

**Orthodox Theology and
Technology:
*A Profoundly Gifted
Autobiography***

From the "Best Works" series

CJS Hayward

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I hope you find food for thought in the works that follow.

Table of Contents

About the Author.....	1
An Author’s Musing Memoirs About His Work: Retrospective Reflections, Retractions, and Retravings.....	2
Classic Character Sheet.....	23
Modern Character Sheet.....	33
An Author Interview by... <i>the Author Himself!</i>	38
Escape.....	48
Orthodox Theology and Technology: <i>A Profoundly Gifted Autobiography</i>	56
Appendix A: Recommended Books.....	90
Appendix B: Profoundly Gifted and Orthodox at Fordham.....	93
Appendix C: The Wagon, the Blackbird, and the Saab.....	118

About the Author

Who is Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward? A man, made in the image of God and summoned to ascend to the heights of the likeness of God. A great sinner, and in fact, the chief of sinners. One who is, moment by moment, in each ascetical decision choosing to become one notch more a creature of Heaven, or one notch more a creature of Hell, until his life is spent and his eternal choice between Heaven and Hell is eternally sealed.

Man, mediator, midpoint, microcosm, measure: as man he is the recapitulation of the entire spiritual and visible creation, having physical life in common with plants and animals, and noetic life in common with rank upon rank of angel host, and forever in the shadow of that moment when Heaven kissed earth and God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man that men and the sons of men might become gods and the sons of God.

He's also a writer with a few hobbies, but really, there are more important things in life.

An Author's Musing Memoirs About His Work

Retrospective Reflections, Retractions, and Retracing

Taking a second look at some of what I wrote

Dear Reader,

Years back, when I was a math grad student, I wrote a short essay entitled, “Why [study](#) [mathematics](#)?” The basic thought was connected with the general education math class I was taking, and it is not really an article for why to specialize in mathematics through intensive study, but why a more basic knowledge of math can be a valuable part of liberal arts education. Much like how I taught my class, I did not speak favorably of memorizing formulas—pejoratively called “mindless symbol manipulation” by mathematicians—but spoke of the beauty of the abstractions, the joy of puzzles and problem solving, and even spoke of mathematics as a form of weight lifting for

the mind: if you can do math, I said, you can do almost anything. I was sincere in these words, and I believe my obscure little piece captures something that a lot of math students and faculty sensed even if they did not explain their assumption. Since then, there are some things I would say differently. Not exactly that I was incorrect in what I said, but I worked hard to climb a ladder that was leaning against the wrong building.

One famous author in software development, who wrote a big book about "software engineering", had said, "What gets measured gets improved," and began to express second thoughts about his gung-ho enthusiasm for measurement. He didn't exactly *take back* his words of, "What gets measured gets improved," but he said that the most important things to understand are rarely things that are easy or obvious to measure: the mantra "What gets measured gets improved," is a mantra to ruthlessly optimize things that often are less important than you might think. His second thoughts went further: the words "software" and "engineering" have been joined at the hip, but however hard software developers have tried to claim to be engineers, what they do is very different from engineering: it's an apples and oranges comparison.

I would pretty well stand by the statement that if you can deal with the abstraction in math, you can deal with the abstraction in anything: whether chemistry, analytic philosophy, engineering, or sales, there isn't much out there that will call for more abstract thinking than you learn in math. But to pick sales, for instance, not many people fail in sales because they can't handle the deep abstraction. Sales calls for social graces, the ability to handle rejection, and real persistence, and while you may really and truly learn

persistence in math, I sincerely doubt that mathematical training is a sort of industrial strength preparation for social graces and dealing with rejection. And even in engineering, social graces matter more than you might think; it's been said that being good at math gets you in the door, but social influence and effectiveness are what make a *real* superstar. I would still stand by a statement that if you can handle the abstraction in math, you can probably handle the abstraction in anything else. But I'm somewhat more wary of implying that if you have a mathematical mind, you just have an advantage for everything life may throw at you.

That's simply not true.

There are some things I have written that I would like to take back, at least in part, but even where my works are flawed I don't believe mass deletions are the best response. I would rather write what might be called "Retractions and retracings" and leave them available with the original works. "Why study Mathematics?", whatever its flaws, gives a real glimpse into the beauty that draws mathematicians to mathematics. I may be concerned with flaws here, but they are not the whole truth. However, there are some things I would like to comment on, some flaws to point out. In many cases, I don't believe that what I said is mainly wrong, but I believe it is possible to raise one's eyes higher.

HOW to HUG

Mathematics may be seen as a skill, but it can also be how a person is oriented: jokes may offer a caricature, but a caricature of something that's *there*. One joke tells of a mathematician who finds something at a bookstore, is delighted to walk home with a thick volume entitled *HOW*

to HUG, and then, at home, is dismayed to learn he purchased volume 11 of an encyclopædia. And I mention this as a then-mathematician who wrote “A Treatise on Touch,” which may be seen as interesting, may be seen as deep, and may have something in common with the mathematician purchasing a book so he could know how to hug.

Part of what I have been working on is how, very slowly, to become more human. This struggle is reflected in *Yonder*, which is at its most literal a struggle of philosophers to reach what is human. There is an outer story of disembodied minds set in a dark science fiction world, who are the philosophers, and there is a story within a story, an inner story, of the tragic beauty of human life. When I showed it to a science fiction guru, he suggested that I cut the philosophical dialogues down by quite a bit. The suggestion had a lot of sense, and quite possibility a traditional publisher would want to greatly abbreviate the sections that he suggested I curtail. But I did not follow his advice, and I don't think this was just author stubbornness. When literature builds up to a success, usually the path to success is filled with struggles and littered with failures. This is true of good heroic literature, and for that matter a lot of terrible heroic literature as well. (Just watch a bad adventure movie sometime.) *Yonder* is a story that is replete with struggles and failures, only the failures of the disembodied minds have nothing to do with physical journeys or combat. They begin stuck in philosophy, mere philosophy, and their clumsy efforts to break out provide the failures, and therefore to greatly abridge the philosophical discussion would be to strip away the struggle and failure by which they reach success: a vision of the

grandeur of being human. Like much good and bad literature, the broad sweep was inspired by *The Divine Comedy*, opening with a vision of Hell and building up to a view of our painful life as a taste of Heaven, and you don't tell *The Divine Comedy* faithfully if you replace the *Inferno* with a brief summary stating that there are some gruesome images and a few politically incorrect ideas about sin. The dark science fiction world and its mere philosophy provides the vision of Hell that prepares the reader to see the humanness of Heaven and the Heaven of humanness. The inner story can be told by itself; it is for that matter told independently in "A Wonderful Life." But there is something in *Yonder*, as it paints the stark, dark, disturbing silhouette of the radiant, luminous splendor and beauty of human life.

While I was a math undergrad, I read and was deeply influenced by the *Tao Te Ching*; something of its influence may be seen in "The Way of the Way." That work has its flaws, and I may have drunk too deeply of Taoism, but there was a seed planted that I would later recognize in fuller forms in the Orthodox Way. I had in full my goals of studying and thinking, but I realized by the way that there was some value to be had in stillness. Later I would come to be taught that stillness is not an ornament to put on top of a tree; it is the soil from which the tree of life grows.

After I completed my studies in math, and having trouble connecting with the business world, I took stock, and decided that the most important knowledge of all was theology. I had earlier planned to follow the established route of being a mathematician until I was no longer any good for mathematics and then turning out second rate theology. My plans shifted and I wanted to put my goal up

front and, I told my pastor, "I want to think about theology in community." (If you are wincing at this, good.) So, in this spirit, I applied to several schools and began the study of academic theology. If you are an astute reader, I will forgive you if you ask, "But isn't this still a mathematician looking for a book on how to hug?" The goal I had, to teach at a university or even better train Orthodox priests at a seminary, was a laudable enough goal, and perhaps God will bless me with that in the future. Perhaps he wants the same thing, but perhaps God first wants to free me from the chain of being too much like a mathematician wanting to learn how to hug by reading a book.

During my time studying theology at Cambridge, I was received into the Orthodox Church. I am grateful to God for both a spiritual father whose lenience offered a corrective to my legalistic tendencies, and for a godfather who was fond of reading Orthodox loose cannons and who helped me see a great many things that were invisible to me at the time. For instance, I asked him for help on some aspect of getting my worldview worked out correctly, and I was caught off guard when he explained, "You aren't being invited to work out the Orthodox worldview. You're being invited to worship in the right glory of Orthodoxy, and you are being invited to walk the Orthodox way." In that sense Orthodoxy is not really a system of ideas to work out correctly that, say, a martial art: there may be good books connected to martial arts, but you learn a martial art by practicing it, and you learn Orthodoxy by practicing it. And in that response, my godfather helped me take one step further away from being a mathematician trying to find a book that will teach him how to hug. (He also gave me repeated corrections when I persisted in the project of trying to improve Orthodox

practices by historical reconstruction. And eventually he got through to me on that point.)

Becoming Orthodox for me has been a matter of becoming really and truly human, or at least beginning to. There is a saying that has rumbled down through the ages in different forms: in the second century, St. Irenaeus wrote, *"For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God."* I have not read this in much earlier sources, but I have read many later phrasings: *"God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man that man and the sons of man might become gods and the sons of God."* *"The divine became human that the human might become divine."* *"The Son of God became a man that men might become the sons of God."* And one real variation on this has been quoted, *"Christ did not just become man so that I might become divine. **He also became man that I might become a man.**"*

If Christ became man that I might become human, this is manifest in a million ways in the Orthodox Church. Let me give one way. When I was preparing to be received into the Orthodox Church, I asked my godfather some question about how to best straighten out my worldview. He told me that the Western project of worldview construction was not part of the Orthodox Way: I had been invited to walk the Orthodox Way but not work out the Orthodox worldview. If there is in fact an Orthodox worldview, it does not come from worldviewish endeavors: it arises out of the practices and life of the Orthodox Church, much in line with, *"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his perfect righteousness,*

and all these things shall be added unto you." Not just corrections, but being caught off-guard by effectively being told, "Here are some of many rules; there is no need for you to know all of them. They are important, and you need to strive for strict excellence, but you are not treating them in the right spirit if you hold them rigidly and legalistically. (Work out with your priest how you will best bend them.)" The Orthodox Church's nature as essentially an oral tradition has helped cure me of silly things like meticulously studying ancient texts to put my mind to an antiquarian reconstruction and answer the question, "How should we live?" (The Orthodox Church is ancient, but it is not really infected with antiquarian reconstruction efforts.) The rhythm of the liturgy and its appointed seasons, the spiritual housecleaning involved with preparing for confession, the profoundly important community of the faithful: all of these are part of how it works out in the Orthodox Church that God became man not only so that I might become divine, but also so that I might become more truly man.

Part of this becoming human on my part also has to do with silence, or as Orthodox call it, hesychasm. Part of the disorder of life as we know it is that our minds are scattered about: worrying about this, remembering that pain, and in general not gathered into the heart. Mathematical training is a training in drawing the mind out of the heart and into abstract thinking. The word "abstract" itself comes from the Latin *abstrahere*, meaning to pull back (from concrete things), and if you train yourself in the habit of abstraction you pull yourself back from silence and from what is good about the *Tao Te Ching*.

In "Silence: Organic Food for the Soul," I all but closed

with the words, "Be in your mind a garden locked and a fountain sealed," which speaks about having a mind that is gathered together and is in the fullest sense mind: which is not when abstract thinking is its bread and butter. Perhaps some of the saints' wisdom is abstract, but it does not come from building an edifice of abstractions.

The terms *intellect* and *mind* mean something very different in Orthodox classics than they do in today's English. The difference is as great as the difference between using *web* to mean a physical object woven out of spider's silk and *web* to mean interconnected documents and media available over the internet. Today you might say, "The intellect is what an IQ test measures." An Orthodox saint who had been asked might have said, "The intellect is where you meet God." The mind is an altar, and its proper thought flows out of its being an altar: in "Within the Steel Orb," a visitor from our world steps into a trap:

"And your computer science is pretty advanced, right? Much more advanced than ours?"

"We know things that the trajectory of computer science in your world will never reach because it is not pointed in the right direction." Oinos tapped the wall and arcs of pale blue light spun out.

"Then you should be well beyond the point of making artificial intelligence."

"Why on a million, million worlds should we ever be able to do that? Or even think that is something we *could* accomplish?"

"Well, if I can be obvious, the brain is a computer, and the mind is its software."

"Is it?"

"What else could the mind be?"

"What else could the mind be? What about an altar at which to worship? A workshop? A bridge between Heaven and earth, a meeting place where eternity meets time? A treasury in which to gather riches? A spark of divine fire? A line in a strong grid? A river, ever flowing, ever full? A tree reaching to Heaven while its roots grasp the earth? A mountain made immovable for the greatest storm? A home in which to live and a ship by which to sail? A constellation of stars? A temple that sanctifies the earth? A force to draw things in? A captain directing a starship or a voyager who can travel without? A diamond forged over aeons from of old? A perpetual motion machine that is simply impossible but functions anyway? A faithful manuscript by which an ancient book passes on? A showcase of holy icons? A mirror, clear or clouded? A wind which can never be pinned down? A haunting moment? A home with which to welcome others, and a mouth with which to kiss? A strand of a web? An acrobat balancing for his whole life long on a slender crystalline prism between two chasms? A protecting veil and a concealing mist? An eye to glimpse the uncreated Light as the world moves on its way? A rift yawning into the depths of the earth? A kairometer, both primeval and young? A—"

"All right, all right! I get the idea, and that's some pretty lovely poetry. (What's a kairometer?) These are all very beautiful metaphors for the mind, but I am interested in what the mind is literally."

"Then it might interest you to hear that your world's computer is also a metaphor for the mind. A

good and poetic metaphor, perhaps, but a metaphor, and one that is better to balance with other complementary metaphors. It is the habit of some in your world to understand the human mind through the metaphor of the latest technology for you to be infatuated with. Today, the mind is a computer, or something like that. Before you had the computer, 'You're just wired that way' because the brain or the mind or whatever is a wired-up telephone exchange, the telephone exchange being your previous object of technological infatuation, before the computer. Admittedly, 'the mind is a computer' is an attractive metaphor. But there is some fundamental confusion in taking *that* metaphor literally and assuming that, since the mind is a computer, all you have to do is make some more progress with technology and research and you can give a computer an intelligent mind."

That litany of metaphors summarizes much of my second master's thesis. Which is not really the point; but my point here is that on an Orthodox understanding, intellect is *not* something you measure by an IQ test and a mind is *not* the spitting image of a computer. The mind, rightly understood, finds its home in prayer and simple silence. The intellect is where one meets God, and its knowing flows out of its contact with God and with spiritual reality. And, in the metaphors of the "Song of Songs," the mind as it is meant to be is "a garden locked, a fountain sealed", not spilled out promiscuously into worry, or grudges, or plans for the future that never satisfy. And this gathering together of the mind, this prayer of the mind in the heart, is one that was not proposed to me by my mathematical training.

Now I should mention that I have a lot to be grateful for as far as math goes. There are a lot of people who gave of themselves in my training; there are a lot of people who gave of themselves in the various math contests I was involved in. And, not to put too fine a point of it, I have a computer job now which is a blessing from God and in which I build on a strong mathematical foundation. It would be silly for me to say, "I am not grateful for this" as God has provided me many blessings through math. But I need to place things like "I have a lot of math awards" alongside what a monk said to a maid and to me: she was fortunate in the job she had, as manual labor that allowed her mind to pray as she was working in inner stillness, while I as a computer person was less fortunate because my job basically required me to be doing things with my mind that don't invite mental stillness. My job may be a profound blessing and something not to take for granted. But he was pointing out that the best jobs for spiritual growth may not be the ones higher on the pecking order.

A streak of escapism

There is a streak of escapism in much of my work. If you read *Within the Steel Orb*, I believe you will find insight expressed with wonder, and I would not take back any of that. But the wisdom, which is wisdom from here and now, is expressed as the alien wisdom of an alien world that panders to a certain escapism. Wisdom and wonder can be expressed without escapism; "Hymn to the Creator of Heaven and Earth" and "Doxology" both express wisdom and wonder in a way that does not need to escape from a disdained here and now. But there is a thread of escapism in

much of my work, even as I have sought to reject it.

During or shortly after I was in high school, I wrote a note in an online forum arguing that *Terminator 2* had shot itself in the foot. The movie had a scene with two little boys angrily playing with toy guns and the voiceover complained about how tragic this was, and at the end the message was made even more explicit: "If a machine, a terminator, can learn the value of human life, maybe we can too." But the movie was an action-adventure movie, meaning a movie whose attraction was built on glorified violence with guns blazing. In terms of a movie that would speak out against violence, contrast it with a movie idea I had, for a movie that would rush along at an action-adventure clip for the first few minutes and then slow down like a European art film; from "Lesser Icons: Reflections on Faith, Icons, and Art:"

What I did do was to outline a film idea for a film that would start out indistinguishably from an action-adventure movie. It would have one of the hero's friends held captive by some cardboard-cutout villains. There is a big operation to sneak in and deftly rescue him, and when that fails, all Hell breaks loose and there is a terrific action-adventure style firefight. There is a dramatic buildup to the hero getting in the helicopter, and as they are leaving, one of the villain's henchmen comes running with a shotgun. Before he can aim, the hero blasts away his knee with a hollow-nosed .45.

The camera surprisingly does not follow the helicopter in its rush to glory, but instead focuses on the henchman for five or ten excruciating minutes as

he curses and writhes in agony. Then the film slows down to explore what that one single gunshot means to the henchman for the remaining forty years of his life, as he nursed a spiritual wound of lust for vengeance that was infinitely more tragic than his devastating physical wound.

By contrast, it may be clearer what might be called shooting yourself in the foot in the *Terminator 2* syndrome, and as far as escapism goes, I have a couple of pieces that shoot themselves in the foot with something like a *Terminator 2* syndrome. In "The Voyage," the miserable young Jason is an escapist and, when he meets an old man, asks the old man's help in an escape he doesn't believe is possible. The old man deftly opens Jason's eyes to the beauty of this world, the beauty of the here and now, that are simply invisible to him. I stand by everything I wrote in that regard. But the closing line, when thanks to the old man Jason triumphs over escapism, is, "And Jason entered another world." Which is to say that the story shot itself in the foot, like *Terminator 2*.

There may be a paradoxical link between escapism and self-absorption. Self-absorption is like being locked in your room and sensing that it is constricting, and so you wish that you could be teleported up to a spaceship and explore the final frontier, or maybe wish for a portal to open up that would take you to the Middle Ages or some fantasy world. And maybe you can get a bit of solace by decorating your room like someplace else and imagining that your room is that other place, and maybe you can pretend and do mind games, but they don't really satisfy. What you miss is what you really need: to unlock the door, walk out, visit a friend,

go shopping, and do some volunteering. It may not be what you could arrange if you were controlling everything, but that's almost exactly the *point*. It may not what you want, but it is what you need, and it satisfies in a way that a quest to become a knight, at least in your imagination, cannot. And my own concerns to escape self-absorption and escapism play out in my writing: "The Spectacles" is more successful than "The Voyage" in telling of an escape from the Hell of self-absorption and escapism; I've been told it's my best short story. But it still has the imprint of self-absorption even as it tells of someone finding way out of self-absorbed escapism. And something of that imprint affects my writing: there are some good things about my fiction, but I have been told that my characters are too similar and are only superficially different. I do not think I will ever receive the kind of compliment given to Charles Dickens, that he envisions a complete universe of different characters. People may say that my satire like *Hayward's Unabridged Dictionary* shows a brilliant wit and is biting funny, but you can be pretty full of yourself and still write good satire. By contrast, it takes humble empathy to make a universe of characters worthy of Dickens.

A door slammed shut:

God's severe mercy

I earned a master's in theology, and entered into a doctoral program. I thought for a long while about how to say something appropriate about that program, and I think the best I can do is this:

I've been through chemotherapy, and that was an

experience: overall, it was not as bad as I feared, and I enjoyed life when I was going through chemotherapy. I still cherish "The Spectacles," the first piece written after a long dry spell because I was drained by illness. I'm not sure it is a nice thing to have powerful cytotoxins injected into your body, and the rough spots included the worst hour of (purely physical) pain in my life, but on the whole, a lot of progress has been made in making chemotherapy not as bad as it used to be, and I had good people to care for me.

And then there are experiences that, to put it politely, put chemotherapy into perspective. My entering this doctoral program and trying to please the people there was one of those experiences into perspective: during that time, I contacted a dean and wrote, "I found chemotherapy easier than dealing with [*a professor I believed was harassing me*]," and received no response beyond a secretary's brush-off. After this ordeal, my grades were just below the cutoff to continue, and that school is not in any way going to give me nice letters of reference to let me finish up somewhere else. I suppose I could answer spam emails and get a diploma mill Ph.D., but I don't see how I am in a position to get the Ph.D. that I wanted badly enough to endure these ordeals.

And if I ask where God was in all this, the answer is probably, "*I was with you, teaching you all the time.*" When I was in middle school, I ranked 7th in the nation in the 1989 MathCounts competition, and I found it obvious then that this was because God wanted me to be a mathematician. For that matter, I didn't go through the usual undergraduate panic about "What will I major in?" Now I find it obvious that God had something else in mind, something greater: discipleship, or sonship, which may pass

through being a mathematician, or may not. Not straying too far from this, I wanted a Ph.D., and I thought that this would be the best way to honor him with my abilities. Again I was thinking too narrowly; I was still too much of the mathematician looking for a book to teach him how to hug; again the answer seemed to be, "*That's not the issue. Aim higher and be my servant.*" As it turns out, I have four years' graduate work in theology; that has some use in my writings, and even if it didn't, the issue is not whether I am a good enough achiever, but whether I am faithful.

During this time I read quite a lot of medieval versions of the legends of King Arthur. There were a couple of things that drew me to them, both of them rather sad. The first was pride, both pride at thinking I was going to be an Arthurian author, and pride at sometimes reading medieval legends in the original.

But the second reason I kept reading them was that compared to what I was covering in theology class, reading the legends almost seemed like I was actually studying *theology*. (At least by comparison.) Whether a course in theological foundations that assumed, "We need to work from the common ground that is shared by all the world's religious traditions, and that universal common ground is Western analytic philosophy," or reading that theologians are scientists and they are every bit as much scientists as people in the so-called "hard sciences" like physics, or a course in "philosophy and contemporary theology" that was largely about queer matters and such topics as ambiguous genitalia, the whole experience was like "Monty Python teaches Christian theology." And it would be a funny, if tasteless joke, but it was really something much more tragic than a Monty Python riff on theology. And in all this the

Arthurian legends, which are really quite pale if they are held next to the grandeur of Christian theology, none the less seemed to give respite for me to study.

In the light of all this, there are three basic things that I wrote. The first is the Arthurian book I wanted to write out of all the medieval books I was reading:

- *The Sign of the Grail*

The second thing is a group ersity; those pieces are not written just in response to being at a "Catholic" university.

- "Dissent: Lessons From Being an Orthodox Theology Student at a Catholic University"
- "An Open Letter to Catholics on Orthodoxy and Ecumenism"
- "Religion and Science Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution"

I believe there is some merit in these pieces, but not that much: if they say something that needs to be said, they are limited to winning an argument. Theology can win an argument and some of the best theology is meant to win an argument, but the purpose of real theological writing is to draw people into the presence of God. These pieces may say something valuable, but they do not really do the job of theology: *beckon the reader to worship before the throne of God.*

But that leaves the third group of pieces written in the wake of that un-theological theology program, and that is precisely pieces which are written to draw the reader to

bask in the glory of God. The ones I would pick as best are:

- “Doxology”
- “God the Spiritual Father”
- “Lesser Icons: Reflections on Faith, Icons, and Art”
- “Silence: Organic Food for the Soul”
- “Technonomicon: Technology, Nature, Asceticism”

So where does this leave me now?

I think I've made real progress but I still have a lot in common with that mathematician who bought a book so he could learn how to hug. Be that as it may, I have a lot to be thankful for.

I had my heart set on completing my program, but in 2005 I started a Ph.D. program that was estimated to take eight years to complete. And since then, the economy tanked. And in this, a gracious and merciful God didn't give me what I *wanted*, but what I *needed*. Actually, more than that. In the aftermath of the program, I took some anthropology and linguistics coursework which on the one hand confirmed that I was already good at learning languages (the woman who scored the MLAT for me said, "I've scored this test for thirty years and I've never seen a score this high,") and on the other hand, paradoxically provided good remedial understanding of things I just didn't *get* about my own culture. And there's something I'd like to point out about that. God provided academic coursework to teach me some things that most people just pick up as they grow, and perhaps studying academic

theology was what God provided to help me get on to something that is at once more basic, greater, and more human: entering the Orthodox Church, and entering real, human theology.

But back to after the anthropology courses. Then the economy took a turn for the worse, and I found a good job. Then the economy got worse than that, and my job ended, and I had my fast job hunt yet and found an even better than that. There's no way I'm entitled to this; it is God's gracious providence at work. These are blessings covered in the divine fingerprints.

I still have failings to face: rather spectacular failings which I'd rather not detail. And it God's grace that I am still learning of my clumsiness and my sin, and realize I really need to face ways I don't measure up. But that is really not the issue.

Does God work with flawed people?

Who else does he have to work with?

He has glorious, majestic, awesome, terrifying holy angels. But there is another glory when God works in and through flawed people.

Even the sort of mathematician who would read a book on how to hug (or maybe write one). The worst of our flaws is like an ember thrown into the ocean of God's transforming power.

And the same God wills to work in you, whatever your flaws may be.

Much love,

Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward

Character Sheet

Christos

(See picture on next screen.)



Classes and Levels:

- Level 7 Aristocrat
- Level 8 Adept
- Level 2 Monk
- Level 1 Assassin

Stats and Basic Info:

Race/Template: Human

Sex: Male

Alignment: Lawful Good

Religion / Patron Deity: Orthodox Christian

STR: 12
DEX: 10
CON: 8
INT: 18
WIS: 16
CHA: 8

26

C.J.S. Hayward

Hit Points: 76

BAB: +8

Fortitude: 11

Reflex: 13

Will: 22

Possessions on person:

- Woodland colored clothing.
- Swiss Army Knife toolchest.
- Watch, 200 meter water resistant, with compass, barometer/altimeter, self-charging.
- Steel toed combat boots.
- Leather duster.
- Portable computer that is designed for outdoor use in inclement weather and can run any operating system he wants and any programming language he wants.

Feats

- Ambidexterity
- Craft Wondrous Software
- Craft Wondrous Writing
- Dodge
- Improved Unarmed Strike
- Toughness
- Weapon Specialization, Crossbow

Skills

- **Balance:** 15
- **Climb:** 18
- **Concentration:** 18
- **Decipher Script:** 19
- **Disguise:** 12

- **Diplomacy:** 17
- **Handle Animal:** 14
- **Heal:** 17
- **Hide:** 22
- **Knowledge** Architecture/Engineering: 20, Geography 20, History 20, Nature 20, Nobility/Royalty 20, Religion 35, Literature: 20
- **Languages:** English 22, French 21, Spanish 20, Italian 19, Latin 19, Greek 19, Python 24, HTML5 22, CSS3 21, JavaScript: 23
- **Listen:** 17
- **Move Silently:** 22
- **Perform:** Keyboard 10, Oratory 15
- **Profession:** Author 20, Developer 20
- **Ride:** 11
- **Swim:** 14

- **Tumble:** 11
- **Use Rope:** 12

Description

Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward is not a druid.

He lays claim to none of druidic spells, nor any of the druidic special abilities, and that he lays claim to a few of a Woodsman's skills and even some of a druid's auxiliary skills, is really beside the point.

But to state that much and stop is to paint a deceptive picture, almost to give a confusion of ideas that prevents truth from being seen. Christos does not worship nature, even if he does worship the Lord of Nature hymned in Hymn to the Creator of Heaven and Earth, but he is pursuing a deeper root of harmony with nature than is to be found by nature worship.

We read in the Player's Handbook:

The fury of a storm, the gentle strength of the morning sun, the cunning of a fox, the power of a bear—all these and more are at the druid's command. That, she claims, is the empty boast of a city dweller. The druid, however, claims no mastery over nature. The druid gains her power not by ruling nature but being one with it. To trespassers in a druid's sacred grove, to those who feel the druid's wrath, the distinction is overly fine.

"The distinction is overly fine." Christos wrote "Physics," or a discussion of the nature of things, and his Tradition (not him personally, but men who are to him brothers) create monastics who are not harmed by wild animals, and who can approach and be approached by animals that are ordinarily afraid of humans—and this is

not an exceptional feat. Even now he does well with children and animals, talking away the pain of a little girl's smashed thumb or spending twenty minutes with a dog nervous about men and after that one session leaving the dog bounding to meet the other men in a group. Druids avoid carrying excessive amounts of worked metal, and such a character alive today would be very wary of spending excessive amounts of time in front of a computer screen, even without the issue of soul-destroying porn. And on the point of long amounts of time staring at a computer, phone, or tablet screen, Christos has shown that with a very light touch Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" of life once removed from ultimate reality becomes *The Allegory of the... Flickering Screen?* of life *twice* removed from ultimate reality.

He brings qualifiers; there is something of wakeup call in Exotic golden ages and restoring harmony with nature, and his "Technonomicon: Technology, Nature, Ascesis" both explores harmony with nature and sets it on a deeper base, that of questing for the virtues.

We read again:

Druids, in keeping with nature's ultimate indifference, must maintain some measure of dispassion. As such, they must be neutral in some way, if not true neutral. Just as nature encompasses dichotomies of life and death, beauty and horror, peace and violence, so two druids can manifest different or even opposite alignments (neutral good and neutral evil, for instance) and still be the part of the druidic tradition.

Dispassion, or *apatheia* (Greek ἀπαθεια, not to be confused with "apathy") is a central tenet of his Tradition, but it is set upon a deeper base: *apatheia* may be compared to commanding the helm of a ship and keeping it on its course when the winds of passion, trial, and temptation

would have it blown off course or capsized. This is close to the heart of being Lawful Good; The Ladder of Divine Ascent places *apatheia* at the height of the Ladder's peak, second only to faith, hope, and love as the highest height of its peak. It is less true that this dispassion is Lawful Good as that Lawful Good emanates from this dispassion.

One last quote:

...druids are part of a society that spans the land, ignoring political borders... still, all druids recognize each other as brothers and sisters.

In the visible Orthodox Church (not invisible), Orthodox Christians are brothers and sisters, all sons of the same God. To quote a saying that has rumbled down through the ages:

“The Son of God became a Man that men might become the Sons of God.”—“The Divine became Human that the Human might become Divine.”—“God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man that men might become gods and the sons of God.”

Christos seeks deification, not through the nearly demigod status of a 18 ECL, but as something offered to the humble and available at any level, here and now.

And he is fond of the Desert Fathers, among many others:

A brother asked one of the elders: What good thing shall I do, and have life thereby? The old man replied: God alone knows what is good. However, I have heard it said that someone inquired of Father Abbot Nisteros the great, the friend of Abbot Anthony, asking: What good work shall I do? And that he replied: Not all works are alike. For Scripture says that Abraham was hospitable, and God was with him. Elias loved solitary prayer, and God was with him. And David was humble, and God was with him. Therefore,

whatever you see your soul to desire according to God, do that thing, and you shall keep your heart safe.

In the ancient world, Jews embraced Holy Orthodoxy because they found it the fulfillment of Judaism, and pagans embraced Holy Orthodoxy and scarcely less found it the fulfillment of paganism: the heights of pagan philosophy, such as Platonic and Stoic, were well retained. And perhaps it is that in Holy Orthodoxy has found the fulfillment of druidry: at least, when he is deepened far enough, Merlin becomes Christ.

In the broad field a life oriented to contemplation, and on a practical level, as he was called by one boss, “Jack of all trades and master of many.”

A quote:

[Other name changed]

Christos [Puts hand on the shoulder of the father of teenage Adam]: “Adam hurt my feelings.”

Adam [confused]: “How did I do *that*?”

Christos: “Fess up, Adam, and then we’ll both know.”

Modern Character Sheet

Br. Christos

Classes and Levels:

- Level 15 Renaissance Man
- Level 7 Orthodox Mystic
- Level 1 Orthodox Monastic

Stats and Basic Info:

Race/Template: Human

Gender: Male

Alignment: Lawful Good

Religion / Patron Deity: Orthodox Christian

STR: 12

DEX: 10

CON: 8

INT: 18

WIS: 16

CHA: 8

Hit Points: 76

BAB: +8

Fortitude: 11

Reflex: 13

Will: 22

Renaissance man areas of skill:

Major areas:

Master's degrees bridging mathematics and computers (UIUC) and theology and philosophy (Cambridge)

Anthropology / Cultures

Computer Science / Programming

Linguistics / Languages

Mathematics

Philosophy

Theology

User Experience

Writing

Possessions on person:

- Black robes.
- Swiss Army Knife toolchest.
- Portable computer that is designed for outdoor use in inclement weather and can run any operating system he wants and any programming language he wants.
- A non-5G iPhone which he would not trade for a new

one.

Feats

- Ambidexterity
- Craft Wondrous Software
- Craft Wondrous Writing
- Dodge
- Improved Unarmed Strike
- Toughness
- Weapon Specialization, Crossbow
- Weapon Double Specialization, Rifle

Skills

- **Balance:** 15
- **Climb:** 18
- **Concentration:** 18
- **Decipher Script:** 19
- **Disguise:** 12
- **Diplomacy:** 17
- **Handle Animal:** 14
- **Heal:** 17
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- **Knowledge** Architecture/Engineering: 20, Geography 20, History 20, Nature 20, Nobility/Royalty 20, Religion 35, Literature: 20
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- **Perform:** Keyboard 10, Oratory 15

- **Profession:** Author 20, Developer 20
- **Ride:** 11
- **Tumble:** 11
- **Use Rope:** 12

Description

Brother Christos is a born renaissance man, with activities from inspired keyboard improvisation to making a four-dimensional maze, from writing “A Dream of Light” to a Myst-like souvenir from Cambridge, and more.

He has had a lot of being in the right place at the right time, and started his first and now most extensive website at cjsheyward.com, within a year or two of the web's founding. His preserved works at the Internet archive are as old as the archive itself.

In recent years he has increasingly focused on being a student of Orthodox patristics, and more specifically asking what is good for man, and more specifically than that, how to navigate a technology-laden maze when many mainstream options are ultimately counter-productive. His magnum opus, called *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*, looks at the maze *and how to navigate it* in a many-sided way, and over half of the preferred introduction to his works, *C.J.S. Hayward in Under 99 Pages*, are pulled from his extensive works on technology and man. Likewise, his autobiography is titled, *Orthodox Theology and Technology: A Profoundly Gifted Autobiography*.

With years, the transformational nature of the Orthodox spiritual path has helped him to grow, and part of that growth is being deeply calm, a contagious calm that settles on those around him, and has had some people

wanting to be with him so that part of the calm will rub off onto them. For them he wrote "Calm."

And he always meeting some of his readers, and you are invited to contact him.

A quote:

[Other name changed]

Christos [Puts hand on the shoulder of the father of teenage Adam]: "Adam hurt my feelings."

Adam [confused]: "How did I do *that*?"

Christos: "Fess up, Adam, and then we'll both know."

An Author Interview by... *the Author Himself!*

Interviewer: You're interviewing yourself? Some of your opponents might say that's a bit odd and egotistical. I'd like to give you a chance to respond to what your opponents are saying.

C.S. Hayward: Um, well, yes, I have plenty of ego, and this is a bit unusual, and some people who know me might find it a surprise, if perhaps a believable surprise. But may I comment?

Interviewer: Certainly. What do you have to say for yourself?

C.S. Hayward: As far as denying that I am proud, I'm not interested in defending myself. If I am to be defended, and I am not innocent, my defense would best be spoken by others' lips. But as for a reason, I do have a particular practical reason for such an odd process.

Interviewer: What's that?

C.S. Hayward: Awesome Gang offers a free interview for an author to promote his book, and I can only call that a work of mastery for all kinds of authors offering all kinds of books. But there is a weakness in such a master-stroke: the cookie cutter allows discussion of the Scandal of the Particular, but I wished something almost entirely *driven* by suchlike scandal. I want questions that allow me to speak, and at times much more particular questions, even if (for instance) my website's author biography is very unusual for a personal biography:

Who is Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward? A man, made in the image of God and summoned to ascend to the heights of the likeness of God. A great sinner, and in fact, the chief of sinners. One who is, moment by moment, in each ascetical decision choosing to become one notch more a creature of Heaven, or one notch more a creature of Hell, until his life is spent and his eternal choice between Heaven and Hell is eternally sealed.

Man, mediator, midpoint, microcosm, measure: as man he is the recapitulation of the entire spiritual and visible creation, having physical life in common with plants and animals, and noetic life in common with rank upon rank of angel host, and forever in the shadow of that moment when Heaven kissed earth and God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man that men and the sons of men might become gods and the sons of God.

He's also a writer with a few hobbies, but really, there are more important things in life.

Interviewer: What would you respond to people who say *that's* not really the scandal of particular!

C.S. Hayward: It draws attention to something overlooked in a standard statement of what makes your uniqueness, as marketers would have it. I claim for myself the glory and the shame of being human. And I stand indebted to one monk who had managed some prestigious obediences, but as far as the story of his coming to Orthodoxy, wrote, “The story of _____’s coming to Orthodoxy was told to the priest who received him, under the seal of confession, and he received absolution for his sins.” And I can’t really do better than that. Or rather, I have only said anything much better and much more specific than that under the seal of absolution. I’ve had an interesting life story, and other aspects are told in my autobiography, *Orthodox Theology and Technology* (my first impulse was to mention *The Luddite’s Guide to Technology*, which I consider my work most likely to be significant). But the distinction I seek is in repentance, both in the sense of something all Orthodox are called to, and as a term for monasticism.

Interviewer: “Orthodox Theology and Technology?” Do you consider yourself a theologian?

C.S. Hayward: The story is told of a liberal scholar who went to the Holy Mountain and told a monk that he was a theologian, and the monk suddenly acted very obsequious and began kissing his feet. The academician asked why on earth the monk was acting that way, and the monk explained, “We had St. John the Theologian, and then some centuries later we had St. Gregory the Theologian, and then some centuries after that we had St. Symeon the New Theologian, and now, we have... *you!*”

It is not a respected affirmation that one is the fourth in

that series, but if I may speak for the “underdog perspective” (Fr. Seraphim of Platina said it is noble to defend the underdog), the standard Western use of “theologian,” especially without the idea that you bracket any religious beliefs you have and work in theology in an atheistic approach, is a concept that has legitimate use, and in a devout Western setting the claim to be a theologian is not meant or taken as a claim to be the fourth of that august company that directly experience God. For that matter, the Philokalia talks about people engaging in “theology”, meaning the direct experience of God and not the accumulation of the more usual kind knowledge concerning God.

Orthodoxy in recent years, to fill the gap of someone who works to understand God without the claim to be the fourth in that august company, has developed the term “patrologist” to mean someone who devoutly studies what academics trade in, and is the general term for someone who has not specialized in something with a more specific term. And I would claim to be a patrologist lite, perhaps not the best out there even in my interests. It’s kind of a way of answering a Westerner’s question of whether I study what a Westerner would consider theology, but without the implications of a claim to be the fourth Theologian in the Orthodox Church’s history.

I was studying at an Orthodox seminary, but that seemed to get derailed because my need-based financial aid was not registered, and my strong hope is to get to St. Demetrios’s monastery in Virginia whether it takes one trip or several, insofar as I am able to. I’m not sure if you’ve read *Everyday Saints and Other Stories*, but the words are fragrant with the fragrance of Heaven yet simple such I have rarely, if ever, pulled off myself. In

that book, Orthodox seminarians tend to be arrogant and clueless, enough so that a seminarian who should know enough patristics to know that the Orthodox Church claims a wealth of only three Theologians, introduces himself as a theologian and is surprised when he is asked, “You’re the fourth?” And I wonder if having introduced myself as a seminarian I have introduced myself as arrogant and clueless in like terms.

Interviewer: Um, you’re introducing yourself as “C.S. Hayward.”

C.S. Hayward Yes, and may I say a few things about that?

First, I owe C.S. Lewis a greater debt than perhaps any mortal writer. I’ve read 90% of all he has written, including some of *The Neglected C.S. Lewis*, and he shaped me enough as an author that I’ve been told, “You write like an Englishman.”

And there’s also what Graham Clinton, founder of International Christian Mensa, said.

Interviewer: What’s that?

C.S. Hayward: I asked him, in perhaps inexcusable vanity, if I might be the next C.S. Lewis. His first reply could be taken as a very diplomatic “No.” He said, “Sure, you could be, but why would you want to?”

But the next major point he tried to make was really about how the World Wars emphatically “killed off all our talent.” He said simply that all the A-level talent in England got killed off, leaving B’s like C.S. Lewis to be promoted when they would otherwise have had to work

for a living (his term). The implication was that I was A-level talent wanting to be compared to B-level talent.

And on Facebook, which isn't too keen on having people known by initialism, entered my name as Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward, expecting it to be collapsed and yield "CJSH." Readers found enough kindness and affinity to condense to "CSH" meaning, "C.S. Hayward." So why not?

Interviewer: So what has life been like? I noticed that you are applying, at 46, to a monastery that's looking for novices in their 30's.

C.S. Hayward: Yes; may I say a word about that?

Interviewer: Certainly.

C.S. Hayward: That is not simply an arbitrary or superstitious requirement; they are presumably looking for people who still have a certain flexibility to be able to adjust to monastic ways. And may I speak about that?

Interviewer: Yes.

C.S. Hayward: The mainstream understanding of learning languages is that languages are best learned as a child, and not as an adult. However, this is a rule of thumb and not an unyielding principle. The usual course of language development is to learn one's first language, and then redeploy the grey matter that can learn languages once no new languages are being learned. But I've continued to learn languages, if not always very well, and at Cambridge I was told I was learning Greek as a child did. And when I took the

modern languages aptitude test, as an adult, I scored (*mumble*) and was told for instance, “I’ve been scoring this test for thirty years and I’ve never seen a score this high.” I have master’s degrees in math and “theology.” Both were interdisciplinary, and both were from a world-class institution: UIUC and Cambridge.

I don’t want to mindread or psychologize what would motivate a monastery to make such a request, since retirees have become successful monks, but the obvious concern is a rational one: the monastery may prefer candidates who are not too set in their ways to adapt to monastic life.

And I have continued to have changing life circumstances: studying and returning to school, ineptly fitting recruiter roles in information technology, and retirement on disability. I was able to survive for two years studying theology at Fordham, and I have continued to make major adjustments every few years ago. So I believe I could age-wise be accommodated to monasticism. I’ve kept alive the ability to adjust to different circumstances as I’ve kept alive, at least badly, the ability to learn languages (and have read the Bible in English, French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Slavonic, and modern Russian and just dipped into Ukrainian). I have a T-shirt that says, “Я ез США. Говорите медленное пожалуйста” (“I’m from the USA. Please speak slowly.”).

Interviewer: Who made it?

C.S. Hayward: I did, and I’ve been clearly advised not to wear it to a Slavic monastery. I might still use it as a night mask or as an undershirt.

Interviewer: I've just taken a look at Profoundly Gifted and Orthodox at Fordham. Eek! What sense did you make of *that*?

C.S. Hayward: The biggest is that the forces of evil only have a hand on me so far as I disobeyed. The first time they needlessly endangered my life, it was strongly in my conscience to complain to the President of the university. I failed to do so; had I obeyed, I might have had a channel open when things went really wrong. Also, I tried the hardest of my life to befriend the great Fr. John Behr, identified as A_____ in the document. My conscience was to give him a wide, wide berth. My faults ratified others' decisions and failings.

But there is one thing I would like to clarify.

Interviewer: Yes?

C.S. Hayward: I haven't ever really been off-track except as... I may have tried plan A to get a Ph.D., and then a plan B, and then a plan C, and so on down the alphabet, but my as my spiritual director told me during one of our first meetings, God is always on plan A, even if we think we're going down the alphabet. Even if I never succeeded at further entering a doctoral program or getting an academic position, even a community college adjunct professorship at a large College of DuPage.

Interviewer: You think you're on a Plan A?

C.S. Hayward: Bookmark and read "God the Spiritual Father" sometime. I am not on my own Plan A, but God is on Plan A. The International Christian Mensa Founder's unflinching, ever-polite requests for me to wake up, said, "Your job is not to write the books that PhD's

write. Your job is to write the books that PhD's *read*." And I have written books for scholars and nonscholars, gently suggested that Fr. John's St. Vladimir's Seminary can stop sucking Fordham's staff, in more ways than one. (I've gone through that discipline myself.) I have also had a whole lot of being in the right place at the right time. My website is enormous, with a print "Complete Works" series that occupies eleven volumes of four to six hundred pages, and that's a dense four to six hundred pages per book. Not all of it is excellent, but some are pretty good.

Interviewer: Sounds like you've shined through some pretty rough stuff.

C.S. Hayward: I have a lot to be grateful for, and not just in relation for my writing. I have a covered dental visit coming up where I'll end up with a root canal, crown, and partial being paid for. You may say that a root canal is little to be excited about, but really, having dental work covered is something to be grateful for.

Interviewer: And you are grateful.

C.S. Hayward: I am not worthy or capable of thanking God adequately for all the good he continues to show for me. But I give praise, even when I am unworthy to give praise.

And I am glad to be visiting the monastery. I don't know if they will require multiple visits, or whether they'll follow a practice on the Holy Mountain and allow me to come as a pilgrim and stay as a novice. But in any case, the abbot's decision will be part of God's Plan A, even if I am not allowed to join. All that's really left to me is due diligence. And I'm working hard on the "due

diligence” part, such as having a collection of pants with varying waist sizes so I’ll have pants that fit me as my waist shrinks on a monastic diet. I’m really looking forward to it, I’ve been told the abbot is kind, and even if he makes a decision I don’t want him to make, God will still be on Plan A.

Onwards and Upwards, as we said at Avery Coonley School!

Escape

I want to write today something to do with happiness, something that is interwoven with my whole life story.

“You are too old, children,” said Aslan, “and you must begin to come close to your own world now.”

“It isn’t Narnia, you know,” added Lucy. “It’s you. We shan’t meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?”

“Are—are you there too, Sir?” said Edmund.

“I am,” said Aslan. “But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.”

These words, from the end of a book by C.S. Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia* were for me a big spiritual turnoff for as long as I can remember. (They went over my head

when my father read *The Chronicles of Narnia* to my brother and me as little boys.)

When I read those words, they could not but grate because I wanted to continue to live vicariously in Narnia, not our world which seemed so drab and dull, and I was more interested in Aslan than a real Christ. And here I wish to touch on something.

The term “occult” has a few senses and meanings; it can mean supernatural power not given by God; or it can mean something that may or may not be supernatural but is very obscure and known to few. One classic study of occult memory techniques in Renaissance times is occult in both senses. By contrast, a familiarity with the story of the twelve paladins as heroic literature may or may not be occult in its supernatural dimension but is occult in the sense of being obscure. Today, Harry Potter and the X-Men may glorify an imaginary occult world but they are not occult in the sense of being obscure by the standards of pop culture: both of them are backed by tremendous marketing muscle to be a global financial powerhouse, and one need not try to delve into obscure matters to start becoming interested in either.

At that point I remember being puzzled by a counselor showing something almost like a patriotism towards one of the colleges in Harry Potter; in one sense it may seem harmless enough but I would expect a psychologist to know enough about happiness not to build a proper patriotism for something not literally available. I remember in reading “How to Be a Hacker” that talked about “hackers” (software experts who are usually not focused on breaking computer security) as being “neophiles”, meaning people who, like the “Athenians and strangers” of the Bible in Acts 17:21, “... spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear

some new thing.” And though technologies change and develop and there is little end to which changes of some sort are available, one of the big things I read on reading propaganda for HTML5 is that the axe ground against its predecessor XHTML spoke of an appetite for change in excess of the admittedly significant technical changes HTML5 heralded. The amount of bad smell attributed to XHTML was reminiscent of New Age people grinding an axe against Newton, or perhaps today Einstein, as a primary authority figure. My involvement in physics, for instance, never really turned up figures grinding an axe against past paradigms by physicists. Newtonian physics may be considered to have been surpassed, but I was taught Newtonian physics before relativity, and engineers (and for that matter some physicists) routinely stick with Newtonian physics in a large number of cases where the discrepancy between Newtonian and relativistic physics (or quantum mechanics, or superstring theory) is dwarfed by much larger imprecision in other matters. And being a neophile is a downwind attribute of finding that things one already has are just *boring* and really not being happy with life as it is. I would expect a psychologist to know, not so much that enough involvement in literal occult activities is a recipe to lose your mind, but that placing what is rightly called patriotism in a mere fantasy setting is a recipe to find what one can literally *have*, to be quite dull in comparison. Perhaps a degree of curiosity towards new things is helpful in rapidly changing times, but boredom with tried and true technology is not an attribute of happiness, and patriotism for Hogwarts represents a problem in the first world that is not, as the idiom goes, a “first world problem.” A true first world problem is something minor that is blown out of

proportion. A spiritual condition that can let you be in circumstances coveted worldwide and not appreciate it is a matter of grave concern. In a world where many are hungry, many lack clothing or shelter, where many lack a safe place to stay, many people wish for a lot that comes easily in the USA, and is taken for granted when one pines for Harry Potter and Hogwarts. A true “first world problem” is something like having a cracked phone screen or having to use cheaper and rougher toilet paper, for the lack of graver and more pressing concerns. Being an American white middle class professional is something that is coveted around the world. (Being an American white middle class professional who thinks her lot is dull, and pines for a bit of spice in patriotism for Hogwarts, is a significant missed spiritual opportunity.)

I harp on escapism because even though I have resisted some of its manifestations, it is something I know well, and it is not innocent or harmless. I imitated the staring in one place that opened a portal to a magical world in *The Last of the Really Great Whang-Doodles*; in a French language novel by a friend, there was no question about whether escape was to be found, only of how it might be ferreted out. There is also in fiction the possibility of intense concentration or some other intense psychological state breaking through; though it is not exactly a delivery of *escape* by which the curse is broken at the end of *Ella Enchanted*, the ace card that trumps magic nothing else could ever break illustrates another portal by which escape is provided in literature. In my own experience, reading or dipping into games can be a way to imbibe tainted spiritual realities as well.

My own attempted interest in Arthurian legends (in

The Sign of the Grail, I omitted entirely one part of the rhythm of Arthurians where two knights hacked each other to death's door and were both well a few weeks later (contrast history where a sword duel was usually eventually fatal to *both* duelists), is relatively unique in that I don't see the fountainhead as being Sir Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, but studied the medieval flourishing that escaped Celtic folklore into mainstream European popularity in the 12th century "Brut", and was finally transformed into a 1000 page synopsis by Mallory as the end of a flourish. (And I tried hard to convince myself that reading an arbitrarily long sample of Arthurian legend is fascinating. Most of the time I was fighting uphill to convince myself that what I was reading was interesting, when I knew it was deadly dull.)

These Arthurian legends, told and retold and formed and reformed from about the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, concern a time frame of allegedly the sixth century. The times in which the stories were told were separated from the time they occurred in by about as many centuries as the reteller's timeframe is distant to us historically, before history and period awareness were really discovered in Western culture.

For just a slice of what changed between the sixth century and the centuries of these retellings, such things as *knights* who fought on horseback and *jousts* simply were not available in sixth century England. Historically knights were mounted shock troops who fought from on horseback, and that depends on the *stirrup*, a technology not available in sixth century England. Without stirrups, horses can be useful but they can only take you to a battle scene faster where you can fight on foot. A knight riding on horseback in

a battle, or in a joust, simply was not available in the sixth century any more in the sixth century any more than people in the twelfth through fifteenth centuries would have been able to coordinate their combat by using modern radios, walkie-talkies, and cellphones in a world where news really couldn't travel faster than people.

They are the medieval equivalent of our fantasy TV shows having Robin Hood's merry band go through a haunted house, and have Maid Marian confronted with a magical apparition the other side of a mirror and saying, "I am having... a *biochemical... reaction!*" or otherwise show scriptwriters who know how fantasy storytelling works today, but do not share Lewis's and Tolkien's writing of medieval fantasy out of a profound knowledge of medieval literature and history. And in the days when these Arthurian legends were rampant, it really is not academic peskiness to suggest that chivalry was the real religion of the nobles, or to observe that Western Europeans traveling to the Byzantine empire participated in the dangerous sport of jousting that was practiced one place and the other sometime around the thirteenth century. "People now don't really love," to quote a repeated didactic comment about courtly love by a troubador, are the kind of signal that tells the historian that the milieu of medieval mania for Arthurian legend embodies courtly love as never before.

(And something of the same sensitivity gives me hope when Orthodox say that too little of the greatness of ancient monasticism is alive now, because it may signal a flourishing quite independent of our needing to re-create the conditions of the Egyptian deserts met by the followers of St. Anthony the Great. *The Philokalia* is very widely read among the faithful today, and that in and of itself is

exciting.)

My mother showed consternation in relating a report that children surveyed would “rather be rich and unhappy than be poor and happy,” but the consternation played out in circumstances in my life. Many people today would rather be escapist and ungrateful and unhappy with the here and now than be happy and grateful with the here and now.

I had the privilege of studying at the University of Cambridge in England, and in a very real sense that was an escape into a golden other world for me. A real Narnia to me, if you will. And it did not make me happy; I very much preferred being in Europe when the opportunity was open even if I was unhappy there. It was not until after I had returned to the U.S. that I learned how to be happy in the here and now. Years after that I traveled to Mount Athos, and I was expecting to feel better, but I was just happy, if the word “*just*” is appropriately used in such a case. The voyage was one of tremendous blessing to me, but I did not feel better for a transition to the Holy Mountain’s medieval settings.

When I was at Cambridge I was received into the Orthodox Church, and I bristled when I read Vladyka KALLISTOS’s comment in *The Orthodox Church* that Orthodoxy “is not something Oriental or exotic,” because that is precisely what I wanted Orthodoxy to be for me. I also bristled when the priest who received me said, “Orthodoxy is slog!” Now, years and a decade later, I find that Orthodoxy *transforms* slog.

My “escape from escape” essentially unfolded as

follows. When I had been leaning enough on, for instance, subtle mind tricks, one priest commented to me that monks in the desert were perennially warned about escape, with pastoral advice of praying through the temptation until it was gone. And I finally came to a point where I bleakly let go of escape, when all of my desire on one level was to escape the bleak here and now, and in an instant my eyes were opened and I no longer found the here and now to be bleak. Nowadays, the temptation comes back from time to time and I need to keep on intensely praying through the temptation the Fathers called “the demon of noonday,” but even if the activity of prayer is initially bleaker, I know where victory comes from. When I pray through the temptation, sooner or later it leaves, and I find that the here and now bears some of the marks of Paradise.

“The road less traveled” is today the embrace of the here and now instead of trying to find happiness via escapism, and leaving the broad highway of escapism for the narrow and straight road less traveled, by all means, makes all the difference.

Orthodox Theology and Technology: *A Profoundly Gifted Autobiography*

O Lord, I know not what to ask of Thee. Thou alone knowest what are my true needs. Thou lovest me more than I myself know how to love. Help me to see my real needs which are concealed from me. I do not dare to ask either a cross or a consolation. I can only wait on Thee. My heart is open to Thee. Visit and help me, for the sake of Thy great mercy. Strike me and heal me; cast me down and raise me up. I worship in silence Thy holy will and Thine unsearchable ways. I offer myself as a sacrifice to Thee. I have no other desire than to fulfill Thy will. Teach me to pray. Pray Thou Thyself in me. Amen.

St. Philaret of Moscow, a high rank of bishop, unusually named after a layman, St. Philaret the Merciful.

It is not particularly unusual for a teenager to lie awake in bed and wonder about the biggest questions: “Who are we?”, “Where did we come from?”, “Where will we go?”

What is unusual in my case, as I wondered and tried to answer questions like, “Is there an external world?”, “Can there be a perpetual motion machine?”—”If so, how can it get started?” “What does it mean to be “Jonathan Hayward?””, “Am I a being of the same class as those I observe about me?”, is that I was not a teenager. I was a little boy, too young to think about any of those questions in words. and so I worked out my idiosyncratic and even solipsistic metaphysics by thinking in pictures, and this is in fact my earliest memory.

People (some agree, some don't) say that a person's earliest memory can be illuminating, and it has been commented that this is an unusual first memory. I have read a number of people's earliest memory stories, and not one that I have read is like this. The one that jumps to memory is a girl saying she remembered her Mom holding her and then passing her to another woman, and asking, “Who is this?” and being told, “That's your grandmother.” An earliest memory is normally a story, not to mention simple and concrete. I was a bit of an outlier.

But I am getting ahead of myself.

I was born in 1975, a firstborn son to John and Linda Hayward, when my father was a grad student. My father studied physics, and my mother would go on to study the

teaching of English to speakers of other languages. I was born almost three weeks overdue. A botch by my Mom's obstetrician meant that at my birth both my mother and I were fighting a deadly infection. I spoke in complete sentences before my first birthday, and at the age of two fell down stairs and hit my head on a concrete basement floor. My eyes rolled back and I did not respond to stimuli. I survived, but spoke slowly, spoke very little, and stuttered. My Mom prayed over me and the stuttering was taken away. When my father had graduated and I was one, my parents moved to Macomb, Illinois, where my father taught at Illinois State University (their homepage shows a young woman wearing goggles that are simply inappropriate for the work she is doing, a common syndrome when photographers try to make a model look scientific). A major goal in their move was to be able to raise me outside of smog. When I was three, my family moved again, to the house where I have my earliest memory, and where my father began teaching at Wheaton College, where he worked until retirement. He had studied physics, but worked in computer science, and served both as a professor and a high-level in-house consultant at Wheaton. He introduced me to puzzles and questions relating to what we found most interesting in computer science (e.g. a question about the foundational 'pigeon hole principle:' "You are in a dark room and cannot see at all, and have a drawer full of mixed black and white socks. What is the minimum number of socks you can take to be sure you have a matched pair?"), and Unix computer games, which I dialed into by modem.

Schooling from kindergarten on

I have fond memories of Lowell Elementary School, where I entered in kindergarten, sometimes dressed up as a cowboy with chaps or in a suit, and attended until third grade, when school and my parents sensed that I would do better at a specifically gifted school, and I entered Avery Coonley School in fourth grade, where the headmaster bent a number of rules and awarded me 25% of the total financial aid awarded by the school for that year so my parents could afford to send me. I was initially placed in the less advanced of two math groups (one year ahead instead of two), and in eighth grade ranked 7th nationally in the 1989 MathCounts competition, programmed a four dimensional maze, conducted an independent study of calculus, and (re)invented recursion in programming and iterated integration in calculus.

After a brief class in modern algebra for math whizzes at the the University of Chicago which I didn't really get, I skipped a freshman year at a local school to enter the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, where I continued to get high ranks in math contests, ran a Unix server that did the work of a local and hard-to-use social network. and actively participated in discussions, and programmed a video game on my calculator. Someone commented later that this was the first video game they'd heard of where you *lose* points for shooting things, although I wasn't trying to be original. (I was trying to implement a game I'd envisioned in gradeschool.) In order to justify a decision, my high school asked me to take an IQ test, and the psychologist scoring the test almost fell off her chair.

The summer after my junior year of high school I

trained as an Emergency Medical Technician at College of DuPage because I was frustrated at the shallowness of what I had taken in first aid class. I was also unsatisfied with the Emergency Medical Technician training, as it seemed to me then to only teach enough medicine to package patients up and ship them to the local emergency room, but there have been a few times I've used my training: once two summers later, in Malaysia, where I helped provide some faint parody of suspected spinal injury management in helping a motorcycle accident victim, who had evidence of serious internal injury, get to the emergency room when he was loaded into a nearby van instead of an ambulance. I also used knowledge about heat, years after that, to get an elderly dog to stop shivering after she was taken outside for a potty break and made a lethargic beeline to the place in the yard where the wind was least bitter, and stood there, shivering, until I picked her up and carried her back inside and did what I could to raise her body temperature. (I do not think she would have survived for more than a few hours more if I had not had that prior medical knowledge.)

I mentioned that two summers later I was in Malaysia. It was wonderful and I didn't want to leave. The rest of my family went there for a calendar year; I choosed to stay in the U.S. for my freshman year of college, but joined my family for the summer. It awakened a lifelong interest in culture and the many ways time can be experienced, but beyond that I would refer to a book on writing college admissions essays which talked about avoiding clichés that college admissions officers are tired of reading, which included pet death and The Travel Experience, which runs something like, "In my trip to _____, I met new people and new ways of doing things. _____ challenged

assumptions I didn't even know I had, and has changed me forever. [*And so on and so forth about life in _____.*]” Please note that this description is entirely ambiguous about what continent, island, or space station “_____” was located on. Living in Malaysia was a life-changing experience, an eye-opener, and a delight, however I try to be careful to avoid stretching social patience in talking about my cherished travel experiences. Those who have already had a travel experience know what it is like; those who haven't don't want to hear me gush on and on.

I entered Wheaton College as a National Merit Scholar, but ran aground on a particular community requirement which, like others before and after me, some Christians are not comfortable with. When I stopped running from my conscience, I took the unprecedented step of appealing to the Board of Trustees to give a conscientious exemption to this requirement (no lesser figure had the necessary authority), they did not pay me the courtesy of letting the item be put on the agenda for consideration (they thought the voluntary nature of Wheaton made my concerns “evaporate”). The requirement, that Wheaton students don't drink and dance, has variously and inconsistently been defended by Wheaton leadership as “just social mores,” “like vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity,” and a strict requirement of Wheaton's conscience. I lay on bed at night, wondering, “If this is how Christians act, do I want to be a Christian?”

I transferred to Calvin with a broken heart. I ended up being able to take all of the highest-level math classes offered at Wheaton and also at Calvin, in total a major and a half's worth of them. I spent a semester in Paris at the Sorbonne, where I imagined the cultures of my own fantasy

world, “Espiriticthus,” a fusion of the beauty I saw in Malaysia and France. I met my first Luddite, a man who commented simply that he would look into the window to the computer lab and observe that everybody seemed to be angry as they were typing. On a larger scale, I also had a painful relationship with a girl named Rebecca. In that troubled relationship, I am not interested in stating what she did wrong. I am interested, however, in stating what *I* did wrong. I approached that relationship, like life itself, as a department of mathematics. Meaning, as time passed, I did not relate to Rebecca as especially human, and I did not relate to myself as especially human either. *Our relationship was mercifully broken off.*

I spent a summer as a camp counselor and entered as a graduate student at UIUC, where I managed to get a master’s in applied mathematics, with a thesis accomplishing one thing usually associated with a PhD: carving out a niche where I knew more than anyone else in the world, in this case opening a new subbranch of “point-set topology” whose implications included a straightforward but rigorous way to handle infinitesimals such as bedeviled the foundation of calculus, in an academic discipline where it was hard to find something new to prove. Nonetheless, my advisor, the department chair, told me in one prolific summer that he regarded my many emails (see “The Blacksmith’s Forge”) as “mathematics fiction” by analogy with “science fiction,” and he did not regard my math awards as indicating in any way that I was adequate in mathematics. He and one other professor approved my thesis without reading the second half.

Entering the work world, or trying to

My first job out of college, at an anonymous company, told me when I was hired that I had gotten the highest score on one test of any applicant yet, and I had gotten a perfect score on the linear logic test, and I submitted the best code sample they'd seen ("reads like plain English"). Then things turned a little odd. I believe the reasons were complex, but they boasted about the computers they gave employees then gave me what was apparently a hand-me-down, and more seriously when, in the interview process, I asked if I would be able to program in what was then the darling language in IT, I was told I would program in a language they compared to a Formula One racecar, but once hired, I was told I would program in a language that had a terrible reputation (one computer science great said that its use "*...cripples the mind. Its teaching should therefore be regarded as a criminal offense;*" lesser wits had compared it with a sexually transmitted disease in that "those who have it tend not to admit it in polite company"). I complained, believing in good faith that its use would be harmful for me. In retrospect I do not believe they made an *intentional* bait and switch, but there was some ineptitude in advertising what they advertised I would work with and then assigning what I was assigned to work with. Also, I think that is the main area where I earned my "not a team player" badge.

I was brainsized my third day on the job (they refused to tell me why...), and I was later told that fellow alumni of the company blocked me from getting jobs at other companies.

A few months later, I developed a terrible manic

episode and my life was again in danger. However, the manic episode is less significant in its aftermath, where I was prescribed a year-long drug overdose that destroyed my abilities of mathematician. I spent a year of my life at my parents' house (where I am still), lying on my bed, staring at the light bulb, with nary a thought running through my mind beyond, "This is worse than watching television." When I saw my psychiatrist, I would inevitably ask, "When am I going to get my abilities back?" and with an edge of anger in his voice my psychiatrist would answer, "I don't know. You've had a major manic episode, and it can take a long time to recover from a manic episode." After about a year of this, my Mom dragged me against my will to a patient advocate group meeting on Wheaton College's campus where a fellow patient, without medical credentials that I know of, listened to my complaints, asked about my medication, and said, "That's *not* an effect of your manic episode. *It's your medication.*"

I have incidentally complained about the provider's preferred counselor to work with a complaint I could have directed at the psychiatrist equally well: trying to get anything done better was "*like a magic spell*, where you have to say just the right words, and say them just right, or else it's all for nothing." (It wasn't, for instance, enough for me to tell him, and have other medical personnel he was working with to observe, that I was throwing up half my medication most days for a year. I had to make a request in *just the right words*, and *just the right way*, for him to prescribe the other form of the same medication which had all of the benefits of what he prescribed me, and no added drawbacks, but would not induce vomiting on a frequent basis.)

The hardest intellectual achievement I had made in my life was not some discovery; it was, after spending six months away from mathematics (including my semester studying French at the Sorbonne), regaining competency. I was never in my life to regain competency in research mathematics. Computer programming came back, but with difficulty and imperfectly. Humanities work, which I had always been interested in, came back almost immediately.

Picking up the pieces

After being on a less destructive dose, I took stock and tried to decide what I wanted to do with my life. I had had some rough times outside of academia; I would later hold one post for over a year, but I was fired after I reported a senior manager for harassment. I asked my pastor, who was also a professor at Wheaton College and one of the most charismatic people around, advice on how to get an interdisciplinary humanities degree, and was strongly advised to pick a single field and get a doctorate in that specific field: “American Studies” PhD’s from a department he taught at, who had studied an interdisciplinary fusion of American literature and history, were incredibly hard to place. History departments wanted a straight history PhD; literature departments wanted a straight literature PhD. I applied to several schools, and Cambridge University accepted me.

In the time between employment and Cambridge, I had joined a group of Wheaton students and some alumni, close friends, meeting every Tuesday night at 9:58 PM for a reader’s theatre reading of classic children’s literature, and it was lore that students from that group would enter a

tailspin after leaving England (and it seemed almost every member of the group found a way to England at some point). However, I thought that that simply did not apply to me. It was not exactly arrogance on my part; past experience had been that I simply did not experience culture shock on cue. I had experienced culture shock, but not when I was expected to, and when culture shock was predicted, I experienced nothing particularly like culture shock. I had, furthermore, already lived abroad, so this wouldn't be my first time outside the U.S.

New directions at, and after, Cambridge

There was a major crescendo of trial and providence involved in my getting to England; there were several distractions, and after six months of red tape and difficulties getting student loans, they fell into place one business day before I left. My college told me not to come into residence. Additionally, I had a growing lump by my collarbone and was very sleepy very often. Cambridge had admitted me for a diploma, not yet a master's, and after I arrived on faith and things started working out, I was diagnosed and treated for lymphoma. And despite all this, I succeeded. After further difficulties and prayer, I was admitted to the master's program, where at the beginning of the year I said I wanted to study the holy kiss, meaning a doctrinal study of ideas, and after reclassifying my intent as a sociological study of kissing that was not particularly edifying, I was told two thirds of the way through the year that my announced thesis topic did not fit my philosophy of religion seminar, and I would therefore have to change topic

completely. (There was also some hideous confusion where it took all but two weeks to meet with my professor and fix the topic for my second compulsory essay, which was a two month project.) I pulled out the stops, wrote a still not particularly edifying thesis in *AI as an Arena for Magical Thinking Among Skeptics*, and succeeded at earning a master's in theology as well, albeit with not quite high enough marks to enter a doctorate. *I went home and had my tailspin.*

Now there were several things that happened along the way; the biggest one being, during my time at Cambridge, my reception into the Orthodox Church. And I would like to tell a bit about one particular nuance.

There is a tradition in Orthodoxy for people of sufficient age to choose a patron saint, and take that saint's name. It is believed that not only does the catechumen choose the saint, but that the saint chooses the disciple from Heaven. I wanted to be called "John Adam." "John" after John the Theologian, and "Adam" as bearing *Sources of the Self's* burden of pioneering a new way of life for others to follow. I knew at some level that this was wrong, and I should have recognized I was choosing those names out of pride. A significant struggle occurred when I was wrestling with my guilty conscience, and after long resistance on my part, I repented. This just happened to be when a priest was reading the names of people commemorated in prayer. The next name I heard was "Christos," and my surrender was complete.

The name has had some salutary side benefits I did not even think of. One thing I have found is that whether clergy are quick to dress me down for taking Christ as my patron gives me a highly effective early warning system for how

well we will end up getting along. (It seems to reflect whether I am judged for obvious pride in choosing One above all Saints, versus perhaps seeing no legitimate way I might have been right in that choice, but still refraining from judging.) Now at my cathedral clergy are not happy about my name, but that came later, after I kept bringing horrible things to confession. I give no complaint about them. But social response has offered me a powerful and useful social cue.

As an author, I have usually given my name as “C.J.S. Hayward”, and on Facebook, which is not terribly friendly to such use of initials written out my name as “Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward,” which I thought would condense to “CJSH” when people spoke of me. I have been told that on Facebook it has instead condensed to “CSH,” meaning “C.S. Hayward.” Did I mention that I’ve read every well-known work by C.S. Lewis and most of his obscurities, and he formed me as a writer?

I might also mention that there is more besides the number of times my life has been in danger and I’ve survived (I seem to have more than a cat’s nine lives, though I have rarely been accused of being catlike.) I’ve had an awful lot of being in the right place at the right time in ways I do not that I can rightly take credit for. For instance, I built my first website within a year or two of the web’s creation, although it would be over a year between when I first built a website and I ever used a graphical browser. I used Lynx, a command line tool that displays text alone. It is still a good way to check if a site appears pornographic before loading graphical view; not the reason why I made a nasty parody site called “Revenge of the Hydra,” optimized for Internet Explorer, which if you load it, nine popup

windows appear, and for each popup window you close, two more appear. (People on the Megalist wanted to ride me out on a rail for that one.) My main site, started in the early nineties, would grow to be a fixture of the web; when Google still published its PageRanks, my website had a PageRank of 5, a respectable PageRank for a medium to large sized organization, and was the top site in its category in directory.google.com. (I've won dozens of math awards, and hundreds of web awards.) It's grown since then, and in some people's opinions, it has only gotten better. Now I have worked long and hard to make my website a good site, but there was from the beginning a great deal of being in the right time and choosing decisions that would prove helpful for reasons I could not have imagined. I also published on the web when the tried and true advice was to pursue traditional publication. Now I am a traditionally published author; I've published two books with Packt Publications, and they've been very good to me and I would heartily recommend contacting an acquisition editor for IT professionals who want to write a book. (Note to such professionals: the pay you receive directly from an IT publisher is a social courtesy; Packt pays more than many publishers but hardly enough to live on. For an IT professional to publish a technical book should be seen as a marketing move that will qualify you as a domain expert who can charge over \$100 per hour for expert work.) However, while Packt is built to give structure to unformed authors, traditional publishing tripped me up, and my traditionally published titles are far from excellent and lower in Amazon ratings than those I've self-published. The core reason is that I do my best work when I am writing out of my heart, but working with editorial requests for major

overhaul has been necessarily out of my head; I cannot summon or control my inspiration or *awen* at will. Even this work, alongside works I consider some of my best, is not the work I set out to write, though that is grace.

I wrote in another blog post that I believed I had experienced what I would call “fame lite.” Leonard Nimoy, in *I Am Spock* talks about how Hollywood has teachers for all kinds of skills they would need to portray that skill in movies: musical instruments, riding a horse, and so on and so forth. However, there was something that no teachers were to be found in Hollywood: dealing with fame. Nimoy learned, for instance, how to enter a restaurant through the kitchen because there would be a public commotion if Spock walked in through the front door. And on that count, I do not obviously suffer the consequences of real fame. I’ve been asked for my autograph, *once*. I’ve had someone call out publicly, before I entered Orthodoxy, “*That’s Jonathan Hayward!*”, *once*. I have repeatedly had pleasant meetings with people who know me through my website. And since then, the only new tarnish to my claim of undeserved “fame lite” is in recent years when a job opportunity was really a cloak for attempted seduction. If that was because of my website or reputation; I am not sure it was.

My thorn in the flesh: *harassment*

However, there is another shoe to drop, a scorpion in the ointment: *harassment*. To take one example, whenever I made a new post to my website, an acquaintance from IMSA wrote extended and intense criticism that delivered pain, took me down quite a few notches, and elevating himself even more notches socially. No matter what genre,

length, or really quality I posted, he would, he would deliver trenchant criticism that covered those bases.

At one point, when I explained why his *contorting* and *twisting* my words into an *actual* alleged assertion that rape **is** the victim's fault, followed by the most belittling lecture in my life, I explained where rape had come close to home and I found that the most offensive thing he'd said yet. He responded with another hefty serving of criticism. I asked him not to send any further criticisms on my writing. He responded with another hefty dollop of criticism of me personally. I asked him not to send any further unsolicited criticisms on any topic. He wrote, "Ok, I will not send any unsolicited criticisms, but I will take emails from you as solicitation for response," and responded by another king-sized industrial strength dose of brutal, judgmental criticism.

A forceful "No" cc'ed to helpdesk@imsa.edu stopped his criticisms cold, or rather I think that the help desk explained to the great liberal what the word "No" means.

I have not heard from him since apart from one request to list him as a trusted contact on LinkedIn.

I also can't say that I missed him.

This sort of thing has happened dozens of times, and not just with people who post a fantasy of their alter ego luring a boy into a car and being finished with him in under five minutes. For one couple of amateur psychologists, my months or years-long ongoing, repeated "No" was slapped down with an assertion that I was "sending mixed messages" each and every time, combined with moving forward with their attempts to help me with my (alleged) Asperger's. This kind of thing is why I made a T-shirt saying:

Autism Spectrum, *n.* A range of medical conditions whose real or imagined presence in your life causes numerous socially inappropriate behaviors in amateur psychologists.

As far as underlying social dynamics go, in the Bible King Saul wanted St. David dead and sent St. David on a suicide mission that would require killing two hundred Philistines. St. David succeeded in his quest. Then women were singing in the streets, “Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands,” which was about the worst thing they could have done for St. David’s welfare. It really would have been better for St. David’s political stock if the woman had chanted a cultural equivalent of, “David smells bad and his mother dresses him funny.”

That was the point where Saul went from wanting St. David dead to making him Public Enemy #1 and engaging in extended manhunts after his first outright attempt at direct murder failed.

My giftedness is not simply from my genes, even if my parents are both at the top of their game. It is actually common for profoundly gifted individuals to have birth trauma or early childhood brain injury; such insults to the brain usually push a person towards intellectual disability, but once in a blue moon they overclock the brain and cause an intensification of overgrowth. I’ve had both routes, and however astonishingly bright my parents are, um...

I had higher SAT scores in 7th grade than my father had as a high school senior, and when I took the Modern Languages Aptitude test, the UIUC linguist who scored it said,

...and here's where it gets interesting. I've never seen someone complete this section before... Your mother scored in the mid 150's, which is considered a very, very high score. You scored 172. I don't know what to make of it. I've been scoring this test for thirty years, and I've never seen a score this high...

I was looking to avoid mentioning this, but my parents, especially in my childhood, surprisingly often dealt with me in anger.

In a moment of "I have no mouth and I must scream" after other unrelated situations of harassment and hostility from several other people, I gave my scream in "The Wagon, the Blackbird, and the Saab."

My quality of life improved remarkably when I learned that a "CEASE AND DESIST" letter Cc'ed to abuse@gmail.com or other authority figure can stop harassment cold.

Schooling: Another attempt

Returning to education, in 2005 I entered Fordham's PhD program. What I think I'd like to say about that was that it was a golden illustration of St. John Chrysostom's "A Treatise to Prove That Nothing Can Injure The Man Who Does Not Harm Himself." During that time, there were occasions where my conscience was extraordinarily clear and I ignored it. Furthermore, while external things may have been inappropriate, it was my own sins that gave them real sting. That a doctor took me off a medication I needed was not my choice. That I worried to the point of

uninterrupted waking nausea about whether I would be able to find employment given that my work in the business world had been clumsy and my PhD “union card” to teach in academia was jeopardized, worriedly asking, “Will there be a place for me?” was my decision. Stoic philosopher Seneca the Younger quoted in the NFL said, “We suffer more in imagination than in reality,” and I suffered much more in imagination than in reality then—*that was my decision, and not the decision of even the most hostile member of the university*. Possibly I could have completed my degree if I had not ignored a conscience at full “jumping up and down” intensity when I didn’t see a reason for what my conscience was telling me, and possibly I am guilty for failing to accept tacitly offered help. I washed out of the program in 2007. Perhaps the other thing really worth mentioning is what I intended to be my doctoral dissertation, which I wrote up in non-scholarly prose that one Roman reader called “the most intelligent and erudite” thing he’d ever read: ““Religion and Science” Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution.”

The birth of a unique area of attention

Now I’d like to shift gears a little bit and talk about something else that has slowly developed over the years, incrementally and mostly imperceptibly to me.

Like others before me, I’ve bristled at the concept of “an idea whose time has come.” My main use of it, as a programmer who poked fun at tools he did not like and tools he did like, was to quote a fake advertisement for Unix’s “X Windows:” “An idea whose time has come. And

gone.” When at Fordham I read Vatican II’s almost incessant anxiety to pay attention to “the signs of the times,” meaning in practice to pay attention to whatever 1960’s fads were in the *Zeitgeist* and take marching orders from them, I pointed out that in searching the 38 volume Ante-Nicene Fathers and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers collections, I could only find three or four references to discerning the signs of the times, and never a slavish imitation of *Zeitgeist*; one of them simply meant being on guard against lust.

Nonetheless, there is a sense in which *Zeitgeist* is real. It is a well-known phenomenon among mathematicians that a major problem will remain unsolved for ages and then be independently solved at almost the same time by several researchers: hence mathematicians are advised that if they discover something major, they should write it up and publish it as soon as possible, because if they don’t, someone else will get the credit for first discovery. *And this is in what is possibly the least Zeitgeist-like academic discipline.*

Gandhi has been popularly misquoted as saying “First, they ignore you. Then, they laugh at you. Then, they fight you. Then, you win!” and while researchers have traced a legitimate Gandhi quotation about how victory will develop if you apply Gandhi’s satyagraha or nonviolence in dealing with people hostile to you, this did not sound much like Gandhi to me. Nonetheless, it has some grain of truth.

When I wanted to do research on the holy kiss, at first I was bluntly ridiculed by my then current Cambridge advisor; he responded by asking cutesie questions about whether we could find reasons to only kiss the members of a congregation who were the prettiest, notwithstanding that

in England there is a well-established social kiss and “Greet one another with a holy kiss” does not come across as a shorthand for all inapplicable ancient nonsense in the Bible as it might in the U.S. midwest, where hugs between friends are within standard cultural boundaries but kisses ordinarily are not.

Furthermore, when I tried to write a dissertation on it, every professor that sought to guide me took my intended *doctrinal* study, and reclassified it as a study of a physical detail of Biblical culture, to be studied alongside other *Realia* like, “When St. Paul said to put on the whole armor of God and used a Roman soldier’s weapon and armor as a basis for the analogy, what kind of physical weapon and armor would have been in his imagination?” which overlooks that the “breastplate of righteousness” and the “helmet of salvation” are the armor that God Himself wears in Isaiah. I drew a line in the sand and told my second advisor that I wanted to do a *doctrinal* study. He immediately pushed past that line and said, “The best way to do that is to do a cultural study, and let any doctrines arise.”

To my knowledge I am the first person who observed that the holy kiss is the only act that the entire Bible calls holy (excluding one reference to a “holy convocation” in the Old Testament where a different Hebrew word is translated “holy”), and it is called holy three or four times. This is one of the highlights that I condensed into a homily, “The Eighth Sacrament.” But then a few years later, I suddenly had people contacting me to tell me about the holy kiss, and people asked if I knew more than I had stated in the homily (yes, I did; the Ante-Nicene Fathers and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers collections contain something like a

hundred references to a holy kiss, many of them boilerplate repetitions of “Greet one another with a holy kiss,” in festal epistles by St. John Chrysostom). Earlier I was rudely enough ridiculed by allies; then I was contacted in response to my website to inform me about the holy kiss by complete strangers.

At the moment I would downplay the importance of the holy kiss for active study. It is practiced in the Orthodox Church; I have said everything I want to say; I do not seek a kiss where none is offered. I have moved on to other concerns, one other concern as I am letting go as Fr. Seraphim of Plantina is in the process of canonization (one of my books, the one that’s gotten by far the most scathing reviews, is *The Seraphinians: “Blessed Seraphim Rose” and His Axe-Wielding Western Converts*).

I would like to say that *The Best of Jonathan’s Corner* is what I consider my overall best collection across my works and leave things at that, but I am rather suspecting another case of “Man proposes, God disposes.” The most important collection I leave behind (if any) may well be *The Luddite’s Guide to Technology*. The topic is loosely “religion and science,” but it is very different in character. “Religion and science” as I have met it, with one stellar exception, is about demonstrating the compatibility of timeless revealed truths of Christian doctrine with the present state of flux in scientific speculation. Science is, or at least was, characterized by a system of educated guesses held accountable to experiment. Orthodox gnosis (understanding of knowledge) should find this to be very, very different from how true Orthodox theology works.

With one exception, none of the Orthodox authors I hold dear know particularly much about science. The one

exception is patologist Jean-Claude Larchet, who raises some of the same concerns I do about technology, and does some of them better. Everyone else (for instance, Vladimir Lossky) shows little engagement with science that I know of. And if I may refer to the *Karate Kid* movie that was popular in my childhood, the sensei tells the boy, “Karate is like a road. Know karate, safe! Don’t know karate, safe! In the middle, squash like a grape.” The “religion and science” I’ve seen has a lot of “in the middle, squash like a grape,” by theologians who want to be scientific (and perhaps make what I have called the “physics envy declaration:” theologians-are-scientists-and-they-are-just-as-much-scientists-as-the-people-in-the-so-called-hard-sciences-like-physics), but who almost never bother to get letters after their name in the sciences, which are genuinely hard. My own formation, in mathematics, engineering, technology, and science, affords me the position of the blackbelt who declares, “*Don’t know karate, safe!*” Perhaps one blackbelt saying such things is needed!

Furthermore, my main concern from mathematics, engineering, technology, and science (all of which I was formed in, even if I’ve lost much of it) is not too much about *science*, but specifically about *technology*. I’ve experienced technology early; my life story and could largely be seen as a preparation for commenting on technology. And I have background in both studying theology academically and living it in practice.

Another dimension to profound giftedness

One reader who has studied giftedness at length

commented to me that profoundly gifted individuals are often “very, very conservative, or at least populist.” I had thought earlier that my conservatism and my giftedness were two separate things. They are not, or at least there is a direct relationship.

The basic way I understand it is this. Possibly I had a contrarian spine built by requesting a conscientious exemption from Wheaton College’s requirements and leaving Wheaton College after it was not even put on the agenda. I have certainly had as much exposure to liberal recruiting, or more, than most liberals. But standard methods of recruiting gifted are less successful in dealing profoundly gifted. The university system has very effective ways of drawing in the gifted, and up to a point the more gifted someone is the better it works—but recruiting tools fall flat with some of the profoundly gifted. Much of the gifted range ends up liberal. It has been pointed out that the math department tends to be one of the most liberal, or the most liberal, department on campus, even though the author pointing this out (and I) have never experienced mathematicians trying to recruit to liberalism. I believe, apart from natural bents, that mathematics shapes the mind in a way that inclines towards liberalism. I stopped really trying to learn chess after I found myself at the Cathedral looking at my quarantine-dictated socially distanced space with regard to other parishioners in terms of what I could threaten to capture in a knight’s move. That may be superficial, and it may fade into the background with deeper study. However, mathematics does shape the character, in the direction of what Orthodox have called “hypertrophied dianoia, darkened nous,” i.e. “overgrown head and impoverished, darkened heart,” and mathematics may do

this in a more concentrated form than humanities which promote the same. I certainly do not see that my successes in relating to my ex-girlfriend (there are some) were due to my bent to take a mathematician's approach to relating.

Something that never happened in my formation in mathematics was that my advisor at Cambridge consistently tried to recruit me to Biblical Egalitarianism (he was a plenary speaker at at least one conference), for instance, by asking, "But what about Biblical Egalitarians, who believe that 'In Christ there is no... male nor female?'" and I would dismantle the live grenade, for instance by saying that "who believe that" in English-speaking idiom means "whose non-shared distinguishing quality is that," and second by saying that he was snuggling into the back door that "no male nor female" be cast along at least quasi-feminist lines, as opposed to recognizing that some conservatives (St. Maximus Confessor, for instance) hold that in Christ there really is no male nor female, but read it along profoundly non-feminist lines. (I think after a certain number of attempts my advisor gave up and accepted that I would not listen to reason.)

Yonder, which is a collection of works intended to answer and challenge feminism, might have been provocative when it was first published. Now there is much more than than the men's movement, which I consider opening men to feminist-style protest. It is mainstream for women to dissociate themselves from feminism and "Like" texts that challenge it. When the U.S. Supreme Court came out in rainbow colors, I posted a response echoing *First Things* in the discussion at StackExchange, whose CEO is an adamant gay activist, saying, "The question is not whether gay marriage is possible in the U.S., but whether

anything else is popular. It has been established that marriage has no particular roles, is dissolvable, need not be open to bearing children, and so forth. Why suddenly draw a line in the sand about marriage involving a man and a woman?" It was censored, with a comment of "Not even close!" However, in the time since then, I have seen comments not censored about the whole policy violation of turning the StackOverflow logo rainbow colors for a time and flipping it to veer in the opposite direction, and so on and so forth, was in fact not StackOverflow's best moment.

C.S. Lewis has a tantalizingly brief remark in "The Allegory of Love", in reference to Spencer who alone receives almost undiluted praise in a book that is exacting of other authors, about how figures who turn out to be what some people call "ahead of their time" seem an odd throwback to the vintage past, when they first appear. Even Bach was respected in his life as a performing organist but not taken too seriously as a composer, because he composed in an area of music that had simply fallen out of fashion. I don't want to compare myself to the famous people who populate the most obvious examples, but in regard to what Lewis said, it seems that **some of my portfolio has matured.**

My critiques of feminism may still not be mainstream, but they are no longer so far off the beaten path. As far as raising concerns about technology goes, we have gone past the point where one very bright friend tweeted a link to Paul Graham's "The Acceleration of Addictiveness" and commented in only three words: "SOMEBODY UNDERSTANDS ME!" For that matter, we have gotten past the point where the cover of *Time Magazine* presents the Facebook "Like" button as a major part of our conundrum.

Things that I said that were way off the beaten path when I said them remain of particular interest, but are far less provocative to say now.

When I tried to do a literature search before or during my writing of ““Social Antibodies” Needed: A Request of Orthodox Clergy,” I searched Amazon in regards to Orthodoxy and technology and was dismayed to find... my writing and nothing else so far as I could tell. Prior books that had influenced me such as Neil Postman’s 1985 *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and Jerry Mander’s 1974 *Four Arguments for the **Elimination** of Television* (one Protestant friend answered my mentioning the title in mock puzzlement: “The author could only think of *four*?”), were available and remain available today. However, an encompassing theological argument that takes into account today’s singularity were simply not to be found.

Since then, times have changed, *and I am not a lone author any more*. I’ve learned a good deal from **patrologist Jean-Claude Larchet**, and what I’ve read from him on the topic is eminently worthy of study. I asked Ancient Faith to read ““Social Antibodies” Needed: A Request of Orthodox Clergy,” not exactly as a candidate for their imprint to publish, but to send to other authors to answer on the record. The response I got back was not detailed, but they said that they had forwarded the questions I raised for other of their authors to answer.

Two other comments before I drop this topic.

First of all, one thing that I can agree with one devotee of Fr. Seraphim of Plantina on is a quote that Fr. Seraphim tried to tell people he was a sinner and he was put on a pedestal anyway. I’ve been wary of being on a pedestal when I realized that I already am on a pedestal; God has just

shielded me from some of the downsides. Apart from harassment, I have benefitted from what appears to be “fame lite.” Possibly I may get put on a bigger pedestal, but I am neither more nor less in God’s hands if God provides that.

The second one, perhaps a tangent, is that I am not mainly writing for success in my lifetime. Certainly I am not looking for writing to be lucrative; my revenues on Amazon, possibly due to Amazon’s ongoing repositioning and reinterpretation of its contracts, has gone from about US\$150-200 per month to less than US\$10 per month over a time frame when more and more people have discovered my writing. I am trying to write works built to last, and I have released my books under CCo licensing (“no rights reserved,” meaning that anybody can republish it). This is an aspect of a long haul strategy.

Now to move on.

More wonders in Heaven and earth...

I have enlisted at the Orthodox Pastoral School, about which I have only glowing things to say. After health issues compounded by provider issues, I have asked to withdraw for the rest of the semester and re-enroll next semester when I believe I have good reason to hope I will be stronger. What they say I do not know, and I am not specifically counting on the measure of grace they have already extended to me. However, one possibility that is off the agenda is that God will stop blessing me because of what they decide. I would like to continue on with them, but if God has something else in store for me, I will just try and

thank them for what they have already done.

The second thing is that I have prayed for years:

Prayer from St. Symeon for a Spiritual Father

O Lord, who desirest not the death of a sinner but that he should turn and live, Thou who didst come down to earth in order to restore life to those lying dead to sin and in order to make them worthy of seeing Thee the true Light as far as that is possible to man, send me a man who knoweth Thee, so that in serving him and subjecting myself to him with all my strength, as to Thee, and in doing Thy will in his, I may please Thee the only true God, and so that even I, a sinner, may be worthy of Thy Kingdom.

I am not praying that now.

Within the past month of my writing, I sent a polite email to a nearby priest and said that I was going to ask a blessing to visit the parish, when I realized that was not then an option due to the quarantine, and then I thought of asking permission to visit him face-to-face, when I realized that would not be an option for the same reason. But, I said, I wished in gesture to visit.

He responded even more graciously, and offered spiritual direction.

I asked a blessing of my confessor, and have begun receiving spiritual direction.

I have also been seeking for years to enter a monastery. That hasn't happened yet, but I have a live

conversation with a monastery now. It apparently won't work out for me to visit again in 2020, but I have hopes of ending 2021 as a novice, possibly a "rassophore monk," also called a "robe-wearing novice."

A last measure in negotiations

The next thing is that in dealing with others, especially as regards difficulties with medical providers, the last measure of resistance I have offered is to let the other party have it their way and then let them decide if they like the consequences.

Earlier I came to the practice I am seen at on double the standard limit of one medication, and they decided to let me have my eccentric ways, at least for a time. But then they decided to relentlessly pursue strict standard dosing, and after a year or two's power struggle, I let them have their way and I was in rapidly declining health. I can still remember the sad expression on my provider's face when she realized what situation I was in: she was not in any sense happy that it looked like I would be dead within a year, but standard dosing was simply not conceivable as something negotiable, or a decision that was less important than my life. After three hospitalizations in about two months, insurance advised me to work with a doctor rather than a nurse practitioner, and the doctor found room in her heart to let me have maximum doses of two similar medications, plus another medication that would help. I returned to the even keel I had when I entered their care.

Experience has been that sometimes the only card I can play is to submit to being keel-hauled, and when I come up torn and bleeding on the other side, the other

party figures out things it had not been able to connect the dots on before.

I went through that last measure again with the department recently.

I have been on a medication whose known effects include kidney damage and eventual death to kidney failure. I have been experiencing precursors to kidney failure, although not yet real quality of life issues; however, every time previously my providers tried to soften the blow to my organs by reducing my dose of that medication by one quarter, it seemed a cure worse than the disease. Kidney failure can kill me within a decade or two; the effects I was experiencing would likely kill me within a year. Every time previously, my provider did not like what my medicine was doing, but they chose maintaining my dose above causing my death in the short term.

This time, my provider decided to wean me off the medication already, which was having destabilizing effects, and furthermore to forbid me to even take a related over-the-counter medication that is dosed much lower than the prescription analogue, and furthermore does not damage internal organs, period. And I decided to offer the last measure of resistance: to submit to being keel-hauled and follow all of her changes to the letter.

After two days of feeling worse than drunk, I felt sober for the first time in ages, and have been writing prolifically.

More wonders

Before that happened, my writing experienced what I can only term a death, a religious experience I have forgotten, and a resurrection. My writing was growing

scantier and worse; there was something morally corrupt. Now I am still not writing perfectly, but I feel younger. Decades younger.

I have also been involved with Toastmasters, to learn to better communicate with my neighbor. I participated, albeit didn't rise above local level, in the 2019 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking, and it is widely considered that the experience and preparation are worth it even if you do not place particularly highly, as I did not. I completed the Competent Communicator curriculum and have started on the Presentation Mastery path.

One of the things my spiritual father said in a first call or two is that we tend to think we have tried plan A (getting a doctorate in math from the University of Illinois and going from there), plan B (getting a doctorate in theology from Cambridge in theology and teaching, which would have left me saddled with over twice the major student loans I graduated with), plan C (getting a doctorate “union card” at Fordham), and are “going down the alphabet” in faint hopes...

...but God is always on plan A.

I believe that if I had made better decisions I could have a degree from Fordham. However, I don't believe that God has withdrawn his care. If anything, he has given me a reminder that decisions have consequences, and a powerful reminder that placing reason above my conscience is not wise. At present I do not have the brand of PhD; I do have two master's degrees connected with Orthodox theology and technology from excellent institutions, and quite a story with them. I think I am the most blessed I have been in my life, and stand to receive greater blessings still. I would close with words offered from a friend:

“Life’s Tapestry”

Behind those golden clouds up there
 the Great One sews a priceless embroidery
 and since down below we walk
 we see, my child, the reverse view.
 And consequently it is natural for the mind to see
 mistakes
 there where one must give thanks and glorify.

Wait as a Christian for that day to come
 where your soul a-wing will rip through the air
 and you shall see the embroidery of God
 from the good side
 and then... everything will seem to you to be a
 system and order.

Signed,

~~Toastmaster, and possibly patrologist, **Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward**, Certificat Sémestriel, Niveau Supérieur I (semester certificate, advanced level 1) in French, Bachelor of Science in Pure Mathematics, Master of Science in Applied Mathematics with Computational Science and Engineering Option and the first person to graduate with a new Thesis Option, Diploma in Theology and Religious Studies, Master of Philosophy in Theology and Religious Studies, Competent Communicator, Presentation Mastery Level 2, and perhaps in substance a *philosophia doctor*~~

Unworthy Novice Christos

But a P.S.: The wonderful change in medication is in fact not so obviously good to me now. It was removed because it can cause significant quality of life issues over a course of years. A recent surprise finding, though, suggests that without the medication, a wrong turn could leave me dead within a week, and I escaped one crisis through other people's prayers. All the same, I say:

Glory be to God on high!

Oh, and I'd love to add to my list of distinctions a knighthood in the British State Order.

Appendix A: Recommended Books

I would request that you consider owning paper copies of at least some of my books. *A single surviving paperback copy* of one of my titles is all it would take for my works to be preserved for a century or two, while ebooks are far more brittle.

My author site, which is extensive, is at cjshayward.com. My Amazon author page with all my books is at amazon.com/author/cjshayward.

Titles I'd recommend include:

The Luddite's Guide to Technology may be the most important book I write in my life. I have thought of *The Best of Jonathan's Corner* as representing my best overall collection, and it does have about as much of my best theology as I can place between two covers. However, this is really the *one* book you should if you only read one of my books.

The Best of Jonathan's Corner, which gathers between two covers handpicked works of theology from a collection ten times its length.

"St. Clive:" An Eastern Orthodox Author Looks Back at C.S. Lewis acknowledges a profound debt I as an author have to C.S. Lewis, and it might provide a normal-sized book for C.S. Lewis fans who would like to see his legacy still live on.

A Pilgrimage from Narnia is a collection of poems intended to show what I saw coming into Orthodoxy.

A Small Taste of Jonathan's Corner is a deliberately short and sweet book intended to help people see why they might want to take on one of my longer collections. It would make an excellent gift to introduce a friend or loved one to me as an author.

Knights and Ladies, Women and Men is one piece intended to look at feminism and then answer the question, "How else could it be?"

Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" Revisited and Other Socratic Dialogue: the first work, the deepest, is a light tweak on Plato's most famous allegory. The other works are interesting Socratic dialogue that I have composed.

How to Survive Hard Times is a work that is, and will be, relevant in difficulties.

Orthodox Theology and Technology: An

Autobiography (*this title*) is an autobiography intended to cover why I am an author who, as one specialty, covers the interaction between practical Orthodox theology and practical technology.

Appendix B: Profoundly Gifted and Orthodox at Fordham

I'm a bit unsure of how to introduce this, but I had a rough time at a university. (An appeal document was sent as follows, after I had raised questions about some things being sexually inappropriate.) One friend said a few things, including that she got a sense from what she was reading that these were “not very moral people” I was dealing with.

The specific university was one that has been treated as alarming by Orthodox. This offers perhaps a slightly fuller picture of what being Orthodox at Fordham is like and a life lesson learned in the process. If you are Orthodox and considering attending Fordham, please review this before you make any final decisions.

For what it's worth...

1. First experience of Fordham's care

My first experience at Fordham was arriving late at night at the address I had been given as Fordham graduate student housing, and finding a high-rise apartment building with no obvious affiliation to Fordham, with a security guard who did not expect me and did not know of a connection to Fordham, and a room number that was in a notation that the security guard did not recognize as referring to Keith Plaza. I was allowed in, and began exploring, laden with two suitcases and a laptop. I eventually found the RA's apartment door, but no one answered my knock. The reason? After I had confirmed I was coming, she sent another e-mail asking for another confirmation shortly before I left, and because I didn't provide a second, *additional* confirmation that I was still coming, she had gone to Brooklyn. It was approximately three hours before I connected with Residential Life staff; the delay included an hour's wait after I told Residential Life that I was outside my RA's apartment and specifically asked if I should go to outside my apartment, but was told to stay where I was. Then Residential Life went to my apartment instead of my RA's apartment, where I told them I was, and gave up on looking for me. My phone almost ran out of power with the number of calls I made before the Residential Life staff found me and took me to a place on campus so I could get some sleep before GSA orientation. (They took me to campus as they did not have any access to my room keys: the RA in Brooklyn was the

only person who could let me in.)

I believe it fortunate that I did not fall victim to crime under these conditions. Someone who was alone, white, with heavy luggage, and in general not fitting in may be very unsafe in the Bronx, and I could have taken a false step, or had my phone run out of battery power before the repeated calls I needed to get the help I needed from Residential Life.

This occurred late summer, 2005.

2. A cold room

When there was a fire in my floor in Keith Plaza, in the summer after a heat wave, I was not able to access my room. Fordham did provide me a room, but and the thermostat was set to below forty degrees; the room felt like a refrigerator, and even when I turned the air conditioning off and found that the heat was not available, Fordham gave me a light blanket not meant to provide warmth and could not find a warmer blanket. The staff knew that my room was cold, and I asked, but they provided me with nothing much better. I spent a very cold night, when my body was used to heat, and in my best judgment after training as an EMT, I was in real danger of hypothermia: being lightly clad, with no more clothing available, under a light blanket, with no heavier blanket available, in a room initially below forty degrees, can be dangerous.

This occurred summer, 2006.

3. Professor A_____.

I found the response when I tried to befriend

A_____ quite traumatic.

During our interactions, it seemed to me that from the first piece of work I showed him, my Cambridge master's thesis, he dismissed my work without any recognition of merit. As a gesture of friendship, I e-mailed him asking for his comments on a draft of a homily I was preparing. The homily drew on his teaching (3/14/06).

His 3/16/06 reply, after what seemed a nicer beginning, ended: "...If you send emails like this to other teachers or other figures, they probably find it rather rude."

During the semester, I e-mailed him requesting accommodation for a disability (4/26/06).

After that point, he pulled me aside after class, and did not give me an answer to that question. He did, however, require me to change topic drastically enough that I had to start over on my paper. This was 4/27/06, one week from the paper due date, and my entire class grade was based on that paper.

After I had completed all the classes and turned in my paper, I thought that the class was over. However, a Sunday soon after (5/14/06), A_____ approached me *after church*, and began to question me about every single other grade I had received and how I was doing in every class for which I had not yet received a grade.

This was before he turned in my grade for his class, and he assigned about as low a grade, I believe, as would not look conspicuous on my transcript.

I e-mailed B_____ after this and asked to have A_____ leave me alone (which he has almost done).

Before A_____, I had never asked an administrator to help me with any difficulties with a teacher.

This occurred during Incarnation to 451, Spring 06.

3.1. No redress with acting chair

B_____.

I sent multiple e-mails to acting chair B_____, including my full logs. So far as I could tell, no redress was given, and the later surprises from A_____ occurred after I had been telling B_____ of difficulties.

This occurred during and after Incarnation to 451, Spring 06.

3.2. No redress with Dean C_____.

After my communication with B_____ failed to resolve things, I tried to inform C_____ that there was a real problem.

The one response I received was a note from her secretary telling me to go to my department chair.

This occurred during and after Incarnation to 451, Spring 06.

4. Professor D_____

There were several kinds of difficulties I had with D_____.

4.1. Finding reason to criticize

During the course of feminist theology, she assigned primary sources. Of these primary sources,

many made claims about how history should be approached; none of them drew on or footnoted postmodern philosophy of history so far as I know, and she did not discuss postmodern philosophy of history in the course of the class. However, after the fact, she sharply criticized my final paper for making its claims about how history should be approached without engaging the current scholarly discussion of philosophy of history, in the evaluation given with my grade on the paper. I find this sort of surprise characteristic of an ongoing stream of surprises I had in dealing with her, and that made it difficult for me to identify a way to work that she would honor with a high grade.

This occurred during Feminist Theology, Spring 06, although the trend of surprises I had difficulty reasoning with occurred during Theological Anthropology, Fall 06.

4.2. Possible constraints to academic freedom.

She emphasized that I needed to have “a sympathetic reading of primary sources,” and I expended a great deal of effort later on trying to give a polite reading that focused on common ground no matter how hostile the source she assigned was to my religious persuasion.

At first, I set out to debunk sources I didn’t like; later on, I was trying not only to respond politely but to focus on the areas of the sources she assigned that I could best appreciate. However, only once during the entire second course did she credit me with “a

sympathetic reading of primary sources;” otherwise, I was penalized, even though for almost all of the later assignments where I seemed to be penalized for not having “a sympathetic reading of primary sources,” I was trying to find what common ground I could, and be as positive as I could. Her parameters for “a sympathetic reading of primary sources,” more specifically sources which diverged from my religious beliefs at a very deep level, left me with no way that I could identify to be faithful to my religious tradition and at the same time give the kind of agreement with much of a source’s substance, that she seemed to mean by “a sympathetic reading of primary sources.”

In discussion of preparation for comprehensive exams, she gave directive instruction for the “method question.” For this question, a student is to be graded not on the content of the position taken in response to the question, but on the quality of reflection on theological method in analysis of how that answer was reached. She specifically directed me to be getting my bearings for thinking about this position from the set texts I was to be able to use in my answer, which seemed to have little in common with my tradition. (This was in response to a draft reflection I had sent her that drew on resources within my religious tradition).

I am not sure how thoroughly my academic freedom was respected. There were definitely points where her clarifications of “a sympathetic reading of primary sources” called for me to incorporate contrary ideas in a way that I do not know how to reconcile with my religious tradition.

This occurred to some degree during Feminist Theology, Spring 06, but mainly Theological Anthropology, Fall 06.

4.3. Improving work and getting lower grades.

D_____ consistently made criticisms that required more fundamental changes, and more work to meet, than any other professor I had at Fordham. However, while I could improve my work in the area criticized to the point that a criticism was not repeated, what I could not do was improve my work in that area and get a higher grade. My work had improved by the second class I took with her so that many criticisms were not repeated, but my grades for the later, improved pieces were consistently lower than the grade based on my work before the improvements were made.

This occurred both during Feminist Theology, Spring 06, and Theological Anthropology, Fall 06.

4.4. Saying “vagina.”

D_____ said “vagina” quite a lot. Her use of the word was both more frequent and more forceful than I have heard in other classes (health class and biology included), and from time to time she gave a slow and emphatic list of genitalia. (It was one of her more common ways of answering my suggestion that masculinity and femininity may be seen as spiritual qualities.)

This occurred primarily during Feminist

Theology, Spring 06.

4.5. Assigned texts and sexual boundaries.

D_____ periodically assigned texts which did not seem to be written with consideration for some male readers' sexual boundaries: Luce Irigaray, for instance, or Tracy Pinchman asking the reader to be sympathetic to adults playing with children's genitals.

This occurred during both Feminist Theology, Spring 06, and Theological Anthropology, Fall 06.

4.6. Treatment of profound giftedness.

When I was doing a paper on profound giftedness, I was attempting in part to document that the profoundly gifted can have a rough life, and that there are some difficult things people don't realize about the experience. She told me at first that it was an inappropriate topic, because "giftedness is privilege" (she heavily emphasized, in the reading, groups of people that have difficult lives, and seemed offended by the suggestion that a particular degree of giftedness could have difficulties appropriate for discussion—N.B. some of them were like the difficulties I attempt to document here). She was not open to me saying certain things even if I could document them very well; much of my revision was not to improve the paper in the usual sense but to kowtow in areas where she did not approve of the substance of what I was saying, told me it was inappropriate, etc.

This occurred during Theological Anthropology, Fall 06.

5. Grade appeal of Theological Anthropology.

After my second class with D____, I asked her for a review of her grade. She refused. I contacted department chair E____, making an appeal based on my turning in improved work from my previous semester with her on the weekly assignments but receiving lower grades.

This occurred after Theological Anthropology, Fall 06.

5.1. Not addressing the concern of improved work receiving lower grades.

E____'s response said that the weekly paper seemed to correlate with the grades. His response in no sense addressed my claim that I had improved my work and gotten lower grades for the improved work.

This occurred after Theological Anthropology, Fall 06.

5.2. A characteristic pattern.

This interaction seemed to be characteristic of a pattern: I have not yet been able to obtain redress for any grievance with any professor within the university. The university has been able to provide assistance when I have had difficulties for which no university

faculty member was at fault, but not when I am having difficulties with someone within the university.

6. Referral to counselor

F_____.

When I visited Fordham's Counseling and Psychological Services, I was told I needed counseling, and referred to the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy, who assigned me to "one of our best therapists," F_____.

This occurred during Spring 06 and lasted into the summer.

6.1. Treatment of religious attitudes and practices.

F_____ initially seemed to be hard to try to understand my religious beliefs, but after a certain point she told me that a religious belief was "centuries behind the times" (I had made it clear that this belief was at the heart of a well-received homily I preached, and considered normal in my community), and seemed to be trying hard to argue me out of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices, which she seemed to be holding to be guilty until proven innocent of being psychiatric symptoms (a concern she raised in so many words).

The longer therapy went on, the more of my religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices seemed to be under attack in her telling me I needed to adopt her vision of "progress."

This occurred during Spring 06 and lasted into the summer.

6.2. Unwanted, unwelcome, and unsolicited sexual directive guidance.

As part of what seemed to be a major effort to argue me out of various psychopathologies, F_____ told me that I should “use pornography and masturbate,” and in the last sessions, made me particularly uncomfortable by saying over and over again at every session after she began, “You need to be naughty.”

This occurred during the summer of 06.

6.3. Pricing.

Fordham had been told, and the Fordham counselor told me, that ICP would go as low as \$18 for Fordham students. They in fact charged me \$55 for each weekly visit, and when I asked for a fee reductions or other ways of reducing a financial burden that was difficult for me, no reduction of fees or frequency of visit was given.

This occurred during the Spring and summer of 06.

7. Referral to psychiatrist G_____.

ICP referred me to G_____. During the second semester in particular, I was concerned with my low

energy levels and getting more energy so my work would not be hindered.

Because my then current medications were known to cause fatigue, I asked if there were alternatives that would cause less fatigue, but I tried to be very, very clear that I was concerned about side effects. I explained my concern and explicitly asked what side effects were anticipated, and when he said a rash was possible, I asked what percent of the patients experienced it.

He had what he thought might be a gentler alternative to two medications that were probably fatiguing me, and he said he wanted to try switching to one and then the other. But then without explaining why, he switched one medication and simply took me off another medication that I need: he told me I didn't need it.

I went from where I was, to feeling a lot of stress, to experiencing stress to the point of unrelenting nausea and repeated diarrhea, whether or not I was dealing with external stressors worth mentioning. At the end, I was trying to find some food that I could get down, and was barely eating—a couple of hundred calories a day because I couldn't really eat—and barely sleeping.

When I suspected that the medication change could be having adverse effects, I switched back to the prior medication regimen, and noticed a marked decrease of stress within days, and was able to eat and sleep at more usual levels.

The period over which this happened was the late part of my second semester at Fordham and the

beginning of the summer. I was trying hard to get off academic probation, but I completed all three of my papers under stress to the point of nausea. One professor, unaware of my medical issue, gave feedback on my final paper and said that one part, treating Cyril Lucaris (he picked out the part written before the medication change) was “full and coherent,” while the treatment of other figures (dealt with in the part of my paper written under stress to the point of nausea) struck him “as impressionistic and poorly organized.” I received independent feedback from another person, before I switched back my medication, confirming that I “indeed seemed less coherent lately in your e-mails.”

This occurred during the Spring and summer of 06.

8. Professor H_____.

H_____, my professor for one class, mentioned that Wittgenstein put an ‘M’ in his journal every day he masturbated. I’ve lost count of how many times he mentioned this, as it became a running gag. He also used the word “tit,” always with verbal force; he introduced another philosopher as owing a considerable debt to Martin Heidegger by saying the new figure “*sucked* at Heidegger’s *tits*,” and references to an infant’s life included asking us to imagine an infant having an inner dialogue of “This must be... a *tit!* and this must be... Mom!” He also talked about a couple that “liked to *lick* each other;” lewd references to licking became another running gag, and late in the course he said that he was attracted to all kinds of

people, but not to children and not to animals, although, he said, there was one dog that “liked to *lick* me.”

One specific running gag particularly bothered me. Fr. Klein complimented one of the male students in the class on his shirt, then a few minutes later quizzically said, “I’m sorry; I’m not supposed to do that. It’s considered sexual harassment,” before saying that he had a priest’s habit of absentmindedly complimenting women on their glasses. He never complimented a female on her clothing that I remember, but he delivered compliments to men on their shirts like the other running gags, and I got more compliments on my clothing than others, as well as the most involved such compliment: “I like the green in your ring; it really color-coordinates with your shirt.”

I say, with reservations, that the class was an introduction to queer culture. The other LGBTQ people I know have sometimes asked me to understand them but have never made me uncomfortable; he seemed willing to repeatedly introduce queer concerns in a way that could make some uncomfortable; hence a story of an old Cardinal talking about the adoration of Christ in the Eucharist, and rhetorically asking what Christ is saying in the Eucharist, and answering that Christ was saying (here Fr. Klein’s voice slowed and became even raspier, sounding almost like a gasp), “*Eaaaat mmeeee!*” For those who missed the painfully obvious point of the raspy “*Eat me,*” he drove home that in gay culture, “Eat me!” is an *extremely* erotic thing to say.

The readings included a discussion of how close

to erotic, or perhaps erotically tinged, St. Anselm of Canterbury's friendship was with his monk friends, and an essay mentioning "the solar anus" and criticizing other scholarship for treating the erotic but still not being sexy enough.

As with feminist theology, I believe my grade might have been higher if I were not sexually uncomfortable.

This occurred during Philosophy and Contemporary Theology, Spring 07.

9. Disability concerns.

I have more than one disability which affects my energy level and the number of waking hours I have available for work. This made things particularly difficult for the first semester, when my doctor needed to make sure I could tolerate a lower dose of my medication before going to a therapeutic dose.

9.1. No disability referral from B_____.

After my first semester, I told B_____ that I had several significant difficulties: when I wrote her and said there was "a monkey on my back," she said, "You had a tiger on your back!"

She tried to support me, but she never did one thing a department chair might have done, refer me the Office of Disability Services when I asked her about talking with my professors about my difficulties. She also said she would speak with my professors second semester and ask for an extension, but when I

later asked her, she could not recall if she had asked more than one professor to give me an extension.

This occurred during and after Spring 06.

9.2. A blunt refusal of accommodation.

Second semester of my first year, I told all three of my professors that I was dealing with difficulties, and did not immediately make any requests for accommodation.

At the end of the semester, I asked for extensions, and was surprised at how bluntly one of the professors declined to provide any accommodation.

This occurred during Spring 06.

9.3. No adjustment to major portion of workload.

The Office of Disability Services, when I registered, offered limited accommodations: I could turn in semester assignments late, but they found no appropriate adjustment for weekly assignments, and when they asked for me about a reduced courseload, Associate Dean I_____ said that was not possible.

I was left, given a disability combination that has me needing to sleep around 40 more hours per week and therefore having one workweek less time per week to do my work, with no accommodation to the brunt of a full load of weekly assignments.

This occurred Fall 06.

10. Medical expenses.

My conditions make for ongoing medical expenses, and with Fordham's graduate student plan, Administrative Concepts Incorporated, I've had more trouble getting payment than any other plan in my life. Before Fordham, I had never maxed out prescription drug benefits on any plan; at Fordham, I maxed out those benefits in months. I did what I could to take care of expenses, but the medical expenses kept me strapped enough for cash that I had to choose between paying for medical needs and buying books.

This was an issue for the entirety of my time at Fordham.

11. Fatigue after a dubiously treated ear infection.

I came into the health center shortly after Martin Luther King day during my last semester, having what I suspected was an ear infection. The nurse said she would treat it with both oral and topical antibiotics, but ended up only giving me an oral antibiotic.

That ear infection became a major problem: it lasted for over a month, and took four visits to a specialist otolaryngologist and something like three or four courses of antibiotics to treat; the otolaryngologist used topical antibiotics as being "6000 times stronger" than oral antibiotics like I had been given.

That infection had me more fatigued than I had been in a long time, and I still have doubts about how well I had recovered by my end of semester duties

after spending much of the remaining semester trying to catch up.

12. My experience.

I entered Fordham as a survivor of religious harassment, sexual harassment from men, and sexual abuse from a woman that caused pain I don't know how to put into words. This has not been at all easy for me to write.

My experience has been traumatic. It has been traumatic in more ways than one. The long times I tried to reach out to A_____—I wanted so much to befriend him—and the retaliation I met for my gestures of friendship, were infuriating. So were several other things where I felt like I was getting pushed down again and again. I'm really not sure how to describe how traumatized I was, or either the fears or the continued frustrations. I can certainly say that if I had the choice of repeating my experiences at Fordham over the past two years and repeating my chemotherapy and radiotherapy when I had cancer, I would repeat my cancer treatment, hands down.

13. Notes.

I have been under duress every semester I've been at Fordham. Despite several things which I believe have impaired my study, I've still managed a rising cumulative GPA, reaching 3.4 by last semester, and with my last semester non-cumulative GPA reaching 3.5.

Two distractions

I am profoundly gifted. To those not familiar with the psychology, it means, for instance, that I ranked 7th nationally in a math contest, or that I've read the Bible in a total of seven ancient / medieval / modern languages, or that I am deeper an author than C.S. Lewis, or, as one psychologist debriefed me, "The average Harvard PhD has never met someone as talented as you," or that I am "smarter than most geniuses" or whatever. There are people who would give me heavy odds of being the most talented student in school history for Fordham, kind of like "The Immortal Bard." That I was allowed to wash out, even after appeal, is simply ridiculous.

Furthermore, Fordham appears to me to be morally challenged. Fordham claims, prominently, to be a Jesuit institution that exercises *cura personalis*, a Latin term meaning a broadly pastoral care for the whole person, and claims to exercise *cura personalis* are plastered all over Fordham's website. I've never seen another institution exercise less care, not more, and I attended Avery Coonley School, the University of Chicago, the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, College of DuPage, Wheaton College, Calvin University, the Sorbonne, Cambridge, and presently the Pastoral School of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Mid-America. (The University of Chicago was a whiz kids math class just before high school.) I can remember one hour of care for my person at Fordham, and not more. Furthermore, there are other cases where I believe I was dealt cards off the side of the deck, including Cambridge. None of them reminds me of the extent of Fordham's badness that in my opinion exceeds mediocrity to become

something (anti-)heroic.

However, I only mention this in passing, because I want to get on to something more *important*.

What is truly sad

I would ask you to stop and “listen” very, very closely to this point:

As far as I am concerned, there is one, and only one, thing that is sad about this story.

I insist that in my side of the story there is one, and only one, thing that is sad.

It’s not that I am not normally called “Dr. Hayward.” I’m called “Christos,” eh? That’s kind of bigger, even if it is only a name.

It is not either, more seriously, that in my opinion Fordham’s negligence could have killed me. Possibly I am right, but I survived. And if Fordham really had killed me, God would have had every ability to allow me to pass away, in C.S. Lewis’s phrase, “between Aslan’s paws.” As it is, I have been given something Orthodox positively **crave**: *more time to repent*.

If it is not a matter of my life, neither is it my career. While technically one can teach on an advanced degree, including a master’s, I’ve never succeeded landing such a job, and informally speaking a PhD is a “union card” and American universities as a whole expect a PhD. I’ve been told that if I want to teach at an Orthodox seminary, a good step is to get a degree from an Orthodox seminary, and I am studying at my Archdiocese’s pastoral school, where the faculty love the students tremendously and I have the upsides of academic study without the downsides. It might

have been God protecting me from a career fighting academic bullies just a wee bit intimidated at my intelligence. (Did I mention that the seminary leadership has extended a *lot* of grace to me, including full tuition?)

Meanwhile, whether I have appreciated it or not, God has been moving forward with me. I am an author, and while Amazon is paying me less than 10% of what they used to, the single most lasting work I have hoped to leave behind is a collection of edifying books, and my expenses are met for now (I'm retired on disability). As far as writing goes, I have had a whole lot of being in the right place at the right time, **and built a website to showcase and share my works that started before I ever heard of Netscape. I also have a bookshelf on Amazon**, and I don't believe Amazon is being cheaper with me than with anyone else. I also have (mostly) what I have called "fame lite." *I Am Spock* talks about the real and profound cost of playing a celebrity character on TV. I've had a hieromonk tell me that other people have told him he should read me. So my writing enjoys some success, and I've invented things by computer: "Grandfather Clock with Westminster Chime and a Soothing Tick-Tock—Steampunk Style" which will sound like a grandfather clock if you keep it open in a browser window on a laptop or desktop.

Then what do I consider sad for me in all this: only one thing. *I attended Fordham through spring 2007. It took me through Wednesday, November 24 2020 for me to forgive.*

I have written earlier, decades earlier, about an idea for a film. It would start in standard action-adventure movie format, have the hero try to sneak in quietly and rescue a good guy, Plan A fails and all Hell breaks loose, and

one of the villain's henchmen comes out after the good guys get into a helicopter, and the hero makes one parting shot into the villain's knee with a hollow-nosed .45.

Then the pace shifts to that of a European art film and follows the henchman for the remaining forty years of his life, as he remains crippled, and far worse than this, is crippled by a grudge that never lets go of desiring vengeance.

I wrote it, but I never imagined I would be writing of myself.

Nothing can injure the man who does not harm himself.

As far as what is really my due in a career as a scholar, I would like to pat myself on the back in quoting *Stranger in a Strange Land*:

“Ben does not speak for me. I am not interested in this lad's so-called rights. His claim to Mars is lawyer's hogwash: as a lawyer myself I need not respect it. As for the wealth that is supposed to be his, the situation results from other people's passions and our odd tribal customs; he has earned none of it. He would be lucky if they bilked him out of it—but I would not scan a newspaper to find out. If Ben expected me to fight for Smith's 'rights' you have come to the wrong house.”

And indeed, a judge might offer me a tissue but would unlikely conclude that Fordham has done me *legal* wrong. Which it hasn't. My present regret is not that I am not long a professor; it is that I am not long a monk, or perhaps my own impatient chafing of the proto-monastic obedience of

“Stay at home for a while.”

Why am I telling all this if I have forgiven?

Fordham has made a big deal about its embrace to Orthodox. It’s not as big a deal as it makes about its *cura personalis* that cares for every aspect of the person, but it’s still a big deal, and Fordham seems to find it natural to expect that Orthodox will agree with “The Church must breathe with both lungs” along the same lines as Roman ecumenism. I do not remember ever meeting acknowledgment that some Orthodox consider ecumenism the ecclesiological heresy of our day, or wrong on a lesser scale. At Fordham, ecumenism reigns.

Also, at Fordham, the gender rainbow (or whatever it is called this month) reigns, and a Fordham that sees Orthodox as simply being Catholics (and on a liberal understanding of “Catholic”), is not in particular a Fordham well-poised to understand why it is problematic to Orthodoxy to strongarm an Orthodox seminary into accepting a hieromonk who married another man. (*It’s perhaps more important that the seminary in question needs to stop sucking Fordham’s dick, but that is another conversation.*) It is true that the “Orthodox” Students Studies Center received something like a million dollar grant to study Orthodoxy and “sexuality,” but Fordham does not grasp or does not accept some very basic rules about what is allowed to Orthodox.

I write to offer a third, if perhaps lesser, piece of the puzzle. Fordham makes no end of a big deal about its *cura personalis*. They also try, in their best Roman ecumenism,

to roll out the red carpet to Orthodox whose schismatic status is gently overlooked. And, in my opinion, Fordham has a heart of ice. I do not say that my experience will be every Orthodox student's experience, but I do say, "Know what you're getting into" at least, and possibly "Get your bishop's blessing."

C.J.S. Hayward, perhaps more honored by a Fordham washout than a Fordham PhD

Epilogue on Roman Ecumenism

Rome continues to make a big deal out of restoring full communion with the Orthodox Church.

It took me longer to forgive the many Roman authorities I wrote who did not even respond to my cry for help, with the exception of one priest and journalist who said it is futile for an outsider to interfere, and whose journal has not yet reviewed any of the books I submitted.

Appendix C: The Wagon, the Blackbird, and the Saab

Before I get further, I'd like to say a few words about what I drive.

I drive an Oldsmobile F-85 station wagon. What's the color? When people are being nice, they talk about a classic, subdued camouflage color. Sometimes the more candid remarks end up saying something like, "The Seventies called. They want their paint job back," although my station wagon is a 1965 model. All in all, I think I had the worst car of anyone I knew. Or at least that's what I *used* to think.

Then I changed my mind. Or maybe it would be better to say that I had my mind changed for me.

I was sitting at the cafeteria, when I saw someone looking for a place to sit. He was new, and I motioned for him to come over. He sat down, quietly, and ate in silence. There was a pretty loud conversation at the table, and when people started talking about cars, his eyes seemed to widen. I asked him what kind of car he drove.

After hesitating, he mumbled something hard to

understand, and looked like he was getting smaller. Someone said, "Maybe he doesn't drive a car at all," and whatever he mumbled was forgotten in raucous laughter.

I caught him in the hallway later, and he asked if I could help him move several large boxes that were not in the city. When we made the trip, he again seemed to be looking around with round eyes, almost enchanted by my rustbucket.

I began to feel sorry for the chap, and I gave him rides. Even if I didn't understand.

He still managed to dodge any concrete hint of whatever it was that got him around—and I had a hunch that he hadn't just walked. My other friends may have given me some ribbing about my bucket of bolts, but really it was just ribbing. I tried to impress on him that he would be welcome even if he just got around on a derelict moped—but still not a single peep.

By the time it was becoming old to joke about whatever he drove, I accepted a dare and shadowed him as he walked along a couple of abandoned streets, got to the nearest airstrip...

and got into an SR-71 Blackbird. The man took off in an SR-71 Blackbird. *An SR-71 Blackbird!* Words failed me. Polite ones, at any rate. The SR-71 Blackbird may be the coolest looking reconnaissance plane ever; as far as looks go, it beats the pants off the spacecraft in a few science fiction movies. But the engineers weren't really trying to look cool; that was a side effect of trying to make an aircraft that *was* cool. It has those sleek lines because it's a bit of a stealth aircraft; it *can* be detected by radar, but it's somewhat harder. And suppose you're in an SR-71 Blackbird and you *are* picked up by radar, and enemy

soldiers launch a surface-to-air missile at you—or two, or ten? Just speed up and you'll outrun it; the SR-71 Blackbird is the fastest aircraft ever built. Some SR-71 Blackbirds have been shot *at*. Ain't never got one shot *down*. One of the better surface-to-air rockets has about the same odds of hitting an SR-71 Blackbird doing Mach 3.2 as a turtle trying to catch up with a cheetah and *ram* it. An SR-71 Blackbird is a different kind of rare. It's not just that it's not a common electronic device that you can pick up at any decent department store; it isn't even like something very expensive and rare that has a waiting list is almost never on store shelves. The SR-71 Blackbird is more like, if anything, an invention that the inventor can't sell—perhaps, some years back, one of the first, handmade electric light bulbs—because it is so far from how people think and do things that they can't see anyone would *want* to use them. The SR-71 Blackbird is rare enough that few pilots have even seen it. And I saw, or thought I saw, my friend get into one.

and got into an SR-71 Blackbird. The man took off in an SR-71 Blackbird. *An SR-71 Blackbird!* Words failed me. Polite ones, at any rate. And probably the impolite ones, too. The SR-71 Blackbird may be the coolest looking reconnaissance plane ever; as far as looks go, it beats the pants off the spacecraft in a few science fiction movies. But the engineers weren't really trying to look cool; that was a side effect of trying to make an aircraft that *was* cool. It has those sleek lines because it's a bit of a stealth aircraft; it *can* be detected by radar, but it's somewhat harder. And suppose you're in an SR-71 Blackbird and you *are* picked up by radar, and enemy soldiers launch a surface-to-air missile at you—or two, or ten? Just speed up and you'll outrun it; the SR-71 Blackbird is the fastest aircraft ever built. Some

SR-71 Blackbirds have been shot *at*. Ain't never got one shot *down*. One of the better surface-to-air rockets has about the same odds of hitting an SR-71 Blackbird doing Mach 3.2 as a turtle trying to catch up with a cheetah and *ram* it. An SR-71 Blackbird is a different kind of rare. It's not just that it's not a common electronic device that you can pick up at any decent department store; it isn't even like something very expensive and rare that has a waiting list is almost never on store shelves. The SR-71 Blackbird is more like, if anything, an invention that the inventor can't sell—perhaps, some years back, one of the first, handmade electric light bulbs—because it is so far from how people think and do things that they can't see anyone would *want* to use them. The SR-71 Blackbird is rare enough that few pilots have even seen it. And I saw, or thought I saw, my friend get into one.

I walked back in a daze, sat down, decided not to take any drinks just then, and cornered the joker, who couldn't keep his mouth shut. I told him to fess up about whatever he slipped me, but he was clueless—and when I couldn't keep my mouth shut and blabbed why, he didn't believe me. (Not that I blame him; I didn't believe it myself.)

I ate by myself, later, and followed him. The third time, I caught him in the act.

I was red with anger, and almost saw red.

He blanched whiter than at the wisecrack about him maybe not driving a car.

What I would have said then, if I were calmer, was, "Do you think it's right for a billionaire, to go around begging? You have things that none of us even dream of, and you—?"

After I had yelled at him, he looked at me and said, "How can I fuel up?"

I glared at him. "I don't know, but it's got to be much cooler than waiting in line at a gas station."

"Maybe it is cooler, but I don't think so, and that's not what I asked. Suppose I want to fly in my airplane. What do I do to be fueled up?"

"Um, a fuel truck drives out and fills you up?"

"And then I'm good to go because I have a full tank, just like you?"

"I don't see what you're getting at."

"Ok, let me ask you. What do you do if you want to make a long trip? Can you fill your tank, maybe a day or two before your trip, and leave?"

"Yes. And that would be true if you had a moped, or a motorcycle, or a luxury car, or even something exotic like an ATV or a hovercraft."

"But not an SR-71 Blackbird."

"What do you mean, not an SR-71 Blackbird? Did you get a good deal because your aircraft is broken?"

"Um, just because you can assume something in a good car, or even a bad car, doesn't mean that it's true across the board. When it's sitting on the ground, my aircraft leaks fuel."

"It leaks fuel? Why are you flying an aircraft that's not broken?"

"There's a difference between designing a passenger car and what I deal with. With a passenger car, if the manufacturers are any good, the car can sit with little to no fuel leak even if it's badly maintained."

"But this does not apply to what the rest of us can only dream of?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"A passenger car heats up a little, at top speeds, due to air friction. One and the same part works for the fuel line when it's been in the garage for an hour, and when it's driving as fast as you've driven it. Not so with my aircraft. The SR-71 Blackbird is exposed to one set of temperatures in the hangar, and then there is air friction for moving at Mach 3.2, and there's a basic principle of physics that says that what gets hotter, gets bigger."

"What's your point?"

"The parts that make up an SR-71 Blackbird are one size in the hangar and other sizes when the aircraft is flying at high speeds. The engineers could have sized the parts so that you could keep an aircraft in the hangar without losing any fuel... or they could make an airplane that leaks fuel on the ground, but it works when it was flying. But they could not make an airplane that would work at Mach 3.2 *and* have a sealed fuel line in the hangar... and that means that, when I go anywhere worth mentioning in my hot, exciting airplane, even I get fueled up on the ground, and I lose quite a lot of fuel getting airborne and more or less need an immediate air-to-air refueling... This is besides the obvious fact that I can't run on *any* fuel an ordinary gas station would carry. For that matter, the JP-7, a strange beast of a 'fuel' that must also serve as hydraulic fluid and *engine coolant*, is about as exotic compared to most jet fuel as it is compared to the 'boring' gasoline which you take for granted—you can't get fuel for an SR-71 Blackbird at a regular airport any more than you can buy 'ordinary' jet fuel at a regular gas station... and you think me strange when I get excited about the fact that you can drive up to any normal gas station and fill-er-up!"

I hesitated, and then asked, "But besides one or two

details like—"

He cut me off. "It's not 'one or two details,' any more than—than filling out paperwork and dealing with bureaucracy amounts to 'one or two details' of a police officer's life. Sure, on television, something exciting happens to police officers every hour, but a real police officer's life is *extremely* different from police shows. It's not just paperwork. Perhaps there is *lots* of paperwork—a police officer deals with at least as much paperwork and bureaucracy as an employee who's a cog in a big office—but there are other things. Police officers get in firefights all the time on TV. But this is another area where TV's image is not the reality. I've known police officers who wouldn't trade their work for anything in the world. Doesn't mean that their work is like a cop show. When police officers aren't being filmed on those videos that make dramatic shows, and they aren't training, the average police officer starts firing maybe once every three or four years. There are many, many seasoned veterans who have never fired a gun on the street. And having an SR-71 Blackbird is no more what you'd imagine it was like to have a cool, neat, super-duper reconnaissance plane instead of your unsatisfying, meagre, second-rate, dull car than... than... than being a police officer has all the excitement of surviving a shootout every day, but only having to fill paperwork once every three or four years if at all!"

"Um, what else is there?"

"Um, what's a typical trip for you? I mean, with your car?"

"My wife's family is at the other side of the state, and —"

"So that's an example of a common trip? More

common than shopping or driving to meet someone?"

"Ok; often I'm just running some errands."

"Such a boring thing to do with a station wagon. If you want things to get interesting, try something I wouldn't brave."

"What?"

"Go for the gusto. Borrow *my* vehicle! First, you can fuel up at home, as any fuel that had been in your tank is now a slippery puddle underneath the vehicle you wish you had. Then start the vehicle. You'll have something to deal with later, after the hot exhaust sets your trees on fire. And maybe a building or two. Then lurch around, and try to taxi along the streets. (Let's assume you don't set any trees on fire, which is not likely.) Now you're used to be able to see most of the things on the road, at least the ones you don't want to hit? And—"

"Ok, *ok*, I get the idea! The SR-71 Blackbird is the worst, most pitiable—"

"Perhaps I have misspoken. Or at least wasn't clear enough. I wasn't trying to say that it's simple torture flying an SR-71 Blackbird. There are few things as joyful as flying. And do you know what kind of possibilities exist (in everything from friendship to work to hobbies) when the list of things you can easily make a day trip to the other side of the globe? When—"

"Then why the big deal you just made before?"

"An SR-71 Blackbird is many things, but it is not what you imagine if you fantasize about everything you imagine my vehicle to be, *and assume almost everything you take for granted in yours*. There are a great many nice things that go without saying in your vehicle, that aren't part of mine. You know, a boring old station wagon with its dull

room for a driver plus a few passengers and some cargo, that runs on the most mundane petroleum-based fuel you can get, and of course is familiar to most mechanics and can be maintained by almost any real automotive shop, and—if this is even worth mentioning—can be driven safely across a major network of roads, and—*of course* this can be taken for granted in any real vehicle—has a frame that gives you a fighting chance of surviving a full-speed collision with—"

"Ok, *ok*, I get the picture. But wouldn't it have helped matters if you would tell people these things up front? You know, maybe something about avoiding these confrontations, or maybe something about 'Honesty is the best policy'?"

He said, "Ok. So when I meet people, I should say, 'Hi. My vehicle leaves Formula One racecars in the dust. It also flies, can slip through radar, and does several things you can't even imagine. But don't worry, I haven't let any of this go to my head. I'm not full of myself. I promise I won't look down on you or whatever car you drive. And you can promise not to feel the least bit envious, inferior, or intimidated. *Deal?*' It seems to come across that way no matter *how* I try to make that point. And really, why shouldn't it?"

I paused. "Do our vehicles have *anything* in common at all?"

"Yes—more than either of us can understand."

"But what on earth, if we're so different? My vehicle is a 1965 model; your vehicle sounds so new you'd need a time machine to get one—"

"My vehicle is a 1965 model too."

"If you want to lie and make me feel better, you could have told me that your vehicle was years older than mine."

"I meant it. There is something about our vehicles that is cut from the same cloth."

"How can you say that? I mean, without stretching? Is what they have in common that they're both in the same universe? Or that they're both bigger than an atom but smaller than a galaxy? Or some other way of *really* stretching?"

"If you want to dig deeper, have you read, 'I, Pencil'? Where an economist speaks on behalf of a common, humble pencil?"

"A speech from a pencil? What does that have to do with our vehicles? Are you going to compare our vehicles to a pencil?"

"Yes."

"So you're stretching."

"No."

"In 'I, Pencil,' a cheap wooden pencil explains what it took to make it. It talks about how a diamond in the rough—I mean, graphite in the rough—crosses land and sea and is combined with clay, and a bit of this and that to make the exquisite slender shaft we call pencil 'lead'. The wood comes from the majestic cedar—do you know what it takes to make a successful logging operation—and then a mind-boggling number of steps transform a hundred feet of tree into something that's a little hard to explain, but machined to very precise specifications, and snapped together before six coats of laquer—oh, I forgot, before the cedar wraps around the slender graphite wand, it's also adorned by being tinted a darker color, 'for the same reason women put rouge on their faces' or something like that. Its parts come through a transportation network from all over the world, and the rubber eraser—which wouldn't erase at all well if were just

rubber; it needs to be a cocktail of ingredients that perform at least three major tasks if it will work as an eraser. Try erasing pencil with a rubber ball sometime; it will erase terribly if it erases at all. Your eraser is not mere rubber, but a rubber alloy, the way airplanes are made, not with mere aluminum, but with an aluminum alloy, and—"

"So the parts of a pencil have an interesting story?"

"Yes. And the quite impressive way they are put together—pencils don't assemble themselves, and a good machine—for some steps—costs a king's ransom. And the way they're distributed, and any number of things necessary for business to run the whole process, and—"

"Then should I start offering my daughter's pencils to a museum?"

"I wouldn't *exactly* offer one of her pencils to a museum. Museums do not have room for every wonder this world has. But I will say this. The next pencil you forget somewhere wouldn't have been yours to lose without more work, talent, skill, knowledge, venture capital, and a thousand other things than it took to make a wonder like the Rosetta Stone or the Mona Lisa."

As usual, she was dressed to kill. Her outfit was modest—I can almost say, *ostentatiously modest*—but, somehow, demurely made the point that she might be a model.

I had a bad feeling about something. During our conversation on the way over, I said, "You have an issue with Saab drivers." He replied, "No. Or yes, but it's beside the point. Saab drivers tend to have issues with me." I was caught off-guard: "That sounds as arrogant as anything I've

—"

He asked me to forget what he had said. For the rest of the conversation, he seemed to be trying to change the subject.

She greeted us, shook his hand warmly, and turned back. "—absolutely brilliant. Not, in any way, like the British Comet, which never should have been flown in the first place, and was part of why jumbo jetliners were dangerous in the public's eye. The training for people who were going to be in that jumbo jetliner—the Comet—included being in a vacuum so that soldiers would know what to do if they were flying in a sparse layer of the atmosphere and the airplane simply disintegrated around them and left them in what might as well have been a vacuum. This sort of thing *happened* with enough jumbo jetliners that the public was very leery of them. For good reason, they were considered a disaster looking for a place to happen.

"And so, when Boeing effectively bet the company on the Boeing 707—like they did with every new airplane; it wasn't just one product among others that could be a flop without killing the company—they gave the test pilot very careful instructions about what to do when he demonstrated their new jumbo jetliner.

"At the airshow, he was flying along, and after a little while, people began to notice that one of the airplane's wings was lower, and the other was higher...

"The Boeing 707 test pilot was doing a barrel roll, which is extremely rough on an airplane. It's like... something like, instead of saying that a computer is tough, throwing it across the room. This stunt was a surprise to the other people at Boeing, almost as much as to the other, and it wasn't long before Boeing got on the radio and asked the

pilot, 'What the §±×¶ do you think you're doing?' The pilot's reply was short, and to the point:

"Why, selling airplanes, sir.'

"He told a reporter afterwards, 'And when I got done with that barrel roll, I realized that the people weren't going to *believe* what they just saw... so I turned around and I did another one!'"

A moment later, someone else said, "What does 'Saab' mean again? You've told me, but—"

She smiled. "It took me a while to remember, too. 'SAAB' stands for '*Svenska aeroplan Aktiebolaget*,' literally 'Swedish Aeroplane Limited.' It's a European aerospace company that decided that besides making fighter jets and military aircraft, they would run a side business of selling cars, or at least the kind of car you get when you combine a muscle car, a luxury vehicle, and more than a touch of a military jet. It's like an airplane in big and small ways—everything from, if you unbuckle your seatbelt, a 'Fasten seatbelts' light just like an airliners', to the rush of power you feel when you hit the gas and might as well be lifting off... I'm not sure how you would describe it... It's almost what Lockheed-Martin would sell if they were Scandinavian and wanted to sell something you could drive on the street."

He said, "It sounds like a delight to drive."

She said, "It is. Would you two like me to take you out for a spin? I'd be delighted to show it to you. What kind of car do you drive?"

He paused for a split second and said, "I needed to get a ride with him; I have nothing that I could use to get over here."

I told her, "He's being modest."

She looked at me quizzically. "How?"

"He flies an SR-71 Blackbird... um... sorry, I shouldn't have said that just as you were taking a drink."

He seemed suddenly silent. For that matter, the room suddenly seemed a whole lot quieter.

She said, "You're joking, right?"

No one said a word.

Then she said, "Wow. It is a privilege and an honor. I have never met someone who..."

He said, "I really don't understand... maybe... um... I'm not really *better*, or—"

She said, "Stop being modest. I'd love to hear more about your fighter. Have you shot anything down?"

He looked as if he was thinking very hurriedly, and not finding the thought that he wanted.

"The SR-71 Blackbird would be pretty useless in a dogfight. It is neither designed or equipped to fight even with a very obsolete enemy aircraft; it's just designed to snoop around and gather information."

She said, "Um, so they get shot down all the time? Wouldn't you tend to get a lot of missiles fired by enemy fighters who aren't worried about you shooting back? What do you do when you run out of countermeasure flares?"

He paused for a moment, saying, "The SR-71 Blackbird doesn't have anything you'd expect. Flares are a great way to decoy a heat-seeking missile, but the SR-71 Blackbird doesn't have them, either."

I turned to him and said, "You're being almost disturbingly modest." Then I turned to her and said, "An SR-71 Blackbird can go over three times the speed of sound. The standard evasive to a surface-to-air rocket is simply to accelerate until you've left the rocket in the dust. I'm not aware of one of them being shot down."

Her eyes were as big as dinner plates.

She said, "I am stunned. I have talked with a few pilots, but I have never met anyone close to an SR-71 Blackbird pilot. I hope we can be friends." She stood close to him and offered her hand.

The three of us ran into each other a number of times in the following days. She seemed to want to know everything about his aircraft, and seemed very respectful, or at least seemed to be working hard to convey how impressed she was.

It was a dark and stormy night. He and I were both on our way out the door, when she asked, "What are you doing?"

He said, "I want to try some challenges. I plan on going out over the ocean and manoeuvring in the storm system."

She turned to him and said, very slowly, "No, you're not."

He turned to me and said, "C'mon, let's go."

She said, "Are you crazy? A storm like that has done what enemy rockets have failed to do: take down your kind of craft. I've grown quite fond of you, and I'd hate to see you get killed because you were being stupid. Think about 61-7969 / 2020."

He said, "May I ask why you know about that?"

"I have been doing some reading because I want to understand you. And I understand people well enough, and care about you enough, to tell when you are acting against your best interests."

He grabbed my arm and forced me out the door. Once

in the car, he said, "I'm sorry... I needed to get out before saying something I would regret."

"Like what?"

"So you know just the perfect way to straighten me out, and you don't even need to ask me questions. Walk a mile in my shoes, to a place you can reach in a car but not my aircraft, and then we might be able to talk."

I watched him take off, and I came back to pick him up, after waiting an hour. I could tell something that seemed not quite perfect about his flying, but I do not regret that I kept my mouth shut about that.

The next day she surprised us by meeting us first thing in the morning.

She gave us a stack of paper. "I care about you quite a lot, and I don't want to be invited to your funeral in the next year. Here are detailed aviation regulations and international laws which are intended for your safety. I could not get an exact count of the number of crimes you committed, either for last night or for your reckless day-to-day flying around. I am sure that there are many responsible ways a vehicle like yours can be used, and I have inquired about whether there are any people who can offer some guidance and free you to..."

He turned around, took my elbow, and began walking out to the parking lot. We got in my car, and she raced for hers.

I saw her go to the mouth of the parking lot and then stop. The one Rolls-Royce in town had broken down, of all places *there*, and the owner and chauffeur were both outside. I had thought that the person who was chauffeured in a Rolls-Royce was a peaceful sort of man, but he was yelling then, and before she got over the owner positively erupted

at the chauffeur and waved his arms. She had gotten out and wanted to talk with them, but you can't get a word in edgewise at a time like that.

Now I'd like to clarify something about my car. I've only seen a vehicle like mine in a demolition derby once, but I was surprised. I wasn't surprised, in particular, that the wagon was the last vehicle moving. What I was surprised at was that over a third of the derby had passed before the ugly wagon started to crumple at all.

And one other thing: one April Fools' Day, a friend who drives a sleek, sporty little 1989 Chrysler LeBaron gave me a bumper sticker that said, "Zero to sixty in fifteen minutes," and then acted surprised when I challenged him to a short race. When the race had finished, he seemed extraordinarily surprised, and I told him, "There is a question on your face. Let me answer it." Then I opened the hood on my ugly, uncool station wagon and said, "Your sleek little number can get by on a 2.2 liter engine. Do you know what *that* is?" He said, "Um, the engine?" And I said, "That is a 6.6 liter V8. Any questions?"

Ok, enough clarification. I looked around, turned in the opposite direction, and floored my car, blasting through the hedges and getting heavy scrapes on the bottom of my car. I got shortly on the road, and had a straight shot at the airport. She did eventually catch up to me, but not until there was nothing left to see but some hot exhaust and the fuel that had leaked when he tried to take off. (I still get the occasional note from him.)

Besides worrying about him, I was also much less worried about my car: tough as it is, cars don't like getting their undersides scraped on gravel, and I decided to take my car to the garage and have the mechanic take a look at it and

tell me if I broke anything.

I was surprised—though maybe I shouldn't have been—to see the Rolls-Royce in the garage when I pulled in. I intended to explain that I might have scraped the bottom up, and after I did so, my curiosity got the better of me. I asked something about Rolls-Royces breaking down.

The mechanic gave me the oddest look.

I asked him, "Why the funny look?"

He opened the hood, and said, "Rolls-Royces do break down easily... and it's even easier to break down if you open the hood, jam a screwdriver right *there*, and rev it as hard as you can."