention, pain and sorrow in his life and in those whom he cares for or about.

⁶⁷ *Promise Keepers* is an interdenominational Christian organization for men envisioned by a college coach, Bill McCartney.

The fathers were not exclusive to the prison ministry. Observed fatherly-behavior occurred among or between other fellows in the cast system. Ideally, the accurate development of the fellows/fathers can be accomplished as memory serves and as imagination allows.



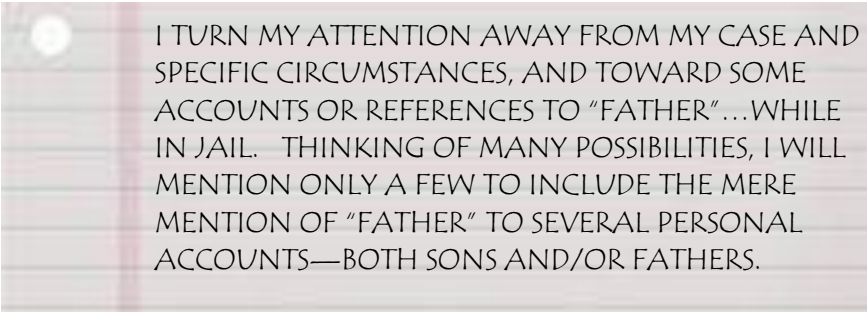
Blocks of Saint Augustine 6 - No source or interpretation is available; but the message goes to great length to describe the condition that a person may greatly know without really knowing themselves.

Francis Bacon said: 'It is a sad fate for a man to die too well known to everybody else, and still unknown to self.'

Momentary-Media

As I began planning this elaboration of the letters, one objective was to use selected dialogue of the personalities (fellows). But in my struggle to recount our conversations, I have taken caution for the sake of accuracy. A few words and phrases may be used to enhance some attribute of the person, the place or a point; still, I may have taken a few liberties.

Resting my back against the wall while being very careful with every movement, I watched the first three TV programs; later, I would write in the third letter:



I TURN MY ATTENTION AWAY FROM MY CASE AND SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES, AND TOWARD SOME ACCOUNTS OR REFERENCES TO "FATHER"...WHILE IN JAIL. THINKING OF MANY POSSIBILITIES, I WILL MENTION ONLY A FEW TO INCLUDE THE MERE MENTION OF "FATHER" TO SEVERAL PERSONAL ACCOUNTS—BOTH SONS AND/OR FATHERS.

And with the minor obstruction of the cell bars or fencing, I watched "Rocky VI".

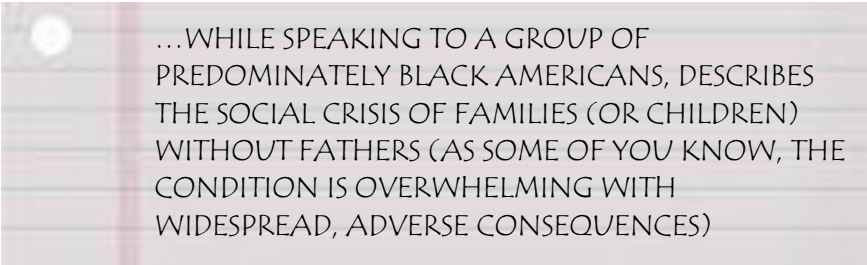
My interest in the *Rocky* series had gradually faded with each release; but to this day, I can still get excited about watching the action—and in particular the very first (of the series). Something about a latent talent rising out of anonymity is always a preferred theme whether an athlete or other "David and Goliath" story. I think the fellow in the first movie was simply more believable—less glossy or presumed as in the sequels of the *Rocky* series.

In what I think is suppose to be the last of the series however, Rocky is retired (so we think...). As I recall, he is a widower who is left with one child who is, by now, a young-rising corporate type. As a side note, I think his turtles, "Cuff" and "Link", have long been gone. Still, he has put much in a

restaurant and, apparently, not enough into his relationship with his son. Somewhere in the development of the story, he attempts to re-connect, while preparing to re-enter the ring against another young-rising type. As I remembered a few words from the script and confrontation, Rocky replied: “Watching you grow-up every day was a privilege....” I know that much more was exchanged between them, but Rocky was apparently able to remind the son of the importance of their relationship. He loved his son; and he wanted to express his feelings through the combination of wistful wording and dramatic dialogue. The fight in the ring was still to come but, in this moment, he was facing a rival that had grown-up in the shadow of the heavy weight champion. Maybe what the son wanted was just a father; but what Rocky needed was a son.

My knowledge of CSI is far more limited; I know that the program (or the variety) present some very impressive, high-tech criminal investigations. On this particular night—the first and only viewing of the program—one of the regular cast (whose name I do not know) describes being a father as “a gift” (perhaps from God).

The last of the programs was a speech given by then candidate Barack Obama. I don’t remember the dialogue but have tried to capture the essence:



... WHILE SPEAKING TO A GROUP OF
PREDOMINATELY BLACK AMERICANS, DESCRIBES
THE SOCIAL CRISIS OF FAMILIES (OR CHILDREN)
WITHOUT FATHERS (AS SOME OF YOU KNOW, THE
CONDITION IS OVERWHELMING WITH
WIDESPREAD, ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES)

The boyhood of the president was without much contact with his biological father; thus, the appeal or concern over fatherlessness is not without passion ...irrespective of any political purpose. He knows what it's like to be without a father in the home—whatever the reasons or causes for his parents' divorce. The social statistics could *hit home*, but he would have to cite divorce as a factor in fatherlessness—and that might not be politically prudent. As with the judges that preside over divorce cases, such “wistful wording and dramatic dialogue” could mean that they could “almost certainly lose their jobs”.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ It may seem unfounded to suggest the power of such political position is so important; but understand that both positions (presidents and judges) are elected and, thus, are driven by the politic. In my last book, *A Once and Always Father*, I summarize the “3-R’s” of the court system: Re-election for the judges; Retainers for the counsel; and Retirement for the balance. This perspective may seem obtuse or absurd, but it may have some merit...as a simplification of motivations in this system. A recent read of mine, on leadership lessons, describes the four options or alternatives regarding decisions; Cowardice (Is it safe?); Expedience (Is it politically correct?); Egotism (Is it popular?); Integrity (Is it *the right thing*?) From the same source, “Leadership Lessons of Robert E. Lee”: “When you see an organization occupy the front ranks...and then proceed to positions of relative obscurity, the reason is largely due to dishonest and selfish leaders. There are mitigating circumstances, of course, but the core pathology is generally dishonesty with both internal and external customers.” From Bill Holton, *Leadership Lessons of Robert E. Lee*, (Random House, 1995), p.54, 64.

Brotherly-Brokenness

Brokenness comes in different degrees⁶⁹...and with different results. This *brokenness* is emotionally-penetrating and poignant—with possibilities that vary for reasons that cannot be explained let alone understood. To encounter *brokenness* is a forgone conclusion; to avoid it, can be a lifelong constitution. “Hiding in my room, safe within my womb, I touch no one and no one touches me; I am a rock, I am an island⁷⁰.” *Brokenness* is akin to hurt; but with help, can lead to being better—rather than bitter.

Adam was hurt; he was a young fellow in his early twenties with whom I shared a cell for several weeks. He had attributes of marked intelligence: in one or two nights, he managed to memorize the names, bios, and associated faces of a deck of pinochle cards featuring unsolved homicides. He would often show-out by betting with other fellows to test his knowledge; then he would respond correctly to every question matching card to face and virtually every detail of the person. This self-motivated assignment took a few nights for a fellow claiming to have Aspergers⁷¹ and showing signs of obsessive-compulsive behavior among his peculiar traits.

Adam could juggle and he could walk on his hands; and with the same child-like behavior, he put on a show for the block. In jest, he may have had real success working in a fair or circus; but kidding aside, he had a painful past and present anger toward his family—like nothing I had ever heard or known. They had apparently allowed him to be drugged in dealing with his

⁶⁹ *Brokenness* has many degrees: from the hair-line to the compound fracture; applied to the sometimes supple but tender tissue of youth to the brittle bones of the aged.

⁷⁰ Selected lyrics from Simon and Garfunkel’s “I am a Rock”, (CBS, 1965).

⁷¹ Aspergers Syndrome is a form of autism where the person exhibits social awkwardness and an all-absorbing interest in specific topics.

childhood behavior. He saw it as abusive and reckless...contributing to—rather than controlling—his conduct or condition. In one moment, he might praise his mother only to berate and condemn her by the next.... Others in the block (and elsewhere) had *marked him* as mental; and, taking advantage of his childlike qualities, they roused and ridiculed him.

Ali was barely eighteen—but had been an adult for many years. His first sex was at age twelve with a fourteen year old; supposedly, it was her first time too. From that introduction came his description of many such encounters that unsurprisingly had dulled the sensation and had resulted in teen pregnancy. This young fellow had an even younger man in his life of whom he affectionately called “Junior”. Several tattoos marked Ali’s body; but foremost was the one at the neckline bearing his son’s pet name.


He was hurt because of the consequences of his crime and, with that, separation from his child. He spoke of his childhood and youth; of growing-up in a single-parent home with an addicted mother. He wanted her to *come-clean* but loved his mom for who she was...and was not.

Shawn was still *a lad* himself. He had already been to “juve-camp⁷²”; and on completion, he had learned how to survive on a different level. Adult jail was a *cake-walk* compared with his description of life for a juvenile. Shawn had a father in prison—as did Adam. Shawn’s father was in construction and Adam; well, his father was a medical doctor. Adam may have loved his mother (but he was hard to understand); Shawn definitely loved his mother; and Ali wanted to.... As to their fathers, prison was a place for now and, as for their sons, probable—if not certain.

⁷² “Juve-camp” was specifically for teen offenders; what was described from experience and hearsay was something in the way of daily chaos. Much may have happened to usher the youth into the penal system.

I have not forgotten these fellows. *Brokenness* or hurt may not mend; even for the mere observer, it may not move beyond memory; and so I write in my third letter:

THERE IS MUCH TO WRITE ABOUT IN JAIL WITH MUCH SORROW AMID MUCH SERIOUSNESS; THE FREQUENT BROKENNESS THAT PREVAILS IN THE LIVES OF BOTH SONS AND FATHERS. NOT ALWAYS SORROW, BUT OFTEN THE WAYWARD AND WILD SON WHOSE FATHER IS DISTANT OR ALIENATED FOR SOME REASON(S). THEN, THE FATHER(S) WHO HAVE LONG ABANDONED OR BEEN ESTRANGED FROM HIS CHILDREN BY MARRIAGE OR OUT-OF-WEDLOCK RELATIONSHIPS.



THE GREATEST EVIL
IS PHYSICAL PAIN

Blocks of Saint Augustine 7 - No source or interpretation is available; anyone who has ever had severe physical pain must know the meaning of this message.

Fatherly-Friend

Where have all the father's gone? Sounds like the answer might lie in with the refrain of a 1960's tune.⁷³ I have learned that many fathers have gone, and that reasons for fatherless may be many. Some fathers may still be fatherly without being a father (or socially be father types); and some fathers may eventually *come home*; but the question remains for more...and with more....

My memory and memos are not exclusive to failing familial; for in the company of many fellows lie the salient moment or observance of a good son or fatherly-friend. No doubt that the setting can heighten the conscience; but seemingly in competition is a mosaic of memories that is perhaps common when taking account of one's life. Jail fostered the recollection of memories thought long gone; fellows/fathers of the past, and others too.

An irony of being in St. Johns County was that I was physically closer to my children than at any time since working for a local aerospace manufacturer.⁷⁴ The current charge of stalking was levied while living long-distance; such that I had to be extradited from Charleston to the children's hometown to be booked for a crime assumed as involving physical contact.⁷⁵ *The Madness of The Mess* had emerged once again to elicit the local law enforcement (and courts) to the distant but undeniable danger of a disparate dad. Bringing him in proximity to his children was the logical execution of the law; but returning to this place (St.

⁷³ Referring to Pete Seeger's "Where Have all the Flowers Gone?"

⁷⁴ Employment in 2006-2007; and the period of my first charge (Violation of the Injunction) for attending my children's ball game.

⁷⁵ Aggravated Stalking is perceived as being physical (in proximity); but the laws have incorporated the cyber-variety, thus, a letter or gift to your children can be classified as aggravated...stalking. Credit the law for enforcing and ensuring that parents and children are completely and unequivocally incommunicado...indefinitely.

Augustine) was one of those causes that conjured up the many memories thought to be dead...or dying.

From years prior, the memories of this village were a daily occurrence. A whole host of places from Guana River State Park to the classic carousel (next to the downtown library); these and other places were where the children and I would venture on our weekend excursions. Sometimes mom would come along; but often, it was just the kids and I. Another irony was that I once conducted the care of a parent within a mile of this jail...without violating the law; at present, I could violate the law living hundreds of miles from my children. What changed?

Life has its peculiarities: *one day* you are seemingly caring for your children as fatherly-friend—not anticipating the possibility that such conduct is cause for a conviction. But I have learned a *hard lesson of life*: authority can create a criminal. From the script of a favorite movie,⁷⁶ “A legislature can trample a man’s rights just as easily as a king can.” Again, expedience at work—*the end justifies the means*, absolute authority and no responsibility in a system of justice.⁷⁷

I met Cory prior to my transfer to the medical unit⁷⁸. Another twenty-plus year old (like Adam) and another incident involving a firearm, Cory was a kid at heart and a son who had a fatherly-friend.

⁷⁶ From “The Patriot”; the setting is the state congressional meeting in Charles Towne, SC; the event is voting a levy to join the revolution against England; the words spoken by Ben Martin (Mel Gibson).

⁷⁷ Expedience may be politically correct, but is seldom *the right thing*; it establishes the outcome, and then proceeds with any and all means to *make it happen*. Expedience and *plea bargaining* are both antithetical to *due process* (to justice). “Absolute authority and no-responsibility” is dangerous dual (like narcissism to the personality).

⁷⁸ After a week on the medical unit (recovering from a slipped disk), I was returned to another block; there, I spent the balance of my incarceration—or about 3 months.

Continuing in the third letter, I write:

THE EXCEPTION TO BROKENNESS HAS BEEN THE YOUNG MAN WHO FREQUENTLY PAYS RESPECT AND GRATITUDE TO HIS FATHER—AND CONSIDERS HIS FATHER TO BE HIS BEST FRIEND.

But other examples (of fathers) could be found too.

THERE IS A MIDDLE-AGED SON WITH EXPRESSED REGRETS—BUT THE DESIRE TO “COME-CLEAN” TO PLEASE, RATHER THAN SHAME, HIS FATHER. FINALLY, THERE IS THE GRANDFATHER WHO HAS FILLED THE GAP TO SOME DEGREE WITH CARE AND COURT-RELATED COSTS.

Much pain and sorrow for the fellows, but also some promise and potential, as I continue:

IN THESE EXCEPTIONS IS MUCH PROMISE AND POTENTIAL—WHERE EVEN THE SORROW AND SERIOUSNESS CAN BE BALANCED WITH THE PRESENCE OF A FATHER, A GRANDFATHER, AND THE FIRST FATHER⁷⁹ TOO.

A fatherly-friend could be found among the fellows; though, as with any relationship, one must be seeking and another willing or wanting. Sometimes the cause might be less than beneficial and, other times, a concoction of possibilities on both sides.

Perhaps more examples will be offered in the chapters to come—both positive and negative, fatherly and other exchanges observed in the vein of pseudo-similar high school gym or some other analogy. I know that *boys will be boys*; but occasionally, the

⁷⁹ Again, *The First Father* being God.

man is manifested in the most profound and promising way. Jail was a remarkable and unique experience—limiting to opportunity and options—so as to force the mind to go elsewhere in search of even greater possibilities, if that is possible.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ This concept of the mind in physical confinement, albeit on jail (and not prison...of something worse!), does offer some room for the mind to travel. Perhaps like the fore-knowledge of certain death, the mind is apt to venture, to be set-free or loosed. In the complexity of the conscience amid the influences of a stranger setting, incarceration institutes its final blow when the mind is finally detained indefinitely. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a minister and martyr in Nazi-ruled Germany, said: ““A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes—and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside—is not a bad picture of Advent”. (By “Advent”, a time of waiting and expectation for...).

He also said: “The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children.” Or in other words: “The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.”

Exceptional-Elders

The Irish-born priest had responded to a phone call from my father; and one of several who ministered to the jail, he met with me early-on: a one-on-one, our meeting was a special moment with a special cause; the fatherly-kindness of a priest who had never met me, met my father—but evidently had met *The First Father*. In the months to follow, his laymen would dutifully arrive at the jail on Saturday morning. Names like Dominique and Tom come to mind. I sincerely looked forward to those Saturdays—a time to meet, to pray, to study—with jails and cells *far behind* in view of a consecrated, common cause.

About midway in my stay, I began attending a Tuesday morning study. A fellow named Ken was committed to the cause of jail ministry, but he also ministered to youth through multiple-county, public-school systems. Functioning alone and on a volunteer basis, Ken offered his insights and wisdom along with his stories ranging from his childhood in a coal mining town to his work with Student Venture. Unabashed admission of his past “filthy rags”, Ken had what is called a “Damascus Road” conversion...and now was dedicated on being another fellow-father.

The setting for these special events was the library; in addition to an hour away from a block, was another good book—if the mind was in search of “even greater possibilities.” During these weekly meetings, I found some great reading from such admired fellow-fathers as Francis Schaeffer. Coupling the jail ministry with such reading made for the best of possibilities in forging opportunity and options for the soul—mine, and perhaps others too.⁸¹

⁸¹ Jail offered some unique opportunities to discuss spiritual matters; the best or most common setting involving two or three fellows.

I close my third letter in mid-July, drawing on a Proverb that begins, “Because the Lord disciplines those he loves”:

THERE IS MUCH WEALTH TO BE GAINED IN “A GIFT” OR BEING A FATHER; AND IN KNOWING THAT LOVE, HOWEVER EXPERIENCED AND APPLIED, IS SO DESPERATELY NEEDED AND WANTED AS THE FATHER, HIS SON, HE DELIGHTS IN.

BY FAITHFULNESS
WE ARE COLLECTED AND
WOUND UP INTO UNITY
WITHIN OURSELVES,
WHEREAS WE HAD BEEN
SCATTERED ABROAD IN
MULTIPLICITY

Blocks of Saint Augustine 8 - No source or interpretation is available; but as observed and experienced, righteousness is by faith “whereas” works leave us enslaved to conditional acceptance. Saint Peter from *The Message*, chapter 1: You call out to God for help and he helps—he’s a good Father that way. But don’t forget that he’s a responsible Father, and want let you get by with sloppy living.

Family-Father

A mosaic of memories *takes me back* to my own childhood, and then to my children. My earliest memory of St. Augustine was a day trip from Jacksonville; a day with some neighbors who were nice enough to purchase me a plastic toy-tugboat with a blue superstructure and white hull. Other accounts meld into my adult years. With its history and attractions, *The Ancient City* is pristine and picturesque by most accounts; but from the *Newer Jail* (not the *Old Jail*)⁸², the perspective is very different.

One moment of refection came on July 4th: an evening walk in the exercise area, the fireworks sounded and flashed from the historic district. It was at that moment that I thought about the striking difference of opinion that occurs when one is *behind bars*—rather than celebrating at one of them. The fireworks and occasion reminded me of liberty and freedom.

As the occasion represents the firestorm over Baltimore,⁸³ perhaps the fireworks over the Matanzas River⁸⁴ could represent an early maritime engagement of the English and Spanish. Not that any such invasion every occurred but, as the events of that time period did involve such possibilities and purpose, the imagination could conjure up such a commemorative invasion by sea. On that night in the exercise area, my mind may have mused on the delight that a modern invasion was underway or, more precisely, that the oldest sea village was engaged in a firestorm of its own. But the next day's newspaper had no such headlines or reporting....

⁸² The *Old Jail* refers to a tourist attraction located in the historic district—near the *Fountain of Youth*. Look for a prisoner's horse-drawn prison wagon with mannequins dressed in striped attire, haggard and in appearing as in despair. Oh, the staff wears stripes too.

⁸³ The War of 1812: "Star-Spangle Banner" by Francis Scott Key.

⁸⁴ The Matanzas River routes through St. Johns County or St. Augustine.

Back to my boyhood, the area north of St. Augustine was where I first recall going to the beach, playing organized football, and participating in drama and music in elementary school. In the midst of these moments (and memories), my father was here and there, home-based or deployed, on-board with his family or shipboard in the Med.⁸⁵ His involvement and presence seemed seasonal; and contact often noted through a letter, an occasional international call, or a voice recording on a 3-inch reel-to-reel.⁸⁶ I think he tried to engage with us but he may have tried much harder to provide because, like his parents before him, that was what he was to do. Yet even with his attention elsewhere, he did venture with us on occasion and, in moments, found his family...and a place in my memories.

Forward to my own family, north of the village was once again the setting; this time, as parent rather than child and, at present, a parent *behind bars*. Meanwhile, my father waited to hear about me through a letter or the limits of an expensive phone service. (I have a long-distance service on my computer that is virtually free;⁸⁷ while the jail's service is *far from free*). He waited and worried—like parents will do when they do not know what is to become of their children—or do not know anything about their children for that matter.

In his retirement years, my father was no longer bound to the duties of the institutions that once occupied his time and attention. Those institutions *moved on* (or maybe he *moved on*) after having offered their remuneration for his services...and sacrifices. Today, he is able to retire occasionally, reminiscent and

⁸⁵ Duty or deployment aboard a carrier in the Mediterranean Sea.

⁸⁶ Not that further details are needed, but a 3-inch reel-to-reel is a tape recorder that preceded the 8-track and cassette player.

⁸⁷ This free phone service is *magic-Jack*; a matching name for the jail's phone service could be *me-Jacked*—referring to the ridiculously high rates.

recollect often, and regret on the occasion that some undesirable moment or event in his children's lives has something to do with his past as a parent. Some pain and some sorrow may come irrespective of whether he draws a connection of his past to the present (or recent); but this is what parents do in regard to their children—as a part of the heart of love, of care.

Too retired to conveniently work his cares (or concerns) into oblivion (or the recesses of the mind), he must contend with *the demons*; the basic questions of whether he tried...or gave it his best. Sure, he could resolve that he did his best so as to leave little if any argument or doubt; or in other words, to clear his conscience. But then comes more moments or events and, as a parent is naturally inclined, reflection on the dastardly *demons* of disparate dads. The probability that he does reflect (and regret) does have its rewards; for like the institutions of his yesteryears, he could have *moved on* after having rendered “his services”.

The bombs bursting in air...gave truth to the night...that my family is still there. Some (of this family) is presently making their sacrifices for the services of institutions⁸⁸ that, God willing, will move on—such that we can reminisce, recollect, and relish the moments made because of parents who have the courage to reflect...and regret as a heart of love, of care.

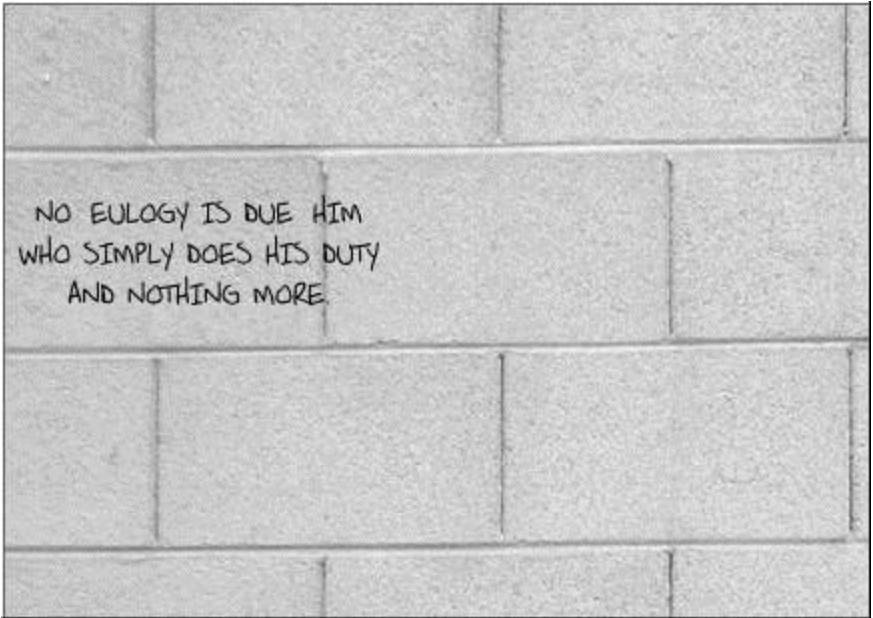
“Being a Good Father⁸⁹” may have many options; but, for the time being, the most evident (for me) is to pray (for them...and us). I have tried to assist them financially above or beyond the child support mandate; and while the money is never declined⁹⁰, the penalty is not. Letters and an occasional encounter are never

⁸⁸ “Sacrifices” (for services to institutions) is the costs they bore for having been forced into divorce...and its consequences.

⁸⁹ “Being a Good Father” refers to the newspaper article—the impetus for beginning the memos or letters.

⁹⁰ Monies have been sent to my children by me and by their grandparents; on record, these monies have never been declined.

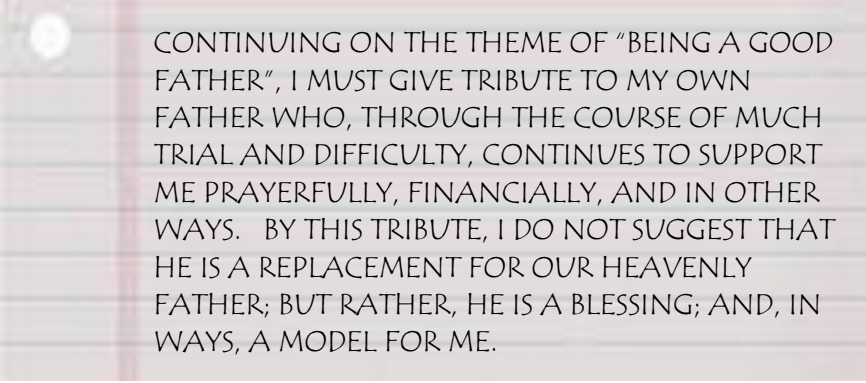
acceptable and, to some degree, have served as evidence for the next violation, charge, and conviction. But the key in these actions—with little or no measurable gain—is the word, “tried”. As elementary-school as it might sound, failure can never occur when one has tried...as failing cannot be assessed when one is trying. The effort to try (to be a father) is what I learned...and what I have been taught—not by an institution that *moved on* (or ideally, will...), but by individuals who faithfully stayed.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 9 - No source or interpretation is available. To do your duty is not enough; you must try still. Francis Bacon said: **“There is no comparison between that which is lost by not succeeding and that which is lost by not trying.”**

Trying-Tributes

In the next or forth letter, I continue on my own course by paying tribute to one of those individuals:



CONTINUING ON THE THEME OF "BEING A GOOD FATHER", I MUST GIVE TRIBUTE TO MY OWN FATHER WHO, THROUGH THE COURSE OF MUCH TRIAL AND DIFFICULTY, CONTINUES TO SUPPORT ME PRAYERFULLY, FINANCIALLY, AND IN OTHER WAYS. BY THIS TRIBUTE, I DO NOT SUGGEST THAT HE IS A REPLACEMENT FOR OUR HEAVENLY FATHER; BUT RATHER, HE IS A BLESSING; AND, IN WAYS, A MODEL FOR ME.

How blessed I have been to have had another to stay the course; or for that matter, that is still alive and healthy to do so. He was there for my children—when *The Madness* and *The Mess* did not stand in the way. He has been there for me, as I have tried to stand in the way of one or more of those institutions for the sole purpose to be such an individual—a father—in my children's lives.

Within a day or two of my arrest and incarceration in North Charleston⁹¹, my parents drove from Alabama to collect my property and close the matters pertaining to my residency and employment. At the same time, they stopped by the jail to pick-up the items held by the local law enforcement. In the months to come, they provided funds and support for my stay in St. Johns County. All in all, they extended their roles to a *place* where neither could have previously imagined for their children—a place where one is at risk for imprisonment in a sincere effort to help his own children—or to do *the right thing*.

⁹¹ North Charleston was my residence; the charges were from St. Johns County Florida—where I would be extradited...days after my arrest.

As I have written in my first book, *A Once and Always Father*:⁹²

In my own experience, these folks (of a bygone era of parenting) cannot generally comprehend the conduct that occurs in the courts today; they cannot conceive the sanctioning of purposeful destruction on the premise of personal rights and wants—rather than the sustaining of families on the proof of sacrifice and responsibility.

Many of these folks grew-up in an era when commitment and promises meant something—as did marriage and family. Individuals who defied such customs and rites were punished (rather than promoted) in their cause—if not by the family, than by the community and *common good*. I'm certain that their “era” had its injustices and shortcomings but, in the collective, represented a much more viable and valued period for marriage and family.

But this was not the first time that they had experienced this kind of “moment or event”; for they had been dealing with these destructive ambitions before the divorce to the degree that they had been implicated as being child-abusers. With all they did to help my family through prior years, they had to endure the allegation of child abuse as one of several tactics applied in the divorce process.⁹³ The present circumstance was more a continuation than a single event—that can criminalize a parent on natural and social practices (or effort) to care for their children...or grandchildren.

⁹² *A Once and Always Father*; published in 2010, the plight of a non-custodial to regain his parenthood, it is the story of marriage, divorce and post-divorce life as a non-custodial....

⁹³ The divorce process involved much effort to play the “abuse-card”; where one parent or spouse will lodge allegations aimed at implicating, even incriminating, the other spouse...or family. In this particular case, the allegations involved no legitimate evidence, testimonies or reasons to consider the possibility or presence of child abuse—as reasoned through the judgment or outcome of the divorce trial.

My folks were not strangers to the area—either *The Lowcountry* or northeast Florida; as both regions involved one or more dots on the map of their military career. What had been another *port of call* was now a call in the undesirable effects of post-divorce and parental dismemberment. They were never removed from the support or care of their children (and even grandchildren to some degree), but their effective discharge through the advent of divorce was nothing like they have ever experienced—and yet another consequence of *an age* beyond their years. Divorce leaves much destruction—whether intended or not—to many, and perhaps all, the family.

Without experience—of what I commonly refer to as knowledge of the “The League⁹⁴”—these folks must admit to the possibility that they simply do not understand. With all the probability to reflect (and to regret) comes the matter of whether they prepared their children to be adults. More than once, I have heard the statement or sentiment that, perhaps, the job to inform or prepare me had not been done; thus, leaving me naïve or gullible to matters and behavior that have come about—to include *The League*.

But in all sincerity is the condition that they simply did not know (in our youth) what was only beginning to develop across *our land*; that is, the dissolution and dismemberment of marriage and family via *divorce on demand*.⁹⁵ With greater attention to individual rights—irrespective of the expense borne by others—this new strain of divorce begin to show-up from state to state,

⁹⁴ “The League” is another title for *the divorce industry* and, in particular, the fraternal relationships of those who profit or gain from divorce...either in the legal aspect or post-divorce custody conflict and dispute.

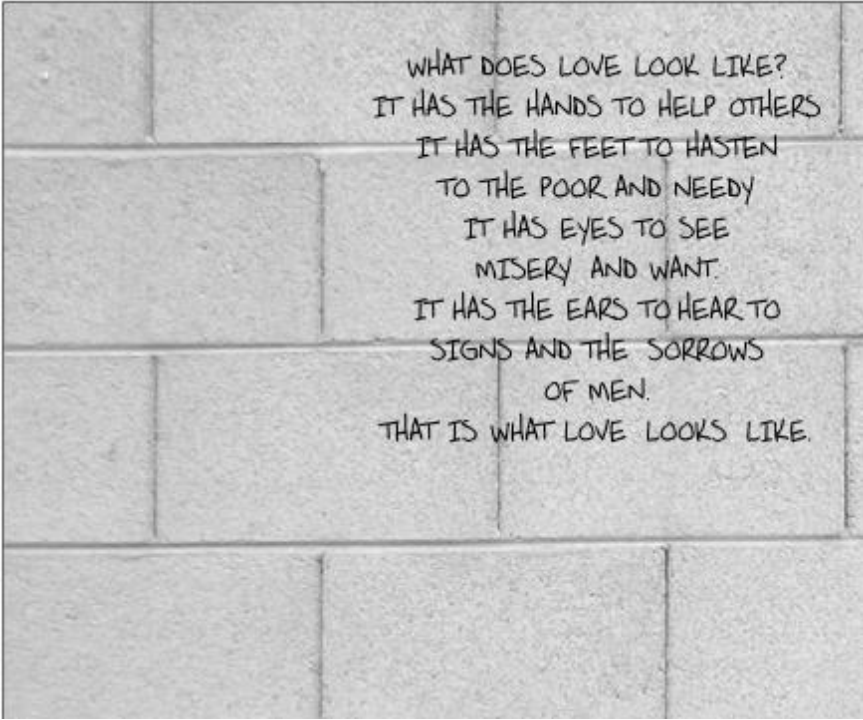
⁹⁵ *Divorce on demand* is a phrase applied to no-fault, uncontested, or unilateral divorce; extending divorce beyond mutual consent through laws enacted in the 1970’s.

family to family...right down to individual lives. Another product of an institution, no-fault is a contradiction of terms: how can the dissolution of marriage and dismemberment of families occur without fault? In its essence, this “individual right” is just another assault on the family...and fatherhood. Another excuse or opportunity for government intrusion and imposition characterized with abuse of authority by both the institution and the individual endowed with exceptional rights. In an ironic and recurring act of history, no-fault has imposed penalties on the citizen in the realm of *taxation without representation*⁹⁶ and enslavement of his children.⁹⁷ These laws have been a firestorm on the family, where the land invasion has spawned from seemingly supportive services.⁹⁸ The village has been caught off guard; and as to the watchtower, the guard has been carted-off....

⁹⁶ *Taxation without representation* occurs when the non-custodial is imputed to pay for his children, yet is denied the duty and privilege to be parent in the true sense.

⁹⁷ Enslavement (of the children) in that the courts place a price on their heads and award the children as property to one parent; hence, the children become wards of the state. The non-custodial is no parent at all, but instead, another service regulated by the state.

⁹⁸ Services of the “front-office” with do-gooders; but a “back-office” of *special interests* as described in an earlier chapter. Chuck Colson is quoted: “May the Christian church never be regarded as a special interest group. We’re here because we love our neighbor.”



WHAT DOES LOVE LOOK LIKE?
IT HAS THE HANDS TO HELP OTHERS
IT HAS THE FEET TO HASTEN
TO THE POOR AND NEEDY
IT HAS EYES TO SEE
MISERY AND WANT.
IT HAS THE EARS TO HEAR TO
SIGNS AND THE SORROWS
OF MEN.
THAT IS WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE.

Blocks of Saint Augustine 10 - No source or interpretation is available; but love is the central to the Christian faith, of course; and it can be manifested in many ways—most commonly when another's needs are truly important.

Committed-Consequences

As to the villagers (or at least some...), this invasion of the 70's has led to the systemic loss of love; at least, through the conventional practice of marriage.⁹⁹ Is there a relationship between the explosion of divorce and the erosion of marriage; or said in another way, has one institution launched an assault or invasion on another?

Casual attention to the concept of “separation of church and state” is often over the church's encroachment in *State* matters; but what happens when the once-held institution of sacred marriage is seized by *The State*? Does the same cliché apply? Has the institution—so vital to a free society—remained under the watchful and caring eye of the home-guard; or has the gate been left unintended in the unduly discharge of the watchtower guard or keeper?

Words alone cannot describe what has become of marriage at the hands of *The State*. An attempt however might be represented by the politician who tried to be all things to all people, and ended-up being nothing to no one. As marriage has been transformed from a contract to a relationship of convenience, families and their villages have borne the burdens. Individual rights may seem like *the right thing*, but fail to follow the concept of liberty and freedom. On liberty and freedom, Lord Acton¹⁰⁰ said: “Liberty is not the power of doing what we like, but the right of being able to do what we ought.” If the want for divorce is predicated on the pursuit of happiness—irrespective of the commitments to marriage and family—then *the right thing* remains to be seen...and done.

Lord Acton would probably agree that “words are cheap”; that actions speak louder than words. And though the want for

⁹⁹ Referring to the significant decline of marriage per capita in the U.S.

¹⁰⁰ Lord Acton (1834-1902); English historian...known for his erudition.

divorce may be expressed to be in the best interest of the children, the possibility is that actions (of divorce) will be rationalized rather than reasoned; that is, that the *end justifies the means*. Such an approach (of rationalization) is *dangerous territory* for the family or village. As Friedrich von Hayek¹⁰¹ described in his book, *The Road to Serfdom*:¹⁰²

The principle that the end justifies the means is in individualist ethics regarded as the denial of all morals. In collectivist ethics it becomes necessarily the supreme rule.

The extent to which individual rights can create a near and present danger is made possible through rationalizations—of laws (or words) through an institution...and of actions of individual rights. Such words threaten the vitality of the village; such actions (of individual rights) represent an assault on one's own family.¹⁰³ What are the limits of the pursuit of happiness?

My forth letter continues through the reasoning of what is *the right thing* to do regarding family—those remaining in the village as well as those sold into custody. In presenting the next paragraph (of the letter), some explanation may be helpful: the concept of actions over words comes from “a generation” or era where words, as with *The State*, were of lesser significance or import¹⁰⁴. As Milton Friedman¹⁰⁵ noted on more than one occasion, there was a time in our history (America) when the government was “largely superfluous”. But to his bemoaning,

¹⁰¹ Friedrich von Hayek (1889-1902); Austrian-born economist....

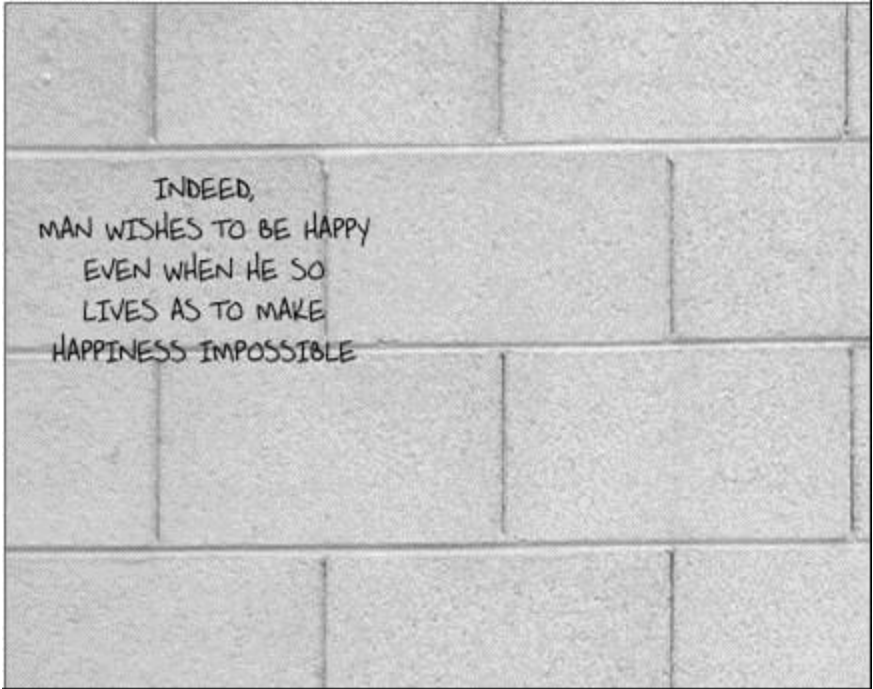
¹⁰² F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹⁰³ These words and actions are the double-threat to the vitality and value of the village; rationalizations—external and internal to this small government— can lead to a familial firestorm...and the eventual fall of the *fabric of a free society*. One institution or government destroys another....

¹⁰⁴ Government and lawmaking was less intrusive....

¹⁰⁵ Milton Friedman (1912-2006); An American economist, statistician....

that “time” is long gone. *Now is the time for the supreme institution to come to the aid of custody*¹⁰⁶—when the gates are left open and the keeper has been re-posted to the rank of pariah or perpetrator.¹⁰⁷



Blocks of Saint Augustine 11 - No source or interpretation is available; but a certainty is that the pursuit of happiness may paradoxically cause unhappiness. In his book, *Writing from the Inside Out: Transforming Your Psychological Blocks to Release the Writer Within*, Dennis Palumbo writes: “The main problem with the pursuit of happiness is that it's perceived as a pursuit at all.” He adds: “What it comes down to, in the end, is love...

Framed in this way, happiness is released from enslavement to our fervid imaginings of the future.”

¹⁰⁶ A play on the once-popular phrase: *Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country.*

¹⁰⁷ I have been the designated “perpetrator” in violation of the orders or injunction.

In the possibility of an exchange of roles, fatherhood may be on its way to replacing this “supreme institution” as superfluous¹⁰⁸. This exchange (of roles) is described by Stephen Baskerville¹⁰⁹ in his article, “Divorced from Reality”:

Some four decades ago...the Western world embarked on the boldest social experiment in its history...Today it is not possible to form a binding agreement to create a family. The government can now, at the request of one spouse, simply dissolve a marriage over the objection of the other.

...and rationalizations “represent an assault on one’s own family.” Continuing on Dr. Baskerville’s article, the following on commentary of G. K. Chesterton:¹¹⁰

The family serves as the principal check on government power, and he (G. K. Chesterton) suggested that someday the family and the state would confront one another.

Stephen believes: “That day has arrived.” And he explains that G. K. Chesterton was writing about divorce. He adds: “despite extensive public attention to almost every other threat to the family, divorce remains the most direct and serious.” Another source cited in the same publication (“Divorced from Reality”), Michael McManus¹¹¹ of *Marriage Savers* writes that “divorce is a far more grievous blow to marriage than today’s challenge by

¹⁰⁸ This statement is referring to comments by David Popenoe in his book, *Life with Father*; he writes: “From almost every social and cultural perspective, fatherhood has been made not only increasingly difficult but often seemingly superfluous and unnecessary.”

¹⁰⁹ Stephen Baskerville; professor, writer and author of *Taken into Custody*, has been a leading researcher and advocate on issues of law pertaining to marriage and family.

¹¹⁰ G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936); English writer, philosopher....

¹¹¹ Michael McManus (1942-present); Christian writer and founder of *Marriage Savers*....

gays.” Finally, the next paragraph of the forth letter—as a continuing tribute to my father, my family:

AS I REFLECT ON HIS EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE, THE GENERAL BELIEF OR IMPRESSION IS THAT HIS DEEDS OR ACTIONS STAND OVER AND ABOVE HIS WORDS. PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THE COMMONLY APPLIED REASON OF “HIS GENERATION”, WORDS HAVE NEVER BEEN THE COMMON (OR NATURAL) LANGUAGE OF LOVE; INSTEAD, THE REGULARITIES OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTING COUPLED WITH THE EXTRAORDINAIRE (OF SUPPORT) MANIFESTED IN THE “TRIAL AND DIFFICULTY” OF DIVORCE AS “THE MESS” AND ITS CONSEQUENCES AND AFTERMATH AS “THE MADNESS”.

Memorable-Madness

The use of the word “extraordinaire” is not an overstatement; indeed, the slow and sometimes never-ending saga of divorce can be draining to the extreme. A description of this divorce process (or processes) has been equated to a physical death; but in the truth, it is only the beginning of dying. For those who hold to the *sacred trust* of family soon realize the myths of no-fault divorce in matters of *The Mess* and an atmosphere of *The Madness*.

The description of *The Madness* may seem too vague; after all, madness has several meanings or applications. But in the context of my divorce, this madness is the prevailing and pugnacious behavior that has gone (and will go) to great length to ensure that my children have no contact or relationship with their paternal family. The length is measured by the prolonging of *The Mess*—or the duration of post-divorce conflict and contention (for which no rightful end is in sight). Perhaps best understood as a divided nation or the severing of statehood, this once seemingly strong alliance has been forever destroyed by differences that go well beyond the *common good*.¹¹² More than a grudge, *The Madness* is deeply rooted in fear; a condition that results in rash and reckless behavior—at the risk of the children...and those who care about them.

Institutional and individual rights (or authority) are *the means to an end*. As long as an institution offers some benefit or service, the individual is enabled and empowered to carry out their objectives. This relationship or arrangement may not be a bad thing—as employment may be an example. But when the institution is enlisted to protect the apparent rights of one beyond the *common good*, then the relationship may be reduced to something on scale of a ruse. Many such examples of this later

¹¹² Using “common good” to denote the best interest of the family and...

arrangement prevail in and through institutions but, basically, are rooted in the individual's want—rather than need—however the motives appear.¹¹³ Moreover, the determination and depth at which some will go is a factor of fear—but not necessarily fear for which the individual or group claims or expresses¹¹⁴.

Meaningful methods¹¹⁵ are not merely enough, but fear drives the individual to seek out every opportunity and service, or as expressed in the contemporary, to *learn the system*. Compromise is not the doing of the institution, but is the behavior of the individual: the willingness to justify all pursuit and possible service of the institution in view of objectives. Choosing to compromise¹¹⁶ is an individual right on the rationale that the service has been (or will be) rendered. Adopting such compromise (over credibility) becomes a life-skill justified by the rendered service or rewards.

Credibility that is lost through such conduct must be constantly kept in check; after all, one's character is *on the line*. Exposure of the truth is the worst possible outcome of the closely-held compromises (and the true intentions of the individual). One's choices and conscience are clouded in the current state of rendered services and its rewards—without much regard for the risks imposed on those who are seemingly part of the cause. To the degree that sobriety may enter the current state—or that true intentions are at risks of being exposed—comes a response that is

¹¹³ Recall the “do-gooders” and *special interests* of the “unholy coalition”.

¹¹⁴ Real (causes) of fear are replaced by cogent causes or what I have called, *pseudo-fear*. Fear is the source of *The Madness*; but fear of what...or whom?

¹¹⁵ Use of “meaningful methods” is for alliterative effect—a term that simply means to do *the right thing*.

¹¹⁶ Compromise is to deviate from understood or expressed character...leading to credibility issues.

rash, even reckless.¹¹⁷ This behavior has included the following description, with my commentary:

- Transferring the children under the guise of fleeing from an abusive situation or environment.
 - The children were taken to Florida (or from their home in Georgia) on three occasions (without notice and without intentions)—the purpose was to use them (or the occurrences) as leverage in control or precedence in planned court proceedings.
 - Once the initiating spouse is under the direction of an attorney, the process begins in earnest—with the steps deemed necessary or important to the objectives of a decisive victory in dissolution of the marriage.
- Issuing a restraining order¹¹⁸ under the guise of eminent fear of the spouse.
 - Had the expressed cause been credible, she would not have returned to the residence by her volition, but would have remained true to the expressed cause...and remained at large.
 - As it happened however, her cause became moot by the simple reasoning of the contradiction in her choice to resume co-residence—a paradox that the courts overlooked....
 - The contradiction of expressed cause and individual choice was the first example of misusing the restraining order...as another example of *learning the system* to obtain objectives.

¹¹⁷ By “reckless” to mean that with the true intentions and the prevailing fear, actions can be viewed as irresponsible toward others...putting them at unnecessary or unjustified risks.

¹¹⁸ Issuing a restraining order is often in conjunction with a complaint of divorce—as advised, if not demanded, by legal council. Such orders are commonly created in pre-divorce as a first-step (or strike) toward removing one parent, and positioning the other parent for child custody—in general, creating precedence for the impending trial.

- Using the features of her family and friendships to ensure support through the divorce process.
 - This practice is not wrong altogether, as such support is relied upon for good reason; but the nature of her use has to do with the issues of credibility and the cause characterized as *The Madness*.
 - Pairing the person to the process depends largely on the proceedings¹¹⁹ and the ability to use pretense¹²⁰ to gain approval while protecting the true intentions. Participants in the process had differing views¹²¹ as to acceptable conduct and behavior. Knowing their views was a necessary prerequisite for the pairing, the process, and the purpose. Allegiance depends on the alignment of...
 - Aligning her associations was just another *means to an end*; and should any associations *sober-up*, she could just as easily cut ties (as a practice) or jettison the arrangement—while concocting that they are the one to blame.

The above is not the full entree, but only samples of compromises served-up as credible in the diet of one who feeds-on and feeds-at the trough of the institution. They have *learned the system*—and in learning it well—have invoked the “dastardly *demons* of disparate dads”. The dilemma that one faces in the intrusion of the institution is characterized as dealing with *neo-narcissism*¹²² at any level: the *dangerous dual* of absolute authority over something (so

¹¹⁹ Proceedings such as a hearing, trial, mediation, etc....

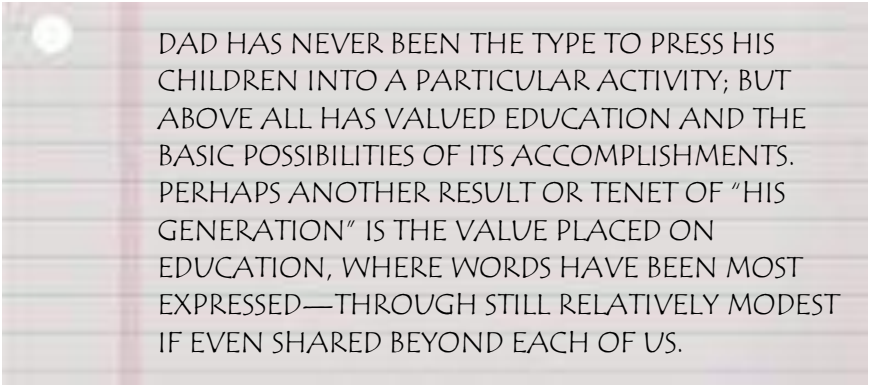
¹²⁰ Pretense to suggest the absence of concrete evidence; bit instead, words or innuendo accepted as sincere—due to pre-existing or predisposed relationships.

¹²¹ Views, standards and ethics as to right and wrong, acceptable/un-acceptable, justifiable....

¹²² The author’s choice of the term, “neo-narcissism”, applied to both individual characteristics and institutional qualities: an unhealthy and unreasonable behavior or conduct—a force that demands everything, and denies any blame for wrongdoing, through subversion of services.

dear)—while taking no responsibility for the rendered risks or the “Committed-Consequences”.

On learning of a more redeeming quality and purpose, the forth letter continues:

A rectangular image showing a snippet of text on a background of horizontal lines, resembling lined paper. The text is centered and reads: "DAD HAS NEVER BEEN THE TYPE TO PRESS HIS CHILDREN INTO A PARTICULAR ACTIVITY; BUT ABOVE ALL HAS VALUED EDUCATION AND THE BASIC POSSIBILITIES OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS. PERHAPS ANOTHER RESULT OR TENET OF 'HIS GENERATION' IS THE VALUE PLACED ON EDUCATION, WHERE WORDS HAVE BEEN MOST EXPRESSED—THROUGH STILL RELATIVELY MODEST IF EVEN SHARED BEYOND EACH OF US."

DAD HAS NEVER BEEN THE TYPE TO PRESS HIS CHILDREN INTO A PARTICULAR ACTIVITY; BUT ABOVE ALL HAS VALUED EDUCATION AND THE BASIC POSSIBILITIES OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS. PERHAPS ANOTHER RESULT OR TENET OF “HIS GENERATION” IS THE VALUE PLACED ON EDUCATION, WHERE WORDS HAVE BEEN MOST EXPRESSED—THROUGH STILL RELATIVELY MODEST IF EVEN SHARED BEYOND EACH OF US.

Even the best learning can be used for the worst. Parents **can** have value and purpose far beyond the *institutions of learning*...and the learning of some institutions.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 12 - No source or interpretation is available; but again, "Even the best learning can be used for the worst." *Learning the system* leads to dependence or a habit.

Breaking-Blessings

The *breaking of bread* is a phrase applied to the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, or the sacrament representing Jesus' last meal at Passover. The ceremony of this event is a celebration; a time to give thanks for the consecrated body of Christ—given as the atonement for the timeless sins of man. Knowing of the subsequent and consequential crucifixion is to know the body of Christ was sacrificed—to mean that his body was scourged (without the actual breaking of bones).¹²³ The punishment of the Roman institution included such practices as that portrayed in the movie, “The Passion”.¹²⁴ If the accounts of his so-called trial are representative of the court proceedings, punishment could be inflicted without cause or without a conviction. So in other words, punishment could be used to make a point, perform the politically-correct, or attempt to appease mob-rule.

Behind the *brokenness* of Christ was the will of God: the prophesy manifested in Christ who, as God, bore the wrath of sin for the sake of man; and by the wounds inflicted on Him, man is offered righteousness—cleansing of the sin that separates one from the other. What was divided in enmity was brought to union by His willing sacrifice. Considered broken by death—the consequence of sin—Christ rose....and lived as prophesied, witnessed and trusted by faith.

The purpose of this brief on Christ is to bring to bear that *brokenness* is not necessarily to destroy but, in the realm of the spiritual, is intended to transform and renew.

¹²³ Messianic prophesy that no bones would be broken, John 19:36.

¹²⁴ “The Passion of the Christ”; a film directed by Mel Gibson (2004).

And by faith (for the Believer), so too the understanding that *brokenness* comes as both a test and a testimony; a description provided by Alan Nelson in his book, *Embracing Brokenness*:¹²⁵

The soul of a person, in its early and natural state, is wildly undisciplined...and fights reliance on God in an effort to go 'my own way'...and is destined to a future of futility¹²⁶.

Yet for God, this aspect or element of man is most important; yes, the soul is front-and-center to God. In this process and priority (of soul development), is the matter and method called *brokenness*. Much more could be said (from the book), but for the purpose at hand, understand that "*Brokenness* is not the opposite of wholeness; it is the continuing precondition for it (wholeness)."¹²⁷

The concept of *brokenness* can be seen in the book of Job:¹²⁸ *He (God) wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal.* In keeping with this theme, the book of Hosea:¹²⁹ *He has torn us to pieces, but He will also heal us; He has injured us, but He will also bind up our wounds.* Last, but among my most favorite, Ecclesiastes:¹³⁰ *A time to teardown, and a time to build.* Not an exhaustive list of scripture, but enough to suggest that *brokenness* is aimed at victory—though perhaps of a different kind....

Sometimes the *brokenness* can be expressed, but may remain silent; still, it may be evident—though limited to a moment like two ships passing in the night. Finally, it may land to port—seeking the safe harbor after much time at sea, adrift, or another “port of call”. *Brokenness* returns to its berth for refitting; the

¹²⁵ Alan Nelson, *Embracing Brokenness*, (Navpress, 2002):

¹²⁶ Chapter 2, “Falling Behind to get Ahead”;

¹²⁷ Chapter 3, “What is Brokenness?”

¹²⁸ From Job, chapter 5

¹²⁹ From Hosea, chapter 6

¹³⁰ From Ecclesiastes, chapter 3

moorings re-Mastered, and compass re-calibrated for what lies...ahead...and not behind....

Walking along the banks of the Matanzas River was always pleasant; with the sights and sound captured in the mind of one locked-up just a few miles away (in the *Newer Jail*). These memories lend to the blessing that some things remain constant or fixed—while other things are relative, even fleeting. *The Madness*, so described previously, was nothing new for my father either; and from his childhood, some *brokenness* that befalls anyone willing to love the relative, even fleeting. The “constant” and the “relative, even fleeting” is where *brokenness* may begin to turn one toward the berth, renewal or new birth.¹³¹

In the final words of the forth letter, just a few miles from the Matanzas River, I finish...regarding my father:

AS AN ADULT AND IN DISPROPORTION OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, I HAVE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT HIS LIFE FROM THE EARLIEST RECOLLECTIONS TO HIS BELIEFS, HIS FAITH. AT THE SAME TIME, THESE LAST FEW YEARS HAVE BROUGHT DEEP EMOTIONS, PAIN AND SUFFERING—MUCH OF WHICH HAS BEEN LEARNED (AND SHARED) BY WORDS MORE THAN ACTIONS.

RECENTLY, HE RECALLED WITNESSING DEATH WHEN HE WAS A CHILD: A WOMAN HIT BY A TRAIN AND A MAN ELECTROCUTED TO DEATH AT A CONSTRUCTION SITE. IN THE DETAIL OF THESE RECOLLECTIONS WAS THE APPARENT SENSE THAT LIFE IS, AS DESCRIBED IN THE MOVIE *AMAZING GRACE*, “A THREAD—IT EITHER BREAKS OR IT DOESN’T.” YET BEYOND THAT LIFE, HE BELIEVES IN ANOTHER, AND FOR THIS, HE IS A BLESSING AND A MODEL FOR ME.

¹³¹ Berth of a ship; birth as to suggest anew, reborn...and fixed on a firm point.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 13 - No source or interpretation is available; the application of this quote has to do with the process by which individual will is replaced by God's will through, in part, a discipline...and *brokenness*.

As a post-entry: the description of my father's prior observation and experience with The Madness pertains to his childhood; some brokenness in his relationship with his mother—the earliest and perhaps most important relationships of unconditional love.¹³²

¹³² On the matter of unconditional love, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “**Human love has little regard for the truth. It makes the truth relative, since nothing, not even the truth, must come between it and the beloved person.**”

Fore-Father

Our fore-fathers came to mind on reading a particular book; not necessarily the Founding Fathers, but those that preexisted.... I know little about my fore-fathers and, in truth, have probably learned more in the last two years than all prior; but with reason, I look now with some degree of promise—at the time of my fifth letter and at present.

The background of my letter will be *self-evident*; that I was unjustifiably charged and arrested for nothing more than what millions of parents do everyday—as they care for their children.¹³³ Discovered in the annals of my observation and experience, and among the anal halls¹³⁴ of the courts, is that one’s intentions—ingenuous and innocuous—can be framed into conduct worthy of a conviction. Doing *the right thing* is not without its risks.

If we reward our children for doing the right things, or discipline for intentionally doing the wrong things, then we might be viewed as doing *the right thing*. On the other hand, we (or parents) might not fully grasp *the right thing*—as the “right thing” becomes convoluted in the mix of the time and period, the latest “grand experiment”, and other influences of parenthood and childrearing. As I see it, the degree and depth at which good intentions can be convoluted and confounded is when “conflict and contention” is brought to bear within the family. No other cause is more disturbing (to me) than the sanctity and civility of the family than the conduct of civil courts that sanction divorce on demand.¹³⁵

¹³³ By “love their children”, I mean in the normal and best sense of parental care. Observation and experience has shown that a non-custodial parent is vulnerable to the capability of *creating a criminal*.

¹³⁴ “Anal halls” or appearing to be orderly...centered to symmetry.

¹³⁵ “Divorce on demand”, unilateral divorce, no-fault or uncontested....

Unlike some of our fore-fathers, families of today must deal with all sundry of “grand experiments” aimed at improving (or replacing) parenthood; or assaulting the family through the *abuses and usurpations* that can remove a parent from his children without cause or condition. When such acts or laws occur in the small government of a family, one spouse has opened both the windows and the doors to nihilism of *The Nanny State*. As with any conflict and its corruption, the innocent suffer with the guilty—the happy with the unhappy. The spoils go to *the divorce industry* that, once entrenched and occupied, will exact its dangerous dual¹³⁶ of absolute authority—detached of any accountability—dismembering of that deemed undesirable.

Call in a “heavy hand”, “the long arm” or by any analogous description, the *weapons of family destruction* have been deployed in the undermining of not only the so-called “problem marriage”, but marriage in general.¹³⁷ Whether appearing with a white or dark hat is of little consequence; indeed, the rider is as heinous and the Colonial headless horseman¹³⁸—able to overtake the best of parental pedagogy with pretense and, where necessary, punishment. How far will the enraged rider travel to seek out the lone “undesirable?” As far as it takes; for “the end” always justifies the means....

Only days prior to my arrest and extradition, I was touring Charleston and enjoying its rich Colonial history. “The Old Customs House” remains at the epicenter of the historic district as a featured stop on a day’s visit; and there, I learned that several signers of the Declaration has been locked-up for actions

¹³⁶ Dangerous “dual”; absolute authority without any responsibility (for the consequences of its actions...).

¹³⁷ Divorce and its consequences impact many families, churches and communities; the divorced are not the only segment that suffers.

¹³⁸ “The headless horseman” is the fabled tale, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”; the “enraged rider” determined to destroy....

unbecoming the rule-of-law. We (citizens) call these men our Founding Fathers and Patriots; but they (the occupation) called them treasonous and rebels. “Who was right?”

In the true sense, no one was completely right or wrong; rather, enough people (or Patriots and others...) showed enough passion and pursuit so as to eventually realize victory in their purpose or cause. Liberty was the apparent objective; or freedom from what was deemed as oppressive, unfair, or excessive. For the cause of what was described as “unalienable rights¹³⁹”, many sacrificed—with few immediate rewards and, in the contemporary, a legacy eventually lost in the ashes of a republic.¹⁴⁰

Perspective and position (or words) obviously play a part in the designation of patriotism; and, possibly, passion and pursuit (or actions) in the determination of purpose. The rule-of-law (or prevailing law) uses both power and punishment to quell the rebellion—to dismember that deemed undesirable. Excessive taxes are not, “the rule” remains enforceable—even if the person, patriot or patriarch is forced from his home—exiled as a citizen of “No-where¹⁴¹”...though paradoxically and providentially the parent and paternal order.

Child support is an ally of *the divorce industry*; and it is a means by which the states can fill their coffers on the backs of all children dispossessed by divorce. Not a stamp or a tea tax, child support is a price on a person—deemed a ward of *The State* and indentured to deprivation and degradations like those of Colonial

¹³⁹ “The term “unalienable rights” do not include *individual rights*—exclusive of penalties and punishment to others.

¹⁴⁰ This “legacy” is the original and once-republic of the U.S.

¹⁴¹ A “citizen of ‘No-where’” to associate political and paternal punishment; the paternity is basically banned from his once-family—removed from any semblance of his domain.

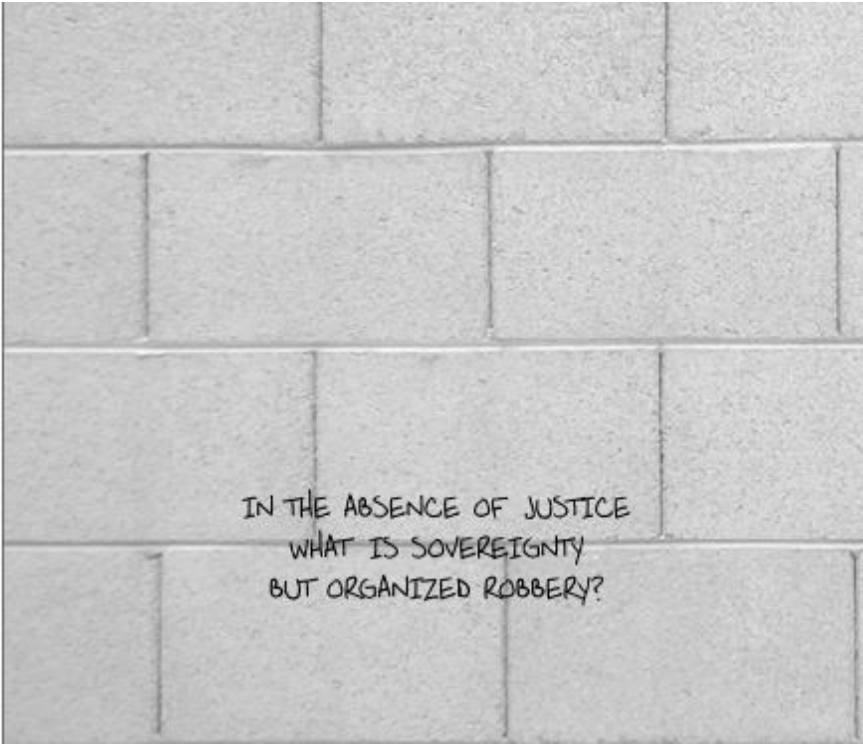
America¹⁴². By embracing “a model” for child support, *The State* have enacted and enabled divorce while collecting a cut of the spoils. Forget the beautiful clothes of the king; a turncoat is more the attire for one that undermines the fabric of a fading, free society. “Who is right?”

Well, “The Right”, is not altogether right; the so-called party of family rights will not consider the grievances of *the commoners*. Studies and statistics bear-out the consequences of the explosive divorce trends—to include the present decline in marriage. This party is politically unwilling to add action to words. Taking a stand for the right thing is not always the right move for *The Right*; too many votes are at risks. Neither is “The Left” right either; but they are too busy with a welfare and a warfare state to concern themselves with a way—fair to the children displaced by divorce. The children are simply *collateral damage*....

Once in Charleston were many mansions; so too, many slaves. Once in “The Old Customs House” were some signers of the Declaration, locked-up in its cells by the occupying forces¹⁴³—the prevailing law. These Patriots were later shipped south to the Castillo De San Marcos, St. Augustine. And so they were...and so was I.

¹⁴² Children are not consigned to servitude per say, but they become the means to state revenues; hence, they are indentured to the ruling state.

¹⁴³ The “Occupying forces”; the British under Lord Cornwallis: besides the taxes imposed on the Colonist. Some additional notes from Augustine.com: When the siege of Charleston ended in capitulation and surrender, the terms of the agreement signed with the Americans stipulated that all militia and sympathizers with the revolutionary cause could remain in their homes and await transfer as prisoners of war, but the British did not keep their word. A number of prominent citizens and soldiers, including General Gadsden who had signed the treaty for the colonies, were rounded-up and shipped down the coast to St. Augustine.

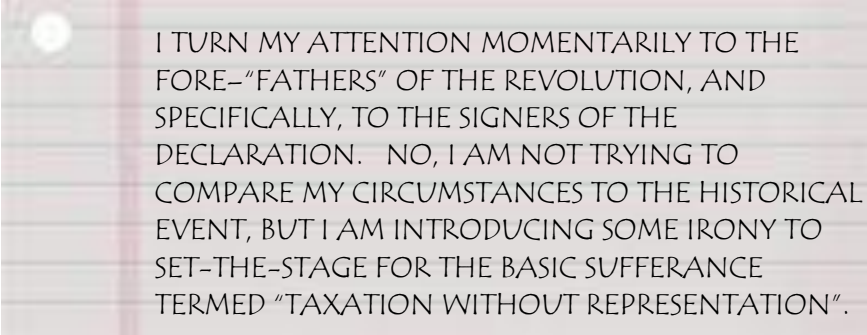


IN THE ABSENCE OF JUSTICE
WHAT IS SOVEREIGNTY
BUT ORGANIZED ROBBERY?

Blocks of Saint Augustine 14 - No source or interpretation is available; considering sovereignty as the authority, absence of justice is tyranny or “organized robbery”.

Comparing-Constitutions

And so I begin my fifth letter—not in the bowels of the nearby Spanish fort—but locked-up just the same.



I TURN MY ATTENTION MOMENTARILY TO THE FORE-“FATHERS” OF THE REVOLUTION, AND SPECIFICALLY, TO THE SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION. NO, I AM NOT TRYING TO COMPARE MY CIRCUMSTANCES TO THE HISTORICAL EVENT, BUT I AM INTRODUCING SOME IRONY TO SET-THE-STAGE FOR THE BASIC SUFFERANCE TERMED “TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION”.

Being in “the bowels” of the longstanding fort would have been worse. I have ventured this garrison as a child and with my children. One time, we were led into what might be considered *the bowels* of this bastion: the three oldest on foot and my youngest on my back, we literally crawled from one anteroom to the silence and stillness of an inner-chamber of masonry, hardened sand. The darkness, dampening (of sound) and dankness adding the effect of a different form of 3-D, I can never forget that moment—all four of us (excluding the one on back) held captive with eyes aglow by one candle of one lantern flame to imagine a life potentially of little account, a prisoner.

In the mystery of this moment lies the opportunity to sense the life of a prisoner of yester-yore. One clapped in irons, possibly beaten with a whip or cane (among other punishments), and thrust into such places without any certainty of his immediate life. Could this place have been such; could the masonry, hardened sand that stands to protect the village and promote *The Ancient City*¹⁴⁴ be the same place that held prisoners, patriots...and

¹⁴⁴ *The Ancient City* is St. Augustine, Florida in St. Johns County.

even patriarchs? Not too far from the fort¹⁴⁵, French Huguenots were massacred by the much celebrated Spanish founder, Menéndez.

Pedro Menéndez was literally on a mission—and not necessarily to start one.... Commissioned to sail to the Colonies (or “The New World”), he was given charge to seek out and destroy the Lutherans.¹⁴⁶ Fort Caroline was one of such places—though the named massacre took place south of St. Augustine in the vicinity of Crescent Beach. On the point was where hundreds fell in a moment of history—casualties of the charge given one to destroy the other...under the patronage of a patriarchic rule.

Not long after I arrived (or was transported), *The Ancient City* was preparing for their perennial celebration of this particular patriarch. Perhaps on scale with a patriot, Pedro is honored for his obvious contributions so commemorated in name by a school and several streets. Leading-up to the festivities, the local newspaper featured an editorial notably-written by a Native-American of possible Seminole ancestry. His perspective and position was of marked difference; apparently, the Spanish carried-out their charge on more than French Huguenots. The chieftain was expressively appalled by the seminal events celebrated by the city: hidden (or buried) in the formation of the city’s origin was apparently much shed blood among the Seminole tribesman; any sacrifice and success should be placed on the peoples that survived such plunder and punishment—and not those who inflicted it!

With causal attention to the newspaper, I do recall a rebuttal; a official response that, as such rhetoric can render, places the emphasis on the festivities while firmly fixed on the finances—

¹⁴⁵ Castillo De San Marcos was erected after the massacre and founding of St. Augustine.

¹⁴⁶ “Lutherans” to describe Protestants...or non-Catholic parishioners.

good intentions in the foreground of special and political interests. If reparations could replace the nature of humanity—as even cloaked in religious fervor—than *the age* would be further along a scale of perfection. As it is however, we have failed *to arrive*—though convinced by rationalization that a massacre is merely *a means to an end*. The king's clothes are beautiful from the perspective and position of his servants; but to the others (person, patriot, or patriarch), the king's clothes mean nothing; for the heart¹⁴⁷ is what matters.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 15 - No source or interpretation is available; but obviously a prayer, or appeal, that the human heart—inherently corrupt and deceitful—be changed from darkness to The Light.

¹⁴⁷ The heart, soul or inner being—from whence words and actions originate....

Parenting-Privileges

Continuing the fifth letter, with the setting still in Charles Towne, I add:

JUST TWO DAYS BEFORE MY ARREST—AND EVENTUAL EXTRADITION—I STOOD IN THE “OLD CUSTOMS HOUSE” IN HISTORIC CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA. THIS BUILDING WAS, AT THE TIME OF BRITISH OCCUPATION, A JAIL; AND AS LEARNED FROM THE TOUR, HELD THREE OF THE FOUR CAROLINIANS (SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION) PRIOR TO THEIR EXTRADITION TO ST. AUGUSTINE.

TO HONOR THEIR SACRIFICE, I HAD TO CONSIDER THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES BY RE-VISITING THE DECLARATION. AS THE “INJUSTICES AND USURPATIONS” ARE READ, THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE DELINEATED IN THE BACKDROP OF TYRANNY AS THE RULE; HENCE, OUR PATRIOTS ARE THE CROWN’S REBELS.

Reading and further understanding was in store; not just about the Patriots of old, but also the parents of today: some reading—thanks to the local libraries—and subsequent purchases made for some perspective and position on the present state of marriage (union) and its aids to come (family). The privilege to read (and understand) is not with words alone, but with the action driven further by passion and pursuit. And as to “who is right”—past or present; the appropriate question should be: “Who has been wronged?” Thus, I read and write (having been convicted for all other¹⁴⁸)—not because I am completely right, but because they¹⁴⁹ have been completely wronged....

¹⁴⁸ By “all other” to mean actions to parent my own children.

¹⁴⁹ The pronoun “they” refers to my children or family.

In the course of family events, it became necessary for one parent to dissolve the politics¹⁵⁰ which has disconnected him from his other and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station from which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God endow him, a decent respect to the opinions of his-kind requires that he should declare the causes which impels him to the separation.¹⁵¹

In her book, *The Assault on Parenthood*, Dana Mack made the following introductory perspective and position on the matter of law, family, and prevailing distrust:

The child welfare authorities, however, are only one focus of what appears to be parents' general distrust of a legal culture they say has no regard for family autonomy and integrity. The courts, parents tell me, seem unable to handle divorce, custody or even adoption in any but the most destructive ways for parents and children¹⁵².

Continuing in her book, Dana brings to light the darker determination of a force so enabled to consider in familial, "The Parent as Pariah". She writes of parents today¹⁵³ as "relentlessly assailed as abusive, and unworthy of their authority."

¹⁵⁰ Of course, a person cannot "dissolve" the law...as with the populous; the expression might be more appropriately described as to ignore that which is antithetical to my familial responsibility and privilege. Damn their laws....

¹⁵¹ On the structure of the opening Declaration of Independence is the parallel of a tyranny of the contemporary; a parent denied his rights to that which he has committed under God...and not man. *What God has joined, let no man tear asunder....* But then is there is tyranny....

¹⁵² Dana Mack, *The Assault on Parenthood*, (Encounter Books, 1997).

¹⁵³ By "parents today", the current American culture....

She continues on what some called the hysteria of the day:

Parents today are relentlessly assailed as abusive and unworthy of their authority. In the past few years, television has subjected us to countless tales of parental cruelty and lasciviousness.... TV has spread the disconcerting impression that everywhere sick parents are brutalizing young lives¹⁵⁴.

But as perspective and position differ, some parents spoke out; again, Dana Mack beginning with the question:

Are parents really so dangerous? We live in a society in which the family is becoming an increasingly volatile unit. But the overwhelming majority of parents I've talked to insist that they pale as authority figures in comparison to their own parents.

But for the time period of the publication and the period of study, the author of *The Assault on Parenthood* records the following on parental abuse:

In the past few years, child welfare authorities were only able to substantiate a third of all reports. And in about 80% of substantiated cases of child maltreatment¹⁵⁵, no serious danger to the child was posed. Only 3% of all substantiated cases involve an injury requiring medical attention...But deaths of children at the hands of their parents¹⁵⁶ are still extremely rare.

Further information or statistics on this matter of child abuse is provided at the end of the book under "Father-Files". Much of this data comes from the National Fatherhood Initiative.

¹⁵⁴ Dank Mack, page 25.

¹⁵⁵ Secondary to statements from Douglas J. Besharov, founding director of the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect

¹⁵⁶ Child deaths increased at alarming rate between 1985 and 1991—a statistic attributable to family breakdown and substance abuse.

Levy-ing-Legislators

Again, the question should not fall on who is right; but maybe: “What (or whom) has changed?” If parents are indeed “softer” (as parents described in the chapter) than their parents (of previous generations), then what of this circumstance as conveyed to the country? Are parents “brutalizing” on such scale as presented or publicized to be? Again, from her book, Dana Mack:

The fact is that are cultural definition of abuse has changed...So loose has even the legal definition of harmful parenting become that in my readings on child welfare, I have run across cases where parents have been convicted for child abuse for such “crimes” as restricting their children television viewing, taking their child out of school for a few days for reasons unacceptable to school authorities....

Ms. Mack continues with a brief history of the cause and effect of such changes (or “grand experiments”). She describes some key figures and theories of the social/scientific community that, over a span of years, have been woven into the fabric of the family through law and other channels.

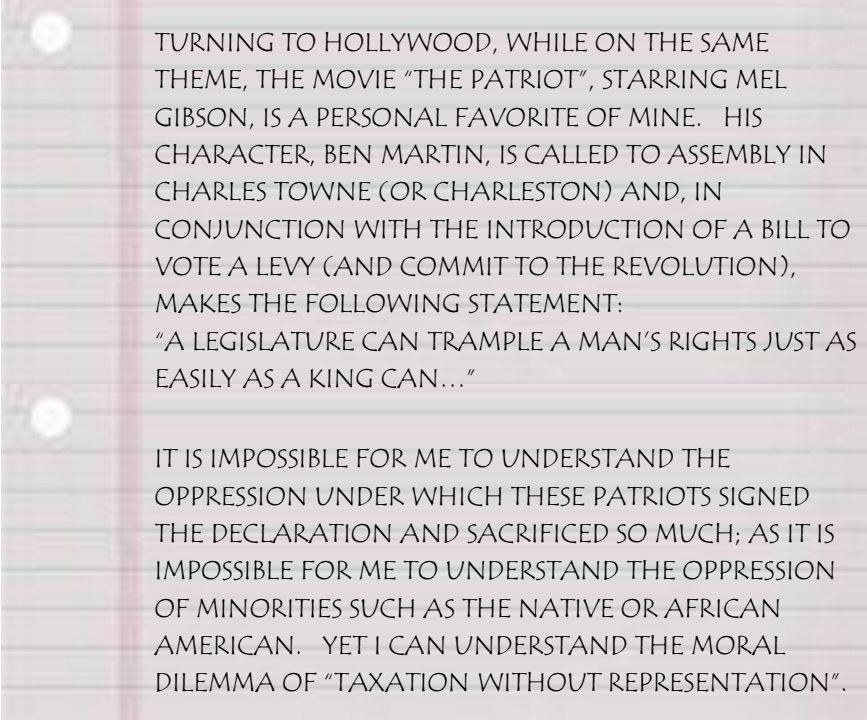
Regardless of who is right (among the social/scientific community), could be the question: “Who is responsible for the care of one’s children¹⁵⁷?” Should parents simply submit to the authority and acumen of the dual legal and scientific community? Can they consider such mutations¹⁵⁸ as *shedding the light* on the needs of your child—among which could be to govern their own lives beyond the cradle? If these mutations could replace the nature of humanity—as even enforced in law and social engineering—than *the age* would be further along a scale of

¹⁵⁷ Or, who should be caring for one’s children?

¹⁵⁸ By “mutations” (or variations to parenthood)

perfection. As it is however, we have failed *to arrive*—though convinced by rationalization that mutation (on parenthood) is merely *a means to an end*. The king’s clothes are beautiful from the perspective and position of his servants; but to the parent, the king’s clothes mean nothing; for the heart¹⁵⁹ is what matters.

Turning again to the fifth letter, a favorite film the bears the name, “The Patriot”:¹⁶⁰



TURNING TO HOLLYWOOD, WHILE ON THE SAME THEME, THE MOVIE “THE PATRIOT”, STARRING MEL GIBSON, IS A PERSONAL FAVORITE OF MINE. HIS CHARACTER, BEN MARTIN, IS CALLED TO ASSEMBLY IN CHARLES TOWNE (OR CHARLESTON) AND, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO VOTE A LEVY (AND COMMIT TO THE REVOLUTION), MAKES THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:
“A LEGISLATURE CAN TRAMPLE A MAN’S RIGHTS JUST AS EASILY AS A KING CAN...”

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND THE OPPRESSION UNDER WHICH THESE PATRIOTS SIGNED THE DECLARATION AND SACRIFICED SO MUCH; AS IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND THE OPPRESSION OF MINORITIES SUCH AS THE NATIVE OR AFRICAN AMERICAN. YET I CAN UNDERSTAND THE MORAL DILEMMA OF “TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION”.

¹⁵⁹ The heart, soul or inner being—from whence words and actions originate....

¹⁶⁰ The film, “The Patriot”, Columbia Pictures, 2000.

Patriotic-Paternity

I think it is worth repeating; the line from “The Patriot”: “A legislature can trample a man’s rights just as easily as a king can...” Ironic to the tenor of this script is that our country is continuing to see just how monarchist a democracy can be; that is to say, that one’s civil and Constitutional rights are not carved in stone: once a republic, now a democracy; and next.... No matter the form of government, the family is still under assault!

And no matter the family, the law is quite clear on the model of unilateral divorce and the addition of yet more fatherlessness in America. And with fatherlessness, further faraway-fathers imputed with the child support federally-subsidized for state revenue. A union formed of *special interests* and the agility or avarice—not of a distant empire—but of “The League” so enabled through all branches of the government...and beyond. Is the model right? Again, the question is not about being right...but about being wronged!

Americans have long accepted taxation. They know that taxes come in many forms and by many degrees; hence the saying that death and taxes are two certainties. Taxes may be apparent or stated, or may be hidden through one means or another. Even inflation can be considered as a tax in that it is the result of monetary policy and the cyclical nature of our economy. Some taxes are not published on the prospect that an institution might actually be shamed—if that was possible.

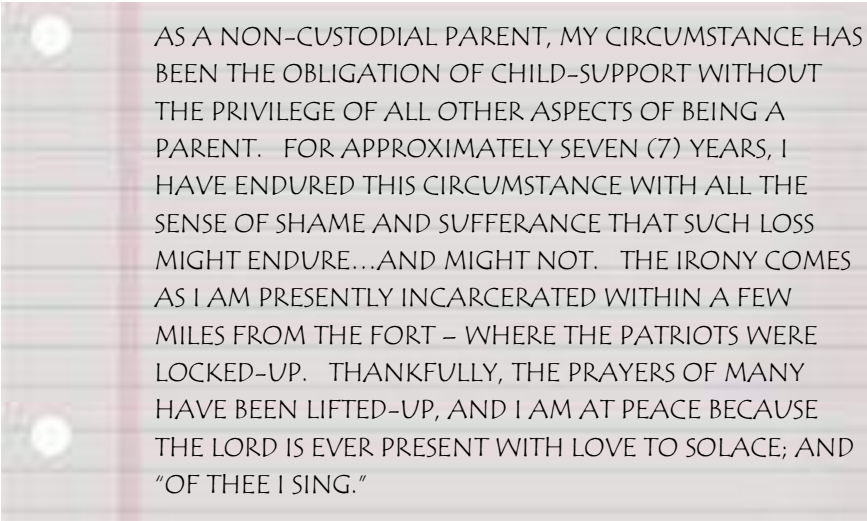
My dispute and downright-disgust is not about taxation necessarily, and nor is it about the financial support of family; rather, it is about the price placed on a person and the awarding of that person to the plaintiff—demanding divorce in the pursuit of happiness. Further, my feelings are about the pathetic nature of an institution that has so degraded and diluted marriage through uncontested divorce. If the “agility or avarice” were not

enough, what remains is what I previously termed “neo-narcissism”—as to the compare a human disorder with the hubris characterized in an institution. I am perhaps stretching the imagination and invective too far, but the *Dual Nature* of this *divorce industry* reminds me of yet another line from another of movie of another era of our nation.

In the film, “Cold Mountain”,¹⁶¹ one of characters named Ruby is paraphrased as saying:

They (the institution) call this war a dark cloud over the land; but they made the weather, then they stand-out under the dark cloud and say, “Shit, it’s raining!”

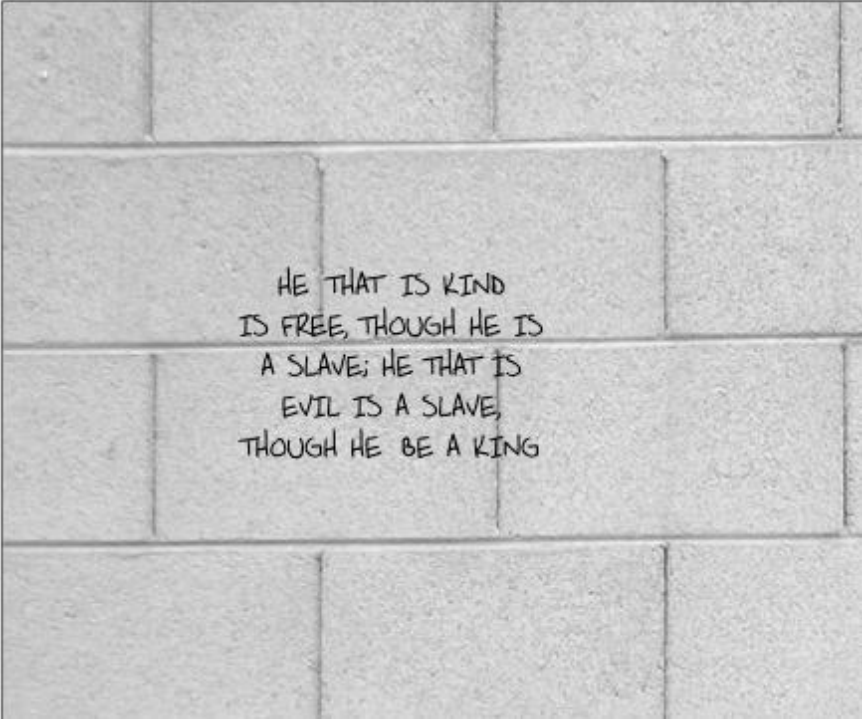
“Dual Nature” is dangerous; for in it is not the *audacity of hope* but rather, the audacity of arrogance. If our fore-fathers were so enabled, would they stand for what technically is human slavery¹⁶²? Only if they were willing to accept that some classes are beneath humanity. I finish my fifth letter:



AS A NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT, MY CIRCUMSTANCE HAS BEEN THE OBLIGATION OF CHILD-SUPPORT WITHOUT THE PRIVILEGE OF ALL OTHER ASPECTS OF BEING A PARENT. FOR APPROXIMATELY SEVEN (7) YEARS, I HAVE ENDURED THIS CIRCUMSTANCE WITH ALL THE SENSE OF SHAME AND SUFFERANCE THAT SUCH LOSS MIGHT ENDURE...AND MIGHT NOT. THE IRONY COMES AS I AM PRESENTLY INCARCERATED WITHIN A FEW MILES FROM THE FORT – WHERE THE PATRIOTS WERE LOCKED-UP. THANKFULLY, THE PRAYERS OF MANY HAVE BEEN LIFTED-UP, AND I AM AT PEACE BECAUSE THE LORD IS EVER PRESENT WITH LOVE TO SOLACE; AND “OF THEE I SING.”

¹⁶¹ The film “Cold Mountain”, Charles Frazier, Miramax, 2003.

¹⁶² Description of Warren Farrell from his book, *Father and Child Reunion*, (Tarcher- Putman, 2001), page 62.



HE THAT IS KIND
IS FREE, THOUGH HE IS
A SLAVE; HE THAT IS
EVIL IS A SLAVE,
THOUGH HE BE A KING

Blocks of Saint Augustine 16 - No source or interpretation is available; a slave to what...that of “a king”? Perhaps “a king” can be slave to the man-made institution—a government excised from eternity. *God sets up kings and He deposes them....* As to the kind...“a slave”; perhaps, that *the first will be last and, the last, first.*

Founding-Father

The term “Founding Fathers” is tantamount to the nation; and used often—as Colonial America is so often vaulted in public forum—for the virtues, vices and vision. These Carolinians, as signers of the Declaration, were among the many that sacrificed much on the monument of justice, freedom and liberty.

One of the three should be on the minds of many today; he was the creator of the flag by his namesake, “Gadsden”—bearing the inscription, “Don’t Tread on Me” beneath a snake on a yellow background. Many of our Navy’s ships fly a similar flag, ensign or jack with a background of red & white strips. Most visible are the many Gadsden flags that fly at public gatherings or protests. Gadsden would go on to *pay a price* for his patriotism and, as with two others from Carolina, would be imprisoned both in Charleston and in St. Augustine.

I have in my possession a paperback of “The Federalist Papers”. I must admit however, that I know little about them and still less about the authors. If I could invoke the passion and pursuit of that personalized and publicized, perhaps I could (or can) find some other parallels between the patriots of yester-yore and the parents (or family) of today. One parallel might include the matter of equality and liberty: *not the power to do what I want, but the duty to do what I ought.*

George Washington was quoted: “Government is not reason; it is not eloquent; it is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master¹⁶³.” I translate his words as the:

- *Dual effect* of authority and un-accountability...
- *Nihilistic Nanny State*...
- *Rationalization—the end justifies the means*...

¹⁶³ George Washington; quote on the nature of government; a warning regarding too much reliance on government.

If we didn't so revere our first president, could we regard such a warning with such value? Perhaps not...; but for some who do know, the warning is worthy of consideration...and elaboration such as by Judge Andrew Napolitano:

Government is a fearful master. It is not faithful to us; it is not truthful to us; it can't produce for us. It doesn't obey its own laws; it doesn't keep us safe; and it won't leave us alone. It is mortgaging our futures, raising our taxes, and treating us all like children.¹⁶⁴

Last of the last statement: "...treating us all like children." Now there is an excerpt that may bring to bear more parallel between the patriots and the parents. This segment of this statement has much potential; for the treatment—or maltreatment—is among the effects of what I have couched in reference to statistics and the basic question of "Who has been wronged?" If this single passive, participant of *the divorce industry*—the children—was given the same action as suggested in the often applied words,¹⁶⁵ then the state would have to seriously reconsider its role in marriage and redress its costs levied on the conventional family. By what authority has the state commandeered the contract—even covenant—called marriage? Is this question worthy of consideration beyond the basic naturally-determined and socially-derived duty and privilege of parents?

Among the books found in the jail library was *The Search for Christian America*¹⁶⁶. Another of the books on an academic level, it served to occupy much time in reading...and re-reading. At the moment, I don't remember the many details, but in general, the

¹⁶⁴ Judge Napolitano; a quote taken from his video series on the Constitution, "Can the Government Keep Us Safe", 2010

¹⁶⁵ The words or phrase often applied: "...in the best interest of..."

¹⁶⁶ Mark A. Noll, George M. Marsden, Nathan O. Hatch, *The Search for Christian America*, (Helmets & Howard, 1989).

scholarly writing was attempting to solve the question for some: “Were the founding-fathers all Christians?” Another way of expressing the question: “Was America founded on a Christian heritage?” And if “yes” (to the question): “Can we get it back?”

If I formed the questions correctly, then perhaps the immediate answer might be in the vein of earlier responses to questions of what is right or wrong; that is, that there is not a clear-cut answer. What is certain is that avowed Christians were among the Founding-Fathers and, by way of the resulting documents and discourse, did influence the formation of a new nation...under God. And while some may have held to the new nation as a “City upon the Hill”, others may have realized the marked difference between man’s government and that of God. Our nation is but one of many (through history) and, while showing the signs of a unique union, it remains vulnerable to the same vices that have plagued the nations through the ages. As to the present however, the Founding-Fathers if enabled, might join the stand for what remains of a republic (if that is possible). After all, the “New World” can only be as good as its citizenship—just like the old worlds....

Signing-Saints

Were all the signers and founding-fathers saints?¹⁶⁷ Of course not; but what might be equally true is that they were enjoined in an effort to create what they thought would be *a better world*. On such a cause are some further parallels—both to Christianity and to parenthood. Parents perhaps are much more desiring of *a better world* for their children¹⁶⁸ (the present societal grievances with the federal government’s unprecedented spending is one example).¹⁶⁹ Christians must accept that a perfect world is *over the Jordan* and conversely, that the present (world) remains fallen; not necessarily a fatalistic¹⁷⁰ view but the result of Adam’s sin—*The Fall*.

Three Carolinians were among the signers (and maybe the saints). These three were arrested in Charleston and extradited to St. Augustine—held captive in the Castillo de San Marcos, the Spanish fort. On these signers, I write:

CONTINUING WITH THE FOUNDING FATHERS; ONE OF THE THREE CAROLINIANS, THOMAS HEYWARD, WROTE "OF THEE I SING" WHILE INCARCERATED AT THE ST. AUGUSTINE FORT. USING THE MELODY OF ENGLAND'S NATIONAL ANTHEM, HE FORMED THE WORDS "MY COUNTRY...SWEET LAND OF LIBERTY..."

¹⁶⁷ By “saints” to mean Believers...not the classic Saints of Catholicism or the first twelve disciples.

¹⁶⁸ This statement is to note the contribution of love in a relationship—the difference between the security desired by a parent and that suggested by an institution.

¹⁶⁹ Parents and family who are concerned about the debt...

¹⁷⁰ This “fatalistic” view might be characterized as non-contributory to the present world—passively waiting for the better world...life to come.

Thomas Heyward was thought (or recorded) to have revised the words of “God, Save the King” to the title of “God, Save the Thirteen Colonies (or States)”¹⁷¹—which may have been a forerunner of the anthem, “My Country, 'Tis of Thee “. While he remained incarcerated at the fort, his farm or plantation was ransacked—his estate in South Carolina divided among marauders. Perhaps more grievous, his wife died while he was locked-up. In the months to follow, he would be released, and shipped north to Philadelphia; and in the years to follow, he would resume some semblance of his former life in South Carolina. In the balance of his life, Thomas Heyward would understand sacrifice—as with so many others—having experienced much loss to include the deep losses of his family.

Gadsden, Heyward and finally, Rutledge¹⁷² as the third of three signers from South Carolina; all were among those shipped south to St. Augustine. These three were somehow able to initiate the first Fourth of July in Florida—in spite of the fact that Christopher Gadsden was held in confinement because he refused to accept a parole¹⁷³ from the British governor. Unlike his fellow signers—and perhaps the balance of the detained insurrectionists—Gadsden remained in a dungeon at the fort. It was on celebration of the Fourth that Heyward’s version of “God, Save the King” was recorded as being sung by the balance, the ranks of the rebels.

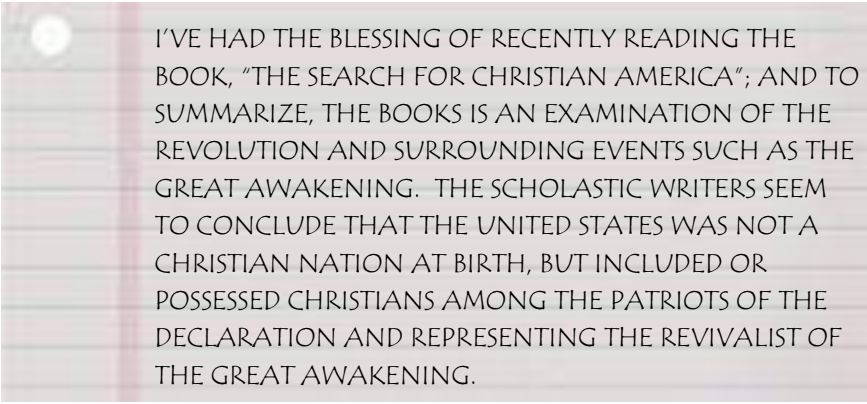
¹⁷¹ Thomas Heyward is not credited with “My Country, 'Tis of Thee”.

¹⁷² Edward Rutledge served as a captain of artillery in the South Carolina militia, and fought at the Battle of Beaufort in 1779. The next year he was captured by the British in the fall of Charleston, and held prisoner until July 1781.

¹⁷³ From taugustine.com/history, “Florida’s First Fourth of July”; Gadsden refused parole on the basis that an earlier parole (in Charleston) had been violated by the British. Why enter a second parole if the first had been violated—all trust dissolved by broken words or lies?

Awaking-American

Continuing the sixth letter, I am well into the cited, scholarly book, *The Search for Christianity in America*.



I'VE HAD THE BLESSING OF RECENTLY READING THE BOOK, "THE SEARCH FOR CHRISTIAN AMERICA"; AND TO SUMMARIZE, THE BOOKS IS AN EXAMINATION OF THE REVOLUTION AND SURROUNDING EVENTS SUCH AS THE GREAT AWAKENING. THE SCHOLASTIC WRITERS SEEM TO CONCLUDE THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN NATION AT BIRTH, BUT INCLUDED OR POSSESSED CHRISTIANS AMONG THE PATRIOTS OF THE DECLARATION AND REPRESENTING THE REVIVALIST OF THE GREAT AWAKENING.

The Great Awakening occurred in Colonial America; a period beginning in the 1730's (but deemed "The Great Awakening" much later in the 1800's). The point of mentioning this spiritual phase is because of it being so entwined with the early movement of The Revolution; perhaps, the concept or the complex interplay of Christianity and America, this phase may have been an early form of Manifest Destiny¹⁷⁴. The human heart is complex enough; but on the premise of divine providence, some saints embraced the ideas that this nation was the *City upon a Hill*.

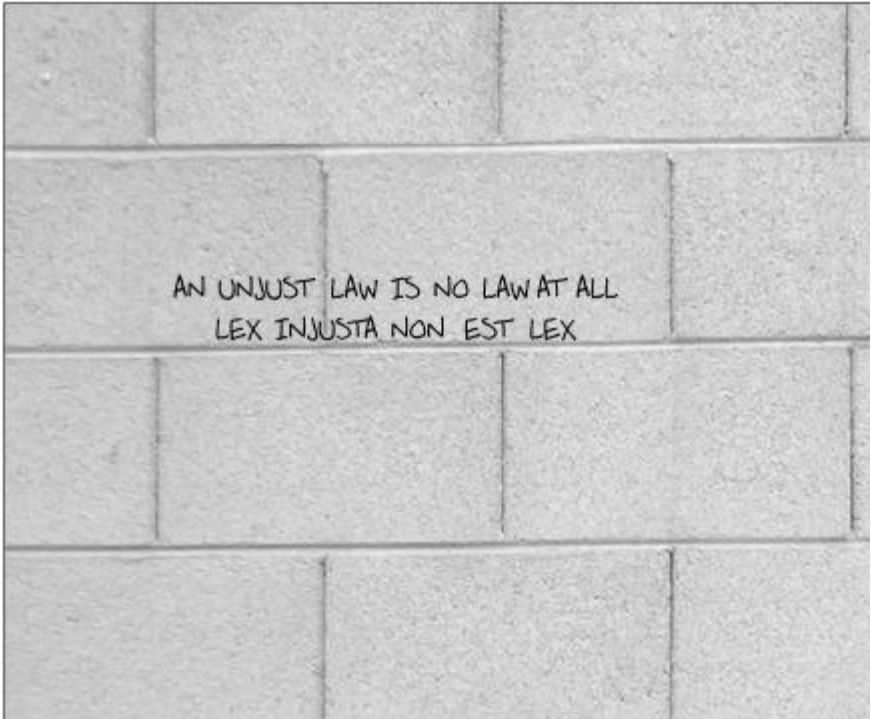
Then again was the other idea that was not fatal, but focused toward the heavens—rather than to man—and "the perfect world" to come. As to justice, freedom and liberty; well, the reality (for these saints) is that the one or the other is never fully-realized in *the present day*—or *a better world* of tomorrow. *The Fall* means that these pursuits are never fully assured or attainable—

¹⁷⁴ Manifest Destiny is noted as divine providence during America's expansion to the west; from wikipedia.org/wiki/Manifest_Destiny, "...a broader expression of a belief in America's "mission" in the world..."

no matter the perspective and position, or however the passion and pursuit. Again, the sixth letter:

AS THE WRITERS INDICATE, SOME (CHRISTIANS) REACTED TO THE PRESENT POLITICS (AND THE REVOLUTION) WHILE OTHERS PLANNED FOR THE KINGDOM TO COME; SOME VIEWED THE REVOLUTION AS THE MEANS TO LIBERTY WHILE OTHERS REALIZED THAT TRUE LIBERTY (FREEDOM) LIES IN CHRIST. THE CONCEPT OF LIBERTY SEEMED TO BE VARIED: SOME CONSIDERED THE PRESENT (GOVERNMENT) AS AMPLE LIBERTY, AS COMPARED TO OTHER NATIONS; WHILE OTHERS OBVIOUSLY DID NOT...

Subsequent “Awakenings” occurred in the 18th and 19th century; one of which was the early movement of abolition (prior to the Civil War). The hypocrisy was that liberty for “all men” did not include all—for some were excluded—as one of the vices of Colonial America. When laws or liberties are excluded from one class because of naturally-occurring circumstances, the condition is called inequality or prejudice. This vice of the past has not been eradicated—and it never will—no matter the present or a *better world*. But is the nation beyond another *Awakening*?

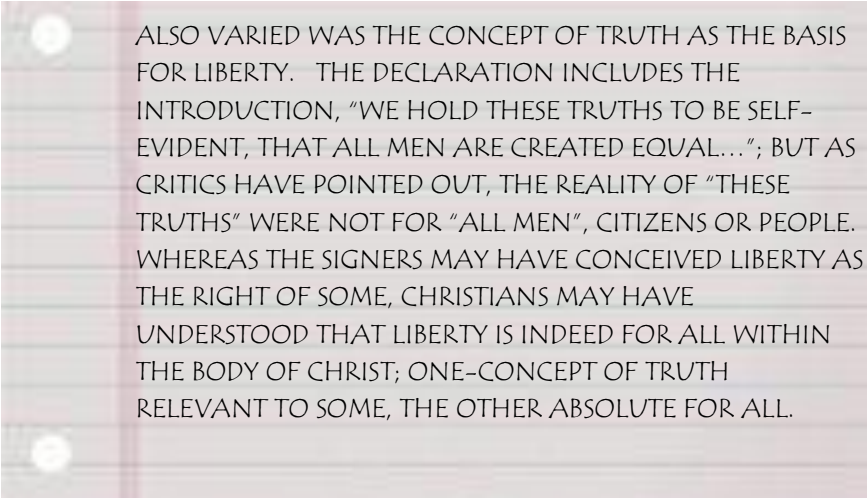


Blocks of Saint Augustine 17 - No source or interpretation is available; but “unjust” to mean unfair, of course. The question of what is “unjust” cannot always be easily-determined: perspective and position are factors in the determination of fairness; and power is the factor in the decision whatsoever. English and Latin....

Conceiving-Christians

Even in the supposed-church lies the presence of hypocrisies—whether acknowledged by the one (human heart), accepted by the many, or noted by the masses. Seems like the salt or light¹⁷⁵ is yet to be pure—giving further doubt as to the *City upon a Hill*. But in *The Truth*¹⁷⁶ is recognized the nature of the heart—foremost by the one who dares to sacrifice for seemingly “few immediate rewards” and, in the contemporary, a faith confounded in nationalism. The Believer is a citizen of “No-where¹⁷⁷”...though paradoxically and providentially is indeed patriotic.

The letter is continued with my own perspective and position on the book, *The Search for Christian America*:



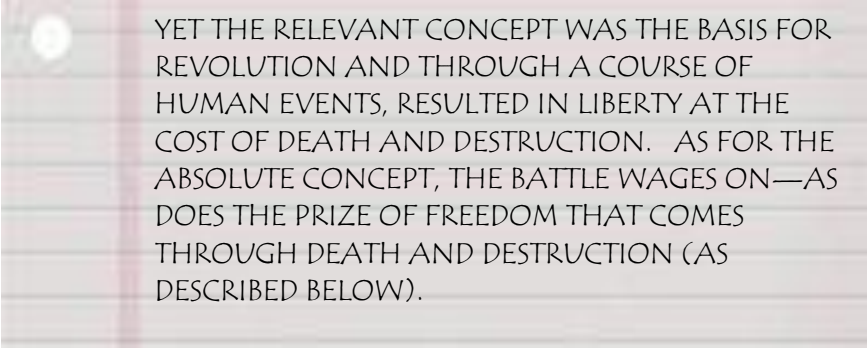
ALSO VARIED WAS THE CONCEPT OF TRUTH AS THE BASIS FOR LIBERTY. THE DECLARATION INCLUDES THE INTRODUCTION, “WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT, THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL...”; BUT AS CRITICS HAVE POINTED OUT, THE REALITY OF “THESE TRUTHS” WERE NOT FOR “ALL MEN”, CITIZENS OR PEOPLE. WHEREAS THE SIGNERS MAY HAVE CONCEIVED LIBERTY AS THE RIGHT OF SOME, CHRISTIANS MAY HAVE UNDERSTOOD THAT LIBERTY IS INDEED FOR ALL WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST; ONE-CONCEPT OF TRUTH RELEVANT TO SOME, THE OTHER ABSOLUTE FOR ALL.

¹⁷⁵ “Salt and light” are used descriptively in the New Testament as to Believers representing Christ to a fallen world; salt to give taste or to preserve, and light to represent Christ (the Light of the World)...and that described as the *City upon a Hill*.

¹⁷⁶ “The Truth” is Christ.

¹⁷⁷ The term “No-Where” to mean: no where in the present, physical earth; not a citizen, but a sojourner of the fallen world.

The church (or Christians) remained divided,¹⁷⁸ and the cause for national liberty limited to all...but not all.¹⁷⁹



YET THE RELEVANT CONCEPT WAS THE BASIS FOR REVOLUTION AND THROUGH A COURSE OF HUMAN EVENTS, RESULTED IN LIBERTY AT THE COST OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION. AS FOR THE ABSOLUTE CONCEPT, THE BATTLE WAGES ON—AS DOES THE PRIZE OF FREEDOM THAT COMES THROUGH DEATH AND DESTRUCTION (AS DESCRIBED BELOW).

Did the church agree “that liberty is indeed for all within the body of Christ”? Did the church believe that Jesus died for all...but all?¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Time and history would prove abolition (as one example) to divide churches—within and throughout a nation in conflict over this crucial issue.

¹⁷⁹ The ending words, “...limited to all...but not all” to suggest that “the cause” (for justice, freedom and liberty) was more about an entitlement...and not an “inalienable right.”

¹⁸⁰ The point or purpose for this (these) questions is a more a mental debate over the true nature of liberty in the contrast between “a better world”—or a human government—and the heavenly, eternal government. If the church views Christian liberty—freedom from eternal death—as limited to some (as was the execution of the newly-formed government), then the church fails to live the truth of the Gospel.

Dying is one of the sacrifices that have yet to be mentioned in the passion and pursuit of the patriot—and the patriot has yet to be mentioned in the sacrifices other than Colonial America¹⁸¹. This “ultimate sacrifice” is not exclusive to patriots per se, but can apply to allied applications of doing what is reasoned to be *the right thing*.

What remains in such pursuit is the matter of what is “unjust”, unfair or unconscionable. Even virtue and vice seems to be difficult to distinguish—as one may depend on the other (or mutate to the other based on circumstances). It was Thomas Jefferson who said, “Most virtues when carried beyond certain bonds degenerate into vices.” Does this have something to do with the saying: “Blood is thicker than water?”

Blood is a currency in the “ultimate sacrifice”—the final price paid for having—for exercising—the passion and pursuit comparable to “patriots per se”. Of all the reading while in jail, *How Should We Then Live?*¹⁸² was my favorite; the writing of Francis Schaeffer offering a broad Christian-world view of culture, art, politics and other aspects of empires and civilization long gone—and those yet to be gone. Another of the variety to read (and re-read), the book was insightful with each reading.

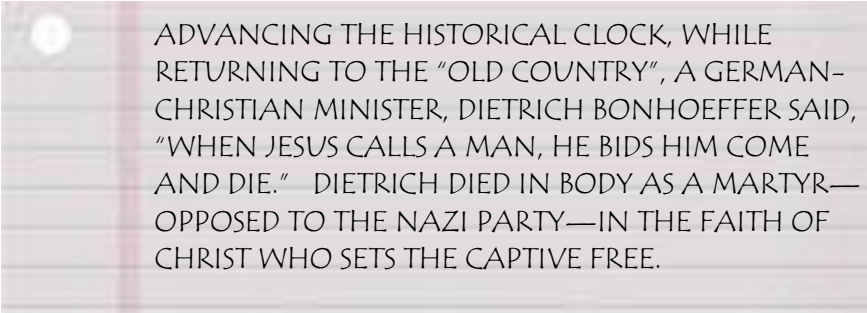
Somewhere in the collection of books or the local newspaper, I was introduced or reacquainted¹⁸³ with a German-born minister who died as a martyr under the Third Reich. At first, the source was thought to be Francis Schaeffer’s book; but on review, his name was discovered elsewhere.

¹⁸¹ A patriot is not exclusive to the country or period, of course; the purpose for this statement was to transition from the time period of The Revolution to another era and another example of a patriot.

¹⁸² Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Crossway Books, 1971).

¹⁸³ My recollection of the German-born minister was most likely from Erwin Lutzer’s book, *Hitler’s Cross*. I am not sure that this was the first as interest spawned from the limited information obtained in jail.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was an inspiration for writing in my letter.¹⁸⁴



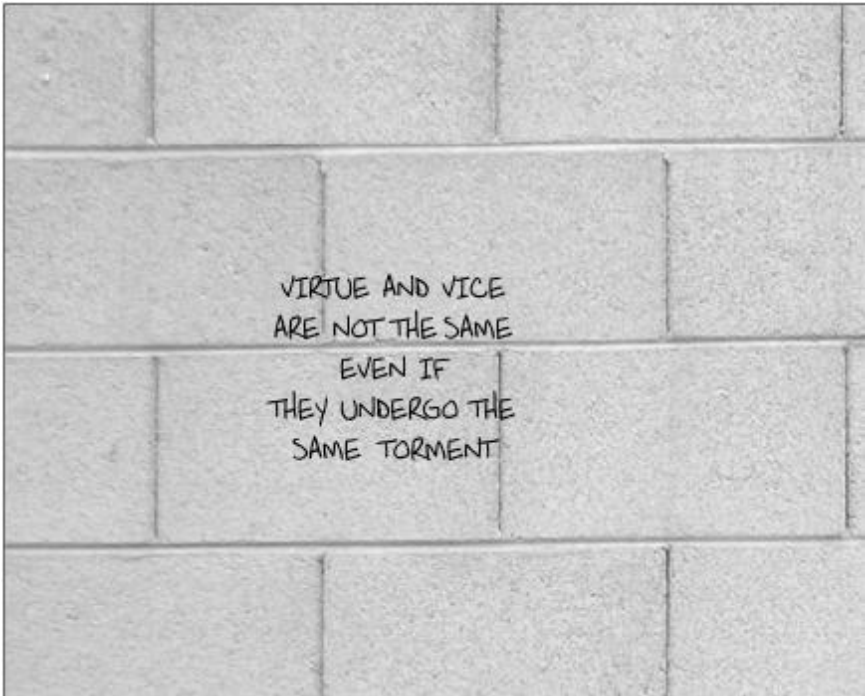
ADVANCING THE HISTORICAL CLOCK, WHILE RETURNING TO THE “OLD COUNTRY”, A GERMAN-CHRISTIAN MINISTER, DIETRICH BONHOEFFER SAID, “WHEN JESUS CALLS A MAN, HE BIDS HIM COME AND DIE.” DIETRICH DIED IN BODY AS A MARTYR—OPPOSED TO THE NAZI PARTY—IN THE FAITH OF CHRIST WHO SETS THE CAPTIVE FREE.

To some, the process of dying is more than physical. For Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the “ultimate sacrifice” was Christ; and as to his own sacrifices, and in the words of a true Saint, “To live is Christ and to die is gain.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German-born evangelical that was executed by the Nazis. He was quoted as also saying: “We have been silent witnesses of evil deeds...will our inward power of resistance be strong enough for us to find our way back?” He also said: “When Christ calls a man, he bids to come and die.”

Coincident with the inclusion of this Christian martyr is the recent release of a film about his life and ministry.

¹⁸⁵ From Philippians 1:21.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 18 - No source or interpretation is available; who is to say what is a virtue or a vice? For with man, one or the other may be a function of position, power, and the period.

William Shakespeare: "So our virtues lie in the interpretation of the time."

Farthing-Father

The first matter has to do with the word, “farthing”; it is a coin of little value.¹⁸⁶ My memory or recollection for using this term is not clear at the moment. Consistent with the alliteration of the headings, perhaps it was just a moment and just another “F”-word. But being such a paltry penny, the farthing has some application to the fellows/fathers.

Jail is more commonly-suited to those less-commonly able to finance a defense (or to potentially pander the prosecution). The choices for council is either a retained lawyer or, by default, a public defender. In the later of these two, the common title in jail was “public pretender”.

One of my cases, the misdemeanor, was conducted essentially without: assigned at the arraignment but, otherwise, the public defender was MIA. At my first hearing, in June, I complained about the matter: the judge said she would make sure that he was engaged but, whether she followed-through or not, he never was.... The second case, the felony, was *a different story*: the public defender was engaged in the case but, perhaps in keeping with services, seemed to be more the messenger for the prosecution than a real defense. Reason would have it that a conflict of interest might be at the root of so-called service—considering *The State* to be his employer.

The lesson to this account is that the value of the service may have something to do with the cost; the appointing of an attorney is more academic than actual—as the public defender is, in one or the other example, disengaged—the servant solely of *The State*. Members of “The League” to be sure, the public defender is further aided by expedience, by *plea bargaining*.

¹⁸⁶ A farthing is a coin worth $\frac{1}{4}$ of a penny; it dates back to the 13th century.

My account is an opinion; but other accounts of prior cases have led me to the belief that, whether with a farthing or more, the counsel is predisposed to do what is in their best interest—and not yours. Money matters; but it is not the panacea for all problems pertaining to the present day preemption of *due process*. Whether you are a parent or a patriot, the rule of law is right—not because of truth or proof, but because of might or absolute authority. “Might Makes Right”;¹⁸⁷ and as to money—“The color of justice is green.”¹⁸⁸

The collection of fellows/fathers was more commonly *commoners*; that is, they possessed no more than a few farthings—or were unwilling to expend much more toward legal council. Some were clearly beneath the belt¹⁸⁹ of average, while others were marginal or somewhere in between. I doubt that any were of wealth to the extent that, being in such position, would enable an immediate “Get out of Jail” in the setting of monotony. Like everything else, there is a price; though admittedly, I don’t know the rate structure or even the basic terms and conditions—but only that money can be a factor.

In keeping with the farthing (or issues of money) is the conduct of the court in the larger criminal system. In the first of my two cases, the prosecution was unable to find legitimate or substantive evidence¹⁹⁰ for the Violation of Probation (VOP). Rather than dismiss the charge, the judge allowed for a continuation—for the prosecution to produce the evidence...to justify the warrant and charge. To paraphrase the decision: “Take some time and locate the evidence; it’s bound to be around here somewhere.” This “allowance” was another questionable

¹⁸⁷ “Might Makes Right”: power without checks and balances.

¹⁸⁸ A quote from Johnnie Cochran during the O.J. Simpson trial.

¹⁸⁹ “Beneath the belt” as an expression for the indigent or homeless

¹⁹⁰ Evidence did not concur with the period of probation and the subsequent charge.

event in the history of the case—as I recall that the Sheriff’s office was puzzled by the warrant (in 2007)...the absence of information or cause. The continuation of this case, as scheduled in the following month, never happened: while waiting in cell—to be ushered into the courtroom—I received notice that my hearing had been continued (again) on account that I was not present (in the courtroom). On this notice, I presumed the prosecution had not found the necessary evidence....

To understand the conduct of the court is to accept that collaboration—and perceived collusion—is apparent in even the most farthing cases: the court is predisposed to a conviction; rationalization and expedience work as closely (and covertly) as virtue and vice in an interplay of conduct in *the gilded walls*.¹⁹¹ But for some, these walls are nothing more than words; for the actions or conduct of the court have nothing to do with the passion and pursuit of facts. Rationalization and expedience leave no room to consider facts; but in the popular phrasing, the order of the day is more like “Get-r-done.” This order begins:

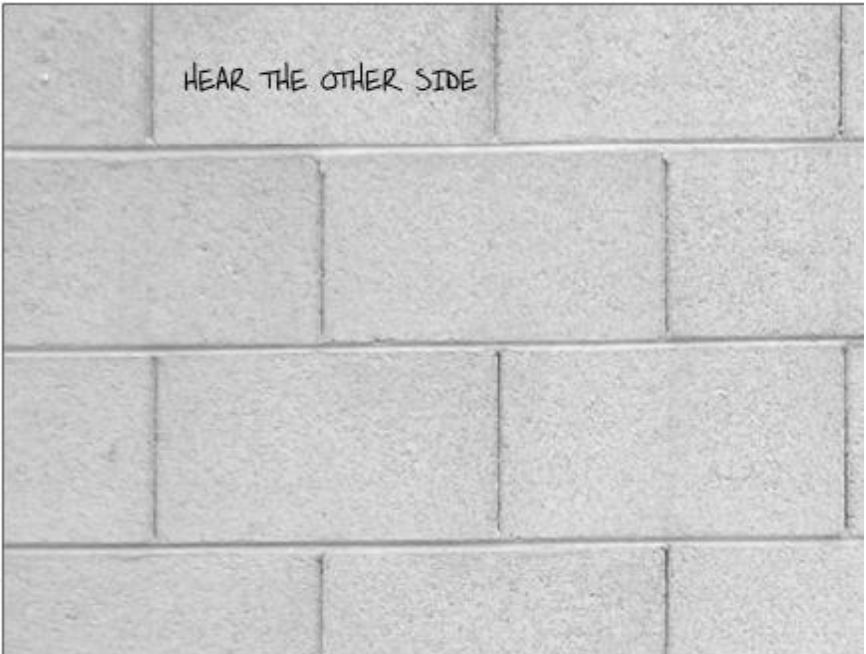
- As “12 months in *the county*”—posed at the arraignment...
- Next, a continuation (to locate legitimate evidence)...
- Then, another continuation on account that I was absent from the courtroom—waiting to be ushered in...
- What next...?

To conceive the gravity to *get-r-done* is to understand that I could not have entered the courtroom until ushered by a deputy. Waiting and shackled in the cell, the defendant is ushered or escorted to the courtroom according to the docket—as protocol. The cancellation was another ploy by the prosecution—presumably without any additional evidence to justify the charge.

¹⁹¹ Gilded walls with placards signifying a justice system...

The judge granted another continuation—for yet more opportunity to ensure a conviction. *The end justifies the means.*

Fellows/Fathers may be shocked to discover what the courts can do—and will do—within *the gilded walls*. I have seen much more than I would prefer—while confirming much with related reading. My opinion or view may seem naïve—as to the conduct of the court—but I was under the impression of *due process*...and that truth and justice coincide.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 19 - No source or interpretation is available; nothing to suggest except that any dispute deserves the voice of both parties; when one side is granted absolute power and truth is irrelevant, what can be said of justice?

Feeling-Freedom

Freedom is a refrain; it more than words or a feeling, but to those who have sacrificed—and to those who know of those who have given the “ultimate sacrifice”— it is many times the farthing. If freedom is the refrain, justice must be in the composition too. From an article bearing the applicable title, “Justice and Freedom”, Leslie Snyder:¹⁹²

For without justice the rule of men (dictatorship), not of law, assumes power. Without justice, society disintegrates into barbarism, where courts of law are administered by favor and pull instead of objective law, and without objective laws, the individual is at the mercy of the ruling power and its agents.

She continues:

The ancient atrocities return, such as no trial by jury, confiscatory taxes on life and property, the purchasing of judges, legislators, and sheriffs; all previous forms of the prior administration of justice become part of the current machinery which administers not justice, but injustice or tyranny.

Is the *commoner* worth a farthing; or, on freedom, is the citizen worthy of their Constitutional Rights?

¹⁹² This article is excerpted from her latest book, “Justice or Revolution”, published in 1979; and appeared with permission on the “The Freeman” Website on March 1980.

Is the meaning of justice *above* natural law—or the presumption that truth coincides...? Again, from “Justice and Freedom” (with reference to *Conversations with Goethe*, March 22, 1825):

A great deal may be done by severity, more by love, but most by clear discernment and impartial justice.

Once again, Leslie Snyder—on the price of freedom:

Freedom is the most exacting form of civil government—it is, in fact, the most demanding state of all for man. That is because freedom demands—depends upon—self-discipline from both the governed and the governing...

Freedom requires more, however. It requires a strong and vigilant defense. “The greater the threat of evil, the stronger that defense must be. That which is right does not survive unattended; it, too, must have its defenders”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer learned of freedom and liberty while attending Union Theological Seminary in Harlem (New York). From Wikipedia, the following on his experience with a fellow-black seminary student:

A black fellow seminarian, who introduced him to Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, where he taught a Sunday school and formed a life-long love for African-American spiritual.... He heard Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. preach the Gospel of Social Justice and became sensitive to social injustices experienced by minorities and the ineptness of the church to bring about integration.

To what extent he carried this experience back to Germany is uncertain; but what is evident is that it made an impression on his life—as a form of liberty in words for all...but in actions, not for all. For those who know of this man (Bonhoeffer), some form of freedom and liberty was ultimately found in the “ultimate sacrifice” through the ultimate surrender of body and soul.

In my seventh letter, I write on the Bonhoeffer's quote: "When Christ calls a man, he bids to come and die."

TO CONTINUE FROM THE QUOTE (FROM DIETRICH BONHOEFFER), THE MATTER OR CONDITION OF DEATH REFERS TO OUR SANCTIFICATION, OF COURSE. MY INTENTION IN USING THIS QUOTE, AND ENTERING THE SUBJECT OF DEATH, WAS AS A CONTRAST TO POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE; THAT IS, TO FIND FREEDOM OR LIFE IN CHRIST'S GOVERNMENT, WE MUST LOSE OUR OWN LIFE FOR HIS...

"To some, the process of dying is more than physical." Pain and sorrow are part of what dying is about; and so I continue:

TO LOSE MY LIFE IS NOT (OR HAS NOT BEEN) WITHOUT PAIN; AND EVEN NOW, AS I CONTINUE AS A DETAINEE, THE PAIN ARISES PERIODICALLY. MOMENTARY FEELINGS OF ANGER OR SELF-PITY FLOOD MY MIND AND, THOUGH LESS-FREQUENT, THE POTENTIAL SHAME I'VE BROUGHT ON FAMILY AND FRIENDS. AND THOUGH I TRULY BELIEVE MY INTENTIONS WERE GOOD—AS TO EXPRESS MY LOVE TO MY CHILDREN—THE BACKLASH OR FALL-OUT SEEMS TO BE AN UNDESIREED AND EVEN REGRETFUL CONSEQUENCE.

To repeat Saint Augustine: "Virtue and vice are not the same, even if they undergo the same torment."

Crediting-Continuation

There is nothing civil about a court that grants *divorce on demand*—while placating the parents with *the best interest of the children*; and there is nothing that justifies a court continuation for an expressed reason that is a patent lie. Eventually, *Might Makes Right* must be brought to justice—the unconscionable and unfair treatment of families on the basis of individual rights to....

Where is individual responsibility in the want for, and entitlement of, such individual rights? The right to:

- Make any allegation in a courtroom with impunity
- Submit any assertions in a legal document without a review or evaluation for validity or veracity
- Use your own children as pawns; children used toward a parent whom they have not exchanged a word since the oldest was eleven—or in eight years
- Create law in the form of an injunction—then violate the law in principle by initiating contact with the classified culprit
- Initiate a warrant, by way of complaint, without documented cause or legitimate evidence
- Repeat “recurring themes¹⁹³” (of mental problems, instability and fear- mongering) without a doubt—let alone any assessment of authenticity, by the absolute-authority

How long can the one *cry wolf* before the bully-pulpit realizes that either the one is without earnest or, even worse, is using the town’s people for her ambitions...or something more? Again, the answer is not clear-cut. Please tolerate my opinion once more in the matter of doing *the right thing*.

¹⁹³ The phrase “recurring themes” represents pretense and innuendo aimed at discrediting the parent. Sometimes called a “moral hazard”, the risk-free practice of falsifying testimony becomes a habit or practice—simply because there is no penalty or punishment where truth is not (or is no longer) a passion and pursuit by the presiding courts.

Enabling divorce and encouraging the conduct (described above) is only possible when the courts abdicate the passion and pursuit for truth. For example, the individual right to “make any allegation” is a dangerous proposition: given the risk-free privilege to say anything is very convenient in implicating—even incriminating—for everything! In the days of yore, the statement of a witness (thought to be a lie) was treated with the same punishment intended for the alleged; a policy that undoubtedly reduced the probability (and practice) of perjury...and other abuses. In my experience and observation, the plaintiff can say anything with impunity. What is truth?

Why did my children have to be implicated further in *The Mess*; or said another way, who is responsible for qualifying the legitimacy of potential witnesses...or the risks imposed on children compelled to testify against a parent? Would any socially-educated professional consider the complicity of the children as worthy or worthwhile? In my experience and observation, expediency is front-and-center while reason or jurisprudence has *left the building*. What is justice?

When did individual or collective rights translate to violating your own laws? Remember the elaboration by Judge Napolitano: “...It doesn't obey its own laws....” When does one gain the right to create a law, than violate the law in principle for their personal ambition or advantage? Whenever they want to.... What is liberty?

How many times will an absolute-authority pander to the parent that, through recurring pretense and position, is pre-disposed to such extreme degree of power? As many times as expedience or political-correctness warrants—no matter the history, the relationship or any pertinent criteria of the parent-child relationship. Being pre-disposed is not limited to this form of a parent; in the larger scheme, the law is pre-deposed too.

What is freedom? Continuing my letter:

TO SOMEHOW ASSOCIATE MY ACTIONS—OR THE CHARGES BEFORE ME—IS NOT THAT SIMPLE; FOR EVEN NOW, THE PROSECUTION HAS BEEN UNABLE TO FIND (OR MANUFACTURE) EVIDENCE ON ONE OF THE CHARGES DATING BACK TO OCTOBER 2007.

AMONG THE PAINS ENDURED IS THE REALIZATION OF JUDICIARY POWER GONE AWRY. JUST LAST WEEK, THE PROSECUTION ENTERED A SECOND CONTINUATION ON THE PREMISE THAT I WAS NOT IN THE COURT ROOM; BUT THEY FAILED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT, PER COURT PROCEDURE, I WAS IN THE HOLDING CELLS WAITING TO BE USHERED INTO THE COURT ROOM....

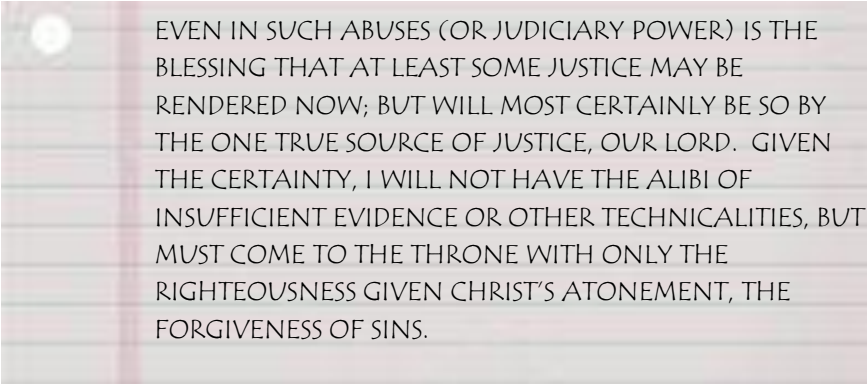
As a force, the court can do whatever expedience allows—justified not on what is truly right...but on Might¹⁹⁴.

¹⁹⁴ The “Heavy-Hand”, the “Long-Arm” or by any other name, is not justice, but expedience and rationalization interplayed by the prosecution.

Righting-Rights

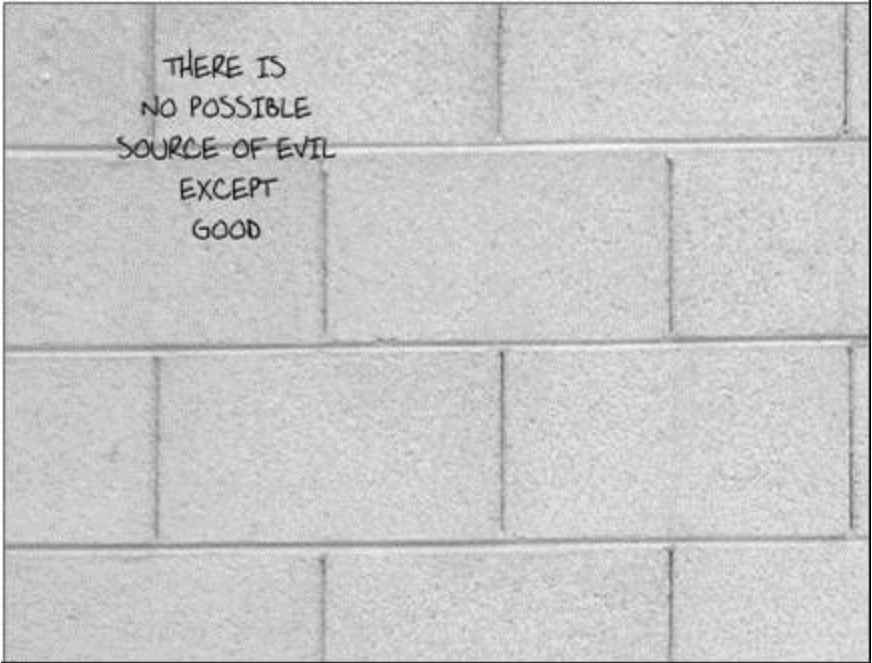
What is one parent to do when the other has the law at her beckoned call? He knows of the course and conduct, and to some degree, has learned the inevitable outcome for those who must *learn the ropes*—the special people he is endeared to protect and defend.... No effort or initiative can replace what has been lost in time and attention; and no courts can offer—or will offer—apologizes or excuses for the *collateral damage*. Abuses of the law go largely without redress as the court, an institution, is a collective of that carried-out as unexceptional right. Remember that *Might Makes Right*.

In such exceptions (to the “unexceptional right”) is the certainty that someone of sufficient power has been inconvenienced to the degree that their individual (not institutional) welfare is at risk; and only then will they attempt to right what has been wronged—or at least appear to.... Forget justice, truth or any other cause of liberty; the “unexceptional right” is underwritten by *the gilded walls*, placards, and other appearances, adornments, and auxiliaries. Abuses go far beyond that which is cast as the convicted; and I write in my letter.



EVEN IN SUCH ABUSES (OR JUDICIARY POWER) IS THE BLESSING THAT AT LEAST SOME JUSTICE MAY BE RENDERED NOW; BUT WILL MOST CERTAINLY BE SO BY THE ONE TRUE SOURCE OF JUSTICE, OUR LORD. GIVEN THE CERTAINTY, I WILL NOT HAVE THE ALIBI OF INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE OR OTHER TECHNICALITIES, BUT MUST COME TO THE THRONE WITH ONLY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS GIVEN CHRIST'S ATONEMENT, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

Truth, justice, and liberty—as a *force*—“may be more attune the conscience” of those (fellows/fathers) where it is (or has been) jeopardized; and as to freedom, the mind may be unbridled....



Blocks of Saint Augustine 20 - No source or interpretation is available; but my thought is that self-righteousness is the “good” that is the “source of evil”. This thought comes in coincidentally studying the parable of the prodigal; the older son being dutiful in his father’s farming, but in that, staking his claim (to the estate) on his apparent dutifulness. Our self-righteousness discounts God’s mercy and grace—and enslaves us to a condition where rewards must be earned rather than received freely.

One other thought or consideration (of Colonial America); it was King George (of England) that said: "I desire what is good. Therefore, everyone who does not agree with me is a traitor." The establishment and enforcement of what is “good” can be corrupted by those who are anything less than perfect—even though considered elite.

Choosing-Contentment

In the middle of July, another booking or “add-on”¹⁹⁵ occurred: the booking was necessary to reframe the violation (VOP) on the basis of the felony charge (or aggravated stalking); that is, the VOP (first issued October 2007) was now based on the felony charge (issued in May 2008). Almost immediately after the booking, I noticed that the document had a typo: the administration had apparently used the prior booking (document) for the new booking, but failed to change the date-year—or the date read as “July 14, 2007”. Without considering the typo, the reasoning would be: a VOP occurring in the first month of my misdemeanor probation¹⁹⁶ (July, 2007) on the basis of a charge to occur roughly a year later (May, 2008)—lending to a prosecution so able to prognosticate...with power to charge preemptively.

Of course, the year-date was a typo; and perhaps, it would have been cause to dismiss the charge. But if I had to speculate, I would say that another continuation would have occurred—so as to allow more opportunity to achieve “the end”. Once the defendant realizes *a force* behind a conviction¹⁹⁷—often with the application of *plea bargaining—the force* (truth, justice and liberty) “may be more attune the conscience” from the day (or year) of the charge, error or not.

¹⁹⁵ Several days following this second continuation, I was ordered to Booking on a “round-trip” for an add-on charge of VOP.

¹⁹⁶ I was serving one year of a misdemeanor probation (beginning in June 2007) on one count of violating the injunction (of February 2006)—for attending my children’s ball game to see them play in the band in October/November 2006.

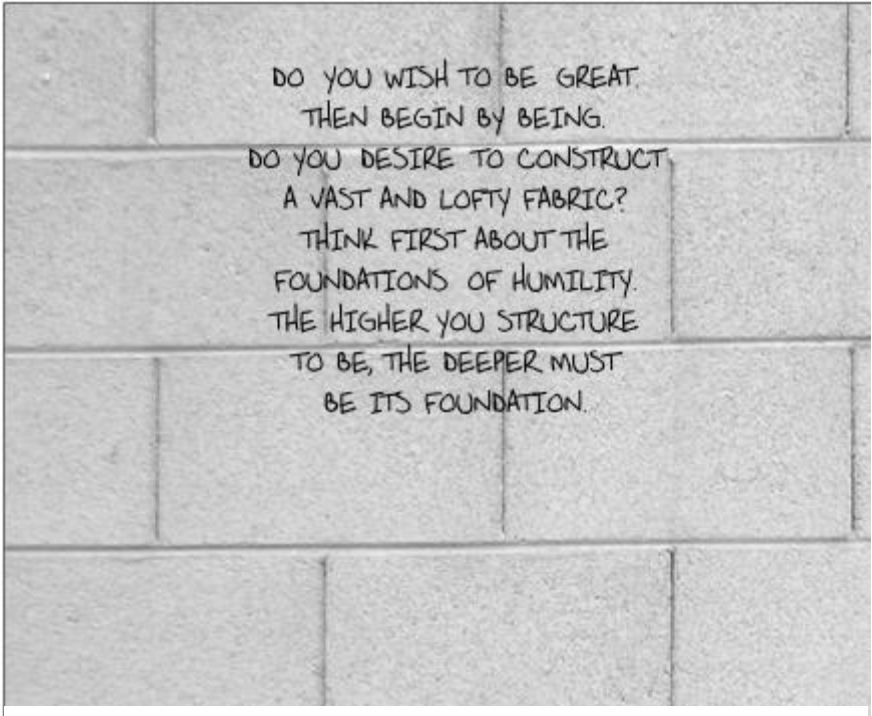
¹⁹⁷ To simply describe the indomitable force that drives the case to a conviction; thus, the system is contributing to the credibility of the criminal system.

Speculation aside, I continue the letter:

IN THE TITLE OF THIS LETTER, THE USE OF “FARTHING” HAS SOMEWHAT OF A DUAL MEANING: STRETCHING THE MEANING OF THIS WORD, THE ONE MEANING IS TO BE FAR AWAY OR DISTANT; THE SECOND MEANING IS TO BE WITH LITTLE WEALTH OR MATERIAL POSSESSION. IF I HAD A CHOICE OF ONE OR THE OTHER, I WOULD RATHER BE CLOSE OR CLOSER TO MY CHILDREN—AS A PARENT SHOULD BE—BUT IN THAT I DO NOT HAVE A CHOICE, CONTENTMENT MUST (AND CAN) STILL BE FOUND IN CHRIST.

PAUL SPEAKS OF CONTENTMENT IN ALL CONDITIONS AND, OF COURSE, TO INCLUDE THE PAINS OF ONE SORT OR ANOTHER. MAY I LEARN FROM HIS LIFE: *TO LIVE IS CHRIST AND TO DIE IS GAIN.*

As a post-entry: a court continuation would be anticipated because of the power to prosecute through *plea bargaining*—as an opposing *force* of truth, justice, and liberty. If not already described, *plea bargaining* preempts *due process*; thus, the defendant is effectively convicted at the time of the charge. Jail and incarceration is additional leverage (or power) that the prosecution can use to compel an admission of guilt. Further, the prosecution is empowered to affect the alternatives—as prejudgment of any eventual trial. Observation and experience suggest that the court’s errors, while noted, do not impede the concerted and collaborative effort to ensure a conviction. Truth, justice, and liberty are only words....



Blocks of Saint Augustine 21 - No source or interpretation is available; but a paradox of the Christian faith: to lead, one must follow; to be first, one must be last; and to live in Christ, one must continue to die in Adam. Just as Christ humbled himself, even to death on the cross, so too must....

Forgetting-Father

Contentment sounds ideal; and *ignorance is bliss!* But what remains of truth, justice and liberty? Why can millions of parent do what I did, and not give the law a consideration? Why do I have to suffer the losses of divorce—the pain and sorrow so accompanied the plight of once-parent, now non-custodial? So much more could be preceded by “why”—so as to leave nothing more. To speak, or think, of these many questions is to sound like I’m whining. But I am whining, about why....

Lewis was in his late twenties; never married and college-educated. Originally from Jacksonville, he had last lived in Atlanta. His violation of probation involved a suspended license; and to comply with a warrant, he drove from Atlanta to St. Johns County—where he was arrested for a second charge of driving without a license. Sound confusing? Well, maybe I don’t have all the facts; but again, cases are not the sort or thing that you ask about, but are learned by willingness and opportunity to speak, too listen and to understand.

He and I spent valuable time discussing religion, politics, and similar subjects that might include one or more of the books mentioned previously. As I recall, we spent much time talking about Francis Schaeffer’s *How Should We Then Live?* I thoroughly enjoyed our discussions. From his financial background, I learned more about the Rothschild’s and other secretive stuff of known or thought existence. During this time, the presidential campaign was well underway; and news of “The Bubble” was flowing-out of Washington.

On the lighter side, Lewis was a crooner—and with that, a huge fan of Frank Sinatra. On a daily basis, he could ring-out a tune or two—on request or impromptu. Toe-tapping, finger-snapping and suddenly “Come Fly” (with me) would take-off. But even more entertaining was his *evangelical hour*: he would

mimic a charismatic service complete with music, message with voice inflections and facial expressions—appearing as authentic as the real article. He had a partner who knew the script too.

Time spent with these fellows gave pause for the mind to move far from those many questions and the analogous anger; and then, to forget the block walls, the metal fences and gates, and all that prominent and programmatic aspects of jail. Sometimes the exchange was educational, but other times just entertaining—but good medicine to momentarily escape that which otherwise enslaves you, plays you the fool, or treats you like a child.

In the cast of characters, the detainee is more like the child in day-care: time to nap, time to eat, time to shower.... Perhaps the individual treatment is earned in part by behavior or conduct; but otherwise, daily productivity can be worth less than a farthing. Until the detainee is sentenced, he must *do time* looking for demands through the distractions of the block, the limits of letters, news from the local paper, or a program on television. Whatever the naïve notions of living incarcerated, my observation and experience is that it sure beats starving or, worse, being physically beaten. Still, I just wanted to be a parent to my children.

Not to confuse the proposed understanding gained by more than “naïve notions”, but being incarcerated does have some aspects of starving and of being beaten (though I can’t say that either has been my experience). Please bear with me while I elaborate on this point—where the similar effect comes more of being depleted than being deprived¹⁹⁸—and the end-result is not

¹⁹⁸ The difference between “depleted” and “deprived” has to do with prolonged stay in jail: the necessities (of life) are prevalent (food, shelter, security); but being “depleted” of basic freedom and the desire to be treated as an adult (without considering possible violations as described previously in court conduct).

humility, over the possible shame of being incarcerated (whatever the reasons), but hostility¹⁹⁹ in the whole experience.

Hostility that goes further than the basketball court (or such games), but is played-out everyday in the character most comparable to a spoiled child; an insatiability for yet more than one needs or could likely want. From what I could see, the hostility that might be thought to apply to basic survival—even dominance—must be directed somewhere (else). This direction is subject to change but, depending on the character and the circumstance, may be momentary (and habitual) toward anything as small as an inconvenience and as big as a basic lifestyle... resulting from real disregard or damage. For the few JITS as an assumed sample (of the population), hostility can come at any moment for any reason—or for no apparent reason either. More often that not, the next higher cast—the daycare deputies—just *let it go*. Unless something happens in the physical, the authority is understandably instructed to treat this hostility with words and limited actions. Hostility is given the noted liberties.

In my experience, such hostility is a distant memory—with the only remote comparison coming from Junior High School during the days of racial integration. A lot of hostility is hemmed-up in the block (walls), the metal fences and gates, and all that prominent and programmatic aspects of jail (or was it school?). So much so that a father (among fellows) may soon forget his real reason for being there (as a “student” may do the same in such school settings). He discovers that being depleted is possible through months of daycare amid the needs and wants that began

¹⁹⁹ In the comparison of jail to “day-care” is some similarity of persons that basically do not want to be there; that is, they prefer another place over the “basic necessities” of the penal system. In the collective of the cast is a prevailing and sometimes pungent hostility—conflict and contention within (the soul), amid (the setting), and extending to the external (physical freedom) too.

long before.²⁰⁰ What might be a cause, and a sense of sacrifice, may become just another case amid such hemmed-up hostility. You're not a father—just another fellow....²⁰¹

Whether the hostility is partly-due to the present (environment) is undeniable; but as to the “long before”, denial may have begun among those who wanted (or had to) opt-out: the correlation between the fatherless and the felon population is widely publicized; many of the prison population were reared in families or environments remiss of socially-responsible or enabled fathers. Could my reason to help my children—sacrifice or not—be any less important in the “prevalent memory”? Some of these fellows could have really used fathers; and even now, some still....²⁰²

²⁰⁰ The “needs and wants that began long before” is played out in the hostility; fellows that have had such needs (and wants) long deferred in their previous setting or environment.

²⁰¹ The setting (of jail) and described hostility can distract a “father” from his naturally and socially derived responsibility: treated as a child, he is in danger of acting like one; and thus, forgetting that he is a father...and parent of his own children. Who would view an incarcerated father as being a positive influence in his children’s lives; who would think that the penal system punishes even the most earnest efforts at trying to be real parent to your children?

²⁰² The ironic circumstance in the setting is that a father can be further informed (or educated) on the consequence of children (or fellows) that have been denied the privilege of a parent (as a positive influence): the cause & effect not always being tied to the parent/child relationship but, as a social statistic, a prevalent and accepted issue or condition of the incarcerated population. See the comments of Erwin Lutzer in earlier footnotes; and also, the endless accounts of Chuck Colson’s prison ministry...among others.

Pressing-Paul

Far from the apparent conditions of *the county*, a jail or prison that could not compare; and among the detainees, some who might be of guilty of a crime called heresy!²⁰³ As history has it, Paul (formally Saul of Tarsus) was taken into custody for protection (more than punishment). In his missionary travels as a Believer, the Saint was subjected to the charges of his once, own “league”. The belief in and preaching of the gospel was his crime—though position and perspective may conclude that criminal behavior was never a case.²⁰⁴

Whatever the opinion or belief (of the cause), the facts of his life and his letters leave much to consider in what has been called passion and pursuit. Paul was a man that was transformed from an encounter—the effect of which the Christian faith was (and is) more studiously and spiritual understood. To be incarcerated for as many six years—and finally executed—he obviously experienced the “ultimate sacrifice”. But like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul is remembered most for recognizing Christ as the “ultimate sacrifice”; and as to his own sacrifices, *to live is Christ and to die is gain*.²⁰⁵

Some accounts refer to his ultimate charge as treason; and if it that was charge, the alleged crime could have been against *The State*—and not the religious status quo. As to the charge however, Paul was martyred for his steadfast faith, his passion and pursuit to *fight the good fight—to win the prize*.²⁰⁶

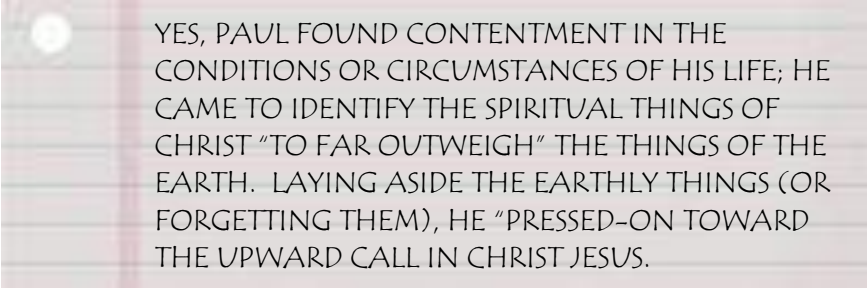
²⁰³ Heresy, or an opinion or belief that contradicts established religious teaching; especially one that is officially condemned by a religious authority.

²⁰⁴ In retrospect and among *The Way* (or first Christian church) his conduct or missionary duty was not a crime; on the contrary, it was his duty....

²⁰⁵ From Philippians 1:21.

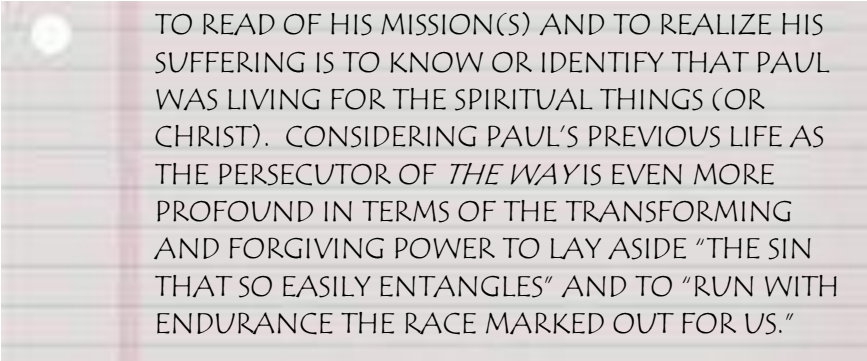
²⁰⁶ From 2 Timothy 4:7.

To his self-described contentment (or peace), I write:



YES, PAUL FOUND CONTENTMENT IN THE CONDITIONS OR CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS LIFE; HE CAME TO IDENTIFY THE SPIRITUAL THINGS OF CHRIST "TO FAR OUTWEIGH" THE THINGS OF THE EARTH. LAYING ASIDE THE EARTHLY THINGS (OR FORGETTING THEM), HE "PRESSED-ON TOWARD THE UPWARD CALL IN CHRIST JESUS.

Unable to draw a comparison in our experiences, I am purposed to examine and present Paul as a patriot (or patriarch). Unable to realistically compare our sacrifices, I am compelled to find in Paul what Dietrich (and many others) undoubtedly did: the willingness to surrender all personal will to *The First Father*. In his (or their) willingness, I write:



TO READ OF HIS MISSION(S) AND TO REALIZE HIS SUFFERING IS TO KNOW OR IDENTIFY THAT PAUL WAS LIVING FOR THE SPIRITUAL THINGS (OR CHRIST). CONSIDERING PAUL'S PREVIOUS LIFE AS THE PERSECUTOR OF *THE WAY* IS EVEN MORE PROFOUND IN TERMS OF THE TRANSFORMING AND FORGIVING POWER TO LAY ASIDE "THE SIN THAT SO EASILY ENTANGLES" AND TO "RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE MARKED OUT FOR US."

Understood by comparison (or similar circumstances) is the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: if treason was the final charge levied on Paul, then the similarity is that both fellows were considered to be treasonous²⁰⁷ to some degree; both were martyrs in the midst of much hostility from one force or the other.

²⁰⁷ Treasonous, or otherwise, they were enemies of the state.

Fading-Forgotten

The question of being a former-father (as though it were possible) has gradually given way to the reasoning that such sacrifices—a criminal conviction—is more than enough. Again, I am the only person in the world who is legally prevented from having contact with my children. In the coincidence of our relationships is the reality of the rationalization (or expedience) to rid the Rainer children of their paternity: simply put, the power endowed to anyone willing to forego basic integrity, and instead, to delve into the convenience of a compliant court—is the root of the problem. *Power corrupts and....*

I am not perfect, of course; but neither were the patriots of old or all-but-one of the patriarchs of *the ages*. Imperfection is not the cause for incriminating a parent; but when the courts must decide in matters of divorce and custody, precedence and pragmatism²⁰⁸ enjoin power (or authority) to ensure that something be done to satisfy someone.

How far will the courts (or power) go in an attempt to assuage the one? Will they permanently dissolve the paternal relationship; will they sever or dismember the father forever? I don't know what they will do (in other cases); but I know what they have done...in response to what has been done in the absence of integrity—doing *the right thing*. When does it end? Well, for patriots and patriarchs, it does not end for as long as there is conflict and contention—and the passion and pursuit for truth, justice and liberty.

But the struggle—the conflict and contention—is more than the physical realm; Paul called it *a war waging within*. The heart that is unwilling to surrender to Christ is the root of the problem; and the belief that what has happened, no matter the pain and sorrow, is beyond God. In this condition, the Believer must

²⁰⁸ Pragmatism or, to apply in simple terms, what is practical; it works!

choose between surrender or a personal passion and pursuit to assuage his own pain and sorrow—as though that is possible. The fundamental surrender and, in turn, the unconditional forgiveness is where freedom is found. Forgetting is not humanly possible, but forgiving is more than humane; it is God acting on our behalf so as to enable absolute truth, justice and liberty. My letter continues on this score:

LAYING ASIDE OR FORGETTING THE PAST (OR EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS...) HAS NOT YET OCCURRED FOR ME. I TEND TO DWELL ON THE OCCURRENCES OR EVENTS OF MY CHILDREN—OR EVEN MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE—WITH MORE THAN THE HEALTHY FORM OF REMEMBERING THE GOOD THINGS OR TIMES. GRADUALLY, THE PAST IS FADING AND THE MEMORIES, HOWEVER ACCURATE IN MEMORY, ARE THE SIMPLE, GOOD TIMES.

OF WHAT I'VE READ AND HEARD, REMEMBERING THE GOOD TIMES IS THE "HEALTHY" CHOICE OF THOSE MEMORIES; IT IS THE CHOICE THAT LEADS TO THE BURYING OF FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS THAT MAY BE REMINDERS OF AN UNFORGIVING HEART—WITH ALL ITS CONSEQUENCES. FURTHERMORE, THE MEMORY OF GOOD TIMES IS THE RECOGNITION OF POSSIBLE BLESSINGS OF GOD.

In the content of the letter is most-likely some meaning that I cannot muster (at this time); that is, I don't recall what deep thought may have been on the mind or, in the spiritual, what force may have been at work in the heart. What I recall is the stark realization that forgiveness is not a tally sheet or checklist; rather, it is surrender in obedience to God. I must deal with the memories that I think I would prefer to not have; but in the

process is a reminder that forgiveness is measured in obedience and is beyond any human capacity to fully-comprehend or



Blocks of Saint Augustine 22 - No source or interpretation is available; but the conflict and contention within the heart—the struggle of the human-will and the higher one.

calculate.

Unforgiving-Unforgettable

Human capacity cannot honestly conclude forgiveness when the wrongdoing involves the present—or the future for that matter. When the mind occasionally or periodically recalls an event or moment, the emotions and expressions can be alarming. Thinking that such (thoughts) were possible no more; and now, the memory drives you to the possibilities that *might does make right*. Choices may seem to be ours alone, but such freedom makes for a decision that goes far beyond the event or moment and, for that matter, far beyond our human capacity in the first place.

This freedom to choose definitely involves doing *the right thing*; but the problem is that the *right* choice does not always yield or produce the desired or thought-to-be right outcome. If the outcome is a measure of *right*, then I am left with recurring doubts. As with the patriots and patriarchs that chose—and chose again—the costs can go beyond the limits of rationalization ...toward the innumerable of principle. When does doing *the right thing* end; or more poignant a question: “Am I doing *the right thing* by attempting *the right thing*?” Turning again to a favorite theologian, Erwin Lutzer writes:

We face a choice: Do we take the cheaper route and build our lives on convenient decisions, or do we make the tough choices at great personal cost? The world is so constituted that the *right* path is usually not the easiest path. History is replete with heroes who made huge sacrifices, sometimes not because they were forced to, but voluntarily.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Erwin Lutzer, *Why Good People Do Bad Things*, (Word Publishing, 2001), p.48-49.

But history also has many “counterexamples”, as he continues:

History also has many counterexamples of people who made a series of small compromises for themselves and served neither God nor man. Sometimes those for whom we have the greatest expectations bring us the greatest disappointment.

Having some relationship to pragmatism, the choice to compromise—to do less than what we believe *the right thing*—is described by Dr. Lutzer as “the price of integrity and obedience....” He continues: “We are willing to violate our principles to achieve certain desirable ends.”

On the lighter side is some recollection of a scene from the movie “The Big Chill”:²¹⁰ a band of 1960’s college students are reunited years later for the untimely death of one of their own. Filmed in *The Lowcountry* (Beaufort, SC), I have some connection—having lived (and lived again) in the same region. But the purpose or application has to do with one character’s idealism on rationalizations. Claiming that people make rationalizations more often than they think about sex, Michael (played by Jeff Goldblum) explains his idea to Sam Weber (played by Tom Berenger).

Jeff Goldblum (Michael): “I don’t know anyone who could get through the day without two or three juicy rationalizations. They’re more important than sex.”

Tom Berenger (Sam Weber): “Ah, come on. Nothing’s more important than sex.”

Goldblum (Michael): “Oh yeah? Ever gone a week without a rationalization?”

²¹⁰ “The Big Chill”, Carson Productions, 1983.

In his words (or idealism) is the reality of rationalization; that the approach to decisions is often that *the end justifies the means*...regardless of what the so-called conscience may accept. The outcome already conceived, now *make it happen*....

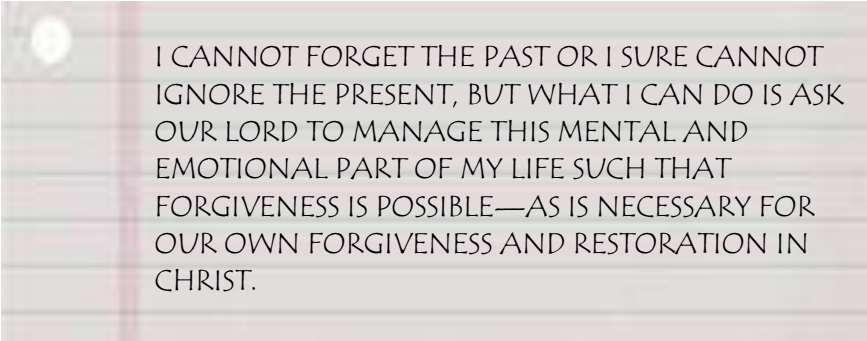
Turning again to a chapter of “The Path of Least Resistance” in *Why Good People Do Bad Things*, Dr. Lutzer explains that the conscience is counted as a measure of maturity:

As we grow and mature, our conscience can either develop in the direction of sensitivity or deteriorate and become dead to the nagging of guilt or shame. If we violate it with impunity, it might no longer raise a voice in opposition to our actions and thoughts.

The end result—or outcome waged on “outcome”—is disassociation to such extreme as to be “insulated from feelings, morality, and other people’s pain.” The problem with rationalization is like the problem with power; the more you have, the more you want...with the eventual outcome of a dulled, even seared conscience. And so goes the idealism—with words and actions toward the immediate outcome with or without realizing the ultimate one. And so goes my letter, writing:

Looking-Lord

As marquees would have it, the advice or message illuminates beyond the fluorescent, incandescent or neon lights. The practice or persistence of looking back (or even to the present) is tough to overcome. The rationalization may be that the past is all that's left in terms of my fatherhood; or in other words, I am only a former-father. Honesty and truth obviously begin with the admission of this “practice and persistence”—among other words and actions of “justified” human capacity. In the admission, I write:

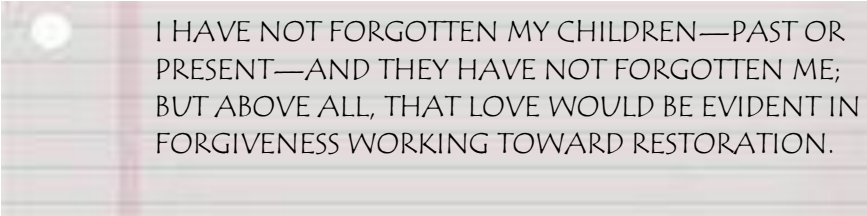


I CANNOT FORGET THE PAST OR I SURE CANNOT IGNORE THE PRESENT, BUT WHAT I CAN DO IS ASK OUR LORD TO MANAGE THIS MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL PART OF MY LIFE SUCH THAT FORGIVENESS IS POSSIBLE—AS IS NECESSARY FOR OUR OWN FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION IN CHRIST.

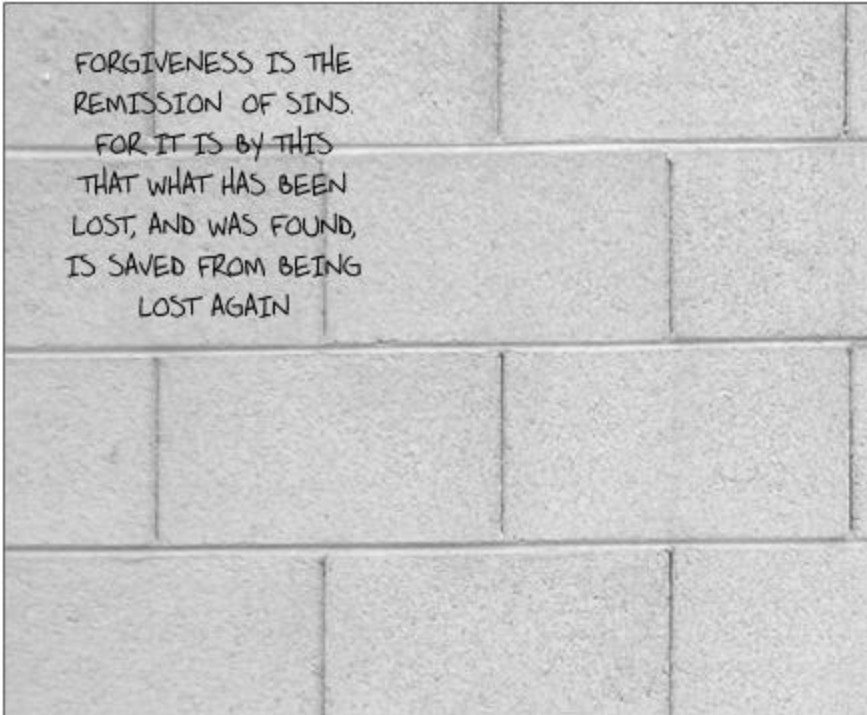
To expect to eradicate the past is impossible; much as I think I could, and may have even tried, my mind is not nearly able. Is that my choice or is that my course; should I expect God to expunge my mind of the conscious of all past events, or just the one's that cause the desire to compromise and resort to rationalization and pragmatism—even hostility?

Honesty and truth agree that surrender is the best course; but in the moment or immediate, rationalization and pragmatism may fool me into believing that hostility will apply to basic survival—even dominance.

“Looking-Lord” is a convenient way of suggesting surrender: a term that reminds me of a saying that might be more understood in a much bygone era; as though from the 1800’s, an expression of surrender or submission when all effort has been exhausted. Looking at my letter, I write:



I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN MY CHILDREN—PAST OR
PRESENT—AND THEY HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN ME;
BUT ABOVE ALL, THAT LOVE WOULD BE EVIDENT IN
FORGIVENESS WORKING TOWARD RESTORATION.



FORGIVENESS IS THE
REMISSION OF SINS.
FOR IT IS BY THIS
THAT WHAT HAS BEEN
LOST, AND WAS FOUND,
IS SAVED FROM BEING
LOST AGAIN

Blocks of Saint Augustine 23 – No source or interpretation is available; remission of sins is possible because of God’s sacrifice. Well described in John Newton’s words: “I once was lost, but now I am found—was blind, but now I see.”

Forgiving-Father

One positive or promising aspect of jail was the opportunity to read. Some books have already been mentioned, but others remain to some degree in the conscious; and of those mentioned, further pleasure came from opportunities to discuss the subject-matter with one or more of the other fellows. It was a book club of sort—though limited to more of a chain of conversation on a topic or point.

Francis Schaeffer²¹¹'s writing was a single book that gave much opportunity to read and re-read; digesting the parallels of Western Culture to the Romans or other civilizations—while trying to grasp the words and views of a deeper-mind through our own individual reading and limited conversation. Now, with book in hand (thanks to a local library), I have returned to this great work and the associated Website. In my own words to follow, I must emphasize that lapse of time since reading (and re-reading) the book and sharing such with other fellows. I cannot describe what took place then; but only that the opportunity was a blessing for each and all us.

Viewing history and the deeper-mind is beneficial; to try to appreciate the appeal to mankind if just to say, “Hey, consider the past in relation to the present...and future. Come, let us reason and recollect beyond your present, personal problem....” May I *come about* and, once again, try to convey the experience and events of sharing this work of Biblical influence.

As a major contributor to my work, Saint Augustine preceded The Protestant Reformation; still, he has been “linked

²¹¹ Francis Schaeffer: was an American Evangelical Christian theologian, philosopher, and Presbyterian pastor. He is most famous for his writings and his establishment of the L'Abri community in Switzerland. Opposed to theological modernism, Schaeffer promoted a more fundamentalist Protestant faith and a pre-suppositional approach to Christian apologetics.... Wikipedia.org.

to the theological teaching”²¹² so as to be a positive influence in the direct contribution of early reformers. The association is to simply draw continuity in the application of his words and the introduction of my reading of the protestant reformation in the cited works of Francis Schaeffer.

With the convenience of the Website, I consider some excerpts from chapters 1 and 4 of the text.²¹³

There is a flow to history and culture. This flow is rooted and has its wellspring in the thoughts of people. People are unique in the inner life of the mind—what they are in their thought-world determines how they act. This is true of their value systems and it is true of their creativity. It is true of their corporate actions, such as political decisions, and it is true of their personal lives. The results of their thought-world flow through their fingers or from their tongues into the external world....

As a person thinks, so they are....

To draw some distinction, while somewhat repeating previous beliefs, is that individual thinking can be a mystery to the very person (remember the words of Saint Augustine: “Who can map out the various forces at play in one soul²¹⁴?”) Whether impulse or obsession, how is the mind bridled by the body?

The mind is capable of the deepest and most degrading of images and premeditations; it can be easily-influenced in what is experienced, viewed or heard—as received through the senses. Impulse or obsession, the mind can mysteriously form a thought

²¹² Again, Wikipedia.org describes the positive influence of Augustine in the ministry of Luther and Calvin among other early reformers.

²¹³ The text is, of course: *How Should We Then Live?*, Chapter 1.

²¹⁴ I take the liberty to use the mind, soul, and heart interchangeable—each or all representing the substance of the person less his body or flesh.

that can evoke the conscious to disagree, to consider, or to embrace it. Extreme levels of fear—on a relative measure—is one example of an initiator for thought (and action) beyond normal and even otherwise, acceptable thinking and behavior. But a perhaps milder, prevailing fear is also *a force* at work: a fear that drives a father to subject his role and privilege to the authority of *The State*.

In a separate matter of “evoking thought”, a book by B. K. Eakman²¹⁵ that describes the “cloning of the American mind” (in the environment of government-based education). Her work describes the “The Seven Deadly Sins of Parental Irresponsibility”. Without attention to any one of “the seven”—or going further by digressing to the ills of another institution—I just want to consider her emphasis on the responsibility of parents to their children.

Responsibility is not paying for your children’s financial needs (or wants); it is not about meeting one’s child support obligation as a singular-contribution to their lives. *The State* can do that.... A parent has much deeper and vested interest in his child and, on that basis, can offer love and other support as an individual—not institutional—contributor. Parents realistically view their children as gifts or blessings. Conversely, *The State* attempts to institute an individual (parent) by imputing child support allied to divorce or paternity; worst yet, is *The State* usurps his authority in their lives by regulating his role and, in still worse possibilities, by dismembering the family. Often this process occurs in the context of divorce; and often, in the want for divorce...at any costs.

An institution becomes the singular authority to disengage the family through de facto dissolution or *divorce on demand*. *The*

²¹⁵ B. K. Eakman, *Cloning of the American Mind*, (Huntington House Publishers, 1998).

State is not a qualified authority on the conjoining of two—with limited responsibility as a licensure—therefore, it cannot be a legitimate authority of the dissolution by one....and the division of what *The State* treats as human property. But even as a licensure, *The State* can legally terminate a marriage, dismember the children and impose the institutional nature so lethal to the well-being of individuals. *The First Father*, the *Founding Fathers*, and the faraway-father share some degree of understanding of the manner—the ills of another institution.

Where the described dissolution begins to unravel—in terms of reasoning—might be viewed from the basic business case. *The State* and its proponents argue that the parent should pay for his child (and not *The State*); and while the singular-argument is agreeable, it may not mention the enormous costs borne by the public in the burgeoning divorce rate—the product of no-fault divorce. Thus, the relatively paltry savings obtained through the imputation of child support is dwarfed by the broader tangible and intangible costs of divorce in American culture. What is possibly guising the greater costs is the lucrative business of divorce—and the *special interests* that couch such law²¹⁶ among the highly-favored, *individual rights*.

Individual thought is obviously flawed too; again, a body cannot control what the mind thinks—at least in the moment. But there is another force at work in the individual that has no counterpart in the institution. The analogy of the institution to

²¹⁶ Another law uses costs or finances to justify a service, policy or program; but on the basis of gross figures, becomes flawed by the overwhelming burden brought to bear on the public. This program is characterized in the context of Milton Friedman’s “unholy coalition”: a coalition of “do-gooders” and *special interests* as the prime mover or driving force. Remember the costs borne to the public: from a 2004 *State of the Union* report, a single divorce costs the public \$30,000; and for the 10.4 million divorces in 2002, \$30 Billion. One institution is destroying the other....

an individual might be attempted in such dialogue or personification as: "...the heart and soul of the..." But in the truth, human institutions are not *at the heart of the matter*—but are excluded to the collective and custody of others. God's attention, first and always, is the individual (...the heart and soul of the individual.)

Scripture is sound in noting the role of governments (or institutions) in the providence and permit of God; but again, "the heart is the matter." On this singularly-placed attention of higher-standing is the possibility to accept that institutions are heartless and soulless—one or more of which was complicit in the undoing of my family.

If institutions could be considered like individuals, then they might be on equal scale of being a beast or leviathan: one that preys on people and, in some aspect, consumes or feeds on them with indiscretion and indifference. The character of the institution more or less representing the collective once removed from compassion and the capacity to choose. In this personal story is the opportunity for a Forgiving-Father—and the opportunity for a father to forgive. Not a father of institutions, but of the individual—his heart and soul.

Notably influenced and inspired by Saint Augustine, Martin Luther offers some further reference to human-will and the internal beast or leviathan:

The [human] will is a beast of burden. If God mounts it, it wishes and goes as God wills; if Satan mounts it, it wishes and goes as Satan wills; Nor can it choose its rider...the riders contend for its possession.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 24 – No source or interpretation is available; but human-kind is degraded to any lower-kind (or worse!) left to his own devises. The depravity of human-kind is dependent upon the human will to defy God—his existence, mercy and might.

Purposing-Pain

With tablet and pencil, I continue my letter on *Total Forgiveness*. As long as I have recited the Lord's Prayer (forgive, as you have been forgiven), I did not consider that forgiveness is essential in every place of the Believer's heart.

I HAVE HAD THE RECENT BLESSING TO ACQUIRE THE BOOK TOTAL FORGIVENESS BY R. T. KENDALL. WHILE I HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE—EVEN NECESSITY—TO FORGIVE, THERE IS CLEARLY ROOM-TO-GROW MY UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF CHRIST-DEFINED FORGIVENESS.

THE TITLE OF THIS LETTER HAS A TWO PART MEANING TOO: THE FATHER WHO DESIRES TO BE FORGIVEN BUT MUST ALSO FORGIVE...IN ORDER TO BE FORGIVEN.

This subject (and book) was mentioned by several fellows: men coming to terms with the places in the heart that remain hardened—whatever the condition, whomever at cause, wherever point or period in time—no matter the details.

A Jewish Rabi, Harold Kushner ²¹⁷ wrote a book: *How Good Do We Have to Be?* I was fortunate enough to find the book after several years and, like an old friend, to call on it once again. He writes on the human-will...not to forgive:

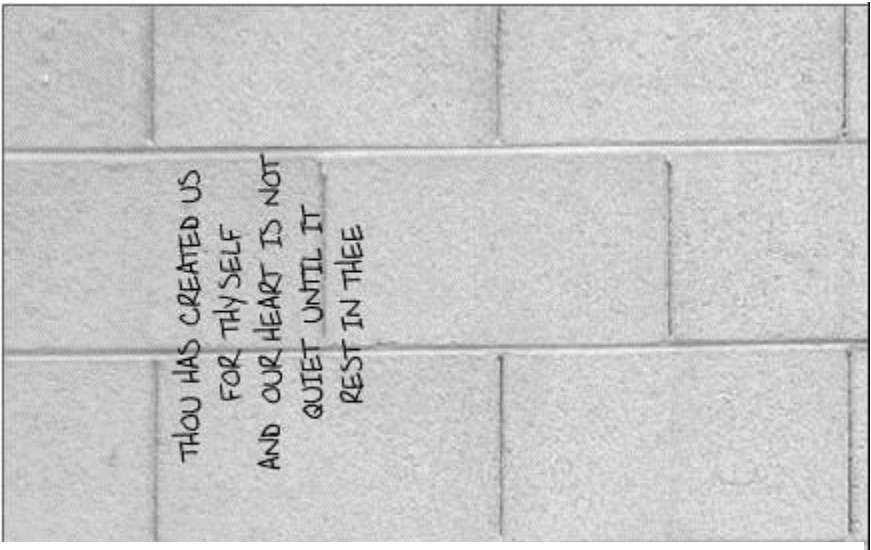
The embarrassing secret is that many of us are reluctant to forgive. We nurture grievances because that makes us feel morally superior. Withholding forgiveness gives us a sense of power, often power over someone who otherwise leaves of feeling powerless. The only power we have over them is the power to remain angry at them.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Harold Kushner also wrote *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

²¹⁸ Harold Kushner, *How Good Do We Have to Be?* (Back Bay Books, 1996), p. 105.

Ironically, the apparent power (as a force) is the very thing that overpowers them. Forgiveness is about freedom...or release from that “someone”, that something, or that some time which binds you—no matter the details.

When I choose not to forgive (or to enable God to help me forgive), I am purposing-pain. Further, I am refusing to obey my Lord and, in my disobedience, I am hindering my prayer life—and purposing more pain or grief on the Holy Spirit. Finally, I am enabling bitterness—an ironic outcome of that “sense of power” so described as a last vestige for *the victim*.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 25 - No source or interpretation is available; but by faith is the belief that God is the creator—and that the creation was to glorify God. Of David: Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace.

Judging-Judge

What must it be like to be a judge? The robe, the podium, and the chamber could describe a king; indeed, *The First Father* is a king—and is the superior judge. Seldom has been my observation and experience to witness the judge make a judgment on what I view as truth; but in the finale, justice is only possible in truth...and in *that time* to come.

In “that time” the described conditions of familial infighting²¹⁹ will be no more²²⁰; and in that time, *fathers’ hearts will be turned to their children*²²¹—far beyond the natural order and the conditions marking such days of depravity, love departed. Not that such a time is referring precisely to the faraway-father, but more to *The First Father* and a familial structure that goes beyond natural order. The human heart will, at that time, be freed from struggles over sin, the pain and sorrow whether purposed or not.

Until such time, we remain in the struggle and confusion of vices and virtues—and the torment, both internal and external. Total forgiveness is the respite that, when engaged by our Lord, supplants love in the far recesses of the human heart—light where there was wanton or willful darkness. Though reconciliation be the expected consequence of such change, it is not necessarily possible when choice—as with any mutual

²¹⁹ The “described familial infighting”: several scriptures point to the *End Times* descriptions of familial fighting; Luke 21:16 describes a degree at which one will be betrayed by the other—and whether this fighting refers to faith or not—it marks the depth of the depravity within natural families and marriages presumed faithful.

²²⁰ I am not disputing the fact that familial fighting has always existed; but in referring to *End Times* scriptures, am pointing out that it will escalate with such venom as to violate the natural order—exclusive of the superior, spiritual order.

²²¹ Not necessarily natural familial fathers to children; but the scripture’s description (Luke 1: 17; Malachi 4:5-6) of what changes occur in the coming of the Lord, the restoration or emergence of love over bitterness, disparity and deprivation.

decision—needs both in some measure. Forgiveness is still possible, and necessary, for the Believer who has witnessed and received this manifestation of unconditional love. To remain enslaved to the past would be to deny that real love ever existed or, to our astonishment, has survived to the present.

I cannot forget the past; as my mind is able to remember or recall the past events (as reflected in the book and elsewhere); but this admission is further reason to embrace forgiveness—as the mind is not something that we can control in the moment, so as to humanly-will the removal of such memories. As I have tried to describe in my own experience (and in few words of this chapter), forgiveness is spiritual—where the heart is enlightened and the mind follows....

In the choice to forego forgiveness is also the feeling of being “morally superior”; and with this feeling, the false sense of being a righteous judge of the other. Scripturally, Paul reminds the reader that such a feeling, or condition of the heart, is disobedience. As I wrote my letter, the thought occurred to me that, in my disobedience, I was diluted to believe that I was justified in judging her. My decision is my doing—and I am accountable to accept God’s forgiveness and, in turn, to return that forgiveness toward others. An ever transforming mind that, with or without memories, is directly aligned with a heart so enlightened in righteousness of our Lord.

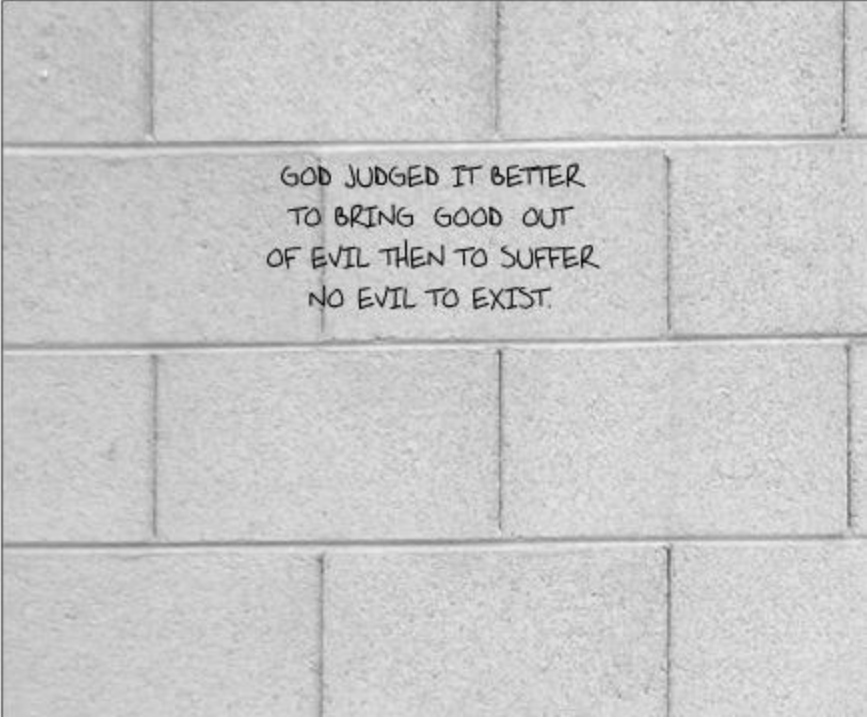
On the book by R. T. Kendall, I write:

FROM THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK, "TOTAL FORGIVENESS" OCCURS WHEN THE PAST IS BURIED—WHEN THE THOUGHTS ARE NO MORE AND THE PRAYERS OF BLESSING ARE IN-WORK FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HURT OR OFFENDED. WHEN "TOTAL FORGIVENESS" OR CHRIST-DEFINED FORGIVENESS BEGINS, SO DOES THE FREEDOM TO ENABLE LOVE—EVEN FOR THOSE WHO PURPOSE TO HURT AND DESTROY....

ALSO INCLUDED IN THIS PROCESS (OF FORGIVENESS) IS THE MATTER OF JUDGING OTHERS. THE INSTRUCTION AND ACTION OF JUDGING SEEMS TO DRAW A FINE LINE BETWEEN THE TIME TO REFRAIN FROM JUDGING AND THE TIME TO JUDGE—AS JUDGING CAN REDUCE THE DESIRE OR ABILITY TO FORGIVE—AND RAISE THE POTENTIAL FOR HURT....

In the described works of Paul is one more point. In his letter to the Church at Corinth, he writes: "I care little if I am judged by you or by any human court."²²²

²²² 1 Corinthians 4:3 – Paul's expressed feelings regarding human judgment...of any kind.

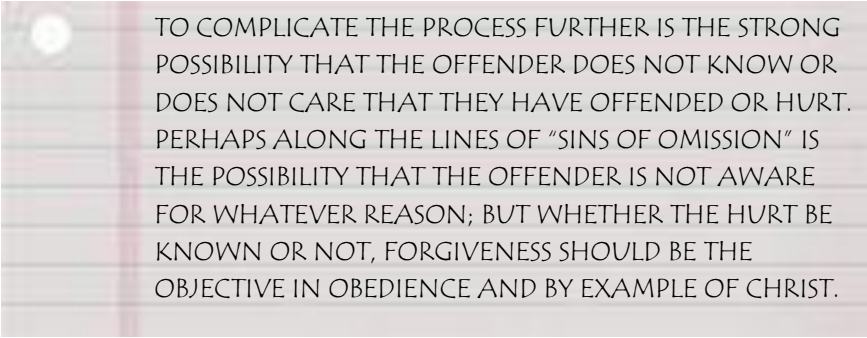
A photograph of a brick wall. The bricks are light-colored and arranged in a standard pattern. One brick in the upper-middle section has a handwritten message in black ink. The message is centered on the brick and reads: "GOD JUDGED IT BETTER TO BRING GOOD OUT OF EVIL THEN TO SUFFER NO EVIL TO EXIST."

GOD JUDGED IT BETTER
TO BRING GOOD OUT
OF EVIL THEN TO SUFFER
NO EVIL TO EXIST.

Blocks of Saint Augustine 26 - No source or interpretation is available;
the providence and purpose of God is a mystery...

Offending-Offender

In the complexity of reconciliation is the requirement for mutual desire—just as in a marriage or healthy relationship. Unlike uncontested divorce, reconciliation requires two...or mutual consent. But again, forgiveness is our own; it is the human-will that surrenders to God's will of unconditional love. No more a question of who is right or wrong—whatever the condition, whomever at cause, wherever point or period in time. Simplicity comes through surrender; the basic description of love that denies personal want or desire and, with that, the insensitivity of self-righteousness. The letter once again:



TO COMPLICATE THE PROCESS FURTHER IS THE STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT THE OFFENDER DOES NOT KNOW OR DOES NOT CARE THAT THEY HAVE OFFENDED OR HURT. PERHAPS ALONG THE LINES OF "SINS OF OMISSION" IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE OFFENDER IS NOT AWARE FOR WHATEVER REASON; BUT WHETHER THE HURT BE KNOWN OR NOT, FORGIVENESS SHOULD BE THE OBJECTIVE IN OBEDIENCE AND BY EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

Self-righteousness can do that; it can make us dead (or insensitive) to our sin—or that for which we are accountable.

Another favorite film, "Amazing Grace",²²³ is a biography of William Wilberforce.²²⁴ From the film and his biography, William and John Newton²²⁵ have a relationship that apparently began in

²²³ The film, "Amazing Grace", Bristol Bay Productions, 2006.

²²⁴ William Wilberforce: much could be included in this description, but basically, William made abolition his political pursuit and central purpose for much of his public service in the parliament.

²²⁵ John Newton: as with Wilberforce, much could be included; John's life changed radically in fear of an ensuing storm at sea—a "Damascus Road" conversion that would providential lead him to faithfully oppose forces one held as his future and fate.

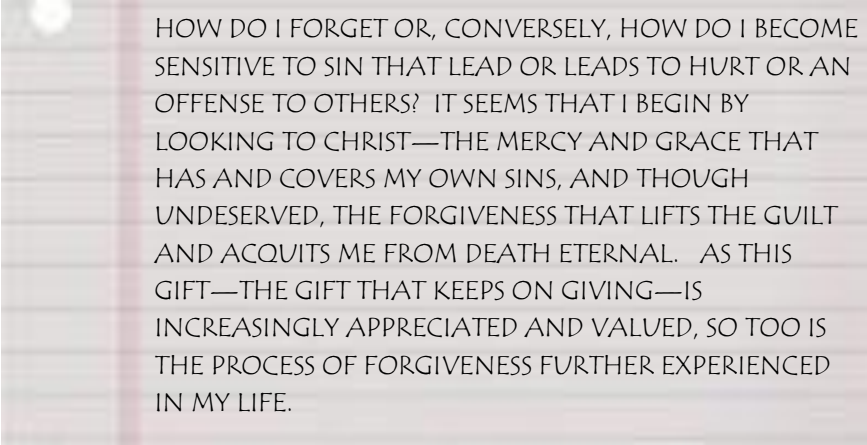
William's boyhood. As an adult and legislature, William calls on the aid of John in the long-struggle for the abolition of slavery. John's personal struggle with his past is expressed in his present reservations (to give advice) but, in a few words, he says to William: "Blow their bloody ships out of the water" (referring to the trans-Atlantic trafficking of slaves).

Indignation of the immoral—though legal—enslavement of another race or nationality is a righteous cause—and who better to know it than one so steeped in the salve trade. Subsequent encounters of the two men present John as losing his eyesight; but remarkably, he is perhaps more attune to his individual accountability ("blind, but now I see") when he says: "I know two things: I am a great sinner; and Christ is a great Savior."

How beautiful to recognize what we are (and are not) in the light of Christ. John was portrayed (in the film) as a man who lived with the "thousands of ghost—all those names...those beautiful African names." He could not necessarily escape what he had done to so many; but what he did identify is the power of God to *move us* to a position and perspective that finds fairness in the true sense of what it is—and is not. The person who has found forgiveness—through the one who has framed forgiveness—has found freedom on *the road to truth*.

Sensing-Sin

“Sensing-Sin” is expressed in the words of John’s Newton’s song and script: “I was blind, but now I see.” But his admission is not the end; but the beginning or continuance of forgiveness so represented in any Believer who is discovering this freedom along *the road to truth*.



HOW DO I FORGET OR, CONVERSELY, HOW DO I BECOME SENSITIVE TO SIN THAT LEAD OR LEADS TO HURT OR AN OFFENSE TO OTHERS? IT SEEMS THAT I BEGIN BY LOOKING TO CHRIST—THE MERCY AND GRACE THAT HAS AND COVERS MY OWN SINS, AND THOUGH UNDESERVED, THE FORGIVENESS THAT LIFTS THE GUILT AND ACQUITS ME FROM DEATH ETERNAL. AS THIS GIFT—THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING—IS INCREASINGLY APPRECIATED AND VALUED, SO TOO IS THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS FURTHER EXPERIENCED IN MY LIFE.

A commentary I found on the Web by Dr. Waylon B. Moore, mentions the book, *Total Forgiveness*. The commentary (on the same subject) offers some realization on “the road to truth”:

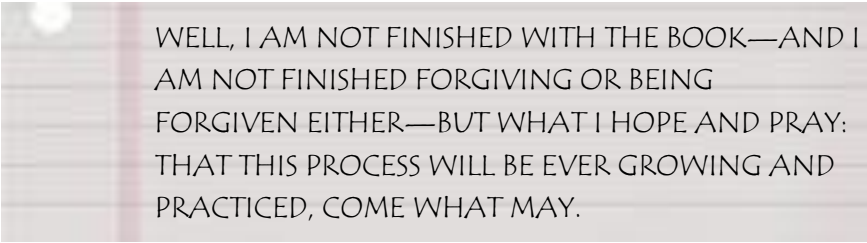
We often sin unknowingly toward God and others. The cross is God’s supreme reminder that we need forgiveness. Sin is so hideous, so blinding, that only the death of God’s son could pay for such terrible, enormous ruin. We also choose to deliberately sin. We pick a word or choose an act, not always caring that we will wound others deeply. We even rationalize that they deserve it! People also hurt us in similar ways, either unknowingly or purposely.²²⁶

²²⁶ Dr. Waylon B. Moore, “Forgiving: The Difficult, Delicate Decision”, mentoring-disciples.org.

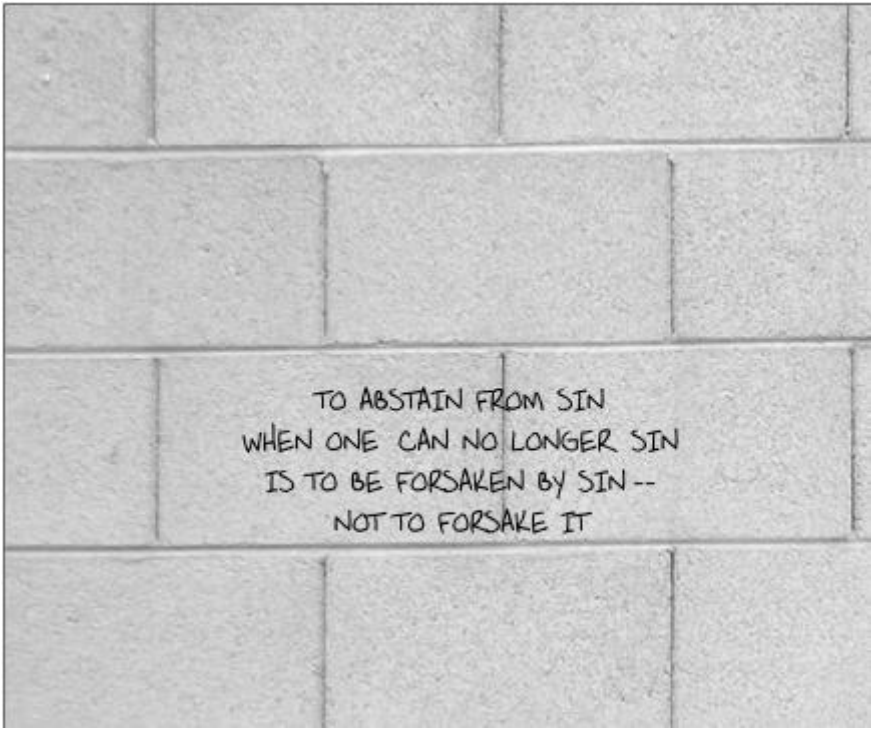
But then is the possibility:

Total forgiveness is the way to freedom. Only then can we be unchained from our past, and freed from a glorious flight into the Now!

Forgiveness is not a checklist, a ledger or some similar calculated entry (as I may have thought); but if a similar association could be made, it is more like a trust fund with limitations immeasurable by humankind—individual or institution. Trust then in the trust fund...without limitations.



WELL, I AM NOT FINISHED WITH THE BOOK—AND I AM NOT FINISHED FORGIVING OR BEING FORGIVEN EITHER—BUT WHAT I HOPE AND PRAY: THAT THIS PROCESS WILL BE EVER GROWING AND PRACTICED, COME WHAT MAY.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 27 - No source or interpretation is available; but if it were possible to be removed from temptation—and therefore, not sin—where is our faith? Of course, temptation is ever present—and serves as a reminder of our weakness and fallibility...in light of God's mercy and grace.

Fearing-Father

Another interesting book was *Fear of Falling: the Inner Life of the Middle Class*.²²⁷ a view of the social-economic landscape of America; the rise of what is called the “professional middle-class” and the changes and transitions that have led (or lead) to the fear that they are *losing ground*. A book review²²⁸ may help to recall that the transition of this class from post-WWII has resulted in a prevailing *fear of falling*; that is, the sense that pursuits of wealth and prosperity would bring ruination to what was thought, in early times, to be a most redeemable and esteemed segment of society. Somewhat self-made examples of educated and intellectual-types feared their faltering in the effort to succeed. In summary:

...the middle class was fraught with doubts and insecurities by the late 1980s, exemplified by what Ehrenreich calls "the yuppie strategy" — the superficial and self-destructive emulation of the rich that has exacted a high price in terms of both money and self-respect to a class that once defined itself by its professional autonomy and moral integrity.

Another of the “re-read” variety, this volume kept me busy for a while; and like a few other books, became a source for further discussion in the block’s described book club. It was my first encounter with the writing and life of Ms. Ehrenreich, but a much-appreciated opportunity to read her work. Having a somewhat similar association by way of my engineering background, I was particularly interested in her description of

²²⁷ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: the Inner Life of the Middle Class*, (Pantheon Books, 1989).

²²⁸ A book review on *Fear of Falling*; scotlandon.com.

the changes of the workplace and employment. To that end, I have used another of her works in another of mine.²²⁹

Fear is a subject that I have become increasingly aware of—the result of a period that I call post-divorce. Admittedly aware of the general concerns about “falling” too, I am more concerned about the burdens of a non-custodial—the dilemma of parental alienation with absolute liability for financial support. If any “positive²³⁰” aspect could be extracted from the non-custodial lifestyle, it is the accelerated-track²³¹ toward financial distress and familial disparity. What may have occurred in the 1930s in a mass economic-downward spiral of society has similarity to the consequences of the divorce—as I see it.

In this status (of a non-custodial) is also the *hairpin-trigger*²³² of the custodial parent; that, on a moment (or minute), they can marshal the penal system. Such privilege of “the victim” described as the:

- “License to lie” or the privilege to say or submit any testimony with impunity (without penalty of perjury)
- “Latitude to legislate” or the ability to create a law (prohibiting contact with the children)
- “Longitude above...” where the created law can be violated in principle by the originator (*bait and switch*)...thus, they are *above the law*—as institutions violate their own laws...

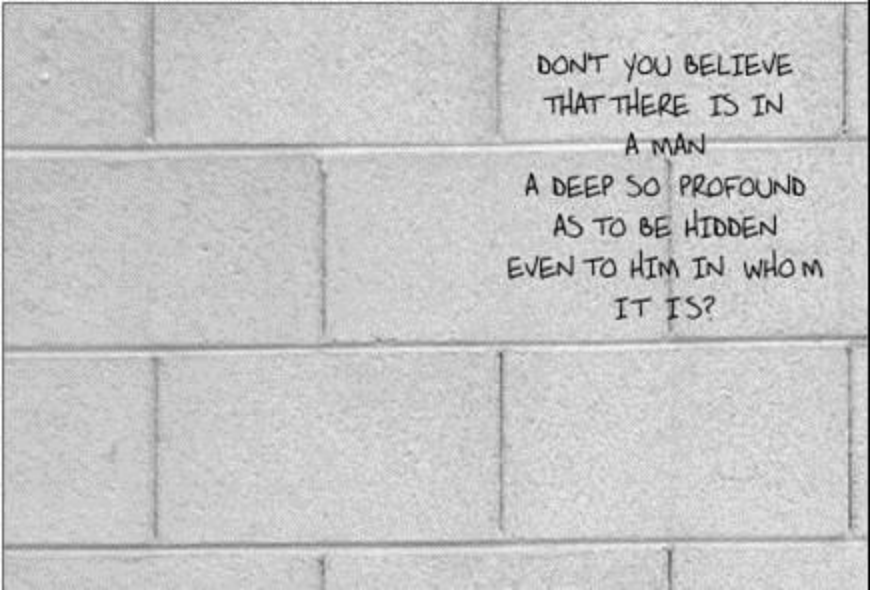
²²⁹ The other of Ms. Ehrenreich’s works is *Bait and Switch* (Henry Holt, 2006).

²³⁰ The use of “positive” is somewhat cynical though it is intended to suggest that, in *the lessons of life*, the experience is (or has been) character building through much loss....

²³¹ As the middle-class have experienced (or are experiencing) the *fear of falling*, so too those who are designated as a non-custodial’—not just falling from an economic class, but from a social position as a parent in the true sense of the role and responsibility.

²³² Quick on reaction (or action!), a *hairpin-trigger* to trap the other parent using the described *tricks of the trade...learning the system...*

Fear has been felt as no other time in my life (that I recall); not an instant or impulse, but a prevailing dark cloud—a malaise from the malevolence of the one—once by marriage. Is it a “fear of falling”, as somewhat described in Barbara’s book, or is something more? Whatever the nature of the fear, it is not what God desires for his child.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 28 - No source or interpretation is available. Remember Saint Augustine’s quote about “...various forces at play in one soul? Man is a great depth....” How do you know what you do not (or cannot) acknowledge or affirm? The cause of the condition may be confused with the symptom; but symptoms may be left in silence too. Who knows the thoughts of man except the spirit of man? Who judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart except the Word of God?

Growing-Growth

I would like to say that I have achieved victory (over this fear); or that I have discovered the roots of my fears and, with courage, am facing each.... But that would not necessarily be accurate (or honest); as time and events have brought to doubt such a glorious end to the aims of “the end”.

Fear is not a feeling or condition so easily admitted or affirmed; even as children, we may recall being *scared to death*—but saying nothing of it. These memories or experiences are comical in retrospect; no matter the seriousness, the moment and emotions were thinly veiled in what was thought a theatrical-toughness. Whether frightened, hurt physically or just hurting, the pain was preferably *walked-off* rather than reflected with tears and other emotions. The performance was crucial to the moment—making the difference in a temporary test²³³ of testosterone.

The same “feeling or condition” was present among the fellows—and, I believe, was sometimes treated with similar effort. Cory was a young man who notably showed fear (as he and I shared our situations). Fear was why he carried a gun and, one particular night, impulsively brandished it in front of what turned-out to be an undercover cop. Fear may have something to do with his knew-jerk reactions and his let-fly language. He could *talk the talk* and, with firepower, might have made the mistake of *walking it* too. Cory was scared and afraid.

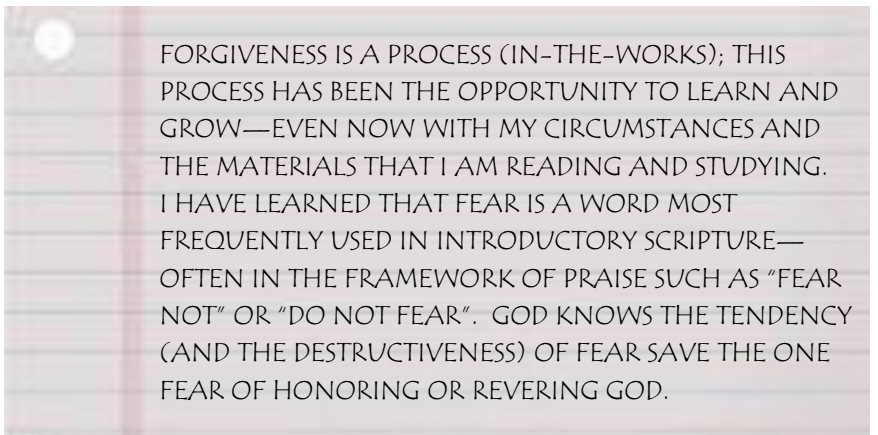
But Cory had other issues (as they say): a long-time drug user, his basic approach to the scene was to try anything at least once; thus, he could have a less-than apparent conscience and clarity of “the picture”—or in other words—drug-use could have had some effect on his general thinking. But then again, his

²³³ A “temporary test”—as staged and impromptu performances could be short-lived in terms of qualifying manliness or toughness.

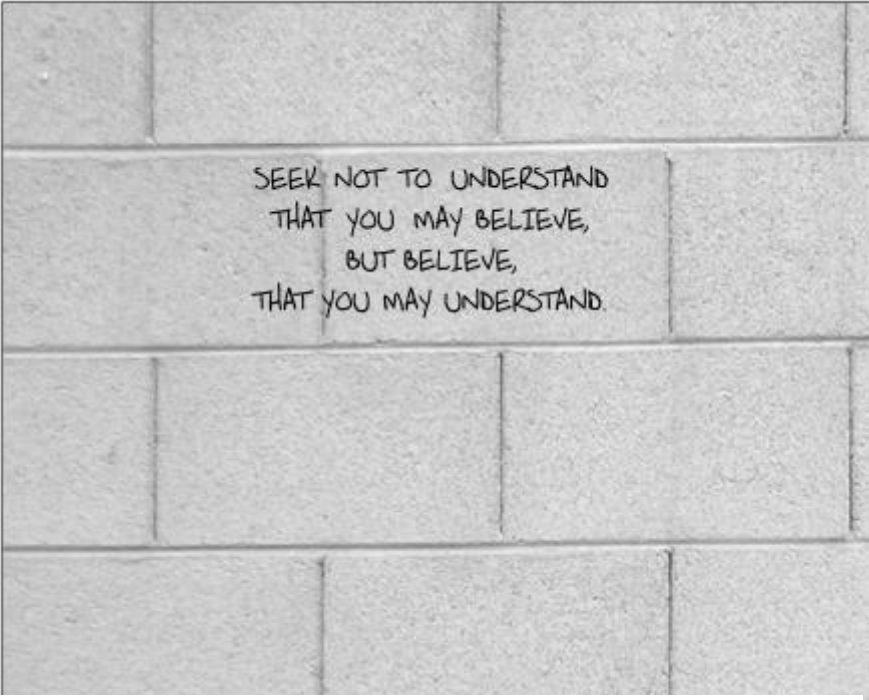
manner or behavior may have been Cory in the norm. Still, he showed such signs of being scared and, in keeping with the *schoolyard* behavior, every determination to *save-face* in the sometimes minute-by-minute confrontations that he more often conjured-up that another might consider real.

Cory was among the young fellows that characteristically held a lot of hurt. For whatever reasons that drug-use carry-on, the lifestyle may have been part of the way of dealing with that “just hurting”. He was not all drugs or all fear; Cory surfed and he liked to dabble in painting and several forms of art. Perhaps the “theatrical-toughness” that he frequented was just part of a child-like quality that fueled his excitement in this sport and that art. In all, Cory was a kid; and, for me, he was another opportunity to be a parent again. He was another fellow, I was another father, and we were another friendship in the fellowship of the block.

Forgiveness is not through. Months after my release from jail—but while still corresponding with Cory—I read his remark: “Let-go...Let God.” Somewhat familiar with the phrase, I think that Cory was being counseled on the process of forgiveness—and I think that his hurting was getting some much needed help. As for me and my hurt, I write:



FORGIVENESS IS A PROCESS (IN-THE-WORKS); THIS PROCESS HAS BEEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND GROW—EVEN NOW WITH MY CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE MATERIALS THAT I AM READING AND STUDYING. I HAVE LEARNED THAT FEAR IS A WORD MOST FREQUENTLY USED IN INTRODUCTORY SCRIPTURE—OFTEN IN THE FRAMEWORK OF PRAISE SUCH AS “FEAR NOT” OR “DO NOT FEAR”. GOD KNOWS THE TENDENCY (AND THE DESTRUCTIVENESS) OF FEAR SAVE THE ONE FEAR OF HONORING OR REVERING GOD.



SEEK NOT TO UNDERSTAND
THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE,
BUT BELIEVE,
THAT YOU MAY UNDERSTAND.

Blocks of Saint Augustine 29 – No source or interpretation is available; faith is a pre-requisite for the Believer to comprehend the Word of God; that is, to fully embrace the Word as truth in eternity. The first disciples understood by way of faith—not through formal education or training.

Admitting-Anger

Cory's ancestry included the Minorcans.²³⁴ Tracing the lineage from the Island of Minorca, these earlier arrivals to Colonial America are unique in the sense of their origin and their faith. Brought as effective slaves to an English-colony (south of St. Augustine), these early settlers suffered greatly (according to historical accounts); and eventually, the survivors (of pestilence and privation) appealed to the English governor. Coincidentally, the village returned to the Spanish and, in such transition, the English plantation and settlement was abandoned. Celebration of the Minorcans' heritage began in St. Augustine in the 1960's.

The people (of which Cory is a part of) hold a Greek festival in the adjoining island of Anastasia. While I lived in St. Augustine several years ago, I was able to attend one of these events. No more apparent tears or sorrows from the past, the people served and ate their fine ethnic creations; and they played and danced some wonderful, fascinating forms too. On prior comment of "never belonging to any fraternity", I found the festival to be every bit rich and remaining of a proud people. Being Greek (for the day) was neat!

Forgiveness must be part of the heritage; not just the faith, but the faithful. The determination to survive beyond that which, in part, is somewhat celebrated by the community. For the Minorcans, the celebration comes as a consequence of suffering and survival of slavery; a point in time that formed what is today a significant mark in the history of the locality and the Greek

²³⁴ From augustine.com/history/old-st-augustine/minorcans; the Minorcans were from an island, near Spain, in the Mediterranean. They were among other peoples of the region that were "recruited" to labor in the New World (New Smyrna, FL) to grow hemp, indigo and sugarcane. From atmetropolis.org, St. Augustine was the first permanent settlement of Greek Orthodox; and to this day, the faith and the people commemorate their heritage with annual festivals.

Orthodox in the New World. Whatever the details of the relatively small Minorcans amid an empirical machine²³⁵, the will to survive and to be set free can be assessed as proof positive toward to “a better” New World.

Without details, and with only some applications that might surface in the present day, anger is ageless when it comes to “pestilence and privation”. Anger left unattended by forgiveness can (or does) become bitterness. Bitterness is not strictly in association with an external war, but for the individual, is more a matter of an internal one. Still, this internal conflict is contagious and costly. To begin being “better” is better for everyone—from the inside out...and from now until....

Being bitter is a cause and a consequence of wars;²³⁶ it is a condition that the emperor in *Star Wars*²³⁷ expressed with delight when he said to the much pressured son of Skywalker, “I feel your hate.” Luke was obviously under much distress, but the aim of the emperor was to elicit every emotion that would either turn the son to the “dark side” or turn the Jedi to self- destruct; either way, and the empire remains.... Only a last vestige of “good” in the father made the difference in the outcome of this fictitious but familial story. The father saved his son.

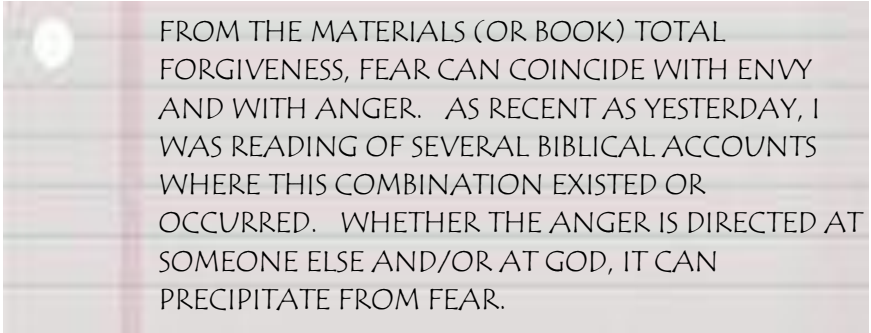
Back *down on earth* (not a galaxy far, far away), I write of another familiar family and throne. King Saul was pursuing David with a vengeance. The fears of losing one’s footing (as a king in this case) can be very costly. Such anger and adversity can be the cause and the consequence of bitterness. Whereas Vader saved his son (and the galaxy) from doom, King Saul was chiefly responsible for destroying his...and dividing the kingdom

²³⁵ The term “empirical machine” refers to the English Empire.

²³⁶ By “wars”, I mean conflict and contention.

²³⁷ Note the movie “Star Wars”, but the sequel “Return of the Jedi”; the scene where Luke is viewing the destruction of the rebel fleet in the presence of the emperor and his father, Darth Vader.

between the legacy and the providence of God. Saul was consumed with jealousy; and his fear left no room for friendship—even with his son, Jonathon. Call it patriarchal-protection or, more accurately, blind-rage; but the condition (of fear) was deeply destructive. Fear eventually destroyed the destroyer too.



FROM THE MATERIALS (OR BOOK) TOTAL FORGIVENESS, FEAR CAN COINCIDE WITH ENVY AND WITH ANGER. AS RECENT AS YESTERDAY, I WAS READING OF SEVERAL BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS WHERE THIS COMBINATION EXISTED OR OCCURRED. WHETHER THE ANGER IS DIRECTED AT SOMEONE ELSE AND/OR AT GOD, IT CAN PRECIPITATE FROM FEAR.

Saul was the people's choice. In the present day, "a Saul" could be a president that looks very presidential. A problem will *looking the part* is that "the right stuff" is not necessarily significant—even important to the place or position. Perception is the point—feelings over substance....

Being weak, the person can succumb to pride...and its weakness. As Ben Martin says in "The Patriot", "Pride is a weakness too; pride will do...." The possibility exist that a king (with or without wearing a beautiful wardrobe) can somehow transform to the part; that is, by acting the part, the place and position transition from perception.... Perhaps like a good actor, the king assumes the role to such a degree as to almost fool his own conscience. Perception and position become as inseparable as vice and virtue, fear and anger, truth and....

But let's not forget my letter, as I write:

THE BOOK DESCRIBES FEAR AS THE "TWIN OF PRIDE". ONE CHARACTER EXAMPLE IS KING SAUL—WHERE PRIDE LED TO DISOBEDIENCE INTERMIXED WITH FEAR OF THE APPARENT RISE OF DAVID. BOTH HIS PRIDE (AND FEAR) AND THE RESULTING ANGER DISABLED REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS.

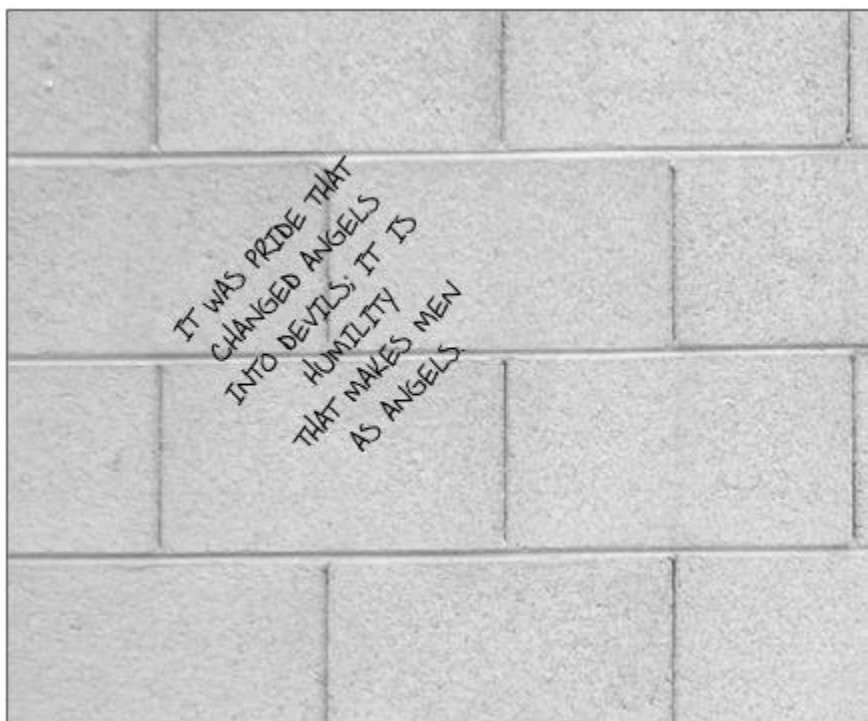
"The Patriot" was right: "Pride is a weakness." Our Founding-Fathers recognized the pitfalls of pride. In the Federalist Papers²³⁸, John Jay²³⁹ wrote:

The pride of states, as well as of men, naturally disposes them to justify all their actions, and opposes their acknowledging, correcting, or repairing their errors and offenses.

States have pride; institutions of states can be indulged—even intoxicated—with power, place and position. Naturally, people are made fools by pride (of the worst sense); and socially, the institutions are symbolic of this pride in the collective. Fear, on the other hand....

²³⁸ Federalist Papers, Essay No. 3.

²³⁹ John Jay: was an American politician, statesman, revolutionary, diplomat, a Founding Father of the United States. He believed the British tax measures were wrong and thought Americans were morally and legally justified in resisting them, but as a delegate to the First Continental Congress in 1774 he sided with those who wanted conciliation with Parliament. Events such as the burning of Norfolk, Virginia, by British troops in January 1776 pushed Jay to support independence. wikipedia.org



Blocks of Saint Augustine 30 - No source or interpretation is available; but pride was the noted characteristic of Lucifer—to consider that he was a god! On the other end, the humility of God—through Christ—is obedience to and recognition of God, his commands and might.

Forgetting-Fear

Fear coupled with pride may be paranoia. King Saul was paranoid over the possibility of losing that which he had already lost. Pride *has its place*.

Near my home is a once-military post; and though the property has been passed on to other civilian purposes, some artifacts remain. Among the remaining are monuments; some stone and other metal monuments use a familiar phrase: “Right to be Proud”. This is *a good place* for pride; sacrifice and selflessness for a cause deemed worthy.

Those familiar with the Bible know that young David was the ordained king to come. The rise of David’s popularity was with jealousy by Saul. David was a marked-man—and Saul determined to see “the end”. Over these years of pursuit, the fugitive was fearful: his fears expressed in The Psalms, David was divided between allegiance (to the king) and the purpose for which he had been ordained.

In complete contrast (to the rage), the relationship of Jonathon and David was described in a spirit of love. One (as one in a relationship) was committed to destroy the other—even his son. The destroyer was driven to do what was necessary to achieve “the end”; to satiate his fears and pride—as though that was possible. Any attempt to rationalize rage is to question whether “the committed” is rage; and if so, whether rage is ever rational.

When I think about rage, the movie “Braveheart”²⁴⁰ comes to mind: the scene where Wallace is attempting to rally the Scots to the cause through an appeal (a plan) to Bruce; pulling Wallace aside, Bruce responds that such a plan “looks like rage”—for which Wallace replies, “It is beyond rage”.

²⁴⁰ “Braveheart” directed by Mel Gibson (Paramount Pictures, 2000).

“Beyond rage” could be rational—even reasonable. The cause, in this course, was for freedom from tyranny—with the “right to be proud”. Sacrifice and selflessness were at the heart of “Braveheart”; of those who were so willing to commit themselves to “the end” of a long, end-less and cruel tyranny so described by Wallace in a few words: “Every man dies, not every man really lives.” Love of the land (people) was enough to lay aside personal pride and to allay fears—even of death—in view of freedom to live. Though a story, “Braveheart” is symbolic of the forces that compel a person or people to go beyond rage—to go beyond their personal wants, security and safety. Naturally, socially or spiritually-driven, this force prevails beyond....

David was described as “a man after God’s own heart”. Not your portrait-image of “presidential”, David was much more... from the unlimited perspective and position of God. Physically, he was an opposite of Saul; and as to the heart, he was what God evidently saw in the qualities of leadership; that is, obedience. To the degree that David is of that “own heart” is to realize that he remained faithful to Saul to the very end. David was bereaved by the losses and, in God’s provision, somehow escaped “the end” and bitterness over the years of his life as a fugitive. Scripturally, David’s strength came from God—and not from mass popularity that is so often misplaced, misguided and misused.

Love can mysteriously overcome; it is a force that prevails beyond...our fears and pride, our struggles to forgive (and self-powering bitterness). Love can bring healing and renewal—even reconciliation. Christ is the source of this love: naturally, love is endowed through common grace; socially, love is fostered through familial relationships;²⁴¹ spiritually, love is a gift among

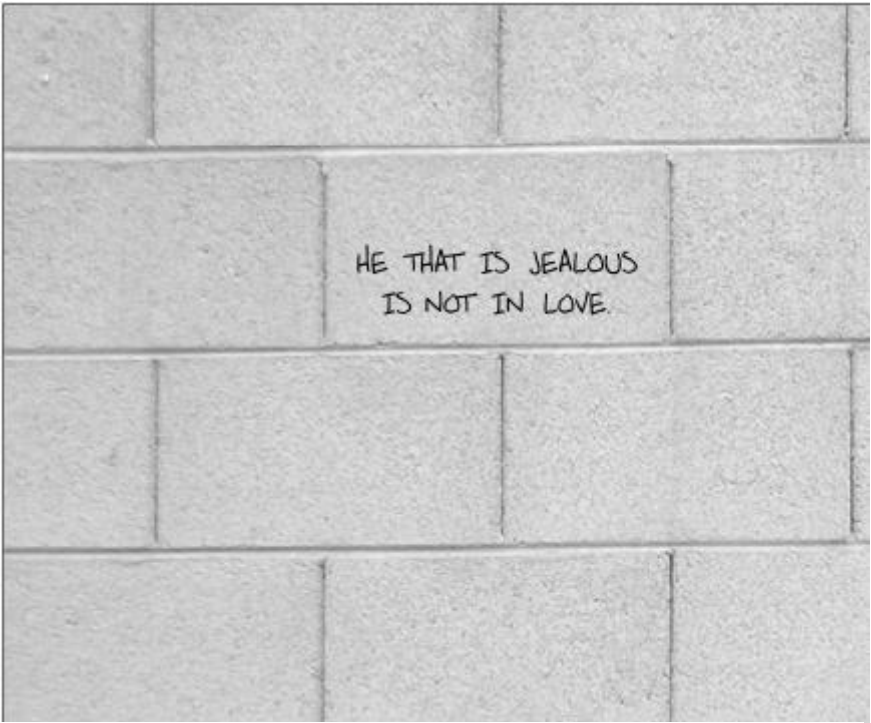
²⁴¹ “Familial relationships” include the church—not just (or necessarily) natural family, but also rich, healthy relationships beyond natural ties.

other attributes of God. Love builds-up²⁴²—it does not destroy—and still, it goes beyond. From my letter, love is:

PAUL TELLS US THAT BELIEVERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN A SPIRIT OF LOVE...NOT A TIMID OR FEARFUL SPIRIT; AND THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT "POURS OUT HIS LOVE" INTO OUR HEARTS. "A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART, DAVID SURRENDERED HIS FEAR(S) TO GOD SUCH THAT LOVE WOULD PREVAIL—EVEN TOWARD KING SAUL.

BOTH IN MY PAST AND PRESENT ROLE AS A PARENT, FEAR IS A STRONGHOLD; IT STRIKES SPONTANEOUSLY AS IN THE POSSIBILITY (OR ACTUALITY) OF DANGER AND, SINCE THE DIVORCE, IN THE UNKNOWN. THOUGH I MIGHT TRY TO JUSTIFY THE FEAR (OR ANXIETY), THE SIMPLE TRUTH IS THAT GOD'S LOVE HAS NOT BEEN FULLY ACCEPTED—AND EMBRACED—OVER FEAR.

²⁴² This phrase and description comes from a translation of Love in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 31 - No source or interpretation is available; as jealousy is described as “a fear” of losing something or someone, it is not a behavior rooted in love, but in lust and control.

Continuing-Care

Care is generally associated with love; and a parent's care of his children can be the expression of that love. If he does not care, then he does not evidently love. Care is not about possession or a sense of self-righteousness or empowerment; rather, it is a force derived naturally, socially and spiritually. Saint Augustine described love (or care): "Since love grows within you, so beauty grows. For love is the beauty of the soul."

But love is not the only force in the Saint's life; indeed, lust was also present—as pointed-out from his past experience and from subsequent scholars. Lust can have several forms: a simplified description could include the objects or obsessions with power, possession and pride.

In his writing, *City of God*²⁴³, Augustine writes of the lust of power—to dominate.... In a subsequent and contemporary writing, this lust is noted as being "Libido Dominandi"; and on this description of this lust, Llewellyn H. Rockwell²⁴⁴ writes:

Augustine cites this impulse as the worst manifestation of the sin of pride, since it directly seeks to ape God. It can also be shortened to a more familiar phrase: Power Lust.

By way of contrast, Augustine cites the case of a family headed by a "just man who lives by faith and is as yet a pilgrim journeying on to the celestial city." There, "those who rule serve those whom they seem to command; for they rule not from a love of power, but from a sense of the duty they owe to others—not because they are proud of authority, but because they love mercy."²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Saint Augustine, *City of God*

²⁴⁴ Llewellyn H. Rockwell: widely known as "Lew" Rockwell, he is an American libertarian political commentator, activist, proponent of the Austrian School of economics, and chairman of the Ludwig von Mises Institute. He is Roman Catholic.

²⁴⁵ Llewellyn H. Rockwell, "Power Lust", (LewRockwell.com, 2003).

To care is not enough however; but it begs the question: Care about what...or whom? When the question is answered, not just in words—but with intentions and action—only then, can care be qualified as love....

Possession and power are also close; for the lust of possession as “the end” is accomplished through access to power as “the means”. Expedience and rationalization is built on the premise that possession—or to possess something or someone—is achievable through power. Much seems to exist in the way of Augustine’s thinking or ideas on these two; but with some personal observation and experience, I proceed.

Continuing with the term “Libido Dominandi”, Rome (the Roman empire) was “undone” by its lust for power and possession (or domination). Herbert Deane ²⁴⁶ writes:

This lust for domination over other men is associated with the love of glory, honor, and fame, which men “with vain elation and pomp of arrogance seek to achieve by the subjection of others.” Like avarice, the desire to exercise power and domination is not confined to a few men, although it is particularly strong in the ambitious and the arrogant; “there is hardly any one who is free from the love of rule, and craves not human glory.”

Lust is a powerful force too. The want for sustained power and possession drove Saul to destroy his own; a similar position (of an institution) drove Rome to destroy its own too. Lust remains...as does the want to destroy—even our own!

²⁴⁶ Herbert Deane: a professor emeritus of political philosophy and a former vice provost at Columbia University, he was noted for his writings on St. Augustine.

As the “original sin”, pride is the last of the three; though mentioned previously in the life of Saul and the words of John Jay:²⁴⁷

...disposes them to justify all their actions and opposes their acknowledging, correcting, or repairing their errors and offenses.

Pride is the basis for *an absolute authority that takes no responsibility*. A cause cannot exist without the admission, acknowledgement or acceptance of fault. Any opposition (or the target) of such a “Tour de Force”²⁴⁸ has much to fear—as learned from the life of David, and shared in my letter:

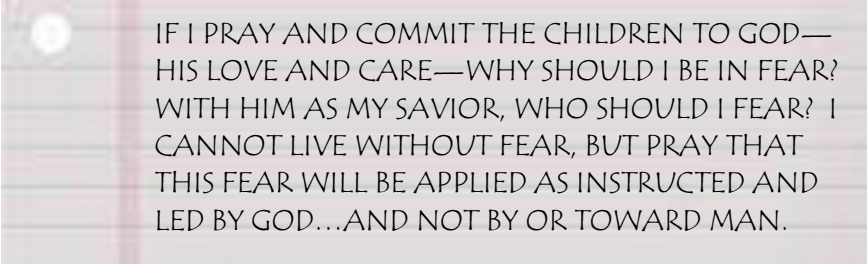
TO COMPOUND THE STRONGHOLD IS THE NOTION THAT THE LEVEL OR DEGREE OF FEAR IS COMMENSURATE WITH MY EFFORT AT BEING (OR TRYING TO BE) A PARENT; AS THOUGH, I AM NOT WORRIED OR FEARFUL, I DO NOT CARE. OF COURSE, THIS NOTION IS WRONG AND STILL ANOTHER EXAMPLE OR INDICATOR OF GOD'S LOVE NOT YET FULLY ACCEPTED OR EMBRACED...

Care about what...or whom? Care about my children, my family; but to care is to bear some cost—of attempting to reconcile what has been lost. An element of the cost is anger; and anger that I want to believe is righteous—an indignation in the wrong committed toward my children.

²⁴⁷ From the Federalist Papers, Essay No. 3.

²⁴⁸ “Tour de Force”: an expression meaning an exceptional creative achievement—the condition of never being wrong, at cause, or at fault. The problem with pride is that no wrongdoing is admitted, acknowledged or accepted by the prideful; thus, the “target” (or opposition) is in err by default.

Still, I pray and write:



IF I PRAY AND COMMIT THE CHILDREN TO GOD—
HIS LOVE AND CARE—WHY SHOULD I BE IN FEAR?
WITH HIM AS MY SAVIOR, WHO SHOULD I FEAR? I
CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT FEAR, BUT PRAY THAT
THIS FEAR WILL BE APPLIED AS INSTRUCTED AND
LED BY GOD...AND NOT BY OR TOWARD MAN.

For-(e)-bearing-Father

The prefix of “for-(e)-bearing” considers the meaning of both: “forebear”, or a descendent; and “forbear”, or to resist or refrain from.... As described in the section, “Former-Father”, “people” are the primary evidence in the ancestry of fathers and, as simple as that reasoning, is the argument that my children are the evidence that I remain a father. I am a descendent of my children—a relation that cannot be removed by law or *The State*. My role is naturally certain by evidence of my children; but my responsibility to be socially-engaged has been thwarted indefinitely. The later of these two, “socially-engaged”, has been diluted by divorce and criminalized as a consequence. If I were not a non-custodial, the possibility of such mal-treatment would be less plausible and probable. Unilateral or no-fault divorce destroyed my family by dismembering my socially-engaged fatherhood.

Behind the destruction is the “dual effect” (of absolute authority and no responsibility). Imagine such a position; where authority is absolute and yet, regardless of the effect and consequence, responsibility is disregarded, deflected or denied. I think of such one-sided circumstances in my own experience as a step-parent and non-custodial: a guardian of some degree that may have full responsibility (for the children) but have little, if any, authority to parent. The understood frustration is the imbalance of the two requirements.

The observed and experienced deterrent for a defendant is the opposite (imbalance)—or what I call *neo-narcissism*.²⁴⁹ The

²⁴⁹ This term, *neo-narcissism*” was described previously to suggest that an institution personifies a character trait unhealthy in the sense that one’s true self is being sheltered rather than sought under the guise that *might makes right* regardless of conduct, credibility or consequences.

defendant²⁵⁰ is daunted in the paradox that the conduct of the courts is convoluted with *due process* (the presumed rights of the defendant) by the common practice of plea bargaining. More information on plea bargaining is provided in “Father-Files”.

The criminalization of a non-custodial in not uncommon; such extreme measures of the divorce and post-divorce process can be described as common practice. Stephen Baskerville ²⁵¹ describes this consequence of no-fault in the article, “Divorced from Reality.”

Unilateral divorce inescapably involves government agents forcibly removing legally innocent people from their homes, seizing their property, and separating them from their children. It inherently abrogates not only the inviolability of marriage but the very concept of private life.

By far the most serious consequences involve children, who have become the principal weapons of the divorce machinery. Invariably the first action of a divorce court, once a divorce is filed, is to separate the children from one of their parents, usually the father. Until this happens, no one in the machinery acquires any power or earnings. The first principle and first action of divorce court therefore: Remove the father.

This happens even if the father is innocent of any legal wrongdoing and is simply sitting in his own home minding his own business. *The State* seizes control of his children with no burden of proof to justify why.

²⁵⁰ The use of “defendant” applies more to criminal court—though still, a consequence or condition of divorce and the imbalance of authority.

²⁵¹ Stephen Baskerville: Baskerville is widely recognized as “the leading authority” (in the words of columnist Paul Craig Roberts) on the politics of divorce, custody, and family courts. He is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Patrick Henry College and past president of the American Coalition for Fathers and Children (ACFC.org).

The above “process” is not precisely what occurred in my case(s); but, in my years of “education” in this area, the *presumption of guilt* is acceptable as standard protocol—where the authority of *The State* stands with one...against the other. Once the parent is removed from his family, he is vulnerable to all variety of allegations; and in my case(s), this “variety” was extended to other members of the paternal family.

Allegations lodged during the divorce process had no substantive evidence; by word or statement alone, the plaintiff and a neighbor (at the time) attempted a ruse. While “the accused” were exonerated (by virtue of the resulting unsupervised visitation with my children), the use of such unsubstantiated allegations was (or has been) part of my “education”. Observation and experience is enough to conclude that the plaintiff, in such cases, can make or carry-out false testimony with impunity—as a condition that simply encourages the behavior as a “de-vice”, tactic or tool.

Notwithstanding my unqualified assessment of the courts (as I am without formal education in law), a layperson’s understanding is that justice cannot be served when truth is of no interest and account. The courts’ conduct in the described tolerance of false allegations is enough evidence to substantiate that justice is irrelevant. Such conduct is executed...and excused—often before the conventional parent is “educated”. Tactics long-deployed in *the divorce industry*²⁵² become the tools for the one parent to undermine the other—the *dismantling of the mantel of responsibility*.

²⁵² Recall *the divorce industry*: such organizations and their representatives have constructed careers on the demise of families. Books, training and other resources represent the tools used in the process that enable and encourage divorce—profiteering from the demise of marriage.

On such a “de-vice” or tactic, Melanie Phillips²⁵³ writes:

It is remarkable that such a grossly unjust system has not been noticed. One explanation is that no one knows what happens...until it happens to them—and even then, they can’t believe it. Any objections are dismissed as implausible.²⁵⁴

To argue that such tactics are not oriented to gender would be to dismiss the data. On this condition—this imbalance—Sylvia Ann Hewlett²⁵⁵ and Cornel West²⁵⁶ write:

In recent years, fathers have been the subject of a tidal wave of critical thinking and punitive action.... If the past few decades have seen a systematic war against parents, the battles waged against fathers have been particularly ugly and fierce.²⁵⁷

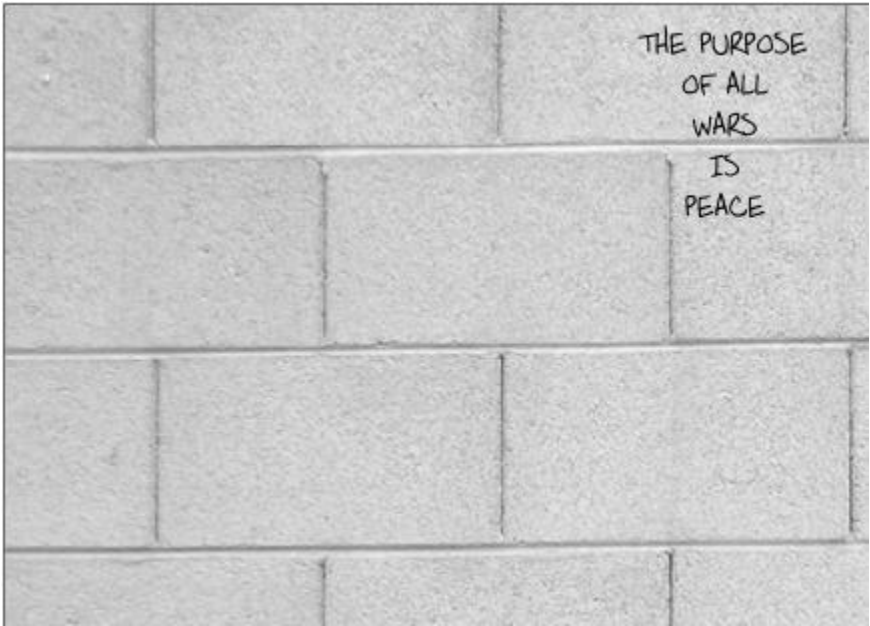
²⁵³ Melanie Phillips: a journalist and author. She is best known for her controversial column about political and social issues; and is considered as a defender of authentic liberal values against the attempt to destroy western culture from within.

²⁵⁴ Melanie Phillips, *The Sex-Change Society, Feminised Britain and the Neutered Male* (London: Social Market Foundation. 1999), p. 282.

²⁵⁵ Sylvia Ann Hewlett: an economist, consultant, lecturer, and expert on gender and workplace issues.

²⁵⁶ Cornel West: an American philosopher, author, critic, actor, and civil rights activist.

²⁵⁷ Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West, *The War Against Parents: What We Can Do for America’s Beleaguered Moms and Dads* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 173.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 32 - No source or interpretation is available but consider the words of President Eisenhower: "I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than our governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that *one of these days* governments had better get out of the way and let them have it."

The “battles” that the authors describe is indeed an assault on the family; not just on the causalities of the “tactics long-deployed”, but the conventional family in general. When no-fault entered the states,²⁵⁸ the convention of a contract marriage was undermined—the consequence of which was the first wave of skyrocketing divorce; then followed by a second wave—a secondary consequence—of declining marriage per capita. For the culture at large, the destruction of divorce has been (and will be) very costly indeed. *The State* is complicit in this maltreatment of *sacred trust*; but the *dual effect* remains in the way of reasoning—or accepting such responsibility.

An anecdote may be applicable to the dilemma (of the *dual effect*): while surfing the Web for information on a related topic, I came across the Website of a divorce attorney in the southern region of my state. In much content is his expressed view of the cause for divorce: he comments that divorce (or law) is not the problem; the problem is “bad marriages.” Entertaining his view for the sake of making a point, I have to ask the question: “What is a “bad marriage””? For the states that have adopted unilateral divorce, a “bad marriage” is realistically any marriage—because any marriage is a candidate for divorce under such convenient and uncontestable conditions. The institution of marriage has been so weakened as to make marriage and family notably at risk—the viability of this institution devalued by the inflation of individual rights...regardless of the costs to the community, the economy and our culture.

My interpretation of the perspective in the above (anecdote) is representative of a larger system; that is, the determination to deflect attention away from the cause—the source of the problem—and toward some symptoms. What lies beneath this

²⁵⁸ The use of “state” to signify the majority of states; no-fault began in California and spread from state to state during the 1970’s.

effort (to deflect attention) is a lucrative source of income that, in the debate over the destruction of divorce, is rationalized as the solution rather than the problem. How often does *The State arrive* or respond as the source of the solution...to its induced problems? They surely made the weather²⁵⁹ ...but do they admit that they made it rain?



Blocks of Saint Augustine 33 - No source or interpretation is available; but with some thought and reading, I consider charity to be voluntary giving (with no conditions). A definition of justice: equal treatment under social and legal conditions which include a collection of known rules regarding allowable and non-allowable actions that will lead to unequal positions with no-one knowing in advance.

True or real charity does not impose “social and legal conditions”; it is very different from justice and, therefore, is no substitute.

²⁵⁹ Referring to an earlier quote from the film *Cold Mountain*.

Fore-bearing-Family

An article that bears a similar name to the noted book by Francis Schaeffer, “How Shall We Live” offers insight on charity in family. The author of this article from *The Freeman* writes:

...proper charity treats people with dignity and directs them toward independence rather than dependence. Examples from fatherhood (or motherhood) are appropriate: The right goal for a father is not to give his children everything they want or to see that they are blissfully happy all the time. Rather, his goal is to help his children flourish as independent, responsible people in an imperfect world.²⁶⁰

Divorce represents the single largest threat to marriage and family—and for that reason, is warranted for repeated concerns and commentary. What has not been necessarily described is that the intrusion (or invitation...) of *The State* presents what is sometimes called a “moral hazard”.²⁶¹ If a witness is held responsible for their testimony (as to the veracity or validity), the submission of testimony would be with accuracy and precision—rather than with intention as described previously. Courts may excuse such protocol or presumed conduct as inapplicable to “family” court, but such an excuse is ludicrous.

The dilemma that a parent sometimes faces is realistically *the best interest* of the children. In such consideration is the decision to not divorce—on the basis of the increased risks placed or posed on the children. The parent that presumes some “advantage”—by which precedence raises the probability of sole-

²⁶⁰ Paul Cleveland, “How Shall We Live?” (*The Freeman*, April 2010).

²⁶¹ Moral hazard arises because an individual or institution does not take the full consequences and responsibilities of its doings, and therefore has a tendency to act less carefully than it alternately would, leaving another party to hold some responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Given the liberty to say anything—without reprisal—the witness will say anything....

custody—does not consider the consequences in the same light (again, a *moral hazard*). As the so-called winner by decree, this parent becomes the exclusive “owner” of the children (excluding that taken by *the divorce industry*). As to “the best interest”, *words are still cheap*. In such a dilemma, “the wife is the *moving-party* in divorce actions seven times out of eight”, according to David Chambers²⁶² in *Making Fathers Pay: the Enforcement of Child Support*.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FOREBEAR AND FORBEAR? THE FIRST MEANS A DESCENDENT OR ANCESTOR AND THE LATER MEANS TO REFRAIN OR CONTROL ONESELF UNDER PROVOCATION. THE TWO-FOLD MEANING—OR INTERJECTION OF “E” TO THIS TITLE—DRAWS ON BOTH THE NEED OR PRIVILEGE TO LOOK TO THE FAMILY (OR ROOTS) FOR HELP IN DOMESTIC DUTIES; AND, SECONDLY, TO REMAIN AT PEACE WITH EVERYONE AS MUCH AS IT IS POSSIBLE.

HAVING HEARD OR BEING AWARE OF ONLY A FEW OF THE PAST FATHERS OF MY FAMILY AND, IN THAT, A FEW STORIES; I CANNOT ALWAYS OR EVEN FREQUENTLY DRAW FROM THEIR QUALITIES OR PERSONALITIES. I REMEMBER A FEW EXPERIENCES OR OBSERVATIONS OF MY MATERNAL GRANDFATHER—HIS CHILD-LIKE ANTICS AS WELL AS A COLLECTION OF STORIES THAT MAY HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT EXAGGERATED LIKE A YARN. OTHERWISE, I AM LIMITED TO SECOND-HAND STORIES THAT TEND TO ACCENTUATE THEIR QUALITIES OVER OTHER CHARACTERISTICS. STILL, THESE EXPERIENCES AND STORIES ARE MORE THAN SOME HAVE TO DRAW FROM, AND WITH THIS SITUATION, SHOULD I TURN TO MY ANCESTORS FOR HELP? YES, I THINK I SHOULD AND KNOW THAT I DO ON OCCASION.

²⁶² David Chambers, *Making Fathers Pay: the Enforcement of Child Support* (University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 29

Forbearing-Family

Family is the central concern. Divorce is the threat so imposed on families as part of the larger assault on the family. The dilemma of a parent regarding the *best interest* of children is derived from his role and responsibility in the family: the choice to remain married is **not** without his want for happiness—but the choice that regards the *best interest* of the children too. He (or she) is sacrificing, as parent's do... for their children's sake.

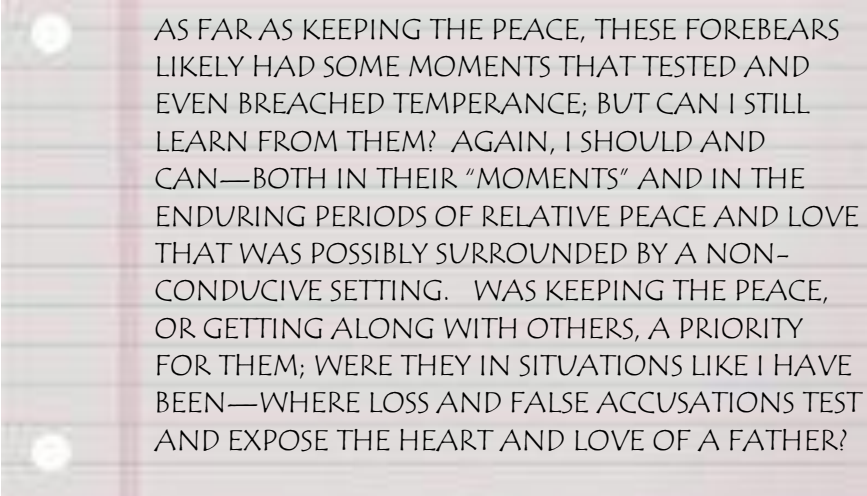
Being a part of a family is to sacrifice (or make sacrifices); to love and to forgive has its costs. Reconciliation and restoration is always the preferably position to all relations—as *anything else would be uncivilized*. But when one or both (or all) deny or reject restoration—or refuse to make further sacrifices—the family is weakened and divided: a small government at risk of faltering or fragmenting—the fabric of our culture further unraveled....

Divorce is far more common in contemporary life than in the bygone years of my grandparents. What has changed is perhaps not so easily determined (as to the collective reasons for the rise in divorce). Already described however, uncontested divorce is a cause in the effect of skyrocketing divorce among other secondary, social problems. The cause & effect is convincing when examined from reports and data; but among the *special interests* (behind no-fault), such correlation is of no regard or relevance in the presence of the described *neo-narcissism*.

Without knowing of the intimate details of my descendant's marriages, I am thankful that they were willing to sacrifice. As inequitable as their lives or living may have been by comparison, they must have been willing to sacrifice much toward sustaining the family. For those who have passed-on, our present culture—as reflected in marriage and family—would be most disheartening. As for the laws complicit in this cultural morass, some discussion and understanding might be helpful—simply

because of the radical changes that have taken place in the institution and meaning of marriage.

To my knowledge, none of my family had to be dragged into a court to sacrifice for the sanctioned happiness of their spouse; no one had to be legally prevented from having contact with their children through spurious testimony and ignominious injunctions. To share such stories (with them) would probably be met by disbelief; that either I was being untruthful or the law has become lawless toward families. If convinced of my earnestness, they might reply, “Shit, it is raining...*cats and dogs!*” Though no longer living, they are on my mind and in my letter:



AS FAR AS KEEPING THE PEACE, THESE FOREBEARS LIKELY HAD SOME MOMENTS THAT TESTED AND EVEN BREACHED TEMPERANCE; BUT CAN I STILL LEARN FROM THEM? AGAIN, I SHOULD AND CAN—BOTH IN THEIR “MOMENTS” AND IN THE ENDURING PERIODS OF RELATIVE PEACE AND LOVE THAT WAS POSSIBLY SURROUNDED BY A NON-CONDUCTIVE SETTING. WAS KEEPING THE PEACE, OR GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS, A PRIORITY FOR THEM; WERE THEY IN SITUATIONS LIKE I HAVE BEEN—WHERE LOSS AND FALSE ACCUSATIONS TEST AND EXPOSE THE HEART AND LOVE OF A FATHER?



Blocks of Saint Augustine 34 - No source or interpretation is available; but consider the words of the Donald Demarco: Where strong virtues are lacking, the vices that rush in to fill the void often assume the mask of virtue. We are not born virtuous. Nature does not steep us in good habits. Nor does moral development take place by means of cultural osmosis. Virtues must be pursued. It is precisely the vigorous pursuit, acquisition, and cultivation of virtues that enable us to conquer vice.

Remembering-Ralph

In the weeks to come, I met with my public defender for a second and final time (before the hearing). Conveying the “terms” of the prosecution, he explained the offering to plead no contest.²⁶³ The assessment that I could not win was because of the described intention of the prosecution to use the in-court testimony of my oldest children—an intention that, as with their present written testimony, was unconscionable.

I have thought much about the actions of the court—the practice and proposed intention of using my children’s testimonies. In my thoughts and writing is the realization that the courts (or prosecution) can stoop to new lows in their expedience: the decision and intention of using a young person to testify against a parent disparate for over eight years, has no merit—and cannot be reasoned as either justified (as legitimate evidence) let alone beneficial to the young people. Yet, the intention was described to suggest that the judgment would involve prison—the outcome or consequence of the children’s testimony and the judge’s verdict.

How could they do such a thing: how could the courts leverage a parent’s children to testify against him when, as described, they have had no contact or communication with him since the oldest was eleven? Now, over eight years later, my children are being used—with the approval of their mother—to testify against me. The degree to which a court will evidently stoop to prosecute is beneath contempt; it represents actions by the prosecution that is condemnable by moral and ethical standards. Once again, rationalization was at work or, in a phrase, “Get-r-done.”

²⁶³ Plead no contest: a case or plea where clients who feel they would not win at charges, but assert their innocence.

Ralph might think this story to be unbelievable; and if my paternal grandfather had lived long enough to know me, he would have grieved over circumstances beyond our control. Ralph was more familiar with the *plight of a parent* than I care to know; the few stories that I have heard are enough to know that he loved his family enough to make great sacrifices—both in his work ethic and in his tolerance of a troubled marriage. Ralph could appreciate the comfort of a supporting spouse, because he was acutely aware of the *conflict and contention* that makes such conditions impossible. Where his understanding might be tested however, is in the means made available through the application of a child’s testimony against his parent.

The basis for such methods is typically the protection of the “victims”; thus, the courts must intercede and ensure, as possible, that the designated victims are protected from the designated “perpetrator”. Once the cast has been determined, the courts can *go to work* as protector and guardian. The concept of such public care sounds charitable, but the methods and means are the matter-at-hand. If I could figuratively remove myself from the cast of this once-family, I might be able to consider the court’s conduct in a better frame-of-mind; as it is however, the courts remain complicit in the dissolution and dismemberment of my marriage and family...followed by the creation of a criminal.

The story has been told that Ralph once decked a man who approached his family on a downtown street; apparently looking for a handout, the man was met with resistance on more the manner rather than the need of his effort. I don’t mention the story to suggest that Ralph was right—but only that he was reacting to the naturally and socially-driven desire to protect his family. Ironically, he had more instances where his effort to provide and protect was threatened from within—rather than outside—the family setting. The man was met with what Ralph

understood as *the right thing* to do; but had it been a woman, restraint and reason would have been the course...regardless of who is right.

In his time, Ralph was familiar with sacrifice. He lived through the Great Depression, the decline of small farms, and the migration sometimes necessary for work and sustenance. Moving from south to north Alabama is not significant today; but in his time, relocation from family was more significant and serious. Still, he set-out to find opportunity in the industry of the emerging south and, in the course, found marriage and family.

I don't think Ralph would have ever given a second thought to a court so empowered to eliminate a father for no other reason than the want of a wife or the will of a mother. "Get-r-done" had no application to such nonsense. It was a different time and, though prejudice prevailed in the races, it was not prevalent in the public forum of marriage and family. Individual responsibility probably prevailed over individual rights—as the interpretation of "rights" has been grossly confused in public welfare. Ralph would have been just as quick to offer a hand-up (to the man)—had his desire to protect not superseded his naturally and socially-driven effort at community.

Having left the farm was no excuse not to grow things; thus, Ralph kept a garden and a few other affiliations of the agrarian lifestyle. This effort and his employment—sometimes three jobs—was his way of expressing his love and his fears. He was not *too big* to express his fears and not too proud to admit his wrong; but he was too good to allow *conflict and contention* to rule (and ruin) his role in marriage and family. Had he faced the courts of today however, being too good would be of no account. Yes, "it was a different time."

Remembering Ralph, I write:

FROM MY PATERNAL GRANDFATHER CAME A STRONG WORK ETHIC AND AN ARDENT DEVOTION TO HIS FAMILY; FROM THE OTHER CAME THE PLAYFUL SPIRIT TO ENGAGE THE GRANDKIDS ON THEIR LEVEL AND TO HUMOROUSLY CARRY THE SAME INTO HIS OWN SET OF ANTICS. THIS PAST (OR LIFE OF MY FOREBEARS) SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN BUT, IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE, HELD IN RESERVE—AND PRESERVED FOR MY OWN KIDS IF POSSIBLE. THEY WILL NEVER KNOW THESE MEN (OR HAVE BENEFITED FROM A CONSISTENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR GRANDFATHER); STILL, TH VALUE OF KNOWING HIM (OR THEM) THROUGH "A FEW EXPERIENCES OR OBSERVATIONS" OR "SECOND-HAND STORIES" CANNOT BE FULLY ASSESSED...



Blocks of Saint Augustine 35 - No source or interpretation is available; but, once again, the same source that inspired the Saint may serve to enlighten the saint. Proverbs is a possible place to begin: A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense (chapter 19).

Risking-Rose

The expression, “looking through rose-colored glasses”, is the idiom that may suggest the acts of idiocy; the habit or condition of viewing (or reviewing) the past with some exaggerated or *Pollyanna* perspective. Must it be a naturally-driven desire to view the “better angels²⁶⁴” of our past, those places and persons; or is it more prudent to put glasses aside and instead, identify with, or delegate, *the demons*?

The *better angels* may be the *higher-road*, but it is costly—involving great sacrifice and risks. This *road* is not the easy route—love and forgiveness—but it may be the inevitable way to deny *the demons*. As the Proverbs are so worth remembering: “A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.”²⁶⁵ Still, this *road* has its bumps and potholes—so much that cannot be anticipated with even the sharpest reaction.

The problems (or a problem) might again be analogous to war; where the “cast” of who and what is goodness is not so clear: one side may launch an attack or offense, though technically *the victim*; a body, somewhat like the United Nations, may misjudge intentions or, for that matter, may manufacture a motive or movement. In the smoke of the battle, the determination of who started it—or who is at fault—is not left to the losing army. Privilege and perspective is historically left to the victor.

From one who knew war, Dwight Eisenhower offers some keen insight. He said (regarding a defense on war or attack), that the problem is “How far you can go without destroying from within what you are trying to defend from without?” Drawing attention to the present day, the threat of terrorism—and to protect the homeland—takes its toll. When such threats (of

²⁶⁴ The term “better angels” to suggest the goodness, as measured with purpose and practices, and as planted or positioned through a compelling force named “God”.

²⁶⁵ Proverbs 19:11.

terrorism) are combined with ulterior motives to control (the citizenry), the possible outcome is the destruction of civil rights. Ironically, the determination to defend has become (or been used) for the motives to manipulate: if the motives are not earnest (or honest), the outcome may be damaged by the deception; hence, “destroying from within”.

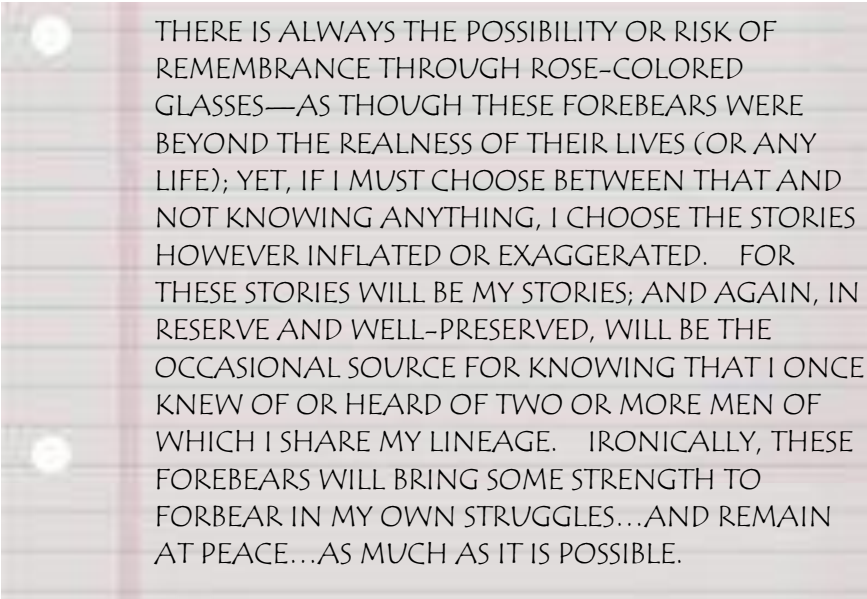
Conflict and contention between expressed and purposed motives is in keeping with Milton Friedman’s description of the “unholy coalition”. The truth eventually surfaces but, by then, “destroying” may be a foregone conclusion. Court conduct that is couched in the *best interest* of the children can conceive and complete the “destroying” of convention. Though not specifically in reference to war, another quote by President Eisenhower:

There's no tragedy in life like the death of a child. Things never get back to the way they were.

Choosing the *better angels* of the *high-road*, I must accept that **my** children died on October 10, 2000—casualties of an unjust war. As children, they will never be (and have not been) allowed to be a part of their family—but with deception as a method—have been predisposed to the risks of “purposed motives” that do not have their *best interest* at heart.

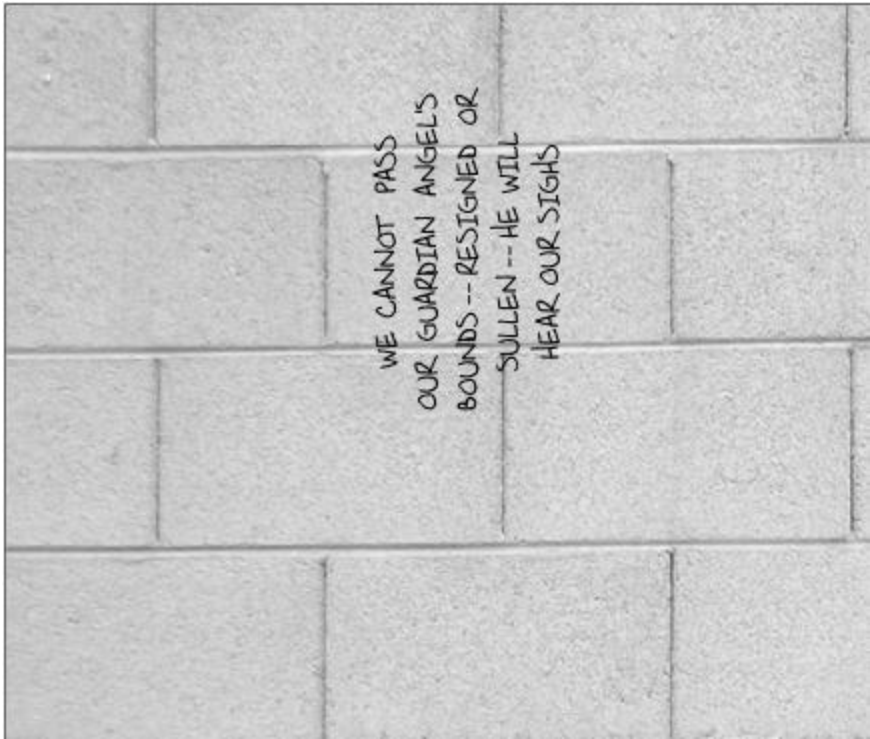
In keeping with the ironies of war is the matter of violence and abuse: as the cast is determined in divorce, once-acceptable and even commendable conduct is *re-manufactured* as malicious. Loving words and caring correspondence is not about content or intention; rather, each and all is subject to the court’s claims and convenience. In a somewhat Orwellian oversight, what was good is now bad—made so by nothing more than raw authority. The rules have changed and, in summary, have nothing to do with the children’s present or future *best interests*. Actions of naturally and socially-driven care are cause for *a crisis*; enter the courts to save

the day. But though children are gone, my family lives on ²⁶⁶—as does my writing:



THERE IS ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY OR RISK OF REMEMBRANCE THROUGH ROSE-COLORED GLASSES—AS THOUGH THESE FOREBEARS WERE BEYOND THE REALNESS OF THEIR LIVES (OR ANY LIFE); YET, IF I MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN THAT AND NOT KNOWING ANYTHING, I CHOOSE THE STORIES HOWEVER INFLATED OR EXAGGERATED. FOR THESE STORIES WILL BE MY STORIES; AND AGAIN, IN RESERVE AND WELL-PRESERVED, WILL BE THE OCCASIONAL SOURCE FOR KNOWING THAT I ONCE KNEW OF OR HEARD OF TWO OR MORE MEN OF WHICH I SHARE MY LINEAGE. IRONICALLY, THESE FOREBEARS WILL BRING SOME STRENGTH TO FORBEAR IN MY OWN STRUGGLES...AND REMAIN AT PEACE...AS MUCH AS IT IS POSSIBLE.

²⁶⁶ Emphasis must be on the fact that my children (as adults) are alive; “the children” died in the sense that I, as a parent, will never know them beyond the day of divorce....



Blocks of Saint Augustine 36 - No source or interpretation is available.
More the matter of charge to never give in!

Churchill said: "Never...in nothing, great or small, large or petty— never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."

Future-Father

I purposely delayed this last chapter in order that prior chapters had time to really *sink-in*; preferably then, this title would give the best and final—a summation and some semblance of my views of the future.

Recently, I was reminded on two occasions of the expected outlook (of life) for the Believer: a vision of hope that rests entirely on the Savior—the resurrection, the life and the life to come. These two occasions were Sunday’s church service and a video on a new found Website bearing the name “Acton”. The Psalms (and David) offer more to encourage the sojourner in the present life: *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*²⁶⁷

When my daughter was young, she adored horses; perhaps a toy or plastic horse, was the initiator, but over several years, she collected many such toys along with books and other stuff. Seldom a sighting (or mention) of horses occurs without the memory of her passion and pre-occupation, She so adored the creatures that she may very well had limited her diet to oats and exercise to a gallop. As I recall her motions, she did mimic a gallop at times and, as least for year, took riding lessons. She was a horse in her mind and her heart.

Where her toys have gone, I do not know? But what is certain is that she once had “those toys” (or figurines) and she once adored them...and the animals they represent. I once experienced her “passion and pre-occupation” so as to be reminded of her, of them. Until she came along, horses were of little interest; but she made a difference that will last a lifetime. Because of her (horse interest), I can now distinguish a few of the breeds. My daughter taught me much about horses; but if I had been so fortunate as to have retained my role as her father, I may

²⁶⁷ Psalm 46:1.

have eventually forgotten this part of her life and mine. As it is however, I will never forget; I will never forget what has passed because of the special interest of one of my special people.

Similar memories and associations hold for my other children too; my choice to describe my daughter (and horses) is largely on impulse, but also to emphasize that sons and daughters represent an equal but unique place in the heart of a father. His desire to care and to protect extends to both and all; but for a daughter, he may retain some service of the guard at the watchtower²⁶⁸...against a force so compelled and convinced to do more than remove him from service and duty.

My daughter was one of two children that testified in the charge of aggravated stalking (testimony in form of a written affidavit). The setting (of the testimony) involved her travels with her marching band in the spring of 2008; and my travels through Atlanta on a weekend return from Charleston. I purposely—but not maliciously—met her bus at the world-famous Varsity on North Avenue. Amid the stampede of those hungry for hamburgers, I passed her on my way to the bus: there, I left a backpack, with her name on it, containing letters and monies. As to the letters: an offer to my oldest to assist with his career plans; and, for the lover of horses, and offer of a laptop computer for her sixteenth birthday (to go with the backpack).

The “ignominious injunction” was not forgotten; but the setting was not Florida either; and “the law”—being a state law—meant that I was granted the freedom to see my children outside of Florida. I did not violate a law...based on jurisdiction.

Her testimony had a mixed message: on the one hand, she said she feared that I would attack her (and her classmates); but on the other hand, she wasn't sure that she saw me—or recognized her “biological father” until she returned to the bus

²⁶⁸ Recall the removal of the guard from the watchtower....

and was given the backpack. From the long-instilled programming of the children, she expressed the kind of emotions (or fear) that could be useful to the courts; but her full-page description also had moments that elicited a kind of expected quality as though to say: “I was just trying to enjoy the trip.”²⁶⁹

I would think that children (or young people) on the bus (or, for that matter, on any similar trip) did not concern themselves with the possibility of an encounter with a parent; they just wanted to be able to go and enjoy the events. For my children, such opportunity—and life in general—is plagued by a purpose that uses fear to control them or, more specifically, to keep them from their other parent. Planning such excursions must be on scale with covert operations: if the risk of an encounter is too great, an alternative or two must be formed to avert “the enemy”.

My oldest is musically talented; he qualified in both his junior and senior year to play in the Teal Drum & Bugle Corps. His senior year was cut short however, as the band’s tour included several college campuses in my residential area. Above all, these young folks must be kept free and clear of any semblance of their former lives amid their paternal family—with or without the opportunity to pursue their passion. I presumed that my son was offered some alternatives too; perhaps a *sweet deal* to help him accept that his withdrawal was necessary for the cause.

All the children are part of it: they have been enlisted in a never-ending effort to *live a lie*—when what they actually need is to be loved in the true sense of what love is.... A doting mother is not necessarily wrong; but I’m not describing such well-intended purpose, but instead, the behavior of one marked by much risk-taking and the raw abuse of authority. Yes, she will...and has...and will again...because it works!

²⁶⁹ The testimony has some light and amusing content; she referred to the restaurant as the “world famous Varsity”, for example.

In the final chapter of his book, Francis Schaeffer describes “alternatives” of a society marked by “improvised values”—or what he described more precisely as the passion and pursuit for “personal peace and prosperity²⁷⁰”. In a description so fitting to America (as he intended), he writes:

Let us hasten to say the freedom of the individual is not magic in the countries with a Reformation background either. As the memory of the Christian base grows ever dimmer, freedom will disintegrate in these countries as well. The system will not simply go on, divorced from its founding roots. As the drift will tend to be the same, no matter what political party is voted in. When the principles are gone, there remains only expediency at any price.²⁷¹

What happens when these “impoverished values” are put in jeopardy—“personal peace and prosperity” at risk or, even worse, *in crisis*? The erosion of civil rights and emerging central control is already underway and, as to the future, further moral and financial bankruptcy. In this context, he brings to our thinking?

With such values, will men stand for their liberties? Will they not give up their liberties...so long as their personal peace and prosperity is not challenged²⁷²...?

²⁷⁰ “Personal peace and prosperity” is the author’s description of priorities for the *present day*, Western culture. He writes: “Personal peace means just to be let alone, not to be troubled by the troubles of other people, whether across the world or across the city...Personal peace means to have my personal life pattern undisturbed in my lifetime of my children and grandchildren.” By “prosperity” to mean: affluence and an ever-increasing standard of living...to include entitlements. In the passion and pursuit of “personal peace and prosperity” is an eroding of principles too. With principles in decline, what happens to freedom, liberty and justice?

²⁷¹ Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We then Live?*, p. 250

²⁷² Schaeffer, p. 205.

...and then he responds to his question:

I believe that the majority of the *silent majority*...will sustain the loss of liberties without raising their voices as long as their own lifestyles are not threatened.²⁷³

In this setting is the politic of *our day*; and in the period (of the 1970's), Francis Schaeffer writes:

Politics has become **not** a matter of ideals—increasingly men and women are not stirred by the values of liberty and truth—but of supplying a constituency with a frosting of personal peace and affluence. They know that voices will not be raised as long as people have these things, or at least an allusion of them.

From a much-more recent publication (though citing a much dated writing), Sheldon Richman's²⁷⁴ article, "What Sort of Despotism Democratic Nations Have to Fear? He elaborates on Alexis de Tocqueville's²⁷⁵ *Democracy in America*.

He (Alexis de Tocqueville) notes that despotism²⁷⁶ in a constitutional republic would be different from what it was in the Roman Empire. How so? [I]t would be more extensive and more mild; it would degrade men²⁷⁷ without tormenting them.

²⁷³ Schaeffer, p. 227.

²⁷⁴ Sheldon Richman: an American political writer and academic, best known for his advocacy of libertarianism.

²⁷⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville: (1805-1859) a French political thinker and historian best known for his *Democracy in America*; he explored the effects of the rising equality of social conditions on the individual and the state in western societies.

²⁷⁶ Despotism: tyranny, absolute rule.

²⁷⁷ To "...degrade men...": consider the observation of jail or incarceration described previously as depleting...rather than depriving....

What Schaeffer calls “pressure”, Sheldon calls “power”. “Power”, “pressure” and “force” could be used similarly (except in physics). Physical science aside—but political *science front & center*—Sheldon continues his commentary on *Democracy in America*:

Above the race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications and to watch over their fate. The power is absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent if, like that authority, it's object was to prepare men for manhood....

But its “object” is nothing of the sort, as he continues to elaborate on *Democracy in America*:

It seeks, on the contrary, to keep them in perpetual childhood ²⁷⁸...For their happiness such a government willingly labors, but chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness; it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principle concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides the inheritances: what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?

The point in continuing with Francis Schaeffer's book, and introducing Sheldon Richman's commentary on *Democracy in America*, is to draw some association between the story of a “Future Felon” and the bigger institution, *The State*. Before bringing this association to some completion however, I return to the last events of jail and my conviction.

²⁷⁸ The description of “perpetual childhood”: remember from the description of jail, “detainee daycare”. In my recollection, the one place where I sensed dignified treatment was with the prison ministry; yes, they treated us like people (not like children).



Blocks of Saint Augustine 37 - No source or interpretation is available. Our culture is a reflection of our individual lives, our principles, morals, ethics, beliefs, and wants.

“A people that value its privileges above its principles soon lose both.”

“There is nothing wrong with America that faith, love of freedom, intelligence, and energy of her citizens cannot cure.”

- Dwight Eisenhower

Challenging-Charges

The last letter was written after being released from jail, but it was considered necessary in view of what I learned about *plea bargaining*, “no contest”, and the supposed status of “not-guilty” described and documented in my case.

Recall that the misdemeanor, the violation of probation, was dropped as part of the *plea bargaining*: several continuances and a series of errors on the part of the prosecution; yet, the violation—created *out of thin air*—finally came to an end. Besides being further “educated” in the conduct of the court, I was reminded of the *clear and present danger* of *The State* so able to issue a warrant without cause (or evidence). Could they do it again? As long as they create the weather, they can make it rain.

But a mere misdemeanor was not what the prosecution obviously wanted; a VOP was not enough punishment to *solace the victim*. Thus, the “small-change” was given-up for the prize: a conditional conviction, a third degree felony of aggravated stalking was *The State's* offer and objective.

According to the public defender, this offer did not determine guilt but, on the sentencing of five years of probation, meant that, if I violate the probation, I could go to prison. Again—and for emphasis—the conviction was “not-guilty” according to record and according to documentation.

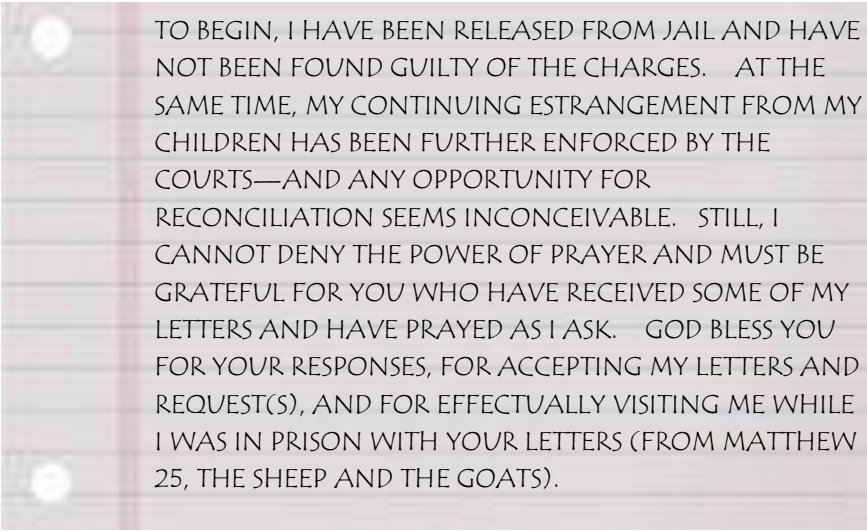
But record and documentation can be cheap (just like words) and, in the months following my release, I would discover that my criminal record posted one conviction of the felony of aggravated stalking; or in other words, I am indeed guilty and, thus, have been denied re-employment on multiple occasions in my profession ostensibly on the criminal background check.

Whether a policy, practice or protocol; this sentencing—a product of *plea bargaining*—is designed to mislead the defendant in the contradiction of the documented sentence and the actual

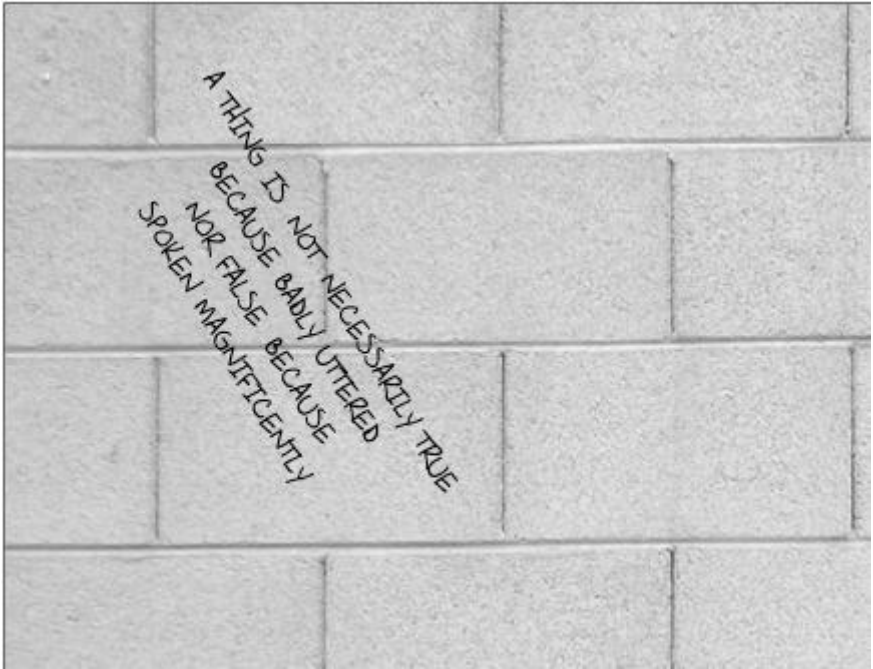
outcome of a criminal background check. To say emphatically that a lie has occurred would suggest that the *dual effect* is uncharacteristically able to accept responsibility. In order to identify who has been wronged, someone must take responsibility. But that someone has not...in a long time; and, as to the courts or prosecution, that someone is actually something—which brings before me the *dual effect* once again.

Ben Martin remains most relevant as he suggested that “A legislature can trample a man’s rights just as easily as a king can”; but he probably intended “legislature” to represent other branches of the government...and other levels of *The State* too. Once *The State* has intruded (or been invited...) into the family, *Might makes Right—anything else would be uncivilized.*

Many would agree that *The State* is a *poor nanny* or exhibits personifications of narcissism; but **not** many have probably experienced the firsthand accounts of authority so able to *create a criminal*. Yes, when expediency and pragmatism are at play, reason and logic gives way to ridiculous and unrighteous conduct of those who both create the weather and then make it rain.



TO BEGIN, I HAVE BEEN RELEASED FROM JAIL AND HAVE NOT BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF THE CHARGES. AT THE SAME TIME, MY CONTINUING ESTRANGEMENT FROM MY CHILDREN HAS BEEN FURTHER ENFORCED BY THE COURTS—AND ANY OPPORTUNITY FOR RECONCILIATION SEEMS INCONCEIVABLE. STILL, I CANNOT DENY THE POWER OF PRAYER AND MUST BE GRATEFUL FOR YOU WHO HAVE RECEIVED SOME OF MY LETTERS AND HAVE PRAYED AS I ASK. GOD BLESS YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSES, FOR ACCEPTING MY LETTERS AND REQUEST(S), AND FOR EFFECTUALLY VISITING ME WHILE I WAS IN PRISON WITH YOUR LETTERS (FROM MATTHEW 25, THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS).



Blocks of Saint Augustine 38 - No source or interpretation is available. How is truth derived or determined in the context of an absolute authority, the *dual effect*?

“Children must be considered in a divorce; considered valuable pawns in the nasty legal and financial contest that is about to ensue.”
- P. J. O'Rourke

Receiving-Responses

A positive outcome of my own experience has been the more recent ambition of writing; and in that, the production of not one, but two books. I want my children to have their own freedom and liberty to know that they were (and are) loved by their paternal family; I want them to know what I believe to be the truth regarding the past and present. They should know....

In the months leading-up to my arrest, I was gainfully employed and making my small contribution to *The State's* revenue and, in turn, larger contribution toward my children's welfare. With the courts' beckoned return however, this one means of support has been jeopardized; again, expedience and pragmatism seldom coincide with reason and logic—and the *best interest* of my children is more assuredly aloft.²⁷⁹

Where *much wisdom can bring much sorrow* has been in being “educated”—the learning—in the larger context of divorce, custody and the courts. Surely I have made feelings and opinion known in the content of two books; surely I have conveyed what is at cause for concern to conventional marriage and family, but now I look to an even larger context of *The State* and society.

There is a connection or association of *The State* that goes obviously beyond this most *sacred trust* (or marriage); a relationship or association that goes beyond the legal and informal “licenses”,²⁸⁰ the treatment of children as property;²⁸¹ and the massive cost burden²⁸² imposed on the general public. G. K. Chesterton was noted to have identified the futuristic

²⁷⁹ By “somewhat aloft” to mean that very actions of the courts cannot even rationalized in terms of the best interest of the children.

²⁸⁰ Referring to marriage license; but also to the “informal” license to lie, to legislate law and the openly violate the law in principle—so as to implicate and incriminate the other parent.

²⁸¹ Of course, child-custody and child support....

²⁸² Again, the cost of divorce to the general public....

*contention and conflict*²⁸³ suggested as divorce (or divorce law); and again, Baskerville's commentary (on his concern) that "the day has arrived".

The future is here; but not just in terms of any conflict between conventional family and the courts. Conflict is occurring in other forums of our lives, our society and culture. Social, economic, financial, and other categories become confusing in the complexities of conflict; but concerns arise over the growing authority of *The State*, as "The Institution", to direct and manage the individual. Only yesterday, I read of another public concern. From Marco Rubio, Republican Senatorial candidate in Florida:

You know what the fastest growing religion in America is? Statism²⁸⁴: the growing reliance on government. Every time a problem emerges, increasingly the reaction in American society is "Well, what can government do about it."²⁸⁵

In the last chapter of his book, Francis Schaeffer²⁸⁶ warns of the possibilities or "alternatives". A society with "impoverished values" is subject to "possible threats to personal peace and prosperity". As long as some semblance (or appearance) of personal peace and affluence remain, the majority of individuals will surrender their liberties. If these "values" are jeopardized however, individuals may be less apt to "surrender"; thus, to

²⁸³ Referring to commentary by Stephen Baskerville: that the State and family would eventually confront one another....

²⁸⁴ From the article, "Every Crime Needs a Victim", author Laurence Vance: "Religious people in particular make a grave mistake when they look to *The State* to enforce their morality. The actions of *The State* are typically the greatest examples of immoral behavior that one could possibly think of. Yet many religious people not only look to *The State* to enforce a moral code, but defend, support, and make excuses....

²⁸⁵ "Rubio says country relying too much on government", KansasCity.com, Mary 15, 2010.

²⁸⁶ Referring to the early 1970's book, *How Should We Then Live?*

“direct and manage” individuals and their collective will require more authority in one form or another.

Coincidentally, some evidence or observation of this behavior is being observed right now: those individuals voicing their concerns or issues with *The State* recognize the *clear and present danger*: they are aware that the services of The Great Society²⁸⁷ cannot be sustained and, consequently, that policies will invariably lead to more taxes...and less liberty—among other inevitable effects and continuing consequences.

The transition from a promising future to the inevitable result of “impoverished values” is beyond the *coming of age*, but is more comparative to the *end of an age*—the future looking very uncertain of *personal peace and prosperity*, let alone confidence in the present....

As the realization (of the transition) rises to the forefront of concern, so does the possibility that *a better world*²⁸⁸ is no longer achievable or attainable. Greece is presently *playing out* this transition with much attention by the international media among others. On the distant history of this nation (Greece) or sovereignty, Francis Schaeffer writes:

Democracy²⁸⁹ (freedom without chaos)...was built on the Reformation.... When one removes the Bible in which God has spoken propositionally and the resulting Christian consensus, freedom without chaos will not long remain. It can't. Something will take its place.²⁹⁰

That Greece has much to do with “impoverished values” might seem very dubious at first; but consider that the bulk of those

²⁸⁷ The Great Society of entitlements in America.

²⁸⁸ The term “a better world” referring to *A City on Upon a Hill*....

²⁸⁹ Democracy was the creation of ancient Greece.

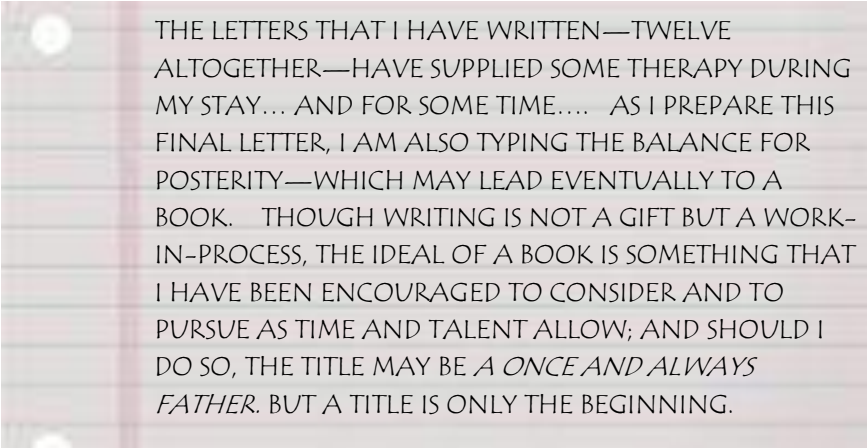
²⁹⁰ Francis Schaeffer, Chapter 8.

involved in public protest are purported as being those whose prosperity are most at risks—recipients of entitlements.

Greece is the origin of Democracy—and is incurring a transition suggested as *the shape of things* to come in our own nation, among others. Notwithstanding the large span of time between that “origin of Democracy” and current events, consider the profound possibilities or “alternatives” of “imposed order” and individual responsibility:

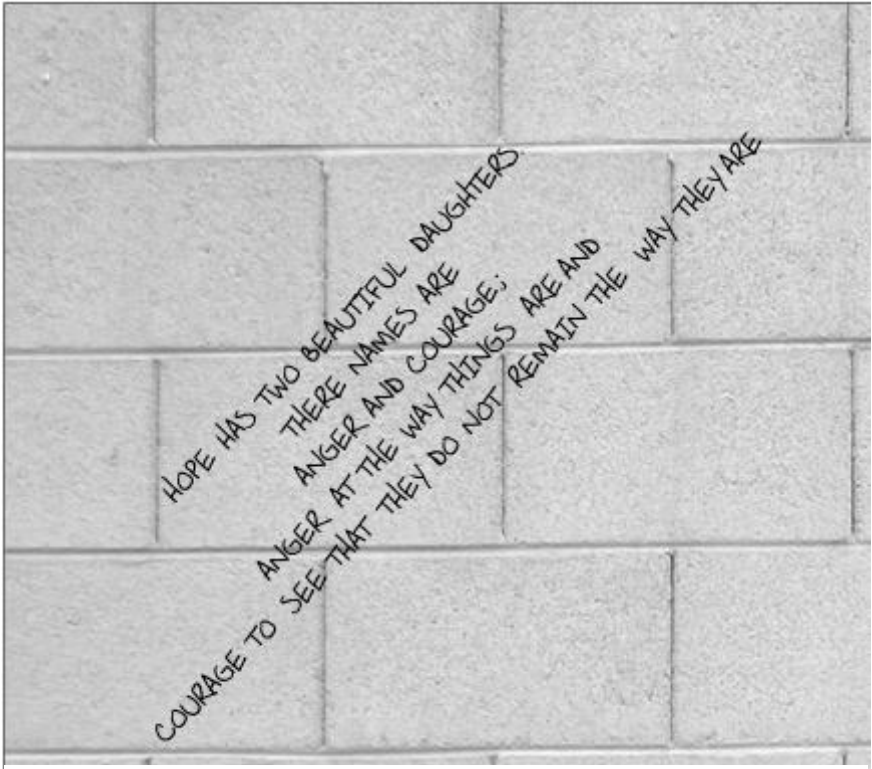
In such circumstances, it seems that there are only two alternatives in the natural flow of events: first, imposed order or, second, our society once again affirming that base which gave freedom without chaos in the first place—God’s revelation in the Bible and his revelation through Christ.²⁹¹

I have been very hesitant in the “look to an even larger context...” The theme of the book may **not** seem to have any association, but it really does; and the challenge is my limited capacity or ability to convey the connection. Before I continue on this subject, another part of the last letter:



THE LETTERS THAT I HAVE WRITTEN—TWELVE
ALTOGETHER—HAVE SUPPLIED SOME THERAPY DURING
MY STAY... AND FOR SOME TIME.... AS I PREPARE THIS
FINAL LETTER, I AM ALSO TYPING THE BALANCE FOR
POSTERITY—WHICH MAY LEAD EVENTUALLY TO A
BOOK. THOUGH WRITING IS NOT A GIFT BUT A WORK-
IN-PROCESS, THE IDEAL OF A BOOK IS SOMETHING THAT
I HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO CONSIDER AND TO
PURSUE AS TIME AND TALENT ALLOW; AND SHOULD I
DO SO, THE TITLE MAY BE *A ONCE AND ALWAYS*
FATHER. BUT A TITLE IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

²⁹¹ Francis Schaeffer, Chapter 9.



Blocks of Saint Augustine 39 - No source or interpretation is available. Again the words of William Wallace: "It is beyond rage."

"The paradox of courage is that a man must be a little careless of his life even in order to keep it."

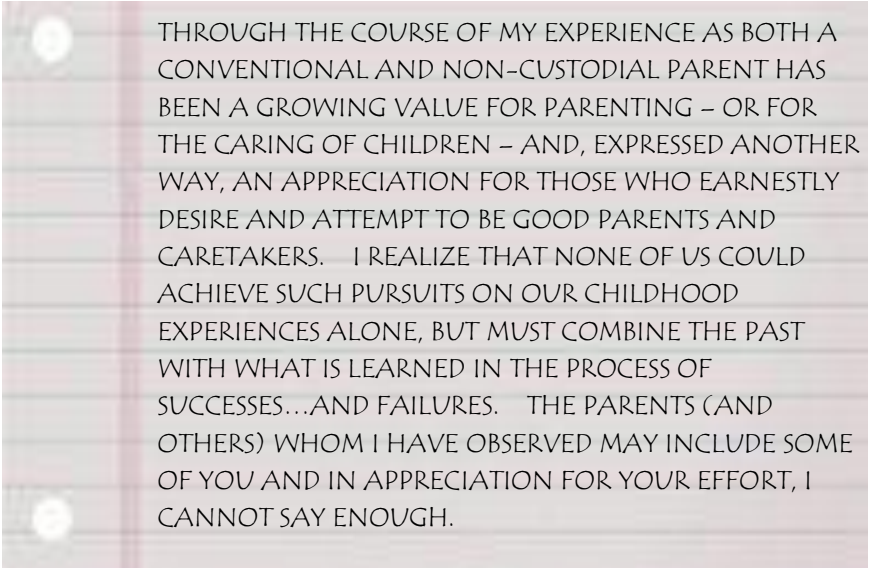
- Gilbert K. Chesterton

"Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires courage."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Passing-Pity

Beyond the pity, and *beyond rage*, is the ideal position to realize that *The State* is simply an institution; and as such, is a reflection of the collective. This “ideal position” is where those who have been empowered—and conditioned to hurt—elicit the *better angels*. My role and responsibility has not been forgotten and, in this, has been inspired by others...and for others.

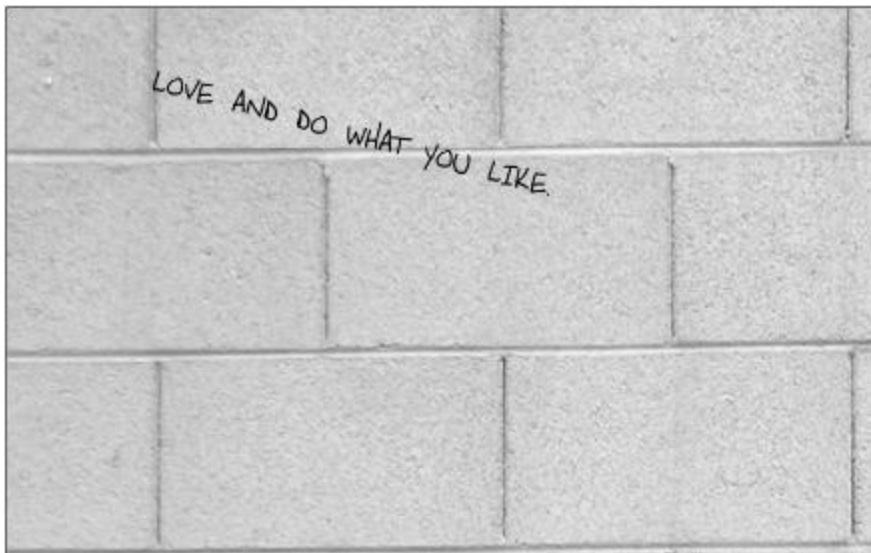


THROUGH THE COURSE OF MY EXPERIENCE AS BOTH A CONVENTIONAL AND NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT HAS BEEN A GROWING VALUE FOR PARENTING – OR FOR THE CARING OF CHILDREN – AND, EXPRESSED ANOTHER WAY, AN APPRECIATION FOR THOSE WHO EARNESTLY DESIRE AND ATTEMPT TO BE GOOD PARENTS AND CARETAKERS. I REALIZE THAT NONE OF US COULD ACHIEVE SUCH PURSUITS ON OUR CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES ALONE, BUT MUST COMBINE THE PAST WITH WHAT IS LEARNED IN THE PROCESS OF SUCCESSES...AND FAILURES. THE PARENTS (AND OTHERS) WHOM I HAVE OBSERVED MAY INCLUDE SOME OF YOU AND IN APPRECIATION FOR YOUR EFFORT, I CANNOT SAY ENOUGH.

There is sorrow however, and I don't pretend that it does not exist. I cannot deny my disgust with *the divorce industry*; but I cannot continue to dwell on this institution to the degree that it becomes (or remains) an idol.²⁹² I hurt for my children—not because their lives are deprived—but because they have been depleted through deception or basic dishonesty of one so presumed as trustworthy and loving. And still I write:

²⁹² By “idol” to mean a fixation or obsession; thus to become like an idol or something captures or enslaves...

AT THE RISK OF LAPSING INTO SELF-PITY, I STILL HAVE SORROW OVER THE INABILITY FOR RECONCILIATION IN THE PRESENT AND, FOR THAT MATTER, THE DIVORCE IN THE FIRST PLACE; AND EVEN IN THE MARRIAGE, THE FAILURES THAT I (AND WE) MADE IN THE PRESENCE OR EXPERIENCE OF OUR CHILDREN. HAVING READ OF "GODLY SORROW" AS LEADING TO REPENTANCE, PERHAPS THIS SORROW IS WELL FOR THE SOUL AND, AT THE LEAST, RECONCILIATION BETWEEN ME AND MY LORD. STILL, I WILL CONTINUE TO PRAY BY FAITH IN THE SAME WAY THAT YOU TOO HAVE MATTERS OF THE CHURCH - YOUR FAMILY AND OTHERS THAT CALL FOR SUCH A VIGIL.

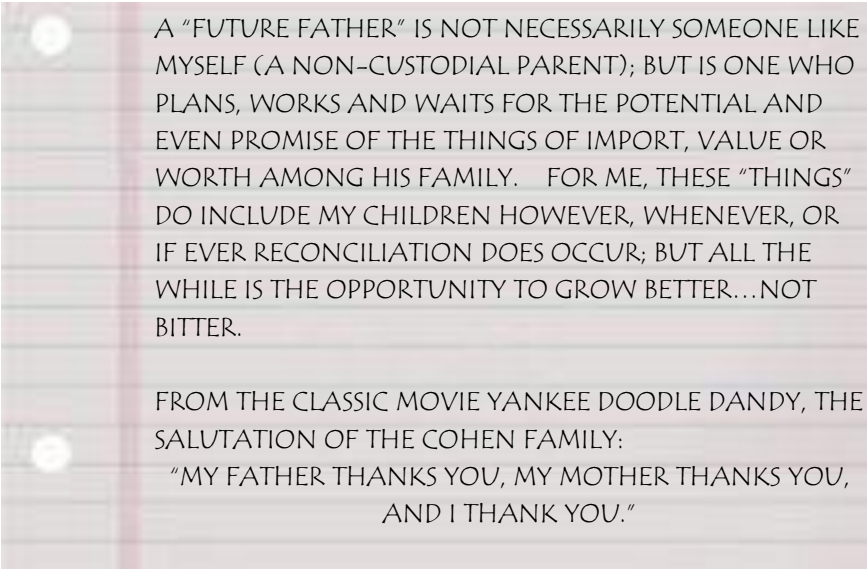


Blocks of Saint Augustine 40 – No source or interpretation is available. Love is a powerful force....

Planning-Parent

It may seem idealistic, even imaginative, to believe in love; and it may seem convenient, even careless, to believe in the power of love. Beyond rationalization, and fixed on the *Author or Absolutes*²⁹³, is where imagination becomes reality and where carelessness becomes caring.

If I did not believe in love and the power from which love comes, I could **not** accept that God is *The First Father*. To believe by faith is to invite some understanding of the terms and concepts of truth, liberty, justice and freedom—in the process of brokenness and life in a fallen world. As to *a better world*, “faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.”²⁹⁴



A “FUTURE FATHER” IS NOT NECESSARILY SOMEONE LIKE MYSELF (A NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT); BUT IS ONE WHO PLANS, WORKS AND WAITS FOR THE POTENTIAL AND EVEN PROMISE OF THE THINGS OF IMPORT, VALUE OR WORTH AMONG HIS FAMILY. FOR ME, THESE “THINGS” DO INCLUDE MY CHILDREN HOWEVER, WHENEVER, OR IF EVER RECONCILIATION DOES OCCUR; BUT ALL THE WHILE IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW BETTER...NOT BITTER.

FROM THE CLASSIC MOVIE YANKEE DOODLE DANDY, THE SALUTATION OF THE COHEN FAMILY:

“MY FATHER THANKS YOU, MY MOTHER THANKS YOU,
AND I THANK YOU.”

²⁹³ Another description of God, *Author of Absolutes* to distinguish from relative or arbitrary....

²⁹⁴ Saint Augustine. As to the future, Joni Erickson Tada said: “Faith isn't the ability to believe long and far into the misty future. It's simply taking God at His Word and taking the next step.”

Finally-Father

“Finally-Father” comes at some last effort to conclude ²⁹⁵ the cited work of Francis Schaeffer. To recall the “alternatives” (of a society of “impoverished values”): either some measure of reformation...or imposed order—the loss of liberties.

In the loss (or losses) of liberty, much more could be a stake than “bad marriages” and their families; but in the legal maltreatment of this *sacred trust* is a strong lesson regarding the nature of *The State*. Marriage has become a state institution and, in this capacity, is under the authority of a relative and arbitrary law; however *handed-over* to *The State*, marriage and family have suffered irreparably. Remember the words of our first president and commentary of Judge Andrew Napolitano among others; the warnings of the nature of government, the *dual effect*....

Another president, Dwight Eisenhower furthered “the warnings” (in the compromise of personal principles): “A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both.” But with relative law and vanishing principles (or “impoverished values”), what or whom is left? Francis once more; and in reference to another distant influence of Western civilization, The Roman Empire, he writes of *conflict and contention*:

No totalitarian authority nor authoritarian state can tolerate those who have an absolute by which to judge that state and its actions. The Christians had that absolute in God's revelation. Because the Christians had an absolute, universal standard by which to judge not only personal morals but the state, they were counted as enemies of totalitarian Rome and were thrown to the beasts.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ By “conclude” to mean my conclusions or final comments.

²⁹⁶ In the days of Julius Caesar (100-44B.C.), Rome turned to an authoritarian system centered in the Caesar. Prior to this centralist government, Rome was ruled with a Senate...but they could not keep public order. The citizenry were accepting of this rule to keep peace.

From-Father

H. Kirk Rainer was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on June 16, 1961. Much of his adult life, and a few years of youth, was spent in Northeast Florida. At the present, and for the foreseeable future, he has made his home in Northeast Alabama.

Pictured at the lower-right is a proud moment: the birth of his youngest son – one of four natural children for which he has been richly blessed. Oh, the new arrival is Brian-Wesley – who was named after Kirk’s brother and John Wesley, Methodist founder-pastor and anti-slavery proponent in the 1,700’s.

At this time in his life, Kirk is busy in the general direction of writing; both in training and in practicing this new found endeavor. At the same time, he continues to ply his skills and education as an engineer.



The desired writing form or genre is creative non-fiction. To date, his writing has included short-stories and correspondence of a pseudo-legal nature, and his first book: *A Once and Always Father*. This book is the latest and most extensive of “this new found endeavor”.

To the left, one of the last family photos taken in 2000 somewhere atop Mount Cheaha at a place called Turnipseed. It was a most memorable time: we could just sit back and watch the day turn to darkness in the light of a fire and the warmth of a family.



Father-Files

In keeping with the title theme, “Father-Files” is my choice of titles as a “catch-all” for references and further reading pertaining to the subject-matter and content of the book.

One matter that needs noting: the choices regarding references excluded much known to be available on the subject of divorce, custody and allied areas. The American Coalition for Father and Children (ACFC) has an exhaustive listing of resources on these subjects; but again, I chose some resources of less apparent association or application. This and other information in “Father-Files”:

- Relevant-Reading & Reviews (of other materials)
- Pleading-Punishment (about the plea bargain)
- Roman-Republic (about The Fall of the Roman Empire)
- Block-Boundaries (a layout of the jail block)
- Some-Statistics (of family and marriage...)
- Reserved-References (or a Bibliography)

Relevant-Reading & Reviews

To elaborate on opportunities potentially-missed, I present a modest sample of the many and, as a supplement, one or more reader-reviews found on Amazon. One other matter regarding my choices (and what should be represented in my book): the books may present a gender-perspective; but my intention or desire is to de-gender the destructive nature of divorce—where one or both may be actively damaging the children by their own words and actions. And now, a few of those many:

- *Divorced Dads, Shattering the Myths*, Sanford Braver, 1998
 - Sanford Braver and Diane O'Connell drop an h-bomb on the conspiracy cells involved in destroying the United States through attacking families, especially via fathers. He uses the most potent weapon of all -- the facts. Braver's accomplishment is one of the great works of the 20th Century.
 - Sanford Braver (Psychology, Arizona State University) and Diane O'Connell offer us a non-technical presentation and discussion of the most thorough, responsible research to date on divorced fathers. Based on Dr. Braver's eight-year, federally-funded study of divorced fathers, this book lives up to its subtitle by shattering myths that are prevalent not only among the general public but also among legislators, judges, policy-makers, and members of the media.
- *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, Judith Wallerstein, 2001
 - This book is the latest in a series of books written by Wallerstein about children and divorce. It provides excellent insights into what children are going through. As the child of divorce myself, I found myself thinking "YES" when reading each page. Her observations about what kids are feeling were brilliant and right on target. It's an uncomfortable book -- many parents won't want to know what they're putting their children through, and children won't want to live again through feelings that they might very well not wish to examine.
 - My children have continued to experience divorce related issues as they have moved into adulthood. Maturity, relationships, marriage, and parenting have been catalysts for the emergence of feelings that were buried and denied. Judith Wallerstein's excellent book provides the context and structure for my adult children to explore and understand their "new" feelings....

- *A Family Divided, A Divorced Father Struggles with the Child Custody Industry*, Robert Mendelson, 1997
 - It's truly a story of American society going arguably berserk; and one father's love for his family lost, in spite of spending a fortune just to remain involved in his children's lives. Many of us have spent \$10s of thousands trying to save our life with our children, only to lose out; but thinking that we could have won if ONLY we had more money to pursue the fight. Dr. Nieland, a truly courageous man for letting his story be told; is proof that you can spend \$100s of thousand with the same outcome.
 - I feel sorry and pity on Dr. Michael Nieland and me. A lot of time, I felt the stories are so outrages that I can hardly believe him, or I don't want to believe him. But I know it's true. I am right now facing the same stories in my real life. I don't know if I should feel relief because I am not the only one.
- *When the Vow Breaks: A Survival and Recovery Guide for Christians Facing Divorce*, Joseph Warren Kniskern,
 - Mr. Kniskern addresses many issues in this book for those facing a seemingly impossible situation. It is so painful to find yourself facing divorce when you really believed in "till death do you part". Whether your spouse is wanting out of the marriage, or circumstances have occurred that make it impossible to stay, this book is a Godsend!
 - I never imagined I would be reading this book. I have cried rivers of tears this year upon facing the reality of my wife choosing divorce. Words simply can't describe how helpful this book was, on so many levels. I deeply appreciate the emphasis on Scripture. I just finished it and I am starting again now that my emotions are not so raw. I highly recommend anyone facing the indescribable horror of divorce, particularly if you are the "non-initiator," to find an understanding friend in this book.

Pleading-Punishment

From “The Problem with Plea Bargaining”,²⁹⁷ the following generalization:

The system functions like a gigantic extortion racket in which the attorney plays the role of “bagman,” the person who transmits the threats (under the guise of legal advice) and collects the payment (the plea).

In plea bargaining, the prosecutor can effectively wear the defendant down. Again, from the same source:

Lengthy pre-trial incarceration weakens and demoralizes a defendant and increases the coercive aspects of plea bargaining (particularly where, as in the case of many indigent defendants unable to post bail, taking a plea is the only sure way to regain personal freedom).

From “The Case against Plea Bargaining”, the Cato Institute:

The truth is that government officials have deliberately engineered the system to assure that the jury trial system established by the Constitution is seldom used; and plea bargaining is the primary technique used by the government to bypass the institutional safeguards in trials.

An opinion might be that the plea bargain is merely the means to an end; a convenience for both the court and the charged.... A criticism *comes to the table* when the matter is examined in light of the prosecutor’s power; that is, the means to persuade the defendant on the basis of the alternatives. In this process, the prosecutor has effectively pre-determined the sentence and, based on record, has the power to see it through. In layman’s terms, the pre-determined sentence becomes the leverage to extort the defendant: “If you don’t plead guilty or no-contest,

²⁹⁷ Steven Silberblatt, “The Problem with Plea Bargaining”, 1994.

then here's what's going to happen...." In this power, the prosecutor has already determined a verdict and a sentence—quite possibly before a hearing.... Again, from the Cato Institute:

Just because *The State* can throw the book at someone does not mean that it can use its power to retaliate against a person who wishes to exercise his right to a trial.

An opinion might be that the defendant has a "right" to make a deal (a contract of sort...like free trade) in the process of his prosecution; but as suggested in the article:

But a plea bargain is not free trade. It is a forced association. Once a person has been charged with a crime, he does not have the option of walking away from *The State*.

Another consideration in the plea bargain is the variability of punishment: a range (or variety) of possible punishment for the same offense hardly seems like justice. On this range...and again, from the article by the Cato Institute:

Are disparate punishments for the same offense sensible?
The courtroom just does not seem to be the proper place for an auction and haggling.

Thomas Jefferson observed that "the natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground." The American experience with the plea bargain is yet another confirmation of that truth.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ From the Cato Institute, "The Case against Plea Bargaining".

Roman-Republic

As an extension or further explanation of the change from Senate to centralist government based on Francis Schaeffer's *How Should We Then Live?*

Rome was influenced by the Greeks, the origin of Democracy. The spiritual base of Rome was a collection of gods defined with limited powers and characterized with natural desires or behaviors. Again, Rome was ruled with a Senate, but *conflict and contention* (vying for power and position) led to ineffectiveness, eventual public disorder and civil unrest.

Enter the Caesar as supreme ruler and authority; and in the ascension, the eventual deification of this rule—the decreed worship of Caesar. Following Julius was Augustus (63 B.C. – 14 A.D.) who, as eventual head of *The State*, was renamed “Pontifex Maximus”. In this age, worship of “the spirit” of Rome transcended to Caesar as the god.

Christians were not persecuted because they *did not render unto Caesar what is Caesar's*; but rather, they held to absolutes in association with an ardent belief (passion) and adamant faith (pursuit). Francis described the emerging *conflict and contention* in the light of a monotheistic worship and allegiance to Christ—the consequence of which were Christians deemed enemies of *The State* in a period of Diocletian (284-305).

The effective nationalization of Christianity by Constantine (313) was not the end of *conflict and contention*: as *The Church* superseded Biblical authority and the Gospel was distorted by *salvation by works* and counterfeit theology; pilgrims divided in *being in the world...but not of it—treasures in Heaven...and not on earth*.

The causes (or symptoms) of Rome's decay are described in a reflection of art, culture, and economics; many ideals and

theories cover a span of time from the Republic, through the division of the Empire and to the eventual and inevitable fall.

Of one aspect, economics is described with enough detail to add credence to the adage that *history repeats itself*:

At the time the empire was fighting enemies on all sides due to its expansion into their territories and was already contributing huge sums of silver and gold to keep up its armies. To try to combat both problems, the empire was forced to raise taxes frequently causing inflation to skyrocket. This in turn caused the major economic stress that others attribute as one of the causes for Rome's decline.²⁹⁹

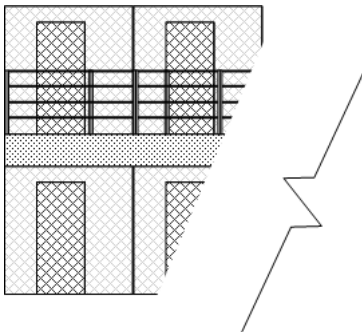
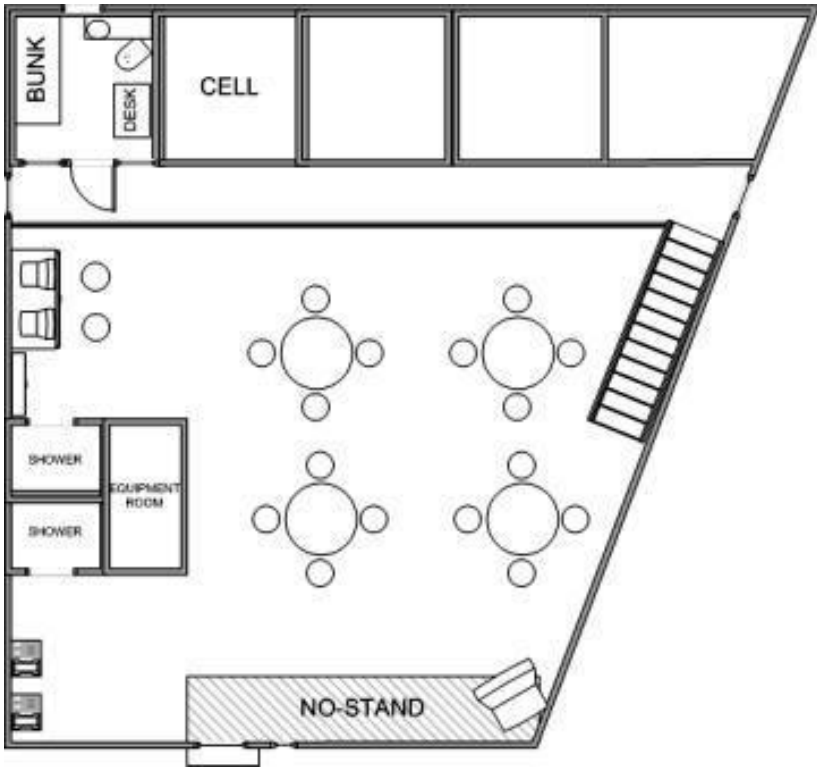
With what information and opinions were read (of the fall...), the common question may be: “How did the Empire last that long?” In the mix of possible causes is the sense that a series of events—both internal and external to the Empire—were the collective cause.

But “sense” may be misleading; as Saint Thomas Aquinas warned the human tendency that “Most men seem to live according to sense rather than reason.” Sense or reason, the last words of the Saint that I prefer at present: “The principal act of courage is to endure and withstand dangers doggedly rather than to attack them.”

²⁹⁹ From Wikipedia: Decline of the Roman Empire.

Block-Boundaries

The first layout is an approximate rendering of the block at St. Johns County; and the second is an elevation drawing of the cells: 2 decks with five cells on each deck. The objects that appear to be computers are the monitors used for video visitation; telephones are on the other side of the showers.



Some-Statistics

The statistics selected for this section could be described as “myth-busters”; that is, the possible differences between what is promoted-perception (or sense) and “Some-Statistics” (sensitivity or reason). The responsibility in the collection/presentation should always include validation or qualification of the data³⁰⁰.

- 7 of 10 adults believe that a child needs a home with both a father and mother. (Gallop Poll, 1998)
- In the U.S., 33.5% of children live absent of their biological father. (*Living Arrangement of Children*, 2001)
- Marital status is the strongest predictor of father presence. (“Fathers and Absent Fathers...”, 1998)
- 36% of children with single, biological mothers are below the poverty line. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005)
- 54% of female high school seniors say they believe that having a child out-of-wedlock is “worthwhile lifestyle”, but 85% of Americans believe that out-of-wedlock births is either a “serious” or “critical” problem. (Gallop Poll, 1998)
- Teen mothers account for 28% of out-of-wedlock births, down from 50% in 1970. (*Non-marital Child-birthing in the U.S.*, 2000)
- Approximately 40% of non-marital births occur to cohabiting women. (*How do prior experience in family affect transition to adulthood*, 1997)
- About half (56%) of all first marriages are now preceded by cohabitation—compared with 11% in 1970. (“Trends in Cohabitation and Implications of Children’s...”, 1999)

³⁰⁰ My experience in a court-setting: when the information or evidence does not bolster the presuppositions or predisposition of *the powers*, it is denied or disregarded—validation or qualification is irrelevant. “**Some-Statistics**” is brought to you by Father Facts, 5th Edition, National Fatherhood Initiative, fatherhood.org.

- In 2002, cohabiting couples reported rates of physical aggression that were 3 times higher than married couples. (“Verbal, Physical, and Injurious Aggression...”, 2002)
- Child well-being suffered the most in families in which mothers were dissatisfied with high levels of father contact. (“Non-resident Father Visitation, Parental Conflict, 1999).
- Compared to living with both parents, living in a single-parent home doubles the risk that a child will suffer physical, emotional or educational neglect. (*America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-being*, 1997)
- Problem behaviors were more frequent for children from unmarried families than from married families. (“Family Structure and the Externalizing Behavior of Children...”, 2001)
- Older boys and girls from female-headed households are more likely to commit criminal acts than their peers who lived with two parents. (“Father’s Absence and Youth Incarceration, ...”, 1999)
- Florida counties with above average rates of father absence had nearly double the rate of school violence. (*Kids & Violence; A National Survey and Report...*, 1998)
- Children who lived with both biological parents did better in school than children in all other family types. (“Spending time with his Kids: Effects of Family Structure...”, 2002)
- Children of single mothers had more behavior problems, poorer school performance, and were less adept socially than children of married mothers. (“Discovering What Families Do in Re-building the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family...”, 1990)

Reserved-References

Reserved references are not necessarily used or cited in the book, but consist of all considered in the process of completing the book.

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