PROBING LAUDATO SI' FOR A NEW SPIRITUALITY

IN A TECHNOCRATIC CULTURE

by

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Date:
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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Pope Francis’ 2015 social encyclical *Laudato si’* provides a challenging, helpful, and timely lens through which to view this cultural moment. By analyzing the reception of this encyclical, its structure and sources, and its resonances among others, this thesis argues that Pope Francis’ target of his critique of the current state of our world is what he calls “the technocratic paradigm.” This paradigm, with its historical antecedents and metaphysical underpinnings, is incongruous with the way of seeing and acting that is more rooted in our Christian tradition. Pope Francis entices the Church to live out its distinct tradition with a renewed rigor. With the guidance of this encyclical, this thesis wrestles with the power and ubiquity of the technological paradigm and the saturation of our everyday lives with its products, procedures, and practices. Neither option of blessing the technocratic paradigm as a gift from God nor rejecting it as pure evil is plausible, but providing a constructive lens to think through the current cultural moment is necessary. Many of the faithful remain distracted and abstracted from the places where they live and the people with whom they interact, and as a consequence, many express a hunger for a deeper and more meaningful engagement with life. Through dialogue with a number of contemporary authors, this project will point to some specific practices that might comprise a new spirituality for today.
Dedication

To my children, Sophia, Corwin, Gisella, and Xavier.

May your lives always be totally immersed in and responsive to God’s mysterious and loving presence.
God created mankind in his image;  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.  
God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth. God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the all the green plants for food. And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.  
---Genesis 1:27-31

Be still, and know that I am God.  
---Psalm 46:11

He is the image of the invisible God,  
the firstborn of all creation.  
For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth,  
the visible and the invisible,  
whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;  
all things were created through him and for him.  
He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.  
He is the head of the body, the church.  
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,  
that in all things he himself might be preeminent.  
For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell,  
and through him to reconcile all things for him,  
making peace by the blood of his cross.  
---St. Paul to the Colossians 1:15-20
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Abbreviations

Col  Colossians
Jas  James
Jn  John
NABRE  New American Bible Revised Edition
Rom  Romans
Acknowledgements

This thesis is not the one I intended to write when I started my doctoral studies in 2012. The game-changer was the publication of Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato si’* in 2015. I could not shake the feeling that what God had given the Church in this work was a gift, and, like all gifts, it needed to be unwrapped, looked at, savored, and shared. I sensed that for my own peace, and the peace of my family and those around me, I needed to immerse myself in this body of work and study its questions and proposals. Through this immersion, I was offered a portal into many philosophical and theological questions that matter for our time. This immersive study certainly challenged me intellectually, but more importantly, through it I came to see more clearly God’s gracious presence in my life – in all of life. Although I dragged my feet through much of this journey and struggled at times to finish, I find myself at the end overwhelmed by the grace I have received. One of the points this thesis argues is that we receive our lives more than we make them. This receptivity to the manifold gifts God gives us calls forth a posture of awe, humility, and gratitude. In that vein, I want to offer here a word of awesome humble thanks to God for my life and the many family members, friends, conversation partners, and mentors who have been so formative to this doctoral study and thesis.

I first want to name the formative influence of Msgr. Frank Lane, Sr. Margaret Carney, O.S.F., and the late Rev. John Moriarty, S.J. who not only cultivated in me a love of history and the importance of philosophical ideas but more importantly a deep love of Jesus Christ and the Church. My short but seminal time with these three holy people was such a gift, one that I continue to acknowledge and further unpack as my life unfolds. It is with these mentors that I am often in silent dialogue, and although they might not agree with everything proposed here, I hope to make them proud in this work.

I am blessed by the presence of many soulful brothers over the last twenty-five years: Joshua Benson, Michael Williams, Bob Donius, Dan McKee, Jean-François Godet-Calogerás, Dan Riley, O.F.M.; Joseph Kotula, O.F.M.; Patrick Connolly, Zachary Rodriguez, Zach Domes, Mark Printz, Michael Tuccillo, Jeff Turner, Joseph Schmidt, and Jason Lillis. This thesis in so many ways is the fruit of our years reading and working together, heartfelt conversations, shared meals and libations, laughter and tears, and joys and struggles. While we each walk our own path haunted by our particular questions and histories, we nevertheless share a common yearning for what
is true, good, and beautiful. This life would be far lonelier and of less value without these companions. I am incredibly thankful for the gift of their friendship.

This academic journey has hinged on the kind assistance and encouragement of many family members, friends, and co-workers: my parents, Paulette and Joseph Padua, and Marc Thompson; the late John Cournoyer; Nathalie Worthington; Sharon Cournoyer; Sarah and Jeff Shepherd; Dominic Padua; Monika Padua; Eric Kunz; Katherine Kunz and Eric Anderson; Ellen Ferrone; Bill Laxton; Leon Cooke; Kathleen Owen; Becky Cawley; Jackie Adamo; Marianne Williams; Bonnie Angel; Mark Reamer, O.F.M.; Steve Kluge, O.F.M., and Steve Patti, O.F.M. They each in their own way made me believe I could complete this project, that it was an important thing to do for the sake of my family, my community, the Church, and the world. These people also in a variety of ways underwrote the many costs of this project, picked up the slack where I could not hold it all together, and supported my wife and family when I was absent. I am so grateful for their nurture, generosity, cheerleading, witness, and patience during what seemed like an interminable period of time.

This time at Duke Divinity School has been a godsend, one that I had not anticipated when moving to North Carolina but took shape in my life at exactly the right time. My doctoral coursework was spent largely thinking theologically about pastoral ministry and leadership, particularly the ecclesial context of my work at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. I am extremely grateful for the companionship and wisdom I gleaned from my cohort and the many professors with whom I had the gift of studying. I want to particularly thank both Dr. Craig Hill and Dr. Warren Smith for their vision and leadership for this doctoral program, and my advisors Dr. Paul Griffiths and Dr. Norman Wirzba for the time they dedicated to mentoring this project to completion. Their gracious presence, probing questions, and reflective connections made this thesis a better body of work. There is part of me that wishes I had more time to study with them.

Above all, I name my wife, Elizabeth, the love of my life, my partner, for whom I am so deeply appreciative. She is many endearing things to me. She is the soulful, brave, and patient mother of my children. She is our family’s head chef, doctor, herbalist, organizer and planner, farmer, seamstress, teacher, mediator, and most importantly, chief-snuggler. Over the course of these years of study, Elizabeth listened patiently to my musings, questions, uncertainties, and fears. She read the entire thesis and offered valuable edits and insights that led to its final form. Surely she wished often that this endeavor would finally be over, and it finally is, but all the while, she gives
and gives, and gives more. Lord knows that I leaned on that sacrificial love in so many ways in order to complete this journey. Twenty years ago, Elizabeth and I met and began a journey of trusting our lives to God. We had no idea what would unfold, or what is yet to come. It has not all been easy we know, but I pray that no matter what happens with our one wild and precious life, I never take Elizabeth’s enduring love and innate beauty for granted. It is my treasure.

In order to complete this project, my children suffered through their father’s many absences, distractions, and weary moments. It might not be a consolation to them now, but I dedicate this thesis to them. I hope they will always know their father’s love, how much he cherishes them. They are gifts to me. The spirituality that this thesis searches after is one that comes forth from the life Elizabeth and I have created together through God’s grace. In many ways, this project embodies an apologetic for the vision of life we yearn for our children and their children, all children. No matter where our children go in this world and what they do with their lives, I pray that they might always know the gift of God’s love for them and seek to offer their lives as a generous and humble response. Perhaps, when life’s inevitable questions and restlessness begin to haunt them, they will pick this thesis up, or a few of the books in the bibliography, and be open to the wisdom of so many who have gone before us seeing God in all of creation and living a life of faith, hope, and love.
INTRODUCTION

I. An Overture

I begin with a story of a fishing adventure. I will do this by looking at the semi-autobiographical novella originally published in 1976 by Norman Maclean called “A River Runs Through It.”¹ One person offered a pithy description of the plot of this story, “These two brothers go fishing, then they go fishing again, then they drink, and later they fish again.”² It is basically this, and more. My direct engagement with this story will be how these brothers, Paul and Norman, interacted with the river within the art of fly-fishing. The exemplary relationship they had with the river will be contrasted with Norman’s brother-in-law Neal’s approach to the waters.

Norman and Paul were taught by their father the art of fly-fishing. They spent many hours on the Big Blackfoot River, and it was in those immersive moments, coupled with the tutelage of their father, that they became masters of the art. The fisherman, Norman says, has a phrase to describe what he and Paul do when fly-

¹ Norman Maclean, A River Runs Through It and Other Stories, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001). Maclean’s semi-autobiographical “A River Runs Through It” tells the story of Maclean’s relationship with his brother Paul and their upbringing in an early 20th-century Montana family in which “there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing.” All references to story narrative from this source with in-text page citations.
fishing. By standing knee deep in the water, and by listening, studying, and responding to the patterns of the river, they are “reading the water” (Maclean 63).

How do Norman and Paul acquire the skill and grace necessary to the art of reading the waters? Part of this is the experience of being in the river. As one fisherman told me in a personal interview, a fisherman must “spend the time and put himself in the place and feel the pulse and begin to see and appreciate and learn the water’s viscosity, structure, temperature, movement, visibility, pressure, and interface.” This kind of literacy does not happen overnight. Another part of this is mentorship of a more experienced fisherman. Early in the novella, the narrator describes his father’s arduous lessons on learning to cast to the four-count rhythm with the help of their mother’s metronome. The father also introduced them to the classic fishing literature and his own interpretative overlay. Like an apprentice to any skill, the boys ultimately to learned the art of fly-fishing as journeyman along the numerous rivers of Montana. Here, the rhythm of the cast meets the rhythm of the river. Although the narrator does not detail each of these formative fishing excursions, we get hints throughout the text at the long hours the brothers spent learning how to be literate of the river’s music.

3 Brent Kelley (fly-fisherman and chef instructor at Alfred State University) in discussion with me, March 2009.
Examples of the brothers’ proficiency at reading the waters include the copious casting techniques of roll-casting or shadow casting or the side cast into the cool waters under the low-hanging willows. It includes being able to pick the right fly according to seasonal larvae hatching and discerning the difference between “dead water” and “open water,” and the “head of the hole” and the “tail of a hole.” This also includes familiarity with the river’s shape, its sound, its ecological balance, and its geological history left by the long interplay of weather, rock, and water. This amalgamation of the Maclean’s and the river’s identities results from a long life together. This literacy results from a lifetime of listening deeply, fidelity to a rhythm of “call and response” with the river, and a “no” to other beckoning voices that would have taken them adrift on other waters. They grew to know this river, feel this river, speak this river, read this river.

The art of reading the water is not about perfection. It is not a technique that leads to some kind of flawless practice. It speaks rather of a kind of suffering love. It is something that comes from a life of dedication and service and immersion. It speaks of patience, etymologically a word that echoes this combination of time, suffering, and commitment, out of which one could not really know something. To read the waters in this way, therefore, does not leave one feeling like a master in control but a humble servant of waters. It engenders a posture of wonder, awe, gratitude, and humility. Despite the eluding quality of the art of fly-fishing, the brothers’ desire to fish is not
dampened. They trust the words running under the water and hope that their literacy might get the fish to rise. This deep faith and certain trust in being able to read the patterns of fish and river and fly allow Paul and Norman to see the invisible through the visible.

It is helpful to contrast this description of Norman and Paul with Norman’s brother-in-law, Neal. Although Neal is born in Montana, he leaves in search of more and better and different, and goes west. Consequently, he lacks the familiarity with the river’s power, patterns, history, and beauty and is deficient in the proper formation for reading the rhythms of the water. He shows no signs of the kind of character, humility, poised and restrained confidence, grace, and understanding of Norman and Paul. He prefers the excitement and pleasure of one-night stands, the stupors of debauchery of cheap beer, and his narcissistic constructions of his own identity. He comes for a visit and goes fishing with the brothers in one of the important scenes from the story. Neal is attracted to the water, but he does not know what to do. Norman helps him read the waters, telling him that the fish where he’s fishing are squaw fish and suckers. Neal responds, “What’s a sucker?” There is not one mention of Neal recognizing the beauty of the river or the art of fishing or the long love affair craft of standing in the water in a place of communion. Instead, his life is falling apart at the seams and is kept barely together by a family’s care and suffering love. Neal’s lack of commitment, his illiteracy,
and his own self-consumed irresponsibility result in the wrong fishing rod, the wrong bait, and the wrong fishing hole. Norman and Paul end up finding him in the middle of the river, passed out on booze, and lying naked and sunburned next to the whore named Old Rawhide. He desecrates the Maclean’s sacred waters and shames the family. It might have been something some call “love,” but there was no art and no communion. This is what it looks like to be illiterate of the waters.

Norman and Paul were taught by their father that man by nature was a “damn mess,” but their father also taught them that the remedy to this original fall from grace was only found in being able to pick up God’s rhythms. Salvation was about this art, reclaiming our power, not by doing whatever the fisherman wanted, but by aligning our four-count rhythms with the rhythms running underneath the river. As Norman recounts his father saying, “My father was very sure about certain matters pertaining to the universe. To him, all good things – trout as well as eternal salvation – come by grace and grace comes by art and art does not come easy” (Maclean 2, 4).

II. The Problem

At the heart of this thesis is the premise that we have lost the art of being able to read the waters; we are more and more like Neal and less and less like Paul. This thesis attempts to trace the evolution of the fall, and by some better understanding of the fall, I hope to propose some ways we might relearn the four-count rhythm of the cast and
come to experience that communion of standing in the river and reading the words running under the water.

In more explicitly Christian language, there is vision within our theological tradition that understands all of creation to mediate the love and presence of the Creator, and that Jesus Christ is the one in whom and through him all things are held together and have their meaning. Paul writes to Corinth saying, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or power – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:15-17, NABRE). John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be” (Jn 1:1-3, NABRE).

To weave this metaphor of the river into our biblical way of speaking, the Word is the One who is running underneath the waters. Christ is the one in whom we stand immersively in our art of faith; Chris is the one in whom we live and move and have our being. The waters themselves are like Christ’s body, the Church. Our Christian tradition over years of deep reflection constructed its own four-part rhythm to the cast and invites us to set out into the deep waters. We believe that there is cosmic
significance to all things, intelligibility to all things, and interconnectivity between all things. And that discipleship is about reading the waters in such a way that the rhythms of our creaturely life align with the patterns of the Word. Our lives are a conversation, a “call and response,” with this Word. We stand in the river with faith that the Rainbow will rise. There is a receptivity to this posture of standing in the water of the Church. It is not master/slave relationship; it is a dance, a commitment of love, a submission into the art of discipleship. The Christian who reads the waters in this way realizes that we are surrounded by – standing knee deep in – a river of rainbow trout.

We call this immersion in the mysterious giftedness of in the river a life open to “grace.” Late 19th century Catholic poet Gerard Manley Hopkins believed in this kind of faith in grace, and thus he can write this sonnet about the graciousness intrinsic to the world entitled “Kingfishers Catch Fire”:

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell’s
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad out its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same;
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying What I do is me: for that I came.

I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God’s eye what in God’s eye he is —
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men’s faces.

Grace shows up, like fish playing at the end of our line, “in ten thousand places,” and all we can say is “Wow, that’s beautiful. Thank you.” To share this graced pattern of life in our own gracious ways, through courteous actions and beautiful movements, leaves behind powerful impressions that linger, effects that energize and transform an atmosphere. This is the witness of the graced life of saints, of what we call “holiness.” We know that by our showing up, by our openness to love and grace, by our humble and confident walk through this world, the patterns of the gracious presence of God will shape us. We might not be perfect. We might be terribly flawed. Our flaw might even be tragic. But the one who practices this art of faith continues to return to the life-giving waters. We enter the river with a new humility and say, “We are not worthy to stand in these rivers but only say the word and I shall be healed.” This art is what we call faith.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI put it this way regarding the art of faith and the long love affair of being in communion with the Word, Jesus Christ:

One remains a Christian as long as he makes the effort to give the central assent, as long as he tries to utter the fundamental Yes of trust, even if he is unable to fit

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in or resolve many of the details. There will be moments in life when, in all kinds of gloom and darkness, faith falls back upon the simple, ‘Yes, I believe you, Jesus of Nazareth; I believe that in you was revealed that divine purpose which allows me to live with confidence, tranquility, patience, and courage.’ As long as this core remains in place, a man is living by faith, even if for the moment he finds many of the details of faith obscure and impracticable.  

This is the art, the faith, the discipline, the assent of one’s life that we see in Norman and Paul. This is also the assent we see in the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, Jesus himself, Sts. Peter and Paul, all the apostles and Martyrs, all the holy ones. Faith in this art of reading the waters is not a system of knowledge and perfection but a deep and radical trust. This trust beckons one to stay knee deep in the river, fishing. It is a trust that remembers the feeling of that moment when the fly and hook found the Rainbow.

“Faith in the risen Christ, in the God who gives life beyond death, creates responsibility, gives substance to the present because it then falls under the measure of the eternal,” Ratzinger goes on.  

“Believing, trusting, and loving are one.” As the novella says, “Eventually all things merge into one, and the river runs through it.”

The story goes on in our lives, and we are not always able to read the waters well. We are fallen. We are lost. We have become distracted and illiterate. We got bored

6 Ibid., 55.
and found the glitter “out west” too compelling. We forgot the four-part rhythm and the feeling of communion. We are bent over and drunk and self-absorbed. We have grown comfortable with the cold and calculable, the sucker fish, and the Old Whole next store. We just keep trying to make the river into something that it is not, and we keep ending up with more dry channels. We feel suffocated, even periodically impotent, and we want to return to the river and go fishing with Paul and Norman. But when we do, we remember that we have forgotten who we are and what the river is about. We call this experience of fallenness in our Christian tradition “sin.” I believe that we know we need repentance, a metanoia, a turning around, a remembering, a reformation in the ability to read the waters. The river calls us back to stand in her grace and beauty, to listen to her words running underneath the water, to know how her communion feels. Like Saul becoming Paul, Neal can come home. This art, this faith, this trust, this fallen state, and this hope in a return are the contours of this thesis.

We live in a culture that affirms the fallen Neal in each of us and keeps us distracted from coming home. Over time, we forgot how to fish, and we begin to think that buying fish from the supermarket yields the same result as the art of fly-fishing. Yet, all the signs are there in our culture, in our own hearts, that we long to come home to the river and listen to her Word. We long for genuine encounters with the Word in the people, things, and practices that make up our lives. We long for a meaning,
purpose, and authenticity. We want to stand in the “Yes” of trust. The moment is ripe, I argue, for the Church to position herself as a place where one might find “Real Presence,” a sturdy rudder, a big beautiful Montana River in the desert of our Neal-like culture.

From the moment the Holy Spirit came to rest on a set of followers of Jesus of Nazareth, the Church has specialized in providing a remedy for the sickness of souls. This remedy has been the river, a life in the Spirit, the way of self-giving love, the way of graciousness and wonder, the art of reading the water. In this way, the Church has specialized in providing a way of life to people who are looking for a deeper walk in the world. In every generation, each with its particular cultural context, people have encountered the grace of communion in the Spirit, transformed their lives, and began to pick up their mat and walk again. The vast variety of religious and lay movements through the history of the Church testifies to the meaning many have found by becoming trusting and loving followers of this person, Jesus Christ. Each of these spiritual movements created its own set of postures, practices, and places whereby a meaningful life in Christ might be lived. These postures, practices, and places make up what we call a “spirituality.” Among the most compelling spiritualities of history, this was not an invitation to a half-hearted commitment, periodic check-ins, or a weekly warm-fuzzy, nor was this a summons to doing our heart’s desire or following our bliss.
The call is more comprehensive in that every aspect of life and selfhood now found a new orientation in Christ.

Despite the fact that the Church served as mother rudder for so many throughout history, by and large Catholics today are not turning to the Church for meaning, purpose, and orientation of their identities and everyday lives. Instead, the laity tends to adopt wholesale secularism’s wares and means and turns to other sources in an attempt to cobble together some sense of meaning, purpose, and sense of self. People still have spiritualities today, but the origin of the postures, practices, and places that comprises people’s lives is debatably not the crucified and risen Christ. It is not by the rhythm of mother Church’s metronome that we are learning to cast our lives. Rather than standing in the rivers in Montana, we are off making our homes out west. Many Catholics remain committed to attending Mass, baptizing their children, and perhaps even voting in such a way that expresses their Catholic “pro-life” and “social justice” values, but this kind of Catholicism is of the sort that Bishop Robert Barron calls a “Beige Catholicism,” a tradition “drained of its distinctive coloration and texture, a Catholicism concerned, above all, with accommodating itself to the surrounding
The Second Vatican Council also called this version of practicing our faith a “mistake” and “one of the gravest errors of our time.” Rather than embodying something distinctive and pervasive to one’s whole lives, the everyday lives of American Catholics appear to cast the same hue as their non-Catholic neighbors. We are all Neals living out west now.

Zeroing in on everyday life provides helpful clarity to this point. For it is there that we witness how secularism’s values and technological toys shape our lives. Rather than a rich formative place in Gospel living and spirituality, its own kind of Montana river, our everyday lives have instead largely become shaped by rationalistic, individualistic, consumerist, and technocratic values that pervade middle-class realities. It is no longer the postures, practices, and places of the Church that orient our lives; there is another kind of spirituality at play here. We are not fly-fisherman anymore; instead, we choose to play a fishing game on an app on our iPad, or watch the movie and call it a day. Even if we do not want this worldly orientation, this larger culture

8 Robert Barron, Exploring Catholic Theology: Essays on God, Liturgy, and Evangelization (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2015), 204-207.
9 Gaudium et Spes, 43, “It is a mistake to think that, because we have here no lasting city, but seek the city which is to come, we are entitled to evade our earthly responsibilities...But it is no less mistaken to think that we may immerse ourselves in earthly activities as if these latter were utterly foreign to religion, and religion were nothing more than the fulfillments of acts of worship and the observance of a few moral obligations. One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between faith which many profess and their day-to-day conduct.”
shapes us in all kinds of unconscious ways. While it is true that there are faithful Catholics who try to make the home and everyday life a real place of encounter with the Holy in a variety of creative ways, the laity more frequently takes this wider culture as a given and a sign of progress, sometimes as a sure sign itself of God’s presence and blessing. Our everyday lives in Montana now look no different than the everyday lives of those living in North Carolina. It is too easy to say that wherever we are is the river. It might be true that the Word is running underneath everyone’s lives, no matter where we live, no matter our lifestyles or spiritualities or casting techniques. This argument is a good one. But in order to have it, we have to find the pause button to the noise in order to figure out how to hear the silent music and shimmering patterns running underneath it all.

Among the many aspects of the wider culture to critique, this thesis will focus on what Pope Francis calls our “technocratic culture,” with its products, procedures, and ultimately whole paradigm that so thoroughly saturates and shapes our lives. It is the river of our moment. In his recent encyclical *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis expresses with concern that humanity now stands at the crossroads.\(^\text{10}\) He narrates that while technology has certainly opened advances, improvements, and new possibilities, even

\(^{10}\) Pope Francis, *Laudato si’* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2015). All further footnoted references to this text will be LS.
remedied countless evils and brought forth liberation to people, the question at the crossroads remains whether technological products, and the paradigm in which these products have emerged, are in fact purely instrumental and morally neutral. The classic axiom is that technology is neither good nor evil; rather it is what we do with it that counts. Yet, this approach eliminates the evaluation of the very method, values, and aims of the technological paradigm, a paradigm that shapes the lives of individuals (and society) through the proffering of the seemingly neutral products and procedures.

The questions that follow from this are many: What if the paradigm that has produced our products in fact promotes no sense of humility or solidarity or gratitude or discipline of restraint, like what we find in Norman and Paul, but rather exalts above all the concept of the rational subject looking to maximize its power and control over everything, like what we find in Neal? What if the blind forces of self-interest and greed created the very thing that we now hold in our hands? What if all that is left in our lives are products that are fabricated and then thrown away? What if we can no longer be comfortable with the gift of life as it is given to us? What if the technology prevents us from being able to stand patiently in the river long enough to feel the communion, to experience the trust, to be left in awe at the big, eternal Rainbow that we call God, or grace, or Being? What if technology carries within its very structure a casting technique, a value system and worldview, perhaps even an all-encompassing metaphysics and
theology? What if our iPhone purports to be a Montana river? These questions raise the ante of this issue.

The morally neutral approach also presumes the existence and growth of human freedom, responsibility, values, and conscience of the people who both make and receive these products. We want to trust that when we go west, the values we learned fishing the Big Blackfoot River will stay with us, guiding us, provide memories, opening up new but similar beautiful rivers to stand in. There is little sign that this kind of responsible and moral discerning about our technocratic moment is happening. What seems clear is that we are preoccupied with finding technological solutions to all our problems, including the very problems that the technology has created.

Again, posing questions about the technocratic shape of our lives is not to propose that we ought to roll back or put a halt to technology. This is impossible. Nevertheless, it strikes me as absolutely necessary for the Church to step back and ask what sort of river we are standing in and how is what we are currently “reading” meeting the deepest hungers for grace and beauty in our lives. This technocratic culture certainly does not absolutely eliminate the possibility of encountering grace, finding some shimmering patterns on the surface, some revelatory moment of call and response, some intelligibility of Christ, but it seems to make the possibility of this kind
of faith more difficult and, at the very least, more confusing. This is the context of my exploration in this thesis.

It is important to note that Pope Francis and I are not alone in our cautious assessment of technological products and a reductionistic technocratic way of looking at the world. In fact, there exists a long line of people who have engaged the topic of technology, heavyweights like German philosopher Martin Heidegger,\textsuperscript{11} American historian and sociologist Lewis Mumford,\textsuperscript{12} French philosopher and Christian anarchist Jacques Ellul,\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Martin Heidegger, \textit{The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays} (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1982). Originally published in 1954, this work of Heidegger frames the question of technology not in terms of the things we use so much as the way we live in the world. The essence of this technological way of living is that its keeps us and the rest of nature in “standing reserve,” a mode of separate existence. We are then postured towards the world framed not by experiencing being itself and its relationality through the poetic process of creation but instead by an “enframing,” as he calls it, which is dangerously hyper-focused on order and ordering all that is understood to be in “standing reserve.” This essay by Heidegger on technology is foundational.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Lewis Mumford, \textit{Technics and Civilization} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). Originally published in 1934. Mumford presents in this book the history of the machine and its effects in civilization – before television, the computer, and the internet. He traces the roots of modern technology to the middle ages. More will be explored regarding this history in a later chapter.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Jacques Ellul, \textit{The Technological Society}, trans. John Wilkerson (New York: Vintage, 1964) where he attempts to argue that what is happening in contemporary society is that the “natural” is being replaced by the “technical” and “technique.” He names early in this book the characteristics associated with this concept of “technique:” rationality, artificiality, self-directedness, self-supporting growth, indivisibility, universality, and autonomy. He further defines “technique,” as “the totality of methods, rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency in every field of human activity.” See vi-viii, x, xviii, xv-xxvi, xxxvi, 13-18, 19. One
German-born philosopher Hans Jonas,14 English economist E.F. Schumacher,15
canadian philosopher George Grant,16

piece of Ellul that I appreciate is that he believes one of the most visible manifestations of technique is the immediate impact that it has on our everyday lives. So too, he felt that our lives are now characterized by an “absence” rather than a “presence.” Another major thread that runs through Ellul’s work is his concern for freedom. Individual freedom is the greatest good for him, and a society of technique is the greatest threat, in that it narrows our everyday and political lives.

14 Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, trans. Hans Jonas and David Herr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). More will be said about Jonas in a subsequent chapter. His focus was an attempt to generate some basis for responsibility (without an appeal to formal religion or a return to its traditional ontology) in light of the growing threats of technology to civilization.

15 E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010). Originally published in 1973, Schumacher’s book presents a compelling argument for building our economies around the needs of our communities and the natural limits of our environment, and not around large, abstract technocratic companies who have a single-minded pursuit of wealth and unlimited progress. He calls for recultivating the wisdom of our spiritual and social lives as a mode of resistance. He proposes smaller, humbler production and technologies “with a human face,” as well as lifestyles designed for peace and permanence on the land. He lifts up family, meaningful work, and our local communities as true foundations for society, and he says that true wisdom that is needed in our world comes only from inside oneself. He writes, “To be able to find it, one has first to liberate oneself from such masters as greed and envy. The stillness following liberation – even if only momentary – produces the insights of wisdom which are obtainable in no other way,” 39. He recognizes the infinite yearning of the human heart but says that we can only achieve satiate this in the realm of the spiritual, never in the material. We need, he says, “a living faith in the God of Love.”

16 George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1969) and *Technology and Justice* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986). Influenced by Heiddeger and Ellul, Grant sees technology as an all-encompassing and always permeating metaphysics, one characterized by a mathematical rationality, that maybe started out with noble goals but now causes an eclipse of our capacity to make moral, free decisions and looks and feels more and more like a homogeneous, tyrannical, and totalitarian empire. His way forward shares many of Heiddeger’s convictions, ultimately a return of human receptivity to the being of things.
and American educator and cultural critic Neil Postman. In more recent years, a whole host of influential voices are researching and wrestling with these questions. I will explore some of these more contemporary authors in my last chapter. It is also the case that the Catholic Church, especially through the work of the last two pontiffs, Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, has been in touch with this issue of a secular and technocratic culture. Each of these authors of the last hundred plus years has attempted to trace some contours of the growing technologically saturated shape of our lives. They are representative of the voices that I bring to the table as I explore this topic and imagine a way forward for Christians. These authors recognize that this might be a dry

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17 Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), originally published in 1985, and *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992). As an educator first and foremost and influenced by media theorist Marshall McLuhan, Postman was highly concerned by the ways that he saw the deterioration of dialectical learning and complex thinking in the “technopoly” that has become America. In his view, we now live in a culture that favors the superficiality of television and mass media and has given over all control to a kind of technological theology that espouses efficiency, precision, and objectivity over all else. In *Technopoly*, Postman attempts to offer a historical tale of society moving from a culture of tools to technocracy, then technocracy to technopol, and then tracing the way this ideology of technopoly shapes our medical and computer technologies. He wants people to be more aware as the first step of resistance.

18 Pope from 1978 to 2005. Pope John Paul II was a magnanimous man who traveled widely, preached and wrote extensively, and touched the lives of many people. His many encyclicals and preaching at his general audiences communicated his deeply spiritual and Christological vision of the human person, the body, creation, work, and suffering.

19 Pope from 2005 to 2013. Before his tenure as pontiff, as Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI wrote extensively on theological and ecclesial themes. His *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), originally published in 1968, is considered one of his most influential and widely read books.
channel but that the Big Blackfoot River of Montana still lives within us. We just have to understand it to be able to fish it.

While this will not be a place for an exhaustive study of all these important voices, we can highlight here some of their cries rising up in the desert of our cultural moment. Some have endeavored to locate the origin story for our modern technocracy; some have detailed the growing threats of more sophisticated technology to our political freedoms, to the safety of the world, to our current biology and genetic code; some have analyzed how seductive some newer technologies are, how they work with our desire to connect, but leave us often feeling empty and ungrounded and even sicker (more depressed, more anxious, more stressed, more addicted); some have explored the way technology challenges our capacity to cultivate quality friendships and connection to our work and our neighbors; some have researched the way our use of technology is changing our brain’s neuroplasticity, nothing that we are being rewired to be more adept at perfunctory multitasking but diminished in our ability to sustain focus, reflect, and think interpretatively; some have mused on the way technology tempts us to consider human and natural limits as obstacles to be overcome without question and imagine some kind of transhuman utopian without restraint or suffering; some have detailed the way the values of technocracy like efficiency and rationality and artificiality and autonomy and profit can turn totalitarian, where man now serves to the goals of
the machine, where we no longer know what “natural” might even mean; some have
argued that technology with its inherent paradigm can become its own religious
narrative; and some of have noted that freedom and responsibility wane with an
increase of technology. While this is not an exhaustive review of the work of all the
important authors on technology, we can see that their concerns remain pertinent to our
particular cultural moment. Their questions should cause us to pause and ponder about
the direction we are headed and how we might navigate a more discerning way
forward consistent with some human and social values. Each of these authors, to some
degree, suggests a way forward, and their offerings range from calls to political
revolution to greater personal responsibility, from being more aware of our key values
to curtailing use of certain technological products, from encouraging new technological
developments to advance the cause of the marginalized to providing strategic tactics for
meaning-making within its hegemonic power, from greater governmental regulations
to more silence and reflection, from the need of a return full-scale to traditional
theology and religion to the idea of just adopting its religious postures and practices.

Every culture, in every time and place, must negotiate the questions arising from
 technological progress. We are technological beings, people who like to tinker, figure
things, reach and dream, create new paths, visit other rivers, and explore other galaxies.
This is without question. The question is whether we can be this kind of person
intelligently, wisely, graciously, affectionately, lovingly. The question is how we might technological beings without losing our practice of the faith. Will we be Paul or Neal? People are longing to stand in the river of their everyday lives and are increasingly having difficulty doing so in a time of such technological and technocratic saturation.

This brings us finally to my project in this thesis which is a deep exploration of how Pope Francis’ 2015 social encyclical *Laudato si’* serves to address these questions of in our cultural moment. Even though Pope Francis did not necessarily read all, or any of, the work of these antecedent authors on the topic of technology, *Laudato si’*’s true wisdom really emerges, I believe, when we read the text through the questions these authors raise. Likewise, we have to remember the longing among many for real presence, the myriad of growing threats to our earth and to our humanity, and the rich treasure trove of our own theological tradition and spiritual practices we have in the Church that provide a way forward and a way home. I believe the Church has provided a timely and immensely helpful document in *Laudato si’* to navigate this cultural moment within which we live.

While most popular and scholarly commentators on this papal encyclical have concentrated on the way *Laudato si’* contributes to the body of Catholic Social Teaching by its sustained attention on “care of creation” or the way it addresses climate change and other related environmental problems, what is less noted is the comprehensive
critique Francis makes of what he calls the “technocratic paradigm” and his antidote of a contemplative, priestly, Trinitarian posture to everyday life. I will argue in this thesis that this is the key insight of this encyclical, one that has hardly been treated and has great implications for showing the Church how to navigate a meaningful and faithful way forward. The effects of this technocratic paradigm are certainly related to what is happening to our planet, but they also have grave implications for our capacity as humans – even Christians – to be in touch with God’s gracious and loving and beautiful presence in the givenness of our lives. The Church is a school of love, a formation house for learning to live again in the giftedness of our Creation.

III. The Overview

Chapter One will provide a critical analysis of the reception of this important and timely work of Pope Francis’ Laudato si’ in the English-speaking world. I will look at the responses by the popular media, the Church at the national and local levels, and among young adults. Because this document is still fairly young, more commentary continues to emerge. I will provide a comprehensive analysis into what the initial reception looked like and what the current engagement still is. Then, in the next section of Chapter One, I will review the academe’s reception of this text by providing a thorough study of three sustained treatments of the encyclical. I will trace the major arguments
and tension inherent to the respective authors and journals. The gleanings from these investigations will allow the fuller context for my work to emerge.

Chapter Two will begin the deeper investigation of the Church’s response to this cultural and spiritual moment as we find it in *Laudato si’*. I will provide my own close reading of the text, especially focused on the question of worldview – how our way of looking at the world is formed, how might the Christian tradition be primary in how we look at the world, and how a faulty view of the world might have emerged in the rise of technology. In this investigation, *Laudato si’*’s Chapter One, Two, and Three will play a central role. I will argue that this encyclical calls for a distinctly Christian imagination that is rooted in seeing creation from a place of contemplation as a wonderful and gracious gift from a Creator who has filled our world with interconnectedness of being. In the unpacking of this timely work, we will arrive at an understanding of Pope Francis’ indictment of this “technocratic paradigm” as a loss of the Christian worldview. I believe that this focus on the technological paradigm serves as a clear window into grasping and appreciating Pope Francis in general.

With its importance, the technocratic paradigm has hardly been treated by commentators of the encyclical. And for those who have treated it, the implications for the faithful’s everyday life have received scant exploration. In this chapter, I will begin to highlight some of the fundamental features of this paradigm as described by Pope
Francis and then highlight how this paradigm, in his mind, is connected to the deleterious effects of our current moment. I will highlight areas of Pope Francis’ analysis that directly speak to the cultural landscape that I narrated in this Introduction. It will be made clear that the technocratic paradigm is the key that unlocks the whole document.

It is important here at the outset to acknowledge the use of and relationship of different terms, namely, “technology,” “technological devices,” “technological modalities/practices,” and a “technological paradigm/worldview.” These different expressions alert us to dimensions that are related but should not be confused. Pope Francis touches only lightly on specific technological practices like the production and use of Genetically Modified Organisms, nuclear energy, or digital technology. He does not really mention at all specific devices. While he recognizes and even speaks to the interrelationship between all of these terms, he identifies the broader, more ubiquitous yet less talked-about “paradigm” or “worldview” out of which particular technological developments, products, and practices arise. Sometimes in popular usage, all of this gets referred to with a blanket-term “technology.” As already indicated, we are all technological beings, and so we are not calling this into question. It is certainly therefore more helpful to differentiate between terms than not, a theme that this is also echoed consistently in the work of the philosophers of technology of the 20th century named
earlier. In this thesis, taking Pope Francis’ lead in *Laudato si’*, I will be speaking most directly to the latter phrases of a technocratic “paradigm” or “worldview.” With him, I believe that if we address questions about technology at this level, we will be better positioned to navigate the daily choices with which we are faced regarding the production and use of particular devices and practices that emerge and become normalized in our culture.

Chapter Three of this thesis will then provide a fuller understanding of this technocratic paradigm by tracing its genealogical lineage. There have been many attempts to do this over time. I will mention and highlight the nuances of a variety of different approaches, but as a master guide, I will turn to an important essay by 20th century philosopher of technology and ethicist Hans Jonas to walk us through this intellectual and scientific history. This is not, however, just a history lesson of dates and personalities. It will be imperative to tease out the philosophical shifts found in the transition from the late middle ages to the modern world. Historians have generally understood this time period as the “Scientific Revolution.” What is particularly helpful in Jonas’ narration is his keen eye towards these philosophical changes in the Scientific Revolution. If it is true that how we live in the world is shaped by how we see the world, then the effort to realize the about-face in metaphysics that happened in the Scientific Revolution is vital. This narration of intellectual history has its detractors,
however. Some see this declensionist view as clouding the historic and life-giving technological changes opened up to humanity. I will address this tension at the heart of this genealogical chapter.

My reading of the encyclical is deeply indebted to an important set of thinkers associated with the Communio school of theology. The Communio school emphasizes that all creation, and most significantly all of human experience, finds meaning and truth only in the person of Jesus Christ. There is no neutral ground, no realm where reason and nature function untouched by revelation: grace always abounds. What this means is that reason and revelation, nature and grace, are not sealed off from each other, but find fundamental unity within the Trinitarian God and within the human person made in God’s image. Reality finds perfect expression in the Incarnation. For this school of thought, primary ingredients are the primacy of Revelation, an emphasis on continuity with the larger theological tradition of the Church, and ultimately the

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20 Joseph Ratzinger (now pope Benedict XVI), Henri de Lubac, and Hans Urs von Balthasar were founding members of the Communio school of theology, which has become dominant in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council. The French word “ressourcement,” meaning “a return to the sources” or getting back to basics, best describes the impulse that compelled the movement. It was understood to be a reaction to a modernizing drift after the Second Vatican Council. In the US, one can find this Communio school of theology among the many scholars within the association known as the Academy of Catholic Theology and among the editors and authors of the journal Communio founded in 1972. Also, professors at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute at the Catholic University of America, and its online journal Humanum, work from this school of thought.
human person’s encounter with Christ, which is understood as an act of adoration and contemplative prayer. Pope Francis’ diagnostic picture and analysis in *Laudato si’*, I argue, remain entirely rooted in the tradition of his predecessors and the Church’s social tradition, and is one that speaks the mantras of this *Communio* school of thought.

However, I also believe that he pushes the Church’s conversation around technology and our cultural moment into new territory, or, at least, a more fully fleshed out place to stand in and peer into our cultural moment. We will see how *Laudato si’* treats themes such as social progress in general, the ontological dimension of the modern technocratic project, discussions of metaphysics and theological anthropology, and particular technological products that have arisen in the modern era and impacted the life of the believer. His reliance on Scripture’s wisdom tradition and the thought and witness within the Franciscan tradition assist Pope Francis in his unique inflection around the issues. As I place Pope Francis in the context of his predecessors’ mission to re-evangelize our culture, it will be apparent that the call for Catholics in this encyclical is not to take this technocratic moment as a given and its products as morally neutral but to seek to be more discerning, more responsible, and more transformatively creative from within our own Christian spiritual tradition and practices.

Many commentators want to read Pope Francis’ diagnosis of and recommendations for the state of our “common home” in environmental, socio-
political, and economic terms. Albeit Pope Francis begins his encyclical with an experiential description of the world’s environmental problems and muses on possible solutions in political and scientific terms in one of his chapters, but I want to emphasize the primary and overall thrust of his diagnosis and recommendations for a way forward are made in metaphysical, spiritual, and theological terms. It is an attempt to describe a compelling Christian worldview and a challenge for people to change their hearts and lives. In a very challenging way, this encyclical is proposing a radically different posture to everyday life than what is most dominant in middle-class America. Thus, it is my argument that where this encyclical is most helpful is in reimaging how we might live our everyday lives from a more intentional, contemplative worldview and set of attitudes and practices. Without acknowledging these deeply spiritual dimensions of the encyclical, the political, secular realm will never get at the real issues.

In my deep read of this encyclical and throughout my thesis, the work of 20th century Catholic thinker Romano Guardini plays an important role.\textsuperscript{21} Guardini is often

\textsuperscript{21} Romano Guardini (1885-1968) is one of the great Catholic thinkers of the 20th century. Born in Italy, most of his life was spent in Germany where he became a priest and professor. He published many books on matters of faith, liturgy, prayer, virtues, and modernity. His influence on Josef Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI has been well-noted. Some have noted that Benedict’s writing has been, at least implicitly, a long meditation on the work of Guardini. Likewise, after serving in a variety of capacities in the Jesuit province of Argentina, Jorge Mario Bergoglio (now Pope Francis) started doctoral studies in Germany with Romano Guardini as his focus of research. Guardini also had an influence on Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac. Although
associated with the *Communio* school of thought, but even more, his work is directly quoted by Pope Francis in key sections of *Laudato si'* that have to do with the technocratic paradigm. Two of Guardini’s books directly address technology in the life of faith: *Letters from Lake Como* and *The End of the Modern World*. In my commentary on the encyclical, I will reference Guardini frequently. I believe his work is as timely as ever.

The Introduction and the first three chapters of this thesis will not only move us closer to an understanding of the technocratic paradigm and its effects but will also show how important this encyclical is for our current cultural moment. This contextualization of the technocratic moment will also serve the goal of helping us realize that there is a distinctly Catholic anthropology, metaphysics, and epistemology that might serve us better for our engagement with technology and the possibilities it offers. I will conclude this thesis then with Chapter Four that presents a proposal for a comprehensive and compelling Christian-Catholic contemplative way of seeing and living in one’s everyday life within this technocratic-oriented world. Because of the nature of my personal experience and my pastoral work, the context for applying this

Bergoglio never finished his doctoral degree, the influence on Bergoglio/Pope Francis is fascinating.
vision will primarily be everyday life within the household and family life. My voice in this final chapter will be undergirded by the work of many of Christian and non-Christians authors as I engage with Pope Francis’ own set of recommendations in the text itself. I will attempt to make my case that the Church has at her disposal the theology and spiritual practices for a compelling vision of the reenchantment of everyday life. I have a particular goal in highlighting how many aspects of our everyday life, like our participation in the marketplace, how we live in our marriages and friendships, how we eat and engage in our community, and how we interact with material things and nature, can all be meaningful avenues for encountering the sacred gift of creation. I believe that Pope Francis challenges the faithful to live a much more radically contemplative lifestyle and spirituality rooted in its own distinctive Christian vision of the world. While the Church has many types of spiritualities at her disposal, we will explore in the last chapter how different ones respond differently to our technocratic moment. Some might be more compelling than others at providing an adequate response to our technocratic culture. What will be clear is that a total accommodation to our technocratic paradigm and its products is not what Pope Francis is calling for. People in the pews are starving, and we are sitting on the treasure of real presence. The Church is like the Montana Big Blackfoot River, and she knows the four-count rhythm and the hermeneutic to read the waters.
CHAPTER ONE: THE RECEPTION OF LAUDATO SI’

Leading up to and immediately after the release of Laudato si’, there was much in the media about its contents and what its themes might mean for the Church and the world. In this chapter, I will review the immediate reception of the encyclical and the subsequent literature that has been published. As we will see, most of the commentary focuses explicitly on the environmental and political aspects of Pope Francis’ text without a full understanding of its philosophical and theological grounding and this grounding’s connection to Pope Francis’ suggestions for a way forward. I find myself with a greater affinity for those who realize this philosophical and theological dimension. Also, it will be clear that very few commentators fully understand how to interpret Pope Francis’ onslaught of the technocratic paradigm. It was one of the surprises of the encyclical’s content, and most commentators side step its centrality. Among the scholarly reflection on this text, there have been three major treatments devoted to a variety of authors providing analysis. In my review, I will trace the main threads of the authors’ arguments, pointing out key questions and noteworthy tensions that give a window into the current hermeneutical conversation. This review of the reception of Laudato si’ will also serve as a context out of which this thesis arises.
I. Review of the Popular Reception of *Laudato si’*

In the days leading up the release of Pope Francis’ anticipated encyclical, there was much a buzz about what Pope Francis would say in this first major Church document addressing the area of care for creation. This topic of creation had been a growing feature of the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. With Jorge Mario Bergoglio choosing “Franciscus” as his papal name echoing the witness of nature mystic St. Francis of Assisi and the Pope’s frequent references early in his tenure to the treatment of the earth and the changing climate in theological terms, there was already a suspicion that he might offer a major look at this theme of creation. When it was announced that he would publish this encyclical in the summer of 2015, there was even more speculation about its contents, its perspectives, and its possible challenges to nation-states and faithful Catholics. With a leaked copy published in an Italian magazine on June 15th and the full text officially from the Vatican on June 18th, the media went wild attempting to summarize Pope Francis’ words into headlines and compelling ledes. Reactions, overall, have been mixed, both positive and critical, enthusiastic and cautious, some politically oriented and others theologically or spiritually based, most highlighting the sustained focus on the cry of the poor and the earth. While there was an initial storm of media, the attention and overall action seems
to have died down. I will now look at the main features of the reception among popular media and the Church.

Some initial reactions in the popular media: The New York Times’ headline for June 18th read “Pope Francis, in Sweeping Encyclical, Calls for Swift Action on Climate Change.” The authors, Jim Yardley and Laurie Goodstein pointed to the document’s call for a “radical transformation of politics, economics and individual lifestyles to confront environmental degradation and climate change.” The article mentioned Pope Francis’ indictments of “apathy, the reckless pursuit of profits, excessive faith in technology and political shortsightedness” but then said that Pope Francis “places most of the blame on fossil fuels and human activity” and that developed, industrial countries were mostly

22 There are some initiatives still popping up, but the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University conducted a survey one year after the release of Laudato si’ and revealed some shocking statistics. It found that only a third of Catholics heard about or read about the encyclical — a percentage that has roughly held steady since July 2015 (a month after Laudato si’ came out). What is more jarring is that the CARA survey found that a whopping 56 percent of those Catholics polled were not even aware of the encyclical and its contents. This number is only slightly lower than the rest of the non-Catholic population. In other words, over half of the people in our parish do not even know about how Pope Francis addressed our particular cultural moment with all its hungers and needs in this timely and important document. See survey results on CARA’s blog: http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2016/06/laudato-si-catholic-attitudes-about.html. I also see the major attention of a more recent writing on marriage by Pope Francis in Amoris Laetitia doing a disservice in the Church’s ability to wrestle with its themes.
responsible. Michelle Boorstein did a service to the public in her *Washington Post* article that compiled a litany of competing reactions from leading Catholic voices under the headline, “Pope’s encyclical generates responses from over-the-top enthusiasm to harsh dismissal.” In some ways, this article still offers a representative range of views about the encyclical. This article’s comments range from Jeb Bush’s remarks that he respects the Pope but that he thinks that environmental problems are better solved in the political realm and Rush Limbaugh’s comparison of Pope Francis’ goals to the ones of Al Gore to comments from other side of the political aisle like ones from U.S. Sen. Ed. Markey (D-Mass.), Rev. Thomas Reese, senior analyst for *National Catholic Reporter*, and longtime USCCB policy advisor John Carr, who all laud Pope Francis’ moral voice found in the document on issues of the environment, climate change, and the impacts on the poor. They are more hopeful for what it can and will do for creating change in society.

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The Catholic magazines *America* and *National Catholic Reporter* also compiled a series of reactions and reflections by a variety of authors. Among these is Jeffrey Sachs who sees *Laudato si*’s main call for a new economic system, several authors who point to the text’s continuity with Catholic Social Teaching and previous pontificates, and another who points out the Franciscan foundations of this text. Nearly all of them point out that the encyclical is most focused on action and a change of course, sometimes talked about as repentance but other times in more political terms. My voice here in this thesis echoes the reflections that value Pope Francis’ moral voice, zero in on the continuity to the past, the call for a renewed anthropology and metaphysics, and a call for repentance in a life of contemplation. I think Stephen P. White’s reflection is on track when he writes, “There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology. The deepest truth about man is revealed in the One through whom all things came to be,

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and who, in assuming our poverty, became both a sign of contradiction and the means of salvation for us and all of creation.”

One can also see the reception of this document in the reaction by conservative Catholic New York Times columnist Ross Douthat and First Things editor R.R. Reno who both suggest that Laudato si’ exemplifies a cautious, even pessimistic or anti-modern view of progress. They muse on whether this will rile both conservatives and liberals who have a blind-faith in either the free-market or governmental solutions. They are mixed about this efficiency of this strategy wondering whether this more apocalyptic turn presents such a desperate place that the only possible solution is some kind of “revolution” or proposal that evokes the very technocratic paradigm that he seeks to critique. On the other hand, others find in Pope Francis’ words a genuine hope and the document chalk full of references to positive change that is already happening and can

29 Ibid., http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/sign-contradiction
certainly happen with the document itself now in circulation.\textsuperscript{32} I share the view that Pope Francis’ document is one that expresses much caution and critique of the very paradigm and goals inherent to modernity. The moment is, in fact, dire, and we need more prophetic words that do not gloss over the reality with a spotlight exclusively on only the signs of the times that affirm our current way of life. I think that Douthat and Reno are as underestimating how much of the encyclical rests on Pope Francis’ call to personal repentance, a life of contemplation, and a renewed role of the Church and her spiritual and liturgical traditions. This is the very fodder that these commentators support and encourage as a response to our cultural predicament.

Given the document’s strong support of climate change by human activity and lifestyle and accompanying dire environmental and economic state of our “common home,” there were many reactions by people who speculated how the encyclical might fuel debate on climate change,\textsuperscript{33} provoke immediate action of fossil-fuel divestment,\textsuperscript{34} and move the Church and society as a whole towards advocating for renewable

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\textsuperscript{32} Nathan Schneider, “The Mood of ‘Laudato Si’: A Reply,” \textit{America}, June 22, 2015, \url{http://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/mood-laudato-si-reply}
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energies. Some felt that the release of the encyclical in 2015 was itself a strategic move to affect some positive fruits at the UN sponsored talks on climate change happening later that year. Some others saw Pope Francis implicitly advocating for political policies of US presidential candidate and self-avowed socialist Bernie Sanders. Since so much of these musings on the encyclical’s political implications are premised on certain views inherent to the text about science, politics, and the economy, there were many who endeavored to find authoritative support for Pope Francis’ scientific claims in the encyclical, whereas there were others who directly challenged the premises by calling them fundamentally flawed and misguided. Acknowledging these debates on

economic theory and climate science, my thesis will nonetheless work with Pope Francis’ basic intuitions about the state of our common home and his moral authority in the realm of the spiritual life. The Church does not make authoritative claims on political realities. Pope Francis does offer some prudential judgments and challenges for governments and business leaders (in Chapter Five of the encyclical), but these suggestions must only be seen in the context of provoking necessary dialogue given the state of our common home. My resonance with the *Communio* interpretation will also position me less towards political solutions and lean more into the spiritual conversion and ecclesial-centered practices necessary for a change of heart and lifestyle to come about.

This more ecclesial approach can be found in many commentators who argue passionately that the encyclical is not really about climate change and “trees and snail darters” but ultimately about humanity, our relationship with God, and the power of sin. Among these voices we hear an emphasis on how Pope Francis’ premises are 


similar to Pope John Paul II’s attacks on the “culture of death” and Benedict XVI’s on the inherent atheism of our culture. Highlighting the “both/and” approach of Catholicism, these authors like to emphasize Pope Francis’ unmistakable connection between the ecology of the earth and human ecology, that the neglect of the earth and the poor and the unborn all stem from the same ontological problem. It is within this group of analysts that the technocratic paradigm and its ontological dimension get the most attention. I share the views of these authors as will be unfolded in the following chapter. However, although these authors are right in their push to make broader connections to our history of doctrine and praxis, in so doing, they frequently downplay the real environmental degradation occurring in our world and leave the reader wondering about their abstract analysis’ connection to everyday life. From a more progressive place, NCR’s Thomas Reese, S.J., also zeroed in on the technocratic paradigm’s presence in Laudato si’ with his article “Pope Francis: Technology + Greed = Disaster.”41 His emphasis differs from Taylor, Weigel, and Reno, pointing less to the

of Love: How (Not) to Read Laudato Si’,” Religion and Ethics, July 6, 2015, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2015/07/06/4268238.htm
ontological dimension to this technocratic paradigm and its connections to other social issues, and instead focusing more on the way the paradigm brings a “power and greed” within politics and business and the need to stop this to prevent disaster. My thesis, like I believe Laudato si’ does for the reader, will attempt to keep social issues connected, to highlight the ontological dimensions to the technocratic paradigm, and stay grounded in everyday life in response to the state of our common home.

One reflection that shows a particularly astute theological reading of the text is a short article by Dominican James Dominic Rooney, O.P., in America. In this article, Rooney, while reflecting on themes from Laudato si’ in the context of his time on retreat with Benedictines, points to the way that Christians are called not to retreat into the desert but to embrace the Incarnational and priestly dimension to their everyday lives where “the entire pathway of daily life is sprinkled with prayer and elevated into a continuous liturgy.” In doing this, he also places this encyclical squarely in the middle of the theological debate about what is the best response for Christians to a growing secularism, whether it is the “Benedict Option” or the “Dominic Option,” whether we are called to scattered and small countercultural communities of upright moral practice or to a life of fraternity, contemplation, preaching, and simplicity that rebuilds the

human and natural environments. This is a fascinating and important conversation in the Church right now, and I look to probe Rooney’s observations much more in this thesis, especially in my last chapter. I find myself much more intrigued and at home among the theologians, both from the right and left, both lay and cleric, who have zeroed in on the spiritual and theological heart of the encyclical. It is within this ontological, spiritual, and theological conversation of Taylor, Weigel, Reno, Reese, and Rooney that I wish to engage most in this thesis.

A number of US Bishops also offered initial comments that were overall very positive, praising it for its prophetic quality, its practical suggestions, and its continuity with Pope Francis’ predecessors. Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, at that time President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, writes that the document is a beautiful and extensive treatment on the care of creation with its focus “to consider our deep and intertwined relationships with God, our brothers and sisters, and the gifts that


44 Kevin Clarke, “As Mass Extinction Threatens, Are Catholics Listening to ‘Laudato Si’?,” America, November 14, 2016, http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/mass-extinction-threatens-are-catholics-listening-laudato-si. In the article in America, Clarke quotes Dan Misleh, Executive Director of Catholic Climate Covenant, who notes that “There were like 110 statements or press release or articles written by bishops within two weeks after it was released…I don’t think the bishops have ever responded that way to an encyclical letter.”
our Creator has provided for our stewardship." Many US bishops expressed their enthusiasm for how the questions the encyclical raises might shape policy and new attitudes in light of the pervasive ecological and social degradation in what Pope Francis calls a “throwaway culture.” Some bishops actively spoke out with recommendations for the laity to take action by reading the document in its entirety and joining small group discussions, as well as encouraging practical steps for implementing some of Pope Francis’ recommendations in the encyclical itself.

Although not widespread, the US Bishops also initially stepped out politically on the themes of the encyclical. The USCCB, through its Office of Justice, Peace, and Human Development, coordinated efforts distribute discussion guides for local groups or


46 Jim McDermott, “California’s Bishops Speak Out on the Importance of "Laudato Si’,” America, June 19, 2015, http://www.americanamagazine.org/content/dispatches/californias-bishops-speak-out-importance-laudato-si,
individuals at a parish to use, but the conference of bishops has chosen not to address the contents of the encyclical at any of their annual meetings. There was also no leadership at a high-level for strong public commitments by Catholic leaders or congregations to be a model in the area of care of creation. The organization Catholic Climate Covenant is an USCCB-sponsored organization founded in 2006 and received new life through the publication of *Laudato si’*. Through its sharing of resources and building on its many national partnerships, it hopes to inspire and equip people and institutions to care for creation and care for the poor. It allows Catholics to learn and to take action politically around many of the themes intrinsic to *Laudato si’*. Its activity and programs have significantly picked up since 2015, but it largely remains political active and ultimately unknown to the parish setting.\(^{49}\)

At the local level, some press has been given to parishes who have chosen to build according to some environmental standards, plant a community garden, and/or engage in some kind of climate advocacy.\(^{50}\) With a variety of discussion guides on the

\(^{49}\) See [http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org](http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org). As a way to show their recent *Laudato si’*-inspired work, they narrate that since 2015, they were able to convene one of the first national conferences on the encyclical, create 140 “care of creation” teams across the country, and helped supporters send in over 10,000 letters to legislators in favor of climate action.

text, there have been attempts at small-group discussion in parishes and some efforts at more sustained conversations with a series of talks or speakers. Plus, it has been noted that some parishes used the encyclical’s inspiration to form “green teams” that promote green energy use and consumption in parishes.\textsuperscript{31} The periodical The Priest also recently published in October 2016 an article by Donnell Kirchner, C.Ss.R, that guides clergy on how to preach and teach themes from Laudato si’. Overall, this piece by Kirchner is well-done, highlighting the encyclical’s spiritual and social-political themes, even noting the aspect of technocracy to Pope Francis’ argument. He encourages pastors to keep preaching and filling their bulletin with quotes and suggestions rooted in the document.\textsuperscript{52} In a very recent bold move, the bishop of the Diocese of Burlington, Vermont nudged his flock, including the clergy, to continue the conversation around themes of the encyclical by calling for a diocesan-wide study and action plan called

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\textsuperscript{51} Brian Roewe, “Year-old Laudato Si’ has stirred up action for Earth,” National Catholic Reporter, June 16, 2016, \url{https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/encyclical-boost-year-old-laudato-si-has-stirred-action-earth}

\textsuperscript{52} Donnell Kirchner, “On Care for Our Common Home How to preach and teach Laudato Si,'” Our Sunday Visitor, September 30, 2016, \url{https://www.osv.com/TheChurch/SocialTeaching/Article/TabId/670/ArtMID/13711/ArticleID/20686/On-Care-for-Our-Common-Home.aspx}
“Year of Creation” following the Church’s Jubilee “Year of Mercy.” What seems missing from all the heretofore mentioned actions at the local level is an attempt to address the technocratic features of everyday life for lay Catholics and its connections to both the environmental and social, cultural, and economic problems that people are experiencing. I would also put my argument in the context of U.S. Catholic’s survey leading up to Laudato si’ one-year anniversary that says that ultimately the disconnect happens at the parish level. There seems to be little priority for its themes, and leadership among clergy is weak.

A number of young millennial Catholics also weighed in on this encyclical, complied in a helpful way in an on-line journal and blog called “Millennial.” Their reactions are overall favorable, highlighting how this encyclical is ripe for a REI and iPhone-generation who are both sensitive to the problems of the planet and are longing for a challenge to live more deeply and intentionally from a relational perspective to the poor and the earth. It might be that Millennials, a generation immersed fully in a

technocratic culture, senses its dark side most. Attempts by a couple organizations to engage young adults in earth care work have been positive steps as a result of this encyclical, but they have not fully come to maturity. One such example is Franciscan Action Network’s ecumenical Earth Corp. By developing and coordinating “Chapters” of young adults across the country, Earth Corp wants to create some grassroots activity that helps young adults live in the world differently, more like what is advocated for by Pope Francis in the encyclical. Another creative approach to engage a younger generation with *Laudato si’* and its themes was the use of on-line videos to unpack its contents and even provide live discussion. I share the desire to unpack the themes of this encyclical for the sake of the younger generation and agree that there is a hungry among them for something deeper.

As all of this analysis suggests, the reception and subsequent actions around this major encyclical cover a spectrum of responses. The reception of this document reflects

56 See: [https://franciscanaction.org/earthcorps/about](https://franciscanaction.org/earthcorps/about)
57 You can see examples of this with the blog and on-line video discussions on the popular site Daily Theology. Example can be found here with a discussion of Catholic moral theologians (who are themselves young adults): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL1mREs8Yrc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL1mREs8Yrc). Another example is this video series by newly ordained Franciscan friar Dan Horan, OFM: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL02W1tFFtdJn9V9_DvEbz9Bygt7XsYXRj](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL02W1tFFtdJn9V9_DvEbz9Bygt7XsYXRj). His series of sixteen videos has had nearly 12,000 views. *America* magazine also hosted a multi-media discussion on the encyclical the day of its release: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdAJQ-anDmY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdAJQ-anDmY). There are many other examples; on-line media engagement is certainly an effective way to disseminate the themes of this encyclical.
the somewhat polarized atmosphere of the Church and society at large, but it also shows that many of its themes directly address our cultural moment. In its immediate days of release, the document engaged and held the attention of media pundits and local Catholic leadership, but over time, awareness and interest have diminished. While there are attempts to keep the conversation going, leadership is still lacking. By and large, the most active engagement with this text remains among environmental, particularly climate change, activists, and progressive Catholics and non-Catholics. While climate change remains on the radar of most Catholics, and even one that most feel should garner our moral voice, activism among Catholics around this issue is fairly low.\textsuperscript{58} It is my argument that if political activism is the main response called for in this document, then it is clear that the engagement of its themes will remain quite low. This is tragic consequence of the reception of this document. I believe that what has been missing in the analysis of \textit{Laudato si’} is a focus on Pope Francis’ Chapter Three of the document where he puts the fault of our particular cultural moment with the technocratic paradigm. Coupled with this analysis in Chapter Three is a very helpful and practical last chapter, Chapter Six, where Pope Francis offers compelling

\textsuperscript{58} The aforementioned CARA survey also shows that 6-in-10 Catholics agreed that climate change was occurring and largely a result of human activity. Additionally, 2/3rds of Catholics – and roughly the same percentage of Americans in general – believe in a personal moral responsibility to address climate change.
suggestions for how one might faithfully navigate and live in this technocracy as a follower of Christ as a contemplative with a priestly dimension. The implications of the Pope’s words in these two chapters for our everyday lives and the shape of our social, political lives are many and potentially transformative. And yet, as we see, very little sustained attention to this has been given. This is the context of the following work. I am seeking to offer a compelling reason to keep the conversation going and to center us in its main themes that actively engage our spiritual and philosophical tradition for the sake of a more meaningful everyday life.

II. Review of the Academe’s Reception of Laudato si’

It is also important to place this thesis in the context of the conversation in the academe. A few academics immediately engaged the themes of Laudato si’ after its release, but only more recently have we seen an uptick in sustained treatments by theologians, social scientists, environmentalists, and ethicists. Three journals, Environmental Humanities, Theological Studies, and Communio, have offered entire publications or significant sections to wrestling with its themes. From my reading of these publications, like with the popular literature, there is much attention on Pope Francis’ larger goal of integrating “care of creation” into Catholic Social Teaching, as well as his many political recommendations. Additionally, we will see among some a more thoughtful engagement with its theological and philosophical underpinnings. In
tracing the shape of the conversations from these academics, we will see the main aspects of their reactions, where they are both inspired and challenged by Pope Francis. I will look at each journal separately and then conclude with some final remarks that show where my thesis will be situated in the context of this academic conversation.

Journal: *Environmental Humanities*

*Environmental Humanities*, published by Duke University Press, is an international, open-access journal that aims to invigorate current interdisciplinary research on the environment. In response to a growing interest around the world with the many questions that arise in this era of rapid environmental and social change, the journal publishes scholarship that draws humanities disciplines into conversation with each other, as well as with the natural and social sciences. This academic approach aligns well with Pope Francis’ major theme of the interconnectedness of all things. They agree that that we will not fully address adequate solutions to the state of our common home without working across disciplinary areas. This journal is published two times a year. In Volume 8, Number 2, published in November 2016, the editors chose to have a “special commentary section” where we find a series of eight short replies to *Laudato si’* by a variety of authors from a diverse set of backgrounds.\(^{59}\) It is worth noting that the

\(^{59}\) All references to this journal will be from *Environmental Humanities* 8:2 (2016).
field of “environmental humanities” is a fairly new area of research and study, and it is largely fueled by “growing frustration within the environmental movement at the slow pace of political responses to climate change, and by pressures on the humanities to prove their social usefulness.” In that way as well, this field shares Pope Francis’ intuitions.

Where Pope Francis differs with the approach and goals of this new field of research is that two of the major thrusts of the discipline are (1) a movement towards what is called “posthumanism” where traditional views of human nature are called into question and the human subject is decentered in relationship to other objects and systems, and (2) a “dissatisfaction with declension narratives” where the stories we tell about the relationship of humanity and nature is told in a way where things only get progressively worse. Laudato si’ itself warns of this posthumanist move from many different angles; in many ways, the entire metaphysics of the document is an argument against it. Regarding Pope Francis’ narrative of history, his views tend towards describing a worsening picture of society and culture. The authors of this journal, despite their different conclusions, graciously engaged Pope Francis’ text and explored the intersections and differences. There is much praise in the reactions of this diverse set

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60 For a description, the main components, and recommended texts for this academic field of “environmental humanities” see UCLA’s page: [http://environmental.humanities.ucla.edu](http://environmental.humanities.ucla.edu)
of authors to *Laudato si’*. The general sketch of the authors’ reaction is one of gratitude for the Pope’s voice in the cause; yet there are still doubts about aspects of its view of creation and human anthropology and hopes for a further evolution of thought for the good of the planet and all people.

We might consider the following positive reactions: (1) that the Pope is building on his predecessors, and through this text, the Church is finally formally and comprehensively addressing the issue of the environment and cataloging it within the larger body of Catholic Social Teaching;\(^61\) (2) that lifting up St. Francis of Assisi in his own papal name and now in this encyclical is a timely, helpful, ecumenical feature;\(^62\) (3)

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\(^61\) Celia Deane-Drummond observes how Pope Francis is able to cleverly weave traditional terminology of Catholic Social Teaching, like “common good,” with new accounts of climate change and environmental harm. In a similar way, she presses the point that Pope Francis builds on his predecessors’ critique of capitalism and nature mysticism, as well as other theological streams of thought like liberation theology. Celia Deane-Drummond, “Pope Francis: Priest and Prophet in the Anthropocene,” 261-262. Michael S. Northcott welcomes the “ecological re-reading of the tradition of the natural law,” in “Economic Magical Thinking and the Divine Ecology of Love,” 268. Philip Goodchild notes as well that the concept of natural law has found new life in Pope Francis’ understanding of “integral ecology,” in “Creation, Sin, and Debt: A Response to the Papal Encyclical *Laudato si’*,” 272.

\(^62\) Matthew Chrulew particularly notes the pervasive appeal of St. Francis of Assisi throughout history and still today, even among contemporary philosophers like Michael Hardt, Anthonio Negri, and Giorgio Agamben. “This saintly name still sings,” he writes in his article “Francis’s Planetary Practice,” 245. Bruno Latour’s reflection, “The Immense Cry Channeled by Pope Francis,” also cannot believe that he is re-reading St. Francis’ famous poem “Canticle” with new eyes and fresh perspective because of this encyclical, 252-254. Bronislaw Szerszynski attempts to unpacks the *Canticle* in a fresh way that serves as an underpinning for what he calls a “geo-spiritual formation,” in “Praise Be to You, Earth-Beings,” 293-294. Beatrice Marovich is overall
that the text wisely attempts to bring together issues of the natural environment, culture, humanities, and social justice;\textsuperscript{63} (4) that it is Pope Francis’ Christian faith in Christ that shapes the text’s main themes;\textsuperscript{64} (5) that it seeks to propose a change of course by offering a different narrative for Christians than the long-standing mandate “to have dominion over the earth;”\textsuperscript{65} (5) that it generally echoes a “pluralist” or less enthusiastic. She calls St. Francis “a complex figure,” in that Francis shows both passionate love and capacity for communion with other creatures and at the same time, in her view, a kind of submission and desire for conversion and domestication, in “Religious Biodiversity and Our Common Home,” 285-286. She reads Pope Francis’ project of \textit{Laudato si’} through this same lens of embodying the right intuitions but not going far enough to full liberate himself from the historic entanglements with imperialism, colonialism, and patriarchy, 286. At the end of her reflection, contrasting St. Francis with St. Augustine, she does sense how his witness of creaturely interdependence is “less orthodox” than the traditional accounts, 290.

\textsuperscript{63} Chrulew, 246. Bruno Latour’s reflection notes the way the Pope masterfully and powerfully uses the word \textit{cry} to describe the earth’s suffering and people who suffer social and economic inequalities, 252-255. Latour is also deeply impressed how Pope Francis creatively brings together a traditionally Catholic anti-modernist flavor with something so contemporary and relevant as ecology, 255.

\textsuperscript{64} Celia Deane-Drummond recognizes that Pope Francis is primarily a priest and thus infused by a transcendent eschatology and cosmic vision of Creation. She notes that this sort of frees Pope Francis from the declension narrative common among environmentalists. She also recognizes Pope Francis’ approach to the doctrine of creation and human nature are “traditional,” 259-260. Philip Goodchild’s reflection acknowledges Pope Francis’ use of the language of “sin” to describe the brokenness between humanity and the earth, in “Creation, Sin, and Debt: A Response to the Papal Encyclical \textit{Laudato si’},” 270-276.

\textsuperscript{65} Northcott, in “Economic Magical Thinking and the Divine Ecology of Love,” notes Pope Francis’ affirmation of the “sacrament of the present moment” and a kind of “ecological natural law” as a way to move into a different posture viz-a-viz nature, 267-279. However, Marovich is strong in her view that Pope Francis remains beholden to a patriarchal and colonialist view of human nature and Creation that still smells an awfully lot like “dominion” in her view, 285-290.
inclusive and ecumenical tone;\(^6\) (6) that it is honest and bold in naming climate change as a real and human byproduct and the necessity of a radical conversion/revolution as a response;\(^6\) (7) that it suggests a fresh understanding of the way everything is connected and the eternal destiny of all creatures,\(^8\) and (8) that is unrelenting in its critique of capitalism.\(^9\) While these authors do not all agree with each other in their praise of Pope Francis, they share a recognition of his unusual leadership in this conversation of humanity’s role in shaping the environment. The descriptors of the text cover a spectrum: “innovative and eccentric;”\(^7\) “surprising,” “curious,” and sometimes

\(^6\) Latour, 254. George B. Handley challenges environmental humanities, especially ecocritics, to take religion more seriously in how it shapes the perspectives of people. If we want to solve climate change, he argues, we need a “ecumenical epistemology” that reconsiders the “postsecularity” of the environmental humanities, 279, 283. Handley, in “Laudato si’ and the Postsecularism of the Environmental Humanities,” sees Laudato si’ helping with this fresh consideration of religion, especially through its call to “less automatism, less objectification, less consumerism, and more awe, gratitude, and wonder,” 283. I like this attempt to translate the practices Pope Francis offers beyond the religious/philosophical narratives he holds, but one of the premises of the thesis is that this religious/philosophical lens is an integral piece to doing these practices.

\(^7\) Handley sees this language of Pope Francis in “repentance” and “conversion” as helpful ways to talk about what needs to happen in order to solve climate change, 283. Beatrice Marovich calls it an encyclical on “climate change and inequality,” 285.

\(^8\) Michael S. Northcott argues that Pope Francis strikes a different posture towards the question of the universal destiny of creatures than St. Thomas Aquinas, 266. He also praises Pope Francis for providing a rich theological basis for the growing cultural and social recognition that everything in nature is connected, 269.

\(^9\) Deane-Drummond, 261. Northcott points to capitalism as Pope Francis’ root cause of the ecological crisis, 263-264. I do not share this view, but Northcott goes on to correctly connect the rise of unbridled capitalism with the demythologization of nature that occurred.

\(^7\) Chrulew, 249.
“combative;” 71 “significant” and a “sea change” of a contribution; 72 and
“extraordinary.” 73 Even for those who find institutional religion meaningless, stale, or
prone to oppression, they give gratitude that in his own way this Pope hears the earth’s
“cry,” gives voice to her immense value and need for liberation, and challenges us to a
new set of practices through a life of repentance.

Despite the ways that the Pope and these authors align in their approach and
goals, there remain incongruities. The most noticeable and important difference is that
nearly all these authors long for a deeper or utterly different transformation and
liberation than the one Pope Francis suggests. There is a consistent frustration with the
Pope for his doubling down on a traditional anthropocentrism and gendered/binary
view of human nature. These, as we have seen, do not square with the posthumanism,
biocentrism, and deep “religious biodiversity,” all of which are foundational among this
field of environmental humanities. 74 Bronislaw Szerszynski offers a representative
statement regarding this challenge of Laudato si’:

While liberating the earth from instrumental humanism and granting to matter a
sacramental and Trinitarian depth, it nevertheless imposes onto the cosmos a

71 These are some of the adjectives Bruno Latour uses in his reflection.
72 Deane-Drummond, 261, and Goodchild, 271.
73 Szerszynski, 296.
74 This view is expressed most critically within the reflections by Deane-Drummond, Marovich, and Szerszynski.
new unity and hierarchy, one in which the relationship between the human and a particular version of the divine is accorded too much privilege. My hope is that, in the wake of *Laudato si’*, alternative geo-spiritual formations become more prominent in the public realm, ones that are more open to the multiplicity of ontologies offered by the diverse geospiritual formations that already flourish across the earth.\(^{75}\)

The liberation these authors imagine would finally allow finite beings “to serve each other in fraternal and sororal love” as well as truly sing St. Francis’ song of “praise be to you” to the ever-present and unending transformations opening up in a beautiful way through a myriad of “strange new destinies and meanings.”\(^{76}\) Many of the authors recognize Pope Francis’ rootedness in his larger, more conventional theological tradition, but they also read his ascendency to Pope through the eyes of a discontinuity and “pray” for his courage to continue breaking from the past. Again, given the Pope’s traditional account of Creation, theological anthropology, and the cosmic salvation of Christ, this liberation is beyond what Pope Francis is able to offer in his text. He does not even show any signs of desiring it. In fact, Pope Francis is very careful to clarify the dangers in his mind of this kind of biocentric, transhumanist, utopian, and postmodern ontology. He suggests in the encyclical itself (and in other public speeches) that these are part of the problem, or symptoms of the problem, and certainly not the solution. In

\(^{75}\) Szerszynski, 296.

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 296.
his clarifying comments in this text, and in others, he continues to double-down on a position of continuity with the teaching of his predecessors. He does, however, ask for continued dialogue, and it seems like these authors are willing to stay at the table for this. It is here, at this difficult but vital edge of dialogue, that I see so important and where I wish my thesis to be a contribution. I do think that it is important that the Church wrestle with the ways its tradition serves as barrier for true kinship with others and the earth. I want this question to haunt me in this thesis. With so many of the authors of this new field of environmental humanities not wanting to repeat old prejudices of outright dismissal of religious discourse and practices, then it will also require them to continue to probe these questions with an open mind. With this liberationist bent and the field’s anti-declension narrative bias, the attention on the text’s role of the technocratic paradigm and the metaphysics inherent to modernity takes a minor place at the table of discussion. Being able to recognize the shadow side of their own liberationist ontology would be a helpful step in this dialogue. Again, while our foundation ontologies matter, the earth and our lives are also at stake.

Journal: Theological Studies

Founded and sponsored by the Society of Jesus in the United States of America, Theological Studies is a Catholic scholarly journal that serves the Church and its mission by promoting a deeper understanding of the Christian faith through the publication of
research in theological disciples. It hopes to make accessible the riches of the theological tradition and to present significant developments in current theology. It is published quarterly in English for an international readership. Celebrating the one year anniversary of *Laudato si’*, this journal dedicated its entire June 2016 edition for the publication of articles that reflect some of that deeper and critical thinking about *Laudato si’* that has been taking place among theologians around the world. This journal also sees itself aligning with Pope Francis’ challenge for interdisciplinary reflection, and as the Editor-in-Chief Paul G. Crowley, S.J., notes in his introductory comments, the fields of biblical scholarship and philosophy, political theory, economics, social theory, the natural sciences, technology, and engineering all play integral roles in the articles in this edition reflecting on the encyclical.

Unlike the authors of *Environmental Humanities*, these authors presumably are working within the same set of doctrines and practices as Pope Francis. Because of this, the six articles in this journal show less of a desire for Pope Francis to work from an entirely different ontology. However, this is not to say that there are not challenges to the encyclical, or liberationist dreams for its implementation. One general observation is that each authors attempt to focus in on one aspect of the text, whether its creaturely

77 All references to this journal will be from *Theological Studies* 77.2 (2016).
redemption, integral ecology, ecological conversion, sublime communion, or responsibility for the future, showing both how this area might be both connected to and different than past theological intuitions and point out what a future vision might look like if the Church and society really heeded its wisdom. I now turn to highlighting some of the main threads from this series of six articles in Theological Studies.

Overall, these articles show a great respect for the text. Given the background of the authors, they are able to zero in on the text’s theological and philosophical underpinnings and are able to astutely make connections from these underpinnings to Pope Francis’ analysis of our environmental problems. They also contextualize his ensuing spiritual and political suggestions for a way forward. The role Pope Francis gives to the technocratic paradigm for our modern crisis is well noted by these authors, and these authors all see the novel and timely wisdom in bringing together care for creation and care for the poor under the umbrella of Catholic Social Teaching.

Many of these authors muse on the ways Laudato si’ stands or does not stand in continuity with the theological tradition of his predecessors. In areas of where these authors sense discontinuity, they attempt to show that Pope Francis is perhaps building upon other legitimately “traditional” streams of scriptural and theological foundations. German archbishop Reinhard Cardinal Marx traces fundamental views of the encyclical back to earlier references to the problems of environment, the need for social and
economic reconstruction, the theology of sin and redemption in relationship to the
cosmos, and the diagnosis of metaphysical and anthropological errors of the modern
world within the work of Popes Leo XIII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict
XVI.\textsuperscript{78} At the same time, Cardinal Marx says that the topic of the “quality of life”
experienced by humanity and the earth has never taken up such a central position in a
social encyclical before \textit{Laudato si’}.\textsuperscript{79} Michael S. Northcott also notes the continuity of the
critique in the text with Benedict XVI’s view found in his major social encyclical \textit{Caritas
in Veritate}. For both Francis and Benedict, superdevelopment, manifested in ecological
destruction, wasteful consumerism, and economic inequalities, is a consequence of a
“practical atheism.”\textsuperscript{80} On the other hand, Northcott’s main goal in this article is to show
that Pope Francis is doing something new in this encyclical, especially in his view of
creaturely redemption. He argues that there seems to be a strong influence of the
evolutionary theology of Theilhard de Chardin and a distinctly cosmic view of
redemption that can be found in the work of St. Irenaeus and St. Basil and later in

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78 See especially Reinhard Cardinal Marx, “‘Everything is connected’: On the Relevance of an
Integral Understanding of Reality in Laudato Si’,” 298-302.
79 Marx, 301. This statement could be debatable given Pope John Paul II’s and Pope Benedict
XVI’s efforts around the “New Evangelization.”
80 Northcott, “Planetary Moral Economy and Creaturely Redemption in Laudato Si’,” 891. See
sections of Benedict XVI’s encyclical \textit{Caritas in Veritate} that deal with development/progress and
technology, 68-77.
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people like Thomas Berry, Leonardo Boff, and within both the Romantic and environmental movements.\textsuperscript{81} He juxtaposes this “affective” and “cosmic” view with one of St. Thomas Aquinas who, in his mind, had a more instrumental view of creation. This cosmic view of creation theme continues with Denis Edwards who attempts to trace the theological roots of Pope Francis’ cosmic and affective view of the natural world. He notes a number of passages from scripture and the thought of spiritual giants like Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure, Augustine, Aquinas, and John of the Cross.\textsuperscript{82}

Finally, author, Daniel P. Castillo, looks at the force of liberation theology steaming through \textit{Laudato si’}, especially its focus on integral ecology and its relationship to the need for revolution of values and political and economic models in order to usher in the fullness of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{83} While liberation theology has had its ups and downs in relationship to orthodox theology, there is no doubt that it is part of our larger tradition, and one that has shaped Pope Francis’ own formation. To read \textit{Laudato si’} through the lens of Gustavo Gutierrez is certainly a fascinating study, but it requires too much bracketing of how the Pope actually aligns himself with his predecessor who had strong

\textsuperscript{81} These are themes at the heart of Michael S. Northcott’s article.
\textsuperscript{82} Denis Edwards, “‘Sublime Communion’: The Theology of the Natural World in Laudato Si’,” 378-391.
\textsuperscript{83} Daniel Castillo’s article, “Integral Ecology as a Liberationist Concept,” highlights resonances of \textit{Laudato si’} with Gustavo Gutierrez’s concepts of liberation.
reservations to the goals of liberation theology. Certainly being in South America for so long, and rooted in the history of base communities role in liberation theology, Pope Francis has been influenced by liberation theology in ways that somebody like Pope Benedict XVI was not. Yet, it is a far cry from making this observation to saying that Gutierrez provides a key to how we should understand the goals of *Laudato si’*. In each of these articles mentioned, we see the authors looking to highlight the continuities and discontinuities with the larger tradition. I believe that this is a helpful for the reader. As we will see, authors of articles in the journal *Communio* that I will review next are less interested in the discontinuities.

Related to the whether there is a liberationist goal of *Laudato si’*, another common theme among the articles in *Theological Studies* is the question of what is the necessary response of the Christian, or the person of good will, to the state of our world. The liberationist view of Castillo sees Pope Francis’ goal in the encyclical as one that pushes the reader to make a clear epistemological break from the status quo, with its structures of developmentism and hegemonic discourses. He acknowledges that Pope Francis is not calling for us to turn to Socialism, like Guiterrez himself did, but he also says that it would be a betrayal of the text’s liberationist thrust to be co-opted by economic and global systems couched in the language of “sustainable development” and are in effect just realignments with injustice and oppression. I resonate with this view that we are
prone to settle for an accommodationist position to the unjust structures of the world. Castillo’s argument, again, is haunting. Just how revolutionary is the Pope’s challenge in *Laudato si’*? And if it is a “revolution,” is it a moral one, a political one, an economic one, a spiritual one? Are they all connected for Pope Francis? How? These are certainly questions at the heart of my investigation in this thesis.

What Gutierrez and Pope Francis no doubt share, as Castillo and others make clear in their articles, is a view that one’s theological anthropology and understanding of how God’s providence works in history shape one’s understanding of salvation. In other words, each of these authors notices that Pope Francis casts the problems of our world today in the context of sin as a rupture of our relationship with God, with others, and with the earth. His articulation of this in *Laudato si’* in Chapter Two is vital, providing the foundation for the rest of the interpretation of what has gone awry and the solutions for a way forward. So many non-theologically trained commentators of this text miss this, or under represent its centrality, to the overall argument Pope Francis is making. The authors of *Environmental Humanities* wanted to replace the Creation story of Genesis with another creation story. However, in the case of the studies in this journal, there is an a priori acceptance of Pope Francis position of the authority of the

84 Castillo, 370.
book of Genesis as a foundational one. Along with this, there a consensus that there must be an epistemological and theological dimension, not just political, to what needs to happen.

Because of this conviction of the importance of the philosophical and theological, we see Cardinal Marx’s ability to grasp Pope Francis’ indictment of progress and the technocratic paradigm through this lens.\(^85\) So too, Richard W. Miller argues in his article that our ability to take “deep responsibility for the deep future” requires that we better see the connections between our theologies of Creation, Christology, and eschatology.\(^86\) And this is what prompts Neil Ormerod and Cristinia Vanin to co-write an interesting piece that interrogates Pope Francis’ notion of “ecological conversion” through the hermeneutic of four kinds of conversions: moral, religious, intellectual, and psychic. They hope that by their consideration of how comprehensive and transformative a conversion is needed “we can become, with God, knowers, co-healers, and lovers of all that exists...in the arduous transition to a more self-transcendent and authentic way of living in relationship with one another, with all of creation, and with God.”\(^87\)

\(^85\) Marx, 298-302.
My view in this thesis shares this conviction of these authors in *Theological Studies* of the Scriptural, philosophical, and theological dimensions to the encyclical and its call for comprehensive conversion necessary to take responsibility for this cultural moment we stand within. It is clear that these theologians are wrestling with the reality of how the Christian, whose sights are ultimately set on another city, must live in the world in the here and now, be concerned about the welfare of future generations, and not be resigned to the world’s injustices, destruction, and meaninglessness. I am wrestling with this same reality in my thesis. *Laudato si’* might in fact need more tweaking by our Church’s teaching office, and her theologians, to explore this more.\(^88\) It is a challenging text, a “wake up call,” as Cardinal Marx says, but it is also chockfull of hope, encouragement, possibilities, and practical recommendations.\(^89\)

**Journal: Communio**

*Communio* is a federation of Roman Catholic theological journals published now in fifteen language editions around the world. As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, *Communio* was founded in 1972 by Catholic theological giants of the 20\(^{th}\) century Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, and Joseph Ratzinger. It stands for the

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\(^{88}\) Denis Edwards observes that there is missing evidence of a theology of the cross as well as the work of some theologians who see themselves delving more deeply into the theology of the incarnation. See 378-380.

\(^{89}\) Marx, 307.
renewal of theology that remains in continuity with the living Christian tradition. The English-language edition of Communio is a quarterly issue that regularly carries articles on philosophy, the arts, and the relationship between Catholicism and American culture. Emphasis is placed on exploring the meaning of John Paul II’s call for a “new evangelization.” Indeed, in every issue of Communio, an effort is made to reestablish the bond between prayer and theological reflection, the loosening of which, the editors believe, lies at the heart of so many contemporary problems. Among scholarly treatments, I find myself in this thesis arguing alongside and referencing the authors (and editors and founders) of the journal Communio. These authors work out of a theological and philosophical tradition that has consistently sought to align itself with the “hermeneutic of continuity” of the Second Vatican Council. This way of reading the text roots me in the aspects of this encyclical that are fresh and timely while remaining in continuity with the whole history of doctrine and praxis from the early Church Fathers to the present day. This Winter 2015 issue is dedicated to the theme of “Integral Ecology,” a key phrase of Pope Francis in Laudato si’. The authors of the articles each attempt to unpack what “Integral Ecology” means in light of the encyclical, the broader Catholic theological tradition, and today’s technocratic moment.

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90 All references to this journal will be Communio: International Catholic Review 42 (2015).
An overall goal among these authors is show that there needs to be a rebirth of the Catholic understanding of “creation as gift” if we are going to be able to recover a true posture of contemplation in our families and households, in our work lives, and in our participation in our economy. These authors clearly understand the ontological dimension to the technocratic paradigm, its ubiquitous feature in our everyday lives, and its presence as an obstacle to seeing Creation from a place of contemplative wonder. Unlike the authors in our previously reviewed journals, these Communio authors have little interest in the ways Pope Francis’ theological intuitions challenge orthodox teaching of the Church. Their approach is neither fixated on the actual environmental degradation of our world nor looking to explore the socio-political solutions to the earth’s cry. For these authors, the metaphysical and theological vision has to be right so that our whole lives can align with this truth. Only in Christ, and in the Church as the sacrament of Jesus Christ, is the full reality of “Real Presence” encountered and true liberation secured for the Communio authors. Again, I share these intuitions. I will now turn to highlighting some key aspects of the articles in this edition.

The map for navigating through these Communio articles can be found in the lead essay by David L. Schindler entitled, “Habits of Presence and the Generosity of
Creation: Ecology in Light of Integral Human Development.”\textsuperscript{91} Here we find the key principles for an adequate Catholic vision of nature as creation, as a generous gift of God who is Creator and Redeemer. Schindler’s entire article is an attempt to argue that this is the overall vision underlying Pope Francis’ \textit{Laudato si’}. I will spell out in detail Schindler’s article and the fundamental principles of this Catholic vision of creation therein because they provide the primary lens through which the rest of the articles in this edition of \textit{Communio} see and interpret Pope Francis’ encyclical. I find Schindler’s argument compelling and will return frequently to its premises throughout my thesis. As we will also see ourselves in the following chapter, Pope Francis is not at all shy in his articulation of this traditional Catholic theology of creation, dedicating a whole chapter of \textit{Laudato si’} to spelling it out in his own words. Through his extensive footnotes filled with references to \textit{Laudato si’}, Schindler proves how integral this theology is for Pope Francis.

\textsuperscript{91} David L. Schindler is Dean Emeritus and Gagnon Professor of Fundamental Theology at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at The Catholic University of America. With some of his first publications going back to the late 1970s and early 80s, his writings and teaching have been immensely important in shaping this \textit{Communio} school of theology in the English speaking world. David L. Schindler, “Habits of Presence and the Generosity of Creation: Ecology In Light of Integral Human Development,” \textit{Communio: International Catholic Review} 42 (2015): 574-593.
The first fundamental principle to this Catholic vision of Creation is the goodness of creation, “Every being is good because it is created. To be created is to be loved into existence by God.” The second principle is that each being, by virtue of its original creation by God and its fundamental goodness, is a gift of presence, a presence that is always primary in the order of knowledge and encounter, and thus necessitates a kind of “letting be” by the one encountering. The third principle is an understanding of the analogy of being where all created beings are understood to be in relationship with each other in a hierarchical way, with human beings uniquely situated atop the hierarchy as embodied spirits and entrusted by God to be stewards of creation. Even though human beings have a special role in this view, all creatures, both human and nonhuman, “bear an innate relation to God and a metaphysical interiority,” and thus are “inherently true and good and worthy of respect.” The role of human beings then is to “deepen and amplify non-human beings’ own inherent giftedness.” This requires both an openness to how each creature participates in the goodness of God and an active “readiness to

92 Schindler, 557.
93 Ibid., 578-579.
94 Ibid., 580.
95 Ibid.
foster the other’s own generosity.” It constantly stirs up in the human being wonder and gratitude.

When human beings do not offer this openness, this reverence for creation’s inherent goodness and truth, and this graciousness and readiness to foster the growth of the thing itself, humanity takes on a “violent” quality. With this understanding of “violence that undermines the original generosity of beings as created,” Schindler brings us to the sin of Adam. Adam’s sin is the original refusal to be a child of God. It is a failure of listening to and acknowledging creation’s original meaning as truth, goodness, and beauty. By casting off this original role and responsibility, human beings are now divided from nature, from each other, and ultimately from God. This violence, this sin of Adam, Schindler argues, is characteristic of our culture’s tendency toward domination and unthinking use and manipulation of nature and its rejection of the original nature of the body and relations between man and woman. Schindler also shows how this “sin of Adam” as a refusal of the original giftedness of creation and a “habit of presence” can be witnessed in the logic of the market economy, the liberalism

96 Ibid., 582.
97 Ibid., 583.
98 Ibid., 584-586. Schindler points out the original meaning as an “unity-in-difference in love.”
99 Ibid., 583-586.
of our democracy, and within modern academy. Ultimately, for him, this is also the root cause of the evident ecological disintegration described in *Laudato si’*.

The solutions to this “sin of Adam,” for Schindler, are not merely technical, “The Church has emphasized consistently in her social teaching that she has no technical solutions of her own to offer in social-economic matters.” Rather, the Church’s main interest, he argues, “is in supporting an understanding of the human being in terms of habits of presence and community, and in criticizing the breakdown in these that is due above all to sin.” The Church offers a distinct vision of creation and the role of human beings in the order of creation, and then she challenges us to read the signs of the times through this vision. This vision expresses “principles for reflection, criteria for judgment, and directives for action.” Schindler is leery of seeing the solution as just a renewed spirituality or stronger moral will in the face of the modern institutions like our market economy or the academy. Instead, he wants to show that the violent logic of sin is inherent to the anthropology and way of life of modern Western liberal societies. Thus, for Schindler, “There will be no integration of human and natural ecology, no

100 Ibid., 588-592.
101 Ibid., 586, with reference to *Gaudium et Spes*, 36, and *Centesimus annus*, 43.
102 Ibid., 587.
103 Ibid.
integral human development, without genuine transformation of these views.”¹⁰⁴ It requires a change of mentality, a conversion, and a new lifestyle rooted in this distinct Catholic vision of life.

Other articles attempt to strengthen this argument. Mary Taylor and Susan Waldstein explore in their articles the distinct Trinitarian aspect of this theological vision of creation and the human person.¹⁰⁵ For them, if our Creator God is understood as a Trinitarian relationship, then all of creation reflects this relational order of goodness and love in different ways and degrees. We receive the gift of creation from the giver with gratitude, and this “logic of gift” then compels us in all our own relations. Taylor argues that this “logic of gift” runs through the entire encyclical, with Pope Francis understanding “Everything as gift – the world, our bodies, our family life, our intelligence, our neighbors, each moment.”¹⁰⁶ To live in sin is to not be able to see this giftedness, to not be able to “read the book” of creation in this contemplative way. The Virgin Mary is lifted up as the model “reader” of the book of creation. She is the one whose responsive “yes” to the angel Gabriel altered the trajectory of man. Waldstein

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 592.
¹⁰⁶ Taylor, 643.
attempts to use the wisdom of St. Thomas of Aquinas and St. Bonaventure to spell out
the ways that we can be more like Mary and read the book of nature in a Trinitarian
register. Can we see the natural order of the hierarchy of beings as an amazing
symphony of Creation from the Creator? If so, we are more likely to stand in awe and
gratitude and look for creative ways to enter into the mystery of God’s goodness.

Michael Hanby’s article “The Gospel of Creation and the Technocratic Paradigm:
Reflections on a Central Teaching of Laudato Si’” situates this vision of Creation within
our own technocratic cultural moment.107 Hanby’s work is important for my
explorations in this thesis. His argument is centered on the fact that today we tend to
view nature not in awe and gratitude of this Catholic vision but rather through a
technocratic lens that presents nature in abstract and materialistic ways. He traces the
history of this technological way of reading the book of nature pointing to key historical
figures like Francis Bacon and Descartes and shows how important it is to recover a
proper ontological view of creation and the human person. I will return to Hanby in
Chapter Three.

There are several other articles in this edition of Communio that attempt to further
juxtapose a life lived from a Catholic vision of Creation with a life lived in a more

technocratic fashion. D. C. Schindler’s article “Work as Contemplation: On the Platonic Notion of Techne” explores the question of how this Catholic vision of creation and humanity come to expression in the way we engage in our work in the world.\textsuperscript{108}

Although \textit{Laudato si’} is only minimally referenced, the article frames this exploration of work in the context of Pope Francis’ own challenge in the encyclical itself, “If we reflect on the proper relationship between human beings and the world around us, we see the need for a correct understanding of work.”\textsuperscript{109} This focus on work is unique among the commentators thus far. D. C. Schindler focuses on how Plato understood \textit{techne} or work as a contemplative activity, namely, a way of receiving and being in touch with the world by coming to some deep and intimate contact with the inner reality of things. He contrasts this view of Plato with his contemporaries the sophists who saw work and knowledge not based in reality itself but in mere appearances and manipulation of feelings and attitudes and things that lack any inherent meaning. Schinder’s argument is that in order to live into this distinct Catholic vision of \textit{Laudato si’} we must rediscover this contemplative dimension to all human activity, “even the most trivial and

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\textsuperscript{109} LS, 125.
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pragmatic of activities.” Patrick Fleming’s article shares this goal of highlighting the implications for this Catholic vision for our everyday lives by investigating the economic implications of integral ecology. An economy rooted in this Catholic vision, he argues, would never lose sight of the larger purpose and goal of Creation as given by the Creator. One would never exclusively measure well-being and success in materialistic terms of profit but would instead include other values that arise by being in relationship with other creatures and places who always embody their own giftedness and meaning. In the last article of journal, Jesse Straight’s reflection about his life on Whiffletree Farm offers a compelling portrait of what this contemplative reading of the book of nature as integral ecology looks like. He tries to let nature be his guide and amplify the goodness of all creatures (animals, customers, and his family) with whom he is in relationship.

Each of these articles in Communio attempts to show that the fundamental vision of creation and human beings is a vision that is in continuity with the larger Catholic vision originating in Scripture, interpreted through Greek philosophy and the work of

110 D. C. Schindler, 613.
the great scholastics of the Church, and communicated to our time through the recent voices of Romano Guardini,\textsuperscript{113} John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. \textit{Laudato si’}, in this view, is not attempting an original or new theological task, but rather it is using a traditional vision to critique our current cultural moment and making it relevant for today’s Christian disciple. I share this fundament thrust of the \textit{Communio} school of theology. However, I am also aware that their perspective forces them to downplay some distinct features of Pope Francis’ theological interpretative lens as seen in \textit{Laudato si} and his other writings, for example, his integration of liberation theology, his reliance on so much of the teachings from a variety of disparate Episcopal conferences and even non-Catholic sources, and the wisdom/mystical tradition of St. Francis and St. Bonaventure. Also, Pope Francis dedicates a whole chapter of his encyclical to particular governmental, economic, and political solutions to our environmental problems. Perhaps none of this takes away the fundamental perspective of the \textit{Communio} authors, but its absence from their engagement makes it oddly lacking a comprehensive quality.

\textsuperscript{113} Christine Myers’ article in this edition of \textit{Communio}, “Seeing with Christ in a Culture of Power,” is a fascinating exploration of Romano Guardini’s work in light of this vision of nature as gift and the need for this Catholic worldview in a technocratic culture. This edition of \textit{Communio} also reprinted one of Guardini’s essays on creation called “Created by God.” Pope Francis was very much influenced by the thought of Guardini, as was Benedict XVI. This emphasis on Guardini highlights the continuity of the theological dimension of \textit{Laudato si’}.
III. Conclusion

It is clear from this review of the reception of *Laudato si’* that nearly everyone sees this encyclical as incredibly well-timed, relevant to our world’s problems, and ultimately inspiring some kind of transformation for how we live. I share this view. It is also evident that there is much jockeying among the many commentators for identifying the main thrusts of Pope Francis’ text, its historical and theological roots, and the concrete implications of its intuitions and suggestions. Not all are in agreement as to Pope Francis’ main foci and proposals for change. As is the case in any interpretative endeavor, where one places the emphasis often reflects the temperament and goals of the one doing the interpretation itself. I hope this kind of dynamic interpretative reading of the text continues. As people engage, the text remains alive and actively part of the conversation, and in due course challenges to the audience to surrender to its themes.114

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114 While I did not offer full reviews of recent book length engagements of the encyclical, there are a number of them beginning to emerge. See as examples: John B. Cobb, Jr. and Ignacio Castuera, eds., *For Our Common Home: Process-Relational Responses to Laudato si’* (Anoka, MN: Process Century Press, 2015), Kevin W. Irwin, *A Commentary on Laudato si’: Examining the Background, Contributions, Implementation, and Future of Pope Francis’s Encyclical* (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), and *On Care for our Common Home: Laudato si’*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016) that includes a lengthy commentary by eco-theologian Sean McDonagh. Again, each of these offers different bent to interpretation and critique, from the perspective of process theology, historical and sacramental theology, and then environmentalism. As mentioned before, my review here only engages the reception among the English-speaking world. It is
I attempted in this chapter to lay out some of the main features of the perspectives of those who most actively engaged the text. I resonate most with the following:

- Pope Francis’ insistence of the metaphysical meaning and value inherent in nature with its compelling vision of Creation;
- The importance of being able to “read the book of nature” in contemplative, relational, Trinitarian, and Christological terms;
- The presence, power, and effects of technology and its technocratic paradigm, and the long and morally ambiguous history of this technocratic paradigm in our engagement with nature;
- The challenge offered to people of goodwill to take up action in resistance to this technocratic moment by taking greater responsibility for the gift of life in how we live our everyday lives;

possible that the reception and interpretation of this text would look quite different in other parts of the world. Pope Francis primary audience seems to be to the Church and to people within western, affluent countries. In situations where the environmental situation looks bleaker, or where the philosophical history of technology and science follows a different unfolding, or where violence and poverty are more normative, it natural that this text would have a divergent trajectory than the one I am following.
• The role of the Church and parish life to help people live this prophetic lifestyle rooted in contemplative, ecclesial-centered practices;

• The interdisciplinary, holistic, integral approach of Pope Francis in seeing the problem and offering solutions.

From within this active conversation, I look to offer my own contribution in the following commentary on the encyclical in the next chapters. I do not want to see this text swept under the rug. I also do not want the challenging chapter on the technocratic paradigm get lost in the conversation. The Church’s active engagement of these themes is vital. I want this thesis to push the conversation further to emphasize both its continuity to the tradition and its incredible prophetic potential for living a life of meaning and purpose in today’s world.
CHAPTER TWO: *LAUDATO SI’ AND THE TECHNOCRATIC PARADIGM*

As the previous chapter’s review of the reception of Pope Francis’ *Laudato si’* indicates, there are many approaches to its interpretation and application. I pointed out the stress points in that review where I find myself most drawn. My perspective aligns most with Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, who, in a speech introducing *Laudato si’* to the United Nations in June 2015, said that Pope Francis did not set out to write an encyclical on climate change or an anti-business encyclical or an anti-modern encyclical or a political encyclical, but the purpose was to link human and natural ecology based on a contemplative, prayerful attitude toward creation.\(^{115}\) Where Turkson uses the word “attitude,” I will use the words “worldview” and “paradigm.” All of these words suggest that it is about our posture to the world, how we see and interpret what it is. In sum, my commentary in this chapter will juxtapose this contemplative, prayerful attitude toward creation – what I call a “Christian Worldview” – and the way of looking at the world that Pope Francis calls the “technocratic paradigm.” As I noted at the end of the last chapter, persuaded by the *Communio* authors, I believe the ontological questions are of ultimate importance.

I will argue that for Pope Francis the crux of the matter is about getting our view of the world right, or echoing my image from the Introduction, learning to “read the waters.”

As I mentioned in my introduction, the voice of Romano Guardini will feature prominently in this commentary. Guardini is Pope Francis’ main interlocutor in the key sections of *Laudato si’* that have to do with the technocratic paradigm. I will pull from Guardini’s body of work, especially the works that directly address modernity, the technological paradigm, and the Christian worldview. I will do this primarily in the context of the footnotes of this chapter. I now turn to a commentary on *Laudato si’*.

I. The Christian Worldview

Our view of the world – our way of organizing and interpreting what we perceive – begins early in life and is shaped by our accumulated psychological, social, and cultural experiences. To some degree, who we are and how we see the world arise from some kind of innate qualities, but on the whole, we take cues about interpreting the world from those who matter most to us and the culture we call home. We then shape and reshape our framework as we confront new people and have new experiences. Through this dynamic process, we develop norms, values, and perspectives. We discover how to make sense of our neighbor, understand our role in the community, and fight evil. We learn how to love, how to grieve, and how to hope in something beyond. Our view of nature and our understanding of our relationship with
it are also formed in this way. This process of socialization is integral for us to feel at home in the world and is thus part and parcel to the development of any person and culture. Once our framework is in place, and we find comfort in how we simplify, organize, and integrate the world around us, we do not often or very easily alter our frames of reference. To experience our framework as inadequate or threatened is to feel the foundation of our lives being questioned. Even though we cannot live in a bubble, most of us go through life protecting our frameworks.\textsuperscript{116}

Even though this framework for seeing the world sounds like an overly cognitive exercise, we tend to feel our way around the world more than think our way through it. Knowing this, we might think about our worldviews more a matter of the imagination that includes our bodies and our hearts than just an exercise of the intellect. How we live as Christians then is less about erecting an edifice of Christian knowledge from our armchairs than a matter of developing a Christian know-how that intuitively “understands” the world in the light of the fullness of the gospel. This echoes my reference in my Introduction to Norman and Paul in how they learned the art of fly-fishing. Reading the water is not something learned by reading about fishing in a book, 

\textsuperscript{116} The work of James K.A. Smith has been helpful in this articulation of the formation of our worldviews, especially as it relates to our Christian imaginations. See Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).
although it is part of it perhaps, but rather it is more about an immersion in the water and an apprenticeship in being, in imagining, in feeling, in desiring. This requires that one get out in the water with a fishing rod in hand and get a feel of it under one’s belt. In doing this, the art gets absorbed into one’s body. As people have argued, how we see the world and “read the waters” and “feel” our way through our days are shaped by our embodied immersions in our own culture. The symbols, rituals, and stories at the heart of the culture we live in are like the “waters” that form our desires and thus our actions. James K.A. Smith calls these “cultural liturgies.” For most of us, this whole process of being formed and reformed is an unconscious process. We stand in the waters of our culture largely unaware of the formative power of our wider culture. However, as Smith helps us see, how we view the world and live our lives take a particular shape by virtue of these cultural liturgies that we participate in. Smith writes:

If education is primarily formation—and more specifically, the formation of our desires—then that means education is happening all over the place (for good or ill). Education as formation isn’t the sort of thing that stays neatly within the walls of the school or college or university. If education is about formation, then we need to be attentive to all the formative work that is happening outside the university: in homes and at the mall; in football stadiums and at Fourth of July parades; in worship and at work.117

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117 Ibid., 19.
In this view, there is no place we can go that is not forming us in some kind of worldview, developing our desires to love certain things and act certain ways. Whether shopping in a mall, attending a music festival, or going to church, our participation in these cultural institutions, each with their own set of liturgical stories and rituals, develop our imaginations, desires, and ultimately our actions for how we see and live in the world. These liturgies shape our identities and give order to how we live in the world. Liturgies make us certain kind of people and define what we love. In short, he writes, “Every liturgy constitutes a pedagogy that teaches us, in all sorts of precognitive ways, to be a certain kind of person.”¹¹₈ Who we are, how we see the world – our worldview – comes from this lifestyle of liturgical formation.

This process of being formed to see the world in certain ways is a familiar one in Scripture itself. St. Paul, for example, in his ministry to the community of Corinth, attempts to use a Christ-shaped imagination to form a people who have yet to be fully socialized in a Christian framework for seeing the world. They have yet to develop the “know-how” of discipleship given their peculiar social problems in Corinth. Pope Francis is doing the same thing in *Laudato si’*. Parsing the wisdom from our Christian tradition and applying it in a practical reasoned way is what social encyclicals are all

¹¹₈ Ibid., 25.
about. In *Laudato si’*’s Chapter Two and Six, Pope Francis unpacks what informs this Christian imagination, all of its primary stories, touch points, symbols, rituals, and mystical wisdom. He points to particular scripture passages, Christian saints, and theological traditions and practices.\textsuperscript{119} We are all formed in a myriad of cultural liturgies. This is an important insight in being able to be more discerning in how we navigate this cultural moment we live in, with its technological shape. Pope Francis acknowledges that there are other valid ways of looking at the world, and he spends an entire chapter about a technocratic paradigm, but he ultimately wants the Christian to enter the dialogue confident that the imagination shaped by one’s faith has something important to contribute.\textsuperscript{120} I will now describe this Christian worldview that Pope Francis attempts to articulate.

\textsuperscript{119} Guardini notes that for medieval religious man Divine Revelation was the “absolute fulcrum” of one’s worldview. Through scripture, its rituals, and its teachings, the Church offered a vision of life that was “vast and liberating in scope” where “all the orders of society were marshaled around these fixed centers of authority” and the “whole rhythm of life pointed to those centers.” See *The End of the Modern World*, 13-17.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 64. The question of how the Christian, with his or her particularly distinct worldview, enters into constructive dialogue and common action with others that do not share the same worldview is an important topic. Although he argues convincingly for a Christian worldview as an antidote to our technocratic paradigm, he also suggests that dialogue and common action with others is required by the Christian to address the problems of the world. For the sake of peace, social justice, dignity of the humanity, care of creation, the common good, and moral values, the Church has consistently taught that we must move beyond quarrels and make efforts at mutual understanding and common action.
Pope Francis begins to lay out this Christian worldview in Chapter Two with the stories of Scripture, especially the book of Genesis. There, one learns that in the beginning all of creation was created out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, and given an inherent law, rhythm, order, and purpose to its unfolding. It was brought forth with an immense love and bestowed with an inherent goodness. We read in Genesis that God looked upon all that God had made and found it good. We hear that each human person was conceived in the heart of the Creator and uniquely made in the image and likeness of God. We poured forth from God’s bosom, and our destiny is to return to God.

Moreover, we are told that humanity is formed out of the “dust of the earth” itself and mandated by the loving Creator “to till and to keep” the earth. We are not God, but the human person, nevertheless, is endowed with a kind of analogous divinity to God, a unique capacity for intelligence and self-giving love and a responsibility to care for the gift of creation itself. For Pope Francis, these creation stories bespeak an immense dignity on all that exists, especially the human person. To be formed in these stories is to already hear some important aspects of creation as good and order and our own dignity wrapped up in our vocation to be stewards of God’s gifts. A Christian worldview would require us to see the world in this fashion.

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121 LS, 65.
As the tradition comes to understand God in a Trinitarian key, we come to know the relational quality of God, and thus the relational truth of all of creation and of our own lives. Through this, Pope Francis sees human life grounded in three fundamental relationships: with God, with our neighbor, and with the earth itself. Because of this relationality at the heart of creation, in some way, we are connected to everything, and each thing is interrelated to each other thing. This interconnectivity of all things is one of Pope Francis’ major themes in this encyclical. He believes scripture bears witness to this truth. He writes, “These ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others.” Creation is one big beckoning of universal communion: “Creation is of the order of love. God’s love is the fundamental moving force in all created things.”

Our human vocation therefore is understood as a call to see and understand the inherent relational order and purpose of creation, and through love, care, and stewardship, to nurture and share in the on-going unfolding of self-giving love that

122 Ibid., 238-240.
123 Ibid., 70.
124 Ibid., 77.
God poured forth in his first act of creation. “This responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world.”125 Because this responsibility given to humanity to see the world in this way and be stewards of the equilibria of our interrelated creation is of such immense importance, we must take seriously our call to “devise intelligent ways of directing, developing, and limiting our power.”126 We can take from the bounty of the earth what we need for subsistence and use our creativity to work with the wisdom within creation, but we have the duty to protect the earth to ensure its fruitfulness for future generations.127 We also need to be sure that everyone on earth—all of creation—benefits from this shared inheritance.128

It is also true that in the order of creation, God began an unfolding, but the work of creation continues through our actions and creative power. The Pope writes, “The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge.”129 New things emerge from our hands. There is an immense power and responsibility in this creativity, but as stewards, we are

125 Ibid., 68.
126 Ibid., 78.
127 Ibid., 67.
128 Ibid., 93.
129 Ibid., 80.
called to “respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things.” Referencing St. Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis highlights how we must always assure that the goods of creation serve the general purpose God gave them and benefits everyone. Our role is to always see God’s good gifts, expand these goods of creation for the good of all, and invite those who are left out into God’s bounty. In this register, the Pope’s social justice bent emerges. Pope Francis points to many passages in Scripture where the response of the human heart to this all-powerful and all-loving God through our relationship with his created order is not one of hoarding, absolute ownership, disrespect, or indifference but rather one of awe, humility, gratitude, respect, wonder, praise, adoration, trust, and hope.

One of the messages that the Pope returns to over and over is that we are interdependent with all of creation; no one is an entirely self-sufficient message unto itself. We need each other, complete each other, each sharing a message of the Creator with others. Each thing is a gift “from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal

130 Ibid., 69, quoting the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 339.
131 Ibid., 93.
132 Ibid., 94-95.
133 Ibid., 72-75.
134 Ibid., 86.
In this way, through “reading” our unseen bonds, we form a “universal family, a sublime communion, which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.” It is being able to see this deep communion within our created order that stirs our hearts, forms us in tender compassion and concern for all our fellow created beings. We were made to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor and have compassion. We see that if any one thing in creation suffers, we all suffer.

To speak of creation in this relational way for Pope Francis is natural because of his Christian worldview. Central is the Christian understanding of God as Trinity. The Church speaks about creation in such a way that it is marked at its core by goodness, harmony, order, and the relationality of its triune Creator. Many theologians have expounded on this Trinitarian theology of the Church. Pope Francis himself references the Franciscan “Seraphic Doctor” St. Bonaventure. He says that this saint teaches us that “each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure, so real that it could be readily contemplated if only the human gaze were not so partial, dark and fragile.”

As contemporary Bonaventure scholar and Franciscan Ilia Delio points out, Bonaventure used two similar images to describe how creation speaks God’s Word:

135 Ibid., 76.
136 Ibid., 89.
137 Ibid., 91.
138 Ibid., 239.
mirror and book. Creation reflects the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Trinity precisely by the way things express themselves. As we “read the waters,” we see a trace (Bonaventure’s word “vestige”) of the Trinity in all things. We see the Trinity being the origin of its being, the reason for its existence, and the end for which it is destined. St. Bonaventure also sees a unique way that humanity reflects the image of Trinity in its capacity to receive and be responsive to the divine gifts as a child of God. Some humans are so conformed to God by grace, says St. Bonaventure, that the bear a likeness, a similitude to God.\(^{139}\)

If we could read the book of creation in such a Trinitarian key, Pope Francis says we would marvel at all the connections among creatures and even discover a key to our own fulfillment. We come to know that through our reading, everything is “imbued with his radiant presence.”\(^{140}\) Through our immersive listening, we discover the “teaching which God wishes to hand on to us.”\(^{141}\) We hear a message and learn to see ourselves in relationship to these messages, to the entirety of God’s plan. To the extent we realize this and live this out in the world (in solidarity with others and in interrelationship with nature), we are becoming, through grace, like God.


\(^{140}\) LS, 100.

\(^{141}\) Ibid., 85.
There is another dimension to the biblically rooted Christian worldview, and that is the role of sin and redemption. Pope Francis, early in his account of this worldview in Chapter Two, names this brokenness, this rupture, this violent turning from our original communion, our unique blessing and destiny given by God. The three fundamental relationships between us and God, our neighbor, and the earth itself are now, through sin, in distortion and conflict. “The harmony between the Creator, humanity, and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations.” 142 What was once in a harmonious state of communion is now disrupted “by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations.” 143 If the biblical worldview suggests that we ideally should see an inherent order to reality with the goal being that we should live in relational attunement with this wisdom and the possibilities offered by the things themselves, then the rupture of sin has put before us a breach with reality itself. Rather than assuming this responsibility to be steward, we act as if we are the Creator where we are free to do whatever we wish, extract everything possible without limit or restraint, fail to recognize the interrelationship between our choices and anything else, and see everything as a confrontation of competitors.

142 Ibid., 66.
143 Ibid.
Right at the beginning of the encyclical, Pope Francis wastes no time getting to his point about the role of sin: “We have come to see ourselves as her (the earth’s) lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will... We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth.” 144 This quick opening description of our current state is familiar language for someone steeped in a scriptural imagination. This imagination knows sin as a kind of forgetting of who we are and thus a state of thinking of ourselves more highly than we are, feeling entitled to do whatever we want, even to the point of rejecting our “mother” and bringing violence to our own, and forgetting both our natural limits and interdependence on others. In this same early paragraph, Pope Francis zeros in on the root problem, this nasty infecting and wounding virus, and its relation to everything else: “The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life (emphasis my own).” 145 Everything, everyone, everywhere, is affected by the virus of sin; we are all carrying symptoms. We are all broken, sick, and in need of healing.

The language of sin haunts this entire encyclical. He spends his entire first chapter on a frank look at the symptoms of what is happening in our world so that the

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144 Ibid, 2.
145 Ibid.
reader might “become painfully aware” of the suffering caused by sin.\textsuperscript{146} He describes a variety of forms of pollution, increasing deforestation, a disturbing warming of the climate, depletion of natural resources (especially quality drinking water), loss of biodiversity, the decline of quality of human life and relationships, and the global inequality gap between the poor and the rich.\textsuperscript{147} We live in a “throwaway culture,” he says, where “the earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.”\textsuperscript{148} Pope Francis names the many ways this original sin of Adam manifests itself today in “wars, various forms of violence and abuse, the abandonment of the most vulnerable, and attacks on nature.”\textsuperscript{149} Sin is about disordered desires, rejection of limits, conflictual relationships, and misuse of power and responsibility.

If sin marks us and creation in such a way, the most important piece of the Christian worldview is that God so loved us that he became flesh in Jesus Christ to save us from sin and death and reconcile all of creation. Through Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, and our baptism into this mystery, we have been given a pathway through sin and death to life. Pope Francis quotes Paul’s letter to the Colossians, “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, 20-52.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 21-22.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\end{quote}
things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:19-20, NABRE). St. Bonaventure has a particularly beautiful way of saying how the book of creation was initially intended by God to be read by all people, but because of sin, this book became unintelligible. Our gaze became “partial, dark, and fragile.” Clouded by sin, we walked in darkness and needed illumination. In this vein, Bonaventure understood the divine Word becoming flesh and opening up for us a medium through which to read again the truth of reality. It is Christ then that offers the lens through which to see our world and our lives. Through Christ, our eyes are opened, healed, enlightened. God holds all of creation together, and through grace, God directs us home in Christ. We journey through this land, still seeking the fullness of God and sharing Christ’s call to make all things new. We know that only in the end will “find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe.” Until then, we know that as “human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, we are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator.”

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150 Ibid., 239.
151 Ibid., 99, 100.
152 Ibid., 243-245.
153 Ibid., 243.
154 Ibid., 83.
This is our Christian worldview as articulated by Pope Francis in *Laudato si’*. This is the mystery of our faith, the vision that guides the members who claim the Church and Christ. For Pope Francis, the articulation of this way of looking at creation, human responsibility, and the story of sin and redemption has a purpose. It is, I argue, to show the sinful state of our common home. The state of our world is a far cry from our original blessing, destiny, and vocation as laid out in the “Gospel of Creation” by Pope Francis. Without embracing this Christian worldview of who we are, who God is, what creation is, and the redemption offered in Christ and the Church, how will we ever return to a place of balance, trust, humility, limits, love, and responsibility? My argument in this chapter has been that *Laudato si’* should be read as an apologetic for a Christian worldview, a vision of the world, of God, and of the human person that is rooted in the giftedness and meaning of the created order, the interconnectivity between all being, and the human capacity responsibility to know and live out the truth of creation in a contemplative posture of gratitude and love.

II. The Technocratic Paradigm

We now turn to Pope Francis’ chapter in *Laudato si’* that accounts for the historical loss of this integral Christian vision of the world and the sinful consequences connected to this loss that mark our particular historical moment. Pope Francis opens up Chapter Three this way, “A certain way of understanding human life and activity has gone
awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us." Pope Francis calls this now dominant off-kilter worldview “technocratic.” Our goal here is to understand what Pope Francis means by this technocratic way of seeing the world and to fully grasp its consequences.

Pope Francis sees a dark side to the last two hundred years. In his view, the Christian worldview, based on a long tradition of a particular metaphysics and anthropology, has collapsed into something reductionistic and materialistic. As he describes it, the problem is the way that humanity now sees the world and its role through an “undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm.” He calls it a paradigm to emphasize that it is a way of seeing things, as if it were like a pair of glasses we might put on that would inevitably color what we see and how we interpret it.

Because of the importance of understanding what Pope Francis means by this, it is worth quoting the pertinent passage in full that describes the technocratic paradigm:

This paradigm exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object.

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155 Ibid., 101.
156 There is a long line of theorists on technology and modernity, so it is hard to trace Pope Francis’ use of this word “technocratic.” Given Guardini’s influence, we can certainly point to Guardini’s reference to “technics,” “technological man,” and “technocracy” in The End of the Modern World. See 55, “This shifting relationship manifests itself undefined in the striking complex of knowledge, theory, skill and mode of production summed up in the term ‘technics,’ that is in technology.”
157 LS, 106.
This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation. It is as if the subject were to find itself in the presence of something formless, completely open to manipulation. Men and women have constantly intervened in nature, but for a long time this meant being in tune with and respecting the possibilities offered by the things themselves. It was a matter of receiving what nature itself allowed, as if from its own hand. Now, by contrast, we are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us.\(^{158}\)

Pope Francis indicates here that the very method of “reading the waters” before us in the modern moment is handicapped by a method that is rational and logical but also materialistic and reductionistic. Through this set of technocratic lenses, one no longer sees coherence, interconnections, unity, inherent meaning, or an a priori order. This technocratic paradigm, instead, sees reality in a way that cannot acknowledge, respect, and reverence – even believe in – any meaning and order inherent to the object that is being apprehended.\(^{159}\) When one sees the world through this technocratic paradigm, one is therefore no longer “in tune” in a relational way with the “possibilities offered by

\(^{158}\) Ibid., 106.

\(^{159}\) Guardini writes in *The End of the Modern World*, “Man’s relations with nature have been altered radically, have become indirect. The old immediateness has been lost, for now his relations are transmitted by mathematics or by instruments. Abstract and formalized, nature has lost all concreteness; having become inorganic and technical, it has lost the quality of real experience,” 69.
the things themselves.”¹⁶⁰ We are now increasingly alienated from experiencing nature as it is.¹⁶¹ The subject doing the seeing is then exalted as the sole executor of meaning. This echoes the famous aphorism of the pre-Socratic philosopher Protagoras, “Man is the measure of all things.” Our exclusive vision of the world is all that matters. We are now the judge of all things. With the subject seeing the world in this fashion and exalted above all things, there remains no limit to what is possible, to what can be created and manipulated in the name of science and technology, and for the sake of progress. On the one hand, this feels exhilarating, empowering, even freeing to the subject. But rather than a friendly or connatural correspondence between subject and object, the technocratic paradigm, in Pope Francis’ view, pits the subject against the object in a

¹⁶⁰ LS, 106.
¹⁶¹ Guardini uses an interesting juxtaposition of phrases to describe different ways we experience nature. When we experience it in immediate ways, like the blooming of a flower or an ocean breeze, he calls it “natural nature.” But when we are separated from experiencing nature in this immediate way, like when its mediated through technology, he calls it “not-natural nature.” In this way, he’s arguing that technology “destroys nature in its primitive originality.” See The End of the Modern World, 72. This is also a guiding theme in Letters from Lake Como where Guardini sees the Italian countryside transitioning from a more “organic” way of seeing and living in nature to a more “artificial” and “abstract” way. He is wrestling with what he sees, whether it is good or bad, how it dovetails with his understanding of the Christian worldview, and how to understand the nature and naturalness of progress. He writes in the eighth letter entitled the “Dissolution of the Organic” about an older world where human creativity still seemed to be aligned with nature in a natural way, “Ancient creativity of all kinds left things very close to nature. It is as if natural forces could still flow unchecked through them, as if things were only partially taken out of nature, as if in what is most important they were still rooted in nature, as if they were lifted out and then the hand caused them to sink back into the basic nexus,” 67.
confrontational manner and leaves the all-powerful subject fighting for dominance with both the objects themselves and other all-powerful subjects. For now, a working summary definition of this technocratic paradigm is the following: a self-referential and overly exalted subject, an object without any preexisting meaning or order or connection to other things, and a confrontational and materialistic epistemology that in itself contains the primary goal of possession, mastery, and transformation.

It is important to acknowledge, as Pope Francis does, that we are beneficiaries of the massive and rapid technological change of the last two hundred years. The Church has always understood human making, human work, and human stewardship of creation to be an intrinsic consequence of being made in the image of God and our God-given vocation to “till and keep dominion.” In this case, Pope Francis, echoing his predecessor Pope John Paul II, believes that science and technology, when one is rooted in this integral Christian worldview, offer an esteemed way by which we live into our noble vocation to participate responsibly in God’s creative action.\(^{162}\) He writes,

\(^{162}\) Ibid., 131. Guardini, following the work of others, suggests that it is Christianity itself that has made science and technology possible in the first place. The argument goes like this in Letters from Lake Como, 81-82: Only those who understood their dignity to come from God and thus understood themselves to be radically different from the world around them could have broken free from the tie to nature. The scriptural imagination that speaks of a vocation to dominion and responsibility for a better the world would is able to dream of progress through the mastery and use of technology.
“Developing the created world in a prudent way is the best way of caring for it.”\textsuperscript{163} And even stronger, “Human creativity cannot be suppressed.”\textsuperscript{164} There is no denying then that technology as such has improved the quality of life over the last two hundred years. It has made new medicines, brought forth new communication tools, and made normal engineering feats like aircrafts. Technology is a kind of art that can create a certain beauty that elevates the soul. Thus, Pope Francis says we should embrace our technological role as stewards of creation, and be both thankful about what we have inherited from the past and excited about the possibilities of the future.\textsuperscript{165}

That being said, this entire encyclical suggests that we have blessed progress without acknowledging its shadow side.\textsuperscript{166} We have embraced the role of dominion without keeping our Christian view of the world as ordered with a relationality and already redeemed goodness. My argument is that Pope Francis has this more sober

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 131.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 102.
\textsuperscript{166} This sentiment is found in Guardini in \textit{The End of the Modern World}, “The modern era was fond of justifying technology and rested its defense upon the argument that technology promoted the well-being of man. In doing so it masked the destructive effects of a ruthless system. I do not believe that the age to come will rest with such an argument,” 56. In \textit{Letters from Lake Como}, right after suggesting that the Christian worldview itself is responsible for technological progress, Guardini says, “The forces have broken free from the hands of living personalities. Or should we say that the latter could not hold them and let them go free? These forces have thus fallen victim to the demonism of number, machine, and the will of domination,” 82.
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account because of his Christian imagination with its strong sense of the truth of a traditional Christian worldview which includes an understanding of the pervasive power of sin and the redemption offered in Christ.

As he articulates throughout the encyclical, especially explicit in Chapter One, the state of our common home is not doing so well. We operate from this technocratic worldview that is diametrically opposed to a Christian integral one. In fact, his whole argument about our current cultural technocratic moment is haunted by his understanding of sin as a break in the fundamental relationships of humanity and nature, our neighbor, and God. Sin, as we have said, is all about disordered desires, misuse of power and responsibility, inability to see truthfully, and conflictual relationships. This has caused and is causing all kinds of problems. While there are many arguments put forth by economists that technological and material progress has indeed benefited all people, even fixing some of the problems it creates, Pope Francis seems much more cautious to embrace progress and capitalism as manifestations of the beneficent hand of God. Chapter Three of the encyclical is therefore a crucial one for understanding this entire encyclical. As we have seen, it is often ignored, misunderstood, or dismissed by critics. Doing this, however, we miss Pope Francis main point about the importance of worldviews and Christological dimension to path forward to a healing of our relationships with nature, neighbor, and God. With the
working definition of the technocratic paradigm, I will now turn to showing how Pope Francis spells out the many ways this paradigm functions in our cultural moment. The problematic implications of this paradigm are many in Pope Francis’ view.

First off, Pope Francis makes a bold statement that the technological products that we might think are merely neutral instruments for our use are in fact not so benign and may even be part of the way we are trapped into the paradigm. He says, “We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups.”

Echoing Guardini, Pope Francis sees our common and casual use of technological products has created a very different kind of person, one more accustomed to and even welcoming of laws of standardization, abstraction, and materialism.

167 LS, 107, 114.
168 Guardini writes in *The End of the Modern World*, “The rise of technology is creating a radically different sociological type and attitude. The new man finds the ideal of the self-made and creative personality inimical; he refuses to grant that the autonomous subject is the measure of human perfection. Sharpest evidence for the denial of the older idea of personality comes with that human type – who stands at the extreme pole from the autonomous – the Mass Man,” 58. In *Letters from Lake Como*, he muses on how in this world of standardization and unlimited production, “Everything that has a personal soul, all individually development creativity, will basically end,” 58. It does not mince words in describing its vulgarity, incessant noise, its surrender to kitsch, and its showiness and trashiness, 59-63.
Pope Francis rebels against the way this technocratic paradigm and the products it creates “tend to absorb everything into its ironclad logic” and “shape the lives of individuals and the workings of society.”\textsuperscript{169} There is seemingly, in his mind, hardly a way out of its clutch. Its power is so pervasive and ostensibly globalizing that to see technology and its products as mere instruments in service of another (higher) set of values and to understand this technocratic paradigm as just one of many ways of looking at the world are “nowadays inconceivable.”\textsuperscript{170} Thus, without a limiting context, higher set of values or goals, or sound ethics, what can stop the powerful “ironclad logic” internal to the paradigm? It is as if this technocratic paradigm is the sole way we can make decisions about what we are to do or be as individuals or as a society. Every decision is judged on how well we live into the materialistic and reductionistic logic of this paradigm.

This raises the questions of who is in charge of this technocratic paradigm, who shapes its contours and path, who benefits from it power, and how does the censure against other paradigms get enforced. Although there are many indirect references in

\textsuperscript{169} LS, 107, 108. Guardini writes in \textit{The End of the Modern World}, “The man engaged today in the labor of ‘technics’ knows full well that technology moves forward in final analysis neither for profit nor for the well-being of the race. He know in the most radical sense of the term that power is its motive – a lordship of all; that man seizes hold of the naked elements of both nature and human nature,” 56.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 108.
the encyclical to the necessary leadership and responsibility of world political leaders, business leaders, and the scientific community, Pope Francis does not explicitly answer these questions. The ultimate question he wants us to consider is whether we are personally really free to live into the God-given identity and vocation we have.\textsuperscript{171} This question of how free we are within this ironclad paradigm is an alarming question but one that is realistic given how our economic and political lives are so dominated by this paradigm. It is nearly impossible to find a space untouched by the paradigm’s power and the products it pushes out in our everyday lives.

With the powerful grip of this paradigm, it is also generally accepted that the logic and the products of this technocratic paradigm will eventually solve every problem of our world. There is almost blind faith in what is thought to be the natural beneficence of technology, and the progress it will eventually bring. Our faith in technology and progress encourages us to assume that technology can fix problems generated by our use of technology and that all that is needed is more or better technology. It is a compulsion that has no ending: the solution to every problem

\textsuperscript{171} For Guardini, this question of freedom is central. Man is only truly a “person” when he is free, when his inner freedom and strength of character can allow him to choose his path in relationship with God. The Mass Man, he argues, cannot do this. See The End of the Modern World, 58-68.
requires a massive infusion of technology, that then creates new problems that require more new technology. Thus, we seem trapped within this technocratic framework.

Some have suggested that in this way technology functions in our society like religion or God. Pope Francis echoes this sentiment, “Life gradually becomes a surrender to situations conditioned by technology, itself viewed as the principal key to the meaning of existence.” Pope Francis comments on a similar surrender humanity makes when we cast off our sense of responsibility and put all of our trust in an invisible hand of the market and the government (with its technocrats) to guide us and make decisions on our behalf. If this paradigm takes on this overarching meaning system like a religion, then it is natural that all other religious paradigms that offer a lens through which to see our world will be seen as threats and obstacles to be avoided or torn down. Especially if other paradigms do not lead to profit or greater power for the subject, what need does this technocratic god need for it.

One might argue that Pope Francis himself is unable to entirely break free of the divine rule of the technocratic logic, that he attempts to offer his own set of technical solutions to our cultural and environmental problems in this encyclical. This would be to miss the point though. He, like his predecessors and the entire Catholic Social

172 LS, 110.
173 Ibid., 109, 123.
Teaching tradition, do not worship the gods of technologic progress. “By itself the market cannot guarantee integral development and social inclusion,” he adamantly says.\(^{174}\) The Church’s voice is less in technical solutions and more in supporting an understanding of the human being and of creation. The Church is about calling people to worship. Ultimately, for Pope Francis, this technocratic paradigm is materialistic and reductionistic, and its ironclad logic functions in a way that will never be the source and summit of our salvation. When we lock God or any sense of the transcendence or higher values out from our framework of seeing the world, we are left in a kind of flat and stifling materialism. He is unwavering that this technocratic religion then leaves us not “saved” as human beings but “diminished”: less conscious, less free, less creative, and less able to make sound and ethical decisions.\(^{175}\)

A related problematic aspect to this technocratic paradigm is how when we see the world through this ironclad perspective we tend to lose perspective and values things differently.\(^{176}\) Pope Francis names a number of aspects to this. For one, inherent to its logic is a preference to specialization and fragmented knowledge. Pope Francis sees this leading to a kind of ignorance when we cannot integrate knowledge into a

\(^{174}\) Ibid., 109.

\(^{175}\) Ibid., 107, 108.

\(^{176}\) Ibid., 110.
broader context or see a bigger picture for what we are doing or thinking.\textsuperscript{177} We can no longer see the larger picture because we are so fragmented, so isolated, so exalted and stuck in our own perspective and our own elevated needs. The world is complex yet whole and interconnected, and although more and more science is confirming this, the way we continue to analyze the world and make decisions – from the global to the local level – do not take this truth into account. The paradigm’s inability to see the interconnected whole also, in Pope Francis’ view, prevents us from feeling a sense of responsibility for how our decisions affect others, future generations, and the earth itself.

Arguing this point, he writes:

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? This question not only concerns the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approach piecemeal. When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results.\textsuperscript{178}

Being able to see that everything is interconnected – how the questions of science and technology are connected to questions of meaning and value – is one of Pope Francis’ mantras through \textit{Laudato si’}. Rather than seeing the interconnection and meaning of all

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 160.
beings, our technocratic lens remains self-referential, prone to abstraction, and fragmented. The inability to see this, to accept it, and to live out of it are symptoms of this pair of technocratic lens that we have such a hard time taking off.

Another major problematic aspect of this technocratic paradigm worth spelling out in more detail is how the paradigm’s elevated sense of self and the loss of a priori order to the objective reality alters our posture and action in the world. Pope Francis uses the language of “modern anthropocentrism” and “relativism” to describe this. Pope Francis subtitles the last of the three sections of Chapter Three “The Crisis and Effects of Modern Anthropocentrism,” highlighting how central this piece of his analysis is to his argument. I now turn to flesh out these features of the technocratic paradigm a little more in order to better understand the effects of seeing the world technocratically as articulated in *Laudato si’*.

Pope Francis thinks that this technocratic paradigm leaves human beings lost, misunderstanding their own sense of self and the world around them. As mentioned before, at the heart of this technological paradigm is a way of seeing reality, quoting Romano Guardini, as only a “cold body of facts…raw material to be hammered into useful shape.”179 This complete “disregard for the message contained in the structures of

179 Ibid., 115. See also Guardini, in The End of the Modern World, 55.
nature itself,” “the original good purpose,” is then coupled with an “excessive anthropocentrism.” He unpacks this further by saying that this exalted view of the human person contains within it “a Promethean vision of mastery,” a vision of a self acting without limits, and an irresponsible sense of “dominion” over the universe. It is an understanding of humanity that is, in his view, “inadequate” and ultimately dangerous.

The dangerous consequence of all of this: “Once human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble,” and therefore, quoting John Paul II, “instead of carrying out his role as a cooperator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature.”

“When human beings fail to find their true place in the world, they…end up acting against themselves,” he writes. As the Pope will remind the reader over and over, the belief in the technological paradigm and its products has indeed historically offered some

180 LS, 115-117.
181 Ibid., 116. See also Guardini, in The End of the Modern World, 55.
182 LS, 116. In Guardini’s Letters from Lake Como, he wonders aloud, “What will become of life if it is delivered up to the power of this dominion?...What will happen when these events become subject to the harsh consciousness of rational formulas, the power of technical compulsion?...Can life retain its living character in this system?,” 49.
183 LS, 117.
184 Ibid., 115.
benefit, but there is no denying that it has also been the source of so many symptoms that characterize our rebellious age.

Again, the power of sin is inherent to Pope Francis’ view. What does this sin of Adam look like? The sum of Chapter One of *Laudato si’* names the environmental consequences that arise when we can see no intrinsic value to the earth and her creatures beyond “resources” for our dominion. We are left with a variety of forms of pollution, increasing deforestation, a disturbing warming of the climate, depletion of natural resources (especially quality drinking water), and loss of biodiversity.\footnote{Ibid., 20-52.} Echoing himself in his Apostolic Letter *Evangelii Gaudium*, he writes in the concluding paragraphs of Chapter One, “Whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which becomes the only rule.”\footnote{Ibid., 56.}

Besides the desecration of soil and ocean life, however, Pope Francis also sees this excessive anthropocentrism and relativism at the root of our culture’s preference for the practices of abortion, euthanasia, war, and neglect of all vulnerable people.\footnote{Ibid., 117, 120, 130-136.} Pope goes on to lump a whole host of related social ills that this paradigm opens up for humanity: the sexual exploitation of children, the abandonment of the elderly who no

\footnotetext{185}{Ibid., 20-52.}
\footnotetext{186}{Ibid., 56.}
\footnotetext{187}{Ibid., 117, 120, 130-136.}
longer serve our interests, human trafficking, the unbridled biological experimentation, and commerce in blood diamonds and fur of endangered species.\textsuperscript{188} In each case, the subject seemingly engages reality on his or her own terms about matters of life and death, matters that traditionally have been understood with humility and extreme caution. But, in this technocratic moment, without reference to the limits imposed by nature, rebelling against our own nature and God, we take these matters into our own hands. If cultural relativism and excessive anthropocentrism are normalized, then, Pope Francis wonders, what will stop the drive for people: “to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects, imposing forced labor on them or enslaving them to pay their debts”?\textsuperscript{189}

Individual choice trumps all in this technocratic paradigm, without respect to any intrinsic dignity of what is before us, then everything seems up for grabs. Everything is “irrelevant unless it serves one’s own immediate interests.”\textsuperscript{190} Everything is possible; nothing is unacceptable. Priority goes to whatever is most immediately convenient, gives the most pleasure, and provides the greatest sense of self-liberation.\textsuperscript{191} All limitation, both personal and social, must be overcome, regardless of consequences.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 123.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 123.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 122.
In this same vein, Pope Francis decries the economic drive for unlimited growth and
profit and boundless exploitation of resources.\footnote{Guardini makes this connection between technics and modern capitalism in The End of the Modern World, “Finally, technics were joined indissolubly with an economy of uncontrolled greed. Thus was begotten the many-faceted system of modern capitalism,” 75.} In each case, it is as if everything is
understood to be unlimited. The only goal: to gain more advantage and power.\footnote{LS, 106, 109, 116.}

One would think that articulating it in this way would suggest that many people
would question this technocratic paradigm and seek to dismantle its logic or look for an
escape. Pope Francis, however, highlights our passive and active participation in (and
worship of) this “techno-economic paradigm” with its god-like rebellion, exploitation,
and unlimited growth. We are so caught up in the cultural moment; we buy things,
entertain ourselves, and live our everyday lives without much pause for our lifestyle’s
effects on the earth or on our neighbors or on our own health. We consume whatever is
put on our plate in a splurge of instant gratification without forethought for its value or
its effect. Pope Francis does not mince words about how these consumerist habits and
our blind faith in the market, science, government, and technology contribute
negatively to the state of our common home. As he has famously put it, we are left with
a “use and throw away” logic that holds no intrinsic dignity for anything. We consume
whatever we want, as much as we want, and do not pay much to the waste generated in
our wake. The waste might be pollution, or it might be an unborn baby; the waste might be farmers committing suicide, or it might be our own mental and physical health. The encyclical is replete with litanies of diagnostic symptoms of this rebellious technocratic paradigm: high levels of anxiety and loneliness, loss of purpose and meaning, pervasive emptiness, loss of wonder and awe, an insidious superficiality, an impulsive and wasteful consumption, and inability to live well in community and in solidarity with others, especially future generations. But, despite all of this, we continue to worship at the feet of this technocratic idol.

This picture of the cultural moment seems dire, perhaps even excessively dire, but as Pope Francis says in Chapter One, “Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.” We are, indeed, at war with ourselves, and the earth; our very

\[^{194}\text{Ibid., 110, 162. In a General Audience on June 5, 2013, Pope Francis offered this words, “We are losing our attitude of wonder, of contemplation, of listening to creation, and thus we no longer manage to interpret in it what Benedict XVI calls ‘the rhythm of the love-story between God and man.’ Why does this happen? Why do we think and live horizontally? We have drifted away from God, we no longer read his signs.”}\]

\[^{195}\text{LS, 19. Much of Guardini’s work on technology challenges humanity around the question of “responsibility.” Will we take responsibility for our power and our progress? Will we take responsibility for the problems we create and the opportunities we open up? We need courage, humility, asceticism, and a sense of the seriousness of the problem, and then we need to take}\]
dignity, our salvation, is at stake. All of this, in Pope Francis’ view, can be traced back to this technocratic paradigm with its internal logic and myriad of products that in themselves shape our personal and social lives in ways we are not fully aware. We cannot remain passive any longer, assuming everything offered on our plates is for our health and benefit. There is an emptiness at the heart of our culture, and technocracy does not offer the means for salvation.\(^{196}\) Pope Francis’ call here in *Laudato si’* is for us to be more “painfully aware” of the crisis and its “human roots” so that we can begin to navigate a way forward for humanity and our earth. The root of the matter, as we have noted, is this technocratic paradigm, with its exalted, Promethean sense of the one seeing and feeling, its loss of faith in God and objective order, and its ironclad materialistic epistemology. Pope Francis is clear that he not asking us to return to the Stone Age; rather he is asking us to better understand the dominant paradigm operative in our cultural moment. We need to see its relationship to our compulsive consumerism, our inclinations to conform to “mass man,” our anxieties, our collective responsibility. See *The End of the Modern World*, 74-95, and the entire Part II of the book he entitles, “Power and Responsibility: A Course of Action for the New Age.”

\(^{196}\) Guardini perceives and names both a “modern anxiety” and a “profound loneliness” at the heart of Mass Man in *The End of the Modern World*, 35, 57.
selfishness, and the deserts within our own lives.197 Ultimately, as we will explore in the final chapter of this thesis, the goal is to help us re-look at reality from within our own spiritual worldview, recover the values and goals of our tradition, and with freedom and beauty, “to generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm.”198 As pessimistic as his diagnosis sounds, he offers repetitious challenges to us “to develop a new synthesis capable of overcoming the false arguments of recent centuries.”199

197 LS, 203-204.
198 Ibid., 111, 114. Guardini writes in The End of the Modern World, “Man has the right, a right in self-defense, to seek the original freshness of his dual nature – in his body and in his soul – in order to feel at home again even in this lost world of symbols which has been advanced within the last decades, which has been demanded by all the exertions of technological man,” 73. Guardini also spends the last part of his section on technological man calling for a re-integration of the spiritual worldview into how modern man sees nature, 95-109. In Letters from Lake Como, Guardini says that we need an awareness of the shadow side of the artificiality, abstract, and inorganic use of technology that results when we have lost the integral, natural Christian worldview. He says we need a new freedom for the soul “to achieve an attitude, disposition, a new order of living, standards of what is excellent and what is despicable, of what is permissible and what is impermissible, of responsibility, of limits, etc., by which we can hold in check the danger of destruction presented by arbitrary natural forces,” 85. More will be said about this later in the last chapter, but Guardini concludes his last letter by suggesting a re-education in the order of being.
199 LS, 121.
CHAPTER THREE: CONTEXTUALIZING THE TECHNOCRATIC PARADIGM

Now that we have defined this technocratic paradigm and seen its manifest effects in our world, as understood by Pope Francis in *Laudato si’*, it will be helpful to understand its pedigree. The natural questions are “Where did it come from?” and “How did we get here?” To assist with this genealogical work, I will turn to an important essay by German-born 20th century philosopher Hans Jonas entitled “Seventeenth Century and After: The Meaning of the Scientific and Technological Revolution.” This short essay traces the philosophical and scientific roots of the technocratic way of seeing the world. Besides narrating the unfolding history of science and technology in terms of a revolution, an overturning of the established order of thinking and acting, Jonas also wants the reader to see just how technology “was thus implied as a possibility in the metaphysics, and trained as a *practice* in the procedures, of modern science.” Coupled with Jonas, I will rely on the work of two contemporary Catholic scholars associated with the *Communio* school of theology, Michael Hanby

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201 Jonas, 48.
202 Michael Hanby is a professor at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at Catholic University of America. I will use his book *No God, No Science?: Theology, Cosmology, Biology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2013) and some other articles published
and David L. Schindler, whose own body of study remains deeply attuned to the
metaphysical shifts intrinsic to our modern culture.

in *Communio*. theological and metaphysical foundations of Aristotelian-Thomism as articulated
through the *Communio* school of thought.

203 As mentioned before in Chapter One, Schindler also is a professor and Dean emeritus at the
Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at Catholic University of
America. He has provided leadership in the *Communio* school of theology in the United States
through his teaching, writing, and editing of the journal *Communio*.

204 While I will rely on the work of Jonas and the *Communio* thinkers to guide me through this
chapter, I acknowledge that there has been a great deal of historical and philosophical writing
about the genealogy of modernity in recent years. Of note are the following: Charles Taylor, *A
Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), and
Knowledge* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013). In each of these studies, the
authors share a sense that there is some wrong or different with the modern world. They want
to unmask modernity’s origins, diagnosis its ailments, and prescribe cures. For all of them, they
see the necessity of understanding modernity’s roots for a more truthful engagement of
blessings and curses of the current moment. How and where one interprets the fault line of
modernity, if any fault line is even there, will indicate one’s prescription for the present. Taylor
is least fond of a telling of this history in a declensionist key. For Taylor, it is more complex
story. Ultimately, for him, modernity is less a space that speaks an absence of transcendence but
more of one that is differently religious and therefore open to different ways of believing and
living. For him then, the loss of a medieval worldview involved more gain than loss. Gillespie’s
study explores how many of modernity’s philosophical emphases and goals have their
antecedents in theological conversations of the past. Whether it is the affirmation of everyday
life, the autonomy of the spheres of science, politics, and economics, or the recent focus on
human rights of transgendered people, if we want to understand why we are where we are, we
need to understand the questions at the heart of the late middle ages, especially the historical
relationship between reason and revelation, and voluntarism and determinism. Pfau too argues
that we have forgotten who we are as humans and how to approach the phenomena of the
world. He traces the origin story for modernity back to the late Middle Ages and its questions
about the relationship between God’s and man’s freedom. Jonas, Hanby, and Schindler cast
Although detailing intellectual history can be a fuzzy and contentious matter, these scholars point to the shifts in the scientific conceptions of nature in the 16th and 17th centuries. This time period is generally known as the Scientific Revolution and the beginning of the modern age. Within it, a whole host of astronomers, mathematicians, and philosophers opened up new vistas by which to understand the world. Through their new methods of thought and experiment and their respective discoveries, human self-understanding and conceptions of the world were entirely altered. Jonas summarizes the shift in this way:

The scientific revolution changed man’s ways of thinking, by thinking, before it materially changed, even affected, his ways of living. It was a change of worldview, in metaphysical outlook, in conception and method of knowledge...Technology, historically speaking, is the delayed effect of the scientific and metaphysical revolution with which the modern age begins.

Metaphysics, worldview, method of knowledge, ways of living – these are precisely the contours of this thesis.

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stark lines between our secular moment and the medieval world. I found myself drawn to them as a result of what I (and others) see as a anti-modern thrust of Pope Francis in *Laudato si’*. While Jonas focuses on the intellectual development of this history, he also mentions the many cultural and social factors contributing to this new way of thinking about the world. Among these factors are the fall of feudal order, the rise of cities, rise of new political order in national monarchies, the expansion of trade, the emergence of the printing press, and widening of horizons through the many voyages of discovery, 51.

Ibid., 47.
In the timeline presented by these scholars, the philosophical foundation of the scientific view can be traced back to the 16th century “trail blazers” of Copernicus, Galileo, and Descartes, who, each with their independent insight and even courageous decisions, overturned long established views and paved the way for future developments of science and technology. My guides through this history also lift up the thought and work of Francis Bacon as another key visionary whose influential utopian fantasies for the role of science and technology in liberating humanity and society to human better world remain very prescient. In the first part of this chapter, I will briefly look at these four central characters of the Scientific Revolution and explore the main contours of their thought and work as it directly relates to the development of this technocratic paradigm. I will then pause and unpack these shifts in metaphysics and epistemology in more detail with the aid of Hanby and Schindler. Both of these scholars attempt to delineate the differences between this scientific-technocratic paradigm and its antecedent way of looking at the world by analyzing the metaphysics inherent to both of them. It is the Aristotelian-Thomistic framework of seeing and knowing the world of nature that has been so influential for the Christian worldview. They juxtapose this with the emerging metaphysics within the scientific paradigm,

\[207\] Ibid., 48.
which experiences its full flowering in the technocratic paradigm of today. I will end this chapter by briefly narrating the way these changes in epistemology and science, combined with the technological, cultural, and economic changes of the 19th and 20th century, create the perfect storm for the creation and maturation of the technocratic progress and paradigm now so ubiquitous. My argument, following Jonas, Hanby, and others, is that what Pope Francis calls the “technocratic paradigm” has its birth and early maturation in the epistemological shifts of the modern era.\footnote{Given the flow of his argument and the particular references in \textit{Laudato si’}, it is likely that Pope Francis’ own narration of these shifts result from the influence of Romano Guardini’s \textit{The End of the World}, which has its own birth story and genealogy of modernity. Guardini narrates the birth of the modern world in this way, “The medieval picture of the world along with the cultural order which it supported began to dissolve during the fourteenth century. The process of dissolution continued throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By the seventeenth century it was complete, and a new picture of reality dawned clearly and distinctly over Europe,” 28.}

We need to remind ourselves again that technology itself, the process and products of humans making things better through development and invention, was not invented during the time period of our investigation but is rather as old as humanity itself. We are not exploring the history of technology as such but a particular way of looking at the world that, following Pope Francis’ lead, we call “technocratic.” Jonas calls it a “scientific-technological revolution,” one that has entirely reshaped humanity’s
environment, behavior, and thought. Especially with the advent of these epistemological shifts of the 1500s and 1600s, combined with the perfect storm of an array of social and economic factors and new vast sums of resources, it is true that technological progress also accelerates exponentially. Although we will get to that part of the history, our first inquiry is the origins of the mindset that makes the technological progress of our day possible. So, when and how did this technocratic paradigm begin?

I. Rene Descartes

The philosophical foundation of the Scientific Revolution begins with the work of Rene Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes’ project can best be found in his main works *Discourse on Method* (1637) and *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641). One of the perennial philosophical questions is how we know anything for certain. Descartes lived at a time of great doubt and uncertainty. Feeling that the authorities of the past and their ideas were no longer tenable, Descartes tackled this epistemological question in *Discourse on Method* by putting all the past into doubt and casting aside all previous methods of inquiry in order to arrive at a more certain “first principle.” Part II of *Discourse on Method* lays out Descartes’ steps for deductive reasoning. In short, his

209 Jonas 45.
210 Ibid., 62-63. Also see the entry on Descartes in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes/](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes/) for the basic contours of Descartes life, thought, and major works.
method required the following: (1) accepting as "truth" only clear, distinct ideas that could not be doubted, (2) breaking a problem down into parts, (3) deducing one conclusion from another, and (4) conducting a systematic synthesis of all things.

Descartes’ second text *Meditations on First Philosophy* builds on *Discourses on Method* and presents in the most detailed and expanded way his new philosophical system of self-referential doubt, empirical observation, and scientific deduction.

Descartes resolved to doubt absolutely everything that could possibly be doubted. Whatever he would find in this line of reasoning would be the basis for a new body of solid knowledge. His plan, in other words, was to doubt his way to a new certainty, to a new sense of stability, casting off the security of the medieval way of looking at the world. What did Descartes arrive at for his secure first principle? The first principle that he finally felt was most self evident was summarized in the now famous statement, “Cogito ergo sum,” "I think, therefore I am.” He thought that other knowledge, even our sensory experiences themselves, could possibly be a fabrication of the imagination, dishonesty, or error, but asserted that the very act of doubting and thinking as evidence of the sure reality of at least one’s own mind. He could not trust the certainty of anything except the *cogito*, the clear and distinct ideas that this thinking mind is thinking, and the judgments the thinking mind makes based on these ideas. Because one can presume God is good and trusting, Descartes felt that he could can
trust that these innate ideas are true and indubitable. Descartes then turned his
deductive method beyond his thinking self to the rest of reality, desiring to find
similarly clear and evident principles that could guide one’s life. As a mathematician,
Descartes understood these innate concepts to be like mathematical concepts, concepts
which were also true without a doubt. From this, he deduced a world that can be
described mathematically. Ultimately, Descartes believed that he could then build on
this first principle of the solitary thinking self to lay the secure foundation for knowing
the world around him.

The seeds of the what comes to be known as the technocratic paradigm are all
here: Descartes’ method of skepticism of all historical authority, its exalted sense of the
disembodied thinking self, its goal of finding clear and certain empirical truth, and its
bifurcation of mind or soul from matter and body are all clear foundations for this
technocratic paradigm under investigation. More will be said about the metamorphosis
of this new way of accounting for the world as it relates to our current cultural moment,
but for now I will now turn to another philosopher who laid the groundwork for our
technocratic moment.

II. Francis Bacon

Some have called Francis Bacon (1561-1626) the prophetic visionary of the new
scientific revolution and technocratic. In his seminal work The New Organon (1620), he
outlines a new empirical, inductive paradigm for approaching the way we see, interpret, and understand the world. Like Descartes, he advocated for a complete suspicion of all previous methods of knowledge and vigilance against the “false idols” of knowledge that captured men of his day. He wanted to overcome what he felt where intellectual blockades and a kind of dogmatic slumber of his age before knowledge acquisition commenced. His method of acquiring knowledge advocated for the slow but important work of accumulating empirical observations by the senses from the “book of nature.” Then, based on what the scientist observes, Bacon had confidence that the scientist could make inductive inferences to axioms of greater and greater scope. This skeptical posture to the past and attempt for a pure inductive method of knowledge are now basic premises of thought and method in the technocratic paradigm. Again, rather than immersion in authoritative sources of truth, the modern scholar was led away from authority and chose to probe things with his own intelligence and reach judgments which were independent of any pattern first laid down by authority. In one way Bacon embodied the call to “reading the waters” in a noble immersive fashion, but for Bacon, the connection to God and interconnectivity and wonder had all be severed from his interpretation.

Coupled with his espousal of a method of doubt and experimental inductive reasoning, Bacon also championed a passionate optimism in what this new science and its future “technological” future could bring to the world. Bacon had a vision of progress that sounds much like our own, namely a view that the steady, cumulative, historical advance in applied scientific knowledge would eventually address and conquer all problems of humanity. Bacon’s vision, as Jonas writes, “was that the new knowledge of nature will make man master over his environment…He proclaimed that knowledge is power, and that it is the aim of knowledge to advance man’s earthly estate, to conquer human ‘necessity and misery’ by subjecting nature to his more complete use.” Bacon’s key utopian-like insight: knowledge is power. When this power is embodied in the form of new technical inventions and mechanical discoveries, he believed it would be the force that would drive history.

This progressive vision of history stood counter to the longstanding view that history was lived in cyclical, and even descending, patterns. In his later works, Bacon promoted his optimistic creed with an almost evangelical force and sense of mission. It was a promised destiny for him that increased knowledge through empirical science would usher in a better, more enlightened world. Bacon explored his utopian vision in

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212 Jonas, 74.
his incomplete novel *Nova Atlantis* (1627) where he proposed a vision of society dominated by scientists and guided by the methods. Science conquers all chance and determines change thus creating a regime permanently pleasant and virtuous. In this world, all social, political, and scholarly life is organized according to scientific truth and efficiency. This utopian creed in man’s powers and goodness and in the methods and inventions of science and technology is still with us today in our own technocratic moment.

III. Nicolaus Copernicus and Galileo Galilei

While less philosophical are the next two figures of history, their influence on the trajectory of the scientific revolution is not to be underestimated. Jonas points to Polish mathematician and astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus’ (1473-1543) *One the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* (1543) as the decisive book that heralded this revolution of perspective.\(^{213}\) In it, Copernicus proposes a radically new conception of the universe, one where the Sun rather than the Earth is placed at the center of the universe. Under the geocentric model, the sun, moon, stars, and planets all circled Earth. The geocentric model served as the predominant description of the cosmos in many ancient civilizations going back to Aristotle and Ptolemy. It provided a solid, hierarchically

\(^{213}\) Ibid., 52.
ordered cosmology within which the human person, and everything else, found its meaning and worth. There was a clear separation understood and experienced between the celestial and the terrestrial spheres, the Earth (thus man) was at the center and above in rank than anything in the natural order, and everything moved according to a sacred circularity around the celestial pole. The heliocentric model proposed by Copernicus turned this entire cosmology upside-down. In this new view of the universe, the Earth is more like a “star” itself, a planet among other planets, composed of similar substance as other celestial planets, not held in place by a hierarchy of being or a sacred circularity, but instead held in place by laws of planetary motion that are measurable and predictable. When Copernicus’ theory was first presented to the world, only a few astronomers took interest into it, but a famous Italian scientist, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), became devoted to Copernicus’ theory. In the early 17th century, with great risk to his personal reputation, Galileo invented the telescope and proved Copernicus’ theory. Future scientists like Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) and Isaac Newton (1642-1727) bring these initial discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo to full fruition.

Although we take this reinterpretation of the order of the cosmos as a plain truth to be accepted in the current cultural moment, Jonas delineates three ways this new heliocentric theory led to a physical cosmology with far ranging implications for the
future of thought. First, Jonas highlights how this new conception of the cosmos overturned an understanding of hierarchical order where different spheres (and the beings within) operated according to different laws. Now, with this new theory, the homogeneity of the cosmos was proposed. Jonas writes, “If not even the universe in its majesty is a hierarchical order, if the heavens themselves are assimilated to earth, then nature as such may not be a hierarchical principle at all and not bestow privileges of sublimity anywhere.”

In this view, everything, everywhere, is the same. Nothing is privileged; there is no special rank to the heavens, or even to man viz-a-viz other beings. Instead, through Galileo’s new telescope, the earth and the other celestial planets could be observed by the naked eye to be composed of more or less the same kind of matter, and, through the later experimental work and mathematical calculations of Galileo, Kepler, and finally Newton, identical mathematical laws of motion could be understood to be applied to everything, everywhere. It is all observable and measurable, and through the human mind and naked eye, rather than relying on past conceptions, we can now surmise a whole new architecture and physics to the universe as we know it.

\[214\] Ibid., 53.
The second implication of the heliocentric cosmology is that it challenged the venerable conception of cosmic motion as circular and uniform. The circle had been a longstanding symbolic of perfection, having gained metaphysical proportions. All theoretical science had to align with its “laws.” The circularity of all cosmic motion reinforced the understanding that all world space was structured according to perfection. Through time, complex theories of how the planets were structured and moved were proposed, each one entirely aligned with the spatial architecture of circularity. Even Copernicus, with good proof that a new theory was needed, had a hard time shaking the axiom of circularity. This circular view of the cosmos, however, was increasingly no longer able to be held as plausible. And finally with Kepler’s discovery of elliptic orbits, the architecture and physics of the cosmos began to take a radically different shape. Rather than everything being held in its perfect place through some kind of divine agent and perfect order, the cosmos looked more like a number of independent bodies moving freely through empty, featureless space. What then holds the cosmos and its spheres and all its beings in orbit? This overarching question now served as a guiding question of this scientific revolution. It was a question of ultimate

215 Ibid., 54-56.
significance. This quest for the causes of motion, a purely empirical description of the laws built into nature, was ultimately fulfilled in the discoveries of Isaac Newton.

The third and final point that Jonas makes about the heliocentric view is that it turns the universe inside out, from a closed to an open universe.\textsuperscript{216} If the prior cosmology presented the universe in such a way that the human mind could imagine its limits, its outer rim, its parameters, and all of the entities in their perfectly proportioned position, then this new cosmology now left the human mind in a position where one could no longer imagine the length, the breadth, or depth of the universe’s size. Rather than looking up at a “vault” containing all that is perfect and meaningful, we now looked up into infinite space that held great mysterious immensity. The latent potentials of the Copernican hypothesis turned the universe into a vast, infinite, and intoxicating vista of possibilities. The human responses to this varied, as Jonas notes, from somebody like Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) who “welcomed cosmic infinitude as the revelation of a divine superabundance of reality and something kindred to himself” to someone like Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) who “shrunk from it and felt the loneliness of

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 56-58.
mankind in an alien universe.” Whatever the response, the cosmology had changed, and we had to find a new understanding of our place within it.

Subsequent developments in the physics of motion by Galileo and Newton provided the mathematical explanations for motion within this new cosmology. These new explanations also made a break from the Aristotelian physics, which saw all movement through categories of change where a natural state of rest was understood to be the end of all movement. In the symbolic world of Revelation within the Christian worldview, movement was a description of where one was on the journey of the mind back to God. Galileo and Newton, breaking from these past conceptions, conceived of motion as an equally natural state of an object, a state that had nowhere else necessarily to return to for an experience of rest. This was a revolutionary insight. So too was Newton’s theory that, building on the work of Galileo and Kepler, what explained motion and change in the cosmos was not (necessarily) one’s sinful nature or God himself but instead were observable, natural laws of gravitation and motion. In this view, every physical event can be accounted for by a purely physical antecedent. This theory of causality that there is one set of laws sufficient to explain all phenomena lays the foundation for classical mechanics and subsequent technological development of

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217 Ibid., 58.
218 Ibid., 58-61.
the Industrial Revolution and beyond. Newton, especially, unified the work of Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler into one scientific theory that has stood the test of time. His major work, *Principia Mathematica* (1687), is still considered by many to be the greatest scientific book ever written, a fundamental work for all of modern science. Newton brought to completion the conception of the scientific method that proposes that the laws of nature can be discovered and verified through a method of controlled experiment and analysis and calculations of mathematical measurements.

Of special significance to this new cosmology and physics is that it began to give a whole new meaning to nature. At one level, this new scientific method of direct empirical observation, experimentation, and rational theory allowed one to rule out the previously understood teleology of the universe. Nature, in this new view, was devoid of any final goals, end-causes, or larger purposes. The “Book of Nature” was not read through the prior, greater “Book of Revelation.” The Christian worldview was no longer the operative lens. Nature revealed its own mysteries. Nature was what was given immediately to the mind and senses of the one observing, without any taint of man or tradition or idols. In this modern mind, we should not look at nature for distinctions of value, providence of God, or any moral “good” or “bad.” Nature is just a

\[219\text{ Ibid., 71.}\]
series of valueless causal determinations that we can study, calculate, predict, and manipulate. At the same time this scientific method seemed to disvalue nature, it actually lifted its meaning up in new ways. Nature now became the closest one could come to “truth” observed. It was given immediately to one’s mind and one’s senses, provided universal natural laws, and thus could be the source of normative values. Nature was now the model of all that is good and holy. It became the best embodiment of what was left of the divine. Whatever conformed to her was justified. Put all your trust in Nature. The goal of life was to be a “Natural Man.” All of these shifts in cosmology and physics radically altered the perception of one’s place in the cosmos and, in turn, to one’s entire approach to living in it.

IV. The Metaphysics and Epistemology of the Technocratic Paradigm

Although there certainly was not agreement in the respective methods and conclusions among the heavyweights of the early modern era, we can, nevertheless, begin to catalog a number of still relevant attributes marshaled in by the philosophical and cosmological changes of the scientific revolution. By way of a summary, I note them here in a way that provides a clear assessment of this modern way of looking at the world:
- A doubt and distrust of all past historical authority, especially in matters of truth; severed from the older religious unity of life and work with a higher authority, science stood alone and at one with its essence;
- An exalted self-confidence, passion, and sense of liberation to pursue and arrive at truth and value with one’s own rational powers;
- An understanding of knowledge as a process of knowing through the scientific method of observation, experimentation, measurement, calculation, and rational theory;
- A view of this scientific method as an end itself, governed by its own logic and laws and with no necessary larger goal or purpose; if there is a purpose, the goal is practical and utilitarian, and seen clearest in the efficacy (and beneficence) of its products;
- An optimism, and utopian vision, for what this scientific method could achieve if fully embraced and applied by society as a whole and its individual members;
- A view of an open universe full of possibilities, vistas of unexplored depths to be uncovered, immense mysteries to be solved, and faraway lands to be discovered;
- A progressive outlook of history as a series of events indifferent to any inherent significance and value or divine order but instead is in need of a perfection achievable in this life by humanity and its scientific powers;
• A privilege of the self, the thinking mind, the “I,” the intrinsic personality and genius, which can never be doubted or questioned and serves as the true measure of all things;

• An understanding of the self in dualistic terms, that it is governed by the same universal laws of nature as everything else but also is something separate and distant from “dead” matter, from the body, from the earth, from other minds;

• A view of nature that both honors it for its observable “truth” of universal natural laws and is circumspect of it for its apparent lack of final cause and inherent larger meaning; and

• A feeling of both freedom and instability, exhilaration and anxiety, opportunity and alienation, curiosity and disenchantment, and creativity and loneliness as one stands within this new cultural moment where the prior paradigm was turned upside down in favor of another one.

Hans Jonas’ entire essay is an attempt to show that the technological shape of our lives is nothing but a consequence of this paradigm. A brand new comprehensive view of the world emerged: a vision of nature, of humanity, of history, of time and space, and of religion and culture. It is a clear articulation, he argues, of the “metaphysics of
science.”

In other words, the development of modern science serves as the origin story for our technocracy. Its intellectual premises, methods, and conclusions provide the very framework for our current technocratic moment. It is “no more than drawing the conclusions from the intellectual premises which the scientific revolution had established.”

Michael Hanby continues Jonas’ argument suggesting that the scientific-technocratic paradigm not only contains its own guiding metaphysics but that this paradigm can be seen only as an intellectual failure, “a failure to grasp the relation between form and matter, body and soul, a failure in virtue of what things are.” Hanby agrees with Jonas that the roots of this intellectual failure, this “partial abandonment of reason,” can be traced back to the advent of modern philosophy. Hanby’s treatment

\[\text{220 Ibid., 48.}\]
\[\text{221 Ibid., 48. In all, this modern movement is one characterized by freedom, discovery, and individualism. In The End of the Modern World, Guardini names three elements intrinsic to modern life that emerged from this history, all expressing these characterizations of modernity: an altered view of nature that now subsists in itself, an autonomous personality of the human subject, and a culture self-created out of norms intrinsic to its own essence, 50.}\]
\[\text{222 Michael Hanby, “The Gospel of Creation and The Technological Paradigm: Reflections on a Central Teaching of Laudato si’” in Communio: International Catholic Review 42 (2015), 742. Hanby believes that Pope Francis acknowledges the importance of this epistemological and intellectual failure, and the remedy of a Catholic integral metaphysics and theology of Creation, but he ultimately sees Pope Francis leaving these areas underdeveloped for his liking. Therefore, he attempts to develop this in continuity with Pope Francis’ intuitions. I think that Hanby has all the right instincts and expertise to make his case. I will rely largely on his interpretation.}\]
\[\text{223 Hanby, No God, No Science?, 107-149, 148.}\]
of the contours of the scientific and, in his view, theological revolution can be found most comprehensively in the third chapter of his book *No God, No Science?*, a chapter aptly named “The Scientific and Theological Revolution.” Therein he presents his extensive argument that the scientific revolution – through its reconceptions of the purpose and method of knowledge, human thought, truth, and being itself – collapses knowing with making, nature with artifice, and contemplation with action. In doing this, Hanby argues that science has been fundamentally unhinged from being able to reason about the world as it is and created in turn its own reduced ontology that evacuates the world of its object: the mystery of being. I find Hanby’s work extremely important for assisting us in seeing the full implications of the metaphysics implied in science and its connections to our technocratic paradigm. His perspective is shaped by his Christian convictions as well as his knowledge of both metaphysics and science. I will now unpack in more detail Hanby’s compelling insight that the scientific revolution reconceived and reduced our capacity to know things as they are.

224 In many ways, as Hanby himself acknowledges, this is essentially Joseph Ratzinger’s case in *Introduction to Christianity* when he tracks the transformation of metaphysics from truth as being, to truth as the made, to truth as the makeable or the feasible. Guardini also narrates this history in these metaphysical terms, where man lost his position in the realm of being. He was carried forward with a sense of his own freedom and self-governance, but also he lost his objective sense of belonging to existence. He ceased to experience the world as a secure place governed by God and the authoritative teaching of Revelation. See *The End of the Modern World*, 28-49.

In Hanby's work, he speaks of this reduced ontological of modern science by juxtaposing its key concepts with certain traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysical concepts. He then shows the way the scientific revolution reversed, upended, and collapsed key concepts in a way that, in his mind, inevitably lead to a technocratic paradigm. This juxtaposition is similar to what Pope Francis does in *Laudato si’*. Hanby's work draws us deeper into this contrast of worldview. Key among the metaphysical reconceptions of modern science, for Hanby, is a reformulation of the purpose and method of human knowledge, of truth its object, and ultimately being as such. In narrating how this happened, Hanby, like Jonas, puts a spotlight on all the main figures of this time period, with special attention on Descartes, Bacon, and Newton. Francis Bacon, particularly, sums up well for him the “radical character” of

226 Ibid., 113.
227 Hanby begins his chapter on the scientific and theological revolution by highlighting that the seeds of the “intellectual failure” actually could be seen in the discussions among scholastics in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance about the relationship of God’s absolute freedom, the meaning of contingency among created things, and related questions of epistemology. In this narration, Hanby puts the culpability with English Franciscan friar and scholastic philosopher and theologian William of Ockham (1285-1347) who rejects the ontological reality of universal intelligible forms. For Ockham, what is known is the individual object as such, known precisely as a unique singular individual and not the instantiation of some universal form. For Ockham and his followers then, every object is an irreducible individual and no single individual shares a common nature with another individual. When we know an object, it is primarily through a simple intuition gained through sensory perception of the sensible aspects of the object. While Hanby shows caution in pinpointing all later developments in science on Ockham, he nevertheless shows that his nominalism lays the ontological foundation for the
this shift in metaphysics and human knowledge. In his *Communio* article on *Laudato si’*, he summarizes this in the following way, twice quoting Bacon himself:

“The new way of knowing supercedes the old distinction between contemplation and action, effectively bringing the former to an end by eliminating its objects and subordinating it and refashioning it in the image of the latter, letting the ‘active tendency itself mark and set bounds to the contemplative part.’ This new technological manner of knowing is a knowing-by-doing that ‘takes experience apart and analyzes it.’”

In his book, Hanby points to two other oft-quoted texts from Bacon that echo this point about his utilitarian view of knowledge, namely that Bacon sees that “the true ends of knowledge” are not pleasure, profit, or fame but “for the uses and benefits of life” and that “knowledge is power.” These might at first glance look like noble and straightforward statements by Bacon, but they in fact reveal, Hanby argues, a radical reformulated understanding of nature that is dualist, materialist, and instrumentalist. In other words, Francis Bacon’s epistemology sounds very much like a building on Ockham’s foundation. Hanby, *No God, No Science?*, 108-112. Others, like John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock of the “Radical Orthodoxy” school of thought, have attempted to go even further back in history to find the roots of the modern era. Another Franciscan John Duns Scotus takes the fault in these narratives. In their view, Scotus’ understanding of the “univocity of being” inaugurates what will become of modernity. See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1990), and John Milbank ed., Catherine Pickstock ed., and Graham Ward ed., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999).


departure by Bacon and others of his era from what had been the long understood as the defining telos of knowledge, that is contemplation. In fact, Bacon was not shy in expressing his mission to liberate the sciences from what he felt were the sterile speculations of traditional metaphysics.

In order to fully grasp Hanby’s point about Bacon, it will be advantageous to provide a very brief and rudimentary sketch of how the ancients prior to this time understood human knowledge to work. To some degree, this was already touched on in my review of the articles in Communio and my own commentary on Laudato si’. I will flesh it out a little more with the Communio thinkers. Doing so in juxtaposition with this articulation of the technocratic paradigm’s history will allow us to see clearly the shift in this epistemological history.

For Aristotle, and subsequent Christian interpreters, the happy life is the life of contemplation, the life where the intellect is able to grasp things as they are, in their being. The ability to contemplatively grasp the being of things was related, in this view of knowledge, to knowing things in their essence, which is what a thing is in respect to itself. We observe and experience existing things in their individuality through our senses. We know things exist, and that they have certain qualities. Aristotle believed that, through reflection, we could come to know the essence of things, which actually for him is the true knowledge of what the thing is.
For example, I observe and experience today’s rain, its particular flow, sound, smell, temperature, etc. In conducting this basic observation of rain, however, is not to yet know rain in its essence, its fullness of being. Only after reflecting on what rain is in its essence do we come closer to that goal. Aristotle writes in his work *Metaphysics*, “What, then, you are by your very nature is your essence…for the essence is precisely what something is.” And so, I then ask, “What’s the proper essence, fullness of being, of this individual rain I observe?” This question opens me up to a more universal aspect of rain. I consider all the rain I have ever experienced, and through this reflection, I have a better understanding of what the individual rain I am experiencing today is. This more universal concept of rain is rain’s essence, and this, for Aristotle and others that follow his lead, is what a thing truly is.

Knowing a thing in its essence is also to consider a thing’s myriad of “causes,” expressed in the classical terms of material, formal, efficient, and final causes. In other words, to know rain, I would need to be able to grasp what rain is made of (material cause), its basic blueprint or pattern (formal cause), its reason for beginning and ending (efficient), and ultimately its inherent goal and purpose for why it exists (its final cause). I come to know the essence of rain in considering these universal “causes” internal to

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the thing being considered. Although my personal experience of this morning’s rain informs my understanding of its essence, I have to admit that I could never experience a rain that does not conform to what the essence of rain really is. In the end, only through observation and reflection about a thing’s “causes,” or essence, will we be able to say that we know a thing in its being.

Following Aristotle’s use of the word *entelécheia* to describe the active component of existing things, we might further understand a thing’s essence to be that aspect of its thinghood that is both already complete in itself and yet actively at work holding on to that fullness. It is an understanding that gives the thing being considered some inherent active presence and integrity in itself. Even though we might experience particular things first, essence has, using language of Hanby, “an ontological primacy.”

In summary, for Plato, Aristotle, and then ultimately for the great scholastic philosopher and theologian St. Thomas Aquinas, this view of human knowledge presupposes that things that we observe have a certain intrinsic interiority, sensibility, and meaning, and that through our senses and consequent reflection, we are able to grasp these universal aspects of things and say we know them in their fullness of being. This is what knowledge consists of for Aristotle and St. Thomas.

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231 Hanby, *No God, No Science?*, 60.
Where does contemplation come in to this understanding of human knowledge? For Aristotle and St. Thomas, the intellect is best understood in its speculative, or contemplative, quality where the mind approaches things with a kind of receptive posture. This receptive posture comes with an understanding that the essence of things, the deepest interiority of their being, has that ontological primacy. This ontological primacy preexists our actual experiencing and thinking of them. In other words, these thinkers believe that there is a kind of givenness to a thing that the mind must intuit, grasp, and respect. We encounter things that are not simply defined by us but are rather living among us, like kindred beings. We meet them, acknowledge them, and are in relationship with them. These things then, in a very real way, through their own sharing of their own essence, make a claim on our being. To know and live in this kind of world requires that we make efforts to receive things in their own givenness. In this, contemplative knowing within a world inhabited by things that have their own essences can be understood as a kind of active prayerful listening to the way things bespeak themselves. It requires a kind of poetic seeing where things are always caught up in a kind revelatory process of their own interiority and immanence.

This receptive contemplative posture towards this givenness of things also makes one aware that there are aspects to being that we experience that seem like they are common to all. When we sense this “common being,” we experience a kind prior
intelligibility and unity about the cosmos. In the end, this contemplative posture towards a thing’s being and an experience of an intelligible and unified cosmos of being create an opening for the affirmation of some divine being who might have created this universe and all of its beings, and continues to sustain them in being. In this vein, for St. Thomas, through the power of grace and our rational powers, one might come to experience and know God analogically through the contemplation of the rain that now falls out my window. Knowing things in themselves, in their very being, has a certain quality of gift or grace about it. This, in the mind of Aristotle and St. Thomas, is what happiness consists of, what beatitude is like; this is how contemplation is the method that offers us a foretaste of this divine happiness.

David L. Schindler, whose work explores the question of technology in relationship to metaphysics, casts this discussion in this way:

The original human recipere is first a receiving from God, and consequently a receiving from the world whose givenness is now understood as gift. That all implies that we are all receivers before we are achievers, in the manner of children. We are first not creators but (active) receivers of the relation to God and to the world that is always-already in our being.²³²

Further unpacking this, Schindler beautifully expounds on the childlike posture of the contemplative where wonder and thanksgiving express the very being of a person who receives the world in this fashion. He says:

Wonder and thanksgiving, in providing the inner form of all making, change the most basic meaning of making from *work* to *play* and, in so doing, change the most basic nature of the thing made from *what is first useful* (from simple instrument) into *what first simply is* (“being”): and thus the integration of the natural (born) and the mechanical (the made) proceeds on terms set by the former and not the latter.  

This rather brief and basic summary of the way the ancients understood knowledge to work, and its vital child-like contemplative dimension that leads to the divine and expressions of wonder and gratitude, is absolutely crucial to fully comprehending the break that Francis Bacon proposes in the 17th century and will continue to haunt us today in the full flowering of the technocratic paradigm.

I now return to Bacon’s project in his *Novum Organum Scientiarum*, a title that translates as “new instrument of science,” or, even better, “an entirely new understanding for knowing the world.” Bacon is unapologetic that his task is to upend, even attack, this Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics and epistemology. His proposal can be summed up in that the “existence” of natural things is now only found in the

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233 Ibid., 96. Schindler, following the work of Balthasar and Bernanos, points to the “poverty of Spirit” as presented in the Beatitudes as the kind of contemplative posture called for by this kind of human *being*, human knowing.
meaning of their sensible empirical fact, that is, not in the act of receiving some universal essence or forms. Revising the Aristotelian *Organon*, he excludes the formal and final causes as mere “idols,” and, with these, the essences – the being – of things. What remain for him are matter and its motions, and the laws that guide them, which can only be known, not by contemplation but, by action, that is, by research and calculation. In describing this loss of teleology, Jonas puts it this way:

> Nature is not a place where one can look for ends. Efficient cause knows no preference of outcomes: the complete absence of final causes means that nature is indifferent to distinction value. It cannot be thwarted because it has nothing to achieve. It only proceeds – and its process is blind.\(^{234}\)

What makes the scientific revolution “revolutionary” then was that this was the moment when humanity stopped believing that things had any other being in themselves other than what could be measured at the level of the external. Interiority seizes to exist. The intelligibility of things was now no longer a matter of knowing a thing’s being through its existence *and* essence but only to be found in what can be calculated mathematically, controlled, manipulated, and transformed through power into some kind of utilitarian purpose.

Hanby argues that this new way of knowing “destroys in thought and experiment the unity of experience and the intelligible wholes that comprise it in order

\(^{234}\) Jonas, 69.
to reduce these objects to their simplest components and reconstruct them as the sum of those abstract components and their interpretation." Contemplation seizes. Unity of being seizes. Intelligibility of the world seizes. Action, experimentation, and utilitarian goals now dominate. “Awe before nature’s mystery gives way to the disenchanted knowingness,” writes Jonas. The truth of our knowledge then is no longer found in a contemplative meeting and grasping of a thing’s revelatory being, standing before it in wonder and reverence, but instead is found in the success of our ability to measure the object in controlled experiments and, in turn, our ability in “predicting, retrodicting, or manipulating these phenomena.” Human relation to the world turns into a reduced technological relation.

Being able to manipulate these phenomena, for Bacon, is what he means when he says that “knowledge is power.” Rather than being burdened by the idols of traditional metaphysics, slowed up in a contemplative posture towards the essences of things, Bacon now feels a sense of exhilaration, freedom, and power as he stands before things, in his mind, as things really are. Things no longer pose a question to him, beckon him to listen and see their interiority. They are just what they are on their surface, ready to be

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235 Hanby, 728.
236 Jonas, 70.
237 Hanby, 728.
measured and endlessly analyzed (taken apart, broken down) and then standing by for manipulation as the experimenter sees fit.\(^\text{238}\) Analysis of nature in this way, breaking something down to its most primitive parts, allows one to begin to know how it is constituted, and, more importantly even, how one might be able to make or remake the object oneself. This movement from analysis to synthesis, experimental science and physics to applied science and technology, is the logical progression of the one who begins to understand their potential unbound power as a scientist. Bacon turns this view into the aphorism, “What is most useful in operating is truest in knowing.”\(^\text{239}\) This “metaphysic neutralizing of man,” as Jonas puts it, gives the scientist license to do whatever he wishes and whatever she finds useful.\(^\text{240}\) It is unclear what now guides the wishing, but this liberation makes one feel very powerful indeed. The use of a thing ultimately supplants any other purpose that a thing might have. To be one who can measure and manipulate nature well is the true knower, the genius-savior of this revolution.

Hanby is fond of presenting this Baconian reduction of truth, objective reality, and human knowledge in terms of the beginning of the reduction of nature to art. It is

\(^{238}\) Hanby, *No God, No Science?*, 131.

\(^{239}\) Ibid., 129. Quoting Bacon from *The New Organon*, II,4.

\(^{240}\) Jonas, 79.
worthwhile to explore this a bit more for the important distinctions it opens up. As we have just seen, for Aristotle and the later tradition, things in nature have their own given essence – form – purpose – interiority. They speak their own project and make a claim on our understanding, as Hanby suggests.\textsuperscript{241} Nature proposes its own norm. The artifact of the artist, on the other hand, lacks this inherent telos. Its end is “imposed upon it from the outside and bears only an accidental relation to the stuff from which it is made. Its project is not its own, but its makers…”\textsuperscript{242} In the classical-traditional view, the best art imitates the givenness inherent in things. To the degree it does this, it evokes an experience of beauty and truth. Again, in itself, art does not contain the same kind of givenness of being. Its purpose is “accidental,” a term used by Aristotle to say that art, unlike nature, has meaning derived from the maker not from the work itself by virtue of its existence. Hanby concludes, “Nature and art thus signify two different ways of being a thing.”\textsuperscript{243}

This distinction between nature and art collapses through the new scientific-technocratic view of objective reality and human knowledge. Bacon, and others of his era, essential emptied nature of its inherent meaning and unity found in its universal

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{243} Ibid.
forms and reconceived it in terms of measurability, predictability, and manipulability. Nature no longer points to a norm. Without its own given inherent order and goodness, the things of nature are now essentially just like artifacts of an artist. As artifacts with only accidental, mostly mathematical qualities, the scientist is now free to do whatever the scientist wishes to do in experiment and manipulation with nature in order to further the goals of science. Nature is no longer its own subject but mere object. Devoid of a will of its own, it is now in the tinkering with nature that knowledge and truth have their place. No longer standing before things as ontological wholes created by God, we see that our role is to liberate the thing to be what it could be in all kinds of other ways.

Hanby, quoting Bacon, says, “This is why ‘nature reveals herself more through the harassment of art than in her own proper freedom.’” In fact, because nature constantly presents itself to the human mind as a source of limitation, the goals of science, rather than being receptive to the inherent givenness, are now understood as liberation through experimentation, manipulation, and ultimately technology. Hanby summarizes this, “If nature is really an artifact or a machine, then knowledge of nature is essentially engineering, and the truth of this knowledge is simply whatever is

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244 Hanby, *No God, No Science?*, 114.
technically possible.”245 We are deprived of life’s depths and can now only see the world through the superficial eyes of the technocratic paradigm. The technological manipulation of reality is truth, the master narrative, and we are solely the servants waiting with holy anticipation for its newest and latest solution and product to overcome all the problems of life. It was a grand vision at its time, but it was also prescient; the Baconian utopia is now before us.246

Hanby, relying heavily on influential scholar of the history of technology Amos Funkenstein, also shows how the scientific revolution, and Bacon’s utopian vision for it, is actually a kind of reconception of theology.247 It opened up a new belief system, a new understanding of the way God worked in the world. At first, this burgeoning modern scientific community, for the most part, maintained some sense of faith and even formal participation in their respective religious traditions by reworking the theological concepts to fit their new cosmology, metaphysics, and epistemology. However, in time, 

246 Jonas’ narrative also references the avowal of the traditional “art imitates nature” axiom, but he sees the early pioneers of Descartes and Bacon (and Leonardo diVinci whom we did not cover in our section of exploration) more or less following this traditional understanding. He sees the complete break from tradition officially happening much later. Either way, one can see the seeds of its avowal in the Baconian project. See my next section for more about this but found in Jonas on p. 78.
as Funkenstein shows, and Hanby highlights, this new scientific, technological way of looking at the world, with its reductionistic paradigm, no longer needed God to do its work and serve its understood goals. Severed from theology, it is now fully free to be its own belief system and source of salvation for the world. Schindler points out that proponents of technology like to imagine technology itself (and other modern technocratic institutions like the “state” and the “market”) as morally neutral and a-religious in that they do not propose in themselves a form or purpose to life. However, he argues, what these proponents cannot see is that their view of things conceals the metaphysical roots of their mechanistic, reduced, dualist perspective. It already contains metaphysic presuppositions, already holds beliefs about the world and the self in dualistic terms of the modern project. They, de facto, are our new gods.

Jonas, Hanby, and Schindler all agree that this is an absolute reduction of truth, of the objective reality of what things are in themselves, and, ultimately, of humanity’s capacity to be human. In their minds, this is all that the technocratic paradigm offers us. This view of history and the philosophical shifts inherent in the Scientific Revolution suggests that it is impossible to consider technocracy and our technological products as neutral objects that can be considered morally only on how they are used, what ends

they serve. As we have seen, the technocratic paradigm is rooted in its own theology, its own metaphysics, a rather complete way of looking at the world rooted in the dualistic, reduction intrinsic to the modern project itself. It evacuates our world and our self from any inherent meaning, it marginalizes contemplation, and it eliminates the need or even the thought of God. It proposes in place of this paradigm an entire new one. Any consideration of the technocratic paradigm that does not take this into account only entrenches us more deeply into the technocratic paradigm itself. This is why Pope Francis says repeatedly that technology is not neutral; it shapes us and our view of the world. We started this section by summarizing the shifts in understanding of our world found in the heavyweights of the Scientific Revolution. Using the commentary of Jonas, Hanby, and Schindler, this section allowed us to see the full implications of the metaphysical and epistemological changes within this technocratic paradigm.

V. Scientific Revolution Meets Technological Revolution

Jonas notes how the scientific and technology revolutions basically traveled parallel paths until around eighteenth and nineteenth century when they come together in full bloom with rise of modern, science-infused technology itself. From the beginning of civilization, humanity has created new tools and artifacts, what we call

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249 Jonas, 71-75.
“technology.” This unfolding was no different through the Middle Ages and early modern period. Jonas even mentions a litany of inventions of the modern era that, besides the use of new investigative instruments, had very little help from the new science: wind- and watermills, improved sailing vessels and sailing techniques, compass, loom, gunpowder, canon, metal alloys, deep mining, and porcelain. The argument proffered by Jonas and the Communio school, however, is that something very different happens when the natural development of technology gets divorced from a larger metaphysics of nature and man and becomes its own all-encompassing belief system. So, what were some of the constitutive historical elements and technological discoveries that made the 18th century ripe for a new kind of progress, one increasingly reflective of a powerful and unbridled technocracy? To conclude this chapter, I will return to Hans Jonas’ narrative to describe how this modern free thinking mind and reductionistic theoretical method of the new science merged with the social and

[250] Ibid., 73.
[251] It is helpful to think about this history in light of Romano Guardini’s observations of the Italian countryside in his Letters from Lake Como. This revolution of thought, with its distinct metaphysics and priorities, brought with it an entirely new way of living on the earth. It certainly was the case that for centuries, people conformed their life to the land and the limits of nature in conjunction with creativity and technological progress. Yet, as the history unfolded, something dramatically shifted when technology and its values became its own alternative universe, self-sufficient and almost independent of given nature.
economic realities and the technological developments in what is now called the Industrial Revolution. In all, it was a perfect storm.

Jonas points out that, just like at the beginning of the modern era, there were a whole host of social needs and economic developments that provide the necessary preconditions of commercially successful innovation and a social, political system capable of sustaining and institutionalizing the processes of rapid technological change once they had started. Some of those key social and economic factors at play in making the moment ripe for technological progress are the following: governmental enclosure of farmlands and common spaces and the consequent movement away from an agrarian-based life; rapid population growth and growth settling particularly in the cities; fairly stable and liberalizing political climate that supported a movement away from feudal, clerical, and aristocratic privileges; high unemployment in cities, thus available (desperate) working class; broad support for a more creative, entrepreneurial approach to industry; rise of factories and new means of production; new wealth and new power among factor owners and other industrialists; widely-available credit and
fewer tariffs; and a whole new vast set of resources and markets available through colonial expansions.252

A key ingredient to this whole industrial project was figuring out how to move from a human-powered society to an efficient machine-powered one. Jonas explicitly names the moment when humanity had discovered how to power work-producing machines with artificially generated and processed natural forces as one of the most important technological moment of the Industrial Revolution.253 With the advent of the steam engine, for example, a factory that once had to be near a water source for power could, through a new device that used boiling water to create mechanical motion, be built now technically anywhere. This technological change itself transformed the possibilities of manufacturing and industry, creating new jobs, new products, and new wealth, and in conjunction, required available and abundant fuel, workers, and engineers to work on, tweak, and invent new and better machines. So too, the success of this new means of production required a liberalized political order that provided the freedom to build, expand, and produce at great volumes. This marriage of politics,

253 Jonas, 75.
industry, science, and technology is an important union for the creation of technocracy as we know it.

The other key technological development that Jonas names that opens the door to our current technocratic world is the emergence and then subsequent rapid growth of artificiality. This, as he shows, is found in the areas of chemical and electrical technology first, and then eventually in our own day with the advent of electronic technology. What happens in chemical engineering is the actual changing of substances found in nature and the synthesizing of radically new substances which nature itself had never known. This can be seen in the creation of dyes, fertilizers, and vast array of pharmaceutical products. Jonas notes how at first this basically follows the traditional pattern of “art imitates nature” and similar to what happens in wine-making and metallurgy, but that through ensuing developments in areas like molecular engineering, the scientist could begin to imagine and then conduct experiments at redesigning nature in such a way that we could now produce substances that nature had not ever imagined.

Jonas claims that with chemical industry, we also finally see the marriage of technological progress with the new methods and goals of science. It is the moment, he

\[254\text{ Ibid., 76-79.}\]
argues, when “small-scale investigation and large-scale application became parts of one intertwined venture.” 255 From this point on, “Increasingly the tasks of research were set by the interest of industry…the idea of applicability was never far from the researcher’s mind.” 256 They become part of mutual feedback loop, each informing and inspiring and forming the limits and goals for each other.

This creation of “artificial” substances through science, applied technology, and industry is most pronounced and formative in the creation of electricity, says Jonas. There was nothing like it before science discovered and created it. Jonas drives this home, “Electrical technology is thus the first that was wholly and unilaterally science-generated…It is an abstract entity, disembodied, immaterial, unseen; and to all practical intents, viz., as a manipulable force, it entirely an artificial creation of man.” 257 Jonas sees this as the moment of a complete break with the traditional “art imitates nature” view. The reductionist scientific method meets applied technology, and what arrives but the creation of artificial substances. These brand new artificial substances are now manufactured with the growing industrial means of production, then distributed and sold throughout the expanding world of liberalizing economies. “With its new,

255 Ibid., 76.
256 Ibid., 76.
257 Ibid., 77, 78. Italics in original.
synthetic substances, it introduces things unknown before into daily use and thoroughly refashions the habits of consumption,” Jonas states well the eventualities of this perfect storm that we are calling technocracy.\textsuperscript{258}

Jonas hints at the relatively short distance needed to be traversed to move from this moment of artificiality in electricity to what we have in electronic technology. Through the advent of electronic products, we now have a vast array of artificial products that are only vaguely related to anything one could find in nature. They are pure inventions. Sure, for the most part these new products continue to serve human needs of providing food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and communication. But the existence of these new products of technology also carry their own novel and formative ends that in turn reshape humanity in such a way that we feel our life stripped naked without them. They have reconstituted what it means to be human. Nature now is artifice; the “artificial” and “inorganic” have become “normal” and “natural.”

Jonas concludes his essay wondering where this historical trajectory will take us as a civilization. With significant technological developments in recent years in the frontier of genetics and biology, the rise of technological enhancements like plastic surgery and gender modification, and the growing technological (especially nuclear)

\textsuperscript{258} Ibid., 77.
capacities of countries for war, one can be gripped by a mix of marvel, bewilderment, and fear.\textsuperscript{259} Without a larger metaphysics of nature and an understanding of human knowledge rooted in contemplation, a “sound ethics and spirituality” says Pope Francis, are we left without guides and limits to whatever is physically feasible? It appears that we are beginning to rewrite the text of what it means to be human, or, as this history overview has shown, perhaps we have been on a trajectory towards this

\textsuperscript{259} It is important to note here again that there some thinkers who see the spirit behind these kinds of technological advances aligning with spirit of a Christian call to betterment in an imperfect world. We saw this even in Romano Guardini’s thought. Throughout Christian history, there have been people and movements who have had more imminent eschatological horizon. Transcendence, perfection, and the fullness of life in Christ do not need to wait for a future age, these authors posit; rather, we can have it all in the here and now. In one Baconian itineration of this, it is science and technology that will usher in this new age of the spirit. All contingencies and tensions will be resolved. A recent book, edited by Ronald Cole-Turner, gathers Christian theologians together to reflect on what is at stake in the emergence of a growing set of technologies that are allowing humanity to explore life beyond our natural limits, a kind of “transhumanism.” The degree to which these transhumanist visions of the future align with our Christian aspirations for a resurrected body and a renewal of the world is a fascinating exploration. See Ronald Cole-Turner, ed., \textit{Transhumanism and Transcendence} (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011). This would also dovetail with the kinds of explorations Michael Gillespie and Charles Taylor offer in their analysis of the secular and modern. There are more theological, religious questions being played out in our technological fantasies than we like to talk about in a serious way. Despite these kinds of explorations, my argument here, with Pope Francis, Jonas, and others, is that this metaphysical shift experienced in the Scientific Revolution not only unleashed human freedom but also unchecked greed, individualism, and materialism. It might in fact be the search of some human betterment, but it also assumes the role of God and abandons any larger and limiting metaphysics, ethics, tradition, or divine sovereignty. See critique of transhumanist aspirations as idolatrous and acts of hubris in Mark Shiffman, “Humanity 4.5,” in \textit{First Things} November 2015, \url{https://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/11/humanity-45}. 162
moment for a long time already. This narration of the history of the Scientific
Revolution, focusing on its philosophic shifts, allows us to understand the historical and
metaphysical roots of this technocratic paradigm and grasp the full implications of
where this paradigm might be leading.

The purpose of this chapter was not to romanticize a past way of looking at the
world, in the sense that we can or should go back to the Middle Ages, but rather, the
purpose was to draw out some important historical moments, figures, and, most
importantly, metaphysical shifts in genealogy of modernity that cannot be ignored in
our larger task of discerning a more faithful response to our current technocratic
moment. Here again, Pope Francis sets us on the right course as we consider our
responsibility going forward. Directly referencing Guardini’s words from The End of the
Modern World around humanity’s need for a renewed Christian conscience and
worldview that checks our unbridled freedom and takes responsibility for our God-
given call to His creation, Pope Francis writes:

The fact is that ‘contemporary man has not been trained to use power well,’
because our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a
development in human responsibility, values and conscience. Each age tends to
have only a meagre awareness of its own limitations. It is possible that we do not
grasp the gravity of the challenges now before us. ‘The risk is growing day by
day that man will not use his power as he should;’ in effect, ‘power is never
considered in terms of the responsibility of choice which is inherent in freedom’
since its ‘only norms are taken from alleged necessity, from either utility or
security.’ But human beings are not completely autonomous. Our freedom fades
when it is handed over to the blind forces of the unconscious, of immediate needs, of self-interest, and of violence. In this sense, we stand naked and exposed in the face of our ever-increasing power, lacking the wherewithal to control it. We have certain superficial mechanisms, but we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint.  

It is to this “spirituality capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded restraint” that we now turn.

260 LS 105. The End of the Modern World, 82-83.
CHAPTER FOUR: A CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY IN TECHNOCRATIC AGE

In this final chapter, I now return turn to the question of how we might live out this distinctly Christian worldview in today’s technocratic world. Given the environmental and social degradation of our world, what does life in Christ look like today? What new habits, attitudes, and practices are called for in this particular cultural moment? How might our relationships with people and places and technological devices look different because of our Christian worldview? What does meaning, fulfillment, and happiness look like in today’s technocratic paradigm? Are there others outside the Church who are more active in their critical engagement of technocracy? If so, what do we have to learn from them, or share with them? If we live from a distinctly Christian worldview, what relationship do we then have with the wider technocratic culture, its devices and practices? Or to return to our metaphor from the Introduction, what does it look like to live our lives aligned with the Word running under the waters today? These questions fuel our probing in this final chapter.

In the following, I will flesh out the contours of a spirituality for our technocratic cultural moment by pointing to a variety of thinkers who are taking these questions seriously. I will explore Pope Francis’ musings on these questions in *Laudato si’* first, highlighting his recommendations for specific attitudes and virtues, principles, and even some specific practices of how we might live today given the Christian worldview.
he articulated in the encyclical. The spirituality Pope Francis preaches in the encyclical is one that is hardly preached from the pulpit of our parishes, and we would do well to heed its wisdom.

I will then point to several contemporary popular Christian authors whom I find useful in providing some guidance in living a more intentional spirituality today in the context of our technocratic world. As indicated throughout this thesis, the mentors I find most attractive are those who are calling for a more contemplative posture rooted in the Christian worldview that puts them in tension with our middle-class technocratic culture today.

My last investigation will be to highlight some complementary work from a number of contemporary authors not explicitly working within the Christian tradition or worldview. Their work, however, looks to help people today to find meaning, balance, and fulfillment in today’s technocracy. My argument is that we Christians should pay better attention to their responses of how we might live more meaningful lives in the world today. Also, because so much of their ideas resonate with Pope Francis’ recommendations and the larger Christian tradition, the hope is that this investigation proves that Christians should bring their wisdom to this important conversation.
Throughout this whole chapter, I will keep a close eye on the context of the family and household through the books and examples I reference. The claim threading this chapter will be that local, home-based practices, strategies, and opportunities for discipleship, mission, and evangelization are foundational and significant. What we do in the most local of contexts matters. Key to my argument will be a view that the home is where the most intimate relationships are made and nurtured, where cultivation of virtue transpires, and is of the proper scale for the kind of accountability that keeps people faithful. In theological terms, the home is the place whereby the laity has the potential to create a meaningful and faithful “domestic church,” and thereby most freely exercise its fundamental identity as “priest, prophet, and king” and bear witness to love of God and love of neighbor. Most fundamentally, the home, and the relationships and practices within, is the most central place where we encounter God and sort out the contours of the “call and response” rhythm of our everyday lives. I believe that Pope Francis gets this beautifully in his last chapter of Laudato si’.

This view is connected to one of the assumptions in this thesis, that the modern North American home does not necessarily function as a meaningful place for the lay faithful to encounter God, grow in virtue, or enact the social mission of the Church. Rather than a rich formative place in Gospel living, the home has now become a private haven to retreat to, a place that isolates us from people in need, and a place that is
shaped almost entirely by the rationalistic, individualistic, consumerist, and technocratic values that pervade middle-class realities. This is true even for the faithful lay person who might advocate and serve the poor in their work and political life. While there are faithful Christians who try to make the home a real place of formation and witness, frequently, the laity takes this wider technocratic culture as a given, sometimes even as a sure sign of God’s beneficence, history’s progress, and one’s own achievement. This chapter will not be an attempt to argue for a particular family make-up. I want this project to be something that pertains to the single person, the married couple, the elderly, and the young adult. I am not here arguing for a certain definition of marriage and the family or holding some nostalgic view of the family. Rather, I am wondering about the postures and practices of any version of a localized community of faith that is more or less home-based.

It is again important to note here that this exploration of a new spirituality for a technocratic age presupposes the situation of North American middle class life. Surely, this spirituality might look different in a situation of scarcity, as opposed to the one I (and Pope Francis) seem to be primarily addressing, one of excess. Many in the world, even in North America, live their daily lives in a state of survival and avoidance or
alleviation of some immediate pain and suffering. In a context of addressing
immediate basic needs, as Pope Benedict writes in *Caritas et Veritate*, “The principal
concern must be to improve the actual living conditions of the people in a given region,
thus enabling them to carry out those duties which their poverty does not presently
allow them to fulfill.” Development programs that are not extensions of technocracy
but rather promote human dignity, solidarity, access to meaningful and dignified work,
and care for the environment are the ways forward that the Church’s social tradition
has long promoted.

Acknowledging this global reality and our Christian obligations to practice
charity and work for social justice, this thesis is primarily directed at the majority of the
world’s population, and the vast majority in North America, who must figure out not
just how to get their daily bread but how they might rightly choose which bread most
satiates their deepest hungers. Rather than definitional questions and prescriptive rules,
I am looking here to take honestly Pope Francis’ challenge that we need a new

261 According to the World Bank, global poverty rates, although going down, remain very high. According to the most recent estimates, in 2013, 10.7 percent of the world’s population lived on less than US$1.90 a day. Half of the extreme poor live in Sub-Saharan Africa. Access to good schools, healthcare, electricity, safe water and other critical services remains elusive for many people, often determined by socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and geography. Moreover, for those who have been able to move out of poverty, progress is often temporary: economic shocks, food insecurity and climate change threaten to rob them of their hard-won gains and force them back into poverty. See [http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview).  

262 Benedict, *Caritas et Veritate*, 47.
spirituality and lifestyle for today. One of Pope Francis’ main points in *Laudato si’* is that this concern for a spirituality today is also a matter of charity, mercy, and justice. In that vein, my hope is that we will see common attitudes and practices that might speak to us, cause us to pause and reflect more deeply on our lives. The larger goal is that through this exploration, we might be able to discern more clearly God’s disruptive grace. Then, with this vision, we might be able to again “read the waters” in a Christian way in the midst of today’s technocratic world. As the Pope says in *Laudato si’*, we need an ethic, a culture, and a spirituality capable of setting limits and teaching us self-restraint. This thesis has attempted to offer a compelling argument for the need for this spirituality. This chapter gives some ideas about its shape.

**I. *Laudato si’*: A Spirituality for Today**

Given the technocratic shape of modernity, *Laudato si’*’s Chapter Four and Six are Pope Francis’ opportunity to challenge the Christian to change course in their lifestyles, to call for a re-formation process of what it means to live today, and to propose some principles to guide the Christian in this new lifestyle. It is important to say again that posing questions about the technocratic shape of our lives is not to propose that we ought to roll back or put a halt to technology per se. The Stone Age is not the goal. As Pope Francis says instead, “We need to slow down and look at reality in a different way…to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our restrained delusion
of grandeur."

*Laudato si’* presents then an opportunity to pause and see afresh how we might live with Christ today beyond the emptiness at the heart of our lives and the glamour of sin. As we have seen, being aware of the contours of different paradigms is the first important step, and then, as Pope Francis says in the opening paragraph of his last chapter in *Laudato si’*, “This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes, and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual, and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.”

With new awareness of technology’s role in our lives and its paradigm’s shadow-side, a new and more fruitful relationship with technology might emerge.

While there are certainly political, economic, and scientific lines of approach for change (See *Laudato si’*’s Chapter Five), Pope Francis says that it is we who need to change most of all.

Pope Francis suggests that given the state of our world today, with

263 LS, 114.
264 Ibid., 202.
265 Ibid., 202, “Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change.” The Second Vatican Council’s *Gaudium et Spes* also, while not denying we need political and economic change, points to the dichotomies and questions and tensions that are at the heart of man. The Church sees herself primarily, even exclusively, offering a religious response to riddles of the modern world, not a technical solution. “Christ did not bequeath to the church a mission in the political, economic, or social order; the purpose he assigned to it was religious,” 42. Certainly living a life of faith and love will oblige the Church to work for the common good with all institutions, but the Church sees her role in distinctly more personal and more religious terms. It is sin, Christ’s redemption, personal choice, human responsibility, faith, human dignity, and the call to be leaven and a sign of salvation in the world that are the most
the earth’s destruction and the anxious and lonely deserts of our hearts, what we might need to experience is akin to a profound conversion. Like Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis sees this conversion ultimately as an interior conversion, a response to our inner desert. We need to meet Christ anew and begin to see our lives from this Christ-centered worldview. Over time this encounter of joy and beauty will open up our lives to a new horizon for living in our world that calls us to a deeper and more intentional relationship with the created world and our neighbor. Our interior conversion will then naturally become evident in our relationship with the world around us.266 Pope Francis lifts up the model of St. Francis of Assisi whose own conversion led to a reimagining of a spirituality where everyone, from the leper to the moon, is a brother and a sister. Although we often get an image of St. Francis in the bird bath, it is important to know that for St. Francis, his primary way of naming his life was as a life of penance. In that vein, this saint shows us that this new lifestyle will require us to face up to the ways we have harmed God’s creation through our technocratic actions and failures to action and frequent themes. In the later chapters of this Pastoral Constitution, the ones that deal specifically with issues of economics, war and peace, and marriage and family, the Church remains rooted in considering these issues in light of her basic theological premises of personal responsibility, human dignity, and Christ’s redemption. For the emphasis on personal conversion, see especially paragraphs 10, 13, 30, 40, 42, and 43.

266 Ibid., 217.
then offer heartfelt repentance. This life of penance, the saint says, is one that truly opens us up to fulfillment and meaning.

Pope Francis acknowledges that we are ultimately facing a challenge of reforming Christians in their own worldview. If we experience a conversion of heart, we need to learn or re-learn what a new life in Christ looks like. And for us Christians, it has been like a long process of forgetting over the last number of centuries. We forgot who we are and thus forgotten how to live in the world in a Christian way. Again, Pope Francis wants us to know that this educational challenge is not about establishing new laws from above. Rather, it is about reshaping our imaginations, making our tradition compelling again, saying to us come and see and meet Christ in the Eucharist, and inviting us to practice some new attitudes and habits consistent with our Christian worldview.

What are some of personal habits and practices that follow from a Christian worldview in Pope Francis’ mind? The entire encyclical is full of ethical implications of our Christian worldview. While Pope Francis’ last chapter in *Laudato si’* is chock-full of suggestions for what this new spirituality might look like, it is not difficult to also glean from earlier chapters applied implications from his critiques. I list his suggestions here as a litany, a compilation of things to meditate upon as we consider a new spirituality within our technocratic moment. Again, for the Pope, these habits and practices are not
political responses to our world but fundamentally different postures to one’s everyday lives. They might have political implications, but they are home-based strategies not technocratic solutions. This spirituality in *Laudato si’* might be about the following:

- Learning about and experiencing the beauty of the created order by immersing oneself in it and making a home in it;
- Being aware of how each creature is already redeemed in Christ, reflects something of God, and has a message to convey;
- Caring for the created order in intentional acts of self-giving love and experiencing the goodness and meaning from those actions that spread out and touch others;
- Reaching out to those who are lost and in need inviting them into this culture of care to meet Christ and his beautiful and compelling order in creation;
- Experiencing gratitude, a recognition that it is all a gift from God;
- Seeing the Trinitarian relationality in all things, nurturing connectivity between people and things, and thus avoiding acting like we are disconnected from the rest of creation and our neighbors;
- Accepting the limits and suffering (the cross) at the heart of creation and our creaturely life;
• Being in touch with the shadow-side of the technocratic values implicit in our current consumerist lifestyles, and getting tuned into the moral dimensions of every action and personal decision we make;

• Understanding the power and idolatry of the media and the market, and consequently seeing one’s life in Christ largely as an act of resistance to their power;

• Accepting our own ache, inadequacies, poverty, and our own crosses, not so that we can figure out technocratic solutions but that we might offer them to God and understand them in the context of the larger providential plan of the Creator;

• Moving outside ourselves and experiencing our neighbor in all their dignity and worth;

• Preferring I-Thou encounters with people and places and things;

• Encouraging a culture of care and neighborliness in civic life, beginning with and especially in our most immediate circles of associations;

• Being aware of our own sinfulness and need for repentance; our temptations to run away, disconnect, and be unhappy with what is; and our inclinations to ennui and indifference;

• Seeing freedom not in liberating license to do whatever we want but in the alignment of one’s life with Christ and his created order;
• Relearning how to approach our work in a way that aligns with God’s vocation of stewardship and responsible, wise use of power;

• Doing work that fits into a larger sense of God’s redeeming love and created order;

• Doing more with less, being happy with little, and experiencing life’s little but beautiful pleasures like friendship, music, slow meals, and the beauty of the natural world;

• Seeing the contemporary relevance of the virtues of chastity, self-restraint, kindness, integrity, humility, and forgiveness in a culture of greed, boredom, vindictiveness, jealousy, and excessive sexual appetites;

• Making space for silence and prayer where one approaches life with a kind of attentiveness and presence that each moment is a gift from God to be lived to the full;

• Putting down and turning off what distracts us from being present;

• Choosing activities that presuppose a horizon that genuinely transcends the present moment.267

267 This litany is most directly gleaned from LS, 208-232 but the entire encyclical offers these kinds of clues. One my main frustrations with the commentary on *Laudato si’* thus far is the lack of this kind of summary and inviting people into consideration of their lives in this manner.
As we begin to live into these attitudes, habits, and virtues, rooted in our Christian worldview, a new kind of spirituality begins to emerge. Pope Francis calls this spirituality in a number of places “contemplative.” It is a way of seeing and living into the world where every thought, action, choice, encounter, thing, or person can open up an opportunity to encounter God and God’s goodness and grace. It is not a life characterized as aggressive, competitive, always searching for more and better and different, and consumed by its sense of liberated self. Rather, rooted in this Christian worldview, it is receptive, open, listening, always finding oneself in a state of gratitude for what is offered through the unfolding gift of one’s life. This spirituality is aware of where we came from and where we are headed. The telos of our lives, life in Christ, is experienced in the here and now, and when life is hard, we know that this final home in the City of God is where we will finally be at rest. In this way, Pope Francis echoes what we saw in previous chapters around a Christian worldview, a traditional way of seeing and living in a state of child-like receptivity and responsiveness to God’s good gifts.

There are also a number of concrete ways that Pope Francis suggests we can live out the important spiritual, theological, and scientific axiom that everything is

268 Ibid., 233.
connected. He calls this view of how everything is connected an “integral ecology.”

He wonders how this contemplative, integral (Christian) worldview would require us to review aspects of our lives that we normally consider remote from other aspects. In this, he asks us to pay more attention to questions of where we live, how we live into our places, who are our neighbors, and what is our participation in larger institutions of the market and the state. To align our lives more closely with this integral view, our responses to these questions, Francis suggests, might have a different flavor.

He wonders, for example, how we might live in such a way that does not act like where we live is devoid of a history, or absent of people who might hold their own more indigenous way of interacting with the land. In several places, he emphasizes how we might learn from people who experienced the land as a gift from God and a

\[\text{IBID.}, 138-140. \text{ Pope Francis wants to show in Chapter Four of } \text{Laudato si’ } \text{ that the axiom that everything is connected is not just wisdom rooted in our biblical and Christian imagination but a premise of other fields of study as well. In the first part of the chapter, Pope Francis highlights how integral ecology is a guiding principle underlying ecological and environmental studies, pointing out the way that more and more scientists are studying the integral relationships between living organisms and their habitats, between subatomic particles, between planetary sciences, and between the shared genetic code among all living beings. As scientists recognize the way different creatures and aspects of nature, each with their intrinsic goodness, relate to one other and that there are larger ecosystems that we all depend upon for our existence, the view that there is an a prior reality which precedes our existence comes to the fore, even for those who do not share the Christian worldview.} \]

\[\text{IBID.}, 143-146, 179.\]
sacred space to maintain their identity and values. In another example, he wonders how our quality of human life is related to kinds of settings we live in and work in. Yes, any place, he suggests, has the potential for one to make a dignified life, but nevertheless, we must not downplay the quality of our settings to the quality of our soul. If where we live or work is ugly, over-stimulated, and saturated with noise, he says it makes it “difficult to find ourselves integrated and happy.” Thus, how we design our homes, buildings, neighborhoods, public spaces, and cities must operate from within this spiritual, integral vision. There are distinct ways of planning that increase people’s sense of belonging, rootedness, and feeling of attunement with nature, and there are ways of planning that segregate, uproot, and leave people feeling isolated and independent of nature. Do our spaces help us connect, relate, and favor the recognition of our neighbor, or do they reinforce a sense that we each our own self-sufficient island? These are not superfluous questions, Pope Francis argues. Urban is connected to rural, inner city to suburban, and country to country. People who claim a Christian worldview or others who grasp this integral ecology cannot continue to live like we are not connected in fundamental ways.

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271 Ibid., 146, 179.
272 Ibid., 147-149.
273 Ibid., 150-154.
Echoing his predecessors, Pope Francis also sees the connections between this spiritual, integral view of nature and our moral life. In the same way that there are laws governing the way nature works within certain habitats, the “ecology of man,” as Pope Benedict XVI called it, also lives with certain laws inscribed into the nature of his body and his moral life. Pope Francis writes, “Learning to accept our body, to care for it and respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology.”

In this way, Pope Francis guards us from seeing fundamental conflict between men and women. He invites us to see the mutual enrichment between the sexes, the giftedness of one’s body and our sexuality, and the interrelationship between our bodies and all of creation. This is a very embodied form of spirituality. Finally, Pope Francis calls us to consider intergenerational solidarity as a vital way this integral vision plays itself out in a spirituality for today. “Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others…the world we have

274 Ibid., 155.
275 Ibid., 155. As noted in the Literature Review in Chapter One, some commentators take issue with Pope Francis’ (and the Catholic Church’s) positive view of the body as created and ascribed with a particular order and meaning. The point here is that the Church is consistent in its view – all of creation is inscribed with meaning and order by the Creator which forms an organic ecological whole. This view certainly puts the Church at odds with contemporary views, views that suggest that any so-called natural order to our bodies or to creation in general has been constructed, constructed by those in power who are invested in keeping an order in place to protect their benefit.
received also belongs to those who will follow us.” 276 Being aware that the world is on loan to each generation awakens us to a sense of the responsibility that we have as stewards of this particular moment in time. If we are too focused on our own personal interests, we do not consider the consequences of our actions right now for our own children. The integral vision opens us up then to ask different questions, “What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?” 277 These questions are at the heart of the meaning of life not just for ourselves but for future generations.

Pope Francis is keenly aware that in such a technocratic-saturated culture, it is very difficult to learn how to live this way. Where does Pope Francis suggest we learn this stuff? What are the contexts for practicing these new attitudes, habits, and virtues? Where do we grow and get mentored in this contemplative spirituality? Pope Francis points to several places. First, there is the important role of the family and home, which is, quoting St. Pope John Paul II, “The place in which life – the gift of God – can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth.” 278 The

276 Ibid., 159.
277 Ibid., 160.
278 Ibid., 213. John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 39.
family is where we should first learn that everything comes from God and is thus a gift. It is where we learn an attitude of stewardship. It is where we are challenged and nurtured to live a virtuous life and cultivate habits that show love and respect for creation and all of life’s gifts. Pope Francis says that we should learn this contemplative way of seeing the world in our families. It is not something we can just read about in a book. To learn this worldview is to be immersed in its practice and within a culture where others see the world this way. One cannot learn the art of fly-fishing just by reading about it. We learn the art by being in relationship with others. Families are a fundamental context for seeing the world as a interrelated whole. Even as we gain our sense of autonomy and spirit of creativity, it is in the family where we nevertheless learn to continue to ask for things, to express gratitude, and to practice self-control. In the home, we learn that the virtues are always relevant, and that survival cannot happen unless we regularly solicit the forgiveness of others.279

This focus on the family cannot be underestimated in a culture where an intentional family life is constantly being threatened and undermined. For many, our homes are no longer places of formation.280 As a result, all kinds of other technocratic

279 LS, 213.
280 20th century social critic Christopher Lasch wrote extensively about the family breakdown in a technocratic culture. His life’s work was devoted to lifting up our reliance on memory,
institutions, products, and values replace this primary formational institution of the family. The Church, in her multiple gatherings of bishops and lay leaders, and in both Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*\(^\text{281}\) and Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*,\(^\text{282}\) offers compelling arguments and practical suggestions for living more deeply out of our marriages and families for the sake of evangelizing ourselves and the world as a whole. Our families are the most basic cells of society; they are our domestic churches; they are the primary places where we put flesh on our integral spirituality. It is in our families that we have daily opportunities to put God’s sacrificial love into action. Pope Francis writes in *Amoris Laetitia* in a chapter called “The Spirituality of Marriage and Family Life”:

> Lord’s presence dwells in real and concrete families with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes. Living in a family makes it hard for us to feign or lie; we cannot hide behind a mask. If that authenticity is inspired by love, then

education, virtue, limits, craftsmanship, and humility. He saw that our social bonds are nurtured by our shared sense of weakness and brokenness more than anything else. He saw family life and religion as a place to reclaim hope in the context of the virtue of humility. For him, the ascendency of technology and science, with its paradigm, values, and goals, is just one ill-shaping feature of liberalism. See especially his 1977 work *Haven in a Heartless World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), his 1979 work *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), and his 1991 work *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991).


the Lord reigns there with his joy and his peace. The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but real gestures. In that variety of gifts and encounters which deepen communion God has his dwelling place. This mutual concern brings together human and the divine for it is filled with the love of God. In the end marital spirituality is a spirituality of the bond in which divine love dwells.  

In a thousand of small and real ways, our family life, full of its struggles and joys, is full of thick opportunities to respond with graciousness to God’s presence. Do we see our families and our homes in this way?

Pope Francis also points to the role of churches and other community networks to provide this re-formation in a Christian worldview and lifestyle. He says that it is within these that we learn accountability, responsibility, and the necessity of for sharing resources and learning. It is also vital that we are surrounded with others who share a vision of life that encourages us in our difficult walk of a contemplative spirituality in our technocratic world. As the Beatitudes remind us, to live this Gospel saturated life will inevitably involve facing questioning, skepticism, and even persecution. “Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of righteousness: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs” (Mt 5:10). We need each other to get through this difficult Christian journey.

283 AL, 315.
284 LS, 214, 219.
In the final section of *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis elucidates the rich spiritual archive of resources available in our own Christian-Catholic tradition. These resources are ultimately the treasures of the Church in their potential to form us in this contemplative life of holiness. He mentions three areas I want to highlight: Eucharist, Sabbath, and the Communion of Saints. First and foremost, Pope Francis points to our worship in liturgy and our Sacraments. He writes, “The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane.”\(^{285}\) In this way, the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, form us to see the world in a non-technocratic way where heaven and earth are joined, the whole cosmos gives thanks and praise, and where we are directed to be sent out to be stewards of creation. This echoes Alexander Schmemann’s point about the experience of cosmic communion in *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*. Here, he suggests that our participation in the Eucharist as an experience of thanksgiving ushers forth an intimacy with the Lord and all his gifts. We come to know everything in relation to God’s love and experience everything to be in communion with God. In this, our communion is one that leaves us in a state of praise and blessing. He writes says, “Thanksgiving is the ‘sign,’ or better still

\(^{285}\) Ibid., 235.
the presence, joy, fullness, of knowledge of God, i.e., knowledge as meeting, knowledge as communion, knowledge as unity...Knowing God transforms our life into thanksgiving.”

As we saw in Chapter Two when engaging the work of James K.A. Smith, our participation in liturgy as a way of being in communion with God and God’s good gifts is a transformative event, perhaps the most loaded forms of ritual practice because it shapes our hearts. Our participation in the Eucharist determines what we love most, our ultimate desire. If our deepest hungers are for God, then this experience of communion and thanksgiving in our participation in the Eucharist has the capacity to affect how we live our lives. Again, it is therefore helpful to understand the wider technocratic culture offering its own liturgies, its own invitations to worship and praise, its own ability to have formative power over what directs our hearts. In this vein, the Eucharist can be understood to be a kind of “counter-pedagogy” to the technocratic cultural liturgies we stand in and are shaped by.

William T. Cavanaugh’s work is particularly instructive in exploring this counter-formational aspect of our participation in the Eucharist and our claim of faith in

287 Smith, 75-88.
the Triune God in the Body of Christ. Cavanaugh sees clearly that our supposedly disenchanted technocratic Western society remains heavily enchanted by the idols and values of nationalism, consumerism, and cults of celebrity. Through Baptism and in our regular participation in the Body of Christ, we are saying to ourselves (and the world) that our lives are claimed by Christ, that we are citizens of another city, that we are marked people. He argues that our participation in the Eucharist, and its formative power on us, has historically led (and can still lead if we take it seriously) to a radically different posture to these technocratic idols and values. Again, this identity in Christ and our experience of communion with God and his gifts has implications for everyday lives. Cavanaugh argues that if our consumer technocratic culture thrives on depersonalized, profit-mentality, then our Christian worldview should compel us to want to discern and create economic practices, spaces, and transactions that are truly free, dignified, and suggest a trust in the abundance of God’s provisions. In that case, we might unearth the lives behind the things we buy and restore the human relationship between producers and consumers, and thus, see the value in shopping more locally where we are able to know the producers of the food we eat. Or we might

seek to create new dignified economic opportunities for people to take responsibility for their own gifts. This is how an integral, Christian worldview might be lived out that takes the claims in the Eucharist seriously.

Echoing Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*, James K.A. Smith says in a book about the “liturgies of home” that to live out of this Christian Eucharistic worldview would cause us to be more attuned to the rhythms and rituals that make up the hum of our families and the goals which our activities are oriented. We would be more reflective of how the Eucharist is or is not providing the operative vision for the good life in our everyday lives? What vision of the good life is carried in the practices that make up our home? Does it all grow out of and draw us back into the Eucharistic celebration in our local community of faith?²⁸⁹

Next we turn to the Sabbath. Pope Francis points to Sunday, the Sabbath, as “a day which heals our relationships with God, with our ourselves, with others, and with the world.”²⁹⁰ By honoring the Sabbath, we regularly enter into a contemplative rest and festivity that helps us re-attune ourselves to God’s mystical real presence in the

²⁸⁹ James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, Brazos Press, 2016), 111-136. In this chapter on the “liturgies of home,” Smith offers challenging ways to think about our marriages, parenting, eating, and other household activities from this Eucharistic perspective, one where everything is enchanted in a place of communion with God’s very being.

²⁹⁰ LS, 237.
universe. This creates in us a dimension of receptivity and gratitude. Rest also helps us stay in touch with the “big picture” and allows us to be reminded of what’s really important.

Here we would do well to reengage the work of 20th century German philosopher Josef Pieper, especially his work *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*.\(^\text{291}\) Pieper argues that if we do not understand leisure/contemplation or a Christian-Catholic worldview, we will never get work, action, or technology right.\(^\text{292}\) In his work, Pieper wants to explore the implications of culture that overemphasizes the world of work and has lost an ability to be in a state of leisure, or Sabbath rest. He asks these questions, “Is there still an area of human action, or human existence as such, that does not have its justification by being part of the machinery of a ‘five-year plan’?...Can the human being be satisfied with being a functionary, a ‘worker’? Can human existence be fulfilled in

\(^{291}\) Josef Pieper (1904-1997) was a German Catholic philosopher at the forefront of the neo-Thomistic turn within 20th century Catholic philosophy. As a prolific writer rooted in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, Pieper sought to translate the perennial wisdom of the Catholic tradition to the modern world. Much of his writings focus on the relationship between a Christian anthropology/worldview, contemplation, and the virtues. See *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Gerald Malsbary, (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 1998).

\(^{292}\) This theme is echoed throughout the work of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. See especially the last chapter of JP II’s encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (1981) and apostolic letter *Dies Domini* (1998), and Benedict’s *Caritas in Veritate* (2009). Again, Pope Francis is in direct continuity with his predecessors.
being exclusively a work-a-day existence?” His answers, of course, are “no.” Rather, he argues, referencing St. Thomas Aquinas, that in order to avoid a deadening of the soul that he calls *acedia*, we need to incorporate leisure in our lives, “leisure as ‘non-activity’ – an inner absence of preoccupation, a calm, an ability to let things go, to be quiet…a form of stillness that is necessary preparation for accepting reality.”

For Pieper, being able to enter into this state of leisure requires an act of faith, a trusting acceptance that the world in its mysterious and fragmentary character is whole, meaningful, and harmonious. God rests on the seventh day, steps back and feels its goodness. Sabbath rest is about resting in this cosmic order, this inherent goodness. Sabbath rest then encourages us to open up and let go, and to consider things “in a celebrating spirit” with an inner joyfulness.

Ultimately, for Pieper, this is not about merely a little portion of rest on Sunday but about a disposition to life, “a whole preserve of true, unconfined humanity: a space of freedom, of true learning, of attunement to the world-as-a-whole.” This Sabbath rest-leisure orientation is about living our everyday lives out in quite an entirely different way than the larger technocratic culture. It is not rest as amusement or simply a “downtime.” It is much

293 Pieper, 22, 24
294 Ibid., 31.
295 Ibid., 31-34.
296 Ibid., 37.
more about where our hearts are, a rest in God alone. Pieper calls this kind of leisure true “festivity,” or authentic “worship.”\textsuperscript{297}

In many ways, this entire thesis has been an apologetic for this kind of contemplative approach to everyday life. By entering into this kind of Sabbath rest, by making the contemplative life of leisure primary, we are reoriented, reintegrated, reformed in our original calling as children of God. The meaning of our lives is not to be found in our work or our technological creativity or in the technocratic dreams. Our meaning is only found in our rest with God. We are who we are not through what we achieve but through what we receive. If we do not get this right, we will never get work or technology right. This has been the teaching of the Church from time eternal. Pope Francis invites us to live from this place, to see and live our lives as a response to God’s good gifts. The Sabbath can teach us this. What kinds of ways do we incorporate Sabbath rest into our lives? Where and how can we regularly remind ourselves of God’s love, God’s goodness, God’s created order that we can trust and feel secure? What are the practices of “festivity” in our lives that renew our soul and immerse us in God’s own being?

\textsuperscript{297} Ibid., 50.
Lastly, the Church lifts up examples of holiness for us – what we call the Communion of Saints. The saints form us in Christian living. Seeing the world through their eyes is how the communion of saints continues to be an aid in our Christian journeys. They are real companions on this journey. Pope Francis mentions many such models, all of whom, for him, are examples of how to see the world through this contemplative Christian worldview. Pope Francis sees Jesus himself embodying this contemplative posture, this tender care and compassion, this constant in-touch-ness with creation in his ministry and work, and the expression of trust, gratitude, praise, wonder, and awe and in God the Father. His favorite saint is his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi with his fraternal, cosmic, and sacramental view of creation. But he also mentions the mysticism of St. Bonaventure and St. John of the Cross, and the little way of love of Thérèse of Lisieux. No gesture of love is too small, and everything can offer an experience of the Divine. The desert hermit Blessed Charles de Foucauld and his followers are mentioned as well for their ability to witness to the radical trust in God’s goodness in their life, their work, and their mission. St. Joseph is a model of care, protection, work, tenderness, humility, and generosity for others. The Virgin Mary, the “Queen of Creation,” is also lifted up as an example of someone who knows the limits

\[298\] LS, 96-98.
and suffering of the world intimately. Only her fiat and faithful following of Christ allowed her to reach the fullness of beauty and be carried up to heaven.

It is too often in the modern world that we approach the communion of saints just as if these holy men and women are exemplars intended to inspire us. This rather thin and flattened approach is not entirely what the Christian-Catholic tradition teaches about the saints. With Christ as the head of the Church, we believe that our communion with the saints is a real spiritual solidarity full of interrelated connections and opportunities for on-going I-Thou relationship as we all await our final glory and rest in God. The Church teaches that this communion is in fact “reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods.”299 Through this exchange, through intercession, they connect us more deeply to God and strengthen us on our spiritual journeys. The relationships we have with the saints then draw us out of ourselves and our technocratic lives. Surrounded by a whole family of holy men and women who have gone before us marked by Christ, we experience some kind of grace in being able to find another path in this world than just the one offered on television and our phones. Our kinship with the saints, a kinship that is stretched out across time and space, is real, incarnational, and embodied. Through the

299 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 955.
communion with the saints, our everyday lives are given new meaning, a new horizon, a sense of a larger mission and companionship.\textsuperscript{300}

This exploration of Pope Francis’ recommendations for navigating this current technocratic moment has allowed us to begin to understand the Christian worldview, complete with its attitudes, symbols (and real spiritual companions), and practices, as one that offers a comprehensive, timely, and prophetic spirituality for today’s technocratic world. This spirituality embraces the world in all its limits and glory. It is a spirituality of meaning and purpose. It is a spirituality that invites people to give praise and glory to the Creator. Beginning to see the world through this contemplative lens has the potential to move the faithful Christian away from a “beige Catholicism” where one adopts wholesale the world’s wares and into a more intentional, vibrant, and full life in Christ.

\textsuperscript{300}Two recent books have helped me in this more Catholic view of the communion of saints beyond just moral exemplars. See David Matzko McCarthy, \textit{Sharing God’s Company: A Theology of the Communion of Saints} (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012) and Robert Orsi, \textit{History and Presence} (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016). Orsi proposes a model of studying religion where we really take seriously people’s relationship with the gods, not dismissing god-talk as metaphors and symptoms of some malformed way of looking at the world. I was particularly moved by his ethnographic writing around people’s relationship with the Eucharist and the saints in their everyday lives. The relationships are “real” for people.
II. From Technocratic to Contemplative: Christian Mentors

We now turn in this next section to some contemporary Christian authors who, I believe, offer some compelling and theologically rich articulations for a new spirituality in our technocratic moment. Even more than Pope Francis does in his encyclical, these authors attempt to put flesh on the bones of what a life in Christ might entail today. In the work of these authors, we will see a spectrum of practical examples to take everyday life back from the grip of technocracy. I will briefly review these authors’ work, with an emphasis on showing how they see the Christian worldview providing a guiding contemplative posture to living our everyday life.

Recognizing that technocracy attempts to create its own rhythm and rules to one’s life, there have been many attempts to explore a new spirituality today by adopting the rules and practices of the Church’s monastic tradition. David Robinson’s *The Busy Family’s Guide to Spirituality: Practical Lessons for Modern Living from the Monastic Tradition* draws on the timeless principles of monastic communal living to

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301 While not every person referencing monasticism today claims Alasdair McIntyre as their intellectual hero, we must reckon with his influential call for another St. Benedict to rise up in order that we might ride out the “dark ages” of our cultural moment in the context of communities where intellectual and moral life could be sustained. See Alasdair McIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).
meet the countless challenges and distractions of contemporary life. Robinson uses the pattern the Rule of St. Benedict to lay out the structure of his reflections and offers tested suggestions, exercises, and activities at the end of each chapter to help the reader create a greater intentionality in the home. Robinson encourages families to create their own rule of life, develop a series of spiritual practices and rituals, host regular family meetings, create spaces for intentional hospitality, and open up times for Sabbath rest and re-creation. By way of another example, Catholic author Dolores Leckey’s *The Ordinary Way: A Family Spirituality* highlights insights around intimacy, equality, authority, prayer, solitude, and hospitality as the real building blocks of Christian family life, whether within the walls of the monastery or in the home next door.

In the last couple years, Rod Dreher, blog writer of *The American Conservative* and author of forthcoming book *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, has used this monastic type to think through how the faithful Christian might live through the “dark ages” of technocracy. He lifts up certain “rules” for living this Benedict Option. Examples including establishing a certain order for one’s

day, committing to prayer practices, developing ascetical practices, working in practical and embodied way like manual labor or in concrete acts of service to others, and opening up spaces for community and hospitality. Dreher identifies the sharp sense of boundary between one’s life and the wider technocratic culture that is inherent to monasticism as vital for this new spirituality for today. For this reason, Christian education and formation are of central importance. Dreher points to examples of those founding Christian-based schools/colleges and homeschooling as positive signs of this monastic-inspired turn. Dreher, and others of his ilk, are ultimately inclined to see themselves as “pilgrims and strangers” and “resident aliens” in this technocratic moment, giving up their power in the market and in politics, in order to re-form themselves into these monastic-like thickly Christian communities of virtue. It is by being reformed in a worldview rooted in their own distinct tradition that Dreher imagines Christians having something meaningful to offer the world as salt and light.

In Dreher and others we see a spotlight on the centrality of the Sacraments and active participation in a worship community. We also see the recommendation of the recitation of the rosary as a family practice and the role of a family altar. To have strong marriages and large families are often seen by this type as the main contexts for embodying their social witness. To live in a large family is not doubt an immersive vocation. They recognize more than many that on-line and digital technology is not a
neutral thing but deeply formative, thus requiring some intentional guidelines for limiting interaction or placing use within a larger framework.

In this more conservative posture to the world and humanity, there is a sober recognition of limits, contingencies, and the inherent opaqueness, even sinfulness, of our lives. It is a posture that encourages us to relish and be grateful for the givenness of things.\(^\text{305}\) We should certainly seek to ameliorate injustices and make marginal improvements in our world, but there is humility to what is really possible in this world. Given this, there is more of a spirituality of surrender and radical trust in God’s freedom and providence. This posture, aligning with my sentiments in this thesis, would be most inclined to be cautious of technocratic solutions to the soul’s or world’s problems. Therefore, more attention on dimensions of life that are closer to home like family, church, and neighborhood are often the focus. This is not because families are perfect but because this is the place where we are most in touch with the graced complexity of life and can actually live and think in a scale that is appropriate to our pieties. Conservatives tend to recognize that natural and social order are hard to achieve and easy to destroy, and thus, they tend to want to conserve things that are have a long distilled history like religion, like the land, like art and beauty. It is clear in

\(^{305}\) See R.R. Reno, “Gratitude for the Given,” *First Things* (February 2017) 
https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/02/gratitude-for-the-given
this thesis that I find myself drawn to this kind of conserving spirituality and think that many (maybe not all?) of Pope Francis’ intuitions lean this way as well.

Two contemporary theologians that share Dreher’s spirit of resistance to middle-class technocratic values who have written about marriage, family, and everyday life are David Matzko McCarthy and Julie Hanlon Rubio.\footnote{David Matzko McCarthy, The Good Life: Genuine Christianity for the Middle Class (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), and Sex and Love in the Home: A Theology of Household, (New Edition. London: SCM Press, 2004). Julie Hanlon Rubio, Family Ethics: Practices for Christians (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010).} McCarthy explores in his work what American everyday life might look like if we took our Christian identity as social creatures called by God to be free and responsive stewards of His gifts in acts of praise and worship and gratitude seriously. He emphasizes intentional friendship, hospitality to others, temperate lifestyles, and some concrete practices like limiting television, internet, and cell phone use; allowing children only one extracurricular activity at a time; giving away possessions that have not been used for six months; and intentionally setting aside quiet time. Rubio is a bit less radical than McCarthy in her recommendations, emphasizing sin and grace found in all contexts of life, but nonetheless she recommends taking the Christian tradition seriously when engaging in everyday habits of eating, shopping, tithing, serving others, and expressing and living with the sacred quality of our sexuality. Like with Cavanaugh and to some extent with
Dreher, Rubio and McCarthy suggest that our Christian worldview makes it very difficult to continue our conventional technocratic habits and practices.

There are a few authors to mention who lift up a contemplative spirituality for today but hold a blurrier line viz-a-viz the wider technocratic culture. These authors want to maintain some distinct identity and values of the Christian worldview, but they tend to be more accommodating to American culture as a whole in their everyday lives. As a whole they focus on the practice of discernment and the practice of the presence of God as a way to cultivate a growing awareness of God’s presence in the everydayness of the Christian. I believe that Pope Francis’ vision shares some of these more mystical leanings. I also share them. Certainly to lift everyday life up into the presence of God will provide a redemptive quality to this world.

Wendy Wright offers one model of this type.307 With the inspiration and example of Christian mystics, Wright probes the everyday, domestic life of dish-washing, carpooling, diaper-changing, and curfew-setting as sacred ground. These are everyday practices that in a technocratic culture lose their meaning. When their meaning gets lost, when our everyday life becomes marketed as empty and boring, the culture is happy to swoop in with its seductions and tantalizing distractions.

The work of James Martin, S.J. is another popular spiritual voice today. In Martin’s view, God is always calling us, will meet us where we are if we are open to it, will become our friend, and will always be with us in making every decision if called upon him. Richard Rohr, O.F.M. is also a popular speaker and writer about contemplation in our technocratic culture. With his many writings, speaking engagements, and the establishment of the Center for Action and Contemplation in New Mexico, Rohr has been a formative figure for many looking to integrate the cosmic spirituality of the mystics and Jungian psychology into everyday life. Both Martin and Rohr recommend contemplating the way God is present and active in all times and places. Overall, their recommendations revolve around a shift in consciousness, awareness, and patterns of the heart and mind. They speak of the many distractions of our technocratic culture, and the subsequent need for silence, prayer practices like the using the examen or reciting short mantras, spiritual reading, active community life and friendship, and frequent engagement with nature. There is an acknowledgement among these authors that it is not always clear where or how God is at work, but by believing that God has redeemed all of creation and continues to come near to us in the Spirit,

they emphasize the practice of discernment and radical trust in God’s mercy. These qualities of Martin and Rohr are admirable and attractive.

The work of Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra has also been influential to many Christians searching for a deeper Christian way of life in the contemporary North American context. Especially popular among mainline Protestants, their work has sought to give fresh meaning to ancient ecclesial practices like hospitality, keeping Sabbath, discernment, forgiveness, honoring the body, breaking bread, honoring beauty, and community life. They trace how these practices are things Christian people have done together over centuries to address the fundamental needs and conditions of humanity and all of creation in light of and in response to God’s active presence in Jesus Christ. By doing these things today, Christians reflect God’s grace and love in the world in embodied, social, thoughtful, and prayerful ways. Through the distribution of many books and study guides, this focus on making ancient Christian practices relevant for today has provided direction to many ecclesial leaders looking to help give the faithful a more Christian-rooted spirituality for today.  

There are another set of authors that find themselves responding to our technocratic culture by putting the emphasis on the Christian call to compassion, service, and advocacy on behalf of the marginalized. Our technocracy leaves many injustices in its wake; it is, as Pope Francis calls it, a “throwaway culture.” Some understand the message of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus himself primarily through a social justice lens, inspiring them to bind the wounds of widows and orphans, to care for creation, to seek justice, and to walk humbly and mystically with God. They see the importance of non-dual thinking, simple lifestyle, service projects on behalf of the poor, and social justice advocacy. One classic example of this type in the context of parenting is Kathleen and James McGinnis’ Parenting for Peace and Justice.\textsuperscript{311} The McGinnis’s espouse a view that family life contains an incredible number of opportunities to help children grow up with an ever greater awareness of the needs of others and a desire for universal social justice. They prioritize doing community service, attending protest marches, and giving children regular opportunities to interact with people of different cultural background.

Franciscan friar and author Dan Horan, O.F.M. also has recently been a major exponent of a Franciscan approach to spirituality.\textsuperscript{312} His emphasis is using the Franciscan relational language to emphasis a friendship with God and then a call to social justice, solidarity, and care of creation in ways that express the love we have for God and that God has for us. He uses the metaphor of “dating” to suggest that we should be “taken” by God’s love, and then challenges us to a more relational lifestyle with others and all of creation. This, in Horan’s expression, like with Martin, Rohr, and the McGinnis couple, tends towards a more progressive social justice orientation.

Another progressive social justice author is Leonardo Boff, a South American theologian and writer, whose work on liberation theology and ecology has frequently put him in tenuous place with the institutional Church. He nevertheless continues to publish books with a strong and overt critique of power in the form of patriarchy, capitalism, and ecclesial hierarchy.\textsuperscript{313} While much of Boff’s work focuses on political realities, what is most interesting to me is his promotion of the formation of small intentional non-technocratic “base communities” that embody commitments to environmental justice, simplicity, human technology, solidarity with the poor, and

\textsuperscript{313} See Leonardo Boff, \textit{Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997) as one example of his many writings.
equality. Like among those with a monastic turn, there is here a strong emphasis on lifestyle and praxis. Boff and others like him though are less firm on traditionally orthodox expressions of the Christian worldview.

Like with Horan and Boff, there are a number of Christian authors attempting to integrate ecological practices with our Christian worldview. Pope Francis’ encyclical in some ways gives an imprimatur on this kind of pursuit, a blessing that in prior days had not always been explicit. However, it is the case that many Christian authors exploring this ecological approach end up so comfortable with the stories of creation that the stories and practices of our Christian tradition tend to recede in the background. The work of the late Catholic priest and eco-theologian Thomas Berry provides one version of this type.\(^{314}\) Berry’s work looks at the history and functioning of the evolving universe as a necessary inspiration and guide for our own effective functioning as individuals and as a species. For Berry, by studying cosmology, geology, and ecology, one begins to understand the love of God and life he calls us to. For him, the wisdom found in this cosmological perspective opens up a path of freedom outside the grip of technocracy. Berry’s approach, however, puts the orthodox Christian tradition and worldview in the background. The earth’s story instead provides the

contours of how one should live one’s life. He reminds society of its function, particularly the universities and other educational institutions, whose role should be to guide people into an appreciation rather than an exploitation of the world around them. He also encourages people to live closer to the land and/or make regular habits of doing things that put oneself into this larger cosmological story.

Catholic religious women Joyce Rupp and Macrina Widerkehr provide another version of this type. In one of their popular works *The Circle of Life: The Heart’s Journey Through the Seasons*, they turn to the seasons of the earth to connect with the yearning they perceived in people to connect with the sacred. They offer a series of reflections, poems, prayers, and meditations on the four seasons of nature to open the readers’ eyes to what each season teaches. They want the reader to claim each season’s unique graces, use them as guides for life’s journeys, and be able to know God’s presence within and around at all times. They weave the Christian narrative with other mythical and poetic traditions, teasing out the way the earth, scripture, dreams, and myths all speak of universal archetypes by which one can perceive the movements of the sacred. A particularly fascinating study of an approach to spirituality that attempts to be similarly inclusive is Douglas E. Christie’s *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative*

Ecology. Christie is heavily influenced by the monastic habits and practices of contemplative prayer, but he also finds an affinity among artists, poets, and other writers, especially those whose attention on the natural world is strong. His recommendations for an authentic spiritual practice include making a home where we are, developing the art of attention, listening deeply to the song of the world, practicing selfless giving and emptiness of one’s ego, and always remembering the final homeland to which we are traveling.

Norman Wirzba offers another compelling example of this ecological approach to assisting us in living out a new spirituality for our technocratic times. Wirzba is interested in mining traditional Christianity for guidance in how we should live as creatures faithful to God’s created order. Wirzba’s work points to the importance of seeing the world through Christian eyes. His work centers on committing to concrete Sabbath practices, more intentional growing, cooking, and eating of our food, and the importance of creating spaces for gratitude. For Wirzba, there is a clear sacramental

understanding of creation, a sense that God speaks in and through the particular “natural” places and rhythms wherever one is. The crux of the matter is the person’s ability to perceive it, embrace it, and live by it.

Influenced by the work of Wendell Berry, Wirzba looks to challenge Christians to be more intentional about land stewardship and cultivation of affection for our places. The place to begin, he argues, is wherever we are, correcting the damage we are doing to the specific neighborhoods—the kitchens, homes, lawns, gardens, parks, streams, rivers, and fields we live in. To do this we must ask questions like: How much poison are we putting into the ground, water, and air? Is the food we eat produced, distributed, and shared in ways that honor the Creator and respect creatures? Where is the energy that fuels our ambition coming from, and how is it being produced and at what cost? What happens to all our garbage? Answering these questions, we will have a sense for what we must do. While Wirzba, like Wendell Berry, does not suggest that one must live on a farm in order to practice this kind of intentional creation spirituality, there are some Christians who see the best response to the ravages of industrialization and technocracy is to “flee to the fields.”

318 Among Catholics, the leaders of the Catholic Land Movement which flourished in England and Scotland during the first few decades of the Twentieth century are a big inspiration for this back-to-the-land turn. G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Fr. Vincent McNabb O.P. and others
In all of these above mentioned models of spirituality today, the Christian tradition, in some form or fashion, is the primary guiding worldview for how we engage in our technocratic moment in more faithful and meaningful ways. In nearly every case, technocracy’s shadow-side haunts the author. Consumerism, individualism, materialism, industrialization, nationalism, and the distraction and abstraction that technology promotes are all frequently referenced. There is a sense among these authors that the interior life and the way we see the world translate to certain embodied practices and witness in the world. They see attempt to translate the Christian worldview for the contemporary believer. In different ways, they all feel that the wrote often and well of the ideal life of families living their Catholic faith in tune with both the natural and liturgical cycle of life. This movement also promoted the economic theory of Distributism, which was a theory built upon the early papal social encyclicals. Distributism stated simply that the means of production ought to be distributed as widely as possible. As Chesterton put it, each man, where possible, ought to have three acres and a cow. This is not to say that cities are bad or evil, but that in this view it is thought that too often cities lack the civility for which they stand. Man has become a slave to a system and he no longer has the normal occupation of looking after his own property. Today, instead, man spends all his work time looking after someone else’s property, or fulfilling a job that is little more than a cog in the wheel of a system over which he has no control. The Catholic Land Movement sought to settle families back on the land as a remedy to the disastrous effects of industrialization and technocracy on family life. See Flee to the Fields: The Faith and Works of the Catholic Land Movement (Norfold, VA: IHS Press, 2003) and http://newcatholiclandmovement.org/ for an attempt to revive this spirit. Also, Catholic Rural Life is a non-profit organization that serves the Church by responding to the needs of rural America in light of the Church’s teachings. They seek to revitalize America’s rural communities by advocating for a more just food supply, instilling a sense of wonder and responsibility for creation, and equipping rural men and women to take spiritual and economic leadership in their communities. See https://catholicrurallife.org/.
institutional Church is not doing enough to encourage believers to live intentional lives in Christ.

We also see differences, however, in how each author navigates the Church-Culture question. Some see the home, the family, or the farm as a kind of haven within the “dark ages” of technocracy. In this way, it emphasizes thick boundaries between the home/family and the larger culture. Hospitality might open it up to others, but its primary focus is on creating rhythms and practices rooted in the Catholic tradition and creation herself that give the family its own internal integrity. Living in an immersive way with creation and among like-minded people are values that grow out of these more monastic/base-community/back-to-land type expressions of the Christian worldview.

Others appeal to appropriate boundaries with the wider culture, but also encourage families to be much more involved in the world in a way that constantly reaches out beyond their comfort zone to the needs and issues of the poor and marginalized and the wisdom within creation and other non-Christian stories of meaning. For many of these authors, the ability to keep some kind of Christian integrity in our given jobs, neighborhoods, and larger participation in culture is brought forth by our ability to see God in all things. For some, this way of articulating the priority for the spiritual life allows for the slow fade of a distinctly Christian flavor to their spirituality.
and lifestyle. In these cases, the habits, attitudes, and practices might in time not look too different than non-Christians. My inclination, as has been emphasized throughout this thesis, is for thicker boundary with the technocratic world and a deeper and more intentional set of Christian practices that encourage attunement with God’s presence in creation, commitments to formative local settings of home and church and neighborhood, and everyday priestly habits for responsive self-giving to God’s good gifts.319

By exploring these contemporary Christian voices, we see that it is not the case that the Church is entirely silent. In fact, if we dig a little bit, there are some active and interesting conversations about how to respond to the larger culture’s technocratic goals and values. My point in this thesis has been that the Church as a whole must be more confident in the conversation around how to live explicitly in relationship to

319 An on-line Quarterly Review from the John Paul II Institute’s Office of Cultural and Pastoral Formation called Humanum: Issues in Family, Culture, and Science is an intriguing pastoral guide for integrating the Communio school of thought with everyday life and pastoral contexts. With annual themes like health, education, ecology, and technology, there are articles, book reviews, and practical wisdom for a contemplative spirituality today. Also Chad Pecknold, professor at Catholic University of America, wrote an interesting article in First Things that proposed a “Dominican Option” for our negotiation with our technocratic moment. Like St. Dominic, and the Order of Preachers, there is an emphasis here on study, prayer, and preaching. Less of a retreat, this spirituality keeps the thick formative identity in Christ but suggests a more outward facing evangelizing mission. See, Chad Pecknold, “The Dominican Option,” in First Things, October 6, 2014, https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/10/the-dominican-option. This also echoes the America article by James Dominic Rooney mentioned in Chapter One.
technocracy and its products. As we can see from *Laudato si’* and among these authors, there is a spectrum of possible types of spirituality. Pick one, or cobble together something that brings meaning. No doubt, Pope Francis is offering a timely and prophetic challenge to the Church to live into its Christian worldview more explicitly, to be more aware of the ways technocracy forms us in non-Christian ways. Given our Christian worldview, we should be providing leadership in this arena of imagining a new way of living today, but we often stand at the sidelines not exactly knowing how our Christian worldview translates into attitudes, habits, and practices that bear witness to a life in Christ. These authors provide mentorship in seeing what a Christian contemplative spirituality today might look like.

### III. From Technocratic to Contemplative: Non-Christian Mentors

God continues to call people into this deeper walk in the world, and there are many outside the Church who express some anxiety about living in today’s world and a longing for a more meaningful engagement with the world. Many people sense that a life of abstraction and distraction is a life not worth living and are thus looking for a life of more intentional presence, silence, and engaging with real things and people. Many are also thinking about priorities, goals, and purpose in their lives in ways that challenge them to look beyond the glitter of gold and the seduction of power. What is ironic in the context of this thesis is that many of the suggestions that come forth from
this turn towards intentionality and purpose are from people not explicitly Christian. Many of their recommendations, however, I believe, should be the very fodder for the Church in this time and place. By referencing the work of authors working outside the Church, we will begin to see how Pope Francis’ work in *Laudato si’* finds resonance with an active conversation among other seekers. I will highlight a number of authors and describe their work by lifting up their guiding questions and the subsequent recommendations in the context of this technocratic moment. There are six thinkers whose work I will lift up in this dialogue: Sherry Turkle, Nicholas Carr, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Albert Borgmann, Wendell Berry, and Roger Scruton. We will enter into dialogue with them and listen for complementary wisdom that deepens our goal in this thesis to help Christians be more discerning in navigating this technocratic moment

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320 Dialogue as an act of evangelization and witness is an important feature for this Pope. It is how he frames *Laudato si’*, “In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (3) and “I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (12). This call to dialogue is also a major feature of Pope Francis treatment of evangelization in his Apostolic Letter *Evangelii Gaudium*, “It is not enough that evangelizers be concerned to reach each person, or that the Gospel be proclaimed to the cultures as a whole. A theology – and not simply a pastoral theology – which is in dialogue with other sciences and human experiences is most important for our discernment on how best to bring the Gospel message to different cultural contexts and groups. The Church, in her commitment to evangelization, appreciates and encourages the charism of theologians and their scholarly efforts to advance dialogue with the world of cultures and sciences. I call on theologians to carry out this service as part of the Church’s saving mission. In doing so, however, they must always remember that the Church and theology exist to evangelize, and not be content with a desk-bound theology” (133).
and begin to take steps towards a more contemplative life in Christ. In all these explorations, we will be asking ourselves what we can learn from their work as we explore what a new spirituality today might look like.

Sherry Turkle

The first author I turn to is Sherry Turkle, a professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who has studied the psychology of human interactions with computational artifacts since the 1970s. Her early work studied the robot-human companionship. Her recent work investigates how seductive our new digital and social media technologies are and argues that these enchantments come with a price. She accepts how technological progress has brought more connectivity with people we love. Working with our natural desire to connect, these new technologies, however, are also leaving us not necessarily better or healthier or happier but, from her research, often emptier, lonelier, and sicker. She notes the greater rates of depression, anxiety, and existential feelings of meaninglessness, as well as fewer quality friendships, fewer meaningful connections to our work and our neighbors, and less of a capacity for the cultivation of the important human habits of silence, solitude, empathy, one-on-one conversation, and self-reflection. Turkle highlights that what is special about this technology is that it is small, small enough to be always on, always on us, always beckoning to us of some seemingly pressing need.
She explores the implications of engaging in this more pervasively technology-mediated world, especially where one now has more contact with people but less actual face-to-face contact. We are always connected but never actually connected. She argues that this situation causes people to be less self-reflective, less able to sustain the messiness, riskiness, and boredom that is real relationship and real life, and less empathetic with others. She challenges people to reclaim moments of solitude and silence and to be more mindful of where one puts one’s attention and how one nurtures one’s important relationships.\(^{321}\)

Nicholas Carr

Another social scientist leading the contemporary conversation about our technocratic cultural moment is Nicholas Carr. Like Turkle, Carr’s premise is that the paradigm and structure of technology has "hidden effects." Carr’s task is to bring these effects out of hiding and into the light. Carr argues that because of the brain’s neuroplasticity, our technological life is literally rewiring us to be more adept at perfunctory multitasking but gravely diminishing our ability to sustain focus, reflect, and think interpretatively. He points especially in his research to the way automation

and internet browsing affects us. He highlights how automation, for example, works with our expectations and creates unhealthy complacencies and biases. We become soft and lazy rather than thoughtful and intentional. In his view, belief in technology as a benevolent, self-healing, autonomous force is seductive—so seductive that we are no longer very good at thinking rationally about automation or understanding its implications. He argues that we have designed a system that discards us and pulls us away from the world as it is and tantalizes us with the assumption that the new thing is always better than the old thing. Like Turkle, Carr calls for a renewal of our capacities for accepting the limits of things and to spend more time in solitude, reflection, and meaningful relationality with others.\textsuperscript{322}

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

The work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, distinguished Professor of Psychology and Management at Claremont Graduate University and former head of the department of psychology at the University of Chicago, is influential and immensely

helpful for navigating this technocratic moment. Csikszentmihalyi’s research revolves around the question of how we can really live lives of fullness and happiness where we do not flit from one thing to the next, wasting our time and potential but rather, with focus, intention and creativity, participate in the complexity of the cosmos. His work lifts up a concept he calls “flow.” Flow, he says, occurs when one faces a clear set of goals, experiences immediate and relevant feedback, and feels one’s skills are fully involved. To experience this state of flow is to feel one’s psychic energy zeroed in in such a way that our self-consciousness fades and our sense of time becomes distorted, leaving us in a place of gratitude, awe, and selflessness. Csikszentmihalyi muses on the ways that our modern, technocratic culture has made it more and more difficult to enter this state of flow. He draws attention to the way our world today seems to lack clarity about what goals are inherent to life. We are a culture of a million options. We increasingly work in jobs that do not engage our passions, our skills, or our everyday lives, and they lack connection to any larger sense of mission or purpose. They are full of tedious routines and psychic and physical stress, which in turn act as impediments to achieving a state of flow. We are in relationships that lack solidity and structure, and in

a society of diffusion, there are few opportunities for us to experience accountability, belonging, and security. We have cast off the security of religious traditions and are now floating in search of some well for our inherent thirst. We have more free time than ever but ennui and passive engagement with superficial entertainment and abstract acts of living are omnipresent. In summary, our technocratic culture does not offer easy avenues for entering into this state of flow. Meaning, purpose, and happiness are hard to come by, he argues; it takes hard, intentional work.

Csikszentmihalyi ultimately points people to an intentional reflection about their lives to reclaim ownership and transform their approach. He lifts up the importance of marriage, having children, and family life, and he challenges us to approach these aspects of our lives with the same attention one enters a sport, artistic performance, or one’s work life. He challenges us to the messy but meaningful art of embodied friendship. He provides a series of questions that we might ask in our work lives that help provide greater sense of intentionality and encourages people to establish priorities. He pushes people to invest in activities that are more likely to produce flow, ones that involve more concentration and active engagement of our bodies and minds. Religion, Csikszentmihalyi also highlights, has historically played an important role in helping people achieve this state of flow by offering clear goals, immediate feedback, and engagement of one’s skills and passions. In so many words, while not advocating
for a formal commitment to religion, he is encouraging people to approach life with
spiritual intensity and religious conviction.

Albert Borgmann

One influential contemporary philosopher who has actively probed this question
of a deeper engagement with the world in a technocratic culture is Albert Borgmann.324
His focus is a critique of our virtual and technologically-oriented culture that, he argues,
is out of touch with the “real,” real things, real people, and real work and practices.
Borgmann sees the infusion of our culture with what he calls devices, which are any
physical or conceptual mechanisms. This “device paradigm” is the pattern of
technology. In his view, life has been and is now structured in new ways as
technological revolutions and devices infuse our culture. Devices have made it easier to
secure the goods necessary to live life, thus increasing their availability and our

324 Albert Borgmann, Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Crossing the Postmodern Divide (Chicago: University
of Chicago Press, 1992), and Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of Technology (Grand
Rapids: Brazon Press, 2003). I find Matthew Crawford’s recent books interesting development
of some of Borgmann’s themes. See his Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work
(London: Penguin Press, 2010) and The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an
case in both of these books for working with one’s hands, embodiment, situatedness, and real
encounters with places and things as an antidote to technocracy’s tendency towards abstraction
and distraction. Borgmann’s work has also been engaged by Christian authors. See Richard R.
Gaillardetz, Transforming Our Days: Spirituality, Community, and Liturgy in a Technological Culture
(New York: Crossroads, 2000) and Marva Dawn, Unfettered Hope: A Call to Faithful Living in an
viability. For this, we are grateful. But in Borgmann’s mind, the disburdening provided by the device leads to a life that is neither noble nor truly happy. In securing the commodities that we want, the device slips more and more into the background where we ignore its more adverse effects. We no longer know how the device’s technology even works, how we might repair it, or how we might secure the commodity without it. Work transformed by the device paradigm often becomes monotonous and devoid of challenge since it requires few real skills, and our leisure declines in nobility since its activities so easily turn shallow in the face of excessive consumption and an entertainment culture.

Technological disburdenment will never lead, in his mind, to a deep and meaningful life. The device paradigm leads to a lack of focus and disintegration, and, thus, his remedy is to reintroduce focus and depth through the introduction of what he calls focal things and practices. Focal things and practices are phenomena that call forth from us qualities that the device paradigm constantly undermines: exertion, skill, self-transcendence, perseverance, endurance, patience, commitment, and attention. Focal things and practices provide a context in our lives whereby we can practice virtue and excellence, and through our immersion with these focal things, we can regain some level of integration. The device paradigm has a way of pulling apart what was traditional held together: the individual from community, the body from the mind,
work from leisure, and the end from the means. Focal practices have a way of bringing these back into unity.

A clear example of how this device paradigm vs. focal practice juxtaposition is played out for Borgmann is the culture of the table. In the device paradigm, food becomes a commodity that is secured and consumed quickly, without a great deal of skilled engagement or attention from our bodies or minds, and often in isolation from others or from the ecosystem that brought it to us. We are separated from the mechanism that brought the food to us, and the setting and utensils of our consumption are often disposable and devoid of any deeper context. In contrast, if we approached the culture of the table as a focal experience, we would find ourselves seeking out material objects (utensils, etc.), food, and recipes that all have a richer and deeper and more complex histories and craft. In engaging the act of eating, we would find the focal things demanding our attention. This focal view recognizes that there is more than eating and cooking to the culture of the table. It is also a tangible way for people to come together to be in dialogue. It is also a context out which we are more likely to express gratitude for the gifts of the earth. Other focal examples Borgmann refers to are activities like gardening, running, fishing/hunting, religious rituals, and other arts and
crafts. Left with a choice, Borgmann encourages one to choose a more focal engagement with securing life’s goods than one that leaves us feeling fed but empty.\textsuperscript{325}

Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry is another influential thinker worth remaining in dialogue given the themes in \textit{Laudato si’}.\textsuperscript{326} What I want to focus in on is his critique of the way technocracy has separated us from the natural piety and love we have for the places

\textsuperscript{325} Borgmann’s work is not without criticism. His examples are often thought of as nostalgic, romantic, and old-fashioned. Some people see Borgmann’s work suggesting nothing but quaint hobbies that he thinks will save us from technological saturation. Others have called for some kind of empirical testing that would corroborate his theory that focal practices are more wholesome and meaningful than ones rooted in the device paradigm. See articles by Andrew Feenberg and Larry Hickman in \textit{Technology and the Good Life?} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

\textsuperscript{326} Wendell Berry is an American novelist, poet, cultural critic, and farmer. A prolific author, he has written many novels, short stories, poems, and essays, which as a collective body of work continues to be influential in conversations about the technological shape of our modern lives and the paradigms operative in them. According to him, the good life includes sustainable agriculture, appropriate technologies, healthy rural communities, connection to place, the pleasures of good food, husbandry, good work, local economics, the miracle and gift of life, fidelity, frugality, reverence, and the interconnectedness of life. The threats Berry finds to this life include: industrial farming and the industrialization of life, ignorance, hubris, greed, violence against others and against the natural world, the eroding topsoil in the United States, global economics, and environmental destruction. Critics have decried this vision as too simplistic, utopian, romantic, biased towards agrarian lifestyles, patriarchal, and impractical. Others look to Wendell Berry as the greatest contemporary prophet we have speaking and writing today. I sit somewhere in between these views, drawn to his vision of life but wondering how we might live it in today’s context. In some ways, all his works are pertinent to the topic at hand. See the influential work \textit{The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture} (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), \textit{What Are People For?} (San Francisco: Counterpoint, Press, 1990), and \textit{Life is a Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition} (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2000) as examples of his engagement of our modern technocratic moment.

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where we live. Berry, in the 2012 National Endowment for the Humanities Jefferson Lecture, speaks of the “pillage and indifference” that characterize America’s treatment of its natural resources and has consequently caused incalculable, perhaps irreparable damage not only to our land, water, and air, but also to “the health and stability of human society.”

Berry laments the way corporate industrialism, unchecked capitalism, and exploitative agriculture combine to make this pillage and indifference normative. They pull us away from the places where we live. The only solution, Berry believes, is affection, “informed, practical, and practiced affection.” This affection, he believes, comes as a result of our long, intentional immersive engagement in our places. This immersion will induce one to good care and good use of things. For Berry, neither government nor our religious traditions can truly compel us to virtue. The problem is a crisis of character, and thus only affection for things that are true, just, and beautiful can cause us to sustain a change of course. Much of Berry’s work outlines the tragic pillage and indifference of technocracy, deducing the sources for its dominance, and outlining the remedy of affection for one’s home and the people who are our neighbors.

Berry’s vision, rooted in his experiences of farming and the community of agrarians, is one that honors the wisdom of creation, especially its natural order of

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327 This lecture can be found on-line: [https://www.neh.gov/about/awards/jefferson-lecture/wendell-e-berry-lecture](https://www.neh.gov/about/awards/jefferson-lecture/wendell-e-berry-lecture)
interconnectivity. Berry has also been heavily influenced by the Amish. The Amish are a people who when considering the use of new tools (technology) are guided by the question: What will this new tool mean for our community? In asking this discerning question that lifts up what is a primary value, the Amish have preserved ways of making and keeping life human where else it has disappeared. In turn, Berry has made decisive steps in his own practice of farming and writing to limit or even avoid certain more advanced technologies.328

Berry’s poetry, much of which is labeled under an umbrella of “Sabbath poems,” suggests that in the stepping aside in a posture of listening, receptivity, and silence, one is able to speak a word of gratitude and praise for the good gifts inherent in our lives and within the whole of creation. Through his poems, he is able to see how the natural and the supernatural, the heavenly and the earthly, the soul and the body, the wondrous and the ordinary, all appear to occur together in the one fabric of creation.

Roger Scruton

In his recent book How to Think Seriously About the Planet: The Case for an Environmental Conservativism, Roger Scruton also proposes oikophilia, a love of home, as

328 In his famous 1987 essay originally published in Harper’s magazine “Why I am not going to buy a computer,” Berry delineates ten standards by which he considers whether to adopt some technological innovation. See the essay http://home.btconnect.com/tipiglen/berrynot.html
an antidote to the destructive trajectory of our technocratic lifestyles.\textsuperscript{329} Scruton spends many pages tracing the history of \textit{oikophilia}, particularly in his native Britain, and how \textit{oikophilia} has been destroyed by internationalism and big-government subsidies and regulations. How does one engender this \textit{oikophilia} in Scruton’s mind? Scruton advocates for the attenuation of central government control so that civic associations and local municipalities are forced to deal with their own environmental issues. Secondly, Scruton suggests that \textit{oikophilia} can be fostered through education, by a reimmersion in the beauty, joy, and mystery of the places where we live. In this view, through this attachment to our places, wonder will arise, a piety will emerge, and a care will be constitutive of our lives. In one of his appendixes, he offers some practical responses to the question “how shall we live?” His suggestions: don't shop at supermarkets, avoid packaging, eat local, live in families, holiday at home or near to home, and don’t keep carnivorous pets like cats and dogs. He goes on to say that these solutions will require ”small adjustments . . . that require little of us.”\textsuperscript{330}

\textsuperscript{329} Roger Scruton, \textit{How to Think Seriously About the Planet: The Case for an Environmental Conservativism} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
\textsuperscript{330} Scruton, 411-413
IV. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to lay out some general attitudes, specific habits and embodiments of virtue, and concrete practices for a spirituality for today’s technocratic moment. We started with Pope Francis’ suggestions, then explored some contemporary Christian authors, and thereafter turned to some important voices outside the Church. There is much in all of these authors’ work that should intrigue us as Christians looking to take seriously Pope Francis’ challenge to us in *Laudato si’* that we need new attitudes, new habits, and a new spirituality for today. So many of these authors in the Church and outside the Church, in fact, recommend many of the same things as Pope Francis: Sabbath-like space for silence and solitude; time in self-reflection; I-Thou intentional engagement with real people and things; experiencing our work as a calling; a piety for our places; moving from fragmentation to focus and mission; doing and buying less; living with the limits that are given in nature; a preference for the interior depth and intrinsic value; an inclination for settlement and belonging; an awareness of interconnectivity; practices that carry beautiful and meaningful ends in themselves; and putting oneself in contexts where one can experience wonder and gratitude at the beauty and mystery of creation.

There is much to admire in these attempts for stability, meaning, and purpose in our current cultural moment. Complementing Pope Francis’ recommendations, I think
we can find something in them in order gain a more secure footing in this diffusive culture. In the process of regaining ownership of our lives in this technocratic moment, we would do well to stay in dialogue with these authors and their musings. So much of the commentary on *Laudato si’*, as we saw in an earlier chapter, focuses on Pope Francis’ comments on climate change and the political action understood to be required. To cast the encyclical in these terms is not only dishonest to the whole but essentially handicaps its ability to touch and change people’s lives. It is too easy too, too technocratic, to cast all the responsibility for the state of our world on the government and market or public education. The larger thrust of Pope Francis’ work, and my argument in this thesis, is for things that are spiritual, local, and pre-political. It is about being aware of the way we see the world and inviting people to a new way of living more consistent with an integral, contemplative worldview. This approach does not attempt to weigh the value of particular technological products or devices but encourages us to consider them in light of what our tradition calls us to. If local parishes were to engage their members with the themes inherent in the encyclical, she would do well to lift up, read, and reference the work of these Christian and non-Christian authors, and find opportunities to invite people to more immersive experiences of the art of reading the waters in this contemplative posture.
Even though I am inclined to take note of these authors working outside the Church, I am less convinced, however, that achieving this state of flow, meaning, and fulfillment is just a matter of willpower for the sake of productivity and this-world happiness. Pope Francis’ Chapter Six can feel at times a little a self-help genre, “Just a few decisive steps, and you will avoid the sink hole that technocracy wants you to fall into.” However, in the context of the whole encyclical, Pope Francis is clear that we must address the larger worldview informing one’s actions. It is not a matter of “3 Easy Steps for a Happy Life” but a conversion of worldview and lifestyle, an adoption of an entirely different worldview. It is ultimately an encounter with the Lord and a conversion of heart that sets us free. Without some kind of conversion, we are only attempting to find some kind of stability and meaning within the very technocratic worldview we are trying to critique. Posing technocratic solutions within a technocratic world view

331 This language of “encounter” is a common one with Pope Francis. He writes in his Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium “I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”. [1] The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms,” 3. Also, this echoes Pope Benedict XVI oft quoted opening of his encyclical on love Deus Caritas Est, “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction,” 1.

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worldview is tempting, but in the end, these will not truly satisfy.\textsuperscript{332} It is helpful here to bring in the wise counsel of St. Augustine of Hippo who reminds us that “For Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.”\textsuperscript{333} St. Augustine, both in his \textit{Confessions} and in \textit{City of God}, demythologizes City of Man’s political realm and its self-sufficient virtues. In his view, no political community or self-help manual for the good life can ultimately satisfy the restless heart or perfect us in virtue or promise peace and happiness forever. The only way, in St. Augustine’s spirituality, is to become united to the source of our being, and the source of all wisdom, truth, and light

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\textsuperscript{332} Some research suggests that the self-help “movement” has actually caused great harm to people. See Steve Salerno, \textit{Sham: How the Self-Help Movement Made America Helpless} (New York: Crown Forum, 2005), and the work of Walker Percy, especially \textit{Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book} (New York: Picador, 1983). Percy astutely observes how modern technocracy, rather than seeing our moods and anxieties as preludes to wonder and self-knowledge and God, instead controls and manages people through a variety of diversions. As a result technocracy’s pharmaceutical, entertainment, and self-help industries get rich as they promise to fix us our unhappiness and make us all happy. Pope Benedict echoes these themes in the final sections in \textit{Caritas in Veritate}, 68-79, “One aspect of the contemporary technological mindset is the tendency to consider the problems and emotions of the interior life from a purely psychological point of view, even to the point of neurological reductionism. In this way man’s interiority is emptied of its meaning and gradually our awareness of the human soul’s ontological depths, as probed by the saints, is lost. The question of development is closely bound up with our understanding of the human soul, insofar as we often reduce the self to the psyche and confuse the soul’s health with emotional well-being. These over-simplifications stem from a profound failure to understand the spiritual life, and they obscure the fact that the development of individuals and peoples depends partly on the resolution of problems of a spiritual nature. Development must include not just material growth but also spiritual growth, since the human person is a ‘unity of body and soul,’ born of God’s creative love and destined for eternal life,” 76.

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– Jesus Christ. For St. Augustine, the virtue of humility emerges as paramount. It is what enables us, as we are always caught in the force between the City of God and the City of Man, to endure our suffering, struggles, anxieties, and tensions of living in this world with Christ’s strength. If our lives are to experience true peace, we must, in this view, turn our lives to God. St. Augustine’s own life gives witness to the fact that it is only when we recognize the impossibility of our own self-transformation that we open ourselves to the transformative power of God. This entails turning our faith and hope and love not more deeply to ourselves and our own happiness in the City of Man but to the City of God. These two cities will remain commingled in time until the final judgment, but in Christ’s Body, the Church, we can receive God’s grace in an immersive way, which expands our capacity for virtue in the love of God and neighbor.\footnote{Chad Pecknold, \textit{Christianity and Politics: A Brief Guide to the History} (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 30-50.}

We admit that living in our world, broken as it is, with our own fragile and broken souls, is difficult. We are all complex creatures, hampered by the sin of Adam, who are mostly opaque even to our own inquires. Like St. Paul, I often do not do the good I want to do, but instead I do the evil I do not want (Rom 7:19, NABRE). We might recognize that there is something compelling about these new attitudes and habits advocated by the aforementioned authors, but the alignment of my life with their
suggestions is another matter. Despite our best intentions, our own actions often do not align. We remain creatures only searchable to God’s mercy. This is not to let us off the hook, but to admit our helplessness, return to God all the more fervently, and beg for his help. In this way, our conversion and life of penance might be both a call to turn our lives over to God’s grace with a renewed sense of love and humility, as well as an act of contrition and a lament to God for our inevitable struggles as we are caught in this tensions between the saving City of God and the necessities of the City of Man.

Knowing how muddled our walk in this life can be, we carry on nonetheless, praying with the Psalmist and St. Augustine, crying out to God, “Deliver me from my necessities.”

There is also a temptation on this pilgrimage of life towards adopting a new spirituality where we begin to judge ourselves and others harshly solely on how well we all embody these more contemplative attitudes and habits. When we do this, these new habits and practices become like a new set of laws whereby we are bound in the flesh. This is not the freedom of a life in Christ. We know not ultimately the conscience of our neighbor before us. What we are talking about here is less about a new prescriptive law for discipleship, and instead, following St. Paul’s and Pope Francis’

lead, we are talking about the contours of a new life “in Christ.” When we encounter the Lord, when we recognize that all we are and all we have are gifts from the Lord, we naturally want to return the gift, share the encounter, and respond with authenticity and a similar kind of generosity in every aspect of our lives. We want our lives, despite their opaque and contingent quality, to become responsive acts of love and mercy and virtue. Touched by the Lord’s goodness, we seek out ways that keep us in touch with this Lord and make habits out of actions that embody the humility, gratitude, praise, and wonder that we know is the way, the truth, and the life. Our lives become living liturgies. Brought into God’s love in the Eucharist, we are sent out to be salt and light.

It is helpful to name one more shadow side of this idea that adopting a Christian worldview would guarantee a genuinely beneficent and loving practice that will be salt and light. There are ample examples throughout the history of the Church where Christians who felt themselves thoroughly saturated in the waters of their tradition were instigators of particular practices of violence. Some have suggested that Christianity, with its anthropocentric emphasis on dominion of creation, bears a huge burden of the guilt for the state of the environment. In a similar fashion, the complex

336 The provocative article that has become the most cited piece of writing within theological debate around this view is Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” Science 155 (1967): 1203-1207.
history of Christianity and slavery, colonialism, imperialism, nationalism, subjugation of women and homosexuals, and religious intolerance are frequently cited by critics of Christianity. These historical realities are ones that Christians need to acknowledge and confess their culpability. To suggest that a Christian worldview will automatically generate right actions is not sufficient or even correct. Again, sin is more pervasive than we like to admit. This returns us to a more confessional posture, a place of humility and sobriety, practices of confession and reconciliation, a life of penance, and a place where the kenotic witness of Jesus Christ on the cross might serve us well as we look to formative images and practices for Christians going forward. It is surely the adoption of the technocratic paradigm as articulated in this thesis by Christians that will, no matter the time or place, undermine the ability of Christians to be salt and light.

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337 One recent example is Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and The Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). Jennings wrestles with some these tensions within Christianity’s checkered past by delving into the complex process of how Christian worldviews were (de)formed during the early modern era, how a religion based on love of neighbor and creation forcibly removed non-Europeans from their homelands, subjugated them, created and maintained segregated societies, and pillaged the land. Jennings calls this worldview a “diseased social imagination,” 6. By way of a response for Christians looking to move beyond a segregated worldview, Jennings challenges Christians to examine their racialized (technocratic?) imaginations, relook at how Israel understood their existence and relationship with God and place, remind themselves of Jesus’ own “biracial humanity” as Jew and Gentile and invitation to a new form of belonging and communion around his body, and begin to explore new ways of living with others and the land that embraces the gift of creation and our own creatureliness. Perhaps with some differences (Jennings’ book is complex), there is much overlap here with our proposal in this chapter and with Pope Francis’ in *Laudato si’*. 233
My recommendations in this final chapter, therefore, is not to suggest that in and of itself friendship, farming, or having family meals will “save” us, not to suggest that these actions are clearly indicative of the depth of one’s faith in the Triune Lord, not to surmise that any person claiming a Christian worldview will actually be reflective of the love of Christ, and not to suggest that we can arrive at some kind of utopian, un-conflicted state of peace in this life. Rather, it is a proposal that is premised on the belief that if we are the kind of creature that is in touch with the Creator and the love Jesus Christ, our lives will naturally want to conform to his love and mercy and goodness in our everyday lives in whatever way we can. In this way, it is not the works that save, but a faith without works is dead (Jas 2:14-26, NABRE). God alone saves. God alone constitutes our happiness (beatitude), says St. Thomas Aquinas. However, on this side of the kingdom, St. Thomas suggests that happiness, however imperfect, is attainable in proportion to this life of contemplation and an exercise of virtue. Although we recognize that because of sin and violence the Reign of God will never fully be made manifest on this side of the journey (and thus no perfect system can be put in place), we nevertheless feel compelled by the vision of this Reign of God and seek some approximation of its beauty on earth.

What we are ultimately talking about in this chapter, and in this entire thesis, is broadening and deepening (contemporizing? enfleshing?) the Church’s contemplative
worldview and life of humble virtue in this technocratic culture. It is about taking to
heart Pope Benedict’s thesis in his *Introduction to Christianity* that “Meaning, that is, the
ground on which our existence as a totality can stand and live, cannot be made but only
received.” This then is less about some effort of the will and more about being, being
open, being free, being joyful, being true, being at rest in the Lord and his grace. The
Christian worldview speaks of an enchanted world where creation is inscribed with an
a priori meaning and purpose. The Word runs underneath the waters of creation, and
out of a holy fear and a place of wonder and gratitude, we receive our place in the
interrelated cosmos and seek to align our lives with this living Word.

This worldview, however, is always being threatened, and historically has lost
dominance. In its stead, another worldview emerged victorious, one that empowered
the subject to be less receptive and more active in the process of “reading the waters.”
The new paradigm opened up new capacities and blessings, new ways of seeing the
world, ones that expressed our deepest desire for transcendence and pushed humanity
into a trajectory of material progress. However, it also eclipsed the need for an appeal to
the Divine and the a priori meaning and purpose within creation. This has left
humanity in a state of spiritual paralysis, an interior emptiness, a quiet sense of despair.

338 Benedict, *Introduction to Christianity*, 73.
We are now distracted and diverted from the very possibility of wonder, self-knowledge, and knowledge of God. The comprehensive, coherent, and charged cosmos of communion was replaced with a seemingly random cold body of unrelated facts open to manipulation and reconfiguration by the most powerful competitors among us. Characteristic of this moment of modernity then is the triumph of this way of reading the waters that, for Pope Francis, encourages a rationalistic, materialistic, authoritarian attitude in humanity toward both physical nature and its own being. The Christian worldview, the way of “reading the waters” through the eyes of faith, is, on the other hand, explicitly non-technocratic; it is relational, humble, and contemplative. This encyclical, therefore, I argue, pivots on the rather simple issue of whether we are going to adopt a worldview based in our faith in the gospel of Christ and his creation – the City of God – or a worldview based in the brokenness and violence of technocracy – the City of Man.

In our state of modern anxiety, spiritual hunger, and superficial engagement with life, I believe we need and want to re-learn the art of fly-fishing. We have all kinds of gadgets, material goods and other diversions, and storehouses of Google knowledge. But none of this satisfies like the art of faith. We want to be re-formed in the art of reading the waters in today’s time and place. We want to be more like Norman and Paul and St. Bonaventure and St. Francis and St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and less like Neal.
This thesis has explored the ways that our interior lives and Christian ways of seeing the world translates into good, virtuous habituated everyday actions. We believe that we can be re-habituated into casting according to the four-part rhythm. We believe, through grace, these actions can shape us into the kind of creatures God so desires and therefore regain some freedom and ownership of our lives in this technologically-saturated moment. We might not always catch the big rainbow trout, but we trust that our immersion in the river and our reading of the waters and a child-like posture of receptivity will over time put us in touch with their mysterious presence. It is not easy to immerse ourselves in this river in our technocratic culture. There is much at work for us to not read the waters according to our own tradition.

Nevertheless, we believe that there are better and worse attitudes and actions that can serve as conduits to God’s grace and thus fulfillment (however approximate it is in this world). Some of these authors we explored avoid recommending formal religion as a way to read the waters and discipline oneself into a meaningful life, but given how much people are searching for meaning, purpose, and belonging in our technocratic world, this only makes a stronger case for the Church to be confident in her invitation into dialogue. Our throwaway culture of today, Pope Francis challenges us, calls for a new lifestyle, a new spirituality, a new ethic. We have a box of possible lures, ideas of how we might put into practice this new spirituality. The river is calling us. Let
us not be afraid to pick up the pole, find a mentor, and relearn how to fly-fish the Big Blackfoot River. The Word running underneath the water is waiting for us.

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