

A photograph of a mossy stone surface, possibly a well or a fountain, with a string of small, round, glowing lights draped across it. A single, bright yellow arrow is positioned diagonally across the stone. The scene is dimly lit, with the lights providing a soft glow.

THE CHRISTIAN NARRATIVE AND LITURGICAL TIME

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Time past and time future
 Allow but a little consciousness.
 To be conscious is not to be in time
 But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
 The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
 The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
 Be remembered; involved with past and future.
 Only through time is time conquered.
 T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"¹

Humanity's temporal existence is foundational to our experiences in daily tasks and throughout an entire lifetime. We hurry about our daily business feeling as though our work or academic schedules place weighty constraints on the way we spend our hours. We work to meet deadlines. We take "time off" to refresh our tired minds and bodies so that we might perform to the best of our ability in the "daily grind" of life. Time also plays a significant role in the way we perceive our life trajectory. In youth and adolescence, we believe ourselves to be living with an abundance of time in a world that is ours to discover. In the evening of life, we are faced with the certainty of death, feeling, perhaps, that time is slipping out of our hands. In our daily and lifelong perceptions of temporal existence, time is "the icon of our fundamental reality, of optimism as well as of the pessimism of our life, of life as life and of life as death."² Through time human beings experience possibility, life, beauty, goodness, community, and joy, and yet, through time, we are faced with the reality of death and earthly finitude.

Human beings have long sought insight into this dual nature—the simultaneous optimism and pessimism—of temporal existence. What is our proper relationship to time, something that at once gives way to the chilling reality of death and yet invites men and women into the beauty of an unfolding life? Various philosophies and religious communities have offered explanations to make sense of this problem of time that is a central aspect to human life, and therefore discussion of how one lives or ought to live within temporal reality is of import. A foundational assumption here is that something as intimately tied to human experience as time and a person's or community's understanding of the human relationship to time must have serious implications for the way individuals choose to live this temporal existence. Of particular concern here is the way humanity's experience or philosophical interpretation of temporal existence affects pace of life. Our question is how does the narrative by which a person defines her life affect how she shapes her existence in the hours of a day?

This discussion has immediate relevance to the modern situation in which technological advancements shape the way human beings experience time and pace of life. This is not a new phenomenon. The tools and devices that we use have long shaped human life and experience of time.³ Yet, in its current iteration, technological advancements and devices are affecting human beings in particularly striking ways. We live in an increasingly fast-paced world in which social networking updates, tweets, news reports, emails, text messages, and many other devices and digital notifications vie for a person's attention in the present moment. Our technology and devices, in many ways, tell us what we should be doing and how quickly we should be doing it. Devices have begun to determine the way human beings should live, and people let themselves live according to a digital pace.⁴ What are the moral implications of living according to this digital pace? Where might we turn to gain insight into these ethical questions?

The aim of this article is twofold. My first objective is to draw attention to the relationships among the temporal existence, pace of daily life, and moral formation of the person. We will examine this relationship through the lens of Christian ethics in two movements. In the first movement, I argue that discussion of the moral implications of pace of life should be incorporated into an understanding of Christian virtue ethics and spirituality. The work of William Spohn is particularly valuable here. Spohn identifies the sources of Christian ethics to be the New Testament, virtue ethics, and spirituality. I assert that careful articulation of the Christian community's understanding of time aptly fits into a Christian virtue ethic in that this understanding is rooted in the Christian narrative and spirituality, which aim towards the character formation of persons called to intimacy with God. In the next movement, we will draw on one social theorist's interpretation of the effects of digital pace on a person's values and way of life.

We will examine Douglas Rushkoff's analysis of the present situation of narrative collapse and "digiphrenia" that has transpired in the wake of an increasingly technologized world.

Having examined the necessity of discussing the temporal aspects of moral formation in Christian ethics and the immediate relevance of this discussion to the present social situation, we will turn to my second objective: to glean wisdom from the Christian Tradition regarding how one ought to relate to his or her temporal existence. To this end, we will discuss the Christian understanding of liturgical time and the way in which living into this liturgical time draws one deeper into the Christian narrative, recognizing his or her identity as a disciple of Jesus created for eternal life with God. Finally, we will look to the Liturgy of the Hours as one Christian practice that builds Christian character and draws persons into liturgical time and, thus, into proper relationship with self and God.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND TIME

William Spohn proposes three main sources of Christian ethics: the New Testament, virtue ethics, and spirituality. The New Testament in general, and the stories of Jesus' life, times, and teachings in particular, shape the dispositions and identities of Christians who seek to live a distinctive sort of discipleship in communion with one another. Disciples of Jesus follow him as the Way and as the end to which Christians strive; in living Christo-centric lives, disciples let the New Testament stories shape their lives and identities so that they might more fully live in Jesus Christ.⁵ The Old and New Testaments tell the faithful who they should be in response to God's covenant with the Chosen people, a covenant renewed in Jesus' life, Death, and Resurrection. Christians' covenantal relationship with

God finds expression in the Scriptures, and “the story that runs through the Old and New Testaments sets the pattern for Christian identity, for the ‘sorts of persons’ Christians are called to become.”⁶ The story of Scripture becomes the story for all Christians, and by entering into the Christian narrative and accepting it as their own narrative, the faithful are called to let Scripture shape their actions and transform their hearts.

Virtue ethics and spirituality add to this interpretation of Scripture in the life of Christian morality in that they offer a fruitful approach to the transformative text of Sacred Scripture as shaping Christians’ moral lives and practices.⁷ Virtue ethics attends to many aspects of a person’s moral experience, focusing on development of the whole person, and operating on the assumption that “our actions and relations becomes habits that gradually shape the stable personal core we call ‘character.’”⁸ Rather than seeking after the rightness or wrongness of a particular action, virtue ethics is concerned with three primary questions: “Who am I? Who ought I to become? And how am I to get there?”⁹

Spirituality offers a link between virtue ethics and the cultivation of certain moral habits as they relate to the Christian moral life. Through practices of prayer, service, and liturgy, the faithful are called to deeper intimacy with God, and “indirectly, these same practices train the imagination and reorient the emotions to produce a way of life consonant with sound morality and New Testament moral teaching.”¹⁰ Spirituality, when practiced alongside exegesis and ethical reflection, helps identify and put into action certain practices that train the mind and heart in gradual transformation of character. Spirituality offers a healthy check to a simple virtue ethics tradition by identifying the proper aim of the moral life not as personal enhancement, but as deeper relationship with God. Virtue ethics aids spirituality in applying the practices and habits of prayer to daily living, for “the

task of ethical reflection is to draw out the implications of the rituals and symbols of faith for life.”¹¹ An understanding of virtue ethics and spiritual practices that flow out of a call to imitate Jesus of the New Testament aids Christians in striving for deeper union with God.¹²

Spohn presents a strong defense of the import and interrelatedness of New Testament exegesis, virtue ethics, and spirituality for Christian ethics, and I believe that the framework that he presents offers support for ethical reflection on time in the Christian moral life. An awareness of humanity’s relationship to temporal existence is one of the foundational and identity-shaping aspects of Christian life, and it is at the heart of a Christian narrative and spirituality. Temporal awareness relates to the Christian narrative that is expressed in salvation history through the Scriptures and Tradition of the Church. The Christian narrative describes humanity’s temporal existence in light of Jesus Christ’s Incarnation and second coming. God enters human existence through the Incarnation, thus sanctifying the world and temporal reality. Yet, Jesus enters temporal reality so that humans might have a way to eternal beatitude with God. The Christian experience of time is at once affirming of the goodness of creation into which Jesus became incarnate and looking forward to the eschatological hope of Christ’s second coming in the fullness of time. Disciples of Christ live in the “in between time,” between Jesus’ Ascension and second coming. Understanding their lives as a participation in the already but not yet of the reign of God’s Kingdom shapes the ways Christians live in the present reality of temporal existence.

A discussion of time also fits into Spohn’s understanding of Christian spirituality, which he defines as “the practical ways of praying, serving, and living that connect the faith convictions of a tradition to a particular time and place.”¹³ Spiritual practices

aid the lives and formation of Christians by being both pedagogical and transformational, training a Christian's dispositions just as habits train a person in virtue.¹⁴ Observed over a period of time, the practices of Christian spirituality such as a regular practice of prayer, worship, and service provide fertile ground for the work of the Holy Spirit in drawing a person to deeper intimacy with God. A Christian may initially attend Mass on Sundays or pray every day out of a sense of obligation, but over time, Spohn argues, these practices of prayer become second nature and begin to shape the person's way of life so that she grows in deeper conformity to Christ. The pedagogy of spiritual practices is aimed at this inner transformation: "These practices help us break from unauthentic ways of existence in order to embrace a more authentic level through the power that comes from a more radical level of reality . . . they provide the structures for deepening and expanding a religious conversion."¹⁵ So, then, there is a temporal aspect to the development of Christian virtue through spiritual practices. This development occurs over time and is a gradual process of realizing one's professed life in Christ. I would argue further that the spiritual practices of prayer, worship, and service that Christians perform help them to live into an understanding of time that is consonant with the narrative that they have taken as their own, the narrative of Sacred Scripture. One such practice is the Liturgy of the Hours, which we will address shortly. I emphasize here that living into an awareness of Christocentric, temporal existence is a gradual process, and the spiritual practices that shape life in Christ—which is the aim of Christian moral living—aid the faithful in entering more fully into the Gospel narrative that proclaims this Christian notion of time.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

We have just seen how Christian ethics might—indeed, should—incorporate discussion about humanity's temporal existence into articulations of the Christian narrative and spiritual practices. This discussion is of immediate relevance to our current situation in which people's understanding of time and pace of life is challenged by an increasingly fast-paced and digital world. In an age of social media and technological advancements, the topic of humanity's pace of life is one that concerns not only theologians but also social scientists and theorists. One such social theorist, Douglas Rushkoff, addresses the issue of humanity's temporal existence in a technological age in his book, *Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now*. Two aspects of Rushkoff's analysis of the technological age are particularly relevant to our discussion: the collapse of narrative and the onset of "digiphrenia."

In our digital age, modern society has experienced the collapse of the narrative and the rise of a presentist culture with little patience for a narrative structure to life. Rushkoff discusses the positive effect narratives have had on human formation and self-understanding throughout time. Stories help individuals piece together a narrative experience of the most important communities in a person's life: family, nation, culture, or faith. These communal narratives help create a context in which human beings exist and find meaning. A person who sees her life as a narrative also sees her life as following a narrative arc. There is an end or resolution to which the joys and sorrows of human existence, her personal experience, aim. Not only does a narrative worldview provide structure to a life but it also serves as a means through which particular values are conveyed.¹⁶ In the current, presentist situation, however, persons seem to have lost the patience, or do not have the time, to enter into unfolding narratives.¹⁷ Reality TV shows, largely devoid of plots and narratives, seem



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to have taken a primary place on primetime television. National and world news is updated to mobile device applications and internet newsfeeds within minutes of significant events, before a whole story has even transpired. Simply put, the linear narrative seems to have lost its import for modern humanity, who prefers the stimulation of moment-to-moment living and the instant gratification of knowing everything now. In a presentist culture, humanity has gradually lost sight of the value of narratives for growing in communal identity and morals, and making sense of one's life.

Another effect of the presentist, technologized culture that Rushkoff highlights is termed "digi-phrenia"—"digi" because the world is digitized, and "phrenia" for "disordered condition of mental activity."¹⁸ In the modern world, everything and everyone is "on" at all times. Everything happens now and people are impatient. Even though human beings continue to live

according to certain biological rhythms and functions¹⁹ and can only occupy one place at a time, "our digital selves are distributed across every device, platform, and network onto which we have cloned our virtual identities."²⁰ In response to an increasingly digitized world, human beings have assumed the immediate pace of "digital time."²¹ iPhones vibrate, Twitter tweets, Facebook profiles update, and emails ding at nearly every moment of the day, and the plethora of digital interruptions are all begging for responses and actions *now*. In fact, they might even continue to notify someone of their presence until they are acknowledged, creating the sense that "we need to keep up with their impossible pace lest we lose touch with the present."²² Rushkoff argues that the immediacy with which humans feel compelled to respond to their electronic devices, aimed at keeping up with this digital pace, is a false goal, "for not only have our devices outpaced us, they don't even reflect a here and now that may

constitute any legitimate sort of present tense.”²³ Digital time is always now, “no longer linear but disembodied and associative,”²⁴ broken into little bites of time that pass from one now to the next. Furthermore, if we would like to take time away from our devices and programs, we feel as though we must “unplug” and live as if we inhabited a pre-digital era. We feel that as long as our devices are on, we are at their mercy.²⁵

Our personal stories and narratives are replaced by our social media profiles that offer a picture of an individual at each precise moment in time. Narratives that once conveyed human values and worldviews have been replaced by the immediacy of the present moment that is not concerned with the virtues or ethics of our behavior with respect to temporal existence, but with staying connected to the latest news update or social networking advancement. Instead of realizing that our devices are beginning to rule our lives, “we change our value system to support the premises under which we are operating, abstracting our experience one step further from terra firma.”²⁶

People allow their electronic devices to determine the pace of their daily lives, and yet it is within their power to use these devices as tools, conforming the device to a human pace. In order to understand, critique, and dialogue correctly with our present reality of the digital era, we must pay attention to the implications that living in a digital environment has for human beings. Yet, we must not assume that computers and social media are making vicious attempts to sabotage humanity’s pace of life. Computers do not concern themselves with such things: “Computers don’t suffer present shock, people do. For we are the only ones living in time.”²⁷ The onus is on each human person and community to question the ways in which humans allow their time and existences to be governed by inanimate devices. Rushkoff argues, “It’s not about how digital technology changes us, but how we

change ourselves and one another now that we live so digitally.”²⁸ The present reality of a digital world offers humanity an opportunity to be creative with these tools and to find ways to engage with technological advancements in ways that preserve a human existence and pace of life. We must make the decision to value a life lived at a human, as opposed to digital, pace. We must learn to find reward not in being up to date on all of our emails or in catching up with the latest Facebook update, but “in the amount of time we get to spend in the reverie of solo contemplation or live engagement with another human being.”²⁹

We live in a world in which increasing digitization seems to be an unstoppable force. Society has become disconnected from narratives that foster ethical imagination. We feel as though time is scarce, a rare and precious resource, as people accept digital time over natural human rhythms and cycles. As Rushkoff argues, there are ways that humans can choose against falling prey to digital time by making electronic devices conform to human cycles and needs, but is it sufficient to guard against the onset of digital time by simply choosing not to let a device control a person’s life? While this is certainly an important step towards living humanly in a digital age, this solution does not satisfy a Christian view of temporal existence in a pragmatically atheistic world.

PRAGMATIC ATHEISM AND THE SIN OF FALSEHOOD

Modern society largely overlooks a Christian understanding of time for at least two reasons: the rise of pragmatic atheism and the failure of Christians to proclaim Christocentric time in a secular and digitized world. Darlene Weaver describes the rise of pragmatic atheism in contemporary Western secular society. Society is increasingly secular, and while secularism is not necessarily atheistic, “there is a de facto exclusion of God from public rationality, reference and discussion.”³⁰ Reference to God is, for the most part, absent from major disciplines in society that seek interpretation, understanding, and explanation of the world. God is no longer operative in discussions of human society, and reference to God is taken to make no difference to the way one lives and acts in the world.³¹ In this way, modern culture shapes both nonbelievers and believers to be pragmatic atheists, effectively incorporating all people into this atheistic worldview while “posing no apparent contradiction to belief in God on some personal, motivational level.”³² In this way, nonbelievers refuse to orient their thinking toward God’s role in creation, and believers sequester God into a particular area of their lives, compartmentalized away from the fabric of daily life and interpretation of the world as it is.

Our primary concern at this time is with those believers who corral God into a particular area of their lives and, giving in to pragmatic atheism, fail to see the world and their faith as intimately connected. These individuals, Weaver argues, fall prey to the sin of falsehood. The liar who denies God in some aspect of her life contributes to a world that has a disordered relationship with God. While the liar may acknowledge God’s existence in some areas of life or may claim that her actions have something to do with God, she believes that the world can be understood apart from God in some capacity.³³ This sin of falsehood not only creates a division

between the liar and her God, but also divides the liar within herself. This false self refuses to become the person God has created her to be and lives according to a shadow of reality that also disconnects her from proper relationship with the human community and creation. The false self does not see things as they are in God’s goodness, but as they are for her.³⁴ This evasion of God, self, and community, and the decision to live in a pragmatic atheistic world amount to a refusal to live according to the Christian narrative in which each person is called to find truth and fullness of life.

This leads to a second reason modern society overlooks a Christian understanding of time: the failure of Christians to proclaim “God’s time” in a secular and digitized world. Alexander Schmemmann believes not only that the average modern human being lives in a world of pragmatic atheism but also that many Christians fail to recognize the gift of the Christian worldview with respect to aspects of human experience, including our relationship to temporal existence. Schmemmann believes that this disassociation of the world, the Christian narrative, and temporal existence is a failure on the part of Christians to see that their “religion” has something significant to offer modern society. Instead of fully embracing the Gospel narrative in which Jesus Christ enters into history to redeem humanity and all created goodness including time, Christians have placidly come to believe that time is void of any real meaning with respect to the coming Kingdom of God that is “beyond time.”³⁵ Thus, modern society’s struggle to understand the human relationship to time is in part due to the Christian failure to understand and boldly proclaim the message that Jesus has sanctified the natural time of everyday human existence and because Christianity, instead, invited the faithful to abandon time in anticipation of eternal rest free of worldly, temporal concerns.

An understanding of time as giving way to a future of eternal joy that makes natural temporal existence obsolete, or at least void of any real meaning for the Kingdom of God, may be pious and inspiring, but such a view does little to redeem the real time in which women and men live, sleep, play, and work.³⁶ In the midst of a pragmatic atheistic society, the Church allowed time to become secularized and to lose its connectedness to God.³⁷ Schmemmann offers a disarming challenge to Christians living in a pragmatically atheistic world: Did Christ enter time “only that we may ‘symbolize’ it in fine celebrations which, although connected with the days and hours, have no power to give time a real meaning, to transform and redeem it?”³⁸ Yet, Schmemmann believes that Christian silence with respect to society’s interpretation of temporal existence is repairable. He describes the experience of time that Christians have had since the beginning of the profession and argues that this experience is still offered to the faithful today through the celebration of the liturgy.³⁹

LIVING IN LITURGICAL TIME

The celebration of the liturgical year helps us to reclaim the Gospel narrative, to choose to live according to Jesus’ story as opposed to the counter-narrative of a pragmatically atheistic society, and helps us to answer questions about how we are to live in an increasingly face-paced world.⁴⁰ Instead of allowing a secularized narrative to govern human experience of time, Christian liturgy offers people contact with the Christian narrative that proclaims the richness and abundance of time gifted to humanity by God.⁴¹ Entry into liturgical time does not provide all the answers to the moral questions of how to live in a digitized, secular, pluralistic world, but the liturgical year does help the Church “reenter the gospel narratives as dramatic moments for ethical reflection.”⁴²

By reenacting the Gospel narrative in the cycle of a year or day and by making the Paschal mystery present in the Christian community in such a way that the Gospel makes challenging claims on the identities of those who profess Christianity, the faithful realize that the story of Jesus’ life is real and present and makes a claim on their lives. The choice to live in liturgical time, God’s time, is a choice to shape one’s life according to the Kingdom of God, and this choice has significant implications for one’s moral life. Christians ought to live morally and in God’s time because these are distinctive features of what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ and to be a member of the believing Christian community.⁴³ By living for the Kingdom and shaping our moral lives around the Gospel values, members of the Church grow in Christian character, and, as Stanley Hauerwas puts it, “only by continually practicing, rehearsing, performing the faith will Christians have any chance of learning what it means to keep God’s time.”⁴⁴ The challenge to Christian faithful, then, is to live in fidelity to the Gospels and to practice the drama of Christian liturgical time in the midst of a challenging secular society, and to respond to the moral questions of the secular world through the lens of daily life in Christ.⁴⁵

Schmemmann explains the theological significance of temporal existence, the gifts that Christian tradition offers to humanity in its understanding of the Sabbath day, the liturgical year, and each sacred day. The day, the most immediate unit of time, is perhaps most in need of redemption in our modern pace of life, for days quickly fly by unexamined in a fast-paced world that values daytime hours by their productivity. According to liturgical time, however, “it is here, in the reality of daily life, that the theology of time, expressed in the experience of Sunday and Easter, must find its application.”⁴⁶ Daily worship is sort of “primary theology,” and remembering to pray throughout the events of one’s daily life establishes a sort of rhythm that echoes throughout the days, weeks, months, and years of our temporal existence.

As Christians, we are called to let the liturgy shape the entire day and the moments that make up this day as we strive towards unceasing prayer.⁴⁷

Christians are called to pray unceasingly, to seek undivided communion with God, and by consecrating specific moments of the day to the praise of God we come closer to the goal of unceasing prayer. We are taught to pray at certain times throughout the course of a day, week, or year, but prayer—conversation with God—is available to us at all times and we encounter God in each present moment: “time is in the Father’s hands; it is in the present that we encounter him, not yesterday or tomorrow, but today” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], §2659). As the *Catechism* states, prayer ought to animate the Christian heart at each moment, yet the faithful are subject to forget the one who is always present and in conversation with each heart at all times. We must strive to be mindful of God’s presence always, “but we cannot pray ‘at all times’ if we do not pray at specific times, consciously willing it” (CCC §2697). Thus, the Tradition of the Church provides certain rhythms of prayer intended to guide the faithful toward unceasing prayer in daily life (CCC §2698).

Since the beginning of Christianity, the faithful have made specific pauses throughout the day to pray to God, and these pauses were not meant to be simple breaks in the day to rejuvenate Christians for the tasks of daily life, but were truly liturgical acts performed for the sake of the Christian community and on behalf of the entire world. These pauses for prayer throughout the day, which were intimately tied to the Christian identity as leaven in the world working for the Kingdom of God, emphasized the relationship of the Church and each Christian to the hours of the day.⁴⁸ The form of praying throughout the hours of the day gradually emerged into what the Church now knows as the Liturgy of the Hours. This liturgical prayer that consecrates seven sacred pauses, or “Hours” to God throughout the day is a means by which

the Church fulfills Jesus’ call to pray without ceasing and without losing heart (Lk 18:1).⁴⁹ Praying the Hours is distinct from other forms of liturgical prayer in that “it consecrates to God the whole cycle of day and night, as it has done from early Christian times.”⁵⁰ The aim of the Liturgy of the Hours is, indeed, to sanctify the day and the human activity that takes place in the course of the day. Through this prayer, all the faithful are invited to deeper communion with God and to pray for the salvation of the entire world.⁵¹

While all the faithful are called to pray the Hours throughout the course of the day, ordained and religious members of the Church promise to incorporate this liturgical prayer into the fabric of their lives. Monastic traditions of the Church have long emphasized the importance of living each day and each hour intentionally aimed toward God’s greater glory. The *Rule of St. Benedict* describes a rigorous horarium that blends work and prayer—*ora et labora*—and through obedient observance of the *Rule*, the monks grow in virtue and in love of God. Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours is seen as one way in which the monks are schooled in the way of discipleship and prayer, and as the *Rule* states, “we believe that the divine presence is everywhere and that in every place the eyes of the Lord are watching the good and the wicked. But beyond the least doubt we should believe this to be especially true when we celebrate the divine office.”⁵² Through the course of a day marked by seven sacred pauses for singing of the Hours, the monks grow in prayerful attention to their every action: “Hour by hour keep careful watch over all you do, aware that God’s gaze is upon you, wherever you may be.”⁵³

Aware of God’s presence with them at each moment, the monks viewed their life as a school in which they were mindful of how to behave in God’s presence and believed that their prayer should reflect this awareness so that “our minds are in harmony with our voices.”⁵⁴

The Liturgy of the Hours is an organizing principle of the monk's daily schedule. Gathering for communal prayer for each of the seven hours, the monks were expected to prize their time of prayer in choir as a gift for which they would set aside any other occupying task when the time came to pray for, "indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God."⁵⁵ The monks valued time here on earth as the school in which they might grow in virtues and dispositions proper to disciples of Jesus Christ, and believed that God's grace would guide them towards this growth in virtue: "What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace. If we wish to reach eternal life—while there is still time, while we are in this body and have time to accomplish all these things by the light of life—we must run and do now what will profit us forever."⁵⁶ One way in which monastic life facilitates growth in a Christo-centric existence is by growing in the habit of prayer throughout the course of a day.

Reflecting on the monastic approach to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours as an organizing principle of daily life and as a school of virtue offers insight into the ways in which Christians in the world might go about living in a technologized and digitally paced society. In the witness of monastic life, we see that the monks reverence the consecration of certain moments to God throughout the day as a "work" of utmost importance, to which nothing was preferred. Even in a fast-paced modern society, Christians are called to imitate the practice of consecrating time to God throughout the day as we strive towards unceasing prayer. Similarly, the monastic tradition strives towards a human existence in time that is unhesitatingly Christo-centric. Each action throughout the day is aimed towards growth in virtue and in love of God, that is, life in Christ. Monastic communities witness to what it means to live according to the Christian narrative and to grow in the virtues that signal deeper conformation to Christ—ends to which all the faithful are called.

CONCLUSION

Liturgical time unfolds between Jesus' Ascension and his second coming. The liturgy of the Church is an event of keeping vigil for the coming of the Lord and "is the manifestation in our life of our constant awaiting of the blessed day when we will see this new universe appear."⁵⁷ The strength by which Christians persevere in hope for the second coming of Christ is founded in the reality that the end to which we strive already exists but has not yet reached its fullness: "Yes, we are waiting, and yet, at the same time, in a hidden way, we are already in possession of the reality."⁵⁸ In this way, Christians understand time to be full of eternity. Even more, Christians understand each *person* in time to be full of eternity, "because the person is the eternal in us and the life, from birth to death, is the temporal . . . but the inner life of the person is eternal life in us already begun."⁵⁹ With hope in our eschatological future and yet affirming the goodness of creation and temporal existence, the Christian community recognizes itself as on a journey with God through time—"indeed, if we think of time as full of eternity, if we think of the eternal in us, then eternity is that same circle that time is, considered all at once."⁶⁰

Celebrating the sacredness of time and all that is timeless, the Church lives in liturgical time and invites Christians and all of humanity into the Christian narrative of human existence. Living within the narrative of the Gospels helps the Christian community to understand what it means to live in time and in eternity as opposed to the collapsed narrative of secular, "digiphrenic" society. A life lived according to the Christian narrative and its concept of liturgical time, shaped by the spiritual practices of a community seeking life in Christ, has significant implications for the faithful. First, formed in an identity that is rooted in the Christian narrative and spiritual practices, Christians are called to discover ways to handle social

realities like fast-paced “digiphrenia” that challenge an understanding of God’s time and combat a human pace of life. Second, living in liturgical time welcomes God into the human experience of temporal existence, and by welcoming God into time, temporal existence becomes rich and full of goodness. Third, the cyclical pace of liturgical time and the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours invite Christians to slow down in a fast-paced society, offering a way of life contrary to the rushed and restless cycles of labor and relaxation for the sake of work that define much of secular society. By understanding work in terms of liturgical time, individuals enter into a much different environment than one that understands work simply in terms of productivity. Finally, Christian entry into liturgical time always unfolds in the context of the believing and moral community. Living in liturgical time helps to form a community of people who share a similar vision for and mission to the world as we seek the breaking in of the Kingdom of God in the temporal world.⁶¹



NOTES

- 1 T. S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1943), II.
- 2 Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 47.
- 3 See Douglas Rushkoff, *Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now* (New York: Current Trade, 2013), 73–84.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 85.
- 5 William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 12.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 9 Darlene Fozard Weaver, *The Acting Person and Christian Moral Life* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 19.
- 10 Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*, 3.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 40.
- 16 Rushkoff, *Present Shock*, 13–18.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 39.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 75.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 88–89.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 73.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Ibid.*, 74.

- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid., 85.
- 25 Ibid.
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