A Study of a Christian Conception of Vocation in Networked Life:

In Dialogue with Oliver O’Donovan and Robert Adams

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'Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor. 12:10)[1]. The last years in developing this thesis have demonstrated—more clearly than I would have ever imagined—that strength, as Saint Paul writes, forms in our times of greatest weakness. This is God's power; not ours. It is in these circumstances that we are to trust especially in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which provides individuals with an ability to press on that simply cannot be achieved on their own.

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[1] New Revised Standard Version, p. 198.

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Abstract

In networked life, individuals are encouraged to live with a sense of limitlessness, and yet are provided with *less*, agency diminished, if not corrupted. Action within networked life seeks control or dominance in the material realm, such short-termism antithetical to freedom. These challenges are clearly presented, albeit from contrasting angles, in the work of the psychoanalyst Sherry Turkle and the sociologist Ronald Burt (contextualised by Marshall McLuhan, Jacques Ellul and George Grant), each converging on control as the aim of networked life.

We discover that networked life is, in its corrupted state, a life in the flesh. Networked life, however, can be redeemed. In this dissertation, I argue that a certain Christian conception of vocation is the way through networked life. Through discussion with Robert Adams and Oliver O'Donovan, vocation is defined as 'An offering from God, involving an ensemble of worldly relations and created goods, through which we are given, in particular, to pursue excellence, realise our agency and serve God.' I stress Adams' focus on pursuit of excellence, but in a manner that is reflective of O'Donovan's restraint.

Both interlocutors provide compelling conceptions of vocation, with ample opportunity for critical dialogue (this contextualised by Grisez, Bonhoeffer, Ellul, Stackhouse, Jr., Williams and others), particularly in areas such as faith, love and responsibility. Moreover, Adams proposes a theory of value grounding excellence in resemblance to the Transcendent Good, whereas O'Donovan embeds value in moral order, which *seizes* individuals. Each sees the measure of value as residing *outside* of individuals, discussion on value important in a world that otherwise prioritises the securing of short-term material advantage. This dissertation favours an evangelical Christian ethics,

engaging constructively with networked life, and making use of its clear benefits, using such benefits for mutual service in the world, and in the ultimate service of God.

Word count: 300

Long Abstract

Networked life consists of narrow horizons in relation to the self, the world and the time. Individuals are encouraged to live with a sense of limitlessness, and yet are provided with *less*, agency diminished, if not corrupted. In this dissertation, I argue that a certain Christian conception of vocation is the way through networked life, providing individuals with a steadiness in action that overcomes short-term forces, while pointing toward God's promise. The way in which vocation charts a course through networked life is one that might be characterised in terms of a *sense of restraint*.

In networked life, danger is always crouching at the door, nefarious actors seeking control and domination; vocation in comparison prepares individuals for a sustained action, unwavering in the face of internal and external forces. My emphasis throughout the thesis is therefore on a gradual, step-by-step uncovering of vocation through action, in which the intermittent formation of purposes through deliberation enables a vocational discernment resisting danger on networked paths.

Vocation is defined as 'An offering from God, involving an ensemble of worldly relations and created goods, through which we are given, in particular, to pursue excellence, realise our agency and serve God.' This definition is derived primarily from O'Donovan, while preserving Adams' compelling emphasis on a pursuit of excellence, which is a critical component of his theory of value. The historical examples of James A Baker III, Dr Eric Newell, Saint Paul, Dr Fiona Hill and a lone parent are weaved throughout the thesis, in order to highlight relevant aspects of the proposed conception of vocation in networked life.

I emphasise throughout the dissertation, building on Al Wolters, the distinction between *structure* and *direction* in a given order of created reality, this framework as a

basis for critical examination on the latent possibilities in networked life. I do not commend a pessimism in reflecting on networked life, for networked life is a part of the created world, which God made very good, and so it can be used strategically in the structuring and directing of a vocation. The approach to the thesis, extending from the critical account of networked life and its various elements, to the role of vocation as a way through networked life, is positive and constructive.

Chapter One: Human Agency in Modern Networked Life

In Chapter One, 'Human Agency in Modern Networked Life,' I critically examine Turkle's networked life and Burt's social network theory. The material advantages found in networked life and network structure must be balanced with a sense of limitation, particularly in the realm of control, both Turkle and Burt centering their accounts on control (this despite Burt's emphasis on networks as a theory of freedom).

I argue in this chapter for a sense of restraint in networked life, particularly in the selection of trustworthy, primary contacts as bridges in to diverse social worlds conducive to new opportunities, these opportunities germane to vocational formation. Conversely, individuals succumbing to the temptations of networked life seek to assume the role of God in action, assuming that the strategic formation of networks enables a control of the future, as well as of others. The assuming of the role of God is evoked most particularly by McLuhan through his description of the self's central nervous system extended into the world; Jacques Ellul through his discussion on technique within technological civilisation, and George Grant through his more hopeful account which allows some space, even if narrow, for the restoration of meaning in technological life. McLuhan, Ellul and Grant serve as key interlocutors to contextualise the discussion focused on a worshipping of the self, as well as of technique.

Individuals caught within networked life treat others as objects—considering others only in terms of useful 'parts'—while moving at speed, tempted to do more, even if rapid response provides them with less. Turkle, in particular, proposes the term 'deliberated nonchalance' as being characteristic of the withdrawal from world-participation involved in networked life. Yet, Burt notes that networked technologies, as well as understanding of network structure, may help individuals in their respective 'Battles of Fredericksburg,' in which individuals compete with others for the securing of productive relationships within given network structures.

It is the pursuit of opportunity which motivates individuals' entrepreneurial behaviour in forming, as well as maintaining, advantageous positions within network structures. In pushing against Ronald Burt in particular, Martin Kilduff, David Krackhardt and Landis et al. demonstrate that a sense of restraint, particularly in relation to the role of the self, may serve as an important component in the formation of opportunity-rich network structures, this reflected primarily in a discussion on the 'paradox of agency' and on a sense of dependence—rather than on abstract psychological power in the accurate perception of relations—within networks.

Nevertheless, network structure serves as a basis for vocation, through the provision of opportunity. I emphasise in the chapter that networked life is often misdirected, this when focusing on the self, but it can be restored; it is not beyond repair. Just as importantly, a myriad of aspects of networked life—such as understanding of network structure and Social Network Analysis—can be used to structure and direct vocations oriented toward the good. James A Baker III, Dr Eric Newell, Paul, Dr Fiona Hill and a lone parent—who through their lives have exemplified restraint in network formation—are introduced in the final section of the chapter, each demonstrating

salubrious elements of networked life, to be incorporated in subsequent chapters on the structuring and directing of vocation.

Chapter Two: Moral Order, Teleology and the Pursuit of Excellence in Adams and O'Donovan

In Chapter Two, 'Moral Order, Teleology and the Pursuit of Excellence in Adams and O'Donovan,' I argue in favour of a socially-oriented pursuit of excellence within the God-given world of created goods, emphasising restraint—restraint as a guard against the limitedness of human perception and the sin of presumptuousness—as well as service toward God within particular sets of valued social relations. The concept of a pursuit of excellence, introduced in Adams, is enriched through O'Donovan's discussion on finding and seeking within moral order. This chapter responds to the deficiencies outlined in the Chapter One discussion on networked life and network structure, particularly that of short-term action, focused on maintaining material advantage and control.

The chapter proposes a moral theological basis for enduring, sustained pursuit of excellence within vocation, in the face of the dangers in networked life. Al Wolters serves as a key interlocutor in this chapter through his distinction between structure and direction within created reality, and in its various orders. Community criticism, as it is outlined in the work of O'Donovan, is contrasted with the deceptive appearances and avoidance of living reflected particularly in Turkle, as examined in Chapter One. James Gustafson, along with Wolters, serve as important interlocutors through their emphasis on the teleological relation between Creator and creation, individuals oriented toward the service of God in the world.

Adams rightly specifies the elusive nature of excellence, but his account of excellence is rather individualistic, this reflected in his example of Gandhi. Here, Adams fails to consider much of Gandhi's moral badness, emphasising instead narrow features

such as his extravagance. Nussbaum, in her article ‘Transcendence and Value,’ provides a compelling critique of Adams’ account of transcendence reflected in the character of Gandhi, seeing Nehru’s service of others and extended periods of suffering and isolation as more reflective of transcendence. Nussbaum’s critique serves as a basis for a more social conception of excellence, in which the multidimensionality of individuals—the fundamental basis for valuing and in turn, God’s love as described by Adams—can be exercised in practice through a wider set of social relations.

I propose a ‘coordinated excellence,’ which provides opportunity for individualised excellence within a more dynamic series of trusting relations, such coordination involving a more *spirited* excellence, raising excellence at individual levels while assuming their roles within larger projects. Moreover, a direct commentary of O’Donovan on Adams, examined in this chapter, suggests that a loving pursuit of excellence that is ‘bottom-up’ (initiated by finite goods) only risks *overreaching*, seeking to overcome elusiveness in the pursuit of excellence, rather than trusting in further self-communication of God which deepens understanding, while preserving spiritedness that might otherwise exhaust itself.

This waiting on God’s self-communication is necessary in the face of suffering, when there is likely to be an absence of enjoyment of goods in the short-term. There is a strong likelihood of suffering in the pursuit of excellence, this in turn part of the proposed conception of Christian vocation, in which case turning to networked life for short-term rewards, or occasions to ‘boast,’ must be resisted.

Chapter Three: Vocational Discernment—Examining ‘The Path,’ Danger in Action and the Call to Watchfulness

In Chapter Three, ‘Vocational Discernment—Examining ‘The Path,’ Danger in Action and the Call to Watchfulness,’ I argue that vocational discernment that is evangelical must involve watchfulness in a particular way, the individual agent awake to

the dangers in the paths walked in networked life, but ultimately pointing beyond to the time that is nearing, always ready for the unexpected hour. Psalm 119 plays a central role in this chapter. A successful deliberation, as part of vocation in networked life, is fundamental; without deliberation, discernment is confined to internecine warfare with the demons involved in networked life, unable to overcome them through spiritedness in the pursuit of excellence, looking toward God's promise. German Grisez (as well as Russell Shaw), Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Jacques Ellul serve as important interlocutors in the footnotes to this chapter, this following on a return to McLuhan and Ellul primarily in the discussion on deliberation (this merging with O'Donovan and Adams).

I emphasise—building on O'Donovan in particular—the constant preparation involved in deliberation's *endurance*, endurance which nevertheless contributes to purposes that are *modest*, possibilities narrowed in relation to actual goods, even if such goods are few and far between in one's world. Deliberation is the several hours per day spent practicing the piano, or reading scholarly materials, which prepares individuals for the 'opportune moments' offered by God for action. In other words, efficacious deliberation, in the formation of robust purposes, leads powerfully into discernment, which is a detail. As part of the discussion on deliberation, and in contrast to the 'deliberated nonchalance' of networked life, I examine the guidance of the Spirit and consistent prayer as elements of deliberation, individuals bearing their crosses, even if such bearing-in-deliberation only distantly images Jesus' plight in Gethsemane.

God's promise serves as a strategy in place of action on networked terrain. God's promise as strategy must instead be the focus of individuals' attention, which, as O'Donovan notes, limits worldly—and possibly self-deceptive—imaginations. I contrast Adams and O'Donovan in the extent to which they see individuals *writing their names* on worldly relations and created goods offered to love as part of vocations. I suggest that the

offering of goods must remain an *offering*, individuals resisting the temptation to take over the goods which they encounter in the world, but rather maintaining focus on service.

Chapter Four: Vocational Action and a Well-Ordered System of Motives and Values

In Chapter Four, 'Vocational Action and a Well-Ordered System of Motives and Values,' I argue for a faithful action, emphasising small beginnings and particularly a gradual sense of becoming within one's existing material circumstances, that resists the tempting imaginative anticipations of networked life. I critically examine senses of becoming in Adams and O'Donovan, and suggest humility in action, through the example of the Parable of the Mustard Seed with its focus on small beginnings and unseen realities. I also consider vocation's faithful action over a lifetime, through self-offering, resisting the overleveraging of powers and fragmentation of attention found in the 'portfolio-based' life or career. Charles Taylor serves as the primary interlocutor in this chapter on modern identity, helping to underpin the discussion between Adams and O'Donovan.

With this gradual sense of becoming via step-by-step action in focus, I consider the question of what contributes to enduring motivational states, as a basis for faithful action in vocation over time. The need for steady motivational states considers the Chapter Three discussion on danger in networked life, as well as the risk of decay within systems, and particularly in relation to adherence to principles without the sustaining or integrative force of trusted, worldly authorities. I highlight that vocation provides a structure—through authoritative figures in the world (Burt's primary contacts forming alliances) —enabling sustained action in the face of waning motivation and external forces. Gustafson, as well as Albert Bandura, serve as interlocutors in this chapter, particularly in relation to the concept of motivation and its linkages with related terms. I argue for a more focused sense of *alliance* on the side of finite good, which on the side of the Infinite is centered on God as

Jesus Christ. The alliances on the side of finite goods are likely to be few in number, this building on the Chapter One discussion stressing limitation.

Indeed, I seek to narrow the scope of alliance as it is presented in Adams, providing an alternative example to that of a philosophy department and its pursuit of shared mission within the university and across other philosophy departments. This example is that of the Australian 'graduate student attributes' project, replicated in Canada and the United Kingdom, suggesting that such shared pursuits in favour of 'the good' are difficult indeed to attain in practice. A sense of restraint is necessary in the extent to which motivation is derived from others' praise following worldly achievements, such praise likely to be withdrawn in cases where purported alliances do not stand tests of adversity.

A rapprochement between the defining features and dynamics of networked life on the one hand—value situated in opportunity flowing through strategic position in a given network structure—and an evangelical Christian ethics on the other—value located in the moral order vindicated by the resurrection Jesus Christ—is difficult, but attainable. This is particularly so if we are to reflect on the goodness of God-given creation, of which Turkle's networked life and Burt's network structure are a part. Nevertheless, the prevalence of networked technologies and of a modern identity often dependent on victory within perpetual war for recognition in the world means that individuals must act with a sense of restraint in their participation in networked life.

Indeed, it is possible to upend corrupted network structures, this resulting from deliberation focused not on the seeking of short-term advantage in networked life, but rather on Jesus Christ, whose life, death and ultimate victory in resurrection enable the endurance necessary for agency, pursuit of excellence and service within vocation. It is with this in mind that I favour an evangelical Christian ethics, engaging constructively with networked life, and making use of the benefits outlined above as part of Life in the

Spirit—such benefits oriented toward mutual service in the world, and the ultimate service of God.

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Table of Contents

Introduction: A Study of a Christian Conception of Vocation in Networked Life: In Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan and Robert Adams 18

Chapter One: Human Agency in Modern Networked Life 34

Networked Life 38

Avoidance of living *38*

Realtechnik *46*

Invisible Network Structure: A Benefit-Rich Networked Approach 51

Competition for network position *52*

Information and control benefits of a networked approach *65*

The tertius gaudens and the paradox of agency *68*

Networks as Opportunity: A Basis for Vocation 75

Historical examples in the formation of direct, trusting relations *80*

Conclusion 95

Chapter Two: Moral Order, Teleology and the Pursuit of Excellence in Adams and O'Donovan 100

The Elusive Pursuit of Excellence 103

Not the measure of all things—value recognised and submitted to *103*

The recognition of moral order—awakening by the blood of the cross *113*

The fragmentation of excellence in created order *120*

Community Criticism and Authoritative Self-disclosure 125

Advantages of elusiveness *135*

Multidimensionality and Individualised Excellence 141

Reaching within valued relations; against a reaching beyond *151*

Conclusion 159

Chapter Three: Vocational Discernment—Examining 'The Path,' Danger in Action and the Call to Watchfulness 164

Deliberation in Networked Life and Network Structure 167

Purpose and direction *167*

Deliberation and Continuous Preparation 180

Endurance leading to purpose: deliberation as continuous preparation *180*

The propensity for deliberated nonchalance *186*

Discernment of Paths and Danger 191

Congruence of normativities and three cases *192*

Watchfulness 198

Psalm 119 ... *198*
Watchfulness ... *202*
Vocational Projects: Moral Seriousness and Self-denial in the Pursuit of Excellence ... 206
Writing names on created goods ... *206*
Opportunity ... *214*
Worldly functions and projects ... *219*
Conclusion ... 226
Chapter Four: Vocational Action and a Well-Ordered System of Motives and Values ... 229
Self-articulation in Action ... 232
Limited senses of becoming and resistance to the question of ought ... *232*
The emptiness of self-articulation ... *242*
Self-offering and Faith in Small Beginnings ... 248
Single-minded service ... *249*
Action over a lifetime—resisting short-term projects ... *252*
Ambiguity in an Ordered System of Motives or Values and the Narrowness of Alliance ... 256
Interconnectedness and challenges in concepts of motivation, dispositions and attitudes ... *263*
The Risk of Decay Within Systems ... 274
Erosion without authority ... *274*
Partnership in suffering: the role of the coach ... *276*
Conclusion ... 280
Conclusion: Vocation as Value ... 286
The way through networked life ... 287
Continuous preparation from small beginnings ... 295
Vocation as value ... 299
Bibliography ... 306

Introduction: A Study of a Christian Conception of Vocation in Networked Life: In Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan and Robert Adams

Networked life encourages individuals to live with a sense of limitlessness, in which they constantly seek to do more. And yet, this doing more provides them constantly with *less*. These are among the findings of Sherry Turkle, Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT, in her extensive work on individuals' evolving relationships with networked technologies. However, networked life is much more than technology; it is a *mindset*, which, when corrupted, is characterised by a persistent seeking of control and dominance within one's relations in the world. The networked life involves a valuing of material benefits, value defined in terms of comparative advantages, such as remuneration, job progression and performance feedback—what Paul terms 'boasting' in the flesh—achieved in part through favourable position within network structures.

Ronald Burt, Charles M. Harper Leadership Professor of Sociology and Strategy at the University of Chicago, demonstrates in his prolific writing on social network theory, that individuals engage in perpetual competition, their own 'Battles of Fredericksburg,' to secure productive relationships within networks as means to provide early access to opportunities, alongside early warning of impending dangers. Networked life is a *war*, though often avoiding direct encounter with other selves, aiming instead to control terms of relationships, projecting appearances such that potential competitors for material advantage are constantly held at bay. Networked life, is, when misdirected, an avoidance of living; a failure to think, as well as to reason practically. Its temptations risk moral corruption, seeing others not as persons but as objects, this a faulty valuing. Networked life, when lived uncritically, is a worshipping of the self and the tool, rather than God.

Through its focus on 'socially-induced action,' networked life traps individuals within the realm of the abstract, hindering human agency. Here, human agency does not derive from reflection on the part of the agent—purposes formed through deliberation—but is rather a product of position within a given network structure. If there is freedom within networked life, then it is reduced to the setting of terms of relations, as outlined in Burt, rather than featuring a more involved, direct series of encounters between individuals acting with purpose and direction, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The networks deemed most advantageous in networked life are 'structurally autonomous,' in which the central figure of the network maintains trusted contacts across multiple, non-redundant *social worlds*, while ensuring coordination between contacts within his own network, such that she cannot easily be replaced by skilled competitors or enemies. Networked life, as such, involves considerable negotiation, in order to ensure that one does not allow others to win favourable position conducive to their own securing of opportunity. Action in networked life often prioritises the short-term, speed and a self divorced from its interdependencies. Deliberation in networked life occurs insofar as it helps to secure relations providing some advantage on the immediate terrain; there is little long-term strategy, in which one first considers who, or what, their actions or lives are *for*, beyond the self.

The problem, then, in networked life is one of a life of narrow horizons in relation to the self, the world and the time. The value of the self in networked life is reduced to what it derives from the parts of others that are useful, a point raised in the work of Turkle. Its world does not involve goods to be admired or appreciated, but is rather one of imposition, in which it is more likely that individuals will seek to write *their names* on created goods, than allow created goods to write their names on *them*, claiming or seizing individuals in a manner that involves submission, glad responsibility and thanksgiving.

There is little opportunity for service and stewardship with such a mindset, the mentality being instead that one will be controlled if one does not control others first. Networked life creates conditions that are antithetical to sustained *action*; it is difficult, indeed, to carry purposes and ensuing action through to completion.

As such, there is little opportunity for excellence in networked life, excellence not only what is initially perceived and admired in loving Eros, but which is also developed steadily, in a step-by-step manner, over time—as part of what may be called a 'pursuit of excellence,' as will be examined in relation to Robert Adams. More fundamentally, networked life diminishes value. Excellence—otherwise characterised by a certain elusiveness or even mystery—is replaced by wanting concrete material benefits resulting from action in the short-term. This is, as noted earlier, a *moral corruption*, in which individuals are no longer awake to excellences in the world of which they are not the measure, failing to recognise excellences in the world or develop proper relations with them. This description of networked life is of its corrupted, misdirected state. We will later refer to Al Wolters in his helpful distinction between structure and direction in the created world that is made very good. Indeed, networked life—both its structure and direction—can be redeemed.

Needed is a way *through* networked life, one which engages constructively with this form of life—particularly its more salubrious aspects while avoiding or mitigating its dangers—and ultimately, emerges out of it, directed toward what lies beyond it. In this thesis, I argue that vocation is the way through networked life, providing individuals with a structure and direction in action that overcomes temptations, while pointing toward God's promise. Vocation calls individuals to action, on particular paths within the vast, interconnected paths of networked life. It involves sustained pursuit of excellence on particular paths in relation to created goods and worldly relations offered to love, and

conceptualises relations in terms of service, rather than self-interest involving the maximisation of benefits.

I engage with two interlocutors in particular in the critical examination of vocation, Oliver O'Donovan and Robert Merrihew Adams[2], whose conceptions of vocation—and of value, more generally—overlap sufficiently for meaningful discussion, while diverging in several important respects. I examine Oliver O'Donovan's *Ethics as Theology* in particular, alongside his *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*. I examine Robert Adams' *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics*, and to a much lesser extent, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good*, particularly in relation to Adams' discussion on common projects. As part of grounding the discussion between O'Donovan and Adams on vocation, I refer to interlocutors such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jacques Ellul, Germain Grisez and Al Wolters, these individuals helping to form the broader hinterland in which much theological reflection on vocation has developed.

O'Donovan and Adams together enable critical examination of aspects of the networked life as set out in Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together*, and in Ronald Burt's *Brokerage & Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital* and *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*[3]. Marshall McLuhan, Jacques Ellul and George Grant serve as

[2] Oliver O'Donovan and Robert Adams are selected based on their roles as magisterial figures in modern theology and philosophy, each providing rich material for an extended critical examination of vocation. Adams' *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* is well targeted by Martha Nussbaum as one of the leading philosophical works of the late twentieth century. O'Donovan's extraordinary range across a range of practical theological topics, this encapsulated for instance in his *Ethics as Theology* trilogy, allows for a narrow, but potentially deep, discussion on any given topic on which he writes, vocation no exception. There is sufficient overlap between Adams and O'Donovan in their conceptions of vocation, as demonstrated in this subsequent discussion, which I hope demonstrates why they serve as effective conversation partners on a study of a certain Christian conception of vocation in networked life.

[3] Sherry Turkle and Ronald Burt are selected based on their notoriety in separate fields (Turkle a psychoanalyst, Burt a social network analyst), Turkle a prolific writer on the relationship between humans and robots, Burt as arguably the foremost living network analyst (along with figures such as Martin Kilduff). I select these two individuals as conversation partners in the thesis, contextualised by key historical figures such as Marshall McLuhan, Jacques Ellul and George Grant, in part given their practical experience 'on the ground' in their fields of study, each with interesting clinical or private sector experience.

significant interlocutors as part of contextualising the critical examination of networked life. Five biographical accounts, highlighting aspects of vocation in networked life, are threaded throughout the thesis, these of James A Baker III, Dr Eric Newell, Saint Paul, Dr Fiona Hill and the case of a lone parent (with lesser emphasis on Dr Henry Kissinger and his constant striving for control of self-perceptions and narrative) in Chapter One. I turn particularly to Psalm 119 in my use of Scripture, alongside the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in relation to chapters or sections on faithful action and watchfulness within deliberation and discernment related to vocation.

Both Adams and O'Donovan provide multiple definitions of vocation throughout their accounts. However, I take Adams' main definition of vocation to be 'a call from God, a command, or perhaps an invitation, addressed to a particular individual, to act and live in a certain way'[4]. Adams also specifies that vocation is 'primarily a matter of *what goods are given to us to love*, and thus of *our path in God's all-embracing and perfect love*'[5]. There is some tension throughout his account, as we will see in Chapter Three, in his notion of 'offering' or 'invitation' to love goods within a vocation. At times, Adams notes that a vocation *claims* a person; at others, it is the individual who *writes their name* on the goods offered to love, suggesting a claiming, if not a control, of particular goods. Adams is more concerned with the goodness of the goods, than he is with the goods that are offered to individuals within their respective circumstances. His account is self-referential, one's sense of becoming within a vocation likely to evoke, in his analysis, protest of the self

[4] Robert Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 301.
[5] Ibid., p. 302.

within its social circumstances which spurs individuals to transcend their material circumstances[6], as well as engage in conflict with others.

In comparison, O'Donovan defines vocation as 'the way in which the self is offered to us…. The course of our life that *will come to be* our unique historical reality'[7]. His account lays particular emphasis on service, vocation 'not a single function, but an ensemble of worldly relations and functions through which we are given, *in particular*, to serve God and realize our agency'[8]. Whereas it is created goods that are *given* to individuals to love in the world in Adams' conception of vocation, it is *the individual that is given* to serve God, in self-offering and particularly in faith, in O'Donovan's account. O'Donovan's sense of becoming is more limited than that of Adams, which is tied to his account of deliberation, consisting of an endurance that forms purpose. Deliberation, in O'Donovan, is akin to a continuous practice which prepares individuals for the opportune moments for action, moments which nevertheless can never be predicted.

The offering of the self in O'Donovan's vocation is a self that can only be approached in imaginative anticipation in the *short-term*, O'Donovan particularly on guard against the risk of haughty self-conceptions—the self projecting onto a blank screen, rather than remaining open to God's determination of her identity. The conception of vocation in O'Donovan is more gradual than that of Adams, one forming projects that, over time, might become part of one's vocation, whereas Adams *adopts* projects or commissions, his language verging on that of possession, if not management or control. A key advantage of the O'Donovan conception, as I attempt to demonstrate in the subsequent discussion, is an

[6] Adams' transcendence is here akin to an improvement of one's material situation, whether work role, social station, geographical location, etc. The term 'social mobility' captures much of what Adams seems to mean in his discussion on vocation involving a protest within one's given circumstances.
[7] Oliver O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking*: *Ethics as Theology Volume 2* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), p. 224.
[8] Ibid., p. 224.

openness to examination of the structure of vocation, particularly in relation to Burt's concept of network structure. The O'Donovan description of vocation is more akin to the piping or electrical wiring of vocation, whereas Adams proposes vocation in ready-made containers.

The definition of vocation at which I arrive is as follows: 'An offering from God, involving an ensemble of worldly relations and created goods, through which we are given, *in particular*, to pursue excellence, realise our agency and serve God.' This definition pulls primarily from O'Donovan, while preserving Adams' emphasis on a pursuit of excellence, which is a critical component of his theory of value. I am less interested than Adams on the idea of becoming as it pertains to vocation, and I do not believe that O'Donovan is, either, the latter proposing a more restrained formulation of 'the course of our life that *will come to be* our unique historical reality….' Adams' conception of the self is prone to arrogant self-justification in networked life, and we see this reinforced in the Chapter Four discussion on modern identity in relation to Charles Taylor. His conception provides too much space for self-justifying protest, without taking seriously the significance of service, in whatever one's circumstances, as part of a vocation.

The way in which vocation charts a course through networked life is one that involves a *sense of restraint*. A sense of restraint in vocation guards against the danger of deception in networked life, and particularly against the risk of control or dominance by nefarious actors as part of vocational discernment. This is not to overemphasise the importance of bad actors in the world, but there is in networked life—with its speed and projection of false appearances through various networked technologies—a need to proceed cautiously, in a step-by-step manner. Determinations of trustworthiness, especially in relation to Burt's primary contacts, are paramount. A sense of restraint also favours the

'perspectival excellence' in relation to created goods offered as part of vocation, enabled by community criticism, which is discussed in Chapter Two.

I concur with Adams in his assessment that discerning a vocation is not easy, and that it takes time. While it is true that every person may have a vocation, it would be incorrect to believe that vocations are rapidly arrived at, or that retrospection allows for easy identification of what was, *in fact*, a vocation; this naming is for God, not humans, to decide, as seen for instance in Jacob's wrestling with God in the night. I see vocation as not being worked out in one go, through a distinct call from God, but rather in a considerably more gradual fashion, hence the preference for language of *offering*, offering which is prepared for continuously, in deliberation.

The proposed Christian conception of vocation in this thesis is grounded in the moral order vindicated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As such, the conception of vocation is an explicitly Christian vocation, with Christian integrity, which merits confident articulation within networked life[9]. There are considerable differences, however,

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[9] The question of articulation raises a related question to the audience of this thesis. I see the audience as including—alongside Christian theologians interested in the topic of vocation—non-Christians interested in questions related to vocations, career paths or the living of good lives more generally. The latter audience might seem to cater to a younger, 'Millennial' or 'Gen Z' audience but there is the possibility that individuals involved in adult education will find value in aspects of this material (and an adult education audience is important, given that a personal vocation, as noted for instance by Grisez and Shaw, may be followed at *any* point even if one has previously taken the wrong path: 'If… [people that have 'missed' their vocations] repent and set about doing God's will, they will find that God does indeed have a complete plan for them, so that they still can make the most of the *rest* of their lives' (*Personal Vocation*, p. 134). This latter audience will be less familiar with Christian language than a Christian theological audience; however, in discussing elements of this thesis with approximately 200 undergraduate and master student interns over the last three years (most studying at British and Canadian universities—themselves from a diversity of regions, primarily Europe and North America, but also parts of Africa and the Middle East—undertaking 6-8 week paid internships, few with any theological training or religious background, and most rather interested in politics, international relations and related topics), I have found the 'Gen Z' students to appreciate and engage critically with the use of Christian language. The same has been the case in more 'senior' audiences, for example in presentations with Canada's Public Policy Forum, a leading centrist Canadian think tank.

This appreciation may be due to the reduction of vocation in much contemporary debate to a matter of *skills* (the skills needed to achieve certain economic 'outcomes') or to the self (how vocation connects with *my* values, wants, needs or desires) over recent years, such that many yearn for a sense of calling from beyond the self, and which involves commitments in the *here and now* over the course of a life. A balance must be struck between 'too much "in-house," Christian jargon' on the one hand and 'resist[ing] the cultural pressure to leave our religious identities to vocabularies at the door when we want to engage in public conversation,'

in the extent to which O'Donovan and Adams make explicit their respective theisms, Adams in particular focusing on an implied love for God throughout his theory of value, to the point that Nussbaum, Wolf and other scholars question the role of his theism within his theory of value. I take seriously O'Donovan's concept of a world-order given by God, in which moral experience *thrusts* itself on individuals, reasserting itself whenever individuals are least on guard.

There are auspicious elements of networked life that can be incorporated by individuals in the proposed Christian conception of vocation. The elements of networked life to be embraced are, firstly, the access to opportunity that emerges from the development of a network that is 'structurally autonomous,' such networks also helping to guard individuals' paths in the face of danger. Networks that are structurally autonomous branch into multiple social worlds, creating 'contradictory variation' that may be at times painful for individuals, but which yields a more rounded perspective on the excellence of given worldly relations or created goods offered as part of a vocation. Second, the selection of primary contacts within social worlds that are *trustworthy*—trustworthiness the most important decision in the development of a network, in Burt's view—allows for the offering of created goods that may fruitfully become part of a vocation. These primary contacts are often, as the Baker, Hill and Paul examples suggest, individuals that offer the possibility of a path for action in networked life. They are integral components of the structuring of a vocation in networked life, serving as the 'mediators' outlined in Ellul,

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on the other, this a 'secularizing pressure' beholden perhaps to the '*au courant* intelligentsia' (*Making the Best of It*, pp. 335-336). This dissertation seeks to engage with such sensitivities in mind, with an inkling that Christian integrity may be less distinctive to a non-Christian audience than anticipated. Indeed, 'The actual world is not always hostile…. And because we live in the *saeculum*, the secular age when the tares are allowed to mingle with the wheat, members of the Church may be found in the actual world, and members of the World may be found in actual churches' (*Behaving in Public*, p. 9). In short, 'Integrity, not distinctiveness, is the point,' and so I seek Christian integrity, resisting pressures of the intelligentsia to dampen Christian language, maintaining a view that Christian theological language—particularly on the topic of vocation—will be appreciated, if not embraced, more often than not.

independent 'centres' in McLuhan's electric life, or 'nodes' on a Social Network Analysis network graph visualisation, every node connected via a series of paths into new nodes.

Moreover, since individuals are *of* creation, creation itself redeemed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I expect that much of the potential goodness or excellence in a vocation is to come through these trusted relations, this in a dynamic interplay of 'reaching-out' between oneself and a primary contact that is reflective of the self-communication of God. Third, the *actual* network structure, versus the network structure that is merely apparent through indicators such as job roles or titles, can be accurately perceived through faith, which involves a seeing of things unseen, a point raised in Chapter Four. A Christian conception of vocation involves a critical stance, which while maintaining the goodness of creation, subjects presented elements of creation to interrogation (for instance, through community criticism, as discussed in Chapter Two) in order to ascertain the faithfulness of the presentation[10].

However, vocation, particularly as it is conceived in O'Donovan, is a spiritual endeavour, focused on God's promise. Worldly achievements might be helpful signposts in the development of vocations, but the achievements are not of foremost value. Neither Adams nor O'Donovan attribute much importance to worldly functions as markers of vocation. The proposed Christian conception of vocation is an offering from God, mediated via the structure of networked life, this structure a structurally autonomous network comprised of primary contacts branching into and across social worlds. Structurally autonomous networks, involving trusted primary contacts directed toward the good, enable the gradual structuring and directing of small numbers of vocations over extended periods of time, while guarding against danger in networked life. God calls us to

[10] The definition of faithfulness here is 'results,' or 'effectiveness' as outlined by Stackhouse, Jr. (*Making the Best of It*, p. 293). Indeed, in networked life, the most effective relation is that of *direct* linkage between persons within a network structure.

help restore the world within our vocations, approximating Kingdom values, this involving a conceptualisation of relations in terms of service and stewardship (as opposed to benefit-maximisation) within our respective networks.

Deliberation here plays a critical role in my account of vocation. Turkle's deliberated nonchalance contrasts with the accounts of deliberation found in O'Donovan and Adams. Turkle's deliberated nonchalance is bereft of seriousness, favouring instead a lightness in disposition and action, this lightness borne out of a doubt of purpose in networked life. Deliberation forms purposes for action, action which nevertheless has, as O'Donovan notes, a 'shadow side,' actions sometimes misfiring, purposes not bearing out in reality. Action in networked life is often anxious, if not fearful, this inhibiting deliberation, individuals reaching instead for easy good. Nevertheless, the success of deliberation, particularly in O'Donovan's account, is not material but rather spiritual, in that human agency, the pursuit of excellence and service are directed toward God, this helping to renew the network structure of which one is a part.

With these introductory reflections provided, I will turn to a brief outline of the dissertation structure, highlighting the general argument of each chapter as it is presented in the chapter introductory sections.

In Chapter One, 'Human Agency in Modern Networked Life,' I critically examine Turkle's networked life and Burt's discussion on network structure. The material advantages found in networked life and network structure must be balanced with a sense of limitation, particularly in the realm of control, both Turkle and Burt centering their accounts on control (this despite Burt's early emphasis on networks as a *theory of freedom*). I argue in this chapter that human agency requires a sense of restraint if networked life and network structure are to be directed ultimately toward good purposes. This restraint is demonstrated particularly in the selection of trustworthy, primary contacts

as bridges in to diverse social worlds conducive to new opportunities, on which vocations are partly formed. McLuhan, Ellul and Grant serve as critical interlocutors in this chapter, contextualising the critical examination of Turkle and Burt (as well as network analysts such as Landis, Kilduff and Krackhardt).

In Chapter Two, 'Moral Order, Teleology and the Pursuit of Excellence in Adams and O'Donovan,' I argue in favour of a socially-oriented pursuit of excellence within the God-given world of created goods, emphasising restraint—restraint as a guard against the limitedness of human perception and the sin of presumptuousness—as well as service toward God within particular sets of valued social relations. The concept of a pursuit of excellence, introduced in Adams, is enriched through O'Donovan's discussion on finding and seeking within moral order. An important part of this argument is that the structure and direction of networked life can be redeemed through the pursuit of excellence, which involves guidance of the Holy Spirit, points toward God and is conducive to transcendence *within* reality. This redemptive work in the world is aided by community criticism, helping to ensure that individuals' pursuits occur in alliance[11] with what are, in fact, excellent (that is, admirable) worldly relations and created goods.

This chapter responds to the deficiencies outlined in the Chapter One discussion on networked life and network structure, particularly that of short-term action focused on maintaining material advantage and control. It proposes a moral theological basis for sustained pursuit of excellence as part of vocation in the face of the dangers in networked life, which is the focus of Chapter Three. James Gustafson and Al Wolters serve in this chapter as important interlocutors, alongside the critical examination of Adams and O'Donovan.

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[11] Alliance is critically examined in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Three, ‘Vocational Discernment—Examining “The Path,” Danger in Action and the Call to Watchfulness,’ I argue that discernment that is evangelical must involve watchfulness, the individual agent awake to the dangers in the paths walked in networked life, but ultimately looking to the time that is nearing, always ready for the unexpected hour. Indeed, networked life is dangerous, offering considerable material opportunity, but also peril for those embarking without caution on wrong networked paths. Psalm 119 plays a central role in this chapter. Serious deliberation, as part of vocation in networked life, is paramount. Without deliberation, discernment is confined to internecine warfare with the powers involved in networked life, unable to overcome them through the sword of the Spirit in the pursuit of excellence, looking toward God’s promise. Luther, Bonhoeffer and Grisez serve as key interlocutors in this chapter, this as part of contextualising the critical examination of a Christian conception of vocation in networked life.

In Chapter Four, ‘Vocational Action and a Well-Ordered System of Motives and Values,’ I argue for a faithful action, emphasising small beginnings and particularly a gradual sense of becoming within one’s existing material circumstances, that resists the tempting imaginative anticipations of networked life. The proposed Christian conception of vocation in networked life encourages individuals to act in a step-by-step manner, in whatever their circumstances. I critically examine senses of becoming in Adams and O’Donovan, and suggest humility in action, through the example of the Parable of the Mustard Seed with its focus on small beginnings and unseen realities. I also consider vocation’s faithful action over a lifetime, through self-offering, resisting the overleveraging of powers and fragmentation of attention found in the ‘portfolio-based’ life or career. Charles Taylor serves as the primary interlocutor in this chapter on modern identity, helping to underpin the discussion between Adams and O’Donovan.

With this gradual sense of becoming via step-by-step action in focus, I consider the question of what contributes to enduring motivational states, as a basis for faithful action in vocation over time. The need for steady motivational states considers the Chapter Three discussion on danger in networked life, as well as the risk of decay within systems, and particularly in relation to adherence to principles without the sustaining or integrative force of trusted, worldly authorities. I highlight that vocation provides a structure—through authoritative figures in the world (Burt's primary contacts forming alliances) —enabling sustained action in the face of waning motivation and external forces. Gustafson, as well as Bandura, serve as interlocutors in this chapter, particularly in relation to the concept of motivation and its linkages with related terms. I argue for a more focused sense of *alliance* on the side of finite good, which on the side of the Infinite is centered on God as Jesus Christ. The alliances on the side of finite goods are likely to be few in number, this building on the Chapter One discussion stressing limitation.

A rapprochement between the defining features and dynamics of networked life on the one hand—value situated in opportunity flowing through strategic position in a given network structure—and an evangelical Christian ethics on the other—value located in the moral order vindicated by the resurrection Jesus Christ—is difficult, but attainable. This is particularly so if we are to reflect on the goodness of God-given creation, of which Turkle's networked life and Burt's network structure are a part. Nevertheless, the prevalence of networked technologies and of a modern identity often dependent on victory within perpetual war for recognition in the world means that individuals must act with a sense of restraint in their participation in networked life.

Indeed, vocation as I understand it, favours a Life in the Spirit, involving spiritual warfare, reflective of Paul's teaching and as examined in Tom Wright. This spiritual warfare engages within, and seeks to restore, aspects of creation through the understanding

and judicious use of equipment of networked life and network structure. God calls us to play our respective parts in the created world, participating fully in a world that is often ambiguous, and which risks action if not pursuit down the wrong network pathways, in service not of God but rather of the self as well as of networked technologies-become-idols. We are called to pursue the better path, and to redeem the networked paths on which we walk.

Indeed, it is possible to upend corrupted network structures, this resulting from deliberation focused not on the seeking of short-term advantage in networked life, but rather on Jesus Christ, whose life, death and ultimate victory in resurrection enable the endurance necessary for agency, pursuit of excellence and service within vocation. It is with this in mind that I favour an evangelical Christian ethics[12], engaging constructively with networked life, and making use of the benefits outlined above as part of Spiritual

[12] By *evangelical*, I draw particularly on the work of Stackhouse, Jr. in *Evangelicalism: A Very Short Introduction* which highlights six 'key adjectives to define evangelicalism: Trinitarian, biblicist, conversionist, missional, populist, and pragmatic,' the relations between these adjectives complicated as prefaced in the discussion (*Evangelicalism*, p. 24). On the first, I emphasise that 'Jesus is Savior and Lord… [who] modeled as the Son of Man how to live in the light of that incoming Kingdom….' (Ibid., p. 25). A key question, particularly in the living-out of vocations, is not 'What would Jesus do?' but rather '*Who are we, for Jesus Christ, today?*' (*Making the Best of It*, p. 4). The resurrection of Jesus vindicates the moral order of which we are a part, as examined in O'Donovan, and serves as the cornerstone who upholds and integrates all aspects of a vocation (the role of Jesus particularly *absent* in Adams, whose theory of value emphasises instead a more distant 'social union' with God focused on resemblance of the divine nature).

The Holy Spirit also plays an important role in the Christian conception of vocation outlined in this thesis, which helps 'believers become progressively more and more fully dedicated to God' as they seek and fulfill their respective callings, their callings involving service of God through restoration of the world we have been given to work with and make something of (Ibid., p. 18). A 'Life in Spirit' is here an approximation of the Kingdom of God in our individual lives (Ibid., p. 238). Finally, I seek a populist *mode* as described by Stackhouse, Jr., stressing 'the sense of a broad spiritual competency in the heart of each believer,' in which 'each person not only must decide for himself or herself on Christian matters, but also is fully competent to do so' (*Evangelicalism*, p. 35). It is indeed a '*lived* Christianity,' in every new day, that is to be sought in part through responses to individuals' particular callings in the world.

An evangelical Christian ethics in this dissertation thus refers to the attributes outlined by Stackhouse, with particular emphasis on the day-to-day living for Christ in the world, living in the light of the coming Kingdom, while seeking to both approximate and draw others into Kingdom life in the created world that God made 'very good.'

warfare—such benefits oriented toward mutual service in the world, and the ultimate service of God.

Chapter One: Human Agency in Modern Networked Life

Networked life and network structure—the latter illustrated through the modern advent of Social Network Analysis—provide individuals with means to exert control over their circumstances while gaining access to rewarding material opportunities. The strategic formation of networks, where individuals develop networks rich in 'structural holes,' is the source of such particular advantage, which can be exploited to the benefit of individuals, reflected in rapid promotion, performance evaluations and pay increases in their work-lives. Such advantage facilitates the process of becoming, where individual agents seek to overcome adverse actual circumstances.

An understanding of network structure informs the exercising of human agency in the world. Network structure and the initiative to achieve the right position within a given structure matter within a frame of competition and decreasing cost of human capital, competition exacerbated by use of networked technologies. At the same time, networked life is overwhelming, with striving for control and a utilitarian approach to relationships providing individuals with less rather than more, risking the stifling of human agency and the corruption of the self.

The discussion elucidates elements of network structure which underpin the proposed Christian conception of vocation in networked life, while highlighting possible directions of networked life in need of transformation[1]. In this chapter, a critical examination of Turkle's networked life and Burt's understanding of network structure demonstrates the material advantages to be acquired through the formation of strategic network structures, these relevant to human agency. Material advantages, however, must

[1] Here I borrow terminology of 'structure' and 'direction' from Al M Wolters' *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, which is examined primarily in Chapter Two.

be balanced with a sense of limitation, particularly in the realm of control, both Turkle and Burt centering their accounts on control.

Critical engagement with interlocutors Marshall McLuhan, Jacques Ellul and George Grant illuminates the discussion between Turkle and Burt, particularly in relation to the ongoing use of networked technologies *numbing* the faculties of users, this reflective of what McLuhan terms a 'Narcissus trance.' A risk in networked life is that individuals become what they behold, the unmitigated use of technique deadening individuals, rather than providing them with freedom. It is Grant, in particular, who holds out hope for a critical human agency within technological civilisation. Ellul's Christian freedom, beginning with God's love and providing individuals with hope, is the basis for a freedom lived out in every new day in *service*, as opposed to individuals winning victory over each other through advantageous network structures, as suggested by Burt.

I argue in this chapter for a *sense of restraint in networked life*, particularly in the selection of trustworthy, primary contacts as bridges in to diverse social worlds conducive to new opportunities. This restraint consists of awareness of human limitation and values step-by-step action within continuous deliberation. I see this restraint as a critical component of vocation in networked life, through its contribution to the effective structuring of a vocation, which helps enable a positive direction, this as part of a gradual restoration of the created world.

In the first section, the concept of the 'networked life' is examined in relation to Turkle, which encourages a withdrawal from the adventure, as well as uncertainties of life, in favour of a preservation of self-image. McLuhan, in particular, highlights the numbness induced by the uncritical use of networked technologies in the electric age, these technologies here becoming prisons without walls. The persistent use of such technologies leads individuals to *become what they behold*, the image of man resembling, over time,

that of networked technologies. I conclude with an examination of the discrepancy between McLuhan's emphasis on *full participation* of being in electric life, and Turkle's contrasting emphasis on withdrawal from adventure in such life, the reason for the discrepancy found perhaps in individuals' fear of potential sudden social *shame* in networked life[2].

In the second section, the concept of 'network structure' is introduced in relation to Burt. The technique of Social Network Analysis (SNA) is the pre-eminent example of the making-visible of the invisible described in McLuhan's account of the electric age, providing a greater awareness of the otherwise invisible relations between 'players' in a network. Ellul's examination of technique suggests that the military-like calling-on of relevant individuals in a network renders thinking about relationships in any other way *impossible*. Any victories won through such technique, however, are illusory, as suggested particularly by Grant. Both Grant and Turkle stress the importance of proper conceptualisation of networks, *listening* carefully and proceeding with caution, in order to ensure that perception of networks is reflective of actual, real-world relations.

A brief discussion on the 'tertius' proceeds to a more individualised conception of network formation, with Kilduff, Krackhardt and Landis et al. as the main interlocutors. Ellul helpfully criticises the individual who sees him or herself as the 'measure of all things'[3], this supposed authenticity in fact a negation of freedom. Whereas freedom in the account of Burt is manifested in individuality, such individuality involves the conceptualisation of terms of relations within a network geared toward maintaining a socially-induced action. *Christian* freedom is for Ellul lived out in reference to *limits*. It

[2] The 'raising of the stakes' in loving, 'dialogical' relations as part of modern identity is discussed in particular in Chapter Four, this in relation to Charles Taylor in his *Ethics of Authenticity*.
[3] This idea will be examined in depth at the outset of Chapter Two, particularly in relation to Adams, with helpful additions by Wolf and Nussbaum.

involves necessities or determinations, however, which emphasises not manipulation of terms of relations, conducive to the perpetual keeping of distance from others, but rather the value of concrete interdependencies between individuals within given network structures. This emphasis on interdependencies necessitates accurate perception of relations within networks, in their messiness and frequently, ambiguity.

The fourth section considers the *advantages* of strategic network formation in networked life, structurally autonomous networks serving as conduits to *opportunity* and therefore a part-basis for the structuring of vocation. Burt's emphasis on strategic network formation is extended through McLuhan's focus on decentralisation in networked life, in which control is forever uncertain, action occurring in the indeterminate. On the need for constant action in the unknown, Ellul argues that victory has been secured in Christ, but that victory must then be lived out by individuals in every new today with an attitude of *service*, individuals acting as *mediators* or *vicariates* for each other. This orientation toward service, which is a critical element of the later proposed Christian conception of vocation, frees individuals from the traps of networked life and networked technologies, and enables individuals to 'light up' relations in the night, transforming network structures.

The fifth section introduces five historical examples, in the forms of James Baker, Eric Newell, Paul, Fiona Hill and the case of a lone parent[4], whose lives demonstrate the importance of a sense of restraint in the selection of primary contacts in a network structure. Trustworthy relations are conducive to human agency that persists, helping to sustain positive direction in a vocation. The cases highlight a constructive engagement with networks involving full participation in the world, a sense of interdependence with others, and the potential for restoration of network structures through a focus on *service*.

[4] And particularly of a lone or single mother. The rationale for these five cases is found within the section.

A sense of vocation enables effective network structure in networked life, which over time undergirds a vocation. Here, vocation is the way through networked life, the careful structuring it favours in engagement with trustworthy worldly relations and created goods conducive to positive direction in service.

Networked Life

In this section, we examine the concept of the 'networked life' proposed in the work of Sherry Turkle, with emphasis on the self that arises through time spent immersed in networked technologies, protected from challenges and dangers inherent in a more focused participation in the world. The networked life is presented as an avoidance of living, one that is conducive to a dullness or hardening of hearts—treating others as objects— rather than to adventure within the unknown. The self that emerges is fragile, striving for short-term control, though with foundations constructed on sand rather than on rock, ever prone to danger.

Avoidance of living

In Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together*[5], the 'networked life' is defined and examined, in relation to robotics as well as the rise of online social networks. Its roots in the mid-1990s, the networked life 'no longer required that we know our destination… one had the sense of traversing an infinite landscape always there to be discovered…. The network was

[5] Turkle serves as Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT. She is a psychoanalytically trained psychologist, and brings to her analysis empirical evidence dating back to her 1980s work *The Second Self* and 1995 work *Life on the Screen*. Whereas her earlier work was 'full of hope and optimism' as to the opportunities related to networked technologies and the formation of the self, her writing has become decidedly more critical in recent years though without descending into pessimism. *Alone Together* is a useful basis for discussion on networked life in this chapter, as the book is the product of fifteen years of research. Turkle does not outright dismiss the potential of networked life, but rather specifies its limitations, while highlighting the significance of deliberation—the focus of Chapter Three—as a means for overcoming such limitations. Taken together, these points suggest Turkle is an experienced, balanced and therefore reliable interlocutor, whose own language emphasising terms such as love, hope and deliberation, allows for later moral theological discussion.

with us, on us, all the time'[6]. There is an expansiveness, and in turn, a sense of limitlessness to networked life, this facilitating a constant (and often indiscriminate, as Turkle argues) striving for more. Turkle's definition of the networked life stresses online communication, where 'the terms *the Net, the network*, and *connectivity*… refer to our new world of online connections—from the experience of surfing the Web, to e-mail, texting, gaming, and social networking'[7].

The networked life reduces others to objects, relationships approached in a utilitarian manner. Here, utility is located 'in the parts [of others] we find useful, comforting, or amusing'[8]. There are few expectations in networked life, given its tentativeness, as individuals seek the protection of a screen and make use of the time afforded to respond *on their terms* to whatever their connections share with them. A risk in such thinking, for Turkle, is that individuals immersed in networked life remove themselves from life's uncertainties as well as its inevitable struggles, opting instead for safety as they seek to exert control over whomever they engage with (or do not), this on the time horizons that they see fit. However, 'Once we remove ourselves from the flow of physical, messy, untidy life—and both robotics and networked life do that—we become less willing to get out there and take a chance'[9]. Networked life, as portrayed by Turkle, is an avoidance of *living*, one characterised instead by manicured self-presentation rather than by the necessity of rigorous reflection as to one's self, one's world and one's time.

[6] Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), p. xii.
[7] Ibid., p. xiv. Turkle's account, however, is not purely focused on online communication; her examination of networked life makes consistent reference to the value of in-person dialogue, which is often described as messy and complicated. Networked life can serve as an escape from such relationships, but Turkle argues that it need not be an escape. The right relationship between these forms of life is to be cultivated through more careful deliberation, in particular, as is set out later in this chapter.
[8] Ibid., p. 154.
[9] Ibid., p. 154.

There is little serious finding or seeking in networked life, for there is closure to demands made on individuals that arise from beyond the self. Indeed, there is little genuine challenge or suffering in networked life, the indeterminacy of action—and constant possibility of going *wrong* in one's actions—replaced by an indiscriminate emphasis on making new connections[10]. There is a perpetual possible rush for cover in the network; moving through connections in the moment and with little prior thought, rather than dedicating attention to particular, concrete individuals or goods. Networked life tempts individuals to do *more*, and yet, as Turkle demonstrates, such emphasis on volume provides individuals with *less*. Networked life diminishes human agency[11].

Constant connection to networks—which Turkle calls 'the tethered self'—encourages individuals to pursue strategies of network volume. Here, 'The self shaped in a world of rapid response measures success by calls made, e-mails answered, texts replied to, contacts reached[12]. This self is calibrated on the basis of what technology proposes, by

[10] The focus on volume and velocity (swift action) in networked life is described by Turkle as a 'paradox,' in that the sheer amount of communication decreases time to think (*Alone Together*, p. 166).
[11] We will use O'Donovan as our reference point for agency. Agency is examined in particular in O'Donovan's *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology*, defined as 'the exercise of freedom, and freedom is the responsibility for self-disposal. We must be called to it. To know ourselves as agents is to know that we have been called to make decisions about ourselves. It is to know, too, that the decisions we must make do not rest with us to think up or invent, but are thrust upon us in the form of certain definite possibilities, challenges, and opportunities as we find ourselves delivered over into a world that is as it is, not as we might have wished it to be' (*Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), p. 13). In *Self, World, and Time*, agency is discussed in relation to moral wakefulness, originating in God's purposes and activated through God's summons. Theology, O'Donovan notes, 'has a special interest in the *renewing* of human agency' (*Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), p. 7). The shrinking from demands made from beyond the self—and particularly from God's call—and into the safety of networked life is a shrinking from the call to human agency.
[12] McLuhan is helpful in describing networked technologies in what he terms the 'electric age,' particularly through his account of 'hot' and 'cold' media. Whereas a 'hot medium is one that extends one single sense in "high definition[,]"… [which] is the state of being well filled with data,' (*Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, p. 22), a cold medium is one of low definition, providing little information or data. Hot technologies are low in participation, for they overheat individuals' senses; cool technologies encourage the involvement or participation of individuals, who must fill in the information gaps left by the technologies in question. For instance, McLuhan describes the lecture as a hot medium, in that it 'makes for less participation than a seminar, and a book for less than dialogue' (Ibid., p. 23).

In taking the smartphone as a prominent example of networked technology, it becomes clear that this is likely to be in McLuhan's estimation a hot medium, the plethora of media of which it is comprised—texting, emailing, the Internet, cameras, and an endless stream of technology applications—overwhelming the senses

what it makes easy'[13]. But, 'As we communicate in ways that ask for almost instantaneous responses, we don't allow sufficient space to consider complicated problems'[14]. Turkle comments on the fragility of the self in such a context, sustained by having a large number of contacts to call on whenever trouble arises, but without these connections interrogating the self in a meaningful way: there is little critical examination in such a context[15]. Outward communication in such a context replaces rigorous thought, individuals unable to look inwardly as part of confronting their challenges. Critical examination is in such cases replaced with *speed*; technology providing the means for rapid communication, though preventing the building of endurance that is necessary in the formation of clear purpose in the world[16]. In other words, that of a self with tenuous rather than stable foundations. We see here a failure to *pay attention* to the world and to orient the self within it[17].

And yet, in a networked world, such an approach is seen as normal, for 'if we can be continually in touch, needing to be continually in touch does not seem a problem or a

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of users, providing copious amounts of data. Particular networked technologies *within* the smartphone, such as texting and Whatsapp, might however be characterised as low-participation media, these providing little information beyond a series of words, and so requiring the constant interpretation of the user. Facebook, X and TikTok, are comparatively hot media, with their barrage of video and advertisements underpinned by cleverly-designed algorithms. Moreover, McLuhan suggests that hot media 'of the mechanical, uniform, and repetitive kind,' and particularly 'any other form of specialist speed-up of exchange and information, will serve to fragment a tribal structure…. Specialist technologies detribalize. The nonspecialist electric technology retribalizes' (*Understanding Media*, p. 23). These descriptions of hot and *non-specialist* electric media are representative of not only social media such as Facebook, X and TikTok but also the *polarising* effects that these media have had across the democratic and non-democratic worlds, users increasingly fragmented based on political, social, cultural and other affiliations.

[13] *Alone Together*, p. 166.

[14] Ibid., p. 166.

[15] Robert Adams will serve as our main interlocutor on the necessity of maintaining a 'critical stance,' in that 'theistic faith involves, or should involve, the consciousness of its own fallibility and imperfection. The ideal practical expression of this confidence is not indecisiveness or halfheartedness in one's concrete religious commitments but self-critical openness, without rigidity or defensiveness, in relation to internal and external challenges to one's commitments; and an expectation that one will change, a hope that one will grow, in one's view of God' (*FI*, p. 212). The fragile self which Turkle describes is antithetical to Adams' critical stance.

[16] Endurance leading to purpose will serve as the later definition of deliberation, as set out in the work of O'Donovan and examined in Chapter Three.

[17] O'Donovan, in particular, notes that individuals awake to a world which has come before them, the truth of a world, which is followed by waking to oneself: 'If attentiveness means bringing the world into view, it means bringing ourselves into view together with the world' (*Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 12).

pathology but an accommodation to what technology affords. It becomes the norm'[18]. The issue to which Turkle refers here is that of narcissism, which has grown from an individual-level to cultural narcissism. The narcissist 'cannot tolerate the complex demands of other people but tries to relate to them by distorting who they are and splitting off what it needs, what it can use'[19]. Networked life provides a 'contact list' which can constantly be accessed, whenever trials and tribulations arise in one's endeavours. The narcissistic, fragile self can see 'those on… [the] contact list… be made to appear almost on demand. You can take what you need and move on. And, if not gratified, you can try someone else'[20].

McLuhan, in his *Understanding Media*, critically examines the Narcissus myth, the Greek word *narcosis* signifying *numbness*[21]. The use of a networked technology, as outlined in the account of Turkle, is in McLuhan's analysis a pathway toward the service of this very technology, which dampens critical faculties such as perception. The narcissistic individual, making prolific use of a networked technology, worships the extended self-image represented in the networked technology[22]. McLuhan sees this worship of extended self-image as a response to irritating pressures, if not shock or trauma—the nature of these pressures suggested in Turkle's analysis of networked life. His diagnosis is cause for concern for the narcissistic patient, in that 'Such amplification [as represented through the use of networked technologies] is bearable by the nervous system only through numbness or blocking of perception…. Self-amputation forbids self-recognition'[23]. The modern user of networked technologies seeks to protect a central

[18] *Alone Together*, p. 177.
[19] Ibid., p. 177.
[20] Ibid., p. 177.
[21] *Understanding Media*, p. 41.
[22] Ibid., pp. 42-43.
[23] Ibid., p. 43.

nervous system that is, in *electric life*, unable to cope with the speed[24], intensity[25], instantaneity[26], involvement[27], decentralisation[28], and potentially—collapse[29]—which collectively represent the Age of Anxiety in which the user lives[30].

Networked life *facilitates*, as Turkle writes, this narcissistic way of being. The narcissist becomes 'socially sanctioned'[31]. Indeed, the narcissist is concerned not with individuals as persons but rather as objects to be used for purposes—often short-term—which advance some aspect of the fragile self. This is the utilitarian approach to relations discussed previously, the narcissist using the cover of networked technology to achieve self-protection, proceeding instead with a hasty, unreflective action[32]. It is control, rather than agency or freedom, for which the narcissist strives, control over others helping the fragile self avoid critical examination. Yet, at some point, narcissistic fantasies must confront reality: the hollow self is revealed. The antidote proposed by McLuhan is represented in the role of the artist, whose 'sensitive inspection and appraisal' uniquely 'seems to have the power for encountering the present actuality'[33].

Networked life, in its debased form, involves striving for control, social networks in particular allowing individuals to keep their connections 'at bay,' avoiding the uncertainties of human relationships, interacting when convenient. Turkle notes that '[we] look to the network to defend us against loneliness even as we use it to control the intensity of our connections. Technology makes it easy to communicate when we wish and

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[24] Ibid., p. 16.
[25] Ibid., p. 23.
[26] Ibid., p. 25.
[27] Ibid., p. 35.
[28] Ibid., p. 36.
[29] Ibid., pp. 67-71.
[30] Ibid., p. 5.
[31] *Alone Together*, p. 177.
[32] O'Donovan might describe this hastiness as a 'half-awareness of ourselves, inattentive to what we are and do, casting ourselves as passive victims of others' action rather than as centers of initiative' *(Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 14).
[33] *Understanding Media*, p. 70.

to disengage at will'[34]. Much of Turkle's account of networked life centers on control. Through networks, it is possible to communicate with—but also *dispose of*—others whenever an individual sees fit. This is particularly so when one encounters some adversity, when for example one is met with a demand from a valued relationship which requires careful interpretation, and perhaps acknowledgement of responsibility or culpability prior to moving forward[35]. There is an avoidance of these one-on-one, involved relationships, and particularly of dialogue in person, for this dialogue risks exposing the self to the complexities inherent in the world.

That networked life allows for a control and a keeping of others at bay is emblematic of McLuhan's term *the medium is the message*, 'because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action'[36]. It follows that 'the "message" of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs'[37]. Networked technologies, not only the smart phone but technology applications such as Whatsapp, permit a distance and aloofness in communication, which becomes, over time, the keeping-of-others-at-bay which Turkle analyses so trenchantly. McLuhan emphasises the subtle power of such technologies in the electric age, referencing Napoleon, who believed 'the semaphore telegraph… gave him a great advantage over his enemies…. [And stated] that "Three hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets"'[38]. McLuhan is prophetic in his reflection that

[34] *Alone Together*, p. 13.
[35] Turkle does not use the term 'guilt' in her discussion on networked life, but it is implied that the cover of networked technology obviates the possibility of feeling guilty for wrong action. Adams considers a morally valid obligation to arise from relationships that are valued. He highlights in particular 'a motivational pattern in which I act primarily *out of* valuing of the relationship, rather than with the obtaining or maintaining of the relationship as an *end*' (*FI*, p. 242). Networked life, however, values relationships insofar as they provide some discernible *advantage*, as we will see in the discussion on Burt. The inability to value relationships properly in networked life means that alienation (resulting from the disposing of another person when there is no longer clear advantage) does not in fact lead to guilt.
[36] *Understanding Media*, p. 9.
[37] Ibid., p. 8.
[38] Ibid., p. 13.

'technological media are staples or natural resources, exactly as are coal and cotton and oil'[39], a point made more recently in Microsoft President Brad Smith and colleague Carol Ann Browne's book *Tools and Weapons: The Promise and the Peril of the Digital Age*, in which the authors note 'Some say that data has become the oil of the twenty-first century. But that understates the reality. A century ago, automobiles, airplanes, and many trains ran on oil. Today, every aspect of human life is fueled by data. When it comes to modern civilization, data is more like the air we breathe than the oil we burn'[40]. With such power, one can see why networked technologies are used by individuals or groups to exercise control over others[41].

The self of networked life is a self built on sand, rather than on rock, there being too little testing through direct encounters with other persons. When reality—the inevitable winds and floods of life—confront the self, the result is a fall from its fantasised heights. Networked life, as presented by Turkle, and networked technologies, as illustrated in McLuhan's electric age, risk dulling the senses as individuals fall prey to the Narcissus trance, the central nervous system extended beyond the self in order to cope with external irritations[42]. Needed is encounter with reality, an engagement with, rather than withdrawal, from the adventure of life involving McLuhan's multiple small centers.

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[39] Ibid., p. 21.

[40] Brad Smith and Carol Ann Browne, *Tools and Weapons: The Promise and the Peril of the Digital Age, p. xiv.* In line with McLuhan's account in *Understanding Media*, Smith and Browne see technology, and particularly the technological innovation of the last twenty years, as having [ushered in a new age of anxiety], p. xix.

[41] McLuhan's emphasis falls particularly on the latter, with repeated commentary on the influence of the private sector corporation—endowed with such technology—over the lives of individuals.

[42] Perhaps more concerningly, given the now-ubiquity of networked technologies, McLuhan suggests throughout his examination of the electric age that such technologies are likely to exercise control over their users 'immediately upon contact' (Ibid., p. 15). Here, 'Subliminal and docile acceptance of media impact has made them [technologies in the electric age] prisons without walls for their human users' (Ibid., p. 20). These technologies become gods to the individuals that embrace them: 'By continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servomechanisms. That is why we must, to use them at all, serve these objects, these extensions of ourselves, as gods or minor religions' (Ibid, p. 46). The unmitigated use of networked technologies in the electric age risks, in McLuhan's analysis, opening individuals to exploitation and eventual conquest by nefarious forces utilising these technologies—and quickly (Ibid., pp. 68-69).

Realtechnik

Networked life, as presented by Turkle in dialogue with McLuhan, limits deliberation. With this concern in mind, Turkle recommends a *realtechnik* consisting of critical examination of networked life. She 'encourages humility, a state of mind in which we are most open to facing problems and reconsidering decisions'[43]. This is a deliberation which takes place in solitude, where an individual is able to sit with themselves, working through important questions alone. Indeed, 'In solitude we don't reject the world but have the space to think our own thoughts'[44]. She emphasises that 'no matter how difficult, it is time to look again toward the virtues of solitude, deliberateness and living fully in the moment'[45]. Deliberation, in particular, involves a grappling with the complexities of action, this including the weighing of options leading to purpose[46].

Yet, networked life, without sufficient deliberation, leads to a corrupted purpose, prioritising instead speed of action valuing utility—purpose is short-circuited. Turkle describes individuals absorbed by their networks as 'Purpose-driven, plugged into their media… pay[ing] little attention to those around them. In others, they seek what is of use, an echo of that primitive world of "parts"'[47]. It is not stated directly, but rather implied, that Turkle sees deliberation as a *gradual* process. Indeed, 'Real people have consistency, so if things are going well in our relationships, change is gradual, worked through slowly'[48]. There is the possibility of going wrong in worldly action, given the complexities of relations and the indeterminacy of outcomes[49]. Thus, seriousness is needed in

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[43] Ibid., p. 294.
[44] Ibid., p. 203. Turkle also indicates that deliberation can occur through conversation with others; however, she demonstrates concern that the self in networked life too often becomes a 'collaborative self'—the self as previously discussed which seeks constant *validation* from others.
[45] Ibid., p. 296.
[46] This will be discussed in the Chapter Three examination of deliberation and discernment, particularly in relation to O'Donovan.
[47] Ibid., p. 293.
[48] Ibid., p. 288.
[49] O'Donovan states that 'I find myself [a distinct agent] poised between the saving and the losing of my soul. The summons to wakefulness confronts me with the menacing possibility of failure to realize myself:

deliberation. One must resist the flight from reality, the detachment and rapid shift to whatever, or whoever, comes 'next', that is constantly an option in networked life. This seriousness in deliberation is necessary if one is to protect their soul, averting 'purposeful' but ill-conceived marches down dangerous paths.

In contrast with Turkle, McLuhan views the electric age as involving the *full* participation of the individual, in interdependence with others:

> *In the electric age, when our central nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of our every action. It is no longer possible to adopt the aloof and dissociated role of the literate Westerner*[50].

The electric world of networked technologies, particularly when viewed from the vantage point of Social Network Analysis (SNA)[51], reinforces indeterminacy, in which control is perpetually uncertain. McLuhan captures the idea of indeterminacy when he notes that 'Electricity does not centralize, but decentralizes…. Electric power, equally available in the farmhouse and the Executive Suite, permits any place to be a center, and does not require large aggregations'[52]. The electric world demands participation, in which 'The immediate prospect for literate, fragmented Western man… [becomes] a complex and depth-structured person emotionally aware of his total interdependence with the rest of

"Awake! Keep hold of your clothes!"' (*Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 13). The networked life described by Turkle sees the self as fragmented, treating others as objects. One does not consider one's life in *total*, where small actions over time cumulatively make the difference between the saving or losing of a soul.

[50] *Understanding Media*, p. 70.

[51] We will in this section introduce the concept of a network graph, as an illustration of SNA.

[52] Ibid., p. 36.

human society'[53]. This interdependence means that control is forever uncertain, action always indeterminate.

McLuhan dismisses the particular 'point of view' of the literate Westerner in favour of 'wholeness, empathy and depth of awareness…. We are suddenly eager to have things and people declare their beings totally'[54]. Additionally, there is for McLuhan a 'deep faith' to be found in this attitude[55]. However, this description of human participation in electric life is, in fact, the *inverse* of the account seen in the work of Turkle, in which participation in the world is guarded, at best. Turkle's account is bereft of faith, expecting instead disappointment, individuals likely to fail each other, particularly in loving relations involving dependence and in turn, vulnerability. Though speculative, it is worth reflecting on this discrepancy between the description—and to an extent, *prediction*—of McLuhan's electric life, and the later empirical findings of Turkle[56].

Despite her criticisms, Turkle is not altogether dismissive of networked life, arguing that it should *not* be viewed as an addiction. Individuals engaged in such a way of life are diminished, though Turkle does not venture so far as to consider them to be

[53] Ibid., pp. 50-51.
[54] Ibid., p. 5.
[55] Ibid., p. 5.
[56] I suggest that three factors contribute to this discrepancy between the McLuhan and Turkle accounts. First, it may be that the individuals are, in Turkle's account, aware even if subliminally of the participatory nature of the electric age—such participation involving faith as described by McLuhan—and yet resist this for fear of the unknown entailed in faith. The electric age is an age of interdependence, which opens itself to the risk of social shame, shock and trauma for individuals in the grip of networked technologies. Second, it may be that the electric age is itself in some form of transition, or 'reversal' as the networked technologies become overheated. McLuhan notes that 'Intensity or high definition engenders specialism and fragmentation in living as in entertainment, which explains why any intense experience must be "forgotten," "censored," and reduced to a very cool state before it can be "learned" or assimilated' (Ibid., p. 24). It may be that the explosion of innovation in the realm of 'hot' networked technologies precipitates a 'cooling-off' state, characterised by Turkle's low levels of participation, and the attitude of 'deliberated nonchalance'. Third, the rise of networked technologies in the electric age may have simply expedited the numbing effect resulting from extension of the central nervous system outside of the self. McLuhan here provides a sobering warning: 'Once we have surrendered our senses and nervous systems to the private manipulation of those who would try to benefit from taking a lease on our eyes and ears and nerves, we don't really have any rights left…. we will meet all technological challenges with the same sort of banana-skin pirouette and collapse' (Ibid., p. 68).

corrupted[57]. Networked life, though it traces its roots to the mid-1990s, remains an incipient way of life, a point stressed in Turkle's account. She notes that 'we are still at the beginning of things. I am cautiously optimistic'[58]. It is therefore possible to make adjustments which allow individuals to regain what networked life steals from them. She provides several prescriptions on how best to proceed, which begins with an embrace of the 'complexity of our situation'[59]. She urges individuals to resist the temptation of participation in networked life without reflection on what 'really matters'—that is, on *value*, and on valued relationships, in particular.

Yet, Turkle is clear on the magnitude of the challenge: 'our problems with the Net are becoming too distracting to ignore. At the extreme, we are so enmeshed in our connections that we neglect each other…. We [adults] did not sufficiently teach the importance of empathy and attention to what is real'[60]. Turkle goes further, stating that 'we are literally at war with ourselves'[61]. This battle with the self highlights the gravity of the situation. Individuals, perhaps believing at first that networked life provides agency, are gradually engulfed by its demands, rendered mere 'maximising machines.' The ability to deliberate erodes over time[62]. It is apparent that a shift away from a networked approach to life is not easy—such is the prevalence of this mindset in networked life, which Turkle demonstrates with her extensive empirical research.

This section has described the networked life in its misdirected form as an avoidance of living, which leads to a fragility of self, bereft of critical self-examination

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[57] I have, however, in the previous paragraph introduced the language of corruption, and will elaborate on this throughout the dissertation, arguing that networked life risks not merely a diminishment of the self, but more specifically, a *corruption* of the self.
[58] *Alone Together*, p. 294.
[59] Ibid., p. 295.
[60] Ibid., p. 295.
[61] Ibid., p. 296.
[62] I will examine the Turkle and Burt conceptions of deliberation and discernment, followed by those of O'Donovan and Adams, as a basis for purposeful human agency in a vocation—amid the complexity and danger of networked life—in Chapter Three.

and external interrogation. Individuals enmeshed within networked life treat others as objects—considering others only in terms of useful ‘parts’—while moving at speed, tempted to do more, and yet with rapid response providing them with *less*. Put differently, there is little interest in networked life in a more gradual deliberation; that is, for careful *consideration* or weighing of options toward action. Emphasis in networked life is rather on the instantaneous, as stressed by McLuhan, such immediacy enabled by electric technologies which over time shape their users. Networked life in its deficient form is directed toward a worship of the fragile self, extended through networked technologies. Taking one step further, we may say that networked technologies themselves become gods, the singular objects of worship, individuals adopting over time the characteristics of these technologies[63].

Turkle’s analysis, combined with that of McLuhan, suggests that networked life *diminishes* the self, reducing agency, individuals ‘at war with themselves,’ unable to hear calls arising from beyond themselves. The supposed *deep faith* in the declaring of total being, as described by McLuhan, does not bear out in Turkle’s more contemporary analysis, individuals instead participating in encounter with others in piecemeal manners, only as engagement with others serves *them*. The perpetual striving for control in networked life is akin to a self that is built on sand, rather than on rock, the lack of critical self-examination and genuine exposure to external challenge in the world creating vulnerability for when trouble inevitably arises, rupturing self-protective illusions. The self built on sand involves a worshipping of networked technologies, in which individuals gradually become what they behold. Turkle, however, remains hopeful that a more fulsome valuing of persons as persons, rather than as parts, may be salvaged, her

[63] The concept of technique, favouring a becoming in the image of technology, is examined later in this chapter in discussion with McLuhan, Ellul and Grant.

realtechnik a critical examination of networked life which asks what networked technologies are *for*, in which deliberation on purposes overarching the use of such technologies may counterbalance their diminishing effects.

We will next consider the role of 'network structure' (through the network theory of Burt) as a complementary perspective to Turkle on networked life. The account of Burt demonstrates how network structure in some cases constrains, while in others *enables*, opportunity and agency, these as a means to becoming. However, Burt's account involves, as with Turkle, too little critical examination of the role of deliberation in the formation of purpose, network structure reduced in Burt's analysis primarily to a basis for the securing of material advantage for individuals in competition with each other, rather than as a means to the formation of vocation in service of others.

Invisible Network Structure: A Benefit-Rich Networked Approach

In this section, the examination of 'invisible network structure' focuses on informality, or the 'unseen,' in the formation of 'benefit-rich,' advantageous network structure. We will see that individuality, in Burt's account, is less a reflection of personal attributes or characteristics, than it is the *way* in which individuals secure and sustain productive relationships. The securing of productive relationships, rich in information and control benefits, is a *war*, one which may be buttressed by restraint—particularly in the perception of the actual relations which govern a given social structure, the unseen relations not necessarily glimpsed by so-called experienced insiders. Burt does not examine the possible motivations which underpin network formation, although the 'pursuit of opportunity' figures prominently throughout his discussion. It is vital, in the development and sustaining of networks, that individuals situate themselves at the crossroads of multiple 'ports of access' into non-overlapping social worlds. Individual agency is the result, in Burt's account, of the formation of a network structure branching

into multiple social worlds, and in which an individual is situated as the sole or main conduit into the various social worlds. Yet, it is strategic positioning within a given network structure, rather than the cultivation of trusting relations, which Burt prizes in his 'benefit-rich' network approach.

Competition for network position

In his seminal book *Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital*[64], Ronald Burt prefaces his discussion on network theory with an account of the Battle of Fredericksburg, part of the American Civil War, in 1862. Burt tells the story of George Temple, one of the twelve thousand Union casualties in the battle unable to overcome the technological prowess of their Confederate counterparts. In this battle, 'Union troops were massed and marched against the Confederate line because that was the strategic thinking of the day. Generals were trained to mass their men to achieve the firepower needed to break a fortification. The thinking was correct with respect to smoothbore muskets, but that was yesterday's technology'[65]. Confederate fighters, using their superior French 'Minie' ball technology, had gained the ability to shoot at distances accurate to 450 yards, rather than the previous 150 yards. Unionists making their way up Marye's Heights suffered enormous casualties; few Confederates were injured.

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[64] Ronald Burt is among the foremost social network analysts, having written several of the main texts on the topic, *Brokerage and Closure* serving as the most prominent of these, this followed by *Structural Holes*. Much like Turkle through her work as a clinical psychologist, Burt has practiced in the world, this through his work at Raytheon Corporation where he served as Vice President of Strategic Learning. Burt also does not confine his research to the work-sphere only, instead examining networks in multiple life contexts. A sociologist by training, he emphasises social structure throughout his discussion, explaining material advantage in terms of social structure more so than in terms of individual initiative. (Martin Kilduff, whose work will be examined in a later section in this chapter, is one of the few social network analysts concerned with the role of the individual in the formation of their networks.) Turkle and Burt are selected as conversation partners in this section because each sees networks fundamentally as means for control in the material world, network mindsets securing short-term material advantages irrespective of the potential long-term effects on human agents. Each implies that deliberation is necessary as part of forming purposes within networked life, though neither specifies *how* deliberation is to overcome short-term, network-based pressures. Finally, both Turkle and Burt are generally optimistic about the potential of networked life.

[65] Ronald Burt, *Brokerage and Closure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 1.

While not a military historian, Burt uses the Fredericksburg analogy to introduce his discussion on networks as their own powerful technology: 'We today fight in our own Fredericksburg, with its own staggering potential for casualties'[66]. Burt takes aim, in particular, at formal chains of command within organisations and favours instead the informal: 'Formal relations are about who is to blame. Informal relations are about who gets it done. Informal relations have always been with us. They have always mattered'[67]. Burt demonstrates caution on formal networks characterised by hierarchical structures of accountability, focusing instead on the fluid and the unseen in networked life, which produce valuable results[68]. His interests are in the *advantage* produced by networks: 'What is new is the range of activities in which they [networks] matter, and the emerging clarity we have about how they create advantage for certain people at the expense of others'[69].

Burt's examination of networks—in line with much of the field of social network analysis—sees competitive position within social structure[70], rather than the personal attributes of individual actors, as the basis for agency in work and life settings. He is particularly clear on this point in *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*[71]

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[66] Ibid., p. 2.
[67] Ibid., p. 5.
[68] Part of Burt's analyses focus on network structure within organisations; however, as we will see, he also discusses networks outside of organisations. That is, he is concerned with important features of networked *life* involving informal, non-work relations.
[69] Ibid., p. 5.
[70] 'Social' and 'network' structure are used interchangeably throughout this discussion. They are used interchangeably in the work of Burt.
[71] There is a further pertinent basis for competition as a framing for our discussion on networks, which is reflected in Brown et al.'s book *The Global Auction: The Broken Promises of Education, Jobs, and Incomes*. The authors note that 'The world has become more integrated and networked, especially in economic activities (*The Global Auction: The Broken Promises of Education, Jobs and Incomes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 2) but that this has resulted in 'a global auction for cut-priced brainpower' (Ibid., p. 5). In this global auction. 'Almost every facet of one's public life and private self are implicated in the battle to get ahead,' positional advantage becoming increasingly important as knowledge, skills and credentials are increasingly replicated in other parts of the world, and at much lower prices. The value of human capital declines.

Moreover, 'Opportunity, rather than being the glue that bonds the individual to society, has become the focus of intense social conflict, raising the question of how to construct a new opportunity bargain that rebuilds trust and fairness within a sustainable economy' (Ibid., p. 11). As human capital becomes cheaper, individuals must look beyond education credentials, knowledge or skills to set themselves apart in a more globalised economy. Networks are one of the primary means through which such advantage is gained, with

The aim, as outlined in Turkle, is to use networks to control, a point that is repeated in Burt. That networked life and a considerable portion of the network literature centers on the securing of advantage through *control* within networks, merits further critical examination. In Burt's account, 'Competition is not about being a player with certain physical attributes; it is about securing productive relationships. Physical attributes are a correlate, not a cause, of competitive success'[72]. As a result, 'The task for the analyst is to cut past the spurious correlation between attributes and outcomes to reach the underlying social structural factors that cause the outcome'[73].

Burt stresses the invisible relations which exist between competitors, competition defined as an 'intense, intimate, transitory, invisible relationship created between players by their visible relations with others…. People and organizations are not the source of action so much as they are the vehicles for *structurally induced action*'[74]. This definition gives little space for deliberation toward action; it is rather the pattern of relationships surrounding a person that provides (or curtails) flow of information—some rich in opportunity—that will spur individuals into action as they seek constant advantage. The paths followed are those most conducive to success, success defined materially in terms of pay, job promotion and performance feedback. The securing of productive relationships within a given context is a *war*, with winners and losers in achieving and maintaining favourable network positions.

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the margins for error in the pursuit of the right networks slimming. Indeed, 'the more position matters because social scarcity is a fact of life even in prosperous societies where most material needs could be met' (*The Global Auction: The Broken Promises of Education, Jobs and Incomes*, p. 136). The importance of developing the right network structure will intensify as access to education widens globally, the cost of human capital diminishes, and individuals continue to seek comparative material advantages.

[72] Ronald Burt, *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 4.

[73] Ibid., p. 4. We will examine a divergent perspective, focused on the role of individual-level attributes in the development of network structure, in later discussion on the work of Kilduff and Krackhardt.

[74] Ibid., pp. 4-5; italics are mine.

The analysis of competition focuses on the *benefits of relationships* involved in competition, rather than on competitors themselves. It is the terrain, characterised by the sometimes dense and sometimes empty spaces within networks, which according to Burt shapes individual action in various domains of life, whether the workplace or otherwise[75]. Indeed, 'In the most competitive of arenas, there are relations between certain players that provide them special advantages. Competition is omnipresent and everywhere is imperfect'[76]. A similar point is repeated in the chapter 'Player-Structure Duality'. Burt's discussion on physical attributes is, in this chapter, more detailed than it is elsewhere: he notes that while structural holes 'are invisible relations of nonredundancy… they don't connect the players we see… [but rather] invisible pieces of players'[77].

The electric age, of which networked technologies outlined in Turkle and Burt are a part, makes visible the 'invisible pieces of players' which cumulatively comprise the social structure of a network. The result is a deeper awareness of the 'total field' of relations between individuals. McLuhan notes that 'All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms…. In this electric age we see ourselves being translated more and more into the form of information, moving toward the technological extension of consciousness. That is what is meant when we say that we daily know more and more about man'[78]. Networked technologies, extending from the smartphone to

[75] Much of Burt's empirical evidence is based on studies within the American corporate world. Yet, he is aware that 'The manager appears in domestic, work, community, and leisure roles' (*Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*, p. 183). For example, 'In the domestic sphere, [the manager] plays the role of father to his children, son to his parents, spouse to his wife…. In the community, he plays an active role in the church and was key in a petition drive against the chemical plant dumping waste into the stream behind his house…. In each role, the manager is a player in a market defined by a network of contacts related to the role' (Ibid., p. 183). Burt is interested in roles as they relate to life beyond the work-sphere, always maintaining his overarching focus on network structure as the basis for individual agency.
[76] Ibid., p. 7.
[77] Ibid., p. 180.
[78] *Understanding Media*, p. 57.

technology applications such as Whatsapp, Twitter and Telegram—all enabled by graph technology—provide instant and comprehensive illustrations of human relations.

Individuals, through possession of networked technologies in the electric age, are given the tools to see instantly what was otherwise subliminal. McLuhan anticipates by several decades the introduction of networked technologies when he notes that 'With such awareness, the subliminal life, private and social, has been hoicked up into full view…'[79]. As such, 'Our private and corporate lives have become information processes just because we have put our central nervous systems outside us in electric technology'[80], McLuhan anticipates the intense competition for the securing of the *information benefits* of particular relations, previously invisible in nature, though now made accessible to entrepreneurial individuals enabled by networked technologies[81].

SNA is, in particular, the technique at the forefront of technological innovation in networked life. The network graph, as illustrated below as a representation of SNA, makes visible the otherwise invisible or subconscious relations that individuals or organisations possess[82]. This making-visible of what is typically invisible is reflective of Jacques Ellul's technical phenomenon, which takes 'what was previously tentative, unconscious, and spontaneous and brings it into the realm of clear, voluntary, and reasoned concepts'[83]. The reasoned concepts are the 'nodes' and 'edges' of a graph visualisation. A 'cold medium,'

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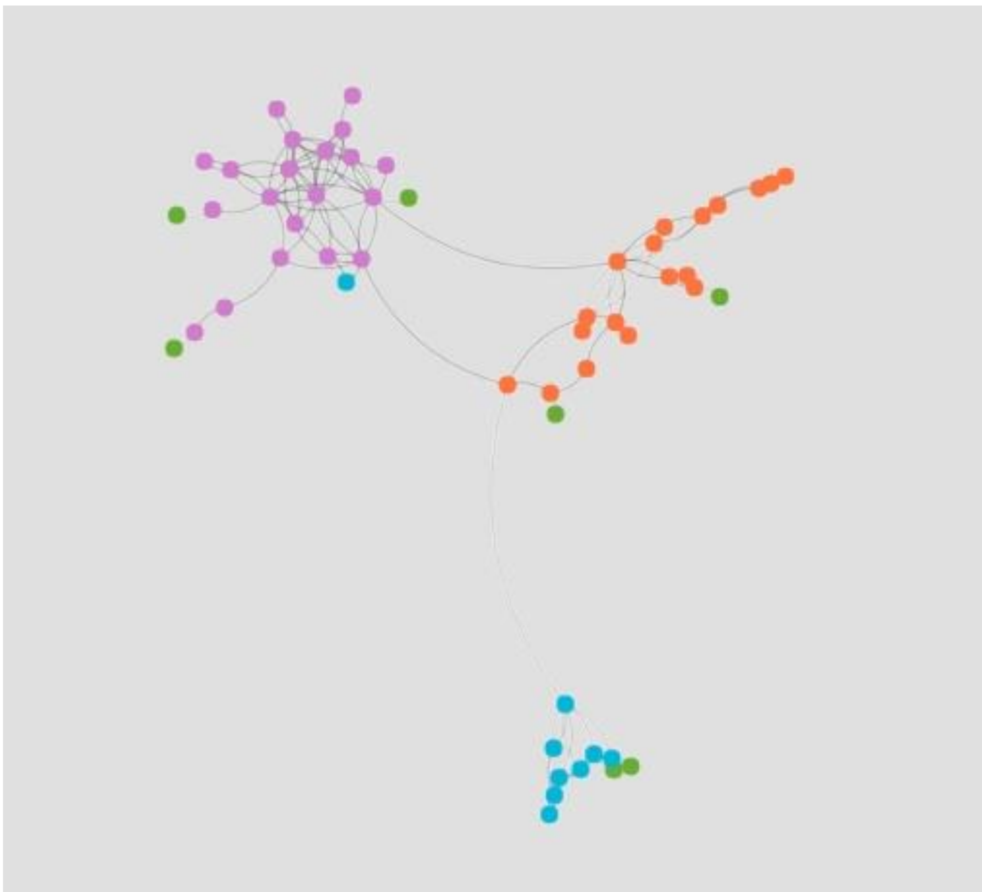
[79] Ibid., p. 47.
[80] Ibid., p. 52.
[81] Brad Smith, as Microsoft CEO on the frontlines of responses to foreign interference and disinformation campaigns enabled by the strategic use of networked technologies, reminds us of the potential nefarious information benefits to be gained through these media. He quotes a German with experience living under Nazi and Stasi regimes who states '"If data is collected, it can always be abused…. Data collected about people—their political, religious, and social views—can fall into the wrong hands and cause all sorts of problems."' (*Tools and Weapons*, p. 42).
[82] In examining the anatomy of a social network, 'nodes' are the objects in the network that can be connected. In a network structure, these are often people, organisations, events or attributes. In comparison, 'edges' are the links that connect nodes to each other. Graph databases store information in a graph format, in which the graph structure allows for the rapid retrieval of information without searching through every database record. This is described as having the ability to see and 'walk' through the database, node-by-node, along a particular path of relationships.
[83] Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 20.

the network graph encourages individuals to participate actively in the shaping of their personal networks, through the making-explicit of the nodes to which they are linked and the paths between them. Individuals may identify particular nodes with which to connect as part of the longer-term shaping of a life. Through the eyes of SNA as a technique, every individual is a 'node,' their image that of a *graph visualisation*. In McLuhan's analysis, the users of SNA begin to see themselves in these terms, reduced to nodes, becoming what they behold. Below is a network graph reflective of SNA[84]:



SNA and the network graph are powerful techniques and tools as part of thinking in a networked manner, and in securing positional advantage in wars within network structures. Success for individual actors in Burt's account is less about seeking direct

[84] The above graph visualisation was produced in my prior professional work, with particular assistance from Cam Raynor at the Calgary, Alberta-based company RA2. It represents a series of individuals as 'nodes,' these organised across three clusters, these connected to various degrees by a series of 'edges' (these representing direct relationships).

control over other *particular* actors as individuals, than it is about shaping the *terms* of given relationships[85]. Direct combat matters less than careful manipulation of relations within a network structure involving constant negotiation[86]. This is particularly the case in a world of imperfect competition, where there are multiple relevant and capable players within a single domain of work or life. For Burt, 'The central question for imperfect competition is how players escape domination, whether it is domination by the market or domination by another player'[87]. Individuality within the account of networked life advanced by Burt is a reflection of differentiated approaches to developing strategic relations within a network. The most entrepreneurial and effective of actors, in Burt's account, are diligent with regard to *securing and framing relationships*, this as part of constructing a wider network architecture[88].

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[85] The most advantageous shape is termed 'structurally autonomous,' which occurs when there are many 'structural holes' between primary contacts and others in a given individual's networks, as well as many structural holes between primary contacts and others capable of replacing the primary contact (*Structural Holes*, p. 45). One's own network should be as dense as possible—free of structural holes—such that others cannot easily substitute someone else for you when in competition. Thus, it is important that one coordinates effectively with one's own closest connections so that these connections cannot be played off each other by actors looking for networked advantage.

[86] O'Donovan considers a negotiation or bargain to be when 'we start out with an idea of what we want to achieve and negotiate away as little as we can…. A negotiation succeeds when it achieves a compromise; a discussion succeeds only when it reaches a measure of substantial agreement' (*Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 45). Burt and O'Donovan stand some distance apart in their respective emphases on negotiation and discussion in their work. Discussion for O'Donovan is, for instance, 'a shared struggle to reach truth and overcome error' (Ibid., p. 45). A negotiation outlined in the work of Burt aims toward securing a dominant network position within a competitive landscape of players.

[87] *Structural Holes*, p. 7.

[88] The 'terms' of relationships within a network structure can be conceptualised in a number of manners, each with implications for one's perception of position within a wider series of relations. The first, and likely most obvious, of these is conceptualisation in terms of job title; that is, one's *formal role* within a network. One's title should (but does not always) provide an indication of one's authority and access to resources within a network. This is a comparative form of relation within a network structure. It is a risky strategy in the formation of an effective network structure, however, given the possibility of *manipulation* of job title or role terminology, such that language is not reflective of a person's actual agency within or outside of the network. For instance, the title of 'director' has become commonplace across multiple sectors, as well as in self-employed work. However, ascertaining the substance, in reality, of 'director' roles is a difficult enterprise.

A more substantive and empirically-based strategy involves conceptualisation of terms based on *kinds* of roles within networked life, as presented in Everett M Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations*. Rogers outlines three kinds of individuals in networked life: 'innovators,' 'opinion leaders,' and 'change agents.' Innovators are active information seekers about new ideas and are often perceived as deviant from their social systems; opinion leaders influence other individuals' attitudes or overt behaviour informally in desired ways with relative frequency, and both exemplify and express a given social system's structure. Change agents

In Burt's account of competition, there is emphasis on opportunity: 'Opportunities spring up everywhere: new institutions and projects that need leadership, new funding initiatives looking for proposals, new jobs for which you know a good candidate, valuable items entering the market for which you know interested buyers'[89]. He then introduces two crucial terms in his examination of networks, these related to *information and control benefits*. Burt uses a military metaphor in discussing information benefits of networks, in that 'It is an army of people processing information who can call your attention to key bits—keeping you up to date on developing opportunities, warning you of impending disasters'. Burt stresses the 'contradictory variation' to which brokers across disparate networks are exposed. While not stated explicitly, it is assumed that effective brokers between structural holes develop the abilities to cope with such variation. It is the act of *calling on* the right army of primary contacts, however, that is conducive to victory in individuals' own Battles of Fredericksburg.

The military metaphor employed by Burt, calling on the right primary contacts, is reflective of Ellul's depiction of *technique*, as examined most thoroughly in *The Technological Society* (important elements of technique are also examined in the work of McLuhan and George Grant). The technical civilisation which Ellul describes is a society dominated by means rather than by ends, engaged in the pursuit of *efficiency*, and seeking

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influence innovation decisions in directions deemed desirable by change agencies; they are the 'lieutenants' in diffusion of ideas. Each of these conceptualisations of terms within networked life is found in the informal, rather than the formal, a reflection of *practice* rather than of formal title. As such, these are less prone to manipulation by deceitful individuals.

A more faithful approach, however, is found in *direct*, one-on-one relations between individuals within networks characterised by trust, based on careful listening and understanding of other individuals and the real relations between them. We will see such an approach in the concluding section in the example of James Baker, whose network strategy emphasises a small number of direct, trusting relations and is examined in contrast to the more indirect, Kissingerian balance of power network strategy. It is the Kissingerian approach which seeks a grand architecture, whereas Baker and other examples, such as Newell and Paul, ground networked strategies and human relations in a more fulsome understanding of other individuals, emphasising the *gardening* of these relations.

[89] *Structural Holes*, p. 13.

constantly to integrate the world into itself, man becoming the servant of technique[90]. Ellul notes that over time, technique begins to dominate all aspects of life, such that ‘Today no human activity escapes this technical imperative’[91], technique ‘absorbed into man’s psychology’[92].

Ellul summarises the vocation of technique as involving *completeness*, ‘eliminating every lesser force’[93]. And having fulfilled its vocation, ‘it will remain alone in the field. Technique thus reveals itself at once destroyer and creator, and no one wishes or is able to master it’[94]. The calling-on of primary contacts is a technique geared toward efficiency, seeking maximal information benefit, which in turn enables the control of others, dominance within human affairs for Ellul an important component of technique. Having acquired the military technique and mastery of networks in networked life, it becomes, as Ellul describes, impossible to imagine the cultivation of human relations in any other way, one’s primary contacts becoming an ‘army’ that secures perennial competitive, efficient, advantage. Here we see the marrying of Turkle and Burt accounts of networked life and network structure, in which lists of contacts can be used or kept at bay as one desires, engagement taking place on one’s own terms, such that self-interest is always maintained.

This perpetual competition for domination of one’s peers is the frame provided in Ellul’s study of technological civilisation. In discussing the sinful nature of man, which ‘applies to the totality of man’s being and existence,’[95] Ellul highlights the competitiveness that characterises relations between individuals: ‘Ordered creation has become a

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[90] *The Technological Society*, pp. 19-21.
[91] Ibid., p. 21.
[92] Ibid., p. 23. Technique seeks dominance in relation to the natural world, entering into all aspects of human activity: ‘Technique has been extended geographically so that it covers the whole earth’ (Ibid., p. 78). All challenges become technical challenges, the application of a technique to a given field altering the field irreversibly (Ibid., pp. 84-85).
[93] Ibid., p. 85.
[94] Ibid., p. 85.
[95] Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 47.

battleground of powers that compete for supremacy. Now only God can exercise total supremacy. But the currents of power, the levels of its exercise, the options of conflict, can be so numerous and complex that it may finally be said that in a kind of circle man is always both dominated and dominating'[96]. The 'options of conflict' referenced in Ellul's *The Ethics of Freedom* can be interpreted as the proliferation of means examined in *The Technological Society*, these means providing opportunities to dominate one's peers, this domination of the other giving way, however, to domination *by the tools one employs*[97].

Technique enables victory in competition and is refined in competition. Ellul notes that 'it was competition with the Napoleonic empire that started His Majesty's government down the road of technique'[98]. The increasing sophistication of technique, with its mathematical precision, provides near-insurmountable competitive advantage, in which 'Only propaganda can retort to propaganda, or psychological rape to psychological rape,' this example followed by an even more disturbing reference to Hitler who writes in *Mein Kampf* about the necessity of combatting poison gas with poison gas, lest one lose a battle with mathematical certainty[99]. Thus, the sinful ordered creation becomes, over time, a *technical order*, which fashions man in his *technique's* own image[100].

George Grant echoes this overtaking of man by technique in his observation that Western technical achievement 'moulds us in what we are, not only at the heart of our animality in the propagation and continuance of our species, but in our actions and

[96] Ibid., p. 48.
[97] Apart from any reference to technology, Ellul emphasises *power*'s propensity to expand itself: 'It ceases to expand only when it comes up against an obstacle that is more powerful than itself. Power is under the necessity of becoming absolute and totalitarian' (Ibid., p. 38). This corrupted ordered creation, involving unending seeking of dominance between ever-expanding powers, is the setting in which Ellul's concept of technique exists—technique providing individuals with competitive advantage in the pursuit of power.
[98] *The Technological Society*, p. 58.
[99] Ibid., p. 84.
[100] Ibid., pp. 93-94.

thoughts and imaginings'[101]. Whereas 'technical progress favors war'[102], which takes place between individuals or groups competing for power, individuals are progressively reduced to objects, their victories over others mere illusions: 'The tool enables man to conquer. But, man, dost thou not know there is no more victory which is thy victory? The victory of our days belongs to the tool. The tool alone has the power and carries off the victory'[103].

A distinction between Grant on the one hand, and McLuhan and Ellul on the other, is to be made here, this in the extent to which it is possible for individuals to *retrieve* what in the substance of man is lost through technical expansion in the pursuit of power within the battlegrounds of competition. This distinction aligns Grant with Turkle in her intermittent appeals for a *realtechnik* involving the restoration of deliberation (in contrast with the 'deliberated nonchalance' of networked life, as will be examined at the outset of Chapter Three), Grant in other words more hopeful than McLuhan and Ellul in the possibility of such retrieval and restoration. There is a parallel, however, between Grant's affirmation that 'As we push towards the goal we envisage, our need of technology for its realization becomes ever more pressing'[104] and the dual McLuhanian and Ellulian emphases on servo-mechanisms: technique enacts a closed-looped feedback system in which individuals, in utilising and improving upon technique in order to dominate others, strengthen the grip of technique over all components of human life[105].

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[101] George Grant, *Technology and Empire*, p. 5. Grant, perhaps more than Ellul or McLuhan, stresses the sheer practicality, embodied most particularly in the imperial United States, which drives the Western technical civilisation and which 'trusts in technology to create the rationalized kingdom of man,' p. 14.
[102] *The Technological Society*, p. 110.
[103] Ibid., p. 146.
[104] *Technology and Empire*, p. 22.
[105] Ellul defines servo-mechanisms as 'Mechanisms which involve so-called "feedback" in which information measuring the degree to which an effector… is in error with respect to producing a desired value… is "fed back" to the effector by a monitor…' (*The Technological Society*, p. 14). This definition stresses the adaptability of a machine, and of technique more generally, in the taking-possession, in Ellul's terms, of individuals.

Yet Grant, while recognising the extreme pragmatism of technological society—at the centre of which sits North America—identifies a gap, even if an extraordinarily narrow one, for Turkle's retrieval and, potentially, restoration of meaning through deliberation[106]. This gap is Grant's conclusion to 'In Defence of North America,' in which he states 'Because we are first and most fully there, the need might seem to press upon us to try to know where we are in this new found land which is so obviously a "terra incognita"'[107]. Further indication of potential retrieval is given in the language of 'deprivation,' in the conclusion to *Technology and Empire*, particularly in Grant's affirmation that 'The language of good is not then a dead language, but one that must, even in its present disintegration, be re-collected, even as we publicly let our freedom become ever more increasingly the pure will to will'[108]. This possible recollection must occur in a world that views technique as its *governing faith*—but for Grant the possibility nevertheless remains.

The brief examination of McLuhan, Ellul and Grant in relation to Turkle and Burt raises a critical question in relation to the nature of victories in Burt's 'Battles of Fredericksburg': are the victories achieved through the advent of modern networked technologies genuine *victories*? Put differently, it might be asked what is *lost* in victory in networked life, whether in the securing of relationships in the pursuit of opportunity, or in a more prolonged dominance over others in the competition for power? Ellul, through his description of the technological order and of sinful ordered creation, provides a frame for Burt's account of perpetual war in the securing of relationships; McLuhan reinforces this frame through his discussion on users of technology becoming what they behold, technology fashioning man in its image. Technique, in Ellul's analysis, seeks

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[106] Ellul directly repudiates the possibility of restoration in technological society, in that technology 'does not allow this world to restore itself or even to enter into a symbiotic relation with it' (*The Technological Society*, p. 79).
[107] Technology *and Empire*, p. 29.
[108] Ibid., p. 127.

completeness, squeezing out space for human agency in the exercising of critical and creative capacities; human bonds are replaced by technical bonds, and so humans become *replaceable*[109].

There is comparatively less emphasis in Burt than in Turkle on the value of formation of direct, enduring relations between individuals. It is Grant who provides this vital—even if very limited—room for manoeuvre for the individual both in the critical use of technology, and in the retrieval of what is lost in the use of technology, this aligning with Turkle's own appeal to reflect on what is lost in networked life. In Ellulian or McLuhanian terms, networked victory in Burt's modern Battle of Fredericksburg is a veritable *technological* victory, individuals achieving domination through technique yet paying little attention to what is lost through the expansion of power. There is an inevitability in Ellul and McLuhan to the capturing of individuals by the tools they employ, the *network graph* becoming, gradually and subtly, the image of man.

Grant, in comparison, emphasises the victory of North America in the technological shaping of the world[110], conceding that much has been lost in the substance of man, but that *all is not lost*; some restoration, as suggested in Turkle, remains possible. And in this restoration project, Turkle echoes Grant on the critical approach necessary: 'Only in *listening* for the intimations of deprival can we live critically in the dynamo'[111]. The following section will examine in greater depth the nature of information and control benefits within networks.

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[109] 'The bond that unites fragmentary actions and disjointedness of individuals, co-ordinating and systematizing their work, is no longer a human one, but the internal laws of technique' (*The Technological Society*, p. 93).
[110] The work of Smith and Browne, referenced in this chapter, is reflective of the extraordinary technological might of the United States, a might which has increased despite the country's growing political divisions.
[111] *Technology and Empire*, p. 126. My italics for emphasis.

Information and control benefits of a networked approach

Discernment is necessary in determining *whom* to call on, as well as the right *timing* in calling on a person or set of relationships. The structure of a network enables or constrains access to useful information, with the 'early warning' gained through relevant information serving as 'an opportunity to act on the information yourself or to invest it back into the network by passing it on to a friend who could benefit from it'[112]. Information flows from contacts but also *to* contacts, and it is on this latter front that strategic individuals gain control advantages, monitoring, limiting, providing and otherwise shaping information as it flows to others within their orbit. Burt summarises his discussion on 'benefit-rich networks,' which prioritise information and control, as follows: 'A player with a network rich in information benefits has contacts: (a) established in the places where useful bits of information are likely to air, and (b) providing a reliable flow of information to and from those places'[113].

The *size* of a given network is one determinant of access to quality information in decision-making and action, but there are opportunity costs when relationships added to a given network are redundant; that is, if new connections are related in some way to others in a given network. It is for this reason that 'Size is a mixed blessing. More contacts can mean more exposure to valuable information, more likely early exposure, and more referrals. But increasing network size without considering diversity can cripple a network in significant ways. The correct response is seen in 'the number of *nonredundant* contacts. Contacts are redundant to the extent that they lead to the same people, and so provide the same information benefits'[114].

[112] *Structural Holes*, p. 14.
[113] Ibid., p. 15.
[114] Ibid., p. 17.

It is here that Burt introduces the term ‘structural hole,’ a central term in his account of networks, which indicates ‘the separation between nonredundant contacts’[115]. A structural hole exists within a network where two groups, or clusters, of people *do not have a single direct connecting point*. Two ‘empirical conditions indicate a structural hole by their absence, these being cohesion and structural equivalence[116]. Cohesion is reflective of a strong relationship between two individuals, for instance between a husband and wife, or two friends. Structural equivalence reflects two individuals having the same contacts. Burt puts the difference as follows: ‘Cohesion concerns direct connection; structural equivalence concerns indirect connection by mutual contact’[117].

While there are benefits to developing networks with high levels of redundancy, Burt’s discussion in *The Social Structure of Competition* focuses on the value of networks rich in non-redundant contacts. This is not to say that there is little or no value in redundancy; network ‘closure’ is an important aspect of networks, as will be discussed in this chapter. There are times where strategic development of a network requires increasing the density within a given cluster of relationships, for instance where a new connection has been made, but where effective action requires that the potential partner in action gains the trust of his new colleagues.

Burt finds a middle ground in that ‘The critical decision… lies in selecting the right person to be a primary contact [within that individual’s own network]’[118]. If time is allocated effectively to preservation of relationships with the right primary contacts, then these can serve as ‘ports of access to clusters of people beyond…. Guided by the first principle [of maximising the number of nonredundant contacts in the network] these ports

[115] Ibid., p. 18.
[116] Ibid., p. 18.
[117] Ibid., p. 19.
[118] Ibid., p. 21.

should be nonredundant so as to reach separate, and therefore more diverse, social worlds of network benefits'[119]. The aim here is to have multiple sources of independent, nonredundant information.

Burt highlights in this discussion on non-redundant contacts the control benefits accruing to actors with information advantages, where 'You become the person who first brings people together, which gives you the opportunity to coordinate their activities'[120]. Further benefits go to individuals capable of such coordination, in that 'having a network that yields such benefits makes you even more attractive as a network contact to other people, thus easing your task of expanding the network to best serve your interests'[121]. The individual in possession of nonredundant relationships themselves motivated to share valuable information is therefore constantly exposed to opportunity, and has more time than peers to determine whether such opportunities are worth acting on. The coordinating individual is here not an artist, as Ellul or McLuhan might wish were the case, but rather a *technician*, this a product of an education system which prizes *adaptability* above all else in its pupils.

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[119] Ibid., p. 21. The term 'social world' raised by Burt can be enriched through discussion with Stackhouse, Jr. in *Need to Know: Vocation as the Heart of Christian Epistemology,* particularly in relation to his critical examination of cognitive pluralism, in which he highlights the 'widespread and complex multiplicity, fragmentation, and versatility… characteristic of advanced modern societies and their inhabitants,' this situation which is 'at the heart of what some call the "postmodern" or "hypermodern" culture' (Ibid., p. 30). I concur with Stackhouse, Jr.'s assessment of postmodern or hypermodern culture as forming the 'intellectual and social landscape' in which Christian thinking and action occur (Ibid., p. 55). In this intellectual and social culture, there is no particular 'current' or 'group' that dominates, and so the recourse is often to 'alliances, agreements, compromises, and coercions' (Ibid., p. 37), postmodernists asserting that 'reality is often more complex than any one sort of people, any one interest group, in any one situation, can comprehend' (Ibid, p. 49).

In networked life, a person's 'network structure' may consist of contacts bridging into multiple social worlds, these worlds potentially in conflict with each other (though not without possible overlap). In such a culture, we are to interrogate what any person, group (or cluster)—bridging into a new social world—is *for* (considering for instance Stackhouse Jr.'s questions such as 'What is the particular purpose of this group? What is its characteristic way of increasing *shalom*, and what are ways in which it typically is distracted from its work?' (*Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World*, p. 229). Such conflict is part of the contradictory variation of structurally autonomous networks branching into multiple social worlds.

[120] *Structural Holes*, p. 22.

[121] Ibid., p. 22.

This section has highlighted the material advantages accruing to individuals situated at the crossroads of multiple social worlds rich in network benefits, such placement providing unique, non-redundant information conducive to seeing opportunities, as well as possible danger. The most important decision in the formation of a network structure is, in Burt's analysis, the determination of which individuals will serve as the primary contacts within their own groups or clusters of people, each such primary contact serving as a 'port of access' to new opportunities across non-overlapping social worlds. In the following section, the discussion turns to the *selection* of primary contacts within networks, as well as on the pivotal role of *trust* in such determinations.

The tertius gaudens and the paradox of agency

Trust is the factor that has not been discussed to this point—in Burt's account it is pivotal: 'Trust is critical precisely because competition is imperfect. The question is not whether to trust, but whom to trust'[122]. In answering the question of whom one can trust, Burt turns to the concept of indebtedness, but while remaining ambiguous on the attributes of a trustworthy person: 'In the imperfectly competitive arena, you have only your personal contacts. The matter comes down to a question of interpersonal debt. If I do for her, will she for me? There is no general answer'[123]. Burt, with his emphasis on social structure as a basis for effective deliberation and action in a competitive world, is unable to enter into the territory of discussion on personal attributes. It is better to optimise for social structure, which will ensure that an individual maintains a position within the network conducive to receiving valuable information, monitoring and manipulating this information such that it does not flow to others in a manner that disrupts a position of informational benefit.

[122] Ibid., p. 15.
[123] Ibid., p. 15.

Given the difficulty of ascertaining trustworthiness, Burt proposes the term *tertius gaudens*; that is, 'the third who benefits…. *Tertius, terzo* or *derde*, the phrase describes an individual who profits from the disunion of others'[124]. Here, we see an individual agent who profits from negative rapport between two individuals in his network, whether serving as an intermediary capable of mending ruptured ties, or provoking further disunity, in order to advance his own interests. In short, 'When you take the opportunity to be the *tertius*, you are an entrepreneur in the literal sense of the word—a person who generates profit from being between others'[125].

It is this ability to affect the terms of relationships, this stemming from where one is situated within a given network, that is germane to individuality in Burt's account[126]. The individual agent acts under constant uncertainty, and so seeks favourable terms for himself in all negotiations: 'In the swirling mix of preferences characteristic to social networks, where no demands have absolute authority, the *tertius* negotiates for favourable terms'[127]. A network optimised for structural holes, primary contacts providing nonredundant sources of information as well as connecting into social worlds beyond themselves, allows savvy individuals to move information strategically across their networks. In Ellul's analysis, the tertius seeks to reduce uncertainty through technique, but this 'mechanism of adaptation… deprives man of freedom and responsibility, makes him into a "thing," and puts him where he is most desirable from the point of view of another technique, that is, where he is most efficient'[128].

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[124] Ibid., p. 31.
[125] Ibid., p. 34.
[126] Burt elsewhere provides what might be deemed a more harmonious account of the potential role of the tertius, writing in *Brokerage and Closure* 'The simplest act of brokerage is to make people on both sides of a structural hole aware of interests and difficulties in the other group; so much conflict and confusion in organizations results from misunderstandings of constraints on colleagues in other groups' (*Brokerage and Closure,* p. 61).
[127] Ibid., p. 48.
[128] *The Technological Society*, p. 362.

Much of Burt's account turns on the point of *experience*, and he indicates that training is one means through which individuals can more clearly see structural holes in a network. Experience means that 'Two people in the same room can see different networks, one sees brokerage opportunities, the other sees a closed network of already-connected people. Truth is not an average'[129]. Early experience in a career is conducive to reaping the fruits of a networked mindset, given that 'social capital of structural holes cumulates over a career so it is useful to encounter holes early in the career…'[130]. Perception of networks, however, is gained not just through work but also living arrangements outside of work, in that 'People who live in a network that contains structural holes are more likely to recognize the holes in their next network'[131]. This is again the point of experience compounding, though Burt does not suggest what such experiences might entail, even at a general level.

He does, however, suggest that watchfulness is useful in perceiving network structures: 'In crossing structural holes, mindful of Weick's (1996) advice, there is value to travelling light on full forage; eyes, ears, indeed all senses, on full alert'[132]. This point is made within the context of a discussion on the use of jargon in brokerage between structural holes in networks, where a uniquely effective consultant demonstrates restraint—despite his 'impeccable' academic training—in using academic jargon in his consulting work with clients, presumably in the high technology industry. We see here once more the importance of paying attention to others, the self brought into view with the world *as it is*, rather than as one wishes it to be. Had the consultant put himself *first*—beginning with presentation of *his* scientific knowledge—the client would have been

[129] Ibid., p. 23.
[130] Ibid., p. 78.
[131] Ibid., p. 77.
[132] Ibid., p. 77.

unsatisfied. This is a case of Jesus' refrain, 'But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first' (Matt 19:30)[133] suspension of self-gratification conducive to understanding within relations.

This implicit emphasis on restraint, highlighted by Weick's advice on travelling with all senses on full alert, runs somewhat in contrast to McLuhan's pessimistic emphasis on technology as creating *numbness*, and to Ellul's view of technology as blinding individuals to *limits*. It is indeed possible to use networks in a manner that secures particular advantages, while guarding against complete diminishment of the user. This manner, however, involves recognition of the limitations of networked technologies within networked life, uncritical use of networks leading to catastrophe both materially, and in terms of meaning[134]. Here, Grant affirms hopefully that 'We know that this re-collection will take in a world where only catastrophe can slow the unfolding of the potentialities of technique'[135].

While Burt's account values the tertius as the embodiment of creative freedom in networked life—though without regard to purpose beyond self-interested material advantage—there *is* nevertheless an implicit emphasis on the value of restraint in the conceptualisation of networks: one must listen, and watch, carefully in order to ensure that perception of networks is reflective of reality[136]. Restraint is vital in part because it is

[133] New Revised Standard Version, p. 22.
[134] Grant views systems of meaning, such as myth, philosophy and revelation, as having 'mitigated both our freedom and the indifference of the world, and in so doing puts limits of one kind or another on our interference with chance and the possibilities of its conquest' (*Technology and Empire*, p. 123).
[135] Ibid., p. 127. Grant does not define catastrophe, for he does not believe it possible to predict what innovations will yield across various spheres of human activity. Catastrophe in networked life might, however, include the selection of the wrong primary contact as trusted partner in a given cluster or 'social world'. Catastrophe in terms of *meaning* involves the user of networked technology worshipping technology as its own God, critical faculties numbed as one becomes very much like the technology in question.
[136] Stackhouse, Jr. links between effective listening and accurate perception of reality when he asks 'How can we really know who our neighbours are and how we can love them best if we do not spend considerable time and effort in listening to them—and particularly to those who are on the margins and who thus are not used to being listened to?' (*Making the Best of It*, p. 340).

possible to go wrong in the development of a network, this clear in Burt's analysis. The shift away from social intuition to a more networked mindset involves self-control in not adopting 'preconceptions [that] can blind people to the structural holes in a network,' for 'When insiders explain a social structure to us, they shape our understanding of the structure with the semantic labels they use to distinguish clusters'[137]. But the skill 'is to see the brokerage opportunities where semantic labels fail to distinguish them, or even obscure them'[138]. Appearances can be deceiving in networked life and within a network structure. The individual experienced in networked thinking is able to see beyond such appearances, perceiving the real social structure at play[139].

A further demonstration of the role of the individual in the formation of network structure, building on the example of the entrepreneurial tertius, is seen in Landis et al.'s studies on the 'paradox of agency,' where the authors find that one's subjective feeling of power increases willingness to broker within a network—that is, to make a connection between individuals without pre-existing linkages—but *reduces* perception of such opportunities. Landis et al. challenge Burt's assumption that 'the presence of brokerage opportunities is by itself sufficient motivation for the individual to be willing to pursue

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[137] Ibid., p. 22.
[138] Ibid., p. 22.
[139] Kilduff and Krackhardt, in response to Burt and other network analysts, attempt to provide a more individual, rather than structural, explanation of the development of social networks. Their chapter on 'The Social Networks of Low and High Self-Monitors,' *within Interpersonal Networks in Organizations: Cognition, Personality, Dynamics, and Culture*, is of particular relevance in this discussion, the aim being to 'understand how the social networks that significantly affect the performance of organizational participants are shaped by the attributes of interacting individuals' (Martin Kilduff and David Krackhardt, *Interpersonal Networks in Organizations: Cognition, Personality, Dynamics, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 132-136). The hypothesis of Kilduff and Krackhardt is that 'high self-monitors' are especially well suited to the development of advantageous network structure. Self-monitoring relates to the controlling of public presentation in social situations: 'Some people resemble successful actors or politicians in their ability to find the appropriate words and behaviors for a range of quite different social situations' (Ibid., p. 134). Kilduff and Krackhardt find in their research that personality predicts social structure, with high self-monitors occupying advantageous positions within networks. High self-monitors also *secure* more advantageous positions, the more time that they spend in their networks, implying the role of individual agency and experience in securing advantageous position within a network.

these brokerage opportunities'[140]. In other words, it is not only opportunity that motivates individuals to develop network structures conducive to opportunity.

It may be that power creates a psychological distance between the powerful and less powerful, the former thinking in abstract terms toward their colleagues, such abstraction serving as a blindness to actual network structure[141]. This psychological distance is for Ellul an *alienatio*n—from God but also from reality—reflective of the individual who 'finds his source in himself, imposes on himself the law of his own autonomy, makes himself the measure of all things, chooses his own good and becomes his own meaning. Behold the man!—real if not authentic'[142]. On the other end, the less powerful may engage in a more systematic processing of the details of relationships[143].

More specifically, the sense of *dependence* on others that is a part of a lower subjective sense of power necessitates more accurate, rather than abstract, thinking on the nature of relationships within one's network[144]. The research of Landis et al. suggests that any firmness in agency must nevertheless remain *self-critical*; individuals who act without a sense of limitation risk misperceiving wider network structures of which they are a part—and therefore miss out on material opportunities. It follows that the temptation to view favourable positioning within a given network structure as the source of one's power is a dangerous strategy. A more restrained, if not humble, conceptualisation of the self in

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[140] Landis et al., 'The Paradox of Agency: Feeling Powerful Reduces Brokerage Opportunity Recognition yet Increases Willingness to Broker', p. 2.
[141] Ibid., p. 2.
[142] *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 50. Ellul sees dependence on God, and service of others in the world, as the basis of freedom, whereas 'every manifestation of power is an expression of the might of Satan,' (Ibid., p. 55). Scripture, in Ellul's analysis, reinforces Landis et al.'s conception of agency as involving dependence, in that it 'base[s] power on obedience and (social) superiority on an attitude of service to the other. Any other attitude than service is for Ellul an *illusion*, this illusion Landis' subjective sense of power bereft of accurate perception of network structure.
[143] Ibid., p. 2.
[144] Ibid., p. 3.

relation with the world allows for a more consistently precise understanding of relations with and between others, and in turn a more robust action in the world.

A sense of limitation is, for Ellul, a vital component of freedom. It is the individual who recognises necessities and determinations, living with a sense of dependence, that is capable of 'a recognition rather than an evasion of reality'[145]. Ellul rejects the idea of an elevated subjective sense of power in parallel with the work of Landis et al., in that 'Freedom is introduced by grace into a world of necessities. It does not form a free zone or privileged status for certain people…. Freedom has meaning only in relation to an authentic meaning. Freedom is fate overcome, an obstacle surmounted, a limit passed, a sacred sphere secularized, a burden on man lifted…'[146]. For Christians, in particular, necessities or determinations are 'very dangerous, uncomfortable, harassing, and ambivalent'—qualifiers unlikely to be part of an elevated subjective sense of power which sees oneself as the measure of all things, beholden to no-one. In other words, freedom is to be *lived out* in the world in such difficult, and for Ellul "unnatural," situations, this living-out in the real a responsibility of Christians[147].

This section has suggested that the tertius role arises in part given the difficulty in ascertaining whom to trust as ports of access into social worlds, the tertius able to sow seeds of disunity, or increase unity, between counterparts so long as this is conducive to sustained advantage. Moreover, there is a need for restraint in the perception and formation of network structure, particularly in response to the conceptualisations of relations within networks provided by so-called insiders. Kilduff, Krackhardt and Landis et al. elucidate a research body focused on individual-level psychology in the formation of network structure. The work of Landis et al. suggests that a low subjective sense of power *mitigates*

[145] Ibid., p. 75.
[146] Ibid., p. 75.
[147] Ibid., pp. 94-100.

the risk of abstract thinking as part of the perception of network structure, such thinking hindering accurate perception of actual network structures within a given network.

Networks as Opportunity: A Basis for Vocation

A critical examination of networked life offers important insights into opportunity and the informing of vocation. It is knowing whom to bring into a network that is of particular importance in increasing access to rewarding opportunities. This specificity, rather than emphasis on network size, reduces the burden on individuals whose network structure might not initially be conducive to accessing opportunities. Trust is the vital component as one takes initial steps in developing a network, trust being 'a matter of confidence in the information passed and the care with which contacts look out for your interests'[148]. It is within closed networks in particular that 'people are connected such that no behavior goes unnoticed' and 'advantage [is created] by decreasing risks that would otherwise inhibit trust'[149]. Such closed networks, however, are *unlikely* to provide individuals with access to novel opportunities as they set out on their given journeys, closure 'provid[ing] a reputation mechanism associated with happy and safe, while brokerage provides a vision mechanism associated with achievement and rewards'[150].

Such closure is seen in Ellul's conception of *rootage*, which 'involves justification of the situation in which we find ourselves,' this justification, however, a negation of freedom in Christ[151]. There is a need, in transforming actuality, to make contact with the right, trusted individuals located *outside* of one's existing, closed networks. This involves a stepping into the unknown, into new social worlds, where danger exists. This

[148] Ibid., p. 15. Burt elsewhere defines trust as 'commit[ing] to a relationship before you know how the other person will behave' (*Brokerage and Closure*, p. 93).
[149] *Brokerage and Closure,* p. 95.
[150] Ibid., p. 127.
[151] *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 306. Ellul notes that this negation of freedom is 'a refusal of the conflict of life. It is a refusal of encounter with the Spirit who accuses us before justifying us. It is a refusal of any new commencement,' (Ibid., p. 244).

engagement in the unknown, in new social worlds, is the surpassing of limits, which is a form of transgression and which 'means danger, but… also shows how serious freedom is,' steps taken across 'the limit of my potentiality, action, and intelligence'[152].

Burt, through his discussion on trust, implies that correct judgment of character is a component of effective selection of such individuals. Nevertheless, it can be expected that such decisions—even with considerable prior reflection—will involve uncertainty, and so require leaps of faith. Caution is warranted, for there is risk in individuals 'extending themselves for people whose reputation for honoring interpersonal debt is unknown'[153]. The *extending themselves* is a crucial detail, individuals without the right initial network structures often needing to themselves reach out to others. Without such action, it is unlikely that rewarding opportunities will come their way, this due to adverse positions within network structures. The reaching-out, or extending of oneself in faith, is well captured by Ellul when he notes that 'Christian freedom demands precisely that we be bold in the midst of a hostile world, of pressure groups, of strangers'[154].

Burt specifies that the ability to perceive and form networks conducive to securing particular advantage compounds over time. Network formation, which might only be experimental initially, becomes part of who a person *is*. Burt notes pertinently that 'As the volume of structural holes in a player's network increases—regardless of the process that created them—the entrepreneurial behavior of making and negotiating relations between others becomes a way of life'[155]. The way of life, possibly verging on a vocation, is borne in Burt's account not out of interest in networks, *per se*, but rather out of motivation to pursue *opportunity*. It is the 'promise of success' that is of prime concern in Burt's account

[152] Ibid., p. 344.
[153] *Brokerage and Closure*, p. 15.
[154] *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 255.
[155] *Brokerage and Closure*, p. 36.

of network development as a way of life, where, 'given two opportunities, any player is more likely to act on the one with the clearer path to success'[156].

The temptation therefore is for a purely networked mindset to pervade one's life as time passes, with maximisation of opportunity for the self consuming one's focus, as opposed to stewardship of relations and created goods, given the inescapable interdependence of human relations. It is little surprise, then, that Burt reflects that 'Being willing and able to act entrepreneurially is how you understand social life'[157]: the securing of rewarding opportunity generates further opportunity. One realises, and seeks to cement, position in network structure that allows for continued steady walk on the same opportunity-laden and materially-secure path. This is, however, in Ellul's analysis a leading into a 'ditch,' a furthering rooting in society, in which 'we simply strengthen the determinisms by giving them the allegiance of the only ones who could be freed from them'[158].

There are potential excesses, if not dangers, in the constant pursuit of opportunity, this facilitated through development of structural holes, as examined in Burt's account. The question 'How much is enough?' must be asked. Otherwise, the network entrepreneur risks taking on the character of a child, incapable of slowing down, constantly seeking her own advantage. Needed, in Burt's account of opportunity is emphasis on *restraint* in the structuring of a network. The critical decision, as we have seen in the above discussion, is in selection of the right, *trusted* contact to serve as the center of a given cluster, as part of the formation of a structurally autonomous network linking in to new social worlds conducive to a vocation. On one hand, these primary contacts serve as conduits to valuable opportunities to which a person would otherwise have no or little access. On the other,

[156] Ibid., p. 35.
[157] Ibid., p. 36.
[158] *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 303.

these individuals act as early warning signals when there is impending danger. Wrong selection of primary contacts is potentially disastrous for individuals seeking opportunity in whichever domains they are a part of.

One must therefore demonstrate caution in embarking on a metaphorical walk with primary contacts on a networked path, proceeding in a step-by-step manner, rather than moving at full-bore. Such caution is well demonstrated in Ellul's characterisation of the Christian life, which 'must be a waiting and watching and praying and advancing. It must decide each moment what is to be done'[159]. The significance of selection of primary contacts, involving a high degree of trust, is fundamentally a relation of love, which is 'the particular, unique man, viewed according to his ultimate worth'[160]. Ellul here rightly rejects relations characterised by 'a mere network of communications,' or relations which see individuals primarily in terms such as 'the working class' or 'underdeveloped peoples'[161], each of which prioritises abstract political or sociological thinking at the expense of encounter, which carries the sign of Christ, such relation again involving service of the other's needs[162].

Burt reflects on the 'sense of investing in people with whom you think good things could happen before you are sure what those things are captures the essence of brokerage and the critical role that trust plays in brokerage'[163]. Yet, whereas 'Trust builds over a period of years,' Burt emphasises that 'Brokerage requires trust within a much shorter time frame: months, weeks, even minutes'[164]. When pursuing opportunity in the world, there is not always the luxury of complete information on a person, such that one can have full

[159] Ibid., p. 210.
[160] Ibid., p. 211.
[161] Ibid., p. 211.
[162] Ibid., p. 324.
[163] *Brokerage and Closure*, p. 95.
[164] Ibid., p. 104.

confidence in their trustworthiness. A network rich in structural holes conducive to opportunity involves some risk-taking. For instance, Burt highlights the possibility of encountering abusive people, who experience 'frequent rejection, but… simply move on to abuse new contacts. Over time, abusive people dominate'[165].

Dual challenges related to opportunity within networked life are at this point apparent. On the one hand, there is a need for restraint in the formation of networks rich in structural holes. There is not only a finite number of primary contacts that can be developed—this due to time and energy constraints—but also the risk of going wrong in the selection of such contacts. On the other hand, each primary contact, as an access point to a new cluster of contacts, provides valuable information conducive to rewarding opportunities, but also serves as a source of danger, in cases where this primary contact is untrustworthy. The formation of a vocation, in which individuals are called into the unknown—calling arising from God, but mediated by particular trusted individuals and events in the world—requires attention to these twin opportunities and perils[166]. More to the point, *a vocation is initiated, as well as shaped, by a select number of trusted primary contacts who individually and collectively pull individuals into new social worlds, as part of one's overall pilgrimage with Christ.*

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[165] Ibid., p. 105. The solution provided in Burt's account is that of the development of closure around networks, given that closed networks provide 'warning… reliably early and at low cost so that abusive people can be squeezed out of the network'. Network closure, however, is not necessarily conducive to opportunity that is part of the calling of individuals into action in the unknown. It is through closure that individuals achieve safety, which is incongruous with action embracing indeterminacy. Ellul implies a valuable aspect of network closure through his reference to the 'taking part in an evil society, in the ongoing decay of its institutions, and in the withdrawal of the individual into his private life,' each of these examples reflective of a gravitation to open rather than closed networks (*The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 341).

[166] Here the ambiguity of the world must be stressed. This is well captured by Stackhouse, Jr. when he notes that 'Over and within this landscape of evil [described in Genesis 3], there hands obscurity, such that weeds can look like wheat and vice versa, such that the way forward is not immediately evident, and such that results are hard or impossible to discern' (*Making the Best of It*, p. 263). Ambiguity can be exploited, as we have seen in networked life, such that weeds appear to be wheat through the careful manipulation of appearances or strategic positioning within a network. This overlaps with the previous Biggar reflection on the wheat and tares co-existing within the *saeculum*. The *intentional* structuring of a life, individually, can be achieved in part through an effective network structure, as has been discussed in this chapter and as will be discussed in Chapter Two in relation to the corporate dimension.

Hence, individuals must demonstrate restraint in their metaphorical walks with primary contacts, and in the prior extension of themselves, since trustworthiness can only be discerned in steps, over time. The following section examines the individualised nature of trust, as well as five cases—James Baker, Eric Newell, Paul, Fiona Hill and that of a lone parent—who through their lives exemplify restraint in the formation of network structure, this restraint a critical component in the gradual structuring and directing of their respective vocations.

Historical examples in the formation of direct, trusting relations

Several historical and contemporary cases exemplify this judicious selection of primary contacts characterised by trust, which helps to structure and direct a certain Christian conception of vocation in networked life examined in later chapters. I will briefly examine James Baker, followed by Eric Newell, Paul, Fiona Hill and a vignette of a lone parent, in order to bring added light to an approach which emphasises restraint in the formation of trusting relations with primary contacts[167]. This will be contrasted at points with the control-oriented approach to relations reflected in the life of Henry Kissinger. These examples further an account of network structure conducive to vocation in

[167] These five cases illuminate important elements of network structure as part of the structuring and directing of vocation. In two cases, I am acquainted with the individual in question; however, their public service suggests that my own turning to these examples is not without at least some merit—their vocations have indeed borne fruit. My intention is that the selection is not arbitrary but rather reasoned, the latter achieved through reference to a clear set of criteria. The selection of these five cases seeks to find a balance between that involving a degree of *eminence* on the one hand, and *citizen engagement* on the other, both eminence (James Baker and Eric Newell) and citizen engagement (Fiona Hill and lone parents) of equal value. (I consider Paul to fall in-between eminence and citizen engagement, given his extraordinary role as an apostle on the one hand but time spent in the depths of prison, and in some cases, despair, on the other.) I also seek examples that cover different forms of life and potentially of vocation, these of *politics* (Baker), *business* (Newell), *theology* (Paul), *education* (Hill) and *social* (the lone parent). On *gender*, three males and two females (I take the lone parent example as one primarily featuring single mothers, given their preponderance amongst lone parents) ensures a near-balance, even if not perfect. Whereas Paul is the only example that is explicitly theological, the Baker and Hill examples have important theological undertones. Finally, the example of Hill highlights the role of an ‘infrastructure of opportunity’ at *early stages of life* in geographical ‘opportunity deserts,’ whereas the lone parent considers networked structure and the role of trusted primary contacts within *adult populations.* There is some blurring between these categories, Hill for instance rising to a role of public prominence in adult life following adverse early years. Her analysis refers to her early life and attempts to preserve her groundedness in her childhood geography, that of the North East of England, which unfortunately remains an opportunity desert.

networked life shaped by *individuals*—as well by small-group triumvirates in the role of tertius—deliberating carefully in the formation of purposes to guide action.

The first example is that of James Addison Baker III, a former White House Chief of Staff, serving President of the United States Ronald Reagan, as well as becoming a later Secretary of State whose contributions included helping to ensure a peaceful transition of power in the aftermath of the Cold War. Baker, as a former campaign manager to Reagan opponent George Bush, entered a White House riven with political factions. He was a pragmatist surrounded by ideologues who would over the subsequent years battle 'for the soul of the Reagan presidency,' in which the 'struggle would be more emotionally grueling and deeply painful than almost anyone around him knew' [168]. Baker was respected for his ability to achieve stability within the White House—order out of chaos as is often described—while developing a small number of enduring, trusting relations. At one level, Baker was a master networker, a Washington insider known for his ability to develop a wide range of contacts across politics, business and the press. But his lasting successes were founded in large part on his cultivation of a *very small number of highly trusting relations*, these individuals initiating as well as structuring his political vocation.

It is apparent in his biographies[169] that his relations with a small number of individuals served as the basis for opportunity within the White House. To start, in the day following his surprise announcement by Reagan as White House Chief of Staff, Baker met with his nemesis and competitor for the role, Ed Meese, in order to 'patch things up'[170]. Baker divided duties with Meese in such a manner that Meese saved face but Baker, 'as

[168] Chris Whipple, *The Gatekeepers: How the White House Chiefs of Staff Define Every Presidency* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017), p. 105.
[169] The two main biographies consulted in this brief historical analysis are *The Man Who Ran Washington: The Life and Times of James A. Baker III* by Peter Baker (no relation to James Baker) and Susan Glasser, as well as *The Gatekeepers: How the White House Chiefs of Staff Define Every Presidency* by Chris Whipple.
[170] Ibid., p. 108.

chief of staff, would control access to the president, paperwork, speechwriting, and the White House staff'[171]. Moreover, 'he [Baker] sweetened the package by suggesting that Meese have cabinet rank, while Baker would not. Meese would also belong to a "Super Cabinet Executive Committee" and chair it in Reagan's absence'[172].

Here, Baker not only creatively and cunningly defined the terms of the relationship, but set these terms *directly* through a one-on-one encounter. The externally-facing, surface-level terms of the relationship, in this case, were not reflective of the nature of trusting relations between Meese and Reagan, or Baker and Reagan, in reality. The terms, instead, were rather deceptive, with Baker as the main trusted partner to Reagan *in practice*; Meese appearing to maintain some control through his role, but with much less meaningful access to Reagan, and therefore less opportunity for substantive action.

His relations with the press were similarly direct, one former reporter noting 'He was the one who you thought knew everything; he was giving context and perspective—without spin; whether you agree or disagree, you know he was a straight shooter'[173]. Baker's core team was a network of three individuals: himself, Ed Meese and Michael Deaver, which was referred to as the 'troika'. Baker here serves as the tertius, not only bringing Meese and Deaver together, but 'recogniz[ing] that in any power trip, it was essential to be part of the two and not the one; he had every intention of making sure that he and Deaver were the two. No one was going to make Baker the odd man out'[174]. His gift in this trio was in 'determining what mattered to others and how to use those

[171] Ibid., p. 108.
[172] Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, *The Man Who Ran America: The Life and Times of James A. Baker III* (New York: Doubleday, 2020), p. 133.
[173] *The Gatekeepers*, p. 114.
[174] *The Man Who Ran America*, p. 135.

motivations to get what he wanted'[175]; that is, Baker paid careful attention to the world he was in, critically examining and maintaining a restrained sense of self[176].

His time and energy were spent on developing trusting, direct relations with primary contacts, the *terms* of these relations secondary rather than primary concerns in his own action. It is emphasised throughout his biographies that Baker was not particularly interested in titles. Ultimately, 'His doctrine was deal-making. Real deals, ones that stuck, deals that changed the world. And you cannot make deals and get things done while criticizing from the outside'[177]. While there are criticisms of Baker as having been self-interested, focused intently on his own advancement within the Washington, D.C. political system, his action is deeply cautious, aiming toward the diminution of risk amid perpetual danger. More fundamentally, Baker sought solutions consisting of durability, this necessarily involving compromise. In short, 'Baker always longed to be a statesman, not a hack'[178].

It is Baker's relationship with George Bush, however, which led him into public service, this following a family tragedy—the death of his wife—and the unravelling of the Republican Party following Watergate. His main biographers, Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, characterise his appointment as Under Secretary of Commerce in the Ford Administration—this enabled by Bush—in terms of a *life project*: 'At the age of forty-five, Baker did not know it yet, but he was about to begin his life's work'[179]. They emphasise that 'For Baker, the long dark night was coming to an end. He was ready to take the next

[175] Ibid., p. 140.
[176] It is noted that 'Baker was careful not to assert himself so much in meetings that it would scrape up against Meese and the other power players' (*The Man Who Ran America*, p. 145). It is later highlighted that 'One of the keys to Baker's success over the years was knowing when to back off' (Ibid., p. 265). Baker and Bush were 'profoundly cautious men, believers in words like "prudence" and "restraint" at a time when a revolution was actually happening' (Ibid., p. 325).
[177] Ibid., p. xvii.
[178] Ibid., p. xix.
[179] Ibid., p. 65.

step'[180], a step taken with his *most trusted friend*, and it is Baker who later serves as the central figure in Bush becoming President of the United States.

And yet there was no predicting that Baker would enter politics, or pursue a career in politics with considerable success. His biographers note that there is little if any indication in his early life that he would become a consequential political figure; in fact, his late father had railed *against* politics as a career, let alone vocation. Neither was Baker intent on changing the world, a view which is fashionable in much discussion on political vocation: 'Baker did not come to American politics animated by a desire to save the world or even much of a worldview at all, and most of what the law had taught him before he entered public life was about the perils of risk-taking'[181]. Instead, Baker was called into political life by his most trusted *friend*. Baker's philosophy within the White House was characterised rather by service: his 'maxim about his job was to focus more on the "staff" than the "chief"'[182].

His aim was, in short, to problem-solve, this aim rather humbler than that of his predecessor Henry Kissinger in the role of Secretary of State. Whereas 'Kissinger saw himself as a geopolitical strategist and a grand architect of history, a latter-day Metternich shaping the forces that guided the world,' Baker 'gave little thought to the Treaty of Westphalia or the historical context of great-power competition. He was no professor. He would seek to cut diplomatic deals as a corporate lawyer would. He was a problem-solver, animated by the challenge of finding ways to get things done'[183]. Whereas Kissinger

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[180] Ibid., p. 66.
[181] Ibid., xxi.
[182] Ibid., p. 248.
[183] Ibid., p. 331.

envisioned himself as architect[184], Baker served as gardener, seeds planted thoughtfully, sprouting over time through the watering of tight-knit friendships.

Each man engages in the world—neither is a commentator on the sidelines—but it is Baker whose relations can be more accurately described in terms of friendship, and which are in turn more enduring. It is Kissinger who embodies many elements of the networked life described in the work of Turkle, individuals reduced to parts, means to self-vindication as well as the propagation of his worldview, notwithstanding its merits. It is a mindset characterised by a world seen as 'a barren, desolate place that offered no long-term hope, only the chance to keep on keeping on'[185]. With little faith in individuals or in the world—the reduction of evil, rather than strength of the good, the main aim of action—management of networks serve as a means for control, keeping others at bay. There is much less emphasis on the particular individual—that is, on the formation of longer-term relations with primary contacts—as is demonstrated in the life of Baker.

A second example of trusting relations with primary contacts is seen in the life and work of Eric Newell, who played a central role in the saving and later flourishing of the modern Canadian energy industry. His work is described in a University of Calgary masters thesis entitled 'Policy Entrepreneurship: Understanding Fiscal Policy Change for the Alberta Oil Sands' by Jessica Dawn Weber. Eric Newell served as the catalyst in the creation and signing of the Declaration of Opportunity, which in 1996 ushered in '$5.6

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[184] Barry Gewen captures this point in his biography of Kissinger, *The Inevitability of Tragedy*, when he writes 'In the 40 years since he left government service, Kissinger has devoted himself largely to two goals: burnishing his reputation and instructing the American people in the principles of Realpolitik' (*The Inevitability of Tragedy: Henry Kissinger and His World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2020), xiv). Later, Gewen notes that Kissinger 'had a cause to fight for. Unlike so many public figures, he was not about to go gently into the dark night that swallowed up so many retired American statesmen' (Ibid., p. 350). Kissinger would regularly return following his role as Secretary of State to offer diplomatic advice to American presidents. Gewen's analysis demonstrates that this advice was likely underpinned by several motivations: self-vindication, surely, but also a belief in the necessity of a Realpolitik whereby 'statesmen couldn't afford to leap beyond the messy actuality into a situation people wished were true' (Ibid., p. 392).
[185] Ibid., p. 392.

billion in new investment and 10,000 new jobs for oil sands projects' in Canada[186]. The Declaration of Opportunity led to another $65 billion of investment into the country within a period of eight years. The signing of the Declaration of Opportunity was accomplished through the coming-together of the Canadian Federal and Alberta Provincial governments, as part of the harmonisation of fiscal policies (royalty and corporate income tax policies) in a manner that had been considered impossible—and met with perpetual failure—over the three previous decades.

The cancellation of a megaproject called OSLO spurred Newell into action, OSLO solidifying a perception that the industry had lost its momentum[187]. Newell, along with several colleagues, struck a National Oil Sands Task Force, a new institution, which convened industry and government representatives and made recommendations to the Federal and Alberta Provincial governments on royalty and taxation regimes. In the early stages of the Task Force, Newell 'did not claim to be in control of the entire scope of events. Instead, he recognized the *complexity* of the process and his *limitation* as an individual'[188]. Moreover, in the framing of the policies for which he was advocating, Newell 'had to be aware that others would see his policy proposals from different perspectives, and that they could have different values from his'[189]. This formation of coalitions was particularly important in Newell's project, this including 'establishing friendships and trust between people, bridging industry and government'[190].

The narrative crafted in order to enlist members was one of opportunity—'the great opportunities that would be open to industry if the government changed their policies'[191].

[186] Jessica Weber, 'Policy Entrepreneurship: Understanding Fiscal Policy Change for the Alberta Oil Sands Weber,' p. 1.
[187] Ibid., p. 52.
[188] Ibid., p. 56.
[189] Ibid., p. 62.
[190] Ibid., p. 70.
[191] Ibid., p. 74-75.

Despite this narrative, however, Weber highlights that 'To create a coalition of companies who could work together for a number of years, Newell had to foster relationships and trust'[192]. Yet, Newell was discerning in his selection of *particular individuals* with whom deeper relationships needed to be developed. Weber specifies the Premier at the time, Ralph Klein, who Newell took on a fishing trip to British Columbia, Klein an avid fisherman, with Klein and Newell spending five hours together on a fishing boat. In short, 'In his effort to persuade Klein to adopt the policy proposals, Newell made an effort to appeal to Klein's personal interests, and to get to know him personally'[193]. Newell later adopted a similar approach with the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, Anne McLellan, which provided an 'inside track in shaping her perception of the industry'[194].

Weber concludes in her study that, despite the role of the Task Force and other institutions in the shift in Canadian oil sands related policies in 1996, Newell 'was a major cause for the policy changes…. In other words, the words and actions of a single individual… [were] in fact decisive'[195]. Here, a critical component in Newell's efforts is that 'He imagined other people's perspectives and endeavored to think his way into their concerns and interests'[196]. There was throughout this work considerable restraint in the conceptualisation of relations, Newell listening carefully to the coalition members' problems, this in order to understand in *detail* their main interests. Alongside this careful listening, deliberation allowed for the formation of a pan-Canadian purpose which transformed relations within the coalition that had previously been seen in terms of competition, these relations viewed afterwards in terms of *cooperation*.

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[192] Ibid., p. 75.
[193] Ibid., p. 82.
[194] Ibid., p. 91.
[195] Ibid., p. 93.
[196] Ibid., p. 103.

A third example of restraint in network formation is seen in the life of Paul himself, outlined in the biography *Paul: A Biography* by Tom Wright. Paul's approach in the formation of networks begins with his encounter with Jesus, which serves as the summons to agency in the world. Wright describes the event, or moment, in which Saul becomes Paul while on the 'Road to Damascus,' this moment the result of a considerable amount of preparation, Saul 'meditating upon Ezekiel's vision and seeking, if he could, to glimpse for himself what the prophet had seen'[197].

Wright's description of the moment is less psychological than it is historical, Wright considering what Saul—given his learnedness as well as zeal[198]—might have experienced in his encounter with Jesus. There is considerable emphasis on trust throughout Wright's account, most particularly between Jesus and Saul (becoming Paul), a trust which nevertheless involves Saul's own recognition of his *lowliness*; the understanding that his own capacities are limited. Wright notes that Saul's devotion to the One God was correct but that he was 'absolutely wrong in his understanding of who that One God was and how his purposes would be fulfilled'[199]. Jesus addresses Saul as a 'master addresses a slave'; it is a moment in which 'Heaven and earth came together in this figure, and he [Jesus] was commanding Saul to acknowledge this fact and to reorient his entire life accordingly'[200].

The encounter is directive in nature, involving considerable preparation by Saul, but with the moment, and its implications, utterly unanticipated and unpredictable. It is a moment which involves unwavering trust in the One God, the trust, or 'loyalty' as Wright describes, transforming Saul's conception of the world: 'A shocking, blinding reality. The

[197] Tom Wright. *Paul: A Biography* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2018), p. 51.
[198] Zeal in this case refers to violent persecution of people, where 'Everything possible had to be done to stamp out a movement that would impede the true purposes of the One God of Israel' (Ibid., p. 4).
[199] Ibid., p. 53.
[200] Ibid., p. 53.

reality that would change the world'[201]. This reorientation with the world is followed by an entering into the city, a *world-participation* in which Saul is led by the hand of Jesus. Saul's encounter with Jesus precludes the possibility of withdrawal into the safety of network closure, the demand instead to embark on the adventure of action and danger of the *unknown*, in new social worlds.

Although Wright does not use the term explicitly in his text, it is implied that Paul deliberates carefully as a basis for action, particularly in the face of constant opposition to his purposes. Paul's vocation was centered on reconciliation, this within a world that was 'polyglot, multicultural, [and] multiethnic'[202]. Wright stresses Paul's decade of silence prior to embarking on his vocation, a decade in which Paul focused on 'deepening the well of scriptural reflection from which he would thereafter draw the water he needed'[203]. Smallness, humility and restraint are emphasised throughout Wright's account of Paul, bearing the marks of Jesus while establishing new communities, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Wright stresses throughout the biography Paul's simultaneous vigour and yet restraint in his own sense of power, this most vividly in his imprisonment in Ephesus. We see here the findings of Landis et al. in action, a willingness to act, tempered by humility, which allows Paul to see human relations in fine detail. There is, in particular, a 'radical redefinition of *power*…. It was the subject he found himself rethinking from the ground up as he discovered that the power of the gospel belonged utterly to God and not at all to himself'[204]. Paul's extended and brutal imprisonment in Ephesus grounds this teaching in personal experience, in that 'He [Paul] too had been humbled under the weight of suffering. He had pondered the fact that this was the means by which Jesus had attained his

[201] Ibid., p. 54.
[202] Ibid., p. 15.
[203] Ibid., p. 69.
[204] Ibid., p. 274.

exaltation as Lord'[205]. The word *koinonia* represents this 'partnership of his sufferings'[206]. This implies an approach to action in the world focused not on management of persons, in order to secure short-term advantage, but rather an emphasis on *service* of others with whom one has trusting relations.

In this brief description of Paul's trials in Ephesus, we see the manifestation of the restrained agency described in the work of Landis et al. It is at the depths of despair in the Ephesus prison—Paul also simultaneously consumed by news of his apparent rejection in Corinth—that he deliberates on how to reconcile runaway Onesimus with his master Philemon. Onesimus had likely run away from Philemon while stealing his money, an act punishable by death. Taking such a thief in could itself be punishable by death. Philemon, however, had himself 'come to faith on a visit to Ephesus'[207]. Wright describes Paul's situation as one that is precarious, requiring a reflection on the nature of the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon, as well as a weighing of options as to possible paths forward. Here, we see Paul serving in the role of *tertius*, mending relations as outlined by Burt. Paul's agency, balancing firmness with restraint, is paramount in his deliberation.

Paul's solution is to send Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter emphasising *koinonia*, highlighting Onesimus' care for Paul in the context of his own sufferings, as well as his own relationship with Philemon. The message is one of reconciliation, borne out of Jesus' own suffering, imaged even if fragmentarily in Paul's despair in Ephesus. The letter is 'a high risk pastoral strategy' and 'would demand humility and trust on both sides'[208]. Here again, it is Paul's lowliness which serves as a basis for finely tuned understanding of relations, this understanding allowing in turn for a trusting compromise

[205] Ibid., p. 275.
[206] Ibid., p. 278.
[207] Ibid., p. 280.
[208] Ibid., pp. 282-3.

and reconciliation between two friends. The strategy, as Wright suggests, seems to be a lasting one; the 'deal' reached much like that seen in the earlier cases of Baker and Newell in their own projects. Wright emphasises the necessity for concreteness of thought in human relations, at one point describing such deliberation toward action as being *realist* in approach. Indeed, 'He would never assume that the transformation of small and often muddled communities into a much larger body, forming a majority in the Roman world, would come without terrible suffering and horrible pitfalls'[209].

Fiona Hill, while having lived and worked in élite circles like Baker and Newell, serves as an example of a person rising from humble origins to a role of public prominence due to what she terms the 'infrastructure of opportunity'[210]. This infrastructure of opportunity places trusted primary contacts at its centre, particular individuals entering into Hill's life at the right moments, these moments prepared for through prior sustained deliberation. Hill rose to international prominence through her extraordinary testimony during the first impeachment trials of President Donald Trump—this in her role as Deputy Assistant to the President as well as Director for European and Russian Affairs at the National Security Council, where she served as the American point-person in dealings with Vladimir Putin. However, it is Hill's description of the infrastructure of opportunity involving particular *individuals* pulling her into their social words, as part of the structuring and directing of her vocation, that is of specific relevance to the Chapter One examination of networked life and network structure. These individuals are part of what she terms a 'team' effort that enabled Hill 'literally as well as metaphorically, to go "from the coal house to the White House…"'[211].

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[209] Ibid., p. 415.
[210] Hill has recently become the Chancellor of Durham University, a role which allows her to bridge between the global and local, bringing her networks in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere to County Durham and surrounding areas.
[211] Fiona Hill, *There is Nothing For You Here: Finding Opportunity in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 9.

The network structure in Hill's analysis consists mainly of contacts in her local community, 'Family members, friends, schoolteachers, university professors and administrators, and professional mentors [who] helped me find scholarships and jobs and generally pointed me in the right direction'[212]. Her own life path was formed at a time of utter decimation in the North East of England, the mining and shipbuilding industries closed in rapid succession by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, in turn weakening the miners' 'local community [which] was their safety net and source of contacts for new opportunities'[213]. This destruction of industry, and in turn of community, is 'a major trauma'[214], one which lingers in the region to this day. Nevertheless, Hill describes in her account of opportunity in the North East of England a series of individuals who serve as primary, trusted contacts, *reaching* into her life and *pulling* her into new social worlds and paths in the gradual formation and structuring of her vocation as educator, focused on the upholding of modern democracies in the face of rising authoritarianism.

These individuals include a high school teacher, Dr Marshall, for whom 'Education was a calling,' this teacher encouraging her to apply to St Andrews as opposed to remaining within County Durham for potential higher education studies[215]. Another such individual is the local MP Lord Foster, originally from Middlesbrough, who would follow up with her as part of monitoring her studies and early career. The Durham Miners' Association, an organisation representing and supporting the families of previous coal miners, provides Hill with a vital travel stipend which later enables her to pursue Russian studies as a condition for her undergraduate studies[216]. These trusted individuals are the sources of unforeseen opportunities within the context of an upbringing in which 'Having

[212] Ibid., p. 12.
[213] Ibid., p. 25.
[214] Ibid., p. 33.
[215] Ibid., pp. 52, 62.
[216] Ibid., p. 77.

aspirations wasn't normal—or perhaps… just seemed pointless when you were unlikely to escape poverty or ever leave County Durham'[217]. More specifically, these individuals created new paths for Hill, often unexpectedly, despite the North East of England being a veritable 'economic wasteland, an opportunity desert'[218].

A fifth and final example is seen in the example of single parents who must often rely on the local communities around them in order to gain opportunities conducive to the structuring, let alone positive directing, of vocations as *parents.* Reuben Ford, Research Director of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation and former Senior Research Fellow at the Policy Studies Institute, identifies in *Private Lives and Public Responses: Lone Parenthood and Future Policy in the UK* seven categories of problems related to lone or single parenthood, these related to *poverty*, *fiscal situation*, *long-term impact of changing patterns of fertility*, *effects upon children*, *gender inequality*, *morality* and *social*. Despite these problems, Ford highlights the rising trend of lone parenthood, such that 'At least one-third and perhaps up to one-half of the next generation will experience lone parenthood as a child, and yet others will become lone parents themselves'[219].

Ford, in an article entitled 'Lone Mothers' Decisions Whether or Not to Work,' identifies in a series of depth interviews with lone mothers an 'image recurring again and again in accounts… of a delicate balance between the demands of their family and the labour market and responsibilities to each…. The balance was a complex one because of the need to perform multiple roles…. As lone mothers they had sole responsibility for all adult roles in the house: breadwinner, child rearer and home maker'[220]. One lone mother

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[217] Ibid., p. 74.
[218] Ibid., p. 90.
[219] Reuben Ford and Millar, Jane, *Private Lives and Public Responses*, pp. 7-8.
[220] Ibid., p. 216.

describes work being merely for 'self-preservation…. I don't think anyone's going to put themselves out that much and miss out on their families growing up for the sake of it'[221]. The portrait painted is one of individuals who must balance carefully between competing options, and particularly between different forms of value—financial and non-financial. More specifically, lone parents and particularly single mothers have few material opportunities, time spent with children likely reducing time for engagement with a local community that might help in the raising of children, as well as the sourcing of new financial opportunities.

Trusting relations are paramount for lone parents, particularly given the vulnerability of such parents to abusive individuals who may wish to prey on parents or children. Here, one primary contact with nefarious intentions may ruin the lives of lone parents, whereas one trustworthy primary contact may catapult lone parents into new social worlds, providing opportunities in particular for their children, the lone parent here fulfilling a vocation dedicated to *family*. Clear perception is necessary in the formation, as well as sustaining, of a vocation dedicated to family, lest a parent proceed down the wrong path. Weick's advice to proceed on *full alert* is therefore critical, senses alive rather than deadened through the wrong use of networked technologies. Moreover, lone parents must deliberate as to their purposes with *seriousness*, for clear, even if short-term, purposes serve as anchors in the stormy seas of the vocation to which many such lone parents are called. Indeed, for the vast majority of lone parents, just one or few primary contacts bridging in to interesting, local opportunities—a potential higher-paying job than that of the nearby supermarket, a high school sports coach of good character, an inspiring

[221] Ibid., p. 217.

teacher—may be the difference between peril or positive direction in the fulfilment of a parenting vocation.

This section has focused on the significance of trusting relations between *individuals* as part of network structure and the directing of vocation. Five cases—James Baker, Eric Newell, Paul, Fiona Hill and that of a lone parent—highlight the vital importance of a restrained sense of self as a basis for human agency, this restraint conducive to the cultivation of enduring, trusting relations. A recognition of limitations or flaws in one's own self-conception is, as seen in the paradox of agency, partly a means to a more effective perception of relations within a given network structure. These five examples are contrasted with the life of Henry Kissinger, whose approach to network formation is more akin to that of a grand architect, than it is to that of a gardener, the latter *tending-to* their work in a more gradual, step-by-step manner. The role of deliberation, which will be examined in Chapter Three, is evident throughout the various accounts, deliberation serving as a basis for the transformation or reorientation of terms within sets of relations, terms shifting from the seeking of material advantage in relation to others to a focus on service.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to maintain the strengths—namely, the opportunity to branch into new social worlds as part of the structuring and directing of vocation—in networked life, while restoring a central role for human agency in such life. The examples of Baker, Newell, Paul, Hill and that of many lone parents each point, in their own ways, to a human agency borne out of some prior challenge—the death of a wife, the cancellation of a major project, the despair of imprisonment, estrangement from or destruction of one's community. In each case, the individual is called to action, beginning down a particular path within a network structure. The recognition of limitation is an

integral factor in the gradual formation of trusting relations with a focused and small number of individuals while traversing a given path. In comparison, emphasis on network structure as the basis for human agency encourages a mindset which seeks to control individuals, maintaining positional advantage involving rapid action as part of securing, shaping and transmitting information across one's contacts.

A sense of restraint is essential as part of navigating the complexities of networked life, as well as averting the dangers inherent in the objectification of human relations—such objectification diminishing human agency—seen in the work of Turkle and Burt. Here, individuals risk holding others at bay, engaging only the *parts* of others that are conducive to maintaining pre-conceived self-images. Indeed, Turkle, with her focus on the networked life and Burt, with his focus on network structure, each emphasise the centrality of control as the main end of action. McLuhan, Ellul and Grant help to ground this analysis, their respective depictions of technological civilisation centring on the theme of control of users by the technologies used or even worshipped. There is a tension in their analyses between technical order which overcomes the individual—individuals shaped in the image of their technologies—and of preservation of a small window for freedom in which individuals make use of electric technologies critically, thereby minimising the negative effects.

The pursuit of opportunity within networked life is often inward-looking, individuals consumed with themselves, participating in the world insofar as participation advances their own narrow interests. This self-interestedness is for Ellul the *negation* of freedom, which is instead found in service. For McLuhan, self-interestedness is reflective of a Narcissus trance in which individuals' critical faculties are numbed. Here, participation is characterised not by openness and adventure within the unknown, but

rather by a desire for *safety*, limiting the possibility of relations which might critically examine the self.

Nevertheless, the formation of networks deemed structurally autonomous, branching into multiple, non-redundant social worlds, serves as a basis for opportunity, conducive to the structuring and directing of a vocation. The information benefits arising through the strategic formation of networks cannot be discounted in networked life, where networked technologies, alongside an understanding of network structure, see more proactive individuals receive access to opportunities before others. Turkle is correct in her discussion on *realtechnik*, encouraging a critical examination of networked life, asking what such life is *for*—should opportunities be focused on the self, or to the communities of which one is a part?

Burt highlights the importance of selection of primary contacts within a given social world, in which trustworthiness is the vital factor in maintaining advantage while guarding against danger. If individuals are to maintain or strengthen agency in networked life, then developing such trusting relations across multiple social worlds is *paramount*; otherwise, it should be expected that more cunning individuals will be victorious in networked 'Battles of Fredericksburg.' Indeed, there is the constant possibility of danger in networked life, as will be discussed in Chapter Three in particular, and which can be guarded against through the formation of trusting relations oriented toward the good. These trusting relations are most evident in *communities*, involving not only horizontal, but also teleological relations directed toward God, the transition from a critical examination of networked life to that of community the focus of the Chapter Two discussion. This transition allows for a directedness, particularly over time and in the face of opposition, which is much less achievable in the self-seeking world of safety so prevalent in the fallen version of networked life.

The vocations of the five case studies in this chapter each overcome the problem of narrow horizons in relation to the self, the world and the time, as seen in the corrupted version of networked life with its worshipping of the *self* (or networked technologies and their extension of the central nervous system into the world) as God; its attempted control of others and of created goods in the *world*; and the propensity for rapid but half-hearted action bent on the securing of benefits, anxious with regard to the *time*. James Baker, Eric Newell, Paul, Fiona Hill and the lone parent act, in contrast with these networked life challenges, with a profound sense of personal limitation, borne out of prior adverse circumstances or events which called them into action. Their worlds, even if involving considerable danger, through opposition by actors seeking to corrupt the good (Putin in relation to Hill; purist Reaganites in relation to Baker, and abusive individuals for the lone parent) are undergirded by a focus on the inherent goodness of the world. These actions are structured and supported by networks involving few—though carefully selected—trustworthy individuals dedicated to the good. Finally, these individuals proceed carefully, step-by-step action undertaken one day at a time, as illustrated so well by Newell[222].

These individuals do not pursue opportunity for the sake of opportunity, but rather receive opportunities through pursuits focused on Burt's 'something else'—the gardening of particular relations and created goods as part of their service in the world[223]. Here, as

[222] Apart from Paul, the case studies are not explicitly theological, in that the individuals seldom make public reference to God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit within their vocations. These individuals, the trusted primary contacts comprising their network structures, and the created goods loved as part of their vocations, are excellent, resembling aspects of the divine nature, as will be examined in Chapter Two, and so provide some access to the Transcendent for individuals hesitant to use Christian language. That said, in each of these cases, I am more inclined to see the events calling these individuals to action, as well as the worldly relations and created goods offered to love as part of vocations, as being features of the moral order centered on Jesus Christ, moral experience *thrust* on these individuals and which—as O'Donovan notes—reasserts itself when individuals are least on guard (for instance if distracted or tempted within networked life). This moral order exists, it is *there*, affecting Christians and non-Christians alike. As part of this moral order, the Holy Spirit comes to the aid of individuals in the structuring and directing of their vocations (in some cases bringing them closer to God), working through every part of the created world, this particularly noted by Al Wolters in the subsequent Chapter Two discussion.

[223] Paul is particularly reflective of this tending-to of relations, which is examined in Chapter Four.

reflected for instance in the life of Fiona Hill in County Durham, particular trustworthy individuals enter unexpectedly into the lives of these individuals, becoming focal points in their respective network structures. This formation of network structure is more akin to gardening than it is to architecture, Kissinger emblematic of architecting a network. These primary contacts are tended-to, as seen for instance in Newell's relationship with Ralph Klein, and Paul with Onesimus and Philemon. Vocations are revealed gradually, in part through tending-to these relations, which enables focus amid the distractions of networked life. Across all five examples, there is emphasis on active participation, rather than withdrawal from, the messiness, tribulation and ambiguity of the world, which is restored gradually through service.

Chapter Two: Moral Order, Teleology and the Pursuit of Excellence in Adams and O'Donovan

In the previous chapter, we critically examined the notion of the networked life, emphasising network structure's role in encouraging 'socially-induced' action—the role of the deliberating agent diminished. The result, as reflected in the discussion, is a control-oriented action, constantly seeking short-term comparative advantage. I proposed at the conclusion of the chapter the need for restraint as part of human agency in networked life, particularly in determining which 'primary contacts' within the social worlds of a person's networks are trustworthy. Indeed, trustworthiness is the critical factor identified by Burt in his discussion on effective, 'structurally autonomous' networks, these networks rich in access to opportunities. The examples of Baker, Newell, Paul, Hill and a lone parent demonstrate, in practice, what such restraint entails, this conducive to the gradual structuring and directing of a vocation in networked life.

In this chapter, I argue in favour of a socially-oriented pursuit of excellence within the God-given world of created goods, emphasising service toward God within particular sets of valued social relations. This pursuit of excellence, focused on God's promise, is reflective of what Wolters considers a positive *direction* in the God-given created order, in which network *structure* is characterised by relations of lightness rather than of darkness. It is a primary aim of this chapter to maintain the goodness of the moral order in which individuals act, emphasising the latent potential of the network structure outlined by Burt, as well as the direction of networked life introduced by Turkle.

The concept of a pursuit of excellence, introduced in Adams, is enriched through O'Donovan's discussion on finding and seeking within moral order and complemented by Wolters' emphasis on service as reflective of positive direction. Restraint as part of human

agency involves a ‘critical stance,’ achieved in large part through community criticism, a point introduced by Adams, built on by O’Donovan. At its best, community criticism is characterised by ‘Hesed,’ or ‘lovingkindness,’ Hesed discussed compellingly, even if briefly, in Adams’ examination of grace and embodied specifically in the Chapter One example of Hill. This chapter responds to the deficiencies outlined in the Chapter One discussion on networked life and network structure, particularly that of short-term action focused on maintaining material advantage and control. It proposes a moral theological basis for *enduring* pursuit of excellence as a part of vocation in networked life. These deficiencies, as seen in Chapter One and elaborated on through discussion between Adams and O’Donovan, are often subtle, corrupting individuals gradually, given the prevalence of false appearances in networked life, which encourage an avoidance of in-depth action in the world.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. In the first section, ‘The Elusive Pursuit of Excellence,’ I examine Adams’ notion of excellence as a basis for valuing of persons, as well as wider sets of created non-human goods, excellence an important component in the proposed Christian conception of vocation in networked life. Both Adams and O’Donovan, in dialogue with Wolf, Wolters and other interlocutors, dispel the idea of the self as the measure of value, value rather thrust on individuals, seizing them. Wolters helps to specify the necessary terms of relations within such an account of value, these of servanthood rather than of efficiency, the latter emblematic of the corrupted version of networked life described in Chapter One. Both Gustafson and Wolters provide supportive accounts of teleological ordering of created goods toward God, in which created goods exist *alongside* each other in dynamic interplay, this as opposed to relations of subordination. This dynamic interplay is reflective of the interplay of relations between persons, goods and events in networked life, as illustrated in a network graph visualisation.

In the second section, 'Community Criticism and Authoritative Self-disclosure,' participation in the messiness and ambiguity of networked life is described as being aided by the *authoritative* self-disclosure of God through the inner-working of the Holy Spirit, whose presence provides freedom. This participation within the moral order is teleological, man ordered-to-serve God, the emphasis on teleology a point of contrast between O'Donovan and Adams. This discussion commends an explicit, rather than implicit, theism[1], the former more conducive to maintaining the teleological ordered-to-serve relationship between Creator and creation, which is necessary in the socially-oriented pursuit of excellence—restraint enabled by authoritative community criticism—that is part of the proposed Christian conception of vocation in networked life. James Baker is particularly representative of an excellence developed through community criticism, excellence in turn becoming more 'perspectival.' While imposing significant demands on Christians and non-Christians alike, the moral seriousness involved in such a pursuit of excellence is increasingly necessary in a world involving rising geopolitical tension.

In the third section, 'Multidimensionality and Individualised Excellence,' Nussbaum serves as the key interlocutor in response to the rather individualised conception of excellence developed by Adams, a more 'coordinated' excellence proposed in place of this, which builds on Adams' emphasis on the multidimensionality of persons as the basis of value. Adams' account of excellence, which arises through admiration in Eros and leads to a pursuit, is, despite some elusiveness, advantageous in that it allows not only excellences of 'greatness' but also of 'ordinariness' to be considered, ordinariness guarding against elitism. A discussion with O'Donovan bolsters the account of excellence through emphasis on a more social—what I term 'coordinated'—form of excellence,

[1] The significance of an explicit theism in the maintenance of a well-ordered system of values and motivations, this as part of the sustaining of vocation in networked life, is spelled out in greater detail in Chapter Four.

which corrects some of the narrower and rather individualistic tendencies seen in Adams, highlighted in the conversation with Nussbaum in particular, the emphasis here on Gandhi's morally complicated behaviour. The Chapter One examples of Baker and Newell are indicative of such coordinated excellence.

The Elusive Pursuit of Excellence

Not the measure of all things—value recognised and submitted to

In *Finite and Infinite Goods*, Robert Merrihew Adams provides a framework for ethics centred on resemblance[2] of worldly, finite excellences to the Good—where God is the Supreme, Transcendent Good, the objective standard, and ultimate judge of goodness in the world[3]. Adams emphasises that the divine goodness is 'of rather fearsome immensity'[4], which allows for a very wide conception of goodness in the world, far exceeding goodness that materially benefits humans. Excellence is not what is good *for* a person, which is a matter of well-being, but is rather described in terms of its intrinsic value[5]. Excellence, also discussed in the text in terms of 'goodness' or 'the good,' is

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[2] The words resemblance and imaging are used interchangeably throughout the text.
[3] The relationship between finite goods and the Infinite Good is characterised as follows: 'being excellent in the way that a finite thing can be consists in resembling God in a way that could serve God as a reason for loving the thing' (*FI*, p. 36). Adams stresses the imperfection in finite goods and the asymmetry of resemblance to God. He specifies that an account of excellence of goods grounded in resemblance to the divine nature is possible if 'the imperfection of the resemblance is sufficiently stressed' (Ibid., p. 30). Throughout his discussion, Adams highlights that it is the *way* or *context* of a resemblance that is of particular significance: 'The excellence of other things besides God will consist, then, in the faithfulness of their imaging of God' (Ibid., p. 33), the question of faithfulness needing to be determined ultimately by God's view of things. However, there remains considerable emphasis throughout the account on human judgment, Adams noting we must look for 'a similarity or analogy between our views and God's.… I think we must assume that there is something in God's view of these matters that is analogous to the implicit rootage of our judgements of image-faithfulness in judgments of importance' (Ibid., p. 34). There is, in other words, a trust in humans' abilities to make competent assessments as to what constitutes excellence in the world.
[4] Ibid., p. 181.
[5] Excellence is described primarily in terms of admiration: '… to the extent that anything is good, in the sense of "excellent", it is good for us to love it, admire it, and want to be related to it, whether we do in fact or not' (Ibid., p. 42). We admire an excellence for what it is in *itself*, without seeing this as a means toward some more distant end.

embodied characteristically in the lives of persons[6]. The clearest summary in the text of what counts as embodiments of excellence is given in 'excellences that are most important to us... excellences of persons or of qualities or actions or works or lives or stories of persons'[7]. Such excellences are primarily to be *enjoyed*, the well-being of humans consisting in enjoyment of excellence. Enjoyment is an intentional focus on whatever is enjoyed, resisting a looking-beyond to whatever such enjoyment might provide—its benefits or consequences.

There is considerable scope for human excellence in Adams' account. His conception of excellence is varied, and according to several philosophers, pluralistic. Susan Wolf, in her article 'A World of Goods,' critically examines Adams' theory of value and applauds this openness to a wide variety of goods, writing that Adams encourages individuals to 'find some excellent things to love and go on and love them—that is, develop the kind of loving relationships appropriate to the kinds of objects they are'[8]. Wolf highlights, however, a tension in the extent to which the goodness of finite goods is grounded in their resemblance to God as the Transcendent Good, as compared to groundedness in the goods' concrete operations in the world: 'We should not love The Good *instead of* particular goods nor should we love particular goods only insofar as they are good'[9], the implication being that The Good and worldly goods are intertwined, though the ultimate grounding of value is often unclear. This tension is seen throughout the text: there are occasions where one considers the extent to which the valuing of human

[6] Adams, however, does not limit himself to an account focused solely on individual lives; beauty is a prominent example in his discussion on non-human excellence, as is truthfulness. He is careful not to give too much attention to personal relations between human beings as the only possible worldly manifestations of excellence or goodness.
[7] Ibid., p. 42. Excellences are also sometimes properties of objects or principles.
[8] Susan Wolf, 'A World of Goods,' p. 470.
[9] Ibid., p. 471.

excellence in the world is *actually separate* from reference to the objective standard; that is, to the standard of God as the Transcendent Good[10].

Wolf is particularly supportive of Adams' claim, however, that humans are not the measure of all things; 'what is good is not good *because* we find it so, much less because we make it so'[11]. This 'perspectival' character of excellence encourages humility, and it is to be commended—for Wolf it is a matter of keeping attachment to any particular goods in the 'proper perspective.' However, Wolf remains unsure as to whether Adams' valuing of intrinsic excellence within human lives depends on his *theism*[12].

There is a myriad of ways in which humans may faithfully image God, though faithfulness is less a matter of measuring up to God incontrovertibly as the objective standard, than it is a *way* of reflecting—as well as *reflecting on*[13]—God's goodness, however imperfect such reflection might be. Indeed, there is a critical stance[14] toward

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[10] The role of Adams' theism is a not inconsiderable tension in Adams' work, his theism at times appearing to be unnecessary in his valuing of created goods, though on other occasions seeming indispensable. It is therefore unsurprising that the importance (or lack thereof) of Adams' theism is central in the commentaries of Wolf, Nussbaum, Zagzebski and others. If the relationship between God and finite goods is to be summarised, then it is possible that the most accurate descriptor is that of 'distance': the experience of finite good allowing for some enjoyment of God, but God always remaining at arms-length, only ever to be glimpsed.

Yet, Adams writes that 'I believe the claim that x is excellent implies not only that it is good to value x, but also that this goodness of valuing x is grounded in the excellence of x and independent of ulterior values that may be served by the valuing' (*FI*, p. 22). This suggests an excellence that is grounded solely in its operation in the world, without reference to an objective standard. Nevertheless, the emphasis, previously noted, on trust in human capabilities is complicated somewhat, when Adams notes that in pursuing 'the good' we are not always clear on what the nature of the good *is* (Ibid., p. 22). Indeed, 'we want more than we now understand' (Ibid., p. 27).

[11] Susan Wolf, 'A World of Goods,' p. 468.

[12] Nussbaum provides an even starker view on Adams' need (or *lack* of need) of theism, this in her article 'Transcendence and Human Values'. She states, 'Sometimes I am inclined to think that the high ratio of agreement on ethical substance between Adams and me is a sign that the transcendent Good does less ethical work, and autonomous ethical judgment more work, in Adams' conception of the ethical than he generally acknowledges' ('Transcendence and Human Values,' p. 446).

[13] This point of reflecting-on is not stated explicitly, but rather implied, in Adams' later use of a portrait—as compared to a caricature—metaphor, as part of ascertainment of the faithfulness of resemblance between finite goods and the Transcendent Good.

[14] The critical stance is as follows: 'For any natural, empirically identifiable property or type of action that we or others may regard as good or bad, right or wrong, we are committed to leave it *always* open in principle to raise evaluative or normative questions by asking whether that property or action-type is *really* good or right, or to issue an evaluative or normative challenge by denying that it is *really* good or right' (*FI*, p. 78).

finite goods, which involves an acknowledgment of human limitation: individuals do not 'measure up' in relation to the divine nature. We must, instead, persistently question whether our worldly perceptions of excellence constitute an imaging of God: demonstrating restraint in practical reasoning, guarding against the sin of presumptuousness.

One of the main strengths in Adams' account is that it provides stable grounding for the valuing of persons, each person deserving—given their diverse ways of imaging God—of the intentional focus that is manifested in love[15]. Moreover, such appreciation provides some restraint in what might otherwise become a striving for comparative greatness, in which valuing of persons depends on their performances in the world: excellence here a matter of outshining others, a competition optimising for achievement in relation to public indexes of success[16]. In place of this in Adams' account is emphasis on excellence as this is manifested *within given individuals or entities*; there is a resistance to the whims of the crowd. It is also worth emphasising the inclusivity, or wide interest, that Adams takes in his account of excellence: the focus on intrinsic excellence, as opposed to comparative excellence, broadens the scope as to what may be considered of value in the world[17].

The main contribution that Wolf makes in her critical examination of Adams, however, comes in the form of a reflection that she shares on the recognition of beauty, aesthetic excellence an important facet of Adams' account of the good: 'artistic creation… provid[es] excellent examples of things (e.g., paintings) whose goodness is essentially

[15] I see Adams' basis of valuing of created goods as a critical component of vocation in networked life, individual vocations serving as a basis for valuing of persons in opposition to material advantages or position within network structures.
[16] The material benefits discussed in Chapter One would be part of such an index, these including remuneration, performance evaluation and job promotion. A valuing of persons based on their position within a network, such position providing access to information and control benefits, is also another form of material valuing.
[17] Wolf, as noted above, highlights this point in her analysis of Adams.

dependent both on the human faculties and susceptibilities that allow us to appreciate their beauty and on the human creativity and vision that they express, but which nonetheless quite naturally present themselves as objects the goodness (more specifically, the beauty) of which we recognize and submit to rather than create'[18]. The language of submission implies that particular excellences or goods are more likely to make their marks on humans, than it is for humans to mark excellences through their creative wills. Adams grounds this value in its Godlikeness, specifically in the divine nature. This language resists *techne,* in which created goods are treated as raw material for human shaping[19]. Wolf sees such conception of value and its determination as residing *outside of* individuals, as making an 'enormous difference' in the question of how to live[20].

O'Donovan, as we shall see, puts this point even more emphatically in his *Entering into Rest*, moral order—particularly as it is examined in *Finding and Seeking*—fundamentally an account of value. However, it is in *Resurrection and Moral Order* that O'Donovan makes precise reference to the basis for man's value: 'Man's status as agent is part and parcel of his created being in the world, and his acts depend for their significance on their context in the world's history'[21] this history centred on Jesus Christ whose death

[18] 'A World of Goods,' p. 469, my emphasis.
[19] James Wetzel, in his essay 'God in the Cave,' notes that 'It is remarkable how far Adams is willing to subordinate an eschatological ethic, with its dream of kingdom come, to theological aesthetics' ('God in the Cave,' 2006, p. 489). Wetzel denies that this theological aesthetics does any ethical work, and suggests there is no possible resemblance between finite goods and the Transcendent Good. In this sense, Wetzel's views are more categorical than are Nussbaum and certainly much more so than Wolf, who retains some openness to Adams' theism as a grounding for excellence in the world.
[20] Wolf is referenced often by other scholars, specifically in terms of her apparent dismissal of Adams' theism. The specific comment consistently referenced is as follows: 'Plato's Form and Adams' God are certainly of little epistemological help in discovering what is good, and the idea that what is good is good because it resembles or images God is totally baffling if we are to understand the idea of resemblance or imaging literally. In what sense can a good meal, a good basketball game, a good performance of the Brandenburg Concerti, a field of wildflowers, the Critique of Pure Reason and my next door neighbor all resemble or image the same thing? How, in any event, can a good meal be said to image God?' ('A World of Goods,' p. 472). Yet, her view seems less firmly held than her counterparts admit. Wolf reflects immediately after this point that she does not want to 'reject [Adams' theism] as a possibility' ('A World of Goods,' p. 472).
[21] Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 1996, p. 118.

and resurrection redeems world-order and man's valued place within this. In other words, it is not only that the conception of value as residing outside of individuals makes *an* enormous difference in how we live our lives; it is *the* difference—the restoration of goodness in the world, and therefore of value, centred in Christ's resurrection—in how one conceptualises one's relations with created goods, as well as acts in the world.

The discussion between Adams and Wolf reveals that, while it is important that humans trust in their perceptions of the world and in their judgments of goodness, that goodness is not a product of their own creative minds. Goodness, or excellence, is part of *God's* creation—it is to be gratefully *received*, just as Christ gives his followers the right words to defend themselves in times of persecution: 'So make up your minds not to prepare your defence in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict' (Luke 21:14-15)[22]. Articulateness in speech is to be given to individuals as a gift from God, and it is persecution that 'will give you an opportunity to testify' (Luke 21:13) [23]. This opportunity is given by God; it cannot be forced into existence through imposition of the will, predicted and prepared for long in advance.

The necessary human disposition is therefore one of openness and thanksgiving—openness to excellence, which manifests itself at unexpected moments, thanksgiving for when this occurs. Such a disposition protects against the sin of pride, a concrete manifestation seen in the view that excellences encountered in the world are what individuals have put in motion *themselves*, independent of God, who is ever faithful to mankind, working diligently in the background. This view is captured by Paul in his Letter to the Philippians: 'Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and

[22] New Revised Standard Version, p. 91.
[23] Ibid., p. 91.

supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus' (Phil 4:6-7)[24].

O'Donovan comments, this within a discussion on petition and thanksgiving, on Jesus' own word of thanks—'"I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and wise, and revealing them to the simple…. Everything is entrusted to me by my Father" (REB)'—on how 'In our own thanksgiving we are invited to take up the yoke of Jesus' thanksgiving, and to learn for what, and how, our thanks are due'[25]. Jesus' words value *attentiveness* to the moral order in which individuals encounter created goods, this attentiveness set particularly against pride in one's own creative capacities, which gives way to the *techne*—involving belief in the possibility of control or domination of created goods—that is critically examined by Adams and Wolf, as well as by O'Donovan. Wolf *introduces* this language of submission; it is the relation of finite goods with the Transcendent Good which *helps to ensure*, in Adams' account, that 'submission' remains central in human perceptions and judgments, in the face of temptations to think otherwise, thereby dropping the critical stance. In other words, Adams' theism serves as a bulwark against the temptation to view the self as the foremost measure of value, the self an imperfect, deficient standard.

Here, Al M Wolters provides a complementary worldview which, alongside O'Donovan, asserts the fundamental goodness of God's creation, guarding against a Gnosticism which sees this creation as inherently evil, calling individuals to instead 'participate in the ongoing creational work of God, to be God's helper in executing to the

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[24] Ibid., pp. 212-213.
[25] Oliver O'Donovan. *Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology Volume 3* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), pp. 80-81.

end the blueprint for his masterpiece'[26]. Individuals do not create their own value through *techne* but are rather stewards in helping to restore God's good creation[27]. Wolters, in similar fashion to O'Donovan, references Paul who warns Timothy against the depreciation of 'God's good gifts, "which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."… Against the Gnostic maligning of God's creation (or some part of it) he [Timothy] must proclaim the goodness of all creation'[28].

Wolters differentiates between the *structure* and *direction* of creation, the former which 'refers to the order of creation, to the constant creational constitution of any thing, what makes it the thing or entity that it is…. Direction, by contrast, designates the order of sin and redemption, the distortion or perversion of creation through the fall on the one hand and the redemption and restoration of creation in Christ on the other'[29]. Whereas the original structure of creation and the created goods which comprise it are good—Wolters highlighting the 'very rich and variegated' nature of God's law, by which he means '*creation*, God's design for the world and human life from the beginning'[30]—individuals, as well as the various social and cultural agencies which they comprise, may take this structure in positive or negative directions. A positive direction for creation is in Wolters' analysis characterised by *servanthood*, in which he implies a submission—an 'obeying [of] the law of the Creator'—whereas a negative direction involves not service and stewardship

[26] Al Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, p. 44. It is here worth noting the sharp distinction between Wolters' Reformational worldview which seeks redemption of the world that is part of God's good creation, and Ellul's view of the world which sees the world as fundamentally the domain of Satan, a world in which *Christians* must serve as the salt that preserves God's Kingdom. Wolters appears, despite his later emphasis on bringing the Sword of the Spirit to worldly engagement, more comfortable with *gradual*, restorative action which 'mops up' the war that Christ has already won against satanic forces. Ellul, in contrast, is ill-at-ease in the world, in that 'The fact of living in the world, which we must not evade, is a scandal for our faith. It must be and remain a scandal' (*Presence in the Modern World*, p. 7).

[27] Ibid., pp. 38, 54.

[28] Ibid., p. 49.

[29] Ibid., p. 59.

[30] Ibid., p. 15. Prior to this, Wolters defines creation as 'the correlation of the sovereign activity of the Creator and created order,' which stresses not only God's calling of creation into existence but also His constant presence and activity in creation (Ibid., p. 14).

but rather, techne, a seeking of *efficiency* which is 'the overriding concern in the world of technology… [including] the exaggerated attachment to technique in human affairs'[31]. Indeed, value is in the corrupted version of networked life and in network structure, a matter of utility, related not to intrinsic excellences within creation, but rather to what these excellences secure for individuals bereft of stable senses of value *themselves*.

Networked life, as discussed in Turkle in particular, provides little occasion for thanksgiving, as seen in O'Donovan's commentary on Jesus' own word of thanks, due to the presumed necessity of speed of action—to set time aside for thanksgiving and gratitude detracts from time spent growing one's contact base, individuals serving as 'maximising machines.' More specifically, to recognise value situated *outside* of oneself in moral order, as discussed particularly in Adams and Wolf in this section, is to relinquish a sense of control that is particularly apparent in Turkle's account of networked life, though simultaneously evident in Burt with his emphasis on constant negotiation as a means to maintain positional advantage within network structures. Thanksgiving serves as a weakness—acknowledgment of dependence on the moral order of which one is inescapably a part serving as capitulation on the terrain of our modern Battles of Fredericksburg.

It is important to acknowledge that modern culture—of which networked life, as described primarily by Turkle is a part—is not inherently corrupt. Nor should the 'powerful agencies in our culture by which our worldview is constantly being shaped' be dismissed as irredeemable[32]. Wolters, in fact, recognises the 'disastrous process of secularization,' but simultaneously maintains that this secularisation, if not corruption, 'entail[s] a resolute refusal to abandon our civilization to that process or to concede the

[31] Ibid., p. 55.
[32] Ibid., p. 7.

point that God's creative hand is absent in the culture-building of Faustian man'[33]. Wolters favours neither cultural pessimism nor cultural optimism, these stances replaced by 'Hope… grounded in the constant availability and the insistent presence of the good creation, even in those situations in which it is being terribly violated'[34]. In practice, this hope encourages a reformation of the good creation that has veered off course, the structure of a given aspect of creation sanctified through '*progressive renewal* rather than *violent overthrow*'[35].

The main implication for our present discussion on networked life and on network structure as critically examined in Chapter One is that neither should be written off. Rather, the 'latent possibilities'[36] of each are *considerable*. A valuing of persons in networked life that is reduced to immediate, material benefits, achieved via efficiency, is reflective of a negative direction taken within a given network structure. So is a conceptualisation of relations within networked life in terms of war, as well as the inverse of war (Burt's military-like calling-on of contacts), manifested in withdrawal from participation in the opportunities inherent in networked life. These directions can be reversed. Wolters proposes, much like O'Donovan in his emphasis on the stepping-on to a boat along a quayside, a maritime metaphor in which 'A ship can be diverted from its course by a storm and still be heading for its destination. It is the overall pattern that counts, the fact that the helmsman does everything possible to stay on course'[37].

This section has introduced Adams' theory of value, and in discussion with Wolf primarily and O'Donovan secondarily, emphasised its variegated nature, residing in moral order beyond the self, in comparison to value in the corrupted version of networked life

[33] Ibid., p. 45.
[34] Ibid., p. 62.
[35] Ibid., p. 91.
[36] Ibid., p. 77.
[37] Ibid., p. 6.

and network structure involving perpetual war, created goods dominated, rather than received and reflected on with thanksgiving. Wolters, with his distinction between structure and direction of creation, asserts, however, that networked life and network structure, despite their sometimes-faulty senses of value, can be redeemed—there are considerable latent possibilities.

The recognition of moral order—awakening by the blood of the cross

Oliver O'Donovan is even less accommodating of language of techne—the imposition of the will on raw material. His language is, however, less passive than that which is seen in Wolf and Adams, who emphasise submission and admiration, respectively. The beginning in Eros which Adams and Wolf describe in the recognition of excellence is, for O'Donovan, not a beginning at all, but rather 'simply the drawing of our consciousness, our coming-to to what is already happening and to how we are already placed'[38]. More to the point, 'moral experience is not constructed or achieved out of non-moral experience; it is woken up to as experience that has accompanied other experience, present from the beginning and distinct in kind'[39]. It is not just that individuals must *submit* to excellences, which might sometimes strike in the form of a beautiful sunset. Instead, moral experience is constantly *thrust* on individuals as part of their respective existences, such moral experience the demand of existence in moral order[40].

Here we must identify a crucial difference in the O'Donovan and Adams accounts of theism, which bears on the *weight* of reality, including created goods as these mark

[38] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 2.
[39] Ibid., p. 3.
[40] Wolters makes a similar claim when he notes that 'The law… *impinges upon* its creaturely subjects…. Ignoring the law of creation is impossible. The law is like a spring that can be pressed down or pushed out of sight only with great effort and that continues to make its presence felt even when repressed for a long time' (*Creation Regained*, p. 62). And more forcefully, 'God presses his claim upon us in the structure of his creation, regardless of our direction' (Ibid., p. 62). Stackhouse, Jr. similarly stresses that 'We live in a world… into which God has thrust us to do his work of cultivation and redemption, and the way he does it sometimes involves dirt and blood' (*Making the Best of It*, p. 285).

individuals, within moral order. In O'Donovan, God's world-order is explicit, this explicitness outlined most clearly in his *Resurrection and Moral Order*: 'The order of things that God has made is *there*…. The summons to live in it is addressed to all mankind, because the good news that we *may* live in it is addressed to all mankind'[41]. Thus, man has a decision to make in his thinking about morality, acknowledging the objectivity, or not, in a 'network of interrelationships forming a totality of which mankind himself is a part'[42].

This objectivity is constituted fundamentally by an ordering of creation to its Creator, God summoning his creation to faithful response in the world of created goods. In his discussion on created order, O'Donovan notes that individuals might not fully perceive the order of which they are a part, and yet there remains the opportunity to acknowledge their ultimate directedness toward God. In comparison, Adams' theism is *implied*: his theory of value emphasises God's love of human excellence as it is found in the world, but without summoning mankind to action, such action beginning in God's own summons in His faithfulness to creation.

The implied theism in Adams' theory of value is the result of scant attention given to faith in his theory of value. O'Donovan notes, in alignment with Adams in his theory of value, that 'Created good is a kind of God-relatedness, a reference to an original that lies beyond itself…. I myself belong to the world in which the good is good; I, too, am indebted to the goodness of the good; I cannot pose as an impartial judge of it'[43]—man is

[41] *RMO*, p. 17.
[42] Ibid., 1996, p. 35. The use of the term 'network' in O'Donovan implies a complexity which is seen in similar discussion on network structure in Burt. However, O'Donovan's use of the term 'network' is part of a larger totality that lies on 'theological ground' (Ibid., p, 35). O'Donovan resists the projection of the self onto a 'blank screen of an unordered world,' language here similar to that seen in the network life outlined in Turkle, yet stressing the dependence of relations within a network on God's prior ordering, God as the 'chief and highest end of man' (Ibid., p. 38). Whereas O'Donovan's ordering within networks of interrelationships is ordered to the praise of God, networks within network life as seen in Turkle and Burt are ordered to praise oneself through the winning of advantage.
[43] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1,* p. 118.

not the measure of goodness. O'Donovan too refers to the imaging of God, but sees the 'bearing of the image of God' as the marker of *faith*, 'which is not an evocation or an echo, but an answer we are given to make to God's initiative'[44]. Nevertheless, Adams would not disagree with O'Donovan's assertion that 'Love of God is affirmed in and through our other loves, structuring and ordering them'[45].

But the admiration involved in love of created good in O'Donovan follows a *disclosure*, an authoritative communication, created good *shown* to man: 'Reality is shown us, but instead of seeing it whole, entire, and in the round, we see it through this demonstration, this personality, this theory, this command'[46]. The objective reality of the good is, in O'Donovan's *Resurrection and Moral Order*, restored in redemption, which involves 'an awakening once again to the reality of God's creation as it is revealed in Christ'[47]. The authority of redemption in turn 'lies in its power to determine the present world which we have to do'[48], which summons man to step-by-step, gradual participation in the world[49]. As part of this participation, disclosures by worldly authorities may widen individuals' horizons, pointing toward God, these authoritative disclosures part of the 'sustaining work of God'[50].

The emphasis on disclosure in O'Donovan's account of created good is not seen in Adams' own discussion. This disclosure, as discussed, is dependent in O'Donovan's

[44] *Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology Volume 3*, p. 14.
[45] Ibid., p. 119.
[46] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 54.
[47] *RMO*, p. 109.
[48] Ibid., p. 109.
[49] Wolters provides a similarly positive account of the practical implications resulting from the 'buying-back' of one's original freedom in redemption, in which 'Politics should not be declared off-limits, but reformed… Business must no longer be relegated to the secular world, but must be made to conform again to God-honoring standards. Every sector of human life yields such examples' (*Creation Regained*, p. 71). Indeed, 'Redemption is not a matter of an addition of a spiritual or supernatural dimension to creaturely life that was lacking before; rather, it is a matter of bringing new life and vitality to what was there all along' (Ibid., p. 71).
[50] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 58.

account on faith in a God that has redeemed the world through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, such that 'love of the world and of the God who gives the world occupies our experience not as a settled condition, *but as a series of openings and adventures*'[51]. This series of openings and adventures is a directed life in the Holy Spirit, which puts to death the facticity in created order, and sees created order point instead toward a spiritual life in which the 'old' is left behind… those forms of moral thinking… renewed, given back to us incomparably more disciplined, more informed, more comprehensive, more inviting, than they could have been before'[52]. Put differently, there is a lack of Spirit in Adams' account; the relation between Holy Spirit and spirit absent, Holy Spirit described as a mere, machine-like 'hydraulic' pouring-out onto humans, God distant, rather than a constant presence in the world[53].

The tension between explicit and implicit theism in the works of O'Donovan and Adams, respectively, can be resolved helpfully through reference to James M Gustafson's *Can Ethics Be Christian*? Gustafson's book critically examines religious and specifically Christian dimensions within moral experience[54]. Elements of Gustafson's analysis are conducive to discussion with Adams, specifically a trust in humans' non-religious access to moral reflection and action, this exemplified most notably in the story of a non-Christian colleague who demonstrated excellence in response to moral wrongdoing while Gustafson and a colleague were in New York. Gustafson begins his discussion with emphasis on a

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[51] Ibid., p. 119. My italics added for emphasis. Conversely, if one's world-order centres on the flesh, on the bare factual realities and on the anticipations and predictions arising from this, then moral awakening requires crisis in world-time. And it is unclear in any case whether crisis is sufficient for ongoing watchfulness in action—the topic of Chapter Three—since crises pass and with this the impetus to remain awake to the claims made on individuals that transcend world-time.
[52] Ibid., p. 96.
[53] Wolters in particular stresses the constant presence of the Spirit, across all departments of life, when he notes that 'The "Spirit of holiness" seeks to permeate our creaturely lives, making a qualitative difference in the internal workings of family, business, art, government, and so on…. There is no limit to the scope of the hallowing operation of the Holy Spirit' (*Creation Regained*, pp. 90-91).
[54] James Gustafson, *Can Ethics Be Christian?*, p. 22.

‘describable network of relationships’[55], involving ‘interdependences in which individuals relied upon each other to be dependable, to fulfil their roles,’[56] which is conducive to the critical examination of networks as well as later discussion on vocation involving the fulfilment of roles of service. Gustafson makes extensive use of concepts such as intention[57], disposition and attitude, each of which is prevalent in Adams’ theory of value.

Gustafson’s account allows space for the grounding of morality in the *human experience* of created good, though with the experience of God widening this scope, ‘the reality of God’s goodness and power which is a ground for lively and enduring hope even through the immediate sufferings of human life’[58]. The mediation between human experience in the created world and glimpsing of the Transcendent Good is most evident in Gustafson’s discussion on love. Gustafson stresses the possibility of transformed intentions re-ordering directions for action: it is here that particular connection is made between the accounts of Adams and O’Donovan. The experience of God’s love is, however, in Gustafson’s account, conducive to a fundamental orientation of intentions toward God, an ordering which is teleological: ‘The experience of God as the end of creation, and the articulations of human perceptions of the God who is the *telos*, provide a sense of direction in moral life’[59]. The perceptions of excellence, which activate admiring

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[55] Ibid., p. 3.
[56] Ibid., p. 5.
[57] Gustafson notes that ‘With reference to the fundamental direction of one’s life, intention provides an illumination of the way in which one desires to go, though it does not at this range of generality indicate all the specific projects one must fulfil in order to achieve one’s purpose’ (Ibid., p. 45). Gustafson’s description of intention is less about *enjoyment* of the Good, or of created goods, as is the case in Adams, and more on purposes or ends within action. However, Gustafson’s account of intention involves an implied *being for the Good*, manifested in action.
[58] Ibid., p. 54.
[59] Ibid., p. 114.

Eros in Adams' account, give way to what could be considered a more sustained pursuit in Gustafson, more reflective of O'Donovan's emphasis on action, directed toward God[60].

Moreover, Gustafson suggests that Christian ethics, helps to 'render an account' of the experience of the reality of God—the centre-point of which is the life of Jesus—'the practical importance [of which] is to aid the community and its members in discerning what God is enabling and requiring them to be and to do'[61]. Gustafson is clear that one need not be Christian in order to be moral, his friend's life evidence of this, but that explicit reference to theism must involve *seriousness* in thought and action as part of maintaining a distinctive Christian way of life. Gustafson's account provides, I think, reason to allow some space for Adams' implicit theism, though while acknowledging that a more explicit theism demands a sustained service of God, reinforced by community over time. It is in this sense, valuing moral seriousness in action, that I favour O'Donovan's more explicit theism, as opposed to Adams' implicit theism, though without dismissing the fact that there are indeed 'anonymous Christians' who live in many ways Christian, lives[62].

The demand, as it is seen in O'Donovan, is to be consistently *awake* to the living of life, and to become even *wider* awake through encounter with such objects deemed excellent. O'Donovan sees such encounter with created goods as the basis for deliberation toward *action*, this as response to God's faithfulness toward man. The world-order of

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[60] Here Gustafson makes direct reference to eros, in that 'we are creatures of *eros*, of a love that draws us toward the objects of our deepest desires' (Ibid., p. 112). Eros, in Gustafson's account, involves both persons as well as communities, enabling persistent action in the service of God as the telos.

[61] Ibid., p. 179.

[62] In addressing a non-Christian audience, this point is bound to be controversial, even if Gustafson notes without any misgivings whatsoever the more morally admirable action of his non-Christian friend, far more admirable than what Gustafson as a committed Christian viewed as possible for himself. Whereas Christians and non-Christians alike can perceive and respond effectively to the experience of created goods, the explicit reference to God allows for a more sustained and directed pursuit, over *time*. An explicit theism, as per O'Donovan, however, demands moral seriousness in action, this which is distinctive and demanding when networked life allows individuals to act with deliberated nonchalance. Yet in a world emerging from a pandemic crisis and descending into multiple other crises (Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Hamas and with the possibility of much worse in the Indo-Pacific and Western Balkans), nothing less than moral seriousness in action is required, lest the freedoms hard-won by previous generations be lost, perhaps irreversibly.

which man is a part, 'is a happening and not merely a concept; it comes to pass by "the blood of his cross"'[63]. The blood of the cross and resurrection from the dead wake man from the death of sin, allowing for an existence in Jesus Christ, the arche, or beginning of action. The arche is 'creation's head only in so far as he stands alongside it as the creature, the first-born from the dead who leads creation on the path from death to life, the path which only it, and he with it and at its head, can walk'[64].

This walk requires man to keep his eyes wide open, not only attuned to danger, but receptive and responsive to particular goods in created order, which point in the direction of God. Encounter with excellence in created good[65] is not only, as Adams notes, opportunity for a valuing of good based on its imaging of God; it also, as O'Donovan emphasises, compels *a forward march toward the spiritual*. More specifically, individuals must bring their talents, as Wolters notes, 'under the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to the glory and service of God'[66].

That moral experience is constantly thrust on individuals, seizing them—the blood of the cross waking individuals from the death of sin—is antithetical to the withdrawal from challenging experience that is characteristic of networked life in its misdirected version, oriented on the self or networked technology as God as discussed in Chapter One.

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[63] *RMO*, pp. 32-33.
[64] Ibid., 1996, p. 33.
[65] O'Donovan does not make explicit reference to the term 'excellence' in his texts; however, his discussion on admiration of created goods parallels in substance much of Adams' use of the term 'excellence.' O'Donovan notes 'We love any thing *as* some thing…. Loving knowledge is distinct and focused, attending to the quiddity and quality of its object' (*Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 113). Admiration is 'the knowledge of what can only be known in love, and the love of what can only be loved in knowledge' (Ibid., p. 113). Such admiration is reflective of Adams' excellence. Adams concurs with O'Donovan that an object of love must be loved *as* the object that it is; that is, intrinsically. A schism is seen, however, in the role of faith, reflected particularly in O'Donovan's assertation that 'Its [love's] initial contact with the infinite is not in yearning but in faith; and its initial engagement with love is not through "the beauty of the infinite" but the beauty of the finite' (Ibid., p. 113). Adams's initial contact with the infinite is in yearning; O'Donovan in faith. The effect of this schism is that, while Adams and O'Donovan each see love's initial engagement with the 'beauty of the finite,' it is O'Donovan's initial engagement as a summons in faith to wakefulness within moral order which leads in to sustained action.
[66] Ibid., p. 106.

Turkle emphasises in Chapter One that networked technologies facilitate easy good: networked life permits an avoidance of living, in which individuals remove themselves from whatever is messy or untidy, seeking instead to control the terms of relations, as discussed in Burt, such that one always maintains some material advantage. Networked life values connectedness but evades the occasional adversity that is unavoidable within the formation of trusting relations. O'Donovan's description of moral experience as consisting of a series of openings and adventures, guided by the Holy Spirit, implies a moral seriousness involving direct confrontation with morally complicated and sometimes painful situations.

This section has, through the introduction of O'Donovan's language of the seizing or thrusting nature of moral experience—and the brief intervention of Wolters and Gustafson—emphasised a moral seriousness, rather than avoidance of living, in networked life. Such moral seriousness, while demanding, is becoming more—not less—important in a world characterised by intensifying geopolitical conflict, the effects of which cascade down to the level of the individual. It is with such a world that individuals, as O'Donovan notes, must bring themselves 'into view,' this involving McLuhan's 'total being,' this including interdependencies in the electric age. This moral seriousness is a vital component of vocation in networked life. An explicit theism, as seen in O'Donovan and contextualised by Wolters and Gustafson, is conducive to action directed toward God, involving such seriousness.

The fragmentation of excellence in created order

There is a sense in the account of Adams, and reflected in Wolf's responses, that excellences encountered in the world are primarily fragmented, glimpsed or experienced only momentarily. Imaging in Adams' account is described most specifically as a faithful

portrait; however, portraits, even when well 'balanced'[67] are rarely taken in in their full depth. One must look and look again—a new feature presenting itself upon every return. The observer is often rushed in their observations, collecting whatever glimpses are possible. Here, a lack of time—one imagines for instance The National Gallery in London with its incessant, often chattering crowds—typically prevents such focused return, hindering sustained attention. As such, there is little opportunity for an ordering of disparate excellences in viewing a single, static portrait. Such ordering is difficult unless the observer shifts role to that of active participant, not seeking mere encounter as an outsider, but rather a more sustained relationship with the goods found within created order. One must not only observe excellence, but rather strive to engage with excellence, initial *intentional focus* translating into partnership of man with God[68].

O'Donovan is dismissive of such distanced orientation toward excellences in the world, in which one 'attend[s] to the world momentarily and in fragments, now to this aspect and now to that, without pulling these moments of attention together'[69]. Here, observation *should not impede continued action*. Indeed, individuals must serve as sites of initiative in the world, resisting the fiction that they are mere 'creature[s] of impersonal forces'[70]. The *mark* that recognition of excellence sometimes makes on individuals encourages an active disposition toward such excellence. Encounter with excellence must

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[67] Adams differentiates between caricatures and portraits, where 'The caricature exaggerates one or more features of the original, whereas the faithful portrait represents features in a balanced way and in relation to those features to which they are most importantly related in the original' (*FI*, p. 33).
[68] *World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 40.
[69] Ibid., p. 10. The danger of a passive orientation in the role of onlooker is illustrated most vividly in *Finding and Seeking*, O'Donovan noting that 'We may stand on a high peak and marvel at the mountain ranges spreading for miles before us, watching in fascination as a storm lashes the sides of a distant valley while we remain in full sunlight—a fine geography lesson, and nothing amiss with it. But if we do not realize that the valley so afflicted is the one in which our own home lies, and recall that our roof has a tendency to leak, we are fools' (*Finding and Seeking*, p. 99). In other words, one cannot rest in the satisfaction or security that observation of a perceived excellence provides. Such recognition must give way to preparation-in-humility, the individual agent understanding that the excellence currently glimpsed is not of their own creation, but God's, and that what God has given, He might also take away.
[70] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 13.

encourage a further reaching out to live, 'by knowing ourselves not merely materially conditioned but spiritually: "If by the Spirit you put to death the body, you shall live"[71]. The 'dull factual realities' of created order must be set aside, these giving way to discernment of the created order within which man acts, 'visiting familiar places and seeing them with new eyes'[72].

O'Donovan highlights the directedness of the spiritual life. In line with this directedness, 'the Spirit forms and brings to expression *the appropriate pattern of free response to objective reality*'[73]. O'Donovan nowhere in his *Ethics as Theology* trilogy implies, in the directed Spiritual life, a shying-away from engagement with the world in its utter complexity and messiness. Rather, God summons man to agency in the world, in which action is always akin to stepping from a quayside onto a boat, a metaphor used throughout O'Donovan's work[74]. Within O'Donovan's *Resurrection and Moral Order*, there is a particular focus on teleology, man's chief end being to glorify God in an order-to-serve relationship. Man is, as O'Donovan stresses throughout his discussion of created order, limited in his perception of the created order of which he is a part: 'At best, of course, knowledge of the whole must be knowledge of a mystery. Because we stand within the universe, and not outside it, to view it as God views it, we can only move out towards that whole knowledge, as a limit towards which our mind strives'[75]. The ultimate service of God by His creation, mankind at the helm of creation—this service a teleological

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[71] Ibid., p. 5.
[72] Ibid., p. 19.
[73] *RMO*, p. 25.
[74] O'Donovan here notes that 'Moral reason has a vast stake in description. It describes particular things, describes their relations and purposes, describes the way the world as a whole fits together' (*Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 11). The risk tied to perception only as the basis for evaluation of excellences is that of a prolonged stay in what O'Donovan describes as 'The moment of pure observation, when our practical impulses come to rest in sheer wonder at our object, when we stand right back behind the line of sight….' (Ibid., p. 13). This standing, however, must not be more than a moment, as observation is little without action. Adams' account of excellence rests heavily, however, on such observation, with much less emphasis on excellences as revealed through continued action and critical examination in the world. Action is necessary, since the moment which Adams describes is—in O'Donovan's words, *acquired*.
[75] *RMO*, p. 49.

relationship—necessitates in O'Donovan's account a discernment of relations between kinds, a unification rather than fragmentation of knowledge[76].

In comparison, there is a risk in Adams' account of excellence of over-reliance on the human faculty of perception only, this at the expense of a more involved description of the world, which traces the relationships between the excellences of persons as well as other created goods. Adams prizes aesthetic excellence; it is the resemblance or imaging of God—the concept of a portrait, discussed earlier, aesthetic in nature—which serves as a reason for God loving goods which are excellent in some way in the world. Adams writes 'I believe the way we speak about "goodness" in contexts where we mean excellence treats it as a *property*, and as one that objects of evaluation possess (or lack) independently of whether we now think they do'[77]. A good with the property of excellence must image *God* faithfully. Yet, there is little description, in Adams' account, of the operation of a supposed excellence within the wider world; that is, in its relations with other goods.

This connection with the wider world is important, for there are relations which can either illuminate or darken the soul, this reflected particularly in Jesus' words on the Light of the Body: 'Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness' (Luke 11:34)[78]. If a person is to illuminate their soul, then they must set their eyes on good things, perceiving clearly. Such perception depends on careful world-description: are the created goods on which the eyes are set filled with lightness or darkness?[79] Jesus continues: 'Therefore

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[76] Ibid., p. 50.
[77] *FI*, p. 18. Adams later emphasises the word 'aspects' in his explanation of resemblance, in which 'The potentiality here [in resemblance] is presumably grounded in the divine nature as well as in the features that finite things could have. In this way the supreme standard of excellence is constituted by aspects of God to be imitated or imaged by finite things, and partly by an aspect of the divine nature that can be seen as part of the divine rationality' (Ibid., p. 37).
[78] New Revised Standard Version, pp. 78-79.
[79] Wolters uses the helpful image of a miner's lamp to illustrate the light of Scripture, particularly in its illumination of correct relations between individuals and things, this most clearly seen in Wolters' emphasis on stewardship as described previously. Whereas the miner is helpless without a lamp, the possession of a

consider whether the light in you is not darkness' (Luke 11:35)[80], a warning to ensure that the perceived excellences, the objects of admiration, are *in fact* excellences; that is, to investigate them further.

The distinction between the two—goodness and badness—are not always clear, and so judicious world-description is paramount. Jesus concludes with 'If your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays' (Luke 11:36)[81]. The emphasis here is on a purity in what one sets their eyes on, ensuring to the greatest extent possible that the created goods on which attention is focused are not *themselves* set within questionable relations, for instance with worldly relations and created goods directed not toward service but rather toward efficiency, as per the valuing of network structure provided by Burt in Chapter One, built on by Wolters. An involved, participatory world-description, as set out in O'Donovan, is necessary if one is to guard, if not strengthen, one's soul. The urgent demand is to ensure that the properties deemed excellences of persons, or otherwise, are set within right relations with other created goods; that is, *within relations pointing in the direction of the Good.*

Turkle warns of a self shaped in rapid response, viewing the world as a screen on which to project its problems, but without allowing sufficient space to critically examine complicated problems. It is life of a hasty, unreflective action as discussed in Chapter One, rather than the intentional focus proposed in Adams and built on by O'Donovan. Speed of action interrupts the intentional focus that is necessary in the determination of *faithfulness* of a finite good's imaging of the Transcendent Good. Moreover, speed of action obstructs

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lamp 'enable[s] them to discern the nature of what lies before them: earth and rock, ore and gangue' (*Creation Regained*, p. 38).
[80] Ibid., p. 79.
[81] Ibid., p. 79.

the tracing of teleological and generic relations within objective reality, which is necessary in ensuring that one is *for* the Good in action, while guarding against danger through the accidental setting of one's eyes on created goods whose own relations are characterised by darkness.

However, if there is a risk in networked life that is most revealed through the accounts of Adams and O'Donovan, it is one that may arise not immanently but rather over time, one failing—in the observational and presumably safe stance facilitated in projection of images of networked life, withdrawing from the call to action—to realise that the storms which others encounter might eventually reach one's own house or terrain. The summons to agency involved in intentional partnership with God, involving a more focused description of tracing of relations between the goods that one observes *and* encounters in world-order, reduces such risk. This section therefore sheds light on dangers which risk striking individuals not immediately, but rather *over time* in the hastiness of networked life.

Community Criticism and Authoritative Self-disclosure

Adams is in *Finite and Infinite Goods* hesitant to provide an account of excellence involving emphasis on social relations, this most clearly seen in his discussion with Anderson, who concerns herself with personal relations reflected in *community*. The discussion with Anderson results in Adams stressing that the excellence of a particular good must be grounded in its own nature, 'independent of ulterior values that may be served by the valuing'[82]. This effectively bars social relations in the world—the serving of

[82] *FI*, p. 22.

another good as the basis for the excellence of a good in question—from Adams' evaluation of excellences as they are found in the world[83].

Since there is perpetual incompleteness in resemblance between created goods and the Transcendent Good, Adams stresses the *importance* of the resemblance or imaging of the supposed excellence as it is found independently in the world. While Adams concedes that a variety of goods might each possess, as an example, the property of beauty—this property encouraging some reflection on the relations, or perhaps more accurately, the *similarities* between objects independently deemed beautiful—such reflection remains a matter of 'tracking some way in which experienced, mundane beautiful objects resemble each other'[84]. In other words, the relation between such objects remains abstract, grounded not in actual, social relations in the world, but rather in 'a way in which beautiful objects point beyond themselves to a transcendent ideal, and in which they resemble or image God'[85].

Adams does, in *A Theory of Virtue*, critically examine the notion of 'common projects,' in which human good is found in the participation of multiple persons in shared projects, the joint performance which is sometimes of 'intense interest'[86]. These common projects are also sometimes long-term in nature[87]. Adams' focus, however, is on the *caring*, or being *for*, shared ends within common projects, as a basis for alliance: 'People

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[83] The groundedness of excellence in the nature of a good itself, rather than in its social relations, is complicated somewhat by Adams' account of virtue in *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good*, which examines social relations in particular in his chapter on 'Common Projects'. Adams here considers virtue to be a 'holistic property of persons' (*A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good*, p. 11). However, moral virtue for Adams remains grounded primarily in the individual, as 'an excellence of the will, in the indicated broad sense' (Ibid., p. 17). Ways of being for the good include 'loving it, liking it, respecting it, wanting it, wishing for it, appreciating it, thinking highly of it, speaking in favour of it and otherwise intentionally standing for it symbolically, acting to promote it or protect it, and being disposed to do such things' (Ibid., p. 16). Being for the good is more so a matter of intention at the individual level, than it is about acting—particularly in relation to others—in Adams' account.

[84] Ibid., p. 41.

[85] Ibid., p. 41.

[86] Ibid., p. 89.

[87] Ibid., p. 89.

who are devoted to the same common project are thereby obviously in a sort of alliance'[88]. Nevertheless, Adams does not discuss the *direct*, relational element of common projects, between concrete individuals. Emphasis throughout the chapter is more so on individuals' overlapping motivational groundings within common projects, than it is on the development of relationships—and particularly of trusting relationships—between individuals *themselves*[89].

The result is that the nature of excellence remains in the realm of psychology, rather than the exemplification of excellence in social relations *in practice*, Adams specifying that 'our cognitive access to it [the concept of beauty] must probably remain dependent on our ability to classify mundane objects together as beautiful'[90]. This is an understanding of excellence that is largely *intellectual*, based on classifications or taxonomies rather than on the gradual revealing of excellence in the world. The intellectual, or psychological conception[91] of excellence in Adams is reflected in part in his related discussions on virtue, specifically in *A Theory of Virtue*, a book which is dismissive of moral-decision making and which considers morality in terms of 'faculties, states, and

[88] Ibid., p. 93. In the lead-in to the introduction of the term of alliance, Adams states that a 'lively interest in common projects for their own sakes…. is a normal part of being a good colleague, a good teammate, a good citizen, a good mentor, a good friend, a good spouse, a good parent, child, or sibling,' but the emphasis is more on shared *ends* than it is on *trust* within these relations (Ibid., p. 90). The topic of alliance is a main focus in Chapter Four.
[89] There is one notable exception to the paucity of examination of personal relations in Adams' account, this seen in a brief aside on friendship. Adams considers friendship to be a common project, in which both parties care about the relation for its own sake. Adams does not introduce the term trust, directly, but alludes to this when noting that 'An ostensible friend who does not value the relationship in this way [intrinsically] is apt to be perceived as spoiling the common project—"letting the side down," so to speak' (Ibid., p. 90). I take the 'letting the side down' as a form of a breach of trust, manifested in an assumed shared understanding in the importance of the relationship. Friendship, which Adams considers to be one of the most important of human excellences, is contrasted with relations focused on the provision of benefits. Nevertheless, Adams' account of friendship is more psychological than it is focused on the formation of trust between individuals, particularly within competitive environments, Adams dismissing competition in favour of cooperation as a 'more essential context for excellence in human living….' (Ibid., p. 93). While Adams helpfully examines the potential value of friendship-as-common-project, which when at its best is an intrinsic excellence, this common project depends in his account largely on the strength of caring, *participation* perhaps more psychological in nature, than involving persistent exertion through action *with* others.
[90] *FI*, p. 41.
[91] The most precise description of virtue in terms of psychology is found in Adams' reflection that 'When we speak of virtues we surely mean to speak of enduring psychological states that can in some contexts play an influential part in more or less reliable predictability' (*A Theory of Virtue*, p. 18).

acts of will and motivation'[92]. Adams is interested in motivations underpinning actions, virtue 'a kind of *goodness* rather than *rightness*,' the emphasis on the former 'being much more tolerant of ambivalence and diversity'[93]. Yet, while virtue provides access to the good as it is manifested in the lives of persons, a point which O'Donovan makes in a wider discussion on virtue-talk as being of service to moral communities, virtue reflects on 'the goodness the world has *already* seen and known…. Talk about virtue is always third-person talk, observers' talk about deeds that have already taken determinate form'[94]. It is for this reason that virtue does not feature prominently in this chapter, my emphasis more so on the *pursuit* of excellence as it is manifested in action, participating in the world as it currently is—in every new and evolving *today*—than in the world as it has been for others[95]. There is a need for continual moral wakefulness.

O'Donovan, in his discussion on moral wakefulness, highlights the importance of awareness of *the truth of a world*, and it is here that a clear distinction becomes apparent between conceptions of excellence in O'Donovan and Adams[96]. The objective order which O'Donovan specifies is one which places Christ at its centre. The resurrection of Jesus affirms 'The work of the Creator who made Adam, who brought into being an order of things in which humanity has a place'[97]. Without the resurrection, then God's creation—whether aesthetic excellence reflected in beauty, or other excellences found in the world—would be lost causes. However, 'The sign that God has stood by his created order implies

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[92] Ibid., p. 3.
[93] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[94] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 90.
[95] This is not to diminish the potential value in reflecting on the lives of 'moral exemplars' as part of deliberation in preparation for action. I do believe, however, that there is a risk of indulgence in virtue-talk, removing attention from the complexity of deliberation in the present, which is never straightforward. Many supposed moral exemplars, such as Gandhi—as will be examined in relation to Nussbaum's critique—are more complicated persons than can be captured in educational discussion on moral virtue set apart from the dynamism of first-person moral experience. There is a point at which third-person moral virtue talk risks usurping full, first-person participation in moral life.
[96] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 10.
[97] *RMO*, p. 14.

that this order, with mankind in its proper place within it, is to be totally restored at the last'[98].

The freedom which mankind enjoys is given through the death of Christ, God's ultimate sacrifice, which redeems man, saving him from his sin and the undoing of creation. O'Donovan highlights that the power or freedom which the Spirit gives is that of Christ[99], from which it follows that 'we must characterize Christian freedom as participation in Christ's authority within the created order, the authority by virtue of which, according to Saint Paul, we are no longer slaves but sons'[100]. Participation in new creation is, as O'Donovan notes, to participate in Christ as the irreplaceable authority, but O'Donovan also underlines the necessity of participation in created order with its variety of worldly authorities, political or otherwise[101]. More generally, authority is, in O'Donovan's work *an event in which a reality is communicated to practical reason by a social communication*, the resurrection serving as the central event reconciling man to God, restoring man to his position at the head of creation. Without disclosure, there is but a power-struggle for control between fallen mankind, individuals reduced to the status of slaves. Yet, God's social communication re-asserts a world-order which is to be perceived more clearly through continual participation within community[102].

This authority *exists* in the world: 'the divine has not remained apart in hiddenness, but has shaped a world to ground our being, a covenanted sphere of communication

[98] Ibid., p. 15.
[99] Ibid., p. 24.
[100] Ibid., p. 24.
[101] Wolters similarly notes that 'The authorities that exist have been established by God,' and evokes Peter whose italised words in "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every *authority instituted* among men" (1 Pet. 2:13) are the Greek word for *ktsis*, the regular biblical word for "creation" or "creature". It seems plain, therefore, that civil authority belongs to the created order; the state is founded in an ordinance of God' (*Creation Regained*, pp. 25-26).
[102] O'Donovan notes that 'Authority penetrates social existence and gives it social cohesion' (*Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 54).

between himself and ourselves, evoking agency and practical reason among us'[103]. This is contrasted in O'Donovan's account with a divine that in its erroneously imagined sheer *absoluteness and hiddenness* exercises not authority, but rather control. God's authoritative self-disclosure in the resurrection of Jesus serves as the basis for further authoritative communications in the created order[104], resisting the temptation to seek domination of others, this replaced instead by a thinking-through of the proper relations between man and various goods within the created world.

This participation in Christ's authority within the created order demands a participation in *community*, which involves a 'processing of experience by community criticism and tradition'[105]. In his *Entering into Rest*, O'Donovan notes a confidence in 'finding in community the authoritative form of our own further acts,' our works a part of God's whole work, such that 'As we see fine works of witness performed by others, we are content to know that our own works are no more than a small part of what God has in hand'[106]. This emphasis on community involves 'a virtue of restraint and deference, a discipline of allowing space for others to take practical initiatives'[107].

The world which O'Donovan describes is uncertain, interpretations of the world always *contested*, active participation involving world-description in discussion with others. In Adams, beauty as an aesthetic excellence allows one to glimpse the Transcendent God—beauty is the object of appreciation, but does not necessarily lead in to further initiative in the world. However, in contrast with Adams, O'Donovan lays particular emphasis on human agency, this as a response to God's summons to mankind. It

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[103] Ibid., p. 57.
[104] O'Donovan notes at the outset of his chapter on authority in *Resurrection and Moral Order* that 'whatever remained to be said about other authorities, we ought to say it afterwards in the light of what had first been said about the authority of Christ' (*RMO*, p. 121).
[105] *Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology Volume 3*, p. 12.
[106] Ibid., p. 19.
[107] Ibid., p. 21.

is a call to an active participation in the world, moving through 'a determined world to an undetermined possibility in exercise of its freedom to realize possibility in the world by action'[108].

This discussion on social relations, community criticism in particular, has a crucial bearing on world-description, and in turn, on the characterisation of *excellence* in the world. O'Donovan, much like Adams, emphasises the perspectival character of excellence, though without using this exact terminology: 'To attend to one's own presence in the world means becoming aware of one's point of view, identifying oneself as occupying an observation-point and recognizing that one's point of observation is *only one such possible point*'[109]. Here, the emphasis is on attention to *oneself* but while acting within the world; however, it is action which, as noted previously, must bring oneself into 'view together' with the world[110].

This 'view together' with the world is evocative of McLuhan in the Chapter One discussion, who is dismissive of the private point of view of Western, literate man and who favours instead the participation of total being in the electric age, one which embraces interdependence with others. In practice, this participatory interdependence in networked life manifests itself positively in the subjecting of the self to *multiple perspectives* within a community, which as O'Donovan notes provides a more nuanced understanding of the excellence of a created good.

O'Donovan, without stating as much explicitly, reveals the perils of perspective based solely or primarily on personal experience. One must recognise the perspectival

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[108] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 19.
[109] Ibid., p. 13. Italics are mine for emphasis.
[110] Ibid., p. 12. The 'perspectival' approach in O'Donovan's account is serious, cognisant of the vital importance of moral awareness informed by multiple competing perspectives as a basis for guarding one's soul—but it does not seek to control, because morality is fundamentally the business of the 'we' rather than the 'I'.

character of excellence, subjecting one's own perspective to criticism inherent in active participation in world-order; that is, within communities, which includes trusted primary contacts. Such participation defeats the abstract; that is, a view of excellence which exists in isolation from other, sometimes competing perspectives on what constitutes excellence. This exposure to other perspectives, part of participation in the world, 'is not merely a philosophical requirement, but is in O'Donovan seen as a matter of practical urgency'[111]. This responsibility, or practical urgency, is the difference between a successful or unsuccessful living of life; 'the whole world (from the point of view of own destiny) depends on it'[112].

And here we see the divergence between Adams and O'Donovan, in this discussion on excellence, in its most acute form. Whereas in Adams, it is the individual perception of excellence—reflected in the moment of admiration—which serves as the entryway to further reflection on the extent of resemblance or imaging—in O'Donovan, perception of excellence is a basis for *responsibility*, characterised by *service* in a world-order centred on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, man ordered toward God in the supreme teleological relation, this ordering however part of a wider series of networked relations directed ultimately toward the service of God. Much rests on the accuracy or inaccuracy of perception in admiring Eros; it is of paramount importance that individuals focus their attention on created goods which *are* in fact excellent. Community criticism, one's self

[111] Ibid., p. 12.
[112] Ibid., p. 33. Set in opposition to O'Donovan's emphasis on exposure to other perspectives via a participation in the world is Wolters' description of Gnosticism which sees 'salvation to be a flight away from this evil world in withdrawal and detachment in order to achieve a kind of mystical union with the supreme God' (*Creation Regained*, p. 49). More positively, Wolters reflects that 'part of God's rule over creation takes place through mediation of human responsibility… in society by discerning, interpreting, and applying creational norms for the conduct of their lives' (Ibid., p 98). This responsibility requires that individuals as well as institutions exist *alongside* each other. Necessary, in Wolters' view, is critical exposure to other perspectives, this as part of 'participation in the restoration of creation and the coming of the kingdom of God' (Ibid., p. 100).

engaged in discussion with other selves as their own sites of initiative, this as part of mutual service, helps to ensure this[113].

The discussion on community criticism, as opposed to a more individualistic critical stance, welcomes the 'contradictory variation' outlined in Burt's discussion on structurally autonomous networks. The contradictory variation involved in more materially advantageous network structures is psychologically taxing, but is conducive to access to *opportunities as well as advance warning of impending dangers*. Here, O'Donovan's discussion on authority overlaps with that of Burt on primary contacts, for these primary contacts' trustworthiness is borne partly out of the authority which they command within their respective worlds.

This is not to dismiss Adams' own critical stance, and the possibility of idolatry as one engages with authoritative individuals; Burt himself stresses the thinking that is necessary in the selection of these primary contacts, which takes time. O'Donovan's emphasis on restraint as well as humility within community, manifested most particularly in service toward others, should—as we have seen in the work of Landis et al.—allow for

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[113] It is important at this point in the discussion on community criticism—so as to avoid any sense of naiveté, not to mention the giving-in to fads—to highlight my agreement with Stackhouse, Jr. on the overuse and idealisation of the term 'community' and that community is sometimes the source of evil (*Making the Best of It*, p. 228). It is possible for mediocre if not nefarious individuals to hide under the guise of community, avoiding responsibility as well as their own callings. In balancing between the individual and community, 'The correct answer, of course, is [to examine] *both*' (Ibid., p. 228). In this discussion on 'perspectival' excellence, it is my aim to propose an engagement with trusted individuals, or primary contacts, across multiple social worlds (each primary contact within a social world potentially bridging the individual into a new community, who collectively form a 'community' for the individual structuring and directing a particular vocation. This community enables a 'perspectival excellence' on a shared created good that may be a key part of a vocation). We see an example of community criticism sharpening understanding of a particular excellence in the example of Eric Newell and the formation of his Declaration of Opportunity. The shared good is in this case the pan-Canadian purpose developed through the National Oil Sands Task Force. This structurally autonomous network, reflective of the description of community above, involved considerable criticism in the pursuit of excellence, Newell engaging with particular leaders across Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments, as well as with trade unions, Aboriginal groups, industry associations and others as he formed a pan-Canadian purpose to renew the Canadian energy industry. This took place over a six-year period, with careful selection of each primary contacts across the various social worlds (this reflected in the composition of the task force).

a more detailed and precise processing of the social relations of a given primary contact, which is necessary in the effective selection of trustworthy primary contact.

James Baker is particularly representative of this 'perspectival' conception of excellence, enriched by community criticism. The Chapter One discussion highlights the extent to which he engaged with enemies within the White House—his nemesis Ed Meese as well as Reagan 'true believers' who never accepted Baker as a Reaganite given his prior work on competing political campaigns, his early-life affiliation with the Democrats, and on his long-standing friendship with George Bush—this lack of acceptance *despite* Baker's immense contributions to the success of the Reagan presidency. As Whipple notes in *The Gatekeepers*, Baker walked around with a constant target on his back—and yet he continuously *engaged* with those on the opposite side of the aisle, whether across political parties or within his own camp. Furthermore, he was the 'straightshooter' who spoke constantly with trusted journalists, providing them with useful information while garnering valuable perspective himself.

This exposure to community criticism within the Washington, D.C. political community *broke* Baker—the psychological difficulty of the 'contradictory variation' of discussion with individuals across a structurally autonomous network is not to be understated. But community criticism gave Baker a 'perspectival' excellence that infused his political vocation with a positive, sustaining direction, Baker able to maintain his pursuit despite some elusiveness in material results and the perennial ambiguity in much of political life. In other words, community criticism is conducive to a sounder network *structure* reflective of the variegated goodness of creation and the intensely contested order of political life. It is conducive to a more reliable—and less self-centred—*excellence* which helps to build God's Kingdom on earth.

This section has proposed community criticism of perceived excellences, which helps individual agents move beyond initial perceptions of excellence in the created world, as well as the limitations of the critical stance at the individual level only. Exposure to such criticism occurs through participation in Christ's authority, God not absolute and hidden, but rather present through his self-disclosure in Christ, this authoritative self-disclosure leading in to further authoritative communications in the created order. That world-description is not static but rather contested, constantly in motion, means that engagement between individuals as responsible sites of initiative is not only of philosophical interest, but rather a matter of practical urgency: in moving from perception to action, it may be the difference between the winning or losing of one's soul.

Advantages of elusiveness

The character of the pursuit of excellence, grounded in Godlikeness, is, in Adams' account, rather elusive[114]. Adams in fact makes a single reference to elusiveness in the text, in a discussion on Hesed, stating 'This [relation between human value and the transcendent Good] doubly frustrates any attempt to provide a quantitative measure of our likeness or nearness to the divine goodness; it is elusively imaged in us, rather than present in any precise degree'[115]. It is curious indeed that this reference does not take place until midway through the text, the description of elusiveness serving as a crescendo to a very brief section on Hesed, or 'lovingkindness' in the Hebrew Bible[116]. The sheer

[114] In a review of another of Adams' books, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good*, but which references in large portions Adams' *Finite and Infinite Goods*, Jean Porter interestingly comments that Adams' 'excellence remains a somewhat elusive category' (Porter, p. 115).
[115] *FI*, p. 173.
[116] Ibid., p. 173. This is among the most striking passages in the text and it comes at the end of a brief reflection on Hesed, the English translation of a word in the Hebrew Bible which is often translated as 'lovingkindness.' In most references to imaging or resemblance of God throughout the text, the relationship between humans and God is described as distant or fragmentary. However, it is in this discussion on a love within God which consists of unconditional commitment to humans, far exceeding obligation, that imaging is described in terms of its sheer ambiguity.

incomprehensibility and utter mystery of God lends a certain mystery to the possible permutations of worldly excellence.

Excellence is an object of *pursuit* in Adams' account, although the nature of such pursuit is uncertain, largely emphasising moments, rather than duration of a pursuit. Pursuit begins in moments of *admiration*, which itself presupposes some possibility of *recognition* of goodness by humans. Adams is confident in humans' abilities to recognise goodness sufficiently. We see that recognition initiates *some* form of pursuit. He emphasises that 'the most relevant sort of good, like the most relevant sort of admiration and desire, is to be found in Eros, Eros 'awakened by some objects'—beauty the example used in this case[117]. Eros is a valuing of a personal relationship *for its own sake*. It seems to be an important component of pursuit of the good—'Eros pursues excellence'[118], although Adams notes that Eros does not always pursue what is most excellent, as it is *particularity* that Eros is most drawn to. There is a mysteriousness to Eros. It cannot easily be defined; certainly, it cannot be predicted prior to a pursuit of excellence.

There are contradictions within Adams' account of God as the Transcendent Good which reflect this elusiveness. On one hand, Adams writes 'If God is the Good itself, then the Good is not an abstract object but a concrete (though not a physical) individual'[119]. On the other hand, 'The good is not exactly "at home" in human life.... we are not likely to be wholly comfortable with the Good itself; it has an alien aspect'[120]. At a surface level, such differences—concrete and like a person, and yet alien, far above nature—appear directly at odds with each other[121]. Adams notes that 'As with the judgments of resemblance and

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[117] Ibid., p. 20.
[118] Ibid., p. 19.
[119] Ibid., p. 42.
[120] Ibid., p. 51.
[121] David Decosimo, in an entertaining critique of Adams' definition of conceptions of intrinsic value and resemblance to God, writes 'To rescue the Godlikeness thesis would require sacrificing a whole brilliant world of excellence and beauty, reducing the complexity, diversity, and particularity of countless finite goods to generic properties that might be thought to resemble God—tenderness, purity, sweetness, filling-

importance that are involved in it… there is no formula for getting it right'[122]. The decisive formulation of the pursuit of excellence in the text is as follows: 'The character of our pursuit of excellence, including the character of the things we think are excellent, determines what sort of thing would *satisfy* the pursuit'[123]. The character of the pursuit is Godlikeness, where 'sensible particulars' faithfully image the divine nature, and in so doing point in the *direction* of God as the Transcendent Good. Adams, however, 'can only plead the extreme imperfection of human insight into the divine nature'[124].

Adams' divine nature has a personality, and Adams provides some indication that the divine nature includes empathetic concern for creation[125], but there is—as far as the description in the text is concerned—little apparent reciprocity within interpersonal relations. Specifically, Adams' notion of the Spirit is not interpersonal, but rather a 'hydraulic' pouring-out onto persons as we have seen—the image given is unidirectional, if not mechanical[126]. In comparison, O'Donovan notes that while 'The divine purpose may be incommunicable… the secret understanding of the future which the Father and the Spirit hold between them comes to our assistance'[127].

The earlier discussion examined the deficiencies in a perception of created good involving observation, but without further searching action. O'Donovan sheds light on the

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ness, and so on' (Decomiso, 2012, p. 436)'. Decosimo provides too little space for imagination in what might constitute resemblance between an excellence as it is found in the world and the divine nature; he neglects in particular Adams' brief but important discussion on images *faithfully* imaging God; though not necessarily literally.

[122] Ibid., p. 33.

[123] Ibid., p. 22.

[124] Ibid., p. 49.

[125] Ibid., pp. 42, 47. God is a 'lover'; God prefers the joy of his creation and dislikes their suffering.

[126] Ibid., p. 42.

[127] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 2. The relation between Creator and creation, in communication between Spirit and spirit, is most clearly set out in O'Donovan's *Self, World, and Time*: 'The spirits are not equal; one is Creator, the other creature. Yet they are spirits together in a graced analogy; God's witness comes to one whom God has made to answer and reflect him. The spirit hearing is like the Spirit heard, though at the same time wholly unlike. That likeness is what being led by Spirit consists in, living a life that is given by Spirit and corresponds to Spirit's life' (*Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 5).

illusory nature of an observational engagement with created good, which offers 'a terrain in place of a strategy'[128], the risk of static observation discussed in the earlier examination of Adams' portrait metaphor. The pursuit of excellence outlined in Adams, the character of which is Godlikeness, must in O'Donovan's analysis, ask the question 'Why?': What is the pursuit of excellence *for*?

The success of a strategy—strategy a necessary component of any fruitful, enduring pursuit—depends on the prior posing and answering of the question 'Why?' The answer to this 'Why?'—a question which O'Donovan asks—is the promise of the Kingdom. With this answer, 'It becomes thinkable that "Find, and you shall seek!" need not deflate "Seek, and you shall find!" The perpetual return to seeking becomes a preliminary mapping of the way to the promise of an ultimate finding'[129]. The question 'Why?' mitigates the risk that elusiveness in the pursuit of excellence falls prey to belief that the pursuit is ineffectual; that is, without purpose. Too often, individuals devise strategies for action without reflecting on what the action is for, and so become 'masters of activity,' much like Turkle's 'maximising machines,' efficient and always on the move, yet without purpose. These individuals are likely to give up when encountering challenging circumstances. Indeed, they are unlikely to pursue excellence given the often-elusive nature of much of excellence. God's promise of the coming Kingdom provides this 'Why?' amid ongoing finding and seeking. The guidance of the Spirit in the created world helps to sustain action in all sectors of life, allowing individuals to approximate Kingdom values on Earth, as Stackhouse, Jr notes.

For O'Donovan, 'The Spirit is "warranty" of the promise, the promise 'over and beyond every intermediate finding and seeking'[130]. In a similar vein, Wolters raises, in

[128] Ibid., p. 3.
[129] Ibid., p. 4.
[130] Ibid., p. 4.

reference to James Fleming, the need for man to discover what God's plan or order is, and then conform to this order[131]. Wolters uses the language of 'guidance' or 'calling' to express 'that there is a will of God that we are called to know and that God promises to reveal to us'[132]. There is a lack of assurance in such a pursuit, and yet, Wolters notes in congruence with O'Donovan that 'it [God's will] can be known, and that I must seek it and act on it'[133].

The Holy Spirit, providing warranty of the promise, overcomes the moral decay resulting from life in the flesh, a pursuit of excellence focused on worldly achievement. The response to the question 'Why?' overarching the pursuit of excellence, encourages a pursuit that is in fact somewhat alien, as Adams describes. O'Donovan notes that 'Life in the Spirit is the life of a post-resurrection mankind, taken into the friendship of God, admitted to divine direction and guidance'[134]. Through the dialogue between Adams and O'Donovan, it becomes apparent that the pursuit of excellence is rather 'elusive' in the world, in that its nature is not grounded in worldly excellence, but rather in a certain

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131 *Creation Regained*, p. 30.
132 Ibid., p. 35.
133 Ibid., p. 35.
134 Ibid., 2014, p. 9.

spiritedness, which cannot easily be described[135]. This 'spirit of excellence' is reflected, I believe, in much of our common, experienced pursuit of excellence[136].

O'Donovan notes that 'life in the Spirit is nothing less than a condition of moral *maturity*, in which the elements of moral experience—norms, good, demands of other people—are integrated into a competent discernment of God's will, founded in an understanding of the order and destiny of the world'[137]. The elusiveness involved in the pursuit of excellence is antithetical to the immanence of networked life in its corrupted

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[135] I will here further clarify what I mean by the terms Spirit and spirit throughout the dissertation, given the considerable ambiguity as well as varied uses of these terms across theologians and non-theologians alike. To start, I do not consider a Life in the Spirit (using the language of Paul) or a spirited living (a living that does not involve explicit theistic reference) to be a living that involves mystical union with God, set aside from life in the world. Nor do Spirit or spirit refer to a mysterious force or energy which uplifts human action. The Life in the Spirit and spirited excellence to which I refer throughout the dissertation do not transcend reality. Wolters notes, for instance, that spiritual gifts belong to nature and yet owe their 'existence to some extraordinary power or influence outside nature…. They are like faith: only someone regenerated by Spirit can have faith (true faith, that is, faith in Jesus Christ), but this regeneration does not make faith foreign to the Creator's original purpose' (*Creation Regained*, p. 105). Moreover, despite radical differences in the extent to which Wolters and Ellul believe that the *world* can be restored, Ellul, like Wolters, emphasises the activity of the spirit in the world, recognising that 'in the entire course of God's action in history he uses a material medium, a human means, to act by his Spirit' (*Presence in the Modern World*, p. 9).

I am also in agreement with Wolters who highlights the power of the 'Spirit of holiness' which permeates all aspects of life and which can make a *qualitative* difference within them. O'Donovan appears to make such a distinction when he refers to the correspondence between Spirit and spirit alongside Creator and creation, the lower-case 'spirit' wholly different than Spirit, and yet infused and guided by it. This qualitative difference stems from prior faith in Jesus Christ, and I believe that much common experience suggests that faith in Jesus Christ *does* raise the quality of action, without this raising being a transcendence above reality. Perhaps more controversially, I believe that much common experience suggests that non-theological faith results in a more *spirited* action; that is, action undertaken with *belief*, which enables *qualitative improvement* reflected in the *effectiveness* of action.

[136] A non-theological example, though reflective of the discussion on the pursuit of excellence between Adams and O'Donovan, is seen in the legendary American collegiate football coach Nick Saban. Saban writes in *How Good Do You Want to Be?* 'When I talk about *being great* or *being a champion*, it is necessary to point out that I'm not talking about winning a college football title or becoming the world's richest person. I am more concerned with you being the best you can be, no matter what your chosen profession or goals in life' (*How Good Do You Want to Be? A Champion's Tips on How to Lead and Succeed* (New York, Ballantine Books, 2005), p. 23). What pursuit of excellence requires, in Saban's discussion, is a *road map*: 'You need a road map to give you direction…. a road map often takes the form of a mission statement' (Ibid., p. 25). The mission statement, in line with O'Donovan's proposal, answers the question 'Why?' enabling the creation of an effective strategy for action in the world.

[137] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 8. There is considerable overlap, as we have seen, between O'Donovan and Wolters in their emphasis on Life in the Spirit, Wolters stressing the need for discernment of God's will within an understanding of God's order, and with reference to the laws of nature, the providential will of God, the influence of authorities, perspective of colleagues, constant reference to Scripture and the guidance of the Spirit (*Creation Regained*, pp. 19-39).

state. Networked life seeks short-term, conspicuous material advantage. It seeks, as discussed in Chapter One, to secure outcomes from the *outset* of action.

Put differently, networked life is a life, in its misdirected state, focused on the flesh, action as well as relations tightly controlled in order to maintain advantages within network structures; there is little interest in elusiveness or mystery, *excellence* in turn defined in terms of material outcomes, such as performance evaluations, remuneration and promotions, as seen in Burt. Hence, networked life does not favour in its misdirected state asking the question 'Why?'—this critical examination likely to disrupt the securing of short-term material advantages—emphasis more so on the terrain than on the strategy, as outlined in O'Donovan. This focus on immediacy, however, prevents a pursuit of excellence involving intentional focus on promise, to which finding and seeking—sometimes without immediate results—are oriented.

This section suggests that the elusiveness in Adams' pursuit of excellence is, contrary to the resistance of scholars such as Decosimo, an advantage, particularly in its openness to ongoing pursuit, as opposed to a more short-term emphasis on achievement of material markers of success. Whereas Adams highlights the alien nature of the Holy, O'Donovan lays more emphasis on Life in the Spirit, which is a directed life oriented toward God's promise. Wolters further specifies the elements involved in a spiritual understanding and wisdom conducive to discernment of God's will, in accordance with His promise. This directedness in the Spirit responds to the question 'Why?'—a question that must be asked if a pursuit is to be genuinely strategic, within which persistent spiritual finding and seeking, in relation to created goods, is possible.

Multidimensionality and Individualised Excellence

Adams' account of value is *egalitarian,* resisting any possibility of what he names 'elitist' conceptions of excellence. Adams does not resist the use of the term 'elitism' so much so that any discussion on *excellence* is simply written off; not all discussion on excellence is reflective of one seeing oneself above others. Adams instead resists *comparative* excellence, particularly as this relates to variation in individual human capacities in the pursuit of excellence. He considers any such comparisons to be elitist, in a decisively negative sense. While acknowledging that humans differ in their capabilities, 'this [differentiation in capabilities] raises... the threat of inegalitarian consequences of our conception of the value of persons'[138]. It is clear that Adams wishes to defend against comparative excellence *at all costs*; he is in principle open to, but suspicious of, any excellence that might be construed as greatness.

The solution lies in an emphasis on intrinsic valuing, where each person is sacred in themselves, given their multidimensional characters. Every person is sacred, which is 'an objective moral fact,' with primary value of persons 'intrinsic to persons as individuals.... It is wonderful that you exist, because *you* are wonderful, in the way that parents rightly perceive their infant children as wonderful'[139]. It is not so much rationality that is the basis of excellence (for individuals will differ in their capacity for rational thinking), but rather the fact that individuals are dynamic, each comprised of a 'complex system of capacities'[140]. This is also seen when Adams writes, as part of a wider account of the sacredness of persons, that 'Human persons are sacred not as static objects but as having lives that are dynamic processes[141].

[138] *FI*, p. 117.
[139] Ibid., p. 120.
[140] Ibid., p. 114.
[141] Ibid., p. 124.

It is not consideration of a larger global sum of excellence that falls within Adams' conception of the good, but rather that individuals may pursue excellence as a result of who they are as *human beings*. More specifically, it is that humans may *enjoy* life in a simple manner that is a basis for their equal value: 'A deep breath of clean air seems, in the relevant respect, like a good meal as opposed to junk food, like a good joke as opposed to a bad one, and like good art as opposed to bad.... it is particularly important for me to ascribe excellence to these unglamorous natural functions'[142]. Such natural functions are the fundamental human basis for excellence, and therefore of value in Adams' account.

Many of the forms of excellence set out by Adams are individualistic in nature. The most concise series of examples of excellence in the text is presented at the outset of Chapter Three on 'Well-Being and Excellence,' where Adams restates the theory he is developing, which gives 'primary place to *excellence*—the type of goodness exemplified by the beauty of a sunset, a painting, or a mathematical proof, or by the greatness of a novel, the nobility of an unselfish deed, or the quality of an athletic or a philosophical performance'[143]. Each of these, save possibly the unselfish deed, is an excellence that can be undertaken in what can be reasonably considered a solitary fashion. The beauty of sunlight is presented as an excellence on several occasions throughout the text, this as a manifestation of the glory of God, where 'one enjoys the sunlight on the leaves and is the more excited because one catches there (as one believes) a glimpse of the beauty of the Creator at work'[144].

While the excellence in each of these examples will have been informed to varying degrees by prior discussion with others, or training with a coach in the case of athletic endeavour, the exemplification of the excellence *in practice* occurs largely at the

[142] Ibid., p. 116.
[143] Ibid., p. 83.
[144] Ibid., p. 193.

individual level. These examples are all individualistic in nature; there is little need for individuals to coordinate with others in the pursuit of excellence. Adams resists a theory of value too focused on personal relations, and he shares an anecdote to this effect, in which he has learned through experience that 'no serious intellectual enterprise can be pursued with honesty and integrity without caring about the attainment of truth for its own sake'[145]. His point is that principles, rather than personal relations with human beings, are to be treated seriously as excellences.

There are exceptions to these examples, most prominently in Adams' discussion on Eros in the chapter of the same name. His discussion on the saints is of particular interest, in that 'Saints, and especially the most interesting and attractive among them, are typically rough-edged and controversial characters, liable to quite reasonable and often serious criticism from various directions'[146]. Yet, the supernaturalness of the saints is described at the level of the individual, for example in their 'Kissing lepers and praying for people who are torturing you'[147]. There is little discussion on saints' relations with others, however, and we see this reinforced when Francis of Assisi and Gandhi are said to envisage and do, and show others how to do, things that no one else had thought of doing'[148]. Nussbaum will serve as our main interlocutor on the example of Gandhi in particular, who critiques Adams' account for its *narrowness* in the description of the lives of these saints—Gandhi in particular. This demonstrates an inattentiveness on Adams' part to the wider set of relations of which these saints were a part, which shaped, or at least informed, their individual pursuits of excellence.

[145] Ibid., p. 181.
[146] Ibid., p. 52.
[147] Ibid., p. 53.
[148] Ibid., p. 56.

Adams' theory of value emphasises excellence *as* enjoyed, and it is indeed within one's own life that enjoyment is primarily to be found in his account. While conceding that 'some of your relations [are in your life],' Adams notes that 'it is harder to say which ones' though he values the actual rather than imagined relation throughout his text[149]. There is a sense throughout the text, given the concrete examples provided, that excellence *in the world* is found at the individual level; the borderline cases involving social interaction raise questions as to where the boundary between self and other is located. This boundary gives little space for wider social consideration, excellence held tightly around the individual. The risk with such an individualised conception of excellence is that excellence arising through relations with others—involving uncertainty and challenge—does not feature prominently enough in an account.

Nussbaum, in her article 'Transcendence and Value,' provides a compelling response to Adams' account of transcendence reflected in the life of Gandhi, and more specifically, in individualised excellence. Nussbaum takes aim in particular at Adams' claim 'that the transcendent *divine* nature of the Christian God (or of God in other traditions) is a helpful moral paradigm as we think of what is appropriate for a mortal human life'[150]. Nussbaum takes it that excellences in the world are excellences in themselves; their value does not need to be grounded in the divine nature. She picks out in particular Adams' example of Gandhi as a moral exemplar, one who at a surface level appears to be an exemplar of the transcendent human excellence that Adams has in mind. That Gandhi, in Nussbaum's view, imagined himself as being related to the divine nature was the source of some excellence, to be sure, but on balance, this relation was the source of a considerable amount of moral badness. She notes, 'Only by seeing himself as having a

[149] Ibid., p. 94.
[150] 'Transcendence and Human Values,' p. 448.

special destiny apart from others could Gandhi… sustain the life of service that made his genuine achievements possible'[151].

Gandhi believed that he transcended humanity and saw himself as separate from others, Nussbaum highlighting his misogyny, sexual exploitation of young women, devaluation of Muslims and collaboration with Axis powers. Nussbaum contrasts Gandhi with Nehru, who was in comparison more self-effacing and who in his vulnerability achieves, in Nussbaum's view, transcendence. She pinpoints that Nehru 'sat in jail for long periods… endured isolation and risk… [and] spent his life forging a nation'[152]. Nehru's transcendence consists in his 'concerted effort to remain morally awake on behalf of others, and to put one's own mental and physical comfort at risk for their sake'[153]. For Nussbaum, any attempt to transcend humanity through explicit relation to the divine nature will open oneself to moral badness—behaviour which sees oneself as not beholden to the expected norms and behaviours within a society, if not maltreating fellow creatures[154].

To start, however, Adams does not *necessarily* consider Gandhi to be excellent on the whole, but rather 'ethically interesting,' a point which Nussbaum misses in her response to Adams[155]. What Adams ignores, and which is a deficiency in his account of excellence—well targeted by Nussbaum—is the importance of *social* relations as part of determinations of excellence in an individual's pursuit of excellence. Adams steers away

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[151] Ibid., p. 450.
[152] Ibid., p. 451.
[153] Ibid., p. 451.
[154] Nussbaum's conception of transcendence in relation to Nehru is consistent with Wolters' account of transcendence, which emphasises *restoration* of aspects of creation whose structure is essentially good but whose directions may have veered from the right paths. This 'directional battle does not take place on a spiritual plane above creaturely reality but rather occurs *in* and *for* the concrete reality of the early creation' (*Creation Regained*, p. 88). Put differently, Gandhi is representative of an individual who in his direct connection with the divine sees himself as *above* creaturely reality and so not beholden to human norms; Nehru, with his more humble conception of transcendence, places himself within creaturely reality.
[155] Nussbaum considers Adams' example of Gandhi as being one of 'transcendent human excellence' but Adams does not use this language himself. Still, Adams comments that 'it is no accident that expansions of the repertoire of human virtue have so often been associated with aspiration and devotion directed toward a superhuman, transcendent God' (*FI*, p. 56). The presentation by Adams and his constant meticulousness suggest that he considers Gandhi to be excellent in more than a narrow sense.

from the complex social relations of which each person is a part throughout his account of excellence. He is more interested in narrow excellences which require a very considerable amount of time and energy, often at the expense of attention given to other people. Given Adams' focus on moral horror in his fourth chapter, which includes lengthy discussion on physical violation in particular, it is clear that Adams would condemn Gandhi's misogyny, as well as his sleeping with young women in order to test his chastity. Hence, it is odd that a more nuanced assessment of Gandhi is not included in his account, and that the account suggests an overall positive evaluation of Gandhi based on his expansion of the human repertoire.

Nussbaum's critique of Adams in relation to the Gandhi example is interesting for another reason. It reveals a disconnect between Adams' earlier discussion on the multidimensionality of human excellence—excellence based fundamentally on individuals' 'emotional, social and creative capacities'[156]—and the various concrete examples of excellence provided throughout the text. Multidimensionality, as Adams defines this, consists of a complex series of capacities *within* a person, but these must be exercised in *social contexts*. Yet, as we have seen, the nature of the pursuit of excellence, as demonstrated in the examples above, is represented by individualistic activities: swimming, philosophy and mathematics as three prominent examples. Nussbaum's brief historical commentary of Gandhi drives this point home, Adams failing to consider social relations in Gandhi's life which are clearly morally bad. This is a contradiction within Adams' account of excellence, multidimensionality a central—and compelling feature[157]—in his account of human excellence and its resemblance to God, though strangely absent in discussion of its exemplification *in practice*.

[156] *FI*, p. 117.
[157] This receiving the praise of Nussbaum, Wolf and Zagzebski.

This deficiency in Adams, helpfully implied in Nussbaum's critique, leads us to the following proposal: alongside individual excellence, there is a social excellence that merits consideration as a higher form of excellence within Adams' account of the pursuit of the good. This social pursuit does not dampen the spiritual gifts of the individual, but rather *raises* them in a manner that enriches a person's multidimensionality. We may call this a *coordinated excellence*[158], this calling-on activating what Adams terms each person's complex package of emotional, social and creative capacities.

Rather than consider the individual athletic performance, we might think of the centre-back in British football, or the quarterback in American football, who coordinate their teams, ensuring a certain rhythm and cohesiveness amongst all participants. In academia, it is the theology or philosophy professor leading a small-group seminar that requires the coordination of perspectives, such that a common perspective is developed throughout the discussion. In music, it is the concert involving not only the musicians, but also the production manager ensuring smooth transitions between every set[159]. In each of these examples, we are more likely to witness the multidimensionality of any given participant, their complex of individual excellences activated and raised in response to the individuals around them, and with whom there is mutual trust.

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[158] A similar account of what I have in mind is provided in what Otto von Gierke terms 'real group personality,' this described in Patrick Nash's article 'Classical Pluralism.' Nash describes real group personality as follows: 'This essentially means that when people organise, the emergent group acquires a will and personality of its own, over and above the distinct wills and personalities of its individual members. These group-persons are not fictions, symbols, aggregates, collective names or apparatuses of the state. Rather, they are living organisms arising naturally from man's consciousness and associative urge' (Patrick Nash, *British Islam and English Law: A Classical Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), p. 89).

[159] Adams, does, in *A Theory of Virtue*, propose examples of 'the goodness of a philosophical discussion, a musical performance, or a game of basketball…. those joint performances consist of actions and experiences of individual persons, related to each other…. [and in which] the joint performance can also have an intrinsic value as a whole which is not a sum of the values *for* individual persons and is an appropriate object of intense interest' (*A Theory of Virtue*, p. 89). These examples in Adams' discussion on common projects, however, emphasise shared ends, involving loose alliance, rather than the collective or group spirit emanating from such *coordinated* performances.

In Chapter One, such coordinated excellence is seen specifically in the example of Eric Newell who reaches out to, and holds together, a series of network actors who are otherwise disconnected or even opposed to each other (Federal and Provincial Governments; large and junior oil companies; trade associations and trade unions). The network structure developed by Newell is consistent with Burt's structurally autonomous network that branches into multiple 'social worlds,' with high levels of internal coordination on the side of Newell, and few linkages between the primary trusted contacts in each of the social worlds. Newell's coordinating efforts are spurred by the cancellation of the OSLO project, this the event which *calls* him into action. He is over this six-year period not only exposed to the criticism that is part and parcel of such coordination of otherwise-disconnected actors, but keeps them together, this keeping-together founded on a prior faith in the goodness of his vocation, Newell emphasising the collective *opportunity* involved in this project. Newell is therefore demonstrative of the latent possibilities of Burt's favoured network *structure,* particularly when the *direction* is shaped by the perspectives of multiple actors. The Newell example is consistent with Baker in that the coordinator is a steward or servant in relation to others within a network.

The coordinated excellence is congruent with important elements of Adams' theory of value. To start, most admire such excellences, and are likely to be gripped, or marked, by the excellence in the manner described by Wolf in her commentary of Adams' account of excellence. In cases of such admiration, we are likely to admire the roles of any given individual participant, perceiving the individual excellences activated and often times enhanced, than in cases where a pursuit is purely individualistic. We are also, in coordinated excellence, likely to admire failures just as we are successes, a point that is not

unimportant in Adams' account[160]. That failure does not spell disaster for a person in a coordinated excellence should help to mitigate, even if somewhat, the risk of the pursuit of excellence stuttering in the face of temporary roadblocks.

Most importantly, however, it is in coordinated excellence that relations described in terms of *Eros*—that is, of loving admiration—are frequently found, wonderfully so, and in a manner that helps to guard against the objectification seen in the Gandhi example. While Gandhi inspired many to action, that he was seen as a figure on his own, set apart from others—a beacon of individualised excellence related primarily to the divine nature—might have allowed the more nefarious elements of his pursuit to take hold and prosper. This conception of a coordination excellence merits regard in the wider discussion on networked life, for it is reflective of the structure of *any* person's network. Indeed, the network graph visualisations in Chapter One are demonstrative of such coordination, *every* person inextricably linked to a series of individuals, organisations, and events, and so mutually implicated in each other's actions. A coordinated excellence is less prone to such badness, each person within a group needing to take seriously their personal relations with their most proximate group members. Coordination is here a proper recognition of the nature of networked relations not only in the light of SNA, but more fundamentally in the light of Scripture, involving stewardship, rather than approached solely or primarily in terms of self-interest, or maximal material benefit.

This section challenges Adams' framing of the pursuit of excellence as occurring in an individualised manner, emphasising activities which might require some social preparation, but which are performed individually. The boundaries of the pursuit remain tightly drawn around the individual, such that there is little apparent space for a more

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[160] Adams concludes a section on God's love for finite things with the point that 'Success is not always more admirable than failure, and a life is not necessarily worse for including some failure' (*FI*, p. 134).

coordinated form of excellence. Nussbaum's critique of Adams highlights the dangers of a narrow conception of individualised excellence, focused primarily on close rather than fragmentary imaging of the divine nature, bereft of reference to a dynamic set of valued social relations mediating a pursuit of excellence directed toward God.

Reaching within valued relations; against a reaching beyond

Eros is the focal point of discussion on social relations within Adams' theory of value. For Adams, 'the paradigm of... [Eros] is a passionate desiring or prizing of a personal relationship for its own sake'[161]. Adams dismisses the 'economic model' of good, which views good in terms of benefits[162]. It is the *relationship*, rather than an individual's own good, or that of the other, that is of value in Eros. One might derive benefits from a relationship in Eros, but it is not the benefits that are of primary interest in Eros. It is possible that, at points, there will be few apparent benefits within a relationship, and so a temptation to believe that the relationship is 'detrimental'[163].

There is, in other words, a particularity within Eros, which values individuals not because they serve as intermediaries toward other desired goods, or because they possess certain valued qualities, such as beauty, intelligence or honesty. The first moment of Eros in admiration presupposes some valuing of particular qualities which might give way to loving a person or object with more comprehension, but there is little distinction made between admiration, and a more fulsome love, in Adams' account. There is little in the discussion on *Eros*, in particular, that describes the role of love in the pursuit of excellence, beyond the initial *awakening* in a moment of admiration.

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[161] *FI*, p. 137. Although, we have seen that the personal relations are not necessarily with human beings but may be with qualities, such as truth.
[162] We may describe the economic model as that presented in the work of Burt, with its emphasis on benefit-rich networks.
[163] Ibid., p. 145.

There is a danger in Eros, in which the initial moment of awakening leads individuals to rest complacently—without additional critical examination—in whichever aspects of created good are initially perceived. O'Donovan considers this danger to be 'embed[ding] ourselves in the knowledge we have attained, making it, rather than its object, the focus of our love. And that is the love of the world that we are warned of'[164]. O'Donovan is concerned in part with a facticity, a love of the flesh, which does not point toward a love of God. But the created world in which man finds himself is the realm in which man must act, and so the danger of facticity cannot be neglected[165].

The sin which accompanies the failure to love the world properly is that of folly, individuals proceeding down a given path too quickly in their purported love for a given good, the critical stance effectively abandoned. The sin of folly is an existential danger, one which risks destroying human agency through a limited understanding of the world in which action takes place. This is not to imply that human agency depends on a complete grasp of the created good to which one is related; O'Donovan specifies that 'All our knowledge and love is incomplete; there is no total purchase on any reality in the world, only a partial coming to grips with it, which may, however, promise further discovery and encounter'[166].

It is rather that the awakening that occurs within Eros must *itself* be questioned—Adams' critical stance maintained—in the movement from perception of created good, to

[164] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 81.
[165] It is the context, rather than purported excellence as it initially seems—even if the object is at first resplendent—which is to be examined through continual, focused encounter. This emphasis on context is reflective of the earlier discussion of a perspectival conception of excellence informed by community criticism. This emphasis on context is contrasted with desire, O'Donovan noting 'The object of desire is, by definition, superficial—not in the sense that its emotional effect is trivial, for it may be very great, but that it is the appearance of the object, not its origin, identity, meaning, or relation to the present conditions, that excites desire. More intense desire clouds our perceptions of its origin, identity, and meaning, since the resplendence of the object throws the context into shadow' (*Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology Volume 3*, p. 27).
[166] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 81.

initial pursuit, and beyond. O'Donovan's restraint is particularly necessary in the development of trusting relations with persons. He observes that 'Our knowledge and love of people often takes this course [the gradual appreciation of the excellence of goods]: those whom we most enjoy on first acquaintance disappoint us, and those whom we view with initial distrust turn out to be admirable members of their communities, whom we can learn to appreciate'[167].

O'Donovan proposes a continued investigation focused on relations between persons and created goods: what do they conceive as their purposes? Whom do they serve? With which persons and goods are they most closely related? A critical stance in relation to such questions—as well as to their responses—is a marker of moral maturity, a directedness by the Spirit reflective of responsibility as well as of intelligence. More specifically, community criticism is particularly robust in providing the more rounded answers that help preserve an individual's agency, responses to such questions multifaceted, rather than based on one's own limited perceptions only. Whereas the prizing of the relationship is an auspicious aspect of Adams' account of Eros, O'Donovan provides helpful reminder that admiration should not go unquestioned, perception instead accompanied by further investigation of relations between persons and other created goods.

It is in Adams' discussion on grace, however, that more clues are given as to human relations valuing the multidimensionality of persons. Adams emphasises that 'love

[167] Ibid., p. 80. The 'deliberated nonchalance' introduced in Chapter One, and further examined in Chapter Three in relation to Turkle, may sway unsuspecting or naïve individuals who take the appearances of networked life at face value. Such appearances might be highly convincing given the prior deliberation of nefarious network actors. A critical stance, at the level of the individual, reinforced by community criticism, as examined earlier in this chapter, however, reduces such possible errors. This criticism may be decisive in the structuring—through the selection of trusted primary contacts as per Burt—and in the maintenance of a positive direction—through the evasion of individuals who may seek to interrupt a given pursuit of excellence—as part of vocation in networked life.

requires a certain focus, a certain kind of attention to the beloved'[168]. There is a prizing of the beloved which is likely to be spurred by 'the rich complexity of excellences that constitute the value of a person as such'[169]. For Adams, however, the *value* of an individual or thing cannot be the main focus within love; while value might provide *reason* for love, reasons risk generalisation beyond the individual[170]. Here again, O'Donovan provides caution, this while engaging directly with Adams in his chapter on 'The Good of Man' in *Finding and Seeking*. O'Donovan's main criticism of Adams' conception of Eros—which holds equally for his discussion on grace—is that 'When things are good [in Adams' account], they are so not by communication from above, but by imitation from below'[171]. O'Donovan highlights that in Adams, the excellent in the world is concerned with excellence manifested in resemblance to The Good; that is, communication is essentially unidirectional between created good and The Good. In other words, 'What is missing is a notion of *self-communication* on the part of the excellent-good, which is one reason why the relation between God and not-God in Adams's account never achieves the clear contours of creation'[172].

An impediment to grace within Adams' account is that God as the Good risks becoming *disinterested* in the good: 'Either we think that we have no interest in the good we admire, or we think that the good has no interest in being admired'[173], this the result of a certain distance between created good and The Good, structured in Adams' emphasis on imaging, in which the value of created good is derived partly from the reasons which resemblance from the bottom-up provide in God's loving of created good. O'Donovan

[168] *FI,* p. 169.
[169] Ibid., p. 165.
[170] Adams sees the provision of reasons in this case as a step toward teleology, in the sense of particulars serving as means to desired abstract instances. Instead, Adams seeks to preserve a distance in the communication between finite goods and the Infinite.
[171] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 71.
[172] Ibid., p. 71.
[173] Ibid., p. 71.

concludes this discussion with Adams with the assertion that 'The original good enables and sustains the dependent good, forming it, requiring it, and accompanying its humble walk. The original good offers itself to participation…. It is the *subsisting reality* of our good, whether we know it or not'[174].

In the case of the lone parent, God as the subsisting reality is one of the few goods that the individual has, for the lone parent's situation is likely to be one of material scarcity, with few goods in her possession. Thus, the original good offers itself to participation, joins the lone parent on her humble walk, forming, requiring and accompanying this individual as O'Donovan notes. The subsisting reality is here characterised by goodness, and offers the lone parent opportunities for participation via unexpected chance encounters, which in some cases pull her into new social worlds. The Holy Spirit guides the lone parent through ambiguous circumstances, providing protection that the parent cannot achieve on her own.

O'Donovan's subsisting reality, God as Jesus Christ, reduces the risk of persons *overreaching* in their loving of particular goods. There is the possibility of Eros leading to an overleveraging of loving capacities, should a person in their love of created goods be continually expected to reach in the direction of God, in the pursuit of excellence. This overreaching and overleveraging results in a love that presses, rather than a love that waits on God's self-communication in love. This overreaching in Eros, and the subsequent pursuit, risks consuming created good, the elusiveness in loving and patient encounter with created goods in a pursuit of excellence reduced to an impatient focus on benefit-maximisation, salt in such cases losing its flavour[175].

[174] Ibid., p. 72.
[175] Ellul, in his *Presence in the Modern World*, contrasts saltiness with materialism when he notes that 'This fact of being the salt of the earth is the primary way by which Christians are involved in the world's preservation, much more than by any material activity' (*Presence in the Modern World*, p. 3). Here, Christians must preserve the new covenant made in Jesus Christ, living with a Christian freedom by grace

We may return at this point to the earlier discussion on the pursuit of excellence, which, as we have seen, reaches in a certain *direction*. When Adams first raises the idea of a direction, a sense of distance is given: 'goodness is the property that is uniquely found in that direction, or that reaches the farthest in that direction'[176]. This sense of distance is, however, misleading, if not dangerous. The particularity of love, which values the beloved intrinsically, reaches *within* relations themselves; not beyond them. Created good, as well as God, are *mutually involved* in such reaching. It is not distance, but rather a closeness, a restrained yet welcoming *coming together*, which excellence pursues. While there is a need for pursuit of *few* valued relations, well-selected, in response to admiration in Eros, an *openness* in pursuit—grounded in the self-communication of God—precedes and accompanies such pursuit. This coming-together manifests itself in deepening trust within relations, though with restraint in submission to God's self-communication ensuring that an overreaching in action, as well as in presumed understanding, does not see facticity overcome mystery.

In relating this emphasis on multidimensionality within particular relationships to the Chapter One discussion on networked life, then the main question to ask is the question 'How much is enough? as seen in the section on 'Networks as Opportunity: A Basis for Vocation.' In the formation of network structure conducive to opportunity, the selection of trustworthy primary contacts into otherwise disconnected social worlds is paramount. Whereas there is a propensity in networked life, as we have seen, for individuals to serve as 'maximising machines,' the discussion on Adams and O'Donovan recommends a more

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'through which they *are able* to struggle against the world's spiritual realities' (Ibid., pp. 2-3). Ellul here contrasts explicitly between preserving action strengthened by the Holy Spirit and spirits of the world which seek to dominate others, the latter reflective of the spirit of malevolent actors in networked life seeking dominance within their network structures (Ibid., p. 3).

[176] *FI*, p. 22.

focused and limited reaching out, one that occurs alongside the self-communication of God, this emphasised particularly in O'Donovan.

The Chapter One discussion highlights the dangers in individuals *extending themselves* toward the wrong individuals in the gradual structuring of vocations, whose initial perceived trustworthiness does not bear out in practice. Here, the discussion between Adams and O'Donovan underlines the risk of persons *overreaching* in their love of particular, worldly relations and goods, this pressing-forward in pursuit mitigated by a waiting-on of God's self-communication. The valuing of material advantage seen in networked life presses forward *constantly* in order to secure new opportunities, whereas a restraint in relation to God's offering of opportunities consists of a more considered and patient action. A sense of limitation in response to the question 'How much is enough?' allows space for the self-communication of God, emphasised particularly in O'Donovan's loving encounter with created good, as outlined in this section[177].

It is the concept of Hesed, in particular, which most clearly illustrates the particularity of love outlined above. Hesed allows for an alliance between persons which reverses the ever-pressing benefit-rich approach to networked life. Networked life, as we have seen, limits time horizons, emphasis on the immediate response or connection. The speed of action expecting immediate response and result is reflected in Ellul's assertion that 'Human beings have set off at astronomically high speeds toward nowhere'[178]. Hesed is, in comparison, a commitment which holds individuals together when material calculations might otherwise pull them apart—it is a basis for patience in action.

[177] A less rather than more mentality, allowing space for the self-communication of God, may not at first glance appeal to non-Christians, particularly digital natives who are often confronted with an onslaught of information via networked technologies, such as Tik-Tok and X. However, it has been my experience training early-career, 'Gen Z' individuals that they appreciate an approach to the formation of networks that emphasises the cultivation of few, high-quality relations involving trust, as opposed to a proliferation of relations with mere 'weak ties.'
[178] *Presence in the Modern World*, p. 45.

Adams highlights the 'firmness and open-endedness of Hesed's commitment [which] require[s] a readiness for "mercy," forgiveness in some contexts, and making allowance for weaknesses'[179] and reiterates its noncomparative, though not necessarily uncritical, nature. The valuing of personal relations *in themselves* in its strongest form is Hesed. Such a valuing, and commitment to, relationships in networked life is a means through which the temptation to pursue material benefits can be averted. The open-ended commitment to valued relationships characteristic of Hesed is vital, if we are to assume that the rewarding opportunities in networked life are likely to lead individuals to neglect individuals within networks who are less obviously 'relevant' in the provision of short-term material benefits.

One can imagine in Hesed a person, such as Fiona Hill who, raised in a deprived town in North East England, benefits from opportunities related to structural holes within her networks early in life. Yet, she does not think of relations as a way *out* of her town; Hesed maintains an enduring commitment to her birthplace far past the point at which the excellence of the town might seem to merit such commitment[180]. Hesed is also exemplified in Hill's warm references to the particular individuals and organisations, such as the Durham Miners' Association, which structure and guide her vocation—and with which she now engages in later life—following the impeachment testimony providing her with public notoriety. Adams' examination of Hesed is brief, but it rejects conceptualisation of persons or created goods as objects to be disposed of at will, once their perceived utility is exhausted. Hesed is necessary in sustaining an enduring pursuit of excellence whenever

[179] *FI*, p. 172.
[180] Adams makes a subtle point in *A Theory of Virtue* related to enduring commitment based on enjoyment of excellence, contrasting this with overvaluing of commodities, which in relation to human good 'are generally only means or raw materials' (*A Theory of Virtue*, p. 87). Hesed, as one of the highest forms of enjoyment of excellence, is a particular kind of *opportunity* that outweighs the materialistic, commodities-based approach to valuing within the pursuit of excellence.

enjoyment runs low, or when some obstacle is faced which might lead one to question why it is that they are engaged in a given pursuit.

This section has highlighted the crucial role of God's self-communication within loving relations, this self-communication encouraging a certain restraint in pursuits of excellence in the created world, guarding against the sin of folly. A loving pursuit of excellence that is bottom-up risks overreaching, seeking to negate elusiveness in ongoing encounter with created goods, rather than trusting in further self-communication which deepens understanding, waiting on God's guidance through the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

In networked life, the pursuit of excellence risks being stunted, focused on the securing of short-term advantage, which sees individual agents maintain control or dominance within their respective network structures. Excellence in the misdirected version of networked life is achieved through the winning of *wars*, in which individuals seek to outperform their peers, self-interest more significant than valued social relations. The avoidance of living is a cutting-off from valued personal relations which impose commitments upon individuals, but which also offer the opportunity for ongoing loving encounter with created goods.

The pursuit of excellence, as has been argued in this chapter, is characterised by a Spirit which sustains—as warranty of God's promise—the given pursuit. The transcendence involved in this pursuit does not involve separation from the created world in which individuals are called to act; it is more akin to a qualitative improvement in action, as Wolters notes. Networked life, as we have seen, in its short-term securing of material advantage, is focused on the terrain of action, but often lacks strategy enabling a more purposeful, enduring action in relation to created goods offered to love. This more

strategic action involves pursuit of excellence in relation to particular worldly relations and created goods offered to love. It addresses problems related to networked life introduced in Chapter One, these including narrow horizons in relation to the self, the world, and the time.

Adams, in his theory of value, grounds value in the resemblance of excellences of finite goods to God, resemblance providing God with reasons to love finite goods. He argues that the self is not the ultimate measure of value. The dialogue with Wolf, and the subsequent addition of O'Donovan, further suggests that created goods make their marks on individuals, value not located in individuals' creative wills—this labelled *techne*—but rather in the value found in moral order, vindicated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is considerable overlap between the analyses of O'Donovan and Wolters, the latter who makes a distinction between the *structure* of creation, which is good, and its *direction*, which is sometimes fallen but can be redeemed through a focus on service. The accounts of value advanced in Adams and O'Donovan enable a self which serves others, as opposed to seeking its own material benefits, the self no longer neglecting its enduring foundation of love amid the competition of networked life.

The pursuit of excellence, beginning in faith and undertaken through loving participation in God's created order, is most efficacious as a social rather than primarily individualistic pursuit, as it is set out in Adams. The fundamental relation between creation and Creator, is *teleological*, which O'Donovan highlights, and Gustafson examines in his discussion on Christian moral experience. The pursuit of excellence initiated through encounter with particular created goods, oriented ultimately toward God in intention as well as in action, helps to ensure that the goods which one loves are themselves situated within relations characterised by lightness rather than darkness, Wolters here providing the metaphor of a miner's lamp in an otherwise pitch black coal mine. This demands attention

to the world, widening horizons, in which one recognises the vast interconnections between individuals, goods and events in the world, this evoking the illustration of a network graph in Social Network Analysis.

We are more likely to see individualistic pursuits of excellence, in networked life—individuals withdrawing into themselves, relying on their own limited capacities—than we are more socially-oriented pursuits of excellence incorporating community criticism, such criticism conducive to a 'perspectival' excellence. One such risk is seen in Nussbaum's critique of Adams' account of Gandhi, whose own valuing is focused narrowly on the divine nature, but without a valuing of the wider series of relations around him. Nussbaum and Wolters concur in their rejection of a spiritual transcendence whereby individuals *escape* from reality in mystical union with God, transcendence occurring instead within reality, in *interdependence* with others. The pursuit of excellence, as I conceive it, is one that involves a sense of restraint, as well as humility and sense of personal lowliness (this as opposed to direct contact with the divine), as seen in the accounts of James Baker, Eric Newell, Paul, Fiona Hill and the case of a lone parent.

The elusiveness of a given pursuit of excellence is, however, likely to lead those exemplifying the hastiness of networked life to give up when faced with inevitable obstacles, networked life valuing easy rather than harder good, to incorporate language used by Adams in later discussion on vocation. In non-theological experience—though again referring to Adams' language in relation to Eros in particular—we may refer to excellence in the world as being *mysterious*: a person knows excellence when they see it, but defining excellence is difficult. A valuing of elusiveness of excellence, as set out in this chapter, widens horizons in relation to time, action continuing along a given path even if short-term material results are not evident.

The critical decisions specified by Burt in the Chapter One discussion on network structure emphasised, as we have seen, determinations of *trustworthiness*. Burt further specifies that trustworthiness is not necessarily revealed in the immediate term, but rather over time. It is here that O'Donovan's emphasis on the necessity of repeated, loving encounter within the realm of human relations, is of paramount importance. Here, community criticism comes to the rescue, the individuals with whom one is closely coordinated as part of a structurally autonomous network, providing alternative perspectives on what one believes, at first glance, to be of excellence, excellence here becoming much more 'perspectival' as is discussed in the work of Adams. Thus, community criticism serves as a bulwark against the possible reversion into a valuing of network life in which goodness is reflective of a life in the flesh, focused on immediacy (and again, sustaining human agency in sometimes-elusive pursuits of excellence).

The value of community criticism—while recognising that evil is sometimes part of communities—is illustrated in this chapter through Newell's coordination of individuals across sectors over a six-year period in the formation of a pan-Canadian purpose underpinning the eventual Declaration of Opportunity, and in the work of James Baker who rarely withdrew, but rather directly engaged, with the diverse players across the Washington, D.C. political community, as well as across political factions in the White House. This engagement was psychologically painful, yet it enriched his political vocation through a more 'perspectival' political excellence. A deep, lasting commitment to a particular community is characterised in the case of Fiona Hill by Hesed, her County Durham community structuring and directing every step of her education vocation.

What, then, is the impetus for the formation of network structures conducive to opportunity in the pursuit of excellence, pursuit of excellence a component of vocation as a way through networked life? The networks that Burt deems 'strategic' are, as he notes,

rarely authored, but rather formed in the pursuit of 'something else,' a point raised in the Chapter One discussion. This 'something else' is *God's promise* as seen in the earlier discussion on O'Donovan. It is God's promise that enables a pursuit of excellence that is strategic, rather than short-termist, focused on the existing terrain. As noted in this chapter, moral experience is thrust on individuals, seizing them: individuals are called to action. While demanding for Christians and non-Christians, moral seriousness is increasingly necessary in a world of heightened geopolitical tension, the self to be brought 'into view' with the world, as O'Donovan reflects. God's promise, which is good for his creation, demands a firm and continuous positive direction characterised by service, this conducive to stewardship of created goods and worldly relations[181].

The pursuit of excellence within the Life in the Spirit, as part of the proposed Christian conception of vocation, involves fulsome and directed participation in the world as it is, these relations providing loving criticism as opposed to permitting comfortable admiration. The *rewards* in such a pursuit of excellence guided by the Spirit, oriented toward God's promise, are experienced in *private*, through the private deliberation and discernment of vocation, as we will next discuss in Chapter Three.

[181] The necessity of faithful action over time, in self-offering toward God and maintained in part through small-scale alliances, is the topic of Chapter Four.

Chapter Three: Vocational Discernment—Examining 'The Path,' Danger in Action and the Call to Watchfulness

The discussion in previous chapters has sought to identify and correct elements of networked life which diminish, if not *corrupt*, human agency, individuals frequently overwhelmed by the speed and volume of communication around them, as well as succumbing to sins of presumptuousness and folly in their supposed pursuits of excellence. In the wars of networked life and in the securing of material advantage within network structures, individuals are engaged in perpetual competition, the possibility of deliberation interrupted, action confined to the short-term. Moreover, individuals risk attempting to assert themselves on created goods and worldly relations, making their claims on the world in attempts to control or dominate—a mindset described by O'Donovan in terms of *techne*.

The Chapter Two discussion, however, between Adams and O'Donovan, complemented by reference to the works of Gustafson and Wolters, demonstrates that we need to situate the created goods that we are offered to love within a moral order vindicated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; we cannot seek to make claims on the world, but rather must allow created goods offered by God to make their claims on *us*. I have commended the elusiveness of pursuits of excellence, but suggested a more social, and coordinated conception of excellence, which preserves Adams' proposed 'perspectival' character of excellence while guarding against the risks of a more individualistic excellence as seen in the example of Gandhi. Such coordinated excellence is exemplified, for instance, by James Baker and Eric Newell, each introduced in Chapter One.

I argue in this chapter that vocational discernment that is evangelical involves watchfulness in a particular way, the individual agent *awake* to the dangers in the paths

walked in networked life, but ultimately pointing *beyond* to the time that is nearing, always ready for the unexpected hour. The pointing is toward God's promise. A prior continuous deliberation, involving the formation of focused series of purposes, supports constant discernment in the structuring and directing of a vocation. Without deliberation, discernment is confined to internecine warfare with the demons involved in networked life, unable to look toward God's promise.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. In the first section, I examine the weaknesses of an agency in which individuals are constantly at war with themselves and with each other, hindering deliberation as well as the development of trusting relations. Both McLuhan and Ellul provide context to Turkle's highlighting of the troubling direction of networked life, Ellul suggesting that the lack of hope in networked life stems from a prior lack of love, which obviates hope and hinders freedom. The result of a lack of love is withdrawal from the world, rather than full participation, in spite of the material advantages which participation offers.

The second section examines O'Donovan's account of deliberation, with its emphasis on continuous preparation, prudence guarding against the dangers of imaginative anticipations of long-term outcomes of envisioned action. This restrained account of deliberation is preferable to the account developed in Adams, who rightly resists consequentialist interpretations, but sees deliberation as involving *selection* of certain projects or commissions that might be characterised in terms of choice, as compared to O'Donovan, who sees preparation as being for the *opportune moment*. In *Finding and Seeking*, O'Donovan examines deliberation and its eventual end in discernment. Deliberation is the 'endurance that forms purpose'[1]—a *search* for possible action, where

[1] Oliver O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 179.

‘thought has stripped away the ideal contents of the mind and narrowed its focus to a course of action fit for the next moment’[2]. Jesus’ words at Gethsemane are particularly reflective of the conception of deliberation that I hope to advance in this section.

The third section examines discernment as a transformative detail following on an efficacious deliberation. Discernment is a step ‘into the uncharted’[3], involving attention to the *time*: the ‘o’clock’ as O’Donovan suggests. In linking deliberation and discernment, O’Donovan writes ‘Let us say that deliberation must conclude in an act of *discerning the time*’[4]. I examine the notion of discernment, in relation to O’Donovan’s metaphor of a path and his wider account of moral order in *Resurrection and Moral Order*. To discern effectively, as it relates to one’s vocation, one must prepare *constantly*—ever watchful, given the danger of taking the wrong path in action. The significance of watchfulness that is described in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke should be clear if our Christian ethics is centred on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this involving ‘belief that certain ethical and moral judgments belong to the gospel itself’[5].

In the fourth section, I extend O’Donovan’s example of paths, suggesting that the metaphor can be pursued further, stressing the dangers that individuals face in discerning whether paths exist, and whether the paths on which they set off are the paths for *them*. We encounter danger when acting through the prism of world-time only—the speed and volume of modern networks bound to overwhelm individuals. It is with this redeemed order in mind, and through reflection on Scripture (Psalm 119 in particular), that we can

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[2] Ibid., p. 191.
[3] Ibid., p. 215.
[4] Ibid., p. 215.
[5] *RMO*, p. 12. I take this to be the case in the account of watchfulness throughout Scripture. I cannot think of non-theological examples that speak as strongly on the need to remain *awake* to moral responsibilities, and in the case of Christian ethics, to the unexpected hour.

differentiate between discernment of paths in the world (which will be characterised by interconnectedness and disorder), and discernment of *God's way*.

In the fifth section, I then move to Adams, whose account of vocation as projects deserving of love, in *Finite and Infinite Goods*, usefully complements the discussion on paths and ways. This section considers dangers inherent in networked life, such as the intentions of nefarious worldly authorities focused on control or domination through the securing of material advantage, captured in part through Adams' discussion on the idolatry of authority.

Deliberation in Networked Life and Network Structure

In this section, Burt's theory of control is critically examined: the socially-induced agency that is possible for certain individuals well-situated within network structures is a means to a freedom narrowly conceived. Both Burt and Turkle provide incremental accounts of action within network life, which—whether emphasising active negotiation in the role of tertius, or withdrawal from the adventure of life in order to maintain a secure self-conception—provide little room for individual-level deliberation. The implication is a diminishment of the self, action in Burt involving discernment but without deliberation, whereas Turkle describes any thinking about purpose in networked life as no more than a 'deliberated nonchalance.' This section extends the Chapter One discussion on Turkle and Burt, linking this with the sense of direction introduced by Wolters in Chapter Two. Effective, continuous deliberation here underpins the pursuit of excellence, to which individuals are called as part of service in the world, ultimately directed toward God.

Purpose and direction

Through Turkle we see that networked life is increasingly ubiquitous, not only across the young, but also adult populations. She cautions that she is studying a 'moving

target' and that what she reports is 'nothing less than the future unfolding'[6]. Networked life does not pull everyone into its currents. Rather, Turkle provides a *direction*. The direction is one involving a path that tempts individuals to seek self-protection and control over their surroundings—treating others as objects—which in turn diminishes agency. But the direction remains to be informed, if not shaped, by individuals. It is deliberation, in particular, to which Turkle turns as part of taking a better path.

While the networked life is nascent, Turkle's war metaphor—humans at war with themselves—and emphasis on the diminishment of human life, suggests that the direction is troubling indeed. She speaks to a growing *culture* in which individuals seek control through networks, permeating lives across generations. Turkle here aligns with McLuhan, who without professing to know the future notes that 'No society has ever known enough about its actions to have developed immunity to its new extensions or technologies'[7], and who views militarism as a symptom of decline. The direction of technological civilisation for McLuhan is *always* troubling, but he accepts the permeation of technology which allows individuals 'to expand so triumphantly in all directions and in all spheres'[8].

Turkle sees solitude as one means through which this culture can be enriched, which individuals must *summon themselves* into. But do individuals *on their own* possess such inner resources? Turkle suggests, even if tentatively, that they do—that the inner war is to be won themselves—and yet a dominant theme throughout her analysis is one of a self that has become unstable, without a clear source of love, treating others as objects or parts. The risk for Turkle, as discussed, is that her reclamation project is built on sand rather than on rock—a self caught in an abstract quicksand cannot easily pull itself to solid ground. McLuhan is here more cautious, cognisant of the 'endless power of men to

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[6] *Alone Together*, p. xiv.
[7] *Understanding Media*, p. 64.
[8] Ibid., p. 73.

hypnotize themselves into unawareness of the present challenge,' solitude potentially a comfortable escape nevertheless failing to examine the reality of technological challenge[9]. For McLuhan, it is the 'Only the dedicated artist,' who, in Turkle's solitude, would 'have the power for encountering the present actuality'[10].

Burt is less interested than Turkle in discussing the motivations underpinning networked life; the existence of the right network structure as part of securing advantage is explanation enough that the individual is motivated to develop networks. Turkle is much more explicit on motivation in networked life, viewing immersion in networks as stemming from human loneliness. For Turkle, 'People are lonely. The network is seductive. But if we are always on, we may deny ourselves the rewards of solitude'[11]. Turkle speaks, however, to a more fundamental challenge, characterised by avoidance of the complexity of human life. Here, 'The machine [and networks] could be preferable—for any number of reasons—to what we currently experience in the sometimes messy, often frustrating, and always complex world of people'[12].

Though not stated explicitly, Turkle implies a lack of hope in the future; there is an expectation that individuals will disappoint each other, networked life serving to evade such disappointments. Alongside this is little faith in other people. In short, 'People seem comforted by the belief that if we alienate or fail each other, robots [or networks] will be there, programmed to provide simulations of love'[13]. She emphasises that 'this is not a book about robots. Rather, it is about how we are changed as technology offers us as substitutes for connecting with each other face-to-face'[14].

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[9] Ibid., p. 70.
[10] Ibid., p. 70.
[11] *Alone Together*, p. 3.
[12] Ibid., p. 7.
[13] Ibid., p. 10.
[14] Ibid., p. 11.

The individuals portrayed in Turkle's networked life, however, do not act with moral seriousness, but rather with a 'deliberated nonchalance'[15]. They desire 'the exhilaration of creativity without its pressures, the excitement of exploration without its risks'[16]. Those against the good in intention, desire and attitude seek to remove others from full participation in created order, modelling lives which are apparently well-networked, and yet passive—lives in the flesh which seek a manicured control and the avoidance of uncertainty. This is O'Donovan's polished self-possession of the epicure…. [who lives with] a *ressentiment* which closes down on the gift given and diverts energy away from it'[17].

This control is achieved, however, through maintaining a *performance* to the wider world—the *fantasy* of who we want to be. Ellul comments on the relationship between hope and freedom in his introduction to *The Ethics of Freedom*, where 'the man who hopes is acting as a free man…. [hope] giving man the possibility of living our hope concretely and effectively in daily life after a fashion which is not just hypothetical or sentimental…. God loves, man hopes, God makes free'[18]. Turkle's account of lack of hope stems, for Ellul, from a prior lack of *love*, which negates hope and destroys freedom. The inevitable result is the Ellulian hypothesising or sentimentality, which in Turkle's account is false performance reflective of fantasy, an escape from living in the world.

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[15] Ibid., p. 198.
[16] Ibid., p. 224.
[17] Oliver O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 21. This ressentiment is for McLuhan the individual who 'ceases to be sensitive to the diverse and discontinuous life of forms… [who] acquires the illusion of the… "private point of view" as part of his Narcissus fixation, and is quite shut off from Blake's awareness or that of the Psalmist, that we become what we behold' (*Understanding Media*, p. 19). The deliberated nonchalance is, indeed, a covert exercise of power, employing the weapons of networked life as part of the unpicking of The Good and of corresponding worldly goods which image it: it is 'service to the prince of this world' (*Ethics as Freedom*, p. 57). As Ellul stresses, 'To serve Satan, who is himself bound, is lack of freedom par excellence' (Ibid., p. 57).
[18] *The Ethics of Freedom*, pp. 12-13.

Turkle and Burt are complementary, highlighting the pervasive culture and direction of networked life, the means for control which networked life offers, and the temptation to use these means in order to secure short-term advantages—a temptation which nevertheless diminishes, if not corrupts, the self. There is little faith, or trust, in others—as Turkle and Burt each highlight throughout their work—which allows for a conceptualisation of human relations in terms of war.

Turkle highlights the necessity of deliberation as a means to develop purpose in networked life, but does not specify *how* deliberation might take place, other than in solitude. Indeed, networked life, valuing connectivity, denies individuals the time to 'think and dream,' and so to reconsider their directions or purposes. Burt, with his emphasis on constant negotiation, also fails to consider direction or purpose. He prioritises discernment above deliberation as part of action in the networked world; the risk of getting things wrong in action is more so a matter of failing to negotiate properly, than it is of failing to think about purposes or directions in relation to present circumstances. The focus is rather on individual action intent on securing and maintaining control through performance, *in the short-term*[19].

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[19] Burt views control as not absolute, but rather continually to be negotiated: 'Competition is omnipresent and everywhere imperfect' and so continual negotiation is implied (*Brokerage and Closure*, p. 7). The 'central question for imperfect competition,' in Burt's view, 'is how players escape domination, whether it is domination by the market or domination by another player' (Ibid., p. 7). Burt is clear that control is present, if not rife, in the workforce as well as beyond; the question is how to avoid control. The pivotal passage, which concludes his introductory section, is 'This is the focus of the structural hole argument—a theory of freedom instead of power, of negotiated instead of absolute control. It is a description of the extent to which the social structure of a competitive arena creates entrepreneurial opportunities for certain players to affect the terms of their relationships' (Ibid., p. 7). However, the introductory section features the only use of the term 'freedom' within the entire text. All later discussion focuses explicitly on the role of structural holes in securing control benefits, even more so than information benefits. For Burt, freedom is tightly bounded. It is achieved through possessing the right network structure, where control is not absolute, but rather sustained through effective negotiation—this involving jostling over the terms of relationships. Yet, without purposeful agency resulting from deliberation, freedom is reduced to bettering one's peers in a purely material sense. In order to avoid the constant possibility of danger, one must be on guard, but more importantly, on constant attack.

Freedom depends, in Burt's account explicitly, on the prior network structure. It is a theory that begins with perceived outward material reality and which works backward to the individual, agency a question of what such reality allows. If one does not have the right relations within a network—for example, if one lacks a

In Ellul's *The Ethics of Freedom*, freedom also comes from the outside, as 'a situation which is made for us'[20]. Man is, in modern societies, alienated, 'self-dispossessed because he has come under the possession of phenomena which have an increasingly abstract character and over which he has less and less control'[21]. He is part, for example, of a network structure that he cannot see in full, abstract in nature and which in Burt's account constrains possibilities for action. The experience of alienation is characterised by three elements in Ellul's analysis, that of loss of control, lack of motivation and lack of information, 'in which an individual feels isolated because the flow of information between his environment and himself (and *vice versa*) has been stopped'[22], each of these elements also seen in Burt's discussion on the apparent lack of freedom of individuals to be entrepreneurs within network structures that limit opportunities for action, motivation underpinning action vague in the account[23].

In Burt, the individual can only achieve freedom through constant action, remaining on the attack and dominating others through the securing of the right relationships. The freedom-through-control examined in Burt demands a clear recognition of reality. There is again an apparent parallel with Ellul, who affirms 'Christian freedom is concrete freedom. It is lived out in man's reality…. It is not just mystical of spiritual. It is a

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trusting relationship with the leader of a political party who might serve as an entryway into new opportunities, and is instead only a peripheral member of the team or party—then Burt would suggest that it is likely that this individual within the political network structure will be dominated by others.

[20] *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 103.

[21] Ibid., p. 27.

[22] Ibid., p. 29.

[23] There is some congruence between Burt and Ellul in their accounts of motivation, Ellul leaving open the possibility that an external structure, such as opportunity yielded through a wider network structure, might influence, or activate, motivation. Specifically, Ellul notes 'Analysis of motivations increasingly shows that our voluntary acts, on which we base our freedom, are performed for reasons which are indeed within us, which have their roots in our innermost being, but which are completely outside our control' (*The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 33).

recognition rather than evasion of reality'[24]. Victory has been secured in Christ, but victory must then be *lived out* by individuals in every new *today*—and victory can be lost.

Despite these parallels on the living-out of freedom in the world, securing victory in every new today, there is a marked difference between Burt and Ellul in the *attitudes* implied in the respective understandings of freedom. As we have seen in the prior examination of Burt, freedom results from the structure of a given network to manipulate the terms of relationships. Here, social structure constrains the individual agent, who must recognise narrow opportunities for action as part of the securing of beneficial relationships and the dissemination of information across these relationships. The end of freedom is, in Burt's account, control, both in the transmitting of unique information and in dominance in relation to others. The point of reference for such an individual is oneself, others treated as objects who must be used in order to secure or maintain a strategic position, self-protection thereby achieved. The attitude in Burt's perpetual negotiation with others in the world is one of *self-interest*; the illustration is one of an individualised node always at the centre of a network graph. There is, in this attitude, lingering anxiety if not fear of being overtaken by a more strategic actor, hence constant negotiation.

In contrast, freedom in Ellul's account depends on prior faith: 'Man has to grasp… [victory] and make it active and actual by his faith and decision. This is to make everything individual, since it all depends on faith'[25]. Protection is sought in Christ, whereas any other form of protection, 'whether it be in the army, in fortresses, in alliances, or in the state, is to fall into slavery again'[26]. The victory won by Christ overcomes necessities, negates anxiety or fear, and creates space for the living-out of freedom in the

[24] Ibid., p. 75.
[25] Ibid., p. 78.
[26] Ibid., p. 97.

world[27]. The attitude in Ellul's practice of freedom in the world is one of *service*, in which the individual serves as *mediator* or *vicariate*[28].

This attitude of service is a *total* attitude of life, which cannot easily be discerned or quantified, though 'A certain manner of being bears witness to it. It can light up relations as lightning does the night'[29]. Indeed, 'Only the personal relation can perceive this secret quality [of light]'[30]. Whereas Burt's freedom pursues opportunity manifested in results such as remuneration, advancement in one's role in the workforce or another realm of life, or worldly recognition, Ellul's freedom 'is a self-effacing struggle for a freedom which is not for personal profit'[31].

There is thus little opportunity for creativity or risk, which may lead to defeat rather than maintain a semblance of certainty. Individuals are here unlikely to transform the network structure of which they are a part. Ellul provides an apt description of this mindset—that of 'anxious self-centeredness'[32]. His criticism is devastating indeed: 'The moment I am [obsessively] aware of myself I become the unique central, and essential person who lies behind everything. Only my own destiny concerns me. For me I am the central thing in the world. We thus see the dawn of pride, of egoism, and also of worry and anxiety'[33]. Such individuals aim to possess their future, minimising risks to their security, aided by 'an unparalleled growth of devices to ensure the future concretely, institutionally, and objectively'[34].

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[27] Ibid., pp. 87-97.
[28] Ibid., p. 87.
[29] Ibid., p. 110.
[30] Ibid., p. 110.
[31] Ibid., p. 125.
[32] Ibid., p. 136.
[33] Ibid., p. 136.
[34] Ibid., p. 136. If *devices* is interpreted as 'networked technologies,' then we see in Ellul's description of the anxious, self-centered individual both Burt's unceasing action to secure the near-term future *and* Turkle's account of networked technologies in assuring a pre-determined future.

Freedom, for Ellul, is won in a world of necessities and determinations and must be won *repeatedly.* It recognises and pays attention to such necessities and determinations, navigating within the sometimes-narrow spaces available for action. It shuns any possible reversion to a world of fantasy, embracing instead the challenge if not suffering sometimes involved in negotiating the opportunities and perils of reality. Ellul's freedom demands self-awareness in a world of increasing complexity, but is oriented toward others in *service*. Ellul's emphasis on direct, personal relationship in a world of complexity—even if such complexity is replete with networked devices impinging upon the individual—allows glimpses of light, such relations depicted as lightning in the night. Thus, Ellul sows the seeds for a *transformation* of network structure, while taking into account the material challenges clearly outlined in the account of Burt.

The transformation of network structure

A network structure-driven account of freedom, in which 'the social structure of a competitive arena creates entrepreneurial opportunities for certain players to affect the terms of their relationships,' can be further interrogated in part through several individual-oriented examples that are not infrequently seen in modern social and political life. We will see in the following three cases the layering of Ellul's account of freedom onto the account of freedom within network structure advanced by Burt.

The first example is seen in the saying 'leaders come from the periphery,' emerging presumably from out of nowhere—on the outskirts of a given network structure, little-known to centrally located, trusted figures. These individuals, once arrived, rapidly assume increasingly central roles within networks despite their previous relative or complete anonymity. Modern political history is filled with stories of little-known outsiders bursting onto the scenes: American Presidents such as Donald Trump, Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, as well as eventual Secretaries of

State James A Baker III and Dr Henry Kissinger; in Europe, Vladimir Putin, Hitler and Stalin all serve as prominent examples of leaders emerging from the periphery.

Such outsiders are not beholden to existing network structures as many others are; they rather reorient the structures, turning them on their heads, and in some cases, turn the world upside down. An account of freedom centered on position within network structure assumes that such individuals have little agency to set the terms of their relations, and so are controlled by other more central players around them. Freedom is a mere opening-up of entrepreneurial opportunity *enabled* by network structure, though in practice these examples suggest that it is the individuals themselves that upend existing network structures. The old wineskins in these cases burst, the old cloth torn—often irreparably so—as these once-peripheral individuals situate themselves within revised network structures, the *structures made new*.

This upending of entrenched network structure is possible in the electric age, which favours decentralisation above centralisation as seen in the earlier McLuhan discussion, who provides his own political example when noting that the electric age 'permits Castro to exist as an independent nucleus or center'[35]. Ellul refers to this breaking of wineskins amid 'Technical invasion [which]… does not put new wine into old bottles; it does not introduce new content into old forms. The old bottles are all being broken. The old civilizations collapse on contact with the new'[36]. More specifically, however, the decentralisation to which McLuhan refers, and which is enabled by the electric age, is a 'Daring [which] involves courage to live one's own life in one's own style. This is what freedom in Christ means…. It has liberated us from the powers…. Hence, when we act, we no longer express the evil one; we express the Holy Spirit'[37]. The decentralisation of

[35] *Understanding Media*, p. 36.
[36] *The Technological Society*, p. 121.
[37] *The Ethics of Freedom*, pp. 188-189.

power characteristic of the electric age is enabled even more fundamentally by the liberation of Christ from the powers, action guided by the Holy Spirit, in which there is 'no limit to our freedom'[38].

The second example is seen in the role that a purpose—or clear telos—often plays in the setting of direction within formal and informal networks, forcing a shift in mindset from one focused on the gaining of immediate material advantage at individual levels, to one that is more centered on cooperation, individuals fulfilling roles conducive to such purpose. The accounts of Burt and Turkle lack such purpose, the individual acting instead with self-interest ultimately in mind, locked in perpetual competition with a view to securing or maintaining a dominant role, keeping others at bay to the greatest extent possible. This is to be expected when groups, whether within formal institutions or in more informal collectives, act without purposes that transcend the individual.

The lack of purpose in such cases encourages the war-like behaviour outlined in the works of Burt and Turkle, victories incremental in nature given the battles' fundamentally comparative natures. However, when a purpose is clear, individuals may shift the terms of relations from competition to cooperation, *service* toward others becoming the lens through which action—as well as *benefits* of action—is seen. The outworking of freedom in 'conduct and ethics' is for Ellul manifested in 'service… which implies the freedom of him who serves'[39]. The creation of a purpose, however, does not emerge from anything inherent in network structure; nor is purpose the result of agency at the level of the individual or in small groups.

Rather, a telos characterised by service is possible only when the individual 'is first addressed by God, for whom he is Thou. It is not possible except in the face-to-face

[38] Ibid., p. 189.
[39] Ibid., p. 286.

encounter which God sets up and which gives him freedom for other relations too'[40]. This is, in Ellul's analysis, a direct, personal relation in which it is 'the Christian's engagement [in encounter] which transforms a conversation and makes trivial contact into a decisive force'[41]. In practice, this shifting from the incrementalist, war-like relation seen in Burt to that of service seen in Ellul allows for a transformation of network structure through a revaluation of personal relations and reconceptualisation of the terms of engagement.

The third example follows on the first and second in that it is often 'triumvirates' which serve as *pillars* in the formation of purpose within network structure. It is groups of three, and often a single individual within such groups, which through their agency redirect, if not renew, the larger network structures of which they are a part. This is achieved through individual-level agency set apart from network structure, time spent in deliberation, cooperation, and coordination—rather than competition—the emphasis within the group. Social network theory, and in particular discussion on brokerage, focuses on the notion of 'triads,' groups of three in which the broker serves as the third member of the triad, controlling the flow of information within the group[42].

The previous discussion on Kilduff et al. suggests that a low subjective sense of power, consisting of *a sense of humility, caution or restraint*—this based on an understanding of individuals as being flawed—is conducive to a more detailed and accurate understanding of relations within a network structure, than if individuals see themselves as powerful. The individual within a triumvirate who proceeds cautiously, with self-control based on a sense of limitation, is more likely to ensure a clear purpose within the triumvirate, and in turn within the wider network structure. The question that follows is

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[40] Ibid., p. 209.
[41] Ibid., p. 325.
[42] We have examined the notion of triads, primarily with sinister, control-oriented tendencies in mind, through the concept of the tertius. However, a triad structure can pursue a more positive direction.

what is the source of such a sense of agency, one that is firm and yet self-critical, aware of the possibility of *going wrong*? Later moral theological discussion in this chapter, on watchfulness, addresses this point; however, a more immediate answer is found in non-religious moral experience, in the role of an 'advisor'[43]. Ellul indirectly captures the role and value of an effective advisor when he reflects that 'to engage in dialogue I have to have self-detachment. To have this presupposes the supreme freedom that Christ himself had. None of the falsification of dialogue or encounter can be avoided unless I am free'[44].

This section has shown how it is possible to overcome the short-termism in networked life, in which agency is hindered by perceived outward material realities. In different ways, Turkle and Burt propose that individuals, in order to preserve their agency, be on constant attack—Turkle through deliberated nonchalance, utilising network technologies, and Burt through active negotiation in the role of tertius. This deliberated nonchalance is contrasted with Ellul's conception of Christian freedom which sees freedom as *existing* within material necessities or determinations, requiring a living-out in every new day of the victory originally won in Christ. Such freedom is an expression of the Holy Spirit, rather than a product of advantageous position within a given network structure, though it is not dismissive of network structure, either, the opportunities and perils of reality engaged with directly.

Here, Christian freedom involves a deliberation that holds the potential to transform network structure, reorienting the terms of relations within networked life. A networked life in which deliberation plays a more prominent role sees material experience serve as a basis for transcendence *within* a given actuality.

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[43] In *The Trusted Advisor*, David H Maister notes that with a trusted advisor, 'virtually all issues, personal and professional, are open to discussion and exploration. The trusted advisor is the person the client turns to when an issue first arises, often in times of great urgency: a crisis, a change, a triumph, or a defeat' (Maister at el., 2012, p. x).
[44] *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 326.

Deliberation and Continuous Preparation

Endurance leading to purpose: deliberation as continuous preparation

O'Donovan describes deliberation as the endurance which forms purpose, the endurance implying consistent preparation, which allows for the possibility of a transformative discernment[45]. Deliberation is not a weighing of options, but rather a search in which the task is 'finding one possibility where there was none'[46]. It is an extending, or reaching forward in O'Donovan's account, which hunts, sweeps and peers in order to form a purpose, that is; a course of action that one is *for*[47]. The aim in deliberation is not to imagine the consequences of a given action, but rather to imagine the action *effected* in the world, which might produce consequences much different than one originally had in mind.

Deliberation is preceded by faith, an awakening to responsible agency based on God's initial summons[48], which in O'Donovan's account leads in to participation in the created world, involving Eros as outlined in the examination of Adams in Chapter Two. The good sought in deliberation is that of *action*, which in O'Donovan's account requires that individuals 'appreciate many goods.... Yet to seek it [the good of action] is to narrow the focus of attention very considerably'[49]. It is not admiration of excellence in created goods—a resting in one's knowledge of created good, as reflected in Adams' account—that deliberation seeks, but rather a purpose for action, involving the focusing of attention as one embarks on the adventure of living[50].

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[45] I am indebted in particular to Jonathan Ruffer on the linking between deliberation and a 'transformative discernment,' discernment nevertheless a 'detail,' as will be discussed in the next section.
[46] Oliver O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 181.
[47] Ibid., pp. 180-181.
[48] Ibid., pp. 179.
[49] Ibid., p. 182.
[50] Bonhoeffer, in his *The Cost of Discipleship* guards particularly against such meandering deliberation, in which the Sermon on the Mount risks being interpreted in 'a thousand different ways.... [Jesus] does not mean that it is to be discussed as an ideal, he really means us to get on with it' (*Discipleship*, p. 138). Ellul provides a similar reflection in his criticism of turning Jesus Christ into an 'abstraction. God became incarnate; it is not our job to disincarnate him' (*Presence in the Modern World*, p. 5).

The purpose formed in deliberation occurs within the *now*, rather than in the past or in the future. Indeed, 'A purpose can never be formed in advance of the opportune moment. Yet without the work of deliberation leading up to it we are not in a position to receive the gift; it must first be searched for and recognized'[51]. The endurance in O'Donovan's account of deliberation is that of *continuous* preparation, this involving considerable thought as to one's self, world and time—though with God's *objective determination* as the basis, as we have seen, for right purpose. In other words, deliberation demands considerable prayer; it must pay careful attention to the guidance of the Spirit, attentive to indications of God's self-communication in the world-order He has given, the offering of created goods which serves as a basis for right purposes and effective action today. Nevertheless, deliberation, in the formation of purposes *for* particular courses of action, shapes the world in which one participates, and in turn informs what goods might be offered by God as part of the gradual formation of a vocation.

This initial decision to be for the good, seen in Adams, opens the way in deliberation to being for a vast array of worldly goods. Deliberation, however, does not *bring about* or *make* a 'presumed last state,' but rather considers the 'shape of life' of the individual agent; it resists the notion that 'how *I* have performed is judged solely by *what* turns out in the world, not by how *I* turn out'[52]. It is conducted, in other words, in relation to God's promise; the success of deliberation is not defined by material achievement[53]. Thus, continuous preparation as part of deliberation involves restraint in the face of the

[51] Ibid., p. 180.
[52] Ibid., pp. 202-203.
[53] Bonhoeffer remarks that individuals are to hide the visibility of their discipleship from *themselves*, for 'the disciple forgets self and clings solely to Christ'. Indeed, if the disciple 'want[s] publicity in the eyes of men we have our reward,' but here 'we are forging our own reward, instead of that which God has intended to give us in his own good time' (*Discipleship*, pp. 106-108).

perennial temptation to make one's mark on created good, striving for public admiration, as has been discussed in relation to Adams and Wolf in Chapter Two.

The endurance that forms purpose is seen in the reading of scholarly materials two hours every night—despite tiredness from other responsibilities and without immediate signs of success in the world—over many months, prior to the writing of an article. It is reflected in the tireless work of James A Baker III, who was known for returning every call from a journalist before the end of the day, in order to ensure that a reputation for reliability and trustworthiness would be maintained, this conducive to answering the question of 'What is to be done?' when challenging policy issues would inevitably arise[54]. Baker's continuous preparation occurred, as Whipple notes, while most others had gone home: 'In the gospel according to Baker, preparation was the first commandment…. Baker logged sixteen-hour days and personally returned every phone call, no matter the hour'[55].

Deliberation is also seen in the suspension of the self in the case of Eric Newell, as part of his interactions with political ministers on route to the formation of purpose manifested in the 'Declaration of Opportunity.' This constant preparation served as an opportunity to form a larger, pan-Canadian purpose in action, conducive to a deeper cooperation than had previously been imagined in the Canadian energy industry. Here, 'Newell worked to shift the perspective to a long-term time span, and to what was best for… Canadians,'[56] though the shifting of perspective described throughout Weber's account is one that consisted of a myriad *of shorter-term 'experimental' purposes*. As with

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[54] Grisez provides an especially impressive account of the discipline involved in constant deliberation, one which echoes O'Donovan and aligns particularly with the example of Baker: 'Even fairly well-organized people often fail to make good use of the time and energy still available while they engage in some necessary activity, for example, by allowing their minds to wander as they shower and dress or by using a radio for passive entertainment as they commute. Committed Christians should discipline themselves to replace useless activities with others which not only promise real benefit but further one or another element of their vocation…. For example, while occupied with necessary activities which leave the mind free, a person can make plans, think through a problem, or pray…' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.5).
[55] *The Gatekeepers*, p. 114.
[56] 'Policy Entrepreneurship,' p. 68.

the Baker example above, Newell's deliberation was consistently modest—a point that we will see reflected in later discussion on O'Donovan—larger and more comprehensive purposes only formed *over time*. Similarly, the early life of Hill in the North East of England is characterised by constant preparation, particularly in the study of Russian history and language, which leads into unexpected encounters with teachers that invite her in to new social worlds conducive to the furthering of her purpose, formed step-by-step in deliberation. A lifetime of work leads eventually into an offer to join the White House, an offer which was similarly unexpected.

Deliberation's endurance in the formation of purpose, however, is particularly apparent in the life of Paul. As recounted in Wright's biography, Paul spends a silent decade in Tarsus—following his encounter with Jesus Christ on the Road to Damascus—preparing from within 'a small, cramped workshop,' in which 'he prayed, he studied, and he figured out all sorts of things'[57]. Indeed, 'He could no doubt improvise on the spot, but in his mature thought he gives every evidence of long pondering'[58]. Wright describes Paul as never retreating from the world, focusing instead on the implications of the decisive moment given to him by God, in which he realises that '*on the cross Jesus of Nazareth had defeated the ultimate force of evil*'[59]. The development of Paul's train of thought is described as a 'hammering away' on his purpose for action, through argument with those around him, in which he brings his zeal to bear in the shaping of his new life, never relenting in his love for God. Thus, 'by the end of the Tarsus decade Saul had worked out in considerable detail what it meant that the One God had revealed himself in and as the crucified and risen Jesus'[60]. The hammering-away over ten years, without immediate

[57] *Paul: A Biography*, p. 69.
[58] Ibid., p. 69.
[59] Ibid., p. 79.
[60] Ibid., p. 83.

material reward or recognition, is reflective of O'Donovan's conception of deliberation as involving endurance forming purpose in relation to God's promise, rather than to a desire for worldly achievement.

When Barnabas calls on Paul to join him in Antioch, this in order to grow and sustain a community of believers, Paul had *already* deliberated effectively—he was prepared. The opportune moment given by God was that of Barnabas recalling Paul's erudition but also his zeal, his directedness in action often despite adverse circumstances. Paul, of course, could have never predicted this moment—the reaching-out of Barnabas—a trustworthy contact capable of opening Paul to a new social world, the significance of such primary contacts examined in relation to Burt in Chapter One, their reaching-out as authoritative self-disclosures—following on God's self-disclosure through the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the irreplaceable authority—examined primarily in relation to O'Donovan in Chapter Two.

Yet, it is possible for deliberation to be *even more* constrained than what we see in the examples of Baker, Newell, Paul and Hill, such constraint reflective of O'Donovan's characterisation of deliberation as involving the finding of possibility when there is none. The experience of many lone parents, as introduced in Chapter One, is one of formation of *small* purposes when material circumstances seem to provide no opportunities for action. Trapped in jobs with few, if any, prospects for promotion, with poor remuneration and working hours often unpredictable, sustaining endurance is of utmost challenge. The purposes for action likely to be formed through endurance in such circumstances are, when seen in bare material terms, inconsequential[61].

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[61] This lack of material possession is of little consequence to Bonhoeffer in his own conception of calling by Jesus Christ, who concludes his chapter on the Beatitudes with a vivid illustration: 'There shall the poor be seen in the halls of joy. With his own hand God wipes away the tears from the eyes of those who had mourned upon the earth…. The echoes of this joy reach the little flock below as it stands beneath the cross, and they hear Jesus saying: "Blessed are ye!"' (*Discipleship*, pp. 66-67).

It is smallness and simplicity in action that O'Donovan favours in his critical examination of deliberation, O'Donovan's account focusing on short-term purposes in the *today*, more than it does on the formation of large, sweeping purposes to be maintained far into the future. He provides the example of Edmund Power, who prior to his execution as a champion of Irish nationhood exclaimed 'Power shall have another day!' in which 'the simple idea of that "other day," however vague, was needed to fix his resolution on that last and most difficult act'[62]. While acknowledging that *some* imagination of ends-of-action is inevitable—and necessary—in deliberation, the future world is shaped by many factors beyond oneself, such that precise imaginations of future worlds as part of ends-of-action can be delusive[63]. This hesitance in the formation of long-term purposes is seen in O'Donovan's assertion that 'all long-term purposes are to a greater or lesser extent hostage to events'[64]. In politics, the frustration of imagined long-term purposes is captured in the former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's saying 'Events, dear boy, events.' Instead, deliberation should form purposes involving the *effecting*, or undertaking, of specific actions that are *modest*, in which the present opens to the immediate future that is *available*: 'It is important to be modest enough in speaking of what it is that the deliberator seeks'[65].

There is a narrowing of possibilities in relation to actual goods, the narrowing responding to the openings—even if few and far between—that are available to the individual agent. This narrowing of possibilities involves not only a search for actual goods in relation to which one might act responsibly, but also the *declining* of possibilities where no good routes forward exist, this cutting-off a consistent theme throughout

[62] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 188.
[63] Ibid., p. 186.
[64] Ibid., p. 211.
[65] Ibid., p. 181.

O'Donovan's discussion in particular. When no purposes exist, the restraint from agreeing to a tempting, but wrong purpose—through the securing of immediate benefit, such as admiration in the eyes of others—or in elimination of a wrong purpose, may open the way to unforeseen possibilities. O'Donovan's deliberation is very much like this, deliberation a *restrained and focused search*, resisting the pull into the abstract future as well as the immediate future of benefits in the flesh[66], proceeding rather in a step-by-step manner, waiting when God's external determinations do not present themselves. Indeed, 'Without searching there can be no finding, but finding is by no means an inevitable result of searching'[67]. Deliberation is a search conducive to a pursuit of excellence involving the spiritedness discussed in Chapter Two, action not spurred by the flesh, but rather by faith in a prior world-order, this faith leading in to loving engagement in the world.

This section has emphasised the constant preparation involved in deliberation's endurance, endurance which nevertheless contributes to purposes that are modest, possibilities narrowed in relation to actual goods, even if such goods are few and far between in one's world. The endurance in deliberation is a preparation for opportune moments for action emerging unexpectedly, and whose rewards—if any—are rewards in God's view.

The propensity for deliberated nonchalance

In networked life, Turkle has demonstrated the propensity for individuals to project idealised versions of the self, this a *deliberated nonchalance*. A manicured self-presentation takes the place of a serious finding and seeking, as discussed at the outset of Chapter One; that is, there is evasion of a protracted search. As discussed previously in

[66] Bonhoeffer is particularly instructive on the risks of the flesh, noting that 'Instead of trusting to the unseen, we prefer the tangible fruits of desire, and so we fall from the path of discipleship and lose touch with Jesus' (*Discipleship*, p. 83).
[67] Ibid., p. 181.

relation to Turkle, networked life often impedes serious deliberation. The lack of possibility for purposeful action, which requires further exertion in the finding of possibility, is difficult to arrive at in networked life since searching *without* producing a set of short-term answers—even if false, ill-conceived answers—defies conventional wisdom. A deliberated nonchalance is, however, a withdrawal from participation in life—participation which sometimes, as O'Donovan notes, involves a failure to find. The premature cutting-off of deliberation in networked life is not a decision, as O'Donovan outlines, but rather a failure in self-restraint in relation to tempting distractions, when a search does not give way to easy finding

In opposition to the immediacy of networked life is a deliberation involving the bearing of one's cross, even if in a very fragmentary manner. O'Donovan highlights, at the outset of his chapter on deliberation, that 'If purpose is prepared for in faith, its formation involves an endurance of time, and all endurance of time, even that of death on a cross, forms a purpose'[68]. Jesus' crying 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit' is the formation of a purpose as he breathes his last on the cross (Luke 23:46)[69]. It is implied in O'Donovan's statement—but can be stated more explicitly—that the endurance involved in formation of purpose, within *deliberation*, involves the bearing of one's cross. The bearing of one's cross in deliberation is conducive to a narrowing of purposes in the search preceding action, this narrowing of purposes contributing in turn to the achievement of harder rather than easier good, as is implied in Adams' account of vocation.

The example of Paul throughout Wright's account provides witness to the bearing of the cross, the formation of purpose in Paul often opposed by dangerous forces, though with the Holy Spirit providing continual assistance. In reflecting on the moment that Saul

[68] Ibid., p. 179.
[69] New Revised Standard Version, p. 95.

becomes Paul, Wright stresses the role of the Holy Spirit, which provides Saul with a surge of energy, through which he 'denounces Bar-Jesus in fierce and uncompromising terms…. He [Paul] is out on the front line and finding sudden energy [through the Holy Spirit] and focus to meet a new kind of challenge'[70]. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is necessary in order to sustain deliberation in the face of opposition which seeks to interrupt it, limiting or corrupting the good.

Wright's emphasis on the Holy Spirit merges with O'Donovan's in his discussion on deliberation, who laments at the conclusion of an examination of possible critiques of deliberation that 'We listen in vain, therefore, for the *prayer* for the Holy Spirit, which is the act of thought from which all moral reflection and deliberation springs'[71]. It is also captured when O'Donovan concludes, following a discussion on decision within deliberation—and on the cutting-off of lingering *imaginations of the future*—that 'Life lived as a sail across a calm sea, purposes flowing in order and without stress from wise counsels taken long before, is something to thank God for, but it cannot be a moral ideal'[72].

Peter Nichols' *A Voyage for Madmen*, which tells the story of the inaugural *Sunday Times* Golden Globe Race, the first non-stop, solo round-the-world sailing race, is a concretisation of O'Donovan's account of deliberation, the successful contestant in the race Robin Knox-Johnston characterised as a stubborn and stolid man who 'is the sort of bloke who does what he sets out to do'[73], this contrasted with the energetic but deceitful Donald Crowhurst who yearned for 'The brilliance and superiority of Donald Crowhurst…

[70] *Paul: A Biography*, p. 115.
[71] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 193.
[72] Ibid., p. 183.
[73] Peter Nichols, *A Voyage for Madmen* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2011), p. 259.

[to] be acknowledged by the world'[74]. Crowhurst is limited in his expedition by his uninhibited imagination of future success and stardom, whereas Knox-Johnston proceeds in a much more gradual, day-by-day manner, enduring while enjoying the small possibilities presented to him.

As Jesus prays in Gethsemane, there is no apparent possibility of action; Jesus is unsure of what God wants from him. He begins, the first of three separate occasions praying, with 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not what I want but what you want' (Matt 26:39), but finds his disciples asleep upon his return. Jesus is alone in this scene, his disciples lacking faith, this reflected in their literal as well as metaphorical sleepiness. It is only Jesus asking in this scene the question of what is to be done; that is, he is alone in his deliberation. Yet, the good of action, apart from persistent prayer in utter deference to God, does not appear, even while Jesus is 'deeply grieved, even to death' (Matt 26:38). His appeal to Peter, 'Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak' (Matt 26:41) is an indication that deliberation, as O'Donovan notes, requires that one be *awake* within the world, aware of the world-order that is given by God, and in turn the need for responsible action, responsibility here a service of God, in relation to God's will[75].

Deliberation, in networked life, is often focused on maintaining carefully constructed conceptions of self, planned well in advance and rigidly maintained—even if in defiance of reality. In contrast, O'Donovan notes that 'If deliberation reaches forward, it also waits'[76]. This language implies the need for a simultaneous seriousness and yet

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[74] Ibid., p. 261. Crowhurst is representative of the Ellulian flight into the *abstract*, which is an evasion of the material determinations in which Christian freedom must be lived out.

[75] Bonhoeffer here comments that 'Jesus prays to his Father that the cup may pass from him, and his Father hears his prayer; for the cup of suffering will indeed pass from him—*but only by his drinking it*…. That is the only path to victory. The cross is his triumph over suffering' (*Discipleship*, p. 46).

[76] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 180.

lowliness in deliberation, one's seeking firm in nature, and yet grounded in Jesus' words at Gethsemane, asking God that 'your will be done' (Matt 26:42)[77]. In Chapter Two, the provision of articulateness in speech described in Luke is a gift from God in moments of *weakness*—the Holy Spirit coming to individuals following the prior recognition of lowliness, rather than through an artificial show of strength, as is seen in networked life's deliberated nonchalance. Deliberation involves submission to God's will, and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God's objective determinations made clear at the right time, often in material weakness rather than in strength.

It is the concept of *prudence* in O'Donovan's account of deliberation that helps to ensure directedness in the formation of concrete purpose. O'Donovan here notes that 'the specific role of prudence is to conceive that ordered good as *directive*, as a *normative* order that lays claim on our freedom to act,'[78] and 'remain[s] constant to the vision of God's goodness that has been given us'[79]. There is a guarding, in prudence, against the erosion of self through the passing of time, in which critical thinking gives way to a sense that the complexities and demands of the present are simply apparent or obvious in observation. O'Donovan is clear that 'deliberative inquiry has no "conclusions"'; the investigation involved in prudence guards against the danger of any sleepiness in search, a rapid arriving at answers based on initial impressions, what in one context O'Donovan labels a 'rationalization of desires'[80].

However, the passing of time 'is not self-evidently supportive of our selves and our agency. It compels the decay of our world; whatever we admired and whatever we have accomplished it takes away, and what it replaces them with is uninterpretable and

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[77] New Standard Revised Version, p. 32.
[78] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 195.
[79] Ibid., p. 196.
[80] Ibid., p. 208.

ungovernable'[81]. In the example of Baker, we see the passing of time sap his energy, the quality of deliberation eroded as he becomes progressively overwhelmed by the complex demands arising in the world. While the refrain that 'politics erodes you' is particularly reflective of political life, this is no less applicable to the living of life described throughout the work of O'Donovan, which involves the bringing of the self into view together with other selves, this bringing-together, however, constantly *contested*. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, Jesus cautions against fixing the eyes on darkness, this darkness risking the corruption of the onlooker's soul. Prudence, as part of deliberation, responds to Jesus' warning, as an 'illumination shining into dark corners and distinguishing solid shapes from shadows'[82].

This section has considered Turkle's deliberated nonchalance, which is a short-term striving for public admiration—Ellul's imagined 'victories' in the public realm—when searches involved in deliberation do not lead to immediate finding. The guidance of the Spirit and consistent prayer are necessary in these situations, as individuals bear their crosses, even if such bearing-in-deliberation only distantly images Jesus' plight in Gethsemane.

Discernment of Paths and Danger

O'Donovan uses the metaphor of a path to enter into his discussion on discernment: 'It happens quite frequently as we cross a bare hillside or open countryside that we ask about the surface formation of the ground we are walking on: is this a path?'[83]. We search for particular features, indications, or 'traces,' which might together form a track. It does not follow, however, that a track forms a path, and it does not matter how a

[81] Ibid., p. 167.
[82] Ibid., p. 210.
[83] Ibid., p. 216.

path was formed or whether it is useful to us. Rather, 'We must first know whether it is the *kind* of track that might lead us to a journey's end'[84]—a *direction*, or *somewhere it is going*. In short, we must ask whether the path 'has a direction discernible on inspection'[85].

O'Donovan cautions against anticipation as to where a path might lead, as if the crushed vegetation will lead to some further opening, for instance into open countryside well-marked by signposts. We cannot determine from the outset where a path might lead; the path 'must be followed until we get there'[86]. And so, 'we commit ourselves to its direction, trusting that where it leads is where we want to go. We rely upon the direction it presents to us, and hope to be led somewhere consistent with our overall purpose'[87].

Congruence of normativities and three cases

This metaphor, powerful indeed, is used to introduce the concept of discernment. Whereas deliberation is 'a focusing of vision upon ourselves and our circumstances,' in which we search for 'the appearance of a path of life and action, a direction that will emerge within the complex of circumstances'[88], discernment focuses on the myriad of constraints and openings involved in setting out on a particular course. Are we prepared to embark on a given path *now*, in this moment? O'Donovan stresses that we can never know decisively; what was at first a large and well-trodden path, wide enough for humans and perhaps even the local farmers' tractors, might quickly come to an end. The initial apparent moment of opportunity on a given path may have only been ephemeral.

How do we discern? O'Donovan writes that discernment does not occur through feeling, but rather, through a search for a 'congruence of normativities, where the ordered

[84] Ibid., p. 217.
[85] Ibid., p. 217.
[86] Ibid., p. 218.
[87] Ibid., p. 218.
[88] Ibid., p. 220.

demand of creation, the agential powers which we are conscious of possessing, and the moment of opportunity into which we are thrust all flow together'[89]. But there is no assurance that our discernment will actually lead to precise openings. If we alight on openings for action, then our search 'suggests to us the operation of a purpose'[90]—yet we must be prepared for no such answer.

I will build on O'Donovan's metaphor of a path, with three additions that I do not believe are incongruous with his original outline. Each highlights the difficulty of discernment, stressing the constant indeterminacy inherent in our navigations—that we may get things wrong. The first of these is that we must sometimes pursue the same paths on multiple occasions in our travels, venturing back and forth between the point of departure and what we at first perceive to be the point of arrival. This may be referred to as 'wandering,' but the wandering is far from aimless—it is attentive[91]. I believe this first possibility extends O'Donovan's earlier point on the *somewhere* that a path might be going. The second of these occurs when the paths that we must follow have not yet appeared, this suggesting that we must *return* to our points of departure. This extends O'Donovan's emphasis on standing and waiting.

The third of these is that the danger in O'Donovan's 'dangerous opportunity' is likely, if not inevitable. This extends O'Donovan's warning that 'We face danger as well as opportunity: at the very moment of reaching out to live and act, we may destroy ourselves as agents and assume the impotence of an object with no possibility left to us but self-pity'[92]. This is not an excuse for cynicism or giving up; far from it. It is rather to

[89] Ibid., p. 221.
[90] Ibid., p. 221.
[91] I am conscious that in Scripture, 'wandering' is not often portrayed in a positive manner. For instance, 'You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments' (Ps. 119:21).
[92] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 222. A useful comparison can be made in *Resurrection and Moral Order*, where O'Donovan writes 'Human nature, as Christians believe, is flawed not only in its instances but in its mould, so that to be human itself means that we find this order of things a problem and are rebelliously disposed towards it. And yet this order still stands over against us and makes its

recognise the limits of human agency, assuming that even our best attempts at discernment will sometimes, or even often, go wrong. This summons us to alertness and prudence—we must be *awake* and *on guard* in face of the dangers in the world.

In the first case, we can imagine that one departs from their home in Oxford, walking beyond Port Meadow, leading into the Wytham Woods and soon after into a series of paths running into and out of the River Thames. The series of hills, forests, waterways and towns across the countryside is vast and *interconnected*; if one is to discern correctly, searching for the path that is truly *theirs*, then some attentive wandering is necessary. One path quickly leads into another, into a third and then back into the first path. At first, the traveller 'set[s] off into the future with a purpose and a degree of anticipation'[93]—but these purposes and anticipations can only take one so far. One quickly recognises that the initial path leads into a vast network of paths, with short and long paths flowing into each other, punctuated by a myriad of stopping points.

This example is not an excuse for aimlessness, an inability to make decisions, shifting from one path to another. Rather, it suggests that some wandering along multiple paths is necessary. What one originally perceived to be a single path is in fact much more complex than was previously imagined. If what at first appears to be a path with its own direction is pursued, but quickly gives way to multiple paths—each with their own directions and in different ways interconnected—then what are the implications for discernment? We must indeed 'commit ourselves to its direction, trusting that where it leads is where we want it to go'[94]. But the stakes in our commitment, and in our 'hope to

claims upon us. When man is least on guard against God he finds his natural ordering reasserting itself and carrying him in directions against which his self-will revolts' (*RMO*, p. 17). In acting, we risk losing focus and pursuing a path that is not God's but is rather the path that we prefer.

[93] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 218.

[94] Ibid., p. 218.

be led somewhere consistent with our overall purpose'[95] are raised as we begin to perceive the complexity of the networks of which we are a part. Discernment, with its vast and interweaving paths in networked life, does not follow on seamlessly from efficacious deliberation.

We are called then to be awake to the reality of multiple directions, always in front of us and attempting to overwhelm us, which can pull the traveller off course. This approach to paths is characteristic of networked life—one short path connecting into another in a vast combination of paths. It is also reflected in Paul's journey from Antioch to Corinth, accompanied by Timothy and Silas: 'They try one thing, then another…. Like the children of Israel in the wilderness looking for the pillar of cloud and fire, they are relying on the spirit of Jesus, and the spirit appears to be allowing them to wander this way and that without a clear sense of guidance'[96]. Wright notes the vast territory covered by Paul and his companions, a period which was 'puzzling,' but which leads in to God calling Paul into Macedonia.

The second case focuses on the possibility that there are *no* paths available: 'We have no a priori assurance that we shall in fact discern such a confluence; we are always aware of the risk of being proved impotent to act'[97]. In cases where no apparent paths are available, one might need to demonstrate the virtue of patience. O'Donovan writes that 'Believers, at any rate, are taught to wait and pray for such indications, ready to recognize in them the leading of God', while also noting that waiting is 'not an experience peculiar to the religiously attentive'[98]. The virtue of patience is here antithetical to Turkle's 'tethered

[95] Ibid., p. 218.
[96] *Paul: A Biography*, p. 174.
[97] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 221.
[98] Ibid., p. 221.

self' that is shaped by rapid response to its constant communications: when there are no paths available, the response is to put *more* out into the world.

What is one to do, however, if despite their patience and endurance, the right path does not open up? To not act is not an option in many cases and for an ever-increasing number of people. The paths that are available are likely to present more danger than opportunity. If one is to discern, then this must occur rapidly or else the agent will face destruction in world-time, particularly as we have seen in Burt's discussion on control or dominance in networked life, individuals seeking constant material advantage within their respective network structures. How are individuals to discern when few paths emerge in patient endurance? I view this case as one representative of scarcity; it is in stark opposition to the vast interconnected world described above.

It is here that we can reach into O'Donovan's *Self, World and Time*, to his discussion on moral awareness: 'And finding ourselves awake, we know we must get our attention to being wider awake. Out of this focused attention moral thinking arises'[99]. And later, as we have seen in the Chapter Two discussion contrasting the Adams and O'Donovan accounts of moral experience, 'Waking is thrust on us. We do not consider it, attempt it and then perhaps achieve it; we are claimed for it, seized by it'[100]. Action must be orientated toward 'the *next* moment into which we may venture our living and acting, the moment which presents itself as a possibility'[101]. The moment which presents itself as a possibility here may not be the right path, but instead a temporary *bridge* to a right path.

Adams provides the example of Gauguin who leaves his family, departing to Tahiti, in order to paint as part of a discernment that might be considered a vocation.

[99] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 4.
[100] Ibid., p. 9.
[101] Ibid., p. 15.

However, we need not use such grandiose examples; the hopeful artist might simply require the temporary bridge of a local supermarket job in order to respond to a purpose focused on painting. The path is in this example a short walk to a store only several blocks away—not a remote island. What matters is that one is able to act, regardless of how small or insignificant such actions in world-time may be, searching for short paths that over time might provide some direction. One searches for a *way*—'finding a way' through networked life. The painter's stroll to the supermarket is, in God's view, an excellent path, a modest purpose responding to created goods that God has offered to love.

The third case focuses on the inevitably of danger in action. To the earlier point that danger accompanies opportunity, O'Donovan writes that 'As every purpose may fail of success, so every end-of-action has its shadow side. We glimpse the possibility of ourselves as failures in life and action'[102]. Our anticipations follow suit: 'Our future self beckons through each next act that we purpose, but like a ghost cannot tell us whether it portends weal or woe'[103]. I believe that O'Donovan is correct, but as with the previous two examples, his account can be extended, and that this is *particularly* so in his account of danger.

Here, we should assume that danger is not just possible but inevitable, given the conditions outlined above[104]. The interconnectedness of networked life coupled with material conditions of scarcity requires that agency be seen, as O'Donovan describes, as a

[102] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 223.
[103] Ibid., p. 223.
[104] The possibility of danger in traversing a given path in networked life is akin to Stackhouse, Jr.'s example of movement (within a spaceship) in an ambiguous starscape, involving green ('come here'), yellow ('be careful of this'), red ('stay away') and white (neutral) stars, the question being 'So what do we do?' (*Need to Know*, p. 240). In such steering, one seeks neither complete knowledge—which is impossible—nor does one only move in the direction of green stars, since green stars are likely to be mixed with yellow, white and red stars. Rather, 'we trust God, recognizing that God recognizes us; our limitations, our tendencies, our drives, our fears. God guides us accordingly… so as to bring us from place to place…. Sometimes, however, God knows that the best way forward is actually to head for that peculiar range of yellow over there instead, the one dangerously close to the frightening red patch' (Ibid., p. 242).

double-edged sword: ‘so every end-of-action has its shadow side’[105]. We are in constant danger. This is a reality of having agency in networked life, actions criticised from every angle in a world of overheated communications. In a world that is deemed to be rapidly changing, where speed of communication is prized, prudence is vital, for missteps can prove fatal. In his conclusion to *Finding and Seeking*, O’Donovan highlights the role of the media in this predicament: ‘Devoting their full attention to the breaking wave, they echo its roar to us; we call upon them to show us the world new every morning, as though there never was a yesterday’[106]. This speed is antithetical to human agency, not just limiting opportunity for action, but also amplifying the negative effects when action goes wrong.

Watchfulness

Psalm 119

If we are to focus on Scripture, as far as discernment of paths or ways for action in the face of danger is concerned, then Psalm 119 provides us with a clear basis for discussion. The psalmist writes from a place of considerable distress, reflected in ‘They have almost made an end of me on earth’ (Ps. 119:87)[107] and ‘The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your decrees’ (Ps. 119:95)[108]. Danger is nearing, with the psalmist asking God ‘How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me’ (Ps. 119:84)[109]. Moreover, the psalmist is surrounded by individuals who show little care for the law and wisdom of God, creating a profound sense of exclusion reflected in ‘I live as an alien in the land’ (Ps. 119:19)[110]. It is difficult to

[105] Ibid., p. 223.
[106] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 234.
[107] New Revised Standard Version, p. 597.
[108] Ibid., p. 597.
[109] Ibid., p. 597.
[110] Ibid., p. 595.

imagine a modern equivalent to the danger faced by the psalmist, who is pursued relentlessly, traps set in order to catch the psalmist off guard.

In a time of utter darkness and depravity, however, the psalmist maintains his trust in God, seeking Him with even more of his heart: 'With my whole heart I seek you: do not let me stray from your commandments' (Ps. 119: 10)[111] and 'I implore your favour with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise' (Ps. 119: 58)[112]. In times of persecution, it might be expected that individuals will demonstrate less faith in God, wondering why they are being tested, but we see the psalmist cry out more loudly for God's salvation. We see the psalmist rising late at night and at early hours in praise of God: 'At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous ordinances' (Ps. 119: 62)[113], 'I rise before dawn and cry for help; I put my hope in your words' (Ps. 119:147)[114] and 'My eyes are awake before each watch of the night' (Ps. 119:148)[115]. Indeed, the psalmist seeks God's word continuously, writing 'My soul is consumed with longing for your ordinances at all times' (Ps. 119:20)[116].

There are multiple references to a path, or way, and it is through God that the psalmist receives light within darkness: 'Your word is a lamp to my feet' (Ps. 119:105)[117]. The psalmist's walk, however, is not a slow, tentative walk as might be expected with an individual making their way through the darkness of night, but rather one of considerable urgency: 'When I think of your ways, I turn my feet to your decrees; I hurry and do not

[111] Ibid., p. 595.
[112] Ibid., p. 596.
[113] Ibid., p. 596.
[114] Ibid., p. 599.
[115] Ibid., p. 599.
[116] Ibid., p. 595.
[117] Ibid., p. 598.

delay' (Ps. 119:59-60)[118], with the psalmist asking God to 'Keep my steps steady according to your promise' (Ps. 119:132)[119].

We see here the psalmist demonstrating complete, unwavering faith in God at a time of enormous adversity. The psalmist is committed to walking in God's ways, not his own, prepared to be led in whichever direction God chooses. And this is to be met with openness rather than trepidation or resistance: 'Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it' (Ps. 119:35)[120]. The psalmist recognises that he has wandered off God's paths at times, but he has been brought low, humbled and therefore asking for God's salvation. This is reiterated in the closing of the psalm, the psalmist recognising that 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek out our servant, for I do not forget your commandments' (Ps. 119:176)[121].

We see in other psalms a focus on God's ways, particularly in response to dangers. In Psalm 5, the psalmist asks God to 'make your way straight before me' (Ps. 5:8)[122], surrounded by enemies who attempt to deceive him. In Psalm 16 God provides counsel in the night, the psalmist writing 'You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fulness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore' (Ps. 16:11)[123]. Psalm 25 makes known the dangers around the psalmist, and with enemies beckoning the psalmist writes 'Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long' (Ps. 25:4-5)[124].

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[118] Ibid., p. 596.
[119] Ibid., p. 598.
[120] Ibid., p. 596.
[121] Ibid., p. 599.
[122] Ibid., p. 520.
[123] Ibid., p. 526.
[124] Ibid., p. 532.

O'Donovan, examining the use of the Hebrew term *derek* (or a 'path' or 'way') references the work of J.K. Aitken, who builds on D.A. Dorsey to identify 'three broad sense-groups [in the Masoretic text of the Scriptures]: (i) a road, (ii) a journey, (iii) a course of travel or route, treating all metaphorical applications of the word to the living of life under the third sense-group'[125]. However, O'Donovan suggests that each sense has a metaphorical application, *derek* representing a *decision*, the second as a *consistent course of life* or *conduct*, and the third as a *prescribed pattern of conduct,* or *law*[126]. However, 'The three senses of the metaphor are in practice interwoven, so that a prayer for a path in an emergency can lead to a prayer for instruction in the path of God's commands'[127]. He notes that this is particularly the case in Psalm 119, examining verses 25-32 which 'describes a drama of moral transformation,' where the 'metaphor [of the path] stands guard over the congruence of vocation and world-order, the agent's particular prospects for action bearing the hallmark of God's purposes'[128].

The example of Psalm 119 allows us to begin to consider *God's way* that cuts through the interconnected paths that are a part of world-time. The psalmist asks to be shown the path of life; it is not for him to decide what this is. We see an individual that has wandered, but who is guided by God in the dark, with the word of God allowing the psalmist to remain attentive at all hours. The psalmist does not ask where God's way might lead, but rather undergoes a moral transformation, as O'Donovan notes, through God's way. This way is not without strife, but it sustains the psalmist in the face of persecution. Alternatively, we can see that without God's way, there is disorder, or chaos. The individuals pursuing the psalmist are focused on setting traps for others; that is, on

[125] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 218.
[126] Ibid., p. 218-219.
[127] Ibid., p. 219.
[128] Ibid., p. 220.

material concerns. It is turning to God, however, that the psalmist can find salvation, rather than continue to experience despair.

If we are to consider the 'congruence of normativities' raised in the earlier discussion, then it is the ordered demand of creation that takes precedence in Psalm 119; agential powers as well as the moment of opportunity in the world diminish in importance. I believe this is necessary, for, as I have attempted to show, individuals are stymied whenever they try to make their marks on the world (or more specifically, on the networks of which they are a part). They are, instead, overwhelmed, ordered creation determining *them*, but in a manner that leads to the destruction of souls as O'Donovan highlights in the earlier discussion. To follow God's way, however, as is seen in Psalm 119, requires that the life of the agent be determined by God. One must, in short, have faith in the way that is opened for action.

This section has focused on Psalm 119 as a representation of moral transformation, in which the psalmist's attention is on God's way rather than on the material world, which lays traps and leads to eventual despair. The psalmist, in Psalm 119, maintains constant trust in God even as he endures affliction, followed and persecuted by his enemies—his steps are marked not by tentativeness but rather by considerable urgency. It is on this point of awakening to morality that I will briefly examine the summons to watchfulness in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Watchfulness

In the Gospel of Matthew, it is written 'But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father' (Matt 24:36-37)[129]. The story of the flood is told where 'they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all

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[129] New Revised Standard Version, p. 29.

away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man' (Matt 24:39)[130]. We are then told to 'Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming' (Matt 24:42)[131]. The chapter ends with the example of a thief; had the owner known what hour of the night the thief was coming, then he would have 'stayed awake' (Matt 24:43)[132]. We are given another therefore: 'Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour' (Matt 24:44)[133]. What was first a call to attend to the day becomes a call to attend to the hour.

The Gospel of Mark also combines the day and hour: 'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the father' (Mark 13:32)[134]. Here we are told explicitly to 'Beware, keep alert…' (Mark 13:33)[135] although slaves are urged to 'Keep awake' for the return of their master when he 'comes suddenly' (Mark 13:36)[136]. In the Gospel of Luke, blessed will be the slaves who are prepared for the return of their master, the chapter beginning with the demand to 'Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit' (Luke 12:35)[137]. Here the slaves that are ready to serve at a moment's notice will be able to eat, served by the master to whom they were originally called to service. In each of the Gospels, appeals for watchfulness are made recognising the possibility of danger. We may expect a thief as one evident form of danger; in the story of the flood we are presented with a much different scenario. It is while *enjoying* others' company that individuals are encountered in their unpreparedness, quickly swept away.

Are these examples meant to urge individuals to refrain from sleeping, refraining from enjoyment? In a discussion on the command of watchfulness in the Gospels,

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[130] Ibid., p. 29.
[131] Ibid., p. 29.
[132] Ibid., p. 29
[133] Ibid., p. 29
[134] Ibid., p. 45
[135] Ibid., p. 45
[136] Ibid., p. 45
[137] Ibid., p. 80

O'Donovan writes 'At this point it is impossible to draw a clear line between literal and metaphorical senses of "waking." The disciples' literal sleepiness is a symbol of the spiritual danger against which Jesus warns them'[138]. Surely this cannot be an appeal to remain physically awake. And yet the specific mention of the unexpected *hour*, in addition to the coming *day*, does provide some indication of the seriousness required in watchfulness[139].

The parables on watchfulness suggest, with their emphasis on hours, that preparation for the Kingdom of God must be *constant*—the demand to keep awake, to stay alert, is continuous. A striking lesson from these parables is that it is *right* when the moral agent's guard is let down that danger strikes. What is the call to watchfulness *for*? In Matthew, the parable on the necessity for watchfulness is followed by a parable on the faithful or the unfaithful slave—the faithful slave working when his master returns. As his death nears, Jesus tells of the exhortation to watch: 'Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trip' (Luke 21:34-35)[140]. We are then told of Jesus' daily ministry in the temple. The emphasis here is on faith in redemption, not on the material conditions of life in the flesh. Here we see faith strengthened through prayer.

We see elsewhere Jesus' disciples' sleepiness preceding moral disaster. It is as Jesus asks his disciples 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial' (Luke 22:46)[141] that he is betrayed by Judas Iscariot. It is not long before this that the disciples engage in argument with each other as to which one of them is

[138] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 8.
[139] Bonhoeffer helpfully warns against anxiety, or on a technique-enabled attempt to seize control of others or of goods in the world, for 'The coming day, even the coming hour, are placed beyond our control. It is senseless to pretend that we can make provision because we cannot alter the circumstances of this world…. God will help us in the hour of need, and he knows our needs' (*Discipleship*, p. 125).
[140] New Revised Standard Version, p. 91.
[141] Ibid., p. 93.

the greatest, to which Jesus responds 'But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves' (Luke 22:26)[142]. Here the disciples' pride, and Jesus' promise to confer on them a kingdom, precedes their sleep at a critical moment. Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane as briefly examined in the section on deliberation, contrast Jesus, praying that, 'if it were possible, the hour might pass from him' (Mark 14:36)[143] with Peter, James and John falling asleep on three occasions. They are unable to respond to Jesus in the final instance, suggesting that in the failure to be watchful, individuals lose their ability to communicate—one must be constantly awake and on guard in order to know what to *say*.

The demand for watchfulness is one of constant attention to agency, recognising that the danger of losing one's soul is ever-present. This requires ongoing discernment, focused not only on the day, but also on the hour of action. Practically, the moral agent must be on guard, aware that any valuing of life in the flesh risks sending oneself down the wrong path, and that even the slightest mistake makes this risk a real possibility. The dangerous opportunity in action is constantly on the moral agent's mind. The reality of dangerous opportunity, however, should not be a reason for paralysis and inaction, but rather for sharpness in practical reasoning, itself grounded in the God-given moral order. Here 'Practical reason looks for a word, a word that makes attention to the world intelligible, a word that will maintain the coherence and intelligence of the world as it finds its way through it, a word of God'[144]. The exhortations to 'Be on guard' and 'Keep awake,' along with—in case one has drifted into sleep—a jolting 'Get up,' serve as reminders to maintain constant attention.

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[142] Ibid., p. 92.
[143] Ibid., p. 55.
[144] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 12.

Should the moral agent then limit sleep, focused intently on taking initiative in order to sustain personal agency? O'Donovan sheds light on this question: 'To be watchful is to attend to *oneself*. If attentiveness means bringing the world into view, it means bringing ourselves into view together with the world'[145], as was examined in Chapter Two, particularly in relation to community criticism. Attention to oneself, however, requires realism in one's talents as well as one's limitations. Along with watchfulness comes the need to 'know thyself'—to be clear on what is necessary to keep oneself awake morally, in world-time but also in relation to Life in the Spirit. This section has demonstrated the significance of watchfulness, not just in every day but in every hour, for it is when one's guard is let down that danger strikes.

Vocational Projects: Moral Seriousness and Self-denial in the Pursuit of Excellence

Writing names on created goods

It is at this point that we can return to the initial discussion on deliberation as it leads into discernment, outlined in *Finding and Seeking*, that 'deliberation must conclude in an act of *discerning the time*'[146]. We find ourselves in constant indeterminacy, which O'Donovan characterises as 'a moment in an ongoing task of moral determination, a phenomenon perpetually presenting itself, perpetually to be overcome, as much part of our exercise of freedom as determinacy is. It is the condition of our present moment, this need to get a purchase on the future horizon as an opening for reasonable action'[147]. We must search constantly for what is right to do, and *when* we should act. How then are we to discern with *excellence* if presented with ongoing indeterminacy? It is here that we can turn to Adams' account of vocation, whose discussion on love of the good within vocation

[145] Ibid., p. 12.
[146] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2,* p. 215.
[147] Ibid., p. 215.

can help to breathe life into what may appear at points to be an overwhelming account of discernment presented by O'Donovan. This discussion is centred on love of goods that God offers to us.

Adams proposes multiple definitions of vocation in his account of vocation, but his primary definition centres on love, loving goods serving as the structure of vocations: 'My suggestion is that vocation is primarily a matter of *what goods are given to us to love*, and thus of *our part in God's all-embracing and perfect love*'[148]. The main vocation for individuals is to participate in God's all-embracing love, or God's project; however, the limitedness of human capacities means that individuals must give focus to particular goods and projects. It is unclear at points, however, throughout the text as to the way or manner in which individuals are to love particular goods as part of their vocations—the central question is whether goods are offered to individuals to love, or whether individuals *claim* particular goods, writing their names on them.

Adams begins his chapter on vocation with the question 'Is there some task in the universe that is *mine* in a morally valid way?' and soon after asks 'How does an ethical concern get my name written on it?[149]. In a later discussion on the structure of vocation as a calling to love the good, Adams poses the question 'What writes our name on more specific tasks?'[150]. He sees the love of particular goods as being shaped by projects which individuals are to make their own[151]. The thrust of these questions is that individuals are seen to make *their* marks on the particular goods involved in a vocation: by writing their names on created goods, these created goods become *theirs* as part of their respective vocations.

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[148] *FI*, pp. 302-303.
[149] Ibid., p. 292.
[150] Ibid., p. 302. Adams later rejects the idea of 'goodness of fit,' that is between goodness of an action and a situation, as suffic[ing] to write out names on whatever tasks they should be written on' (Ibid., p. 296).
[151] Ibid., p. 303.

The tension, however, becomes clear through use of the language of offering, the clearest description of this 'reflected in my account of vocations as structured by goods that are *offered* to us to love'[152]. Yet, the language of offering follows a more *unambiguous* presentation of vocation, where 'My vocation claims me, and it defines my responsibilities'[153]. Adams' distinction between the offering of particular goods to love, and individuals putting *their* names on particular goods, requires further interrogation. Adams' account, as we have seen, stresses participation in God's all-embracing love, every individual having a role or part in God's love, for which they are responsible, proportioned to their capacities[154]. Still, to respond to an invitation or offer to love particular goods, taking responsibility for their nurturing, does not imply a *writing of names* on the goods. Writing of names on a created good or on a given task implies a certain possession, the openness in love, which Adams rightly identifies, shading in to a possible *management* of goods, as is reflected in a corrupted networked life.

As part of vocation, in Adams' account, individuals are responsible for loving particular goods, but responsibility in common moral experience does not typically imply possession: one needn't say, in glad responsibility, that something is typically *theirs*, but rather that one is entrusted with an opportunity to attend to a given good or task, the opportunity which *might nevertheless be taken away*. The writing of a name on a created good does away with this possibility of removal of responsibility, whether due to neglect by the individual agent, or simply due to God's providence; the possibility that God's will might involve the loving of another good at some point in time, which cannot be foreseen[155].

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[152] Ibid., p. 303.
[153] Ibid., p. 303.
[154] Ibid., p. 303.
[155] Bonhoeffer is critical of such a sense of possession, such a sense producing a false sense of security: 'Earthly possessions dazzle our eyes and delude us into thinking that they can provide security and freedom

Adams later introduces the language of commission, considering the loving of goods as 'a commission with which one will be entrusted'[156], this contrasted with *doing what one likes* within a vocation, but the latter point does not have what I suspect is Adams' intended effect. It is not nonchalance in attitude or behaviour that we are here concerned with—the doing what one likes—but rather with the prior issue of possession, the offering of the possibility of trust through a responsible commission, in Adams' account, permitting nevertheless a gradual sense of management, or control, of created goods through the writing of one's name on the commission[157]. To put one's name on a commission with which one is entrusted is to open the way to a sense of control that is not dissimilar to the idea of doing whatever one likes.

O'Donovan makes a similar comment in his *Entering into Rest*, in which he critiques the often totalitarian nature of discussion on *care*, in which 'We persist in assigning ourselves the role of providence…. commending love by evoking the neighbor's dependency and impotence, [which] contributes gratifyingly to our self-importance…. If we cannot take the neighbor's destiny over and organize it, we will "respectfully" leave him to his own devices'[158]. The criticism applies to Adams' framing of a commission: the 'entrusting' resulting from selection amongst alternative options in Adams' account veers perilously between managerial as well as laissez-faire attitudes, each of these, as O'Donovan notes, more similar than what is perhaps at first imagined[159].

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from anxiety. Yet all the time they are the very source of all anxiety…. By trying to insure for the next day we are only creating uncertainty to-day. The only way to win assurance is by leaving to-morrow entirely in the hands of God and by receiving from him all we need for to-day' (*Discipleship*, p. 122).

[156] *FI*, p. 304.

[157] Bonhoeffer, following on his critique of possession, recommends acknowledgement of the limits of a given commission, writing strikingly that 'The great task of the disciples is to recognize the limits of their commission' (*Discipleship*, p. 130).

[158] *Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology Volume 3,* p. 20.

[159] Ibid., p. 20.

Adams does not outline *how* individuals are to write their names on goods or tasks, but he provides several indications in his discussion on vocation and actuality. A critical examination of actuality, in relation to the process of becoming, will be one of the main themes of Chapter Four, but a brief reflection is relevant at this point on the topic of naming of goods, in particular. The question in play is that of the *goodness* of the goods offered to love, goodness—and by extension the *value* of goods as discussed in Chapter Two—needing to be critically examined. Adams notes that 'We are to love only goods (including persons) and to adopt only good projects,' and immediately after, 'If we are considering whether we should treat a particular project as central to our vocation, we must consider whether we have an actual possibility of pursuing it fruitfully, but also and even more important, whether it is *good enough*'[160]. Here, the language of 'adoption' implies a certain possession. Certain goods might be offered to individuals to love; the offering requires critical reflection. If these goods are 'good enough,' then they are to be adopted by the individual agent—the goods become *theirs*, offering, and reflection on goodness, translating gradually into control.

It is important, in Adams' analysis, that the adopted goods connect with who a person is, as well as the person that they are to *become*—an issue that raises the possibility of a certain self-justification, God's giving usurped by the imagined self, which risks figuring too prominently in a conception of vocation. As it stands, it appears in Adams' account of vocation that the offering of particular goods to love, and the writing of names on these goods, is at odds with responsibility. A sound responsibility does not consider whether goods are *good enough*, whether they are of sufficient value, for the individual—particularly in relation to the question of the individual's future self—but rather involves a

[160] *FI*, p. 309. My italics.

degree of humility[161]. One admires the excellence of a particular good or set of goods that one is offered by God to love, taking responsibility for these goods in a step-by-step manner, but while understanding that the offering remains always an *offering*—and so it might be taken away. The writing of names on goods that are deemed to be good enough for the self, implying a degree of haughty possession, negates the possibility of this taking-away, whenever God so wills[162].

O'Donovan, in comparison, uses the language of offering, but while resisting the inclination to see individuals write their names on particular goods. In the introductory paragraph of his section on vocation, O'Donovan provides the example of marriage as a vocation, noting that 'It is not a *good* wife that he needs to find at that point, but *his* wife'[163], though O'Donovan's *his* is less concerned with possession than is the *his* in Adams. The *his* in O'Donovan is more so a matter of individuality, than it is one of possession or even of management, the individuality of vocation seen in O'Donovan's commentary on Rahner, which stresses vocation as being 'coextensive with the person,'[164] but without God's conferring of identity on a person through calling-to particular tasks involving any progression into the individual writing of their names on the tasks or goods that are given. As a case in point, 'when Gabriel was sent to a maiden in Galilee, he did not share God's foreknowledge, but knew only what he was commanded to announce'[165].

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[161] Grisez, without using the term itself, views responsibility as involving a certain humility in relation to one's estimation of self and the supposed goodness of goods: 'It is essential to bear in mind that faithfulness is more important than success, since whatever fragile and mutilated goods are achieved by faithfully fulfilling one's responsibilities are material for the heavenly kingdom' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.5).

[162] Grisez considers not so much the taking-away of goods, but rather the 'harmful side-effects' of fulfilment of responsibility in relation to certain goods, which may tempt *individuals* to 'set aside the responsibility' as part of a vocation (Ibid., 7.E.5).

[163] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 222.

[164] Ibid., p. 228.

[165] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 230.

Particular goods are offered by God to individuals, but these goods are offered in the *now*: they are to be loved one step at a time, resisting the urge, if not propensity, *to take the goods over*. The writing of names on goods, as is suggested in Adams, would in O'Donovan's analysis be reflective of presumptuousness, whereby individuals assume foreknowledge as to the continued offering of goods. Here, 'The actor [in a vocation] cannot confront the future as though it were the past extended forward, like a historian with eyes in the back of his head'[166]. To write one's name on particular goods would assume that the past and present regularities will persist, such writing implying a degree of control that does not, in fact, exist[167].

O'Donovan's idea of offering is much more restrained than that of Adams. O'Donovan defines vocation most precisely as 'not a single function, but an ensemble of worldly relations and functions through which we are given, *in particular*, to serve God and realize our agency'[168]. His account of vocation emphasises the notion of *promise*[169], in particular, in that it is a self in the future offered to individuals, but whose content will constantly *elude* individuals to some extent. O'Donovan highlights the *way* in which a

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[166] Ibid., p. 229.

[167] O'Donovan addresses the topic of naming directly in a brief aside prior to his more focused examination of vocation. He considers the 'persistent reworking of the metaphor of naming' in the New Testament, particularly in the Apocalypse, in which 'the old name summoned the agent to self-aware responsibility… [whereas] the new name crowns agency with achievement' (*Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 224). The new name given to individuals is given 'public reality' by God; it is not necessarily apparent in the material world. This distinction between the public reality before God, and the realm of public admiration in networked life, serves as another point of differentiation between the accounts of O'Donovan and Adams, the latter's more focused on a writing of names on finite goods materially, in the created world bereft of Spirit.

[168] Ibid., p. 224.

[169] Bonhoeffer considers the 'promise Christ gives to their prayer,' rather than any material possession, to be 'the doughtiest weapon in their armoury' (*Discipleship*, p. 131). Whereas the Gentiles in Bonhoeffer's account are restless, living with hardened hearts, detached from loving relations, the 'disciples know what they are looking for…. The disciples seek a God whom they have found in the promise they have received from Jesus' (Ibid., pp. 128-131). There is here an overlap between O'Donovan and Bonhoeffer in their openness to the self offered to an individual as part of their response to the call of God. This openness may necessitate a death of the previous self with its haughty emphasis on becoming, this openness unpredictable in eventual result. Indeed, 'When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world' (Ibid., p. 44).

future self is offered, which in his account is less a matter of the event of calling, or the concrete, worldly forms through which vocation might be described, than it is a *service* involving particular relations, responding as part of one's agency to challenges and opportunities *as they are presented*[170].

O'Donovan, unlike Adams, stresses that individuals are offered, not *given* worldly goods and relations, and that these goods and relations might be *lost*. The example provided is that of a theologian, musician and poet, whose gifts might be put into practice with consistency and unity, though while reposing too much confidence in their exemplification in the material world[171]. This, in O'Donovan's account, is 'a moral danger, especially [that of] idolatry'[172]. His analysis is one that considers the moral danger in worldly success, one where the presumption of clarity, consistency and sustainability of a given vocation cuts off critical examination of the presumed vocation. This cutting-off of thinking not only diminishes agency; it opens individuals to the prospect of more nefarious actors interrupting the shaping of a vocation, the prior guidance of the Spirit in such shaping reverting to a life focused on mere facticity. The facticity here involves a life 'shrunk in upon its preoccupations while relationships are poisoned and opportunities missed'[173], the self-interest implied in one's own preoccupations reducing the paying of attention to God, serving Him—forgetting that vocation is, in O'Donovan's account, a promise whose success is not worldly, but rather Spiritual.

This section has stressed the constant indeterminacy that is perpetually to be overcome in the formation of a vocation, indeterminacy in action requiring effective

[170] O'Donovan presents numerous instances which risk interrupting the process of discernment in vocation, one such example being a flight to safety in forms or titles, which might impede the serving of God through vocation. It is not to particular jobs or occupations to which individuals are called, in O'Donovan's account, but rather to 'a service that can stand the test of fire at the last before God' (*Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 225).
[171] Ibid., p. 225.
[172] Ibid., p. 225.
[173] Ibid., p. 225.

discernment in the paths on which individuals walk. The offering of goods by God, which is part of vocation, risks giving way—as we have seen in Adams' account—to a possession in which individuals write their names on the goods offered to them. I have suggested that the offering of goods must remain an offering, individuals resisting the temptation to take over the goods which they encounter in the world, but rather maintaining terms of relations characterised by service.

Opportunity

O'Donovan's section on vocation involves three separate references to *opportunity*, though opportunity in his account is not described in terms of material rewards, but rather in terms of right action *in the present*. The first use of opportunity by O'Donovan in the text is preceded by a reflection that 'To know what such an opening for action *means*, we must discover the one and only moment that lies open before ourself', the opportunity being the precise *moment* available for agency[174]. The second use of opportunity follows O'Donovan's critique of vocation as an all-absorbing job or occupation, such absorption risking idolatry, again removing attention from the times given for action. The third use of opportunity follows the framing of vocation as promise, which requires that individuals attend to the present, rather than assuming that past regularities will translate seamlessly into the present or future. All three uses of opportunity in O'Donovan's discussion on vocation relate to *time*, vocation offering a particular conception of the self, though only in pieces and only in given moments.

O'Donovan's vocation is one that unfolds in steps, always holding imagined futures at bay, even if material circumstances appear to *point* in a consistent direction[175].

[174] Ibid., p. 222.
[175] Bonhoeffer is even sharper than O'Donovan on this account, specifying that 'Everything depends on the first step…. The first step of obedience makes Peter leave his nets, and later get out of the ship; it calls upon the young man to leave his reaches' (*Discipleship*, p. 21). Grisez too emphasises the unfolding of a vocation in a step-by-step, often gradual, manner, throughout *every stage of one's life*: 'Thus, from childhood until

Indeed, 'If we are sure we know what our vocation is, and are no longer ready to see in circumstances a new challenge or opportunity, we have abandoned the task of discerning it'[176]. O'Donovan here does not dismiss the seeking of a particular self-conception, this spurring action through Eros; he is rather open to such self-conceptions not translating into reality, for whatever reason: 'We glimpse the possibility of ourselves as failures in life and action. No security is possible in anticipation'[177]—and he is correct in saying so[178]. Individuals are to be, in O'Donovan's account of vocation, particularly on guard against the possible manifestation of a vocation in the world involving material success; it is at the moment of success that danger may present itself.

Adams' account of vocation, as described particularly in his section 'A Conception of Vocation,' similarly provides three references to *opportunity*, though with the accent placed less on time than on love. Following the examples of religious orders and marriage as forms of vocation, Adams notes that 'In both cases one is drawn, we hope, by seeing a real opportunity given to one to love certain goods, and persons, in a certain form of life'[179]. What matters in Adams' reference to opportunity is that the opportunity is free, and he believes it better to decide on the loving of a particular good when multiple such options exist, than where the decision is the only decision available. Hence, 'it may be doubted whether someone who sees no acceptable alternative to it is ready for such a

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death, an individual should listen for God's personal call, shaping and reshaping his or her life according to faith and hope, and living each day of it with love' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus,* vol. 2, 7.E.2). This day-by-day discernment of a call is a *struggle*, as reflected for instance in the life of Dorothy Day, as she sought to 'find and conform to the will of God in every singe aspect of life' (*Personal Vocation*, p. 34).

[176] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2,* p. 225.

[177] Ibid., p. 223.

[178] Grisez here undergirds O'Donovan's emphasis on restraint in the realm of anticipations, in that 'When false expectations eventually encounter hard realities, optimism gives way to pessimism and cynicism' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.5). In order to avert the abandoning of vocational commitments, Grisez recommends a living by hope, which 'counts on God to overcome… every evil… [and]… anticipates limited success and much frustration' (Ibid., 7.E.5.). This is not only a helpful reminder in the limiting of haughty anticipations in favour of a grasping of hard realities, but even more so a belief in the power of God to overcome whatever evils one might encounter along a given path.

[179] *FI*, p. 304.

decision; in that way the vocation is viewed as an invitation rather than a command'[180]. This second formulation of opportunity is important, for it presents vocation in terms of decision: certain goods might be offered to individuals to love, many of which *may* be loved, and yet it is important that the individual is 'very free' to decide on the right course of action[181].

The proposal of vocation as a commission in Adams, rather than being an opportunity to do whatever one wants, *follows on the prior decision* to love one or multiple created goods from a wider set of possible created goods, undertaken with some seriousness and sense of responsibility. This prior decision, however, diminishes somewhat Adams' qualification of opportunity as consisting of more than simple 'liking,' for opportunity is not a self-offering from God to be prepared for seriously in deliberation, as it is in O'Donovan, taken up in the moment that cannot be predicted. In other words, the commission with which one is entrusted is not *given* by God to an individual at the opportune time, self-disclosure of the commission depending on prior faith in God's summons, God's summons in turn demanding persistent action, sometimes without

[180] Ibid., p. 304.

[181] Bonhoeffer, in very sharp contrast to Adams, sees this conception of vocation arising through selection amongst options in the world as being disastrous to spiritual life: 'This cheap grace has been… disastrous to our own spiritual lives. The only effect that such a word could have on us was to bar our way to progress, and seduce us to the mediocre level of the world, quenching the joy of discipleship by telling us that we were following a way of our own choosing, that we were spending our strength and disciplining ourselves in vain—all of which was not merely useless, but extremely dangerous' *(Discipleship*, p. 13). In contrast, Grisez strikes a more balanced tone as far as choice is concerned in the discernment of vocation, this balance considering individual choice on the one hand and constraints of given circumstances on the other: 'While many elements of one's vocation are undertaken by free choices, conditions of life beyond one's control can be elements of it insofar as they provide special opportunities to live according to faith' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.2). Grisez provides a robust description of the process of vocational decision-making, in which prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and constant preparation—akin to O'Donovan's deliberation—allows for a gradual *elimination* of vocational options as one comes to recognise God's will. Such recognition involves a 'sense of light, joy, and peace' (Ibid., p. 7.E.3). Grisez thus overlaps with O'Donovan in highlighting the role of deliberation as part of preparation for a possible vocation, though while preserving space for human choice in a manner reflective of Adams and in contrast with O'Donovan (and in particular contrast to Bonhoeffer, who sees such choice as a means to mediocrity, if not danger, in the world and in spiritual life).

concrete immediate results in the world[182]. Rather, the commission is given *for consideration* in Adams, and then *selected* by the individual, ideally, in Adams' view, amongst competing alternatives[183]. Adams' commission is, in short, bereft of faith in the particular created goods offered at the opportune *moment*.

There is much less emphasis on endurance in Adams' conception of deliberation than there is in O'Donovan's. Deliberation is not a term that figures prominently in Adams' account of vocation, though Adams does distinguish between consequentialist deliberation and 'deliberation guided by a conception of vocation.' A consequentialist deliberation is a deliberation that produces 'the best results, all things considered'[184]. Through a brief examination of the life of Bonhoeffer, Adams highlights belonging, caring and participation as factors in effective deliberation, each of these of greater significance in his account of deliberation than what makes a person happy, or what is best for him materially.

Adams' deliberation does not reference the formation of intermittent purposes for action, as is the case in O'Donovan. He proposes instead 'accepting' vocation as involving 'personal projects' to which one is 'committed,' the projects also involving 'caring of something in particular'[185]. The personal projects in Adams' deliberation guided by a conception of vocation are presumably formed through the process of deliberation, but the

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[182] Faith is for Grisez and Shaw the grounding of all forms of personal vocation. Indeed, 'The commitment of faith is the grounding of personal vocation. All other large life-organizing commitments should be made in such a way as to contribute to the carrying-out of this basic commitment of Christian life (*Personal Vocation*, p. 100). Ellul, in his discussion on freedom and vocation in the conclusion of *The Ethics of Freedom*, is similar, noting that 'Man should develop a single life and not a double life…. In these conditions it is evident to faith that since God is the one essential thing in life, unity should be constituted around and in terms of grace, the revealed word, and faith,' p. 497.
[183] Grisez and Shaw are more welcoming of such optionality as part of the context for personal vocation than is Bonhoeffer, remarking that 'only with the opening-up of society—more fluidity, a heightened sense of personal options, stronger awareness by individuals of the opportunity and the need to find a way of organizing their lives—does the appreciation of personal vocation become a realistic possibility for people in general' (*Personal Vocation*, p. 49).
[184] *FI*, p. 297.
[185] Ibid., p. 298.

manner of formation of projects is not outlined explicitly[186]. The examples provided are 'a piece of research to be accomplished, an organization to be served and developed, a child's life to be protected and fostered,' each of which is large or comprehensive in itself and potentially encompassing of a wider set of worldly goods and relations. Adams implies the need for endurance in deliberation, in that 'Accomplishing anything very good commonly requires willpower, determination, and persistence in the face of discouragement,' and he sees a consequentialist deliberation as 'lead[ing] to more of easy good, and less of difficult good,' but there is little examination of deliberation as part of *leading-in* to formation of projects, revealed gradually through faith[187].

Indeed, the endurance involved in Adams' account of deliberation involves much less emphasis than O'Donovan on continuous preparation—a chipping away—in advance of the opportune moments, this chipping-away involving the formation of concrete purposes conducive to action. Adams' deliberation appears to rely on intuition, more than it does on small-scale, continuous action in relation to created goods offered by God to an

[186] Grisez is a useful supplement to Adams in his discussion on projects through his distinction between vocational 'states of life,' 'projects' and 'goods' that comprise a vocation. Vocation is for Grisez *comprehensive*, encompassing every aspect of a person's life, since one's primary vocation is 'to be a Christian and to live the truth of one's faith' (*Personal Vocation*, p. 35). Yet, a vocation may evolve based on a person's state of life, for instance between childhood to years in formal education through to parenthood and then retirement. Within these stages are particular vocations for which varying levels of *certitude* are necessary, the commitments 'To marry, to accept ordination to the priesthood, and to make final religious vows… commitments of a special kind' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.3). These vocations require more deliberation, discernment and confidence than vocations related to a profession, which may change 'When a clear indication of which option better pleases one's better, Christian self emerges…' (Ibid., 7.E.3). Yet a *personal* vocation is more granular than a state of life, this the 'unique, unrepeatable role God calls each baptized person to play in carrying out the all-embracing divine plan…. [involving] the special network of commitments, relationships, and responsibilities characteristic of a particular state of life' (*Personal Vocation*, p. 35). Grisez uses the term 'project' in a manner reflective of the examples used in Adams—such as a research project—in that 'projects are… means to the goods to be served, [which]… can be modified or abandoned without unfaithfulness, if they fail to serve the purposes they were meant to serve or if the purposes can be served in other ways' (Ibid., 7.E.3). A project, such as a research project or raising of a child, is here likely to encapsulate the network of commitments, relationships and responsibilities described in *Personal Vocation*. Moreover, Grisez subordinates projects to *purposes* formed in deliberation, purposes oriented crucially to the serving of particular *persons* in the world throughout a life-course. The trusted, primary contacts within unique social worlds described in Chapter One are often the individuals that aid in the formation of purposes, as well as the objects of service, as part of the structuring and directing of a vocation.

[187] *FI*, pp. 298-299.

individual, the constant preparation which might *over time* take the shape of projects. Whereas personal projects are accepted or decided upon in Adams' deliberation guided by a conception of vocation, in O'Donovan's deliberation they are arrived at much more gradually, concrete projects formed perhaps in an unanticipated manner, the specific relations and goods that partly constitute them more likely to be the original objects of attention.

This section has differentiated between the O'Donovan and Adams conceptions of opportunity, the former emphasising time and the latter emphasising love. Vocation, in O'Donovan's account, offers a glimpse of a possible future self, but the realisation of the possible future self is not achieved through anticipation, nor is it focused on accepting comprehensive or well-formed projects. It is rather through *constant* preparation, in focusing on particular relations and created goods offered by God, that vocations might be formed in opportune moments. Adams' vocation involves the taking-up of projects that one accepts, the projects sometimes akin to commissions, which are likely to be selected from amongst competing alternatives. Whereas Adams references the endurance sometimes involved in vocation itself, the endurance is less reflective of persistent faith—action sustained within the unknown—than it is a matter of continued love of created goods whose structures are more or less already apparent as projects.

Worldly functions and projects

O'Donovan and Adams, however concur on the point that vocation cannot be reduced to the concrete worldly 'functions' that individuals variously fulfil throughout their lives. O'Donovan describes functions as 'the forms of work in which our service is socially recognized as a useful contribution to the common good, the "vocation" as trade

or profession'[188]. He qualifies his reflection in that 'vocation may be shaped by the recognized social role… [but] it is not exhausted by the role… [it] consists precisely in the concrete opportunities that arise, within and beyond the role, to do works that can never be exhaustively categorized according to their types, but can only be narrated as unique interpretations of the role'[189].

Adams, evoking Luther in particular, notes that 'The identification of vocation with job or work may once have been motivated by the desire of ensuring that everyone could have a vocation and easily recognize it,' but does not believe that vocations are so easily recognised[190]. There is a similarity between O'Donovan and Adams' rejection of worldly functions and that of Ellul, who notes that 'we [Christians]… have to discover a form of activity which will express our Christian vocation and thus be an incarnation of our faith…. This vocation must find expression in an action: an action that will have a social and collective impact which in one way or another can change the form of the world in which we are…'[191].

Whereas O'Donovan sees functions as likely to cut off the train of thought involved in deliberation as well as in discernment, this cutting-off leading to missed opportunities in moments given by God, Adams' critique of functions is tied more so to the arbitrary social structures perpetuating social injustices. Adams' concern with function as a manifestation of vocation is seen in his highlighting that 'The presumed role of divine providence in placing people where they were was allowed to be the principal sign of God's call to particular tasks, and people were advised to remain in vocations thus

[188] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 224.
[189] Ibid., p. 224.
[190] *FI*, p. 301.
[191] *The Ethics of Freedom*, p. 507.

identified as their own. This way of thinking about vocations had obvious conservative implications'[192].

It is the service, as well as the worldly relations involved in vocation, that is of particular interest to O'Donovan throughout his account; functions, names, and opportunities seen in terms of material, worldly accomplishments might be useful indicators or signposts as to the fruitfulness of a given vocation, but they are only *considerations* in discernment of a vocation—and potentially, misleading ones. O'Donovan, however, notes that vocation 'frames the unique historical role within a generally intelligible category,' general intelligibility involving the possibility of communication and discussion with others. His point is that whereas 'the actor must submit to the generic forms the world offers, consenting to be "a" physician, "a" parent, "a" friend…"' these categories are merely the *basis* for intelligible dialogue with others. The categories do not foreshadow the precise *service* that individuals are to provide as part of their participation in the world-order given by God[193].

These categories do not, at individual levels, strengthen endurance in the formation of purposes for action. Deliberation involves continuous thinking in every new today, as the present opens to the immediate future given by God. It is not guided by the perceived demands of a fixed, worldly category. Nor do worldly categories reveal the *actual* social relations germane to vocational discernment; that is, the concrete, trusting relations through which vocations can be helpfully discerned. Such worldly categories are abstract;

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[192] *FI*, p. 308.
[193] There is considerable overlap between O'Donovan and Grisez in use of intelligible categories as description of a vocation insofar as these highlight particular opportunities for *service* of others—and ultimately of God. The choice of a particular form of work or career, for instance, is more specifically 'to the good or goods which the line of work serves, and to the persons who can be served in respect to the relevant good or goods' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.3). Grisez is even more unequivocal on the centrality of serving others as part of the structuring of a vocation when he notes 'an indispensable sign of being called to anything is a favorable response from the other or others who must decide whether to accept the other' (Ibid., 7.E.3). He later highlights the role of *trusted* persons, including 'parents, confessors, and devout friends,' in helping to discern a possible vocation (Ibid., p. 7.E.3).

they risk masking the concrete opportunities for service to be discerned through focused attention on the ordering of relations and created goods within world-time.

A function, therefore, cannot encapsulate, in the analyses of O'Donovan and Adams, a vocation; it is, at most, an *indicator* of a larger project that is to be formed gradually, through action in the world. The earlier reference to Everett Rogers in his *Diffusion of Innovations* is relevant here, individuals needing to look beyond material valuing of individuals based on their explicit titles or roles, which merely *suggest* certain series of worldly relations within a given network structure, to alternative categories based on *tendencies* for action in the world—awareness of the tendencies of actions part of the role of prudence within deliberation[194].

These tendencies include concepts such as *innovators*, *opinion leaders* and *change agents*, each which risks losing its substance in networked life—prone to manipulation as referenced in Chapter One—but which nevertheless are informed by empirical evidence supporting these actions within networks structures. Even more significant is a discernment of a vocation involving attention to concrete, trusting relations that exist between individuals within given network structures, as discussed in the conclusion of Chapter Two in relation to Baker, Newell, Paul, Hill and the lone parent. In these examples, we move from the realm of appearances through public functions, to direct encounters occurring between relations characterised by trust; that is, within the *actual*, rather than the merely apparent, network structure.

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[194] A worldly calculation of benefits and costs of action in relation to the fulfilment of responsibilities toward goods and persons in a vocation is for Grisez a false prudence which 'manifests weakness of hope' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.5). In contrast, 'True prudence… determine[s] how best to fulfill responsibilities while minimizing the bad side effects' (Ibid, 7.E.5); that is, it incorporates awareness of the likelihood of evil and danger. Such danger may be seen in fellow actors using deceptive intelligible categories to camouflage nefarious intentions, this obstructing fulfilment of a vocation through engagement with potentially untrustworthy primary contacts.

A sense of restraint is necessary in God's perceived offering of individuals as potential components of a vocation, particularly when such individuals possess authority in the world and are related to created goods that one admires; that is, which might in Eros initiate a pursuit of excellence[195]. It is often the case that such individuals enter into one's life unexpectedly, as has been discussed in Chapters One and Two in reference to the five cases. However, it should not be assumed that such individuals are offered *by God*; the perception of offering might be a matter of self-deception, the result of a faulty deliberation, or, a temptation which serves as an opportunity to test resolve following the formation of a purpose for action in effective deliberation.

It is soon after Jesus' baptism, for instance, that he was 'led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil' (Matt 4:1)[196]. In *The Godfather*, Michael Corleone—while at the funeral of his late father Vito Corleone, and having become the head of his family business—is told that the first person to emerge from his family operation, offering a 'peace pact' with rival Mafia families, will in fact be a traitor, despite overt appearance of friendliness. The offer to mend ties is wisely ignored, the peace pact—as anticipated—an attempt to deceive and murder the new Godfather at a time of emerging opportunity. It is immediately *following* some worldly success in a pursuit of excellence, that temptation in the form of the devil is to be watched for[197]. Hence, as presumed

[195] However, Grisez cautions against undo analysis and criticism of others, which may serve as a barrier to the effective structuring and directing of a vocation. If one is to encounter ill-intentioned or simply careless others, then it is likely best to move on, for 'When the unwillingness of others to cooperate prevents Christians from committing themselves to something to which they thought they were called, they should accept that outcome as an inarguable sign of God's will' (Ibid., 7.E.3). In some cases, the trustworthiness of a primary contact is more ambiguous, and so 'The remedy is to remember that God calls one to do only what one can, by oneself and in cooperation with others,' this doing what one can opposed to an 'idealism which weakens faithfulness,' forgetting that the world is fallen and it is part of one's vocation to help redeem it (Ibid., 7.E.5). This sentiment is echoed in Stackhouse's emphasis on *making the best of it* in whatever circumstances one is presented, throughout his book of the same title.
[196] New Revised Standard Version, p. 3.
[197] Grisez and Shaw view Jesus' temptations, and particularly of the work of Satan behind such temptations, as 'seeking to induce Jesus to betray his personal vocation by exploiting his special relationship with the Father for his own ends…' (*Personal Vocation*, p. 43). These temptations re-emerge, according to Grisez and Shaw, at 'key moments' in his life (Ibid., p. 43), therefore implying that it is following manifestations of

worldly authorities enter into one's life, it is crucial that one first determines whether the authority is *for the good*, or instead wishes to corrupt the good, using it perhaps to secure material advantage in order to control or dominate. A persistent questioning of such authorities in the manner outlined in the Chapter Two discussion on Adams, alongside community criticism as seen in O'Donovan and exemplified in historical figures such as Baker, helps to elucidate such individuals' overarching purposes.

Should an individual appear, while maintaining a sense of restraint, to be *for the good*, then attention may be turned to the excellences of the created goods with which the individual in question is related. Adams notes, in a discussion on benevolence and self-interest, that 'if [benevolence] is to be an active and effective desire, it must be informed by some conception of sorts of excellence that it might be good for me to enjoy, and you must care about such excellences at least to the extent that you think it would be good for me to enjoy them…. you will not have an imaginative and creative love for me unless you *appreciate* a lot of the relevant excellences'[198]. The excellence of the created goods, and one's attitudes toward the created goods in question, will provide indication as to the trustworthiness of the individual, and in turn, whether they may be suitable as primary contacts within the formation of structurally autonomous networks. One must also ascertain whether an individual is *consistently* in favour of these created goods, particularly in the face of some hardship, this providing indication of the extent to which such relations might be viable parts of a vocation.

In networked life and within network structures, vocation is formed in part through God's offering of relations with authority figures, in whom one trusts, capable of serving as Burt's 'primary contacts' within their respective social worlds. Trustworthiness is

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worldly excellence as part of the forward direction of a vocation that individuals should be particularly watchful for the lurking of Satan.

[198] *FI,* p. 138.

determined over time, in a step-by-step manner, such an approach guarding against the sin of folly examined in Chapter Two, this sin characteristic of hasty action in networked life valuing rapid responses. Moreover, in determining the trustworthiness of a given person, one must look beyond the initially perceived or apparent network structure—represented in terms of functions or titles—thinking instead in terms of *conceptual* as well as *actual* relations between persons and created goods. The glimpsing of the actual network structure is a seeing of the unseen; that is, it involves *faith* as a precursor to loving participation in the world, faith conducive as O'Donovan notes to one *paying attention*, remaining awake, within their world-participation.

O'Donovan's deliberation, as endurance forming purpose, comes *prior* to the offering of trusted authorities, or 'primary contacts,' to serve as components in a vocation. The endurance in the formation of purpose resists a possible idolatry of central, authoritative figures in networked life, the idolatry of authority raised in Adams in particular. A more continuous preparation, undertaken in steps and narrowing possibilities, is a deliberation that resists the conflation of primary contacts and the formation of purpose; that is, which locates purpose for action *in one's primary contacts*, rather than in the deliberation that one has undertaken oneself, beforehand.

How is one to proceed in the possible engagement with worldly authorities when one's material circumstances are extremely limited, for instance in the case of the single parent outlined at the beginning of this chapter as well as in Chapters One and Two? In such cases, few individuals are likely to appear who are trustworthy. The Chapter One discussion on networked life and network structure highlighted that network volume is not necessarily an effective network strategy; that is, the growing of one's contact base, without considering the social worlds of which they are a part, increases network management burdens, without providing material return in terms of access to new

opportunities. Thus, if one's material circumstances are limited, one's *becoming*—enabled in part by access to opportunities through information as well as trustworthy contacts—does not require the formation of relations with more than only a small number of individuals. The lone mother might only need to form relations with a trustworthy relation in her child's school, or with the local church pastor, these few individuals sufficient in vocational discernment in response to the formation of a narrow purpose for action.

This section has resisted the notion that worldly functions serve as the main markers of a vocation, relations within the *actual* network structure, involving service of created goods deemed excellent, as the more accurate indicators. Within the actual network structure, God may offer the possibility of developing relations with worldly authorities reflective of the 'primary contacts' outlined in Burt; however, the trustworthiness of such individuals must be ascertained prior to these individuals becoming incorporated into one's vocation. The O'Donovan conception of deliberation, involving constant preparation, is one means to guard against the dangers involved in relations with such individuals despite their potential importance, purposes formed through deliberation limiting the possibility of the idolatry of authority specified by Adams.

Conclusion

We can conclude by returning to the metaphor of paths, combining this with the metaphor of projects. If there is a single path that must be followed, then it is God's path. To walk this path is the most fundamental of projects that may claim a person; it is a project involving constant danger. The ultimate risk, as O'Donovan writes, is to take the *wrong* path, overcome by dangerous opportunity in action. One must know, then, at which points to stop so as not to get caught in darkness—which short (or in some cases long) paths to take. But, it is inevitable that one will sometimes find themselves lost in the night, forced to set up camp in what may become their own Peniel. Discernment in these

situations involves constant watchfulness, for when danger arises one must be awake to meet the opportunity that is also present. Through the created goods and worldly relations to which we give our love and attention, we prepare ourselves for the numerous paths, emerging and interconnected, ahead of us.

In Genesis the story of Jacob wrestling with 'a man' represents the seriousness of the struggle in perceiving God: 'And Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. And he saw that he had not won out against him and he touched his hip socket and Jacob's hip socket was wrenched as he wrestled with him' (Genesis 32:25-26)[199]. In this incredible scene, Jacob is unable to see clearly who he is wrestling with. Whereas God refers to Jacob as Israel, God refuses to reveal his own name: 'Why should you ask my name?' (Genesis 32:30)[200]. The episode concludes with Jacob stating 'I have seen God face-to-face and I came out alive' (Genesis 32:31)[201], and yet Jacob is left limping—God has left His mark on him. We see here Jacob changed through his experience with God—in his struggle with God he has been given a new name. Robert Alter, in his interpretation of Jacob limping, writes that 'This physical note resonates with the larger sense of a man's life powerfully recorded in his story: experience exacts many prices, and he bears his inward scars as he lives onward….'[202]. It is the seriousness of his struggle with God that provides him with a new identity, a struggle that spans from the darkness of the night to the light of the day into which he emerges.

This chapter emphasises the necessity of deliberation, as seen particularly in O'Donovan through his emphasis on endurance forming purpose. The continuous preparation involved within a given pursuit of excellence responds to the challenge

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[199] Robert Alter *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018), p. 121.
[200] Ibid., p. 122.
[201] Ibid., p. 123.
[202] Ibid., p. 123.

outlined by Turkle, in the Chapter One discussion on *realtechnik*, the question related to what networked technologies are *for*. The formation of purposes for action reduces the possibility of idolatry of authority as outlined by Adams, as well as the corrupting of goodness—by presumed worldly authorities bent on securing short-term advantages—as supposed trusted primary contacts, within a moral agent's structurally autonomous network. A sense of restraint in the formation of such relations—even if assumed to have been offered by God—is necessary if one is to develop the excellent relations with a *small* number of individuals, as well as with created goods, that is part of vocation in networked life valuing limitlessness rather than focus.

In the following Chapter Four, we will critically examine O'Donovan's characterisation of faith as the root of action, emphasising a smallness in action which sees minuscule projects germinate over time, much like the seed in the Parable of the Mustard Seed. This will involve a more focused examination of Adams' notion of *becoming*, particularly in relation to an individual's existing material circumstances, that is, to their 'actuality' as outlined in his conception of vocation. We will resist the propensity for grandiose self-articulation in networked life, as opposed to more humble notions of becoming in relation to the self, Charles Taylor serving as one of our main interlocutors in this chapter.

Chapter Four: Vocational Action and a Well-Ordered System of Motives and Values

In networked life, it is the network that is seen to determine the agent through 'socially-induced action,' shaping his potential paths through the world. Action is a constant attempt to get a handle on one's networks; that is, to achieve control through the careful use of networked technologies and position within network structure; there is little apparent need for faithful action. The modern propensity, as we have seen in previous chapters, is to act within open networks involving few direct, trusting relations, which provides individuals with safety in their intended self-projections. Action involving community criticism, enabling a more perspectival conception of excellence, risks upending rigid self-conceptions through the trials and tribulations of action.

In the previous chapter, we critically examined deliberation and discernment in relation to the accounts provided by Adams and O'Donovan, these critical elements in a sustained pursuit of excellence within the vast, interconnecting and often confusing paths of networked life. In this chapter, I argue that faithful action, with its emphasis on small beginnings and particularly on a gradual sense of becoming within one's actuality, or existing material circumstances, is the proper *way through* networked life. Faithful action begins with a summons from God, a summons which must be recalled as one makes their way through the world. This is contrasted with action serving as a means toward *articulation*, a high-stakes contest for worldly recognition, as is described in the work of Charles Taylor.

Faith is, as O'Donovan highlights, the *root of action,* faithful action involving constant remembering of God's initial summons to action, leading in to self-offering that is a single-minded service, the individual at the disposal of God. Vocations are

psychologically and physically taxing—*it is expected that one's motivation will diminish*, particularly through inevitable weakness in life in the flesh. Vocation, as 'An offering from God, involving an ensemble of worldly relations and created goods, through which we are given, in particular, to pursue excellence, realise our agency and serve God' is not unambiguous. Vocational discernment is, as Adams notes, not easy: 'we should [not] expect a vocation to be easily recognized'[1]—but neither should we expect it to be easily *maintained* in networked life.

This ambiguity, with the need for continuous deliberation and discernment as set out in Chapter Three—but with few possible concrete intermittent results, gives way to *erosion or decay* of the self in the world over time, and particularly in relation to the maintenance of a well-ordered system of motives and values[2]. The question, then, is what might sustain motivation in the face of the ambiguity of vocation, as it has been outlined in this thesis, as well as the external forces that seek to interrupt it? The response that I propose in this chapter is that the Spirit provides the freedom that sustains motivation.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. The first section consists of a critical examination of senses of becoming in Adams and O'Donovan, particularly in relation to material circumstances in the world. The self-referential *ought* examined in Adams is prone to bad-faith self-justification in networked life, Adams' sense of becoming a protest which seeks transcendence of social circumstances when the created goods that one is offered by God to love are not *good enough*. This contrasts with O'Donovan's sense of becoming as part of vocation, which is considerably more restrained—as examined in

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[1] *FI*, p. 301.

[2] Time passes and the world erodes people. O'Donovan notes similarly in a discussion on endurance and time, in conversation with Charles Mathewes, that time 'compels the decay of our world; whatever we admired and whatever we have accomplished it takes away' (*Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 167).

Chapter Three—offered, and to be prepared for through deliberation, only in the opportune moments.

The second section emphasises humility in action, through the Parable of the Mustard Seed, with its focus on small beginnings and unseen realities. The account of self-offering outlined in O'Donovan is one of single-minded *service*, God determining the identity of individuals as opposed to their identities being won through recognition in the world. Taylor rightly describes the vying for recognition in modern identity to be a *war*, akin to the war-language seen in Turkle and Burt. There is consideration of faithful action over a lifetime, through self-offering, resisting the overleveraging of powers and fragmentation of attention found in the 'portfolio-based' life or career. Faithful action, as part of vocation in networked life, must focus on a limited number of projects—resisting the notion of a diffuse portfolio-based life.

I continue in the third section with a suggestion that Adams' alliance as *a feeling of friendliness* does not provide sufficient 'integrative force' in the ordering of values and motives toward enduring action. Gustafson, as well as the psychologist and pioneer of social learning theory, Albert Bandura, highlight the simultaneous interconnectedness as well as ambiguity of motives, dispositions and attitudes. Moreover, Adams' conception of alliance, based on a shared principle of being for the good *in the world*, lacks concreteness—fundamentally, a sense of *trust*—the lack of direct relations in his conception of alliance making systems susceptible to decay or erosion over time. The emphasis on a principle for ordering of a system of motives or values is conducive to an implicit, rather than explicit, theism in the reference to God's love; that is, to 'social union,' rather than to what I view as a much more preferable emphasis on Jesus Christ.

In the fourth section, I examine the possibility of decay within any *system* of well-integrated values. Adams underestimates the possibility, if not inevitability, of decay

within systems of values, without *persistent effort to maintain order*. I examine the role that trusted authority figures typically play in sustaining motivation throughout its inevitable ebbs and flows, and the pivotal role that such figures play in sustaining motivation within vocations in networked life involving deceptive appearances. Trusted worldly authorities are, as O'Donovan notes, capable of criticising and transforming a system of motives and values. Moreover, the love of trusted worldly authorities serves as a motivating force in the world, particularly in response to the dangers experienced in vocational discernment outlined in Chapter Three.

In this chapter, I argue in favour of explicit love of God, manifested through Jesus Christ and the Spirit, which provide the necessary ordering in a well-ordered systems of motives and values. Such a system is focused less on abstract principles, than it is on the role of trusted worldly authorities whose love helps to sustain motivation in a given vocation in the face of active opposition, or inevitable decline of energy over time. These trusted worldly authorities are Burt's trusted 'primary contacts' in networked life, who are *offered* to individuals as part of the formation of a vocational project or life, this offering prepared for in deliberation, as examined in Chapter Three.

Self-articulation in Action

Limited senses of becoming and resistance to the question of ought

The Chapter Three discussion has emphasised a pursuit of excellence focused on every new *today*, rather than engaging in self-articulation in defiance of God, whose operation activates and sustains human agency. This critical examination of the pursuit of excellence, as part of vocation, can now be applied to discussion on the concept of *becoming* within vocation, with Adams and O'Donovan as our two main interlocutors. In this section, I propose a sense of becoming characterised by limitation, particularly given

the propensity in networked life to see one's *ought* reflect haughty self-justification, divorced from actuality.

O'Donovan's sense of responsibility within vocation begins with faith emanating from the prior initiative of God, which is the basis of action[3]. This operation of God allows individuals to look past first appearances—a point we have previously encountered, as discussed in O'Donovan and which is also seen in Adams' discussion on actuality: 'One's actual circumstances condition and in various ways influence and limit one's vocation. The vocation, however, is not the circumstances, but what one is called to do in them'[4]. Adams' sense of limitation is much more self-referential, responsibilities linked to who a person *is*, whereas O'Donovan's conception emphasises agency, which nevertheless begins in faith through God's prior summons to agency, finding its security only in the promise of God[5]. There is a sense of tentativeness throughout O'Donovan's account of vocation, vocation ever to be realised through action, action conducive to the realisation of a limited self-anticipation, though with awareness that purposes for courses of action might go wrong.

Adams stresses engagement with the world, but is particularly concerned with the *transformative* power of vocation, vocation serving as a means through which individuals can transcend their given situations, 'particularly if the arrangement is not worth sustaining—or if the role does not connect in certain ways with who we are [...]'[6]. Adams

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[3] Grisez highlights that 'faithfulness requires fulfilling one's vocation as it now is, not as it once may have been' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.5). He stresses throughout his account of personal vocation that individuals are called to act in whatever circumstances they find themselves, oriented toward service of God and seeking change only when this allows for more effective service in line with God's will. Worldly success is not guaranteed through the fulfilment of vocation, but Grisez counsels against despair should this be the case. In the face of 'setbacks, even disastrous failures,' resignation is possible if this entails meekness; faithfulness involves not despair but rather a 'dynamic and hopeful attitude' (Ibid., 7.E.5).

[4] *FI*, p. 309.

[5] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 223.

[6] *FI*, p. 309. Bernd Wannenwetsch comments on this in his chapter "Luther's moral theology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*. He remarks on the '"vita passiva"—a concept that could be rendered "living a receptive life." The relationship between Luther's inner and outer man is complex as

is dismissive of Luther, in that 'The identification of vocation with job or work may once have been motivated by the desire of ensuring that everyone could have a vocation and easily recognize it…. But I do not think we should expect a vocation to be easily recognized'[7]. There is greater emphasis in Adams' discussion on vocation on love of particular goods as a defining element of vocation, than there is on the role of faithful *action* in fulfilling a vocation. This is despite Adams' definition of vocation as a 'call from God, a command, or perhaps an invitation, addressed to a particular individual, to *act* and live in a certain way'[8]. Whereas action is the subject of critical examination in O'Donovan, in Adams' account, it is only implied, with no mention of faith as the starting-point of action. For Adams, vocation is more so a matter of who one is to *be*, rather than what one is to do.

He notes that for most individuals, this is difficult to work out: 'To discern one's vocation is, in large part, to recognize who and what one ought to be, and that takes time. It requires some depth of understanding of who one is and what one's possibilities are, and perhaps listening for the voice of God; it is not easy'[9]. The question of who one *is*, is in Adams' account linked only lightly to actuality—the *is* must be something real in oneself[10], circumstances informing who one is, even if lightly—and yet Adams does not wish to place too much value on actuality, prioritising instead the *goodness* of the goods that a person is offered, or invited, to love as part of their vocation. If the goods that one

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Wannenwetsch notes throughout his account, but it is put forward by several theorists that Luther's account of vocation upheld static social orders rather than encouraging individuals to transcend them.

[7] Ibid., p. 301.

[8] Ibid., p. 301. My italics.

[9] Ibid., p. 301.

[10] Grisez too recommends reflection on the relevant facts of one's self, though views these facts, such as gifts, 'as talents by which God invites one to undertake a particular service, while limitations and defects… are recognized as indications that God is not calling one to certain forms of service' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.3).

loves as part of a vocation are *good enough*, then vocational activity should be expected in Adams' account to frequently lead individuals *out* of their existing circumstances[11].

Adams' *good enough* contrasts with that of O'Donovan, who in a discussion on the perils of half-heartedness notes that 'if we think clearly about how an undertaking can *best* proceed, we must also think clearly about how it may proceed *well enough*…. Thinking clearly about means to ends involves weighing compromises, distinguishing the necessary and tolerable from the self-defeating'[12]. But this *well enough* implies a certain level of pragmatism, an openness to whatever goods God offers; it is precisely *not* the *good enough* of Adams which implies a conception of self that has somehow transcended, or is destined to transcend, its social circumstances.

There is an evident tension between who a person is at any present time—this shaped by their worldly circumstances—and who one is to become. Adams recognises the former as informing vocation—providing access to some, but not necessarily all, of the goods that might be involved in a vocation—but his prioritisation is ultimately on who one is to *become*. There is here the possibility that becoming is, while maintaining some relationship with the present or past, much different from who one has been: 'Viewed in this light, my self is not just who I actually am, but who I am to become. Of course, it is connected with who I already am, but it may also be different enough to surprise even me'[13]. O'Donovan, too, sees vocation as a certain becoming, though in a manner that is

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[11] This is reflected in an examination of the vocation of Kierkegaard and his broken marriage, in which a vocation as 'a soldier on a certain kind of frontier [...] involves a certain kind of spiritual struggle whose intensity is not likely to make for conjugal bliss' (*FI*,). The critical question in this case pertains not to Kierkegaard's responsibilities in his social roles as a husband, but rather to the question of 'What is it that he ought to be?' (Ibid., p. 310).
[12] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 46.
[13] *FI*, p. 312. Rowan Williams, in a sermon compiled in *Open to Judgment*, comments on the tensions between who one is and who one might become within a vocation: '… in the most basic sense of all, God's call is the call to be: the vocation of creatures is to exist. And, secondly, the vocation of creatures is to exist as themselves, to be bearers of their names, answering to the word which gives each its distinctive identity' (*Open to Judgment*, p. 173). Williams asserts, however, that many fail to grasp who it is that they are: 'And

more limited, guarded in its steps. 'Our vocation,' for O'Donovan, 'is the course of our life that *will come to be* our unique historical reality, but is not yet so'[14], though the coming-to-be is restrained throughout O'Donovan's account. Actuality informs deliberation and discernment as part of a purported vocation, though it is not necessarily to be transcended as explicitly as is the case in Adams' account, O'Donovan's self emerging out of their circumstances *only if* the opportune moment presents itself. This is not for individuals to determine, but is rather part of God's will—and it may not.

Adams sees this potential for change in circumstances as being *expected* with the modern self, where 'It also happens, fairly often (at least in our culture), that as a person matures, she comes to object to some aspect of the shape of selfhood she was taught to value and pursue. It doesn't fit *her*, or it is simply *bad*—or so, at any rate, she comes to believe'[15]. There is, in short, a strong potentiality of a vocation 'lead[ing] us to depart from established social expectations rather than to fulfill them'[16]. As such, there is the possibility, or even likelihood, that this will cause pain for others, whose interests are to be affected through another's possible vocation. The individual agent, through his vocation sheds his social roles, this through a constant process of becoming and, more to the point, in cases where who one *ought* to be conflicts with their existing social roles. Whereas Adams resists an account of suffering within a pursuit of excellence, as was examined in Chapter Two, he is open to the possibility of a vocation causing pain to *others*, this reflective of the individualistic conception of a pursuit of excellence critiqued by Nussbaum in relation to Gandhi[17].

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so crises occur at those points where we see how unreality, our selfish, self-protecting illusions, our struggles for cheap security, block the way to our answering the call to be' (Ibid., p. 175).

[14] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 224.

[15] *FI*, p. 312.

[16] Ibid., p. 313.

[17] This emphasis on causing pain to others is, for Grisez, representative of life in affluent societies in which a person's plan for their life 'is all too likely to be self-centered, amounting to a set of egoistic goals—things to be owned, satisfactions to be enjoyed, positions and power to be obtained—together with a strategy for

The question of 'who one ought to be,' while providing some opportunity for transformation in material circumstances, is prone, however, to arrogant self-justification in networked life. There is a risk that individuals in networked life will seek to articulate who it is that they *ought* to be, without subjecting their articulation to concrete action in the world. Adams, in his discussion on vocation and conflicting values, asks 'Does [a sense of vocation] survive tribulation? Is acting on it fruitful?'—both important questions, which speak to a testing of perceived vocation in the world[18]. He goes further, still, writing that a vocation 'earns its keep' in harder circumstances: 'For one of the things that is important about a sense of vocation is that it is something that can give one guidance, and on which one can act with some firmness, in the face of discouragement and in the face of some negative results'[19]. In fact, the *moral weight* of a vocation, for Adams, means that 'In pursuing a vocation one is *apt* to come into collision with the interests of other people…. The potentiality for conflict is enhanced if, as I urge, we conceive of vocations as quite likely to lead us to depart from established social expectations rather than to fulfill them'[20].

One can imagine, however, the agent who presses on—despite failure—having not achieved what he believes he *ought* to become, this worked out in his own careful, prior self-projection. The ought is reflected on beforehand and subjected carefully to the views of one's often like-minded peers in networked life—this externalisation providing some confirmation that one's sense of becoming is indeed valid. But the ought, in this case, is the product of a corrupted externalisation; a *sense* of approval occurs as part of sustained

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achieving them…' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, 7.E.1). Elsewhere, he describes this as 'Clarify your values, set your priorities, line up your goals—and then go for it!' as seen in Gail Sheehy's *Passages* (*Personal Vocation*, p. 21). This self-centeredness is contrasted with a self-fulfillment attained 'by self-giving, by sharing in the realization of genuine human goods in loving fellowship with others…. Such a life plan is not so much a set of goals to be achieved as a set of commitments to be made…. It integrates various roles of service… so that all the responsibilities a person assumes will be met' (Ibid., 7.E.1).

[18] Ibid., p. 315.

[19] Ibid., p. 315.

[20] Ibid., p. 315.

action in the world in open networks involving few dependencies (this as opposed to subjection to community criticism within a structurally autonomous network), the tendency for a withdrawal into safety seen particularly in Turkle's Chapter One account. The Chapter Three example of the modern Gaugain, travelling perhaps to Tahiti without sufficient means in order to paint—but unwilling to act modestly through the taking-up of a job at the local supermarket, in order to respond to a sense of calling more gradually—is reflective of a becoming disconnected from actuality, inattentive to the world of which one is a part.

There is a propensity in networked life for individuals to press forward with a pre-determined sense of who it is that they are to become, rather than to engage seriously with actuality, which is not always replete with opportunity[21]. Moreover, we have seen in the Chapter Three discussion the dangers of a deliberated nonchalance, a term coined by Turkle involving the striving for public admiration in order to fulfil desire for attention whenever the wells of attention in the public realm run dry, the deliberated nonchalance contrasting with O'Donovan's endurance in deliberation, in which a search does not always lead to finding. The assertion of an *ought* as part of a sense of vocation, masked by Turkle's deliberated nonchalance, in which individuals seem in networked life to have everything under control, here takes the place of a more serious engagement with actuality, in which extensive waiting is sometimes necessary prior to the opportune moment.

Indeed, Adams, while recognising the 'self-referential' nature of the modern self, *underestimates* the potential of self-articulation leading to a deficient action, one that seeks

[21] The circumstances in which one finds oneself within a presumed vocation are to Grisez secondary to the building up of Jesus' kingdom. Grisez highlights the power of the Holy Spirit by prayer to perhaps overcome deficiencies within given circumstances, but worldly success is never automatic. Rather, 'one will be encouraged to accept the challenges of hard work and possible failure, confident that commitment and effort will not be fruitless for those who sincerely try to discover and do God's will' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, 7.E.3).

to justify a prior ought, worked out largely in one go and ahead of time, rather than engaging with the world through action in a step-by-step manner. Action, here, is half-hearted, attention given to preservation of a desired sense of self—one's *prior* ought—rather than taking seriously the constraints inherent in worldly action. O'Donovan describes half-heartedness as 'a name for the incapacity to continue what is begun'[22]. It is a doubting, verging on despair, which 'can be close to a false perfectionism that cannot endure the tension of creativity, self-criticism, and adaptation. In any complex undertaking it is easy to lose interest in some functions and processes'[23]. The self, when situating value in material advantage rather than recognising it within moral order of which man is inescapably a part, cannot make enduring *bets* on himself, faith replaced by anticipation of a diminishment in material valuing should the bets not pan out.

The possibility of self-articulation in networked life can, however, be substituted for a more social pursuit of excellence, as set out in Chapter Two, involving repeated encounter with created goods perceived to be excellent, the pursuit of excellence beginning in faith. Faith, within the pursuit of excellence, 'is the *categorical* act, the source of a life's activity, and precisely as such may be known from the acts that spring from it'[24]. When faith in God's summons is replaced by faith in oneself only—the latter reflected in the bare self-articulation of networked life—any pursuit of excellence in the world, regardless of the excellences involved, becomes ineffectual. The pursuit is unlikely to be sustained in the face of trying circumstances.

[22] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 43.
[23] Ibid., p. 45. Grisez considers despair among the gravest of sins, 'since it so strongly armors sinners against repentance and tempts them to abandon their faith' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, 7.A.5). The creativity favoured by O'Donovan is given colour through Grisez' description of creativity involving a faithful seeking of 'better service,' in which the creative person 'does not always follow standard practices, but innovates… as did the saints who founded new religious institutes to satisfy unmet needs' (Ibid., 7.E.5).
[24] Ibid., p. 27.

The self, in a pursuit of excellence, is outward-facing, focusing on its relations with a given excellence or set of excellences, and so is necessarily less concerned with its own becoming. O'Donovan's account of deliberation emphasises constant practice within a pursuit of excellence, a chipping-away as discussed in Chapter Three, which prepares individuals for opportune moments whenever these moments are offered by God. One might, within a given pursuit of excellence, imagine a self offered as part of an envisioned vocation, but the imagined self is only *lightly* imagined, much less important than the pursuit of excellence which involves action within world-order[25]. The dangers outlined in the Chapter Three critical examination of discernment, with emphasis on Psalm 119, suggest that entertainment of haughty conceptions of the self as part of a vocation are not only unrealistic, but much more importantly—risk the destruction of the agent himself, through a failure of attention to the world of which he is a part[26].

O'Donovan, as we have seen in Chapter Three, highlights that we see the selves that are offered to us as part of a vocation, but that imaginative anticipations must be held at bay, self-mockery sometimes necessary in order to deflate imagination that has outpaced actuality. Hence, the view that I favour is a sense of calling involving a more gradual becoming in *every new today*. Deliberation plays a considerable role in this restrained sense of becoming, continuous preparation much more important that whatever, or whomever, one thinks they should be. This does not equate or limit vocation only to one's

[25] Grisez considers the temptation to imagine what *would have been*, particularly for oneself, had one not made certain vocational commitments (particularly related to marriage, priesthood and the giving of vows) foreclosing certain possibilities, to be a grave sin, for it is conducive to 'inertia and sadness, and leads to a dispirited and plodding minimalism in doing one's duties' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, 7.E.5). Rather, God's redemptive plan, clearly revealed in Jesus' death and resurrection, does not ensure that all will go well in this world, but only that faithfulness will bear fruit by God's almighty mercy' (Ibid., 7.E.5).

[26] O'Donovan, in a discussion on moral communication, references a passage in the Epistle to the Galatians regarding self-deception, in which self-deception 'consists in supposing that he, the individual member of the body, is "something" when he is "nothing." He is nothing, that is, if he stands apart as a positive "something" on his own, detached from the mutual exchange of burdens' (*Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 43). Much action in networked life optimises for volume in expansive open networks, bereft of this mutual exchange of burdens.

worldly functions, or—given the emphasis in Chapter Two—to worldly authorities offered as possible trustworthy 'primary contacts' with whom to engage across social worlds, these worldly relations offered alongside excellent created goods. Yet, it favours an understanding of vocation that is much more in tune with an individual's existing circumstances than is presented by Adams. In this conception of vocation, effective deliberation and ongoing discernment based on concrete purposes—purposes not interrupted by short-term turning to networked technologies in order to secure admiration or advantage in networked life—*compound*.

This restraint, in response to the tempting emphasis on becoming in networked life, is reflected in the five cases examined throughout the previous chapters. James Baker did not foresee himself entering politics: at the age of thirty, his 'ought' would have included anything *but* political office. Eric Newell did not immediately form the pan-Canadian purpose in his Declaration of Opportunity, but rather over a thirty-year period, even then requiring a further six years of continuous deliberation, prior to his visible worldly achievements. Paul's early life was spent persecuting with zeal those who opposed the Torah, and even following his encounter with Jesus Christ on route to Damascus, Paul wondered often as to whether his life's work was all in vain. Wright notes that Paul 'keeps on coming back to it [whether it has all been in vain], like the tip of the tongue finding its way to a sore tooth. Perhaps it's all been for nothing?'[27]. Paul's reflections are, as Wright describes, antithetical to the concept that one ought to *become* a particular kind of person, apart from a servant of God, the individual agent focused on self-offering.

The sense of restraint that I wish to convey, in opposition to Adams' imaginative openness, is represented in Jesus' illustration of the narrow gate in Matthew: 'Enter

[27] *Paul: A Biography*, p. 96.

through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it'[28] (Matt 7:13). This is followed by Jesus' 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves' (Matt 7:15). The false prophets of networked life, with their manicured self-possession and deliberated nonchalance, desire to *undo* the Christian discipline necessary in order to enter through the narrow gate. They tempt individuals with public praise and admiration, suggesting an easy becoming, which leads to an early resting in who one *believes* one is, or will soon become—as opposed to the necessity of faithful, and often grinding, action in service. Thus, the often-narrow opportunities for becoming—in which *faith* allows for focused action in present circumstances, open and receptive to whatever outcomes might follow—risk being neglected in favour of the immediacy of networked life.

The emptiness of self-articulation

The modern culture which enables a half-hearted action, the self neglecting sources of meaning arising from beyond itself in favour of a deliberated nonchalance, is examined in the work of Charles Taylor. In *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Taylor examines the ideal of self-fulfilment, stressing in particular its moral force: 'The point is that today many people feel *called* to do this [their career], feel they ought to do this, feel their lives would be somehow wasted or unfulfilled if they didn't do it'[29]. Taylor examines the sources of authenticity, in which individuals must connect with a voice that is 'deep in us'[30]. It is then Herder who 'put forward the idea that each of us has an original way of being human,' where 'Each person has his or her own "measure"'[31], the idea of each person having their

[28] New Revised Standard Version, p. 7.
[29] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 17.
[30] Ibid., p. 26.
[31] Ibid., p. 28.

own measure contrary to the Chapter Two discussion on the self *not* being the measure of value, as introduced by Adams and then built on through dialogue with Wolf and O'Donovan. The risk to individuals in their call to live authentically is as follows: 'If I am not [living authentically], I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me*'[32].

In later discussion, Taylor examines the role of recognition in modern identity—that identity is fundamentally dialogical rather than monological—in which the valuing of originality places particular significance on recognition through relationships with others. We see this reflected in Turkle's earlier description of modern identity as a performance. It is not just what is performed, but what is then recognised—even if superficially by others—that informs identity. The intensity of modern networked communication and the pressure to perform means that originality must be constantly *sought after*. Moreover, it is *human* recognition that is sought after in modern identity; not recognition through God's love, as seen in Adams, the perceived excellences of finite goods providing God with reasons to love his created goods, despite their many imperfections—and in turn, fragmentary or distant imaging.

Taylor's account adds to that of Turkle, noting in a discussion on the role of dependence on others in the formation of modern identity, that 'The thing about inwardly, derived, personal, original identity is that it doesn't enjoy this recognition a priori. It has to win it through exchange, and it can fail'[33]. There is a raising of the stakes, as Taylor puts this[34]. In networked life, there is a two-fold challenge for individuals, who must constantly strive for originality at the personal level, and then *win* recognition from others as they engage in the world, the metaphor of war used both in Turkle and Burt as we have seen in Chapter One. Yet, if identity is to be formed with integrity—in a manner that endures in

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[32] Ibid., p. 29.
[33] Ibid., p. 48.
[34] Ibid., p. 49.

the face of pressures or opposition in the world—then active participation in communities involving trusting relations, as outlined in Chapter Two, is necessary, community criticism providing Taylor's dialogical resistance.

The benefit-rich maximising approach of networked life, bereft of community criticism as outlined in Chapter Two, poses serious problems for Taylor: 'In the light of the ideal of authenticity, it would seem that having merely instrumental relationships is to act in a self-stultifying way. The notion that one can pursue one's fulfilment in this way seems illusory….'[35]. Indeed, there is a dependence on others in the formation of modern identity, but this occurs alongside a constant churn of relations, treated instrumentally, given the speed of networked communications. In other words, individuals 'tend to see fulfilment as just of the self, neglecting or delegitimating the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature or God; they foster [...] a radical anthropocentrism'[36].

Taylor rightly highlights the stress and anxiety in such relations, the self engaged in a constant performance in order to maintain originality and fulfill its own purported calling. O'Donovan notes this anthropocentrism, which neglects God's summons to agency, in which we may know ourselves at the level of the sensory consciousness through feelings of comfort or pain; we may know ourselves at the level of the existential awareness through anxiety and care'[37]. But anxiety in O'Donovan's analysis is primarily a sin against time, a 'fear we experience specifically in the face of action and its perilous opportunities,' which can only be overcome through deliberation[38]. Needed in place of performance is a deliberation providing confidence in agency, 'confidence [which] must

[35] Ibid., p. 53.
[36] Ibid., p. 58.
[37] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 12.
[38] Ibid., p. 173.

be won *by* deliberation *out of* anxiety'[39]. In contrast, the radical anthropocentrism characteristic of modern identity in networked life involves *war* through performances in relation to one's neighbours, as examined in Chapter One.

This is, however, a conception of vocation which sees relations with created goods as being only lightly held, individuals constantly looking over their shoulders in order to determine whether better goods might present themselves. It is an overvaluation of self, what O'Donovan analyses in terms of Saint Paul's concept of *overthinking*, ignoring trusting relations within community. The measure of faith that is a response to God's summons to agency and service requires a 'Getting on with the task with enthusiasm [that] is not consistent with casting doubtful glances sideways, wondering whether one's role is as much appreciated as it should be, or is of more importance than the next person's'[40]. Becoming is not the product of choice, nor is it one of desire, of simply wanting to be something *enough*; becoming emerges instead from service toward God[41]. Adams specifies instead a certain *protest* which emanates in the self, which is one of the 'signs by which God communicates an individual's vocation to be a certain sort of self—ways in which goods defining a certain self-project are offered to the individual to love'[42].

Yet, faithful action beginning in God's summons leads in to victory achieved through deliberation, which, as seen in Chapter Three, entails a series of small, daily battles, won in constant practice. Nevertheless, Taylor does not outright condemn the modern culture of authenticity, advocating instead for a struggle over its *meaning*, in which we 'ought to be trying to lift the culture back up, closer to its motivating ideal'[43].

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[39] Ibid., p. 173.
[40] *Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology Volume 3*, p. 22.
[41] Grisez and Shaw note that 'Personal satisfaction is the principle that underlies the setting of goals and the shaping of a strategy for reaching them: What do *I* want to do, how can *I* get the most out of life?' when in fact 'the principle ought to be the vocational imperative of discerning God's will, accepting it wholeheartedly, and doing one's best to live it out' (*Personal Vocation*, p. 86).
[42] *FI*, p. 312.
[43] *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 73.

The outcome of the struggle cannot be predicted, but is rather 'up for grabs'[44]. Taylor sees authenticity pointing toward 'a more self-responsible form of life,' which 'allows us to live (potentially) a fuller and more differentiated life, because more fully appropriated as our own'[45].

He emphasises that authenticity 'requires that we discover and articulate our own identity'[46], which is inherent in modern culture, but then distinguishes between the *manner* and *content* of action. Manner pertains to self-referentiality of identity, which he says is 'unavoidable in our culture'[47], this reflected particularly in the previous discussion on Adams' ought, emphasis on the becoming of the self. But it would be perilous, in Taylor's account, to confuse manner with matter, the latter which stands beyond one's own aspirations or desires[48]. A conflation of the two limits action, 'clos[ing] off the way ahead' as the human agent reaches inward as his only source of value. Taylor then enters into a discussion on modern art, which despite increasing focus on the personal sensibility of the poet has often sought to 'articulate something beyond the self'[49]. It follows for Taylor that 'We may still need to see ourselves as part of a larger order that can make claims on us'[50]. The ecological disaster is one example in which 'matter'—in this case 'natural surroundings and wilderness'[51]—can make claims on the self, the wilderness as a created good *writing its name* on the individual.

Action, bereft of a wider moral order, is treated as a means for articulation, the struggle being less a serious engagement in action-in-the-world with others, than it is an attempt to fulfill some *projection* of self in an ever-intensifying world of communication.

[44] Ibid., p. 79.
[45] Ibid., p. 74.
[46] Ibid., p. 81.
[47] Ibid., p. 82.
[48] Ibid., p. 82.
[49] Ibid., p. 88.
[50] Ibid., p. 89.
[51] Ibid., p. 90.

Taylor cautions against this instrumentality, in which it is assumed that the world as it is will be transcended, recognising instead the demands on the self emerging from without. Adams gives less weight to such wider considerations, one's focus on becoming what one ought, 'lead[ing] us to depart from established social expectations rather than to fulfill them'[52]. Indeed, for Adams 'the vocation one believes one has is itself a ground of the rightness of the actions that it requires'[53]. O'Donovan describes this approach as a 'defiant positivism that asserts the feeling of responsibility as a projection of the conscious self—I just *am* responsible, no matter to whom, for what, or why!'[54]. In place of this is a need for *service in action*; action that does not seek to make a name for the self in the world that aligns with a certain prior projection of self, but that is instead attentive to the operation of God, this serving as the starting point of action while providing it with an ongoing concreteness[55]. The responsible human agent as conceived by O'Donovan can therefore resist the modern temptation to justify a prior conception of self through half-hearted worldly action.

This section has introduced Taylor's understanding of modern identity, which involves the finding of an authenticity arising from something that is 'deep within us.' The self is the measure of authenticity within modern identity, which necessitates recognition in one's primary relations, this recognition akin to a *war*. Taylor stresses the high stakes in this war, given the possibility of *not* being recognised. He notes that a monological identity is stunted and instead calls for an authenticity in *manner* characterised by dialogical resistance; that is, with content in forms such as history and nature. The anxiety rightly highlighted in what Taylor considers the 'radical anthropocentrism' of modern identity is,

[52] Ibid., p. 315.
[53] Ibid., p. 316.
[54] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 31.
[55] One simply cannot consider 'abandoning a spouse for someone new,' as Grisez and Shaw highlight in relation to the work *Passages* and in contrast to what is left as an open possibility in Adams (*Personal Vocation*, p. 101).

however, underestimated—as well as exacerbated—given the power of networked technologies in networked life.

Adams, with his emphasis on a becoming open to doing away with projects in a manner that verges on the blasé, focused intently on a *protest* of the self in relation to its circumstances, is a case in point. O'Donovan's deliberation, with its restrained sense of becoming, provides the confidence to overcome the anxiety of modern identity. As discussed in Chapter Three, it is a deliberation focused on *God's promise*. The self-referencing which Taylor sees as unavoidable in modern culture must be derived from God's prior faithfulness reflected in His summons of man to action, God's operation in the world constantly underpinning any sense of identity 'won' through action in the world.

Self-offering and Faith in Small Beginnings

In place of articulation of a half-hearted ought, which projects human agency and identity into the distant future, there is need for a more concrete and limited focus on *service* undertaken in *every new today*. Such action is possible through self-offering, which consists of single-minded service within actuality, the communities of which individuals are a part, as outlined in Chapter Two. Self-offering requires openness in action, O'Donovan providing the example of Jesus as a boy preparing for his ministry. There is an urgency in Jesus' preparation: 'All he can do is listen and inquire, and yet that is not a preparation for some future decision, but a decision already'[56]. Jesus does not know what his call will entail: an 'agency unresolved, open to whatever service it may be directed to'[57] is necessary. Self-offering is, in O'Donovan's analysis, 'the service of God without condition and without foreknowledge'[58]. It is antithetical to Adams' sense of becoming,

[56] Ibid., p. 35.
[57] Ibid., p. 37.
[58] Ibid., p. 35.

with its engagement in protest due to a perceived lack of goodness in the created goods offered to love.

Single-minded service

Faithful action as self-offering means that the human agent must give *oneself* to God, knowing that he is determined by God. O'Donovan describes this as 'a life of single-minded service,' where no end is in sight. It is given as a token of more to follow, a recognition of unlimited claim' [59]. If the human agent is to be focused on single-minded service, then there is little time for articulation intending to justify a certain desired self-conception, a particular *ought*: 'Agent-identity is given as we know ourselves addressed by a command to responsibility,' which in turn demands a 'continuation of our acts' as individuals deliberate and act toward God's promise[60].

The continuation might not be enjoyable over a given period of time, but the possible exclusion from created goods, as seen in O'Donovan, is nevertheless not compelling enough reason to break with one's social circumstances as proposed by Adams. In place of this is a responsibility in worldly action in the *today*, as is reflected in the example of Jesus. There is an urgency in such action, even if the question of becoming remains unresolved—this worked out over time as one *serves God*. O'Donovan sees action through self-offering as being possible even where material conditions are lacking, there always being an opportunity to sacrifice: 'In states of utter weakness when exertion is out of the question, when we lie helpless on our last bed needing assistance with the most ordinary bodily movements, sacrifice can make a path that continues the way set out on long before'[61]. Adams, too, maintains that vocation is possible even when one is very ill, in

[59] Ibid., p. 36.
[60] Ibid., p. 34.
[61] Ibid., p. 37.

that ‘A disabling illness may restrict possibilities for action to a very narrow compass, and some wish to speak of such an illness as itself a vocation for those who have it [but]…. The vocation is to love the good in those ways that remain possible in the illness’[62]. Action need not be grand; it is more important that the human agent offers whatever they can in their given circumstances, with Adams stressing the need for continued *being for the good* in intention.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed, where the act of planting is characterised by small beginnings[63]—one not knowing what the mustard seed is to become—is representative of faithful action within inauspicious circumstances. The small beginnings and subsequent growth of the mustard seed reflect an understanding of faith which translates into ongoing, *daily* action in the world. Faith here ‘is the moral center of the life, around which other acts cohere and find their larger justification’[64]. Faith underpins the continuous act of sowing—sowing which is a *deliberation*—which serves as the basis for what is to follow, the mustard seed needing to overcome a variety of challenges, such as preying enemies and the cares of the world. These challenges must be overcome in order to become a shrub and, in time, a tree with branches providing a home to many creatures[65].

[62] *FI*, p. 309.
[63] In his commentaries on the parable, William Barclay writes ‘The point is crystal clear. The kingdom of heaven starts from the smallest beginnings, but no one knows where it will end…. It is the fact of history that the greatest things must always begin with the smallest beginnings’ (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew: Volume 2* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2015), p. 89). Barclay shares the story of William Wilberforce, whose idea for the liberation of slaves began with reading the work of Thomas Clarkson. William Pitt, a close friend, posed the question ‘“Why don’t you give a notice of motion on the slave trade?” An idea was sown in the mind of one man, and that idea changed life for hundreds of thousands of people. An idea must find an individual willing to be possessed by it; but when it finds such a person an unstoppable tide begins to flow’ (Ibid., p. 90).
[64] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 26.
[65] Grisez and Shaw employ a sports metaphor to demonstrate the value of challenge featuring in God’s providential plan, connecting this metaphor to Jesus’s own suffering: A championship sports team… must work hard and struggle against adversity, and its excellence is all the greater if it went into its last match as underdog and came from behind to win. Similarly, Jesus as a human being couldn’t have become who he is now, the risen and glorified Lord, without living as he live, suffering as he suffered, and dying as he died. God allows us also to encounter challenges, and those who are favored often must suffer greatly’ (*Personal Vocation*, p. 114).

In the Gospel of Matthew, the Parable of the Mustard Seed demonstrates the potential in even a small amount of faith: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field: it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches’ (Matt 13:31)[66]. The seed at first is likely to be overlooked, for it is the smallest of seeds; expectations are low as to what it may become. In his explanation of the purpose of the parables, Jesus states ‘The reason I speak to them in parables is that ‘seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand’ (Matt 13:10)[67]. One might see the seed, and yet, without faith, be unable to perceive what the seed might soon become. Over time and with the necessary nourishment then the seed is capable of growth, such that it provides safety for other creatures—the birds and other animals that make their homes in the tree.

A deficiency in faith in any step of the mustard seed’s sowing or development would hinder its process of becoming. Were worldly appearances to be the mustard seed’s focus, for example, then there would be little endurance in action, the mustard seed at first insignificant—scarcely noticeable. With faith, deliberation nurturing the soil, the mustard seed begins to open—fulfilling its vocation as a home to other creatures, which is an act of mutual service in the world, oriented ultimately toward God as the mustard seed bears witness to the potential of faith in action. Self-offering consists of a human agency *set on fire by faith*[68], which serves as a counterbalance to a networked mindset which disproportionately values position within social structure as the basis of effective of action. As O’Donovan notes, ‘What he [God] has in view is that we should be at his disposal’[69]—

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[66] New Revised Standard Version, p. 15.
[67] Ibid., p. 14.
[68] The notion of human agency ‘set on fire in faith’ is raised by William Barclay.
[69] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 36.

we must burn prior comfortable long-term imaginations based on past or present regularities in experience, including doing away with self-imposed limitations, recognising our powers of agency when set on fire by God.

O'Donovan sees self-offering more as a way through life rather than a way out of material circumstances. Faithful action in response to God's call involves an openness to whatever God asks of the human agent; it cannot be assumed from the outset of action that action will lead one out of existing material circumstances, action leading to a transcendence of material circumstances—a liberation from social roles and constraints, as Adams describes. We see, in O'Donovan's account, a call for *humility* in action. Self-offering demands a single-minded responsibility to listen and inquire as one engages in world-time, but without seeking to determine the future, man instead at *God's disposal*. Indeed, 'Our first thought must be to allow the horizon to be the horizon, to resist the temptation of taking over the ultimate and managing it. Practical reason is not a way of organizing the future'[70]. Were initial appearances to serve as the basis of faith, then neither actuality—the initial existence as a seed—nor the intermediate steps, would provide the necessary grounds for endurance in action.

Action over a lifetime—resisting short-term projects

Self-offering, as we can see, occurs over a long duration—that of a lifetime. With self-offering, there is a resistance of action undertaken through multiple, often coinciding short-term projects, which is characteristic of action in networked life. If vocational action is to endure, then it must focus on a *limited* set of projects, in which genuine self-offering is possible. This runs in opposition, however, to individuals in networked life seeking to make names for themselves through their worldly action, where action is packaged

[70] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 17.

carefully into many short-term projects which can be articulated conveniently through networked technologies, such articulation, however, requiring little self-sacrifice.

As we have seen in this discussion, individuals acting with faith do not seek to make their marks on the world through a bevy of short-term projects—many modern projects assumed to last for months or years, before giving way to something new as suggested in Adams—but rather sees their *lives* as opportunities to give freely to God. There is a propensity in networked life to undertake multiple projects simultaneously, each of these reflecting a dimension of the self. What follows is an attempt to 'integrate' across these various aspects of the self, individuals moving between each of these projects, while constructing narratives that provide the various projects with purported unity[71].

This is seen in the professor that 'balances' three jobs—one as academic, another as a university administrator and a third with an external organisation—each believed to be full-time jobs in themselves. A portfolio-based life, consisting of multiple simultaneous projects, is a particularly modern idea, whose articulation resonates in a world of overheated networked communications. As discussed in Turkle, there is a sense that one can do *more* through networked technologies, and yet such presentation results in a fragmented self, unable to see one's actions through to *completion*.

A life of single-minded service, grounded in God's summons to faith, is impossible when attention is spread widely across multiple activities. One must focus instead on a limited set of created goods and worldly relations, prepared for in deliberation and responded to at opportune moments. If a rower, for instance, is to act with a view to

[71] Grisez and Shaw emphasise the importance of integration within personal vocation. This integration, however, is not based on a carefully-constructed narrative but rather on prior faith in Jesus and in an overarching purpose to 'co-redeem with him': 'We make our contribution by integrating our activities and our lives in the service of others according to God's plan as it is discerned in our unique vocations. And we do it, or at least we *ought* to do it, in the present circumstances of our lives… or simply the fact that we are presently preparing to do something in the future that we are tempted to think of as our *real purpose* in life, our *real* vocation' (*Personal Vocation*, p. 117).

becoming world champion in his or her sport, then this will inevitably involve sacrifice in other domains of life over an extended period of time. One cannot offer oneself, in one's full agential powers, to so many projects at once; faithful action begins at the narrow gate, and follows a road that is characterised by constant challenge.

Self-offering, to modern sensibilities, is a risky venture, for a failure to bear fruit in a limited number of projects impedes the recognition outlined in Taylor. Therefore, individuals seeking to justify the self through worldly action spread themselves thinly across multiple projects, winning recognition in the short-term through sheer volume of communication, rather than through faithful action, and yet are unable to see any project through to completion. Such action is characterised by worldly ambition, which, as O'Donovan notes, 'the doubter lives on'[72]. Indeed, 'Doubt is a predatory relation to the world; its inner resources are over-leveraged and its power over-extended when it comes to any course of action involving obscurity or public rejection'[73]. Fearful of the riskiness in committing oneself to a specific course of action, the doubter increases their supposed worldly ambition, seeing volume of activity as an easy path to recognition. This striving for worldly recognition, is, however, a *failure* to exercise human agency; it is self-annihilation.

Moreover, as individuals act with faith, they are *bound* to face active opposition and even danger; engaging in many projects simultaneously reduces—worryingly for the human agent—the ability to *perceive such danger*. The Parable of the Watchful Slaves in the Gospel of Luke, begins with the command to 'Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks' (Luke

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[72] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 22.
[73] Ibid., p. 22.

12:35)[74]. Constant preparation—not to mention proper clothing—is difficult, however, when one's energies are divided across multiple simultaneous projects, as is often the case in networked life.

By spreading oneself across a broad 'portfolio' of projects, individuals crowd out time for the hearing of God's word, becoming like the man who builds his house on sand rather than on rock. If one wishes to avert moral or spiritual danger, then Jesus' teaching to ask, search and knock gains particular significance: 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you' (Matt 7:7) [75]. The possibility of danger strengthens prayer. The calling upon God and a recognition of the need for self-offering in action—single-minded service—is a proactive strategy in keeping eyes focused on God's promise through a focused vocation, rather than attending to a multitude of disconnected projects in the world, which increase spiritual risk. A narrative that seeks to bring unity to a plethora of projects is a *projection* of agency, as O'Donovan writes, a failure to respond faithfully to God's summons to agency in accordance with true identity—worked out assiduously, and *seriously*, over time.

This section has critically examined the modern propensity to engage in a 'portfolio-based life,' which averts the indeterminacy and openness of self-offering in single-minded service to God. In networked life, individuals craft careful narratives to justify the fragmentation characteristic of the balancing of multiple disconnected activities concurrently. The portfolio-based life, however, is an overleveraging of human capacities: it is a failure to exercise human agency. Such overleveraging is not the sign of purposeful action, likely to endure, but rather a manifestation of the sin of doubt: it is a spiritual weakness. A much more limited sense of projects is necessary as part of the self-offering

[74] New Revised Standard Version, p. 80.
[75] Ibid., p. 7.

in vocation, particularly given the dangers in networked life—examined in Chapter Three—akin to the persecutors seen in Psalm 119, constantly laying traps for faithful individuals.

Ambiguity in an Ordered System of Motives or Values and the Narrowness of Alliance

The discussion has thus far concerned the significance of a faithful, step-by-step action in whatever one's circumstances in networked life. This approach to action resists temptations in networked life conducive to articulating and broadcasting haughty conceptions of the self through networked technologies, this indulging, for instance, too great of senses of becoming. A more humble action, focused on service in self-offering toward God is proposed in the place of action seeking recognition through Taylor's dialogical loving relations. It is inevitable, however, that vocation involving this restrained human agency, involving focused pursuit of excellence and service of God, will weaken over time, for time erodes people. This is particularly the case in modern networked life with its intense communications. Hence, the ensuing discussion seeks to address this problem proactively, considering the role of alliances—that of the primary contacts outlined in Chapter One—in the upholding of ordered systems of motives and values underpinning faithful action.

Adams' critical examination of a well-ordered system of motives or values is concerned with an *ethics of motives* in which motives or values are *ordered* rather than fragmented, this ordering contributing to 'its possessor's being a good person'[76]. This

[76] *FI*, p. 178. Adams highlights in the opening of his discussion on the ethics of motives that he is less interested in motives for action than in 'with the kinds of persons it would be good to be. I believe that what and whom one loves or cares about, and how, is the most important factor in determining what kind of persons one is, ethically speaking' (Ibid., p. 177). Motives and reasons are used simultaneously at points in the text; however, the Chapter Six discussion on grace lays less emphasis on reasons for loving than on the intrinsic *value* of what one loves. A motive, though rather ambiguous in Adams' text, is what *contributes* to *who* or *what* one loves concretely; it is less the reason for loving a thing than what might lead to an awakening in Eros as one perceives the who or what in the world. Adams is then concerned with the *value*,

ordering of values emphasises the *end* which orders values, more so than it does consistency of action arising from the ordering. A specification of terminology, however, is here necessary, given the variety of possible interpretations of the concept of motivation and associated terms. Adams does not provide a clear definition of motives, and so we may helpfully turn to Gustafson—a Chapter Two interlocutor in relation to the role of theism in the accounts of Adams and O'Donovan—who critically examines the terminology of motives.

Gustafson highlights the 'extraordinary difficulty to sort out with precision [the concept of motivation and constellation of related terms] because of their complexity and interconnectedness'[77], but highlights R.S. Peters' *The Concept of Motivation*, in which Peters uses the Oxford English Dictionary definition of motive as 'that which "moves" or induces a person to act in a certain way; a desire, fear, or other emotion, or a consideration of reason, which influences or tends to influence a person's volition; also often applied to a contemplated result or object the desire of which tends to influence volition'[78]. Peters' definition considers motives as a basis for action—motives *inducing* a particular kind of action.

Gustafson himself considers motives within a wider discussion that leads in to agency, as seen in the Chapter Two discussion, agency consisting of direction and governance of one's powers. Motives, along with beliefs, dispositions, attitudes and affections, help to set the *conditions* which give 'guidance' for action, or 'which make possible and likely certain sorts of action without determining in themselves what action will be done'[79]. Agency, for Gustafson, however, is ultimately a part of 'the sort of person

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or *excellence* of a motive or set of motives, particularly insofar as motives contribute to a person being *for the good*.
[77] Ibid., p. 30.
[78] Ibid., p. 30.
[79] Ibid., pp. 46-47.

one becomes' if one is 'conscientiously,' or *explicitly*, a Christian[80]. There is overlap here with Adams' emphasis on the *kind* of person one is, what or whom one *loves* particularly constitutive of the kind of person one is, motives contributing to what one values, and potentially loves *specifically*.

Adams does not provide many examples of what a motive is, but he does note that 'Love of an individual person is an example of a motive that is too particular to be a trait of character… though one may hope it will be enduring'[81]. Adams' conception of motives focuses primarily on the *value*—that is, the *excellence* as we have examined in Chapter Two—of a motive and secondarily at *how* motives aim at particular ends, the *how* characterised by love, 'loves [which] are more serious, engage more of the self, and involve attending with care to better and worse ways of relating to the object'[82]. Adams provides Deuteronomy 6:4-5 as a particular example of the motivational ideal of love for God[83], love for the One God in Adams' account *integrative* of other motives. However, a New Testament reference for Adams' discussion on motives might be found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount teaching on treasures: 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also' (Matt 6:19-21)[84]. What one treasures is what one *values*, whereas one's heart is what one *loves,* Jesus here emphasising a Life in the Spirit as opposed to a life in the flesh.

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[80] Ibid., p. 45.
[81] *FI*, pp. 177-178.
[82] Ibid., p. 179. In his chapter on obligation, Adams uses the 'reasons' and 'motives' interchangeably and highlights motives such as fear, social bonds and community as bases for action (Ibid., p. 242). It important to Adams that motives are based on motives that *exist*, such as social bonds, as compared to hypothetical counterfactuals.
[83] Adams here notes Jesus' reference of this verse.
[84] New Revised Standard Version, p. 6.

A desire for a Life in the Spirit might serve as a motive, which *induces*[85], or *contributes*[86], to a valuing of particular created goods, and in a particular *manner*. Whereas Adams' motives are concerned with a love of finite goods which faithfully image God, Jesus' above parable in the Gospels suggests a valuing of goods in terms of Spirit: 'You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds' (Eph. 4:22-23)[87]. The manner of valuing created goods occurs through the Spirit, Paul asking that 'he [the Father] may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love' (Eph. 3:14)[88]. Thus, the motive of a Life in the Spirit contributes to one being a person whose love of finite goods is grounded in a prior faith *in* Christ, this faith in Christ allowing one to be *moved*, or directed, through the Spirit.

There is ambiguity in the implicit role that God is to play in ordering a system of motives or values within Adams' account. In a discussion on love for the Good (that is, for God) as the organising principle in a well-ordered system of motives or values, Adams writes that 'If we can add that the conception of the good around which your motives are organized in these ways is that of an ideal or standard that transcends the value of the finite goods you experience, then we can even say that your organizing, integrative principle is love for the transcendent Good, and for God if God is that Good'[89]. In the next paragraph, however, Adams raises questions as to theistic conceptualisation of love for God: he differentiates between love for the *real* God and our *idea* of God, but the distinction is

[85] In Gustafson's definition (*Can Ethics Be Christian?* p. 30).
[86] In Adams' definition (*FI*, p. 178).
[87] New Revised Standard Version, p. 207.
[88] Ibid., p. 207.
[89] *FI*, p. 191.

unclear[90]. Adams is hesitant to allow for explicit, presumably public, reference to God, this reflected in his interest in 'implicit as in explicit love for God'[91].

There is an *implicit* love of God so long as one is *for the good* (that is, goodness as set apart from The Good as God) as a structuring motivational ideal *in the world*, a desire for such a motivational ideal reflective of being a person who 'cares about some forms of excellence, and who loves good things and not bad ones'[92]. The exemplification of these elements in practice, as Adams outlines, is likely to be informed by an ideal of *being someone* who is for the good, as well as by certain dispositions and attitudes, though each factor is *set apart* from any reference to the presumably 'real' God; that is, one's attention is on finite goods as they exist in the world, and potentially faithfully image or resemble God. Adams' emphasis on finite goods in his wider outline of God's love as an integrative principle for motives and values suggests that a certain level of integration in one's motivational structure—involving a *person* as integrator (as the finite image of God as orderer)—is necessary *in the world*, prior to the introduction of reference to God[93].

In learning how to be someone who is for the good, Adams suggests that a *sense of social union* is necessary, in which 'We view the good motive [of a fellow person] as

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[90] Ibid., p. 191. For Adams, God's love 'can be known and enjoyed in a human love that images the divine love, however imperfectly' (Ibid., p. 196). Yet, there is more emphasis, as I interpret Adams, on loving goods for their own sake—*in the world*—as constituting a love for God (and Adams asserts that nontheists can participate in this implicit love for God just as well as theists can). He states this explicitly in 'whether we share God's loves depends much more on what we love (for its own sake) than on whether we conceptualize it theologically' (Ibid., p. 198). In other words, his emphasis is more so on the excellence of finite goods in *themselves*, than it is on a serving of God through these goods. Adams is, as we have discussed, against any teleological subordination in which finite goods are loved as a way or means toward serving God; his emphasis is on *sharing* God's love rather than on *serving* God in love. This approach holds attitudes toward God and toward finite goods at some distance from each other, which Adams acknowledges, but he notes that we should nevertheless aspire to a 'closer integration of the two types of love' (though it is unclear how this integration is to be attained: he does not give any specification as to how this might occur).
[91] Ibid., p. 198. Presumably, individuals that love finite goods in a manner that is 'for the good' are involved in implicit love for God.
[92] Ibid., p. 191.
[93] This is particularly the case if we are to recall Adams' description of God as the Transcendent Good, who is *like a person*, this related to Adams' assertion that the excellences found in the world are likely to be excellences of persons. Although Adams argues against a conception of value that is narrowly focused on personal relations, his theory of value focuses more on persons than it does on principles as locations of value. It is persons that are most likely to image or resemble God as the Transcendent Good.

rendering her a friend or ally—or perhaps more accurately, an ally or potential ally *insofar as we too love the good*.' Yet, Adams' discussion on social union, and on alliance in being for the good, is brief, and it does not consider alliance in terms more direct than overlapping or sharing of motives; that is, alliance is *implicit* and at times, *distant*. The implicit alliance in finite goods, and particularly between individuals in the world, leads to some ambiguity in the single practical example given in his account of alliance in being for the good: that of his philosophy department. Here, Adams notes that 'Those who love goods are not all allies in practice. Sometimes they are rivals for the same good, and sometimes they are devoted to alternative goods that compete for limited resources and opportunities…. [conflict] must be acknowledged; but if we are talking about love for the Good as such, and about good motivation, we must insist on the larger validity of the generous point of view'[94]. His own philosophy department, while seeking to secure its own goods, must be allies with other philosophy departments 'in the pursuit of philosophy and in the mission of the university,' a failure of which may lead to *evil*[95].

I agree with Adams on the need for a 'generous' point of view in alliance for the good, but the question is *to what extent* a generous view is possible, given finite human capacities in time and attention, these limitations corresponding in turn with the difficulty of effective perception of good motives in purported allies[96]. Adams' inclusivity in his example of alliance provides too large of an entryway for his account of the 'someones' with sound motivational structures, this inclusivity on the side of finite goods conducive to

[94] Ibid., p. 185.
[95] Ibid., p. 185. O'Donovan makes a similar point in a discussion on cooperation in his *Entering into Rest*, but places more emphasis on participation in the corporate life, led by the Spirit, than on alliance in being for the good (*Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology Volume 3*, p. 22).
[96] The failure of perception of excellence in loving attention the *sin of folly*, as examined in Chapter Two, particularly in relation to O'Donovan's account in *Finding and Seeking*. Adams in his discussion on grace highlights individuals' 'limited capacity for attention, which leads us to compete for their [others'] attention' (*FI*, p. 174), human love 'lacking in particularity with regard to most of its objects…. [as opposed to] divine capacities [which] are presumably not limited in such a way that attention to one creature would diminish the attention God could give to another' (Ibid., p. 174).

misapprehension, if not folly, in a supposed social union or alliance. An example is necessary as to what a more restrained sense of alliance would entail, lest one delve into the realm of the hypothetical, or of conjecture, of which Adams is rightly sceptical.

I will turn to a higher education example given Adams' example of alliance of philosophy departments in the pursuit of philosophy and in the mission of the university. A process championed by Australian universities, known as 'graduate student attributes,' sought to create unity within universities as to what a university education is *for*, the *for* consisting of several motives or values to which all departments and faculties within a university are explicitly devoted. For instance, the University of Sydney arrived at three motives or values, these of scholarship, lifelong learning and global citizenship[97]. The Australian university project was motivated in part by a focus on the *kinds of people* that graduating students of the universities might *become*, seeking to create unity in an otherwise fragmenting university environment, in which most departments or faculties look toward their own interests primarily, rather than considering their particular university missions. Other universities, whether in Canada or the United Kingdom, following on the Australian higher education example, have since launched similar projects within their own jurisdictions.

The experience of universities in seeking to develop their own versions of Adams' well-ordered system of motives or values within *their own* campuses has been one of tremendous difficulty, with little agreement within universities, let alone between them as Adams suggests, in his inclusive conceptualisation of alliance. The scope for alliance—alliance which is necessary in the formation of motivational ideals (such as the university

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[97] I have written about the graduate student attributes process previously, and co-led the process (mirroring the University of Sydney approach) while serving as Vice-President Academic of the University of Alberta Students' Union, during my undergraduate studies. A more fulsome elaboration is found here: https://universityaffairs.ca/opinion/in-my-opinion/more-than-a-job-that-students-are-looking-for-graduate-student-attributes/.

mission)—is narrow indeed. This narrowness has been the experience of universities *despite* a very considerable amount of time and attention in seeking to develop a structured system of motives or values in the supposed shared pursuit of the university *mission*[98] within their own institutions. Thus, to desire a being for the good characterised by multiple philosophy departments being in favour of *the* mission of the university—let alone the mission of their *own* university—is unlikely.

My aim is not to dismiss the possibility of a well-ordered system of motives or values in favour of a fragmentation of value as is seen in Wolf. Rather, it is to stress the necessity of a much more *limited*, as well as disciplined, notion of alliance amongst individuals in a supposed shared being for the good. The alliance that is necessary in order to avoid the sin of folly, as outlined in the Chapter Two discussion—interrogating perceptions of excellence with rigour as a means to allying with 'someones' whose motivational structures are worth imitating, even if in part, as part of the formation of motivational ideals—depends on *trust*. The identification of trustworthy relations demands, in turn, focused attention (as we have seen in the critical examination of networked life). Thus, Adams' description of alliance is too general, limited by its own emphasis on shared loves as resulting from *presumed* shared motives and values, rather than on concrete, trusting relations serving as a basis for a more effective discernment of shared motives and values, capable of enduring in response to testing.

Interconnectedness and challenges in concepts of motivation, dispositions and attitudes

A motivational structure, in which motives and values are ordered by a love for the good, includes in Adams' analysis further dispositions and attitudes, the latter of which are of particular importance in achieving 'personal integration' within one's overall system.

[98] In fact, scholars such as Stefan Collini question or oppose the very concept of a university mission, this seen particularly in Collini's *What Are Universities For?*

Adams deftly uses the language of disposition to avoid a teleological subordination of motives and values in which a particular value serves as a way or means toward a more general value, such a teleological relationship in Adams' account hindering *love* (rather than valuing) of a particular created good in its relationship with God. His strategy is one in which 'A good person will have a general disposition to value things that are good…. [that] will blossom into love for some good things, and liking for others, and at least respect for most good things that catch her attention'[99]. Dispositions in turn engender attitudes characterised by 'valuings of particular goods'[100].

Adams' example is that Romeo will have a disposition to love women with a particular shape of nose—Juliet having this shape of nose—a disposition which is nevertheless distinct from his attitude toward Juliet, which is one of particular valuing. Juliet's nose is an 'attribute' or 'quality' in Adams' account[101], though in Gustafson's analysis it would qualify as a motive, since it is an *inducement*, moving Romeo to action, even if very subtly. Juliet's nose motivates or interests Romeo, but his eventual attitude toward Juliet is particular to *Juliet*: 'it does not follow that an interest in that attribute as it might be possessed by *other* women is any part of his interest in Juliet'[102].

Adams' disposition is conducive to a potential blossoming; it will 'not constitute love, in the fullest sense, for goodness in general—though someone who has it may well be said, in a looser sense, to "love goodness"'[103]. In Adams' account, 'A general disposition to value particular good things would go quite a long way… toward integrating one's motivational system in an obvious way around the Good'[104]. Yet, the previous

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[99] *FI*, p. 188.
[100] Ibid., p. 188.
[101] The usage, however unusual the example of a nose may be, fulfils Adams' description of a motive, given its contributing to someone being a good person.
[102] Ibid., p. 188.
[103] Ibid., p. 188.
[104] Ibid., p. 188.

discussion on love as alliance or social union stresses the parallelism of alliance between persons *in the world*, in which Adams specifies that 'we are asking what motives would make us allies of those who love the good,'[105] such alliance characterised, as has been discussed, by a shared being for the good, rather than by concrete relation involving trust as the foundation of being for the good. In short, we are in need of a firmer, more grounded understanding of alliance, if reliable dispositions in being for the good are to be developed, for which integration is possible in Adams' account.

In the Chapter Two discussion, I examined Gustafson in his *Can Ethics Be Christian?* based on his balancing between an account of moral experience without reference to religion on the one hand, and an account making explicit reference to Christian faith—the Christian life followed with seriousness—on the other. Once again, Gustafson can serve as an effective interlocutor given his critical examination of terms central to Adams' discussion on well-ordered systems of motives or values. Gustafson highlights the ambiguity of the concept of motivation, and the dependence of disposition on the *intensity of believing*; that is, on Christian faith, and particularly on a teleological ordering-to-serve God.

However, Gustafson provides considerable scope for the influence of moral experience—outside of reference to religion—on the 'in-forming' of a system of motives or values. In other words, a society's culture is expected to play an important role in the formation of a motivational structure, and thus on the goodness (or lack thereof) of dispositions and attitudes, these dispositions and attitudes crucial in Adams' avoidance of an ordering of a system of motives or values in which created goods are ordered teleologically to the serving of God. If networked life is an important part of a society's

[105] Ibid., p. 185.

culture, then particular emphasis is needed on the identification of *trusted* contacts to serve as the basis for a well-ordered system of motives or values, in which these contacts faithfully image God in a love of God as organising principle. If the ‘someones’ in a motivational system are untrustworthy, then it will be difficult to begin to develop a well-ordered system of values and motives that is itself trustworthy.

A particular emphasis is placed in Gustafson’s account on belief, and on believing, as a basis for disposition in a wider motivational structure. Gustafson links belief and disposition in his own account of the terms: ‘We might say that a person acts with a great deal of consistency in certain sorts of circumstances because he believes in certain things, or believes that certain things are true or valuable’[106]. Gustafson then distinguishes between belief and believing, in that ‘all beliefs are not believed in with the same degree of intensity’[107]. There are also tacit beliefs, which are more uncertain, but which might nevertheless lead to particular courses of action. Gustafson links only briefly between beliefs and dispositions, but there is a sense that dispositions—which consist of the ‘readiness to act in a particular way’[108]—will flow from the holding of particular beliefs, and from more intense *believing*, specifically.

In Gustafson’s account of how it is that *Christian* faith might affect the sorts of person that one becomes, his emphasis is again on believing, ‘with its elements of trust and confidence, its elements of fidelity and loyalty, as much as its elements of “knowledge”’[109]. He qualifies the potential moral transformation that occurs in a person through faith, in that transformation is likely to be *modest*: Saint Paul acted with zeal both

[106] *Can Ethics Be Christian?*, p. 38.
[107] Ibid., p. 39.
[108] Ibid., p. 40.
[109] Ibid., p. 45.

prior to and after his encounter with Jesus on the Road to Damascus[110]. Moreover, Gustafson describes a view stressing gradual *re-ordering* of values within a system of motives and values, this involving 'significant experiences' in the world 'in which one senses the Holy, the transcendent, that plant the seeds of transformation of what one is…'—a view in which events and individuals within a society *mediate* God's ordering[111]. This emphasis on *mediation* is likewise seen in O'Donovan—who emphasises that individuals are *of creation*, the moral order of which they are a part given by God—whereas Adams sees one's value system as more set apart from God, one *protesting* whenever the goods that one has been offered or invited to love are not good enough, in relation to the Transcendent.

Dispositions are described as vague in Gustafson's account, and at the very least, informed in important ways by moral experiences outside of Christian faith. The above discussion suggests that readiness to act, or not act, in a given circumstance may be modified by the strength of a belief—but Gustafson does not wish to '"locate" that readiness [in disposition] in any particular human "faculty"'[112]. He emphasises the very wide range of manners in which Christian believers act, and that Christian belief *in-forms* what one is *already* becoming within the society. The culture, of which they are a part, is one in which the networked life plays a prominent role, narcissism a social pathology that has been normalised, as set out in Turkle[113]. Indeed, dispositions and attitudes are prone to manipulation in networked life, specifically in relation to one's most proximate relations; that is, the individuals with whom one is in *supposed* alliance. O'Donovan uses the term

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[110] Ibid., p. 55. He puts it more strongly later, in that 'It would be foolish to claim too much for the distinctiveness and transforming consequences of religious faith and experience in regard to what men have become through participation in particular societies and cultures' (Ibid., p. 62).
[111] Ibid., pp.58-59.
[112] Ibid., p. 40. Gustafson provides much less analysis on 'attitudes,' which are the source of a single sentence in his text.
[113] Ibid., p. 64.

'disposition' in a similar manner, alongside the term koinonia, to describe a propensity to 'discern private interest only insofar as it is compatible with common interest.' A disposition is a propensity or inclination to think or act in a particular way, but it is dependent on a *wider set of relations*.

Yet, in Gustafson's analysis, Christian belief in *Christian life* must be *decisive* rather than peripheral in the question of who one becomes; God is *telos*, God is orderer, these, among other aspects of the conceptualisation of God[114], to have a 'pervasive effect' on one's dispositions and attitudes, as well as motives and values in a well-ordered system[115]. More to the point, Gustafson notes that if individuals are to *imitate* God, then there is a *tending* toward God with all of one's being, this leading in to 'right intention and direction of specific projects'. Thus, 'it is not too much to say that one's loves govern one's intentions, and that the moral life consists in the right ordering and directing of one's loves'[116]. Adams would concur with Gustafson in the latter's emphasis on the vital role of who and what one loves as part of the becoming of a person, but while refraining from a *directing* of these loves toward God, finite goods and the Transcendent Good rather to be held perpetually at some distance from each other. Still, this discussion on disposition suggests the necessity of *partnership*, rather than of distance, in being for the good, this

[114] These are: God as the *creator*, God having *led his people*, God as the *sovereign Lord*, God as *determiner of individual and corporate destiny*, God *acting in and through historical events*, and God as the ground of *hope* (*Can Ethics Be Christian?*, pp. 87-91).
[115] Ibid., p. 66. Gustafson then interrogates the idea that 'God is love,' the experience of God's love always to be *ambiguous* in ways. One of the manners in which God is love is through the revealing of himself in Scripture (particularly through Jesus, God sending his son as an act of love as Gustafson notes in an examination of 1 John 4:7-5:12); another is in God's loving-kindness, or *Hesed*, as demonstrated to the early people of Israel (Ibid., p. 67), as examined in Chapter Two. The ambiguity of the experience of God's love, however, leads Gustafson to the suggestion that 'one might say, belief that God is love is possible only as a "statement of faith"—and "faith" here would refer to a reliance which is not confirmed by reason and experience' (Ibid., p. 67). Another route, which Gustafson leaves open, is that discussed previously, in which the experience of God's love is mediated through concrete persons in society.
[116] Ibid., p. 75.

partnership consisting of trust—if not subordination—if dispositions and attitudes are to maintain integrity over time.

Albert Bandura, the pioneer of social learning theory, provides a further perspective to that of Gustafson, particularly in relation to network structures, emphasing the role of closed, totalistic milieus in particular in sometimes rapidly altering individuals' motives, dispositions and attitudes. Bandura's analysis reinforces Gustafson's prior point that the relations between motives, dispositions attitudes (and presumably values) is complex. Among these psychosocial mechanisms is the selection of *one's associates*, where, 'Under the social variation in moral standards, individuals generally select like-minded associates who share similar values and moral standards. Compatible associates ensure social support for one's own system of self-evaluation'[117]. This suggests that the form of alliance described by Adams, as consisting of shared motives, values or projects, is the default inclination of individuals. Thus, a critical stance is necessary in order to avert the danger of such alliance diminishing critical reflection on motives and values.

In his article, *The Psychology of Chance Encounters and Life Paths*, Bandura examines the individual and social determinants of the trajectories that lives take following chance encounters; that is, following encounters that were unpredicted, and in which individuals have no pre-existing social ties, this reflective of the Burt account of non-redundancy in Chapter One. Chance encounters, which are sometimes offered by God as discussed in Chapter Three, may subtly or even significantly affect an individual's system of motives and values, prior deliberation, in particular, serving as resistance to potentially nefarious influences in the shaping of life paths. While Bandura notes that 'Humans have an unparalleled capacity to become many things'[118], chance encounters may send

[117] Albert Bandura, *Moral Disengagement: How People Do Harm and Live With Themselves* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2016), p. 10.
[118] Albert Bandura, 'The psychology of chance encounters and life paths,' p. 754.

individuals' lives in highly beneficial or inauspicious directions, depending on the interplay of a variety of factors. It is closed milieus, 'structured around an insulated communal life that prescribes beliefs and behavior patterns for virtually all aspects of living'—reflected for instance in the Jonestown settlement—which are most likely to negatively alter a life-path in cases where there are pre-existing vulnerabilities or uncertainties in an individual's given system of values and motives. In contrast to totalistic milieus are more 'moderately constraining milieus [in which] personal lives are extensively shaped by one's primary affiliations, but active participation in mainstream societal activities creates opportunities for competing influences to exert their effects'[119].

Bandura seeks to highlight many of the positive elements of chance encounters, such encounters inevitable in life, offering opportunities particularly for the well-prepared; that is, for those who have deliberated carefully beforehand. Although Bandura does not make this point directly—his account not involving reference to social network theory—a structurally autonomous network, branching into multiple social worlds, is one likely favoured in his analysis. Such a network structure involves 'binding relationships [which] serve as a vehicle for personal changes that can have long-range effects'[120], affecting motivations, dispositions and attitudes within a system of motives or values, though while guarding against the danger of control within closed networks involving high levels of redundancy that has been examined in the Chapter One examination of networked life.

The analysis of Gustafson and Bandura highlight the ambiguity as well as complexity in the conception of motivation, an ordered system of motives and values

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[119] Ibid., p. 754. Pluralistic societies give rise to a constant vying for attention and influence between disparate social groups, this influence which can be increased through interpersonal attraction, but whose potential harmful effects may be mitigated through pre-existing values and capacities developed through toil; that is, through deliberation (Ibid., p. 754). Bandura highlights 'Pasteur's adage that chance favors the prepared mind,' as well as the fact that 'chance encounters more readily produce converts to undemanding life-styles than to those built through toil on complex competences' (Ibid., p 750).
[120] Ibid., p. 750.

guarding against dangers of manipulation in networked life, yet with motives, values, dispositions and attitudes subtly affected by the individuals with whom one is in direct alliance. Thus, a continuous critical stance is vital in relation to the individuals that one views as being offered as particular, trusted allies through chance encounters—these the possible 'primary contacts' into new social worlds—as part of a vocation. I have suggested that this alliance is a partnership in which trust, involving service, is necessary, as opposed to a more ambiguous and distant sharing of motives and values, as is seen in the account of Adams[121].

The analysis amounts to what is too strong of a focus on *principle* in Adams—the presumed goodness of what one is *for*—as opposed to persons whom one *trusts*[122], as a basis for his well-ordered system of motives and values. On the side of finite goods, this gives way to an inclusivity disconnected from reality, Adams underestimating the competition, as well as sheer difficulty, in penetrating surface-level appearances that is a part of networked life—this part of the culture which informs vocation, such non-religious moral experience highlighted by Gustafson. This approach on the side of finite goods shades in to an ordering of a system of motives and values around God that is *itself* too

[121] In genuine alliance, it is not just possession of the same motives, values or projects that is the test of alliance, but rather how individuals act or respond when the shared motives, values or projects are temporarily suspended. Simply put, the strength of alliance in being for the good is tested when one, both or multiple parties within an alliance (or friendship) do *not* receive the goods that they want. The test here is one that is less focused on love of mutual goods, characterised by a deeper sharing of motives, values or projects, as Adams outlines, than it is one of faith or trust in a concrete person, as I suggest. It is sometimes the case—and often sobering, though the ground for prudence—that what one perceives initially to be alliance, even if over an extended period of time, is more fragile than imagined. Testing involving some compromise or challenge is necessary. For instance, do various members of an alliance make sacrifices when a shared sense of goodness diminishes, even if only temporarily, or when the shared goods are not seen or achieved in practice? Here, faith or trust in the other person within the alliance, rather than a mutual love of motives, values or projects, helps to sustain alliance.

[122] Trust does not receive attention in Adams' discussion on alliance. It is mentioned twice in the conclusion of Adams' discussion on Abraham, in which Adams questions Abraham's trusting obedience in God's command to sacrifice Isaac. It is mentioned in Adams' discussion on moral faith in which Adams notes that faith or trust are needed in the common good; that is, it is when one's conception of human good appreciates the goods of all persons—that justice and fairness exist. A final reference is made in the chapter's conclusion, to trust in *reasons* for faith. In short, there is no reference to trust within *alliances*.

ambiguous—that of a 'social union' focused on covenant *without reference to Jesus Christ or to the Holy Spirit*.

Put differently, it is Jesus Christ, and particularly the pouring out of the Spirit that should serve as the basis of a well-ordered system of motives and values on the side of the Infinite, this evangelical account possessing the concreteness lacking in Adams' account of implicit love of God, a concreteness which would be grounded on the side of the finite at least in part on alliance focused on trusting relations with Burt's primary contacts, as opposed to general sharing of motives, values or projects. The love of God embodied in Jesus Christ is presented in Paul's Letter to the Romans, 'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8:38-39)[123].

The relationship with God described in Adams is that of *covenant*, which is initiated with God—not a 'mere accident'[124]. This would appear to be the strongest form of motivation for human beings, God's love internalised, 'written on their hearts', although Adams provides some space at the very end of the discussion for 'human spontaneity… to see the inscription of God's concerns in human hearts as arising largely from people's attention to what they see of God…'[125]. The description, however, does not make reference to Jesus Christ, nor is there any trace of the Spirit. There is instead reversion to the realm of the finite in love for God: 'it is not enough for God to contribute to it [social union] in a nonaccidental way; we must do so'.

[123] New Revised Standard Version, p. 169.
[124] *FI*, p. 197.
[125] Ibid., p. 198.

Indeed, Adams resists any *teleological structure* in which the love of created goods serves only or primarily as a means to the Supreme Good; that is, to God. His language favours 'kinship,' 'harmony' and 'perspective,' more than it does authority or service: it is important that values are able to *exist together*, rather than to be directed toward anything else. This looseness in language is perhaps best reflected in Adams' characterisation of allies as having a 'friendly feeling' only. For Adams, there is a 'a more profound alliance,' involving a 'fuller sharing of interests, in which shared goals are valued for their own sake by both parties. When we speak of "shared interests," we normally mean being interested in the same things for their own sake; we do not mean just being interested in the friends' interests for the sake of the friend'[126]. Yet, alliance is not only a shared set of interests for their own sake, but rather involves direct relations transcending such interests, relations which provide a basis for motivation in action when motives, values and projects sometimes do *not* align[127].

If a system of motives and values is to develop and maintain order, then the 'organising principle' on the side of finite good must be more concrete; that is, based on trusting and direct relations, rather than a more ambiguous sharing of motives, values or projects. Such trusting relations are exemplified most exemplarily in *service*. On the side of the Transcendent Good, it is God as Jesus Christ who serves as orderer, this in contrast with Adams' more generic conception of 'social union' through covenant. It is in the following section that the external forces of networked life, capable of breaking down systems over time, is examined, ordering through trusted authorities, rather than through generic principles, necessary in the face of such challenge.

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[126] Ibid., p. 196.
[127] The 'most perfect' friendship for Adams would be one where friends each love the same sports team, or perhaps share a love of country, for its own sake, rather than loving primarily the *relation* which exists between them as individuals, within a wider shared set of ends or loves.

The Risk of Decay Within Systems

It is important, as Adams writes, that individuals are 'attached' to this system, allowing for 'reasonable constancy over time in the pattern of what I care about, and how much'[128]. There is little discussion in the chapter, however, on the sheer challenge of maintaining a system of motives or values, and particularly a *well-ordered* system of values, in which difficult contexts may hinder the system that individuals seek to develop. The discussion on Wolf raises what Adams views as the disturbing prospect of life without such a system, but beyond some recognition of the reality of 'painful choices' between conflicting values, there is no examination as to *what might sustain a system under the pressure of conflict*.

Erosion without authority

It does not require much experience to know that systems, without proper care, break down. Maintaining any well-ordered system of motives or values, whether at the level of the individual or collective, requires a considerable amount of attention and effort. There is the constant possibility of manipulation in the realm of motivational systems, particularly within networked life. A myriad of real-world examples demonstrate that systems are not only prone to decay without sustained attention from *within* the system, but also from subtle external influences. In political life, it is often the case that a political leader is brought down through a small number of core team members whose focus *erodes* over time, the prospect of personal gain and enjoyment of the privileges of power growing more important than the collective enterprise and shared mission. This shift in motivation often verges on the *imperceptible*, requiring that individuals maintain levels of focus that are difficult to sustain over time.

[128] Ibid., p. 183.

In the sporting world, locker rooms that otherwise speak with 'one voice' can be poisoned through one or a small number of team members that speak 'off-the-record' to the press; decisive action is therefore necessary on the part of the coach or captain to maintain integrity within the system. Such temptations are rife within networked life, as has been outlined in Chapter One, material benefits encouraging a focus on the short-term, the superficial and perceptible, overwhelming restraint. It is authoritative communication within such circumstances which ensures that motivation can be maintained both at the level of the individual, as well as between individuals within teams or common projects[129]. Such authoritative communication 'penetrates social existence and gives it cohesion'[130]. Authoritative communication is sometimes unsettling, causing discomfort rather than enjoyment in the present; however, such communications serve valuable long-term purposes.

These are of course, particular kinds of excellence, ones that could be easily dismissed as being extraordinary[131]. The challenge of maintaining systems is just as high, however, with more 'ordinary' excellences, for example the lone parent raising a family. There is perhaps even *more* difficulty, in these adverse situations, to maintain a well-ordered system of values and motives, the default option is that of breakdown (which looms in the background even when systems are working well). Such activities are less likely, intuitively, to be characterised by the enjoyment that is central to Adams' theory of

[129] O'Donovan implies the difficulty of sustaining attention within the world when he notes 'Christians have spoken of world-order not only as created but as *sustained* by the constant activity of God, and the event of "authoritative" disclosure belongs to that sustaining work' (*Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 58). And soon after, 'When our imaginations drain the world of final causes, its forms crumble into mere facticity before our eyes' (Ibid., p. 58). Attention given primarily to finite goods leads, over time, to forgetfulness of God, and so does away with the sustaining work of authoritative communication.
[130] Ibid., p. 54.
[131] There is bound to be lack of enjoyment even in so-called exceptional forms of excellence. In *The Gatekeepers*, Chris Whipple references a colleague of James A. Baker III, in what was a 'startling moment': '"Baker's eyes filled with tears. He told me what it had been like for him to be chief of staff in a White House riven by different philosophies and ideological outlooks. And every day various people would try to take Jim Baker out"' (*The Gatekeepers*, p. 105).

value—again, sacrifice is involved[132]. In cases of suffering, it may be expected that individuals will revert to short-term goods, rather than to focus on a pursuit of excellence over time[133].

It is not enough, in most cases, that an 'organising principle' exists within a system, one that provides the right motivation at individual or group levels, for principles are, on their own, *static*. Principles are prone to decay—sometimes rapidly, though often incrementally and imperceptibly—when not given proper care. To return to the example of athletics, which Adams briefly raises at points, few teams, even at professional levels, are capable of maintaining well-ordered systems of motives or values over time. It is rather usually a *coach* and multiple authoritative figures within a group, that are tasked with keeping an organising principle *in sharp focus*[134].

Partnership in suffering: the role of the coach

In a reflection on his service as an apostle, Paul asks 'Do you know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it' (1 Cor 9:24), and continues with 'Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so

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[132] At the very outset of *Finding and Seeking*, O'Donovan highlights the weakness in motivation which often befalls individual agents: '"The Spirit comes to our aid in our weakness" (Rom. 8:26). Weak in confidence, weak in understanding, weak in endurance, our sickened agency is restored, our ill-conceived undertakings are given good effect' (*Finding and Seeking*, p. 1).
[133] In a discussion on 'life strategy' and time horizons within careers, the late *Harvard Business School* professor Clayton M. Christensen writes 'If you study the root causes of business disasters, over and over you'll find this predisposition towards endeavors that offer immediate gratification. If you look at personal lives through that lens, you'll see the same stunning and sobering pattern: people allocating fewer and fewer resources to the things they would have once said mattered most' (Christensen, 2010, p. 8). Christensen does not reference a 'system' directly, but emphasises the role of prayer and explicit attention to God as the explicit organising principle when deliberating on and sustaining action.
[134] Nick Saban, coach of the Alabama Crimson Tide, writes 'Of all the roles a head coach in college football has to assume, that of motivator is perhaps most directly related to a team's success' (*How Good Do You Want to Be?*, p. 157). Saban outlines a comprehensive system which ensures that individuals within his team remain motivated consistently, this captured in the assertion that 'It's the repetitive motivating message given daily over the course of the week that has a real effect—not a few words before kickoff' (Ibid., p. 161).

that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified' (1 Cor 9:25)[135]. The aimlessness, or wandering, to which Paul alludes is *to be expected* unless there is a sustaining force, that of the gospel, the proclamation of which is described as a commission with which he is entrusted[136]. Moreover, Paul, in noting 'I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some' (1 Cor 9:22)[137], serves *himself* in the role of coach; that is, of a trusted authority whose own exertions serve as a centripetal force, his followers ordering their lives around the gospel of service of God *because of him*.

A system of motives or values is also likely to decay over time when it is focused on a life in the flesh, reflected for instance in the corrupted version of networked life. The engagement of individuals as 'parts,' as described in the work of Turkle, and the negotiation to achieve advantageous network positions as described in the work of Burt, are psychologically and physically taxing. The striving for control that is sometimes central to networked life is that of self-annihilation, striving gradually overwhelming the limited powers of human agents. Paul describes this decay in writing 'So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live' (Rom 8:12-13)[138].

O'Donovan notes that in the guidance of the Spirit that 'We are summoned to be alert and understanding, not passively reactive, and that means thinking what it is we are to do while it is ours to do it'[139]. If the opportunity to think what we are to do is not

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[135] New Revised Standard Version, p. 183.
[136] Ibid., p. 183. As part of his reflection 'I am entrusted with a commission' (1 Cor 9:17), Paul notes that the commission is *not of his own will*. This differs with the Adams account, examined in Chapter Three, in which a commission is selected amongst several possible options.
[137] Ibid., p. 183.
[138] New Revised Standard Version, p. 168.
[139] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 5.

grasped—the flesh overtaking the Spirit—then decay is inevitable. O'Donovan highlights that we are 'constantly in peril of losing' our lives, and yet 'the Spirit's power in raising the dead is of a piece with our *moral* recovery, the restoration of imperiled or decayed agency'[140]. The Spirit *gives life* to a system of values or motives, a system which is centred on service of Jesus Christ as the motivational ideal, this service providing individuals with freedom, which 'implies an emancipation from powers that oppress our agency and reduce us to a passive-reactive existence'[141]—passivity often characteristic of networked life as reflected for instance in the concept of deliberated nonchalance, resulting in gradual decay in a system of motives or values.

Nevertheless, *weakness* in human powers is inevitable in networked life, for individuals must undertake to participate actively in the world, as discussed in O'Donovan. It is not to be avoided, but rather to be expected, that counterparts in networked life—whether enemies undertaking the work of the devil, or supposed friends—will attempt, in their own futile attempts to control or dominate, to diminish one's own motivation. If one is to boast in achievements in the flesh, then one is rendered vulnerable to such efforts. Thus, it is imperative that one resists a succumbing to ordering of a system of motives or values, following instead Paul's teaching in which 'a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God' (Rom 2:29)[142]. Motivation that depends on public praise or admiration is a motivation that will decline when praise is eventually withdrawn, when one is mistaken in a perceived alliance in being for the good.

Such mistakes, which are at their core a misperception of whom one is able to *trust*, lead to a temporary weakness in the world, one's system of motives or values having been

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[140] Ibid., p. 7.
[141] Ibid., p. 8.
[142] New Revised Standard Version, p. 163.

sustained to some extent by love received from the individuals with whom one incorrectly assumes to be in alliance in a given pursuit of excellence. Paul notes that 'For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die' (Rom 5:6)[143], this suggesting that in networked life one cannot simply trust the majority of one's friends to come to one's aid in a time of weakness, even if one has been consistently *for the good*, as Adams has outlined. Indeed, it is not through worldly achievements, but rather through proclamation of Jesus Christ, that reconciliation is possible: 'But more than that, we even boast to God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation' (Rom 5:11)[144]. In short, one's system of motives and values must place at its centre God's love through the concrete figure of Jesus Christ, alliance with select trusted authorities helping to sustain such a system over time, *this with a perpetual sense of restraint in the direction received through such relations*.

O'Donovan notes that the freedom gained through Life in the Spirit is 'discursively engaged, not with other agents, but in dialogical intimacy with God himself, who speaks with those who possess the Spirit as he did with Moses, face-to-face. "Led by" the Spirit and "walking in" the Spirit, they find their human purposes shaped responsively to his purposes'[145]. The Holy Spirit in O'Donovan's account is less an organising principle, structuring motives, and more a confirmation of the status of individuals as *subjects of action*, 'attesting God the Son and evoking human attestation of him in human will and deed'[146]. The presence of the Holy Spirit to man is freedom, which demands an active engagement in the world, reality being 'that of God's creation as it is revealed in Christ'[147].

[143] Ibid., p. 165.
[144] New Revised Standard Version, p. 166.
[145] *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology Volume 1*, p. 8.
[146] *RMO*, p. 106.
[147] Ibid., p. 109.

This section has further examined the likelihood of decay in systems of motives and values guided by abstract principle as opposed to by concrete persons, athletics serving as the source of several examples. Without coordinators, such as coaches—or captains—providing integrative force, aimlessness or wandering within a motivational system are to be expected over time. Paul provides such integrative force, as outlined in the biography of Wright, in which Paul's partnership with Jesus serves as a basis for endurance in action of members of the newly-formed churches around him.

A sense of restraint is necessary in the extent to which motivation is derived from others' praise following worldly achievements, such praise likely to be withdrawn in cases where purported alliances do not stand tests of adversity. It is the service of God as Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which provide necessary motivation when such situations occur.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that faithful action, focused on self-offering in whatever one's circumstances, is conducive to sustained initiative over time in networked life. Self-offering guards in part against haughty self-justification as a particular risk in networked life, this reflected for instance in McLuhan's extension of the central nervous system into the world. Too great of a sense of becoming, as Adams suggests, can be manipulated by cunning actors, which cuts off effective action. Hence, a more gradual, if limited, sense of becoming is proposed.

The proposals in this chapter include the restrained sense of self in relation to goods offered to live, a small series of alliances focused on direct trusting relations for the good, and the maintenance of a well-ordered system of values and motives preventing against the decay of the self over time. These collectively address the problem of narrow

horizons in relation to the self, the world, and the time raised in the Chapter One examination of networked life. Faithful action as it is set out in this chapter commends attention in every new today, this attention aided by alliances helping to reduce drift in one's sense of self, engaging with the world as it is, and with consistency.

Faithful action, which is activated and sustained through the operation of God, and is a component of the conception of vocation that I am proposing, involves self-offering in a limited number of projects. There is a focusing of action within communities involving trustworthy relations with primary contacts, rather than in vast, open networks where action is diffuse. Networked life prioritises such diffusion, which is conducive to maintaining identities carefully formed and projected, but whose articulation is rarely critically examined through what Taylor calls 'dialogical resistance.' There is a danger in such critical examination for individuals valuing the material advantage and public admiration in networked life, because it puts such identities—the imagined 'ought' as part of distant senses of becoming—to the test.

The conception of vocation that I propose has a humbler outlook, action focused on *every new today*, resisting the urge to project into the indeterminate future, instead responding seriously to the offerings and challenges inherent in actuality. If vocation is to be transformative for the human agent, then this can only be a very gradual process—one's vocation worked out incrementally as one responds and recalls God's original summons to action. The human agent acts with the Parable of the Mustard Seed firmly in mind, with faith in the unseen realities that may emerge through single-minded self-offering—action sustained by relations with concrete others but oriented toward God—in every new today.

Faithful action involving constant deliberation provides *confidence* necessary in averting the possible sin of anxiety, as seen in O'Donovan's analysis, a confidence which in turn allows for a more effective direct encounter—that is, involving *testing*—of the

individuals that one meets on the paths of networked life. The dangerous individuals who seek to control or dominate, as part of the winning of material advantage or admiration in networked life, are more easily identified and resisted through the confidence emanating from faith. I have suggested in this chapter that faithful action often sets out with *small beginnings*. The self offered through faithful action, however, is only offered in the opportune moments prepared for in deliberation, O'Donovan's emphasis on the 'next' moment defying the temptation to engage in imaginative anticipations.

Hence, this chapter's critical examination of faithful action in networked life values actuality much more highly than does Adams, who emphasises the importance of *protests* within one's social circumstances, particularly when the goods offered by God are not *good enough* as discussed in Chapter Three. A life of single-minded service, determined by God, reduces the possibility of this prioritisation of the self in protest, the focus instead on the primary teleological relation between Creator and creation. If small beginnings translate, over time, to worldly achievement characterised in terms of excellence, then this becoming is merely a by-product of a faithful action oriented always toward the promise of God. The self-offering involved in vocation in networked life involves restraint in the face of the temptation to divide oneself across multiple projects in what is considered a 'portfolio-based' career or life—the spreading of energy across many activities an *overleveraging* of human powers, rather than a demonstration of them. A very considerable amount of attention to a limited number of created goods, offered by God, is necessary if one is to be *responsible* for them, though without taking these over through the writing of one's name on them.

The pursuit of excellence, and particularly a social pursuit of excellence involving coordination—as outlined in Chapter Two—is elusive, and so lends itself to the constant possibility of distraction in networked life, this seen in the attempted securing of public

admiration, whenever wells of admiration run dry. The negotiation involved in the securing of productive relations in order to maintain material advantage, as well as control and domination, mean that individuals must discern carefully as part of their walks on many interconnected paths in networked life. These challenges provide further reason, I believe, for a life of self-offering, involving constant deliberation, this allowing for simultaneous focus, as well as space, to fend off dangers as these inevitably arise within vocational discernment.

The discussion on faithful action via self-offering over time in whatever one's actuality proceeds then to an examination of the concept of a well-ordered system of motives and values, as outlined in Adams, particularly in relation to the likelihood of decay of systems over time, as well as pressures previously identified in discussion on networked life. Love as alliance serves as the means for ordering of values and motives, this building on Adams' initial outline in his chapter on devotion in *Finite and Infinite Goods*. In this chapter, however, Jesus Christ serves as the cornerstone, or ordering principle, in alliance.

God as Jesus Christ serves as the head of a well-ordered system of motives and values, individuals ordered-to-serve in a teleological relation between creature and Creator, the authority of Jesus Christ mediated through trusted authorities in the world, which help to maintain ordered systems over time. Engagement with trusted worldly relations—the 'primary contacts' as described by Burt —helps to ensure motivation in networked life, sustaining disciplined action, though while pointing ultimately toward God. The prior summons of God, His own faithfulness demonstrated through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, serves as the primary source of motivation for action in the world, particularly in the service of created goods and worldly relations offered to love, these part of a vocation.

I have argued that God's love, as it is demonstrated in the reality of Jesus Christ and through the pouring-out and inner working of the Holy Spirit, provides a concreteness that is lacking in Adams' account. Specifically, this allows for a directness in relation within alliance that is necessary in the formation of enduring alliances conducive to the sustaining of motivation amid its inevitable ebbs and flows. Adams' conception of alliance is too focused on *presumed* shared motives, values and common projects. O'Donovan's description of community, particularly in his *Entering into Rest*, sees community not only as focusing on common projects, but also on one's fellow members in *koinonia*; that is, in partnership with each other. Wright's account of the life of Paul further specifies the concept of *koinonia*. Wright, in his imaginative description of Paul's imprisonment in Ephesus, demonstrates that motivation does not need to be elevated in order to maintain a well-ordered system of motives and values. In fact, low levels of motivation, resulting from suffering in the service of God, in the imaging of Jesus Christ, are to be expected in *Christian life,* and particularly in vocation—this evident in Paul's vocation of reconciliation.

The discussion with Gustafson and Bandura as interlocutors demonstrates the significance of particular 'someones' in the formation of motivational ideals, to which values, dispositions, attitudes and other similar concepts are connected in what are, as Gustafson notes, complex relations. I have sought to demonstrate that, while it is important to generally appreciate and be in favour of a wide variety of goods—as is outlined in Adams' discussion on well-ordered systems of motives and values—the goods that individuals are *for* in alliance are often much more limited than what Adams suggests, particularly in his example of philosophy departments and university missions.

The example of graduate student attributes in Australian higher education, imitated in Canadian and British settings, is reflective of the restricted nature, *in practice*, of love as

alliance. Moreover, I have argued—building on the Chapter Two discussion on social rather than individualistic conceptions of excellence—that alliance depends on the role of trusted coordinators or similar figures, rather than on abstract principles, in maintaining ordered values and motives over time.

Conclusion: Vocation as Value

In this dissertation, I have argued that a certain Christian conception of vocation is the way through networked life. Networked life, when misdirected, is a life in the flesh, oriented toward the worship of the self, the central nervous system extended into the world as per McLuhan. Such a life prioritises short-term network advantage and material benefits over service of others and of God. Human agency in networked life risks predominate focus on the self, a self which is nevertheless bereft of a stable foundation of value and love, as suggested by Turkle and built on by Ellul and Grant, succumbing instead to the sin of pride, seeking control or dominance over others.

Networked life, as Turkle demonstrates, promises in its misdirected version *more*, but provides individuals with *less*, diminishing if not corrupting them. The self in networked life attempts to write its name on created goods and worldly relations, engaged in constant negotiation within a given network structure, rather than preparing for the offering of created goods and worldly relations in *opportune moments*, moments which cannot be predicted, and which are to be responded to with thanksgiving and urgency, based on prior deliberation, as set out by O'Donovan.

We can distinguish, building helpfully on Wolters, between the structure and direction of created reality and its various orders of life. More specifically, created reality is good, as are the cultures and cultural agencies which comprise it. When elements of the created world have been corrupted, they can be restored, particularly through service, as Wolters notes. The networked life and its various elements, such as network structure outlined in Burt, can be redeemed, particularly through reorientation toward service within a God-given vocation.

This dissertation proposes a Christian conception of vocation as the way through networked life, utilising elements of networked life for the good, ultimately in service of God, this service mediated through service of others in the world, engaging for instance in small alliances with Burt's trusted primary contacts as part of pursuits of excellence in relation to the created goods and worldly relations offered to love. Vocation helps to guard against the problem of narrow horizons in relation to the self, the world, and the time, as outlined in Chapter One. It proposes a world-participation that endures, regardless of the ambiguity and messiness of human action, the self brought into view with the world and the opportunities it offers for action. It demands a precise analysis of network structures, and the formation of trusting relations as a basis for pursuit of excellence, over time.

Vocation in networked life is conducive to a valuing of persons whose starting-points in action may be that of only 'small beginnings,' characterised by a dearth of material opportunity, this seen in the lone parent or Fiona Hill setting out in the North East of England. This valuing of individuals through vocation resists reductive valuing of networked life, in which value is situated in optimal network position, encouraging individuals to press on in their respective pursuits of excellence. I examine three aspects of the proposed conception of vocation in networked life—vocation as the way through networked life, deliberation in vocation, and vocation as value—and in every section outline several concrete, real-world *implications* as part of the living of this Christian conception of vocation in networked life.

The way through networked life

The way through networked life is that of vocation. Incorporating aspects of the definitions of Adams and O'Donovan, the Christian conception of vocation proposed in this thesis is 'An offering from God, involving an ensemble of worldly relations and created goods, through which we are given, in particular, to pursue excellence, realise our

agency and serve God.' I emphasise throughout the thesis the importance of a *sense of restraint* in vocation, particularly given the multiple dangers outlined in the Chapter One and Three discussions on networked life, watchfulness necessary as part of vocational discernment. Whereas networked life emphasises a constant pursuit of opportunity without limits—an *everything now* mentality—I suggest intermittently the importance of posing the question 'How much is enough?' this seen for instance in the work of Robert and Edward Skidelsky. In vocation, God offers *particular* worldly relations and created goods through which it is possible to serve God as our ultimate, orienting focus. There is an emphasis on limitation in vocation, which contrasts with the limitlessness of networked life, as O'Donovan notes.

Adams specifies that participation in God's project is the ultimate project of which one is a part in vocation, but that responsibilities within vocation must be proportioned to individuals' capacities. Whereas in networked life, there is an unending march forward in the pursuit of opportunity—material finding always giving way to material seeking, appetites never satiated—vocation involves focus and discipline. The goods that are offered can only be taken up *in the moment*, and they are likely to *write their names* on individuals, rather than individuals writing their names on the created goods and relations—the *techne* described in Adams and O'Donovan is impossible, an exhausting of agency.

Vocation, in networked life, is a way through the world consisting of reciprocity in trusting relations and service, rather than of dominance or control, service highlighted by Grisez and Shaw as the focus of vocation. It is conducive to the agency of individuals, preventing against their corruption through the sin of pride that is pervasive in networked life, pride replaced instead by glad responsibility and thanksgiving in response to God's

offering of created goods and worldly relations to love, whatever the goods and relations happen to be.

Several initial concrete, real-world, implications are as follows:

Act in a gradual, step-by-step manner without too much reference to long-term outcomes. A step-by-step approach to vocation, walking along a given path in every new today, is more responsive to God's will and to the indeterminacy (and lack of control) in life than is a life which forces short-term action to desired long-term outcomes. Imaginative anticipation should be reduced to the greatest extent possible, self-mockery utilised, as O'Donovan notes, in order to combat haughty conceptions of self.

Recall that whatever goods and relations that are given to one to love in a vocation can be taken away. One does not possess the goods offered to live. It may be God's will that an individual's vocation changes, particular goods taken away. Personal restraint is therefore needed given the human tendency to believe, over time, that the goods and relations involved in a vocation are theirs to keep. They can only ever be provisional. Moreover, just as goods and relations part of a vocation are provisional, the success in a vocation is not of the agent but of God—all thanks should be directed to the Lord.

Do not broadcast vocational 'success' through networked technologies. One should not seek to broadcast worldly achievements in a vocation via networked technologies, as this opens oneself to pride—worshipping the extended self—and over time to despair. It is paramount to guard against the vices of pride and despair, whether one experiences success or failure in a vocation. These will lead to the defeat, if not the destruction of the soul of the agent. Grisez comments trenchantly on the risks of despair, as does Augustine in his consideration of despair and presumption as vices which pull individuals downward much like a whirlpool.

In networked life, a pursuit of excellence, whether at individual or social levels, is difficult to sustain, the securing of material advantage in relation to one's counterparts taking precedence, this interrupting the elusiveness of excellence. Indeed, there are occasions where worldly achievements are *not* evident, such lack of achievement requiring that one wait and endure. We see this need for waiting as part of vocation embodied particularly in the life of many lone parents, as introduced in Chapter One and developed in Chapters Two and Three. It is likely that motivation will decline in such circumstances when a pursuit of excellence values winning of short-term advantage, in which emphasis is on the immediate 'terrain,' rather than on a longer-term strategy, looking beyond the self.

Action focused on the immediate terrain is reflective of networked life in its misdirected state. This action is contrasted with O'Donovan's emphasis on asking the question 'Why?' within a pursuit of excellence, this question pointing toward God—the warranty of God's promise as the Holy Spirit, which is poured out on man in God's love. There is agreement between O'Donovan and Bonhoeffer on suffering as a means to joy, the way through suffering the bearing of one's cross. The individual that seeks to maximise options and opportunities is, as Bonhoeffer rightly asserts, mediocre. While the self may succeed in securing desired benefits, out-negotiating her peers within a given network structure, action remains confined to the existing terrain; there is little possibility of restoration of the world. Any victories, as Grant notes, are ephemeral, not the victories of the individual but rather of technique.

In other words, networked life risks interrupting an extended pursuit of excellence, instead 'optimising,' in a utilitarian manner—treating others as parts—for short-term good. It prioritises individualistic excellence above social excellence as seen in Adams' narrow analysis of Gandhi, well targeted by Nussbaum, the value of relations tied to whatever aids the insecure self, bereft of wider sources of love, and so needing to 'win' recognition

through dialogical relations as highlighted in Taylor's examination of modern identity. Excellence, however, is rightly described in the account of Adams as being *independent* of subjective determinations. Whereas individuals should trust in their perceptions of excellence in the world, Eros, for instance, awakening individuals to possible pursuits—excellence is rather more outward-facing, the role of the self limited. A more strategic, rather than terrain-focused approach to networked life sees the self as given to serve God, this in turn involving service in the world, in the role of Ellul's 'mediator. Paul's vocation of reconciliation is a pre-eminent example of such service. Here, the excellences perceived and received in the world are not our own, but are rather offered by God to love, this encouraging Wolf's submission to value. The self is not the measure of value, but is rather to serve as steward of valuable created goods and relations, this an approximation of Kingdom values on Earth, as noted by Stackhouse, Jr.

Thus, we must consider how elements of networked life can serve individuals as they seek to restore created reality, resisting the modern equivalents of the psalmist's persecutors in Psalm 119. The lessons derived from the Chapter One and subsequent discussion on networked life are threefold: 1) The development of 'structurally autonomous' networks; 2) The identification of trustworthy 'primary contacts' as entry-ways into new social worlds, and 3) The demonstration of caution, or restraint, while engaging in the unknown of new social worlds, particularly when potential new 'primary contacts' are offered to individuals—presumably by God—through what Bandura terms *chance encounters* in Chapter Four.

The development of structurally autonomous networks, characterised by high levels of redundancy within one's own immediate network of allies on the one hand, and branching into multiple social worlds through trustworthy primary contacts on the other, mitigates potential danger through nefarious, manipulative actors in networked life. The

formation of structurally autonomous networks is akin to keeping swords sheathed, ever prepared for battle in the material world as part of the guarding of one's soul.

Indeed, a love as alliance, in which individuals maintain the well-ordered system of values and motives described in Chapter Four—this order sustained ultimately in and through Jesus Christ, requires a series of relations with trusted authorities *in the world*, whose emphasis is on maintaining the good. A structurally autonomous network is one that is itself well-ordered, motivation sustained in the world by well-coordinated trusted relations, allied in the love of particular goods in a shared pursuit of excellence. Moreover, structural autonomy guards against risks to any given individual in possible temptation, which in networked life might corrupt individuals, diminish the overall strength of alliances, and lead to misdirected pursuits of excellence over time.

Several additional concrete, real-world, implications are as follows:

Engage, or at least demonstrate openness to engagement, with individuals across a variety of social worlds. One should seek to cultivate a personal network in which many close friends do not know each other, and where there are no or few linkages between these friends or the clusters of people of which they are a part. The formation, as well as maintenance, of such a network is psychologically taxing given the 'contradictory variation' in the information one receives from various sources. However, such a network is a strategic advantage given the more nuanced and realistic perspective that it provides in any pursuit of excellence, the excellences more 'perspectival' as discussed in Adams, and of value in a highly contested postmodern world.

Identify trustworthy 'primary contacts' as entry-ways into new social worlds. The selection of trustworthy primary contacts into non-redundant social worlds is, as Burt notes, *the most important* decision that one can make in the formation of a network, the sin

of folly emphasised in the Chapter Two discussion in particular, given the pervasiveness of false appearances manipulated via projection through networked technologies in networked life. Thus, individual-level restraint, as well as community criticism—O'Donovan's emphasis on community here building on Adams' proposal of the critical stance—are each necessary as one seeks to ascertain the trustworthiness of a given individual.

Cultivate few trusted contacts rather than more, even if networked life favours limitlessness in the development of social contacts. A vocation does not require a significant number of friendships; a 'less is more' approach is a much sounder strategy in developing a robust network. Research into strategic, structurally autonomous networks indicates that only *one* primary contact is needed in any social world. Thus, once a friendship is formed in a given social world, one should be careful to not invest too much time and energy into the development of relations with friends of this primary contact, since the addition of new contacts in any social world or cluster increases time, energy and management demands without providing valuable return of information to help inform action as part of a pursuit of excellence within a vocation. If one does develop multiple contacts in a given social world or cluster, then it is vital to recall who serves as the primary, central, trusted contact.

Interrogate potential trusted primary contacts through repeated loving encounter, as well as through analysis of their own network structures and loves. If an individual is to become a firm part of one's network structure in the structuring of a vocation, then it is important that one meets with this individual on at least three occasions, this in order to develop some familiarity with the individual, their purported intentions, loves and relations. Just as importantly, one should seek others' perspectives on these given individuals from a wide range of potential mutual contacts. There is a risk in relying on the

positive testimony of a personal friend, who may know this individual in only one or few social contexts. Some mutual participation in a pursuit of excellence, lightly walking a path together (allowing space for possible reversal, as per the Chapter Three Wytham Woods example), is likely to be helpful in understanding another's intentions, loves and relations.

Demonstrate caution, or restraint, while engaging in the unknown of new social worlds. The branching into new social worlds—this facilitated not only by a reaching-out on the part of the individual, but also on the self-communication of God as emphasised in O'Donovan's direct commentary on Adams in Chapter Two—may provide individuals with chance encounters involving *opportunity* in the formation of their respective vocations. Such encounters, serving as gateways into previously unseen social worlds, are part of the *gradual* offering of selves that are part of what I view as a necessarily restrained, step-by-step conceptualisation of vocation in networked life.

Demonstrate restraint in initial and repeated encounter with individuals that may pull one into new social worlds. It may be part of God's providence that a new and interesting person from an unfamiliar social world enters one's life. It is fully possible that such an individual is a mediator in vocation, strengthening the direction of a given vocation while contributing to its progressive structuring. However, it is crucial to determine whether these individuals are in fact trustworthy, or whether they are sent by Satan as part of testing a blossoming vocation. To the best of one's ability, one should seek to determine what the central node or nodes of a given social world or cluster are *for*, the motives and values of the most central, influential contact likely to permeate across the social world.

Continuous preparation from small beginnings

Deliberation plays a critical role in the proposed conception of vocation, this in line with the account of O'Donovan, as opposed to that of Adams. As O'Donovan describes, deliberation is an endurance forming purpose, deliberation which is *continuous*. Chapter Three builds on O'Donovan's definition of deliberation, describing it as a constant practice, the two or three hours per day practicing the piano, undertaking scholarly research prior to writing an article, or adjusting pitching or bowling mechanics in the sports of baseball or cricket—which prepare individuals for the unexpected offerings of worldly relations and created goods that is part of vocation. Deliberation occurs in world-time, and yet it points not toward worldly achievement, but rather toward *God's promise*: it is of little import whether deliberation translates into material victory in the world, and particularly in the form of public admiration.

Rather, the fruits of successful deliberation are in relation to one's public audience with God. Chapter Four describes deliberation as the *sowing* which occurs in the Parable of the Sower, which prepares the ground for eventual planning of mustard seeds, in faith. Deliberation is a search, in which one seeks a particular course of action; that is, a purpose. In deliberating on what to do, one reflects on the goods that one is for, and with which one is related at a given point in time, these informing a narrowed course of action. One might, in envisioning oneself as a possible student of Russian in one's undergraduate studies, only have access to several introductory books on Russia, or on literature, at a local library, this the case for Fiona Hill growing up in the 'opportunity desert' of the North East of England—but the engagement with these materials is enough, forming intermediate purposes for small-scale, serious action.

The formation of purpose through deliberation, in this thesis, serves four important roles, particularly within the context of networked life. First, continuous deliberation

allows for the formation of intermediary purposes which are necessary when a vocation is *not readily apparent*, vocations rather ambiguous, as reflective of O'Donovan's conception, in particular. As O'Donovan notes, finding gives way to seeking, but seeking does not always lead to finding: endurance is paramount. Thus, purposes for action are conducive to gradual, step-by-step action through which clearer vocations may be developed; one should not expect that one will be given well-formed projects, or entrusted with commissions, as Adams suggests.

Second, purposes for action, which involve prior reflection on created goods with which one is connected, acquaint one with excellences—and in turn a sense of value—with which nefarious actors in networked life may be resisted. There is a risk, even if in the formation of structurally autonomous networks serving as bulwarks against danger in networked life, of ascribing too much value to *people* as the bases of opportunity, this seen in Bandura's more pernicious examples in the Chapter Four discussion on chance encounters. In this sense, I concur with Adams in his guardedness on ascription of excellence to personal relations only. Third, deliberation, with its directedness toward God's promise, is enabled by the Spirit, which serves as warranty as we have seen in O'Donovan's discussion, this building on Paul. As such, deliberation involves a spiritedness which is reflective of a Life in the Spirit, this conducive to the Christian believer's ongoing warfare against Wright's 'dark powers' in networked life.

The fourth role is tied to the Chapter Four discussion on *small beginnings* in faithful action. As Adams notes in his account of vocation, this following on his prior discussion on excellence as part of his theory of value, it is important to consider that *every person* has a vocation. This openness does not imply that every person will identify vocations in the immediate-term, for the formation of a vocation is, as Adams notes—not easy.

Several additional concrete, real-world, implications are as follows:

Cultivate small, intermittent purposes as opposed to grand purposes focused on 'changing the world.' Consistent deliberation, or the daily practice reflected in the playing of the piano for two or three hours per day, serves as a basis for effective discernment in a world where the 'right' path for action is seldom apparent. Networked life, with its propensity for withdrawal into fantastic worlds, neglects the potential value of continuous deliberation manifested in constant practice. Hence, individuals should not seek to change the world but rather act within whatever circumstances they are given, understanding that the results of effective, continuous deliberation as a basis for action compound over time.

Do not worry about the intelligible categories into which a vocation fits (or does not). Vocations, as Adams and O'Donovan argue in their respective accounts, do not necessarily align with clear or prominent worldly 'functions'; in O'Donovan's account, vocation is a *form of service*, occurring in part through intelligible categories, such as that of 'a poet' or 'a firefighter'[1]. The critical point is that vocations are not for an élite minority; vocations are manifold. Individuals with few material opportunities may live lives that are deeply vocational, in response to the few worldly relations and created goods offered by God. Such vocations may be more faithful to God than in the lives of individuals with comparatively greater material wealth and opportunity.

Deliberate with purposes for action focused ultimately on God's promise. This deliberation is in contrast to a deliberation focused on creating purposes for action oriented ultimately toward the benefit of the self. It is possible for individuals to deceive

[1] Grisez concurs with O'Donovan and Adams, suggesting that work in the form of 'homemaking, day labor, farm, factory, office, trade, profession, government, education, or whatever—also is a large part of life and offers its own opportunities for giving Christian witness, serving one's neighbor, and recapturing some part of the fallen world for Jesus' kingdom' (*The Way of the Lord Jesus*, 7.E.2).

themselves, believing that their purposes are focused on God when in fact they are really about securing their self-interest. Any planning that individuals undertake, as Grisez and Shaw note, should be dedicated to God. It is important to acknowledge, as part of vocational deliberation, the working of the Holy Spirit, which works in even the most narrow or constrained of paths for action in the world, the Spirit permeating all sectors and aspects of life, as Wolters notes.

Networked life values comparative worldly achievement, such that achievement can be easily mistaken for vocation. Jesus, in response to the questioning of the rich man, says 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, then come follow me' (Mark 10:21)[2]. Vocation, reflective of a person's true identity given by God, may be more seldomly arrived at by rich men or women than is the case in more materially constrained circumstances, the latter demanding—as seen in the work of Landis et al. in their examination of the 'paradox of agency' in Chapter One—a more detailed description of relations between individuals, such description conducive to effective service, rather than abstract exercising of power.

The Chapter Four discussion emphasised faithful action, particularly in relation to small beginnings. O'Donovan's offering of the self as part of vocation is ongoing, vocation discerned in a step-by-step manner, rather than in a single instance. Whereas Adams stresses love of goods *given* to individuals to love, O'Donovan stresses the *giving* of life in service to God, service which is an indefinite self-offering. Neither Gabriel, as seen in the conclusion of O'Donovan's account of vocation, nor the mustard seed, set out with a conception of what they would *become*, becoming revealed instead over time, in layers. Thus, the proposed Christian conception of vocation in networked life sees faith as playing

[2] New Revised Standard Version, p. 49.

a particularly important role, action always taking place within what O'Donovan describes as the indeterminate, or the unknown. Watchfulness, as part of vocational discernment, suggests that individuals must remain *awake* to the dangers of life in the flesh, while keeping their eyes on the light of God's promise, in every new day as well as hour. As examined in Chapter Three, Jesus states 'Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour' (Matt. 24:44)[3]. Moral experience is thrust on man: we are *seized* by it.

Vocation as value

Through its engagement with particular worldly relations and created goods, as part of a pursuit of excellence, vocation serves as a source of *value* in networked life. Networked life, in its misdirected form, involves reductive understanding of value, which is based on material advantage, examples being remuneration, performance evaluations and promotions as seen in Burt's analysis. Vocation, as a response to the offering of God—oriented toward the *service of God*—begins, as well as ends, in God's love. God's loving sacrifice of his Only Son redeems man from his sin, the undoing of creation reflected in Adam. The resurrection of Jesus Christ demonstrates that man's faith is not in vain; God has been faithful to His creation, which is *good*—the moral order of which man is a part is itself *of value*.

The value provided by vocation resists the reductive, technology-induced valuing of the corrupted version of networked life. As discussed earlier in this conclusion, networked technologies encourage individuals to do *more*, even if this doing more provides individuals, paradoxically, with less—individuals becoming mere 'maximising machines.' This doing more is a product of technological civilisation, which prioritises

[3] New Revised Standard Version, p. 29.

efficiency, but which risks numbing users of technology, these individuals succumbing to what McLuhan terms the ‘Narcissus trance.’ While Grant, much like Turkle, leaves some room for hope in the possible recovery of meaning in technological civilisation, he is an outlier in relation to McLuhan, Ellul and other commentators who see the effects of the electric age and its technologies as being *determinative*, shaping man in the image of the technologies which he gradually comes to worship.

O’Donovan concludes in *Finding and Seeking* that the waves of modern media and mass communications crash over individuals in every new day, as if there was never a yesterday, this crash effectively narrowing time horizons to the immediate. To resist the crashing of waves is difficult indeed, particularly if one assumes—as Taylor notes, examined in Chapter Four—that a sense of value in modern identity is to be won through recognition within dialogical relations, and particularly in loving relations: *the stakes are high*. Indeed, networked life is bereft of a stable source of love, oblivious to God as the source of love, seeking instead to create value, and win love, from scratch.

The emphasis on centrality within networks, the realm of the material as the framework for thinking, is an attempt on the part of individuals to play *God* in networked life: exercising careful management of relations, such that they cannot easily be overtaken, remaining perpetually in control, avoiding failure. McLuhan is prophetic on this point, seeing technologies in the electric age as personal gods, Ellul’s critical examination of technique specifying the process by which such technologies become gods. It is difficult to withdraw from networked life: while its significance can be overstated, it is firmly part of the culture that conditions action.

As has been examined in Chapters One and Two, networked life risks *corrupting* individuals and impedes the pursuit of excellence, which as Adams describes, is rather elusive. In seeking constant, short-term advantage, individuals in networked life opt for

what Adams terms easy, rather than hard goods. While there is excellence in the multidimensionality of every person, this the unique and complex set of capacities to be exercised within wider series of relations, I propose a more *social* conceptualisation of excellence, one that avoids the rather individualistic examples provided in much of Adams' analysis (mathematics, philosophy, a swim across the English channel). The Chapter Two discussion has examined the risk of the individual seeing him or herself as resembling or imaging too closely the divine, this particularly reflective of Gandhi, and critiqued by Nussbaum, in favour of Nehru's supposed 'transcendence' through suffering and lowliness in relation to others.

There is a considerable amount of excellence in the world that is found not in elite, individual performance, but rather in the emergence of Gierke's 'real group personality' as described in Nash's outline. This team, *coordinated* excellence, involves a spiritedness (in terms of qualitative improvement in the created world) that raises excellence at individual levels, but without excellence at individual levels seeming elitist. Rather, emphasis is on each person fulfilling a particular *role*, or playing a valuable *part*, each role admirable in itself as well as due to contributions made to the wider whole. James Baker and Eric Newell are reflective of the coordinated excellence, grounded in community criticism, which I favour in this dissertation. O'Donovan's description of community, involving the embrace of others' vocations, a turning sideways toward others as opposed to a suspicious looking over one's shoulders, is reflective of this more coordinated, rather than individualised, excellence.

Several additional concrete, real-world, implications are as follows:

Fully participate in, rather than withdraw from, the world. Participate in the messiness of the world, despite the obstacles, dangers and uncertainties that it presents. This participation involves direct, in person encounter with individuals with whom one agrees

and disagrees, as well as with individuals that are potentially dangerous, seeking to corrupt the good. The hiding behind networked technologies tempts individuals to withdraw from the adventure and indeterminacy of life, and it is possible to cultivate a deliberated nonchalance which mimics a life of adventure. Such withdrawal, as opposed to full participation, however, destroys the human soul over time; it does not preserve it.

Demonstrate restraint in the use of networked technologies but do not reject them outright. We live in an electric age as outlined by McLuhan in which networked technologies play an important role in human relationships and in the transmission of information. Networked life is not going away. Networked technologies, whether Social Network Analysis or daily use of Whatsapp and other social media, provide individuals with the ability to communicate personally and powerfully with others, further enabling strategic actors to serve as central nodes within their network structures. Yet, such technologies must be used with considerable caution, such that they do not become personal gods, shaping users in their own images.

Maintain a low sense of self regardless of the material success that one experiences. If one is to live an obedient life directed toward Christ, then one will consistently seek to bear their cross in daily life. This emphasis on serving others, putting oneself last as opposed to first, is the basis for a more accurate reading of the relations of a given network structure. This accurate reading of relations is paramount in effective action; a misreading of such relations could spell challenge if not disaster for the haughty individual who sees himself as being above others. One should remind oneself of the necessity of service, as part of the bearing of one’s cross, whenever one experiences success within a given network or community of people.

God summons man to action, the summoning which demands faithful response through world-participation. God's offering of a self to man through vocation is responded to in glad self-offering, a self-offering which is to be determined by God, over time. Jacob wrestles in the night with God, but it is God that names Jacob, who is marked forever by a limp: 'by a simple touch on the thigh the adversary asserts his power over Jacob in hurting him without killing him'[4]. The naming of Jacob and others in their respective vocations provides individuals with their true identities, these *determined by God*. Worldly achievements gained through wrestling in the world do not provide this identity, the self of vocation offered by God as the Transcendent Good, whose determination of agents needs only the touch of a thigh. This touch is reflective of God's Hesed, his lovingkindness, to be responded to through urgent action in the world.

Five individual-level historical examples have been used to highlight important features of my particular conceptualisation of vocation in networked life, these of James Baker, Eric Newell, Fiona Hill, Paul and a lone parent. All five examples are representative of agency exercised through world-participation, participation which is messy and uncertain, danger lurking around every corner, waiting to corrupt the good. Each individual acts with a view to *serving* others—keeping haughty self-conceptions at bay—this service motivated by God, and particularly the example of Jesus Christ.

Service is taxing, unbeknownst to onlookers, and yet which is necessary in their social, rather than primarily individualistic, pursuits of excellence. There is considerable community criticism, such criticism painful in the short-term, but which strengthens the self through the cultivation of a more 'perspectival' excellence over time. The opportune moments in the formation of vocation may occur rather unexpectedly—reflective of

[4] *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2*, p. 11.

Macmillan's 'Events, dear boy, events'—Baker through the death of his wife, Newell through the death of the OSLO Project, Paul through his encounter with Jesus on the Road to Damascus, Hill through her Presidential impeachment testimony and the lone parent through a divorce. Extensive deliberation, however, precedes such events, preparing each individual for the moment of opportunity.

Action is anchored by trustworthy friends, with whom there is direct rather than conceptual alliance. For Baker, this is George Herbert Walker Bush; for Newell, this is Ralph Klein and Anne McLellan; for Paul, this is Barnabas; for Hill this is a chance encounter with a St Andrews Russian studies lecturer; for the lone parent this may be an unforeseen job opportunity. Jesus' authority is mediated through such trustworthy worldly authorities—Burt's 'primary contacts'—the Holy Spirit guiding individuals to and with them, as part of God's offering of worldly relations and created goods in the formation of vocation. The five cases use the more salubrious elements of networked life, but while maintaining constant senses of restraint; their way through networked life is gradual, proceeding in a step-by-step and yet spirited manner.

Vocation, as the way through networked life, engages wholeheartedly with created reality—the worldly relations and created goods offered to love—but while oriented toward God's promise, the pledge of the Spirit enabling faithful action unwavering from its focus on God. Directed toward God, vocation is God's *way* through the world. It is the vessel through which the always choppy seas of moral life can be navigated, the seas ever uncertain, calmness turning to storm at a moment's notice. Networked life, as it has been described in previous critical examination, is much like this, danger crouching at the door, nefarious actors seeking control and domination within their networked structures and through the use of networked technologies. A better way, however, beckons: God, through His everlasting love, offers the possibility of faithful action in adverse circumstances. It is

in service of God, guided by the Spirit, that we must pursue excellences given to us—God the source of value.

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