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The Cosmopolitan Church: Voices from the Tradition

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WHAT IS COSMOPOLITANISM? And should Christians practice it? These are the questions I will address in this essay. After summarizing the views of two leading contemporary exponents of cosmopolitanism, the philosophers Kwame Anthony Appiah and Martha Nussbaum, I will argue that from the Christian perspective their projects are problematic. Finally, I will suggest some possibilities for a Christian cosmopolitanism, bringing voices from the Christian tradition into dialogue with Nussbaum's and Appiah's ideas.

Nussbaum advocates a contemporary appropriation of cosmopolitanism, an ancient idea developed most fully by the Stoics, because of its potential to help us bring an end to the strife and suffering that beset us all around the world. Cosmopolitanism, she argues, offers a paradigm both for putting limits on violence and human aggression and for nurturing respect and love for all of humankind.

Diogenes the Cynic is often regarded as the first cosmopolitan. When asked where he was from, he answered quite simply, "I am a citizen of the world [*cosmopolites*, from *polites*, 'citizen' and *kosmos*, 'world']." Diogenes was unusual for his day, according to Nussbaum, because he "refused to be defined by his local origins and local group memberships" and instead "insisted on defining himself, primarily, in terms of more universal aspirations and concerns" (1997, 29). This idea of world citizenship was then taken up and articulated more fully by the Stoics who claimed that all of us reside in two communities: the local one of our birth and the world-wide community which the first-century Roman author, Seneca, described as "truly great and truly common, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun" (*De otio*, 4.1). Our most basic moral and social obligations stem from this world-wide community. According to Nussbaum, this cosmopolitan notion that "[w]e should view ourselves as fundamentally and deeply linked to humankind as a whole, and take thought in our deliberations, both personal and political, for the good of the whole species" grows directly out of the Stoic conception of human beings. She explains:

According to the Stoics, the basis for human community is the worth of reason in each and every human being. Reason, in the Stoic view, is a portion of the divine in each of us. And each and every human being, just in virtue of being rational and moral... has

boundless worth. Male or female, slave or free, king or peasant, all are of boundless moral value, and the dignity of reason is worthy of respect wherever it is found. This reason, the Stoics held, makes us fellow citizens. (1997, 30)

For the Stoics, recognizing our common humanity should lead us to realize that differences in gender, social class, ethnicity, and nationality are irrelevant. Rather, we ought to acknowledge that by virtue of our shared humanity, each person deserves our respect and concern.

While the Stoic view is aimed at cultivating an attitude of respect and concern for all humankind, it does not entail a rejection of local affiliations. The Stoics acknowledged that the exigencies of human life require us to give special attention to those closest to us, and for good reason. For example, if, rather than focusing my attention on my two daughters, I were to try to spread my energies among all the world's children, I would surely end up neglecting my own, thereby doing the world more harm than good.¹ But the Stoics simultaneously warned that we ought not allow such proximate ties to cause us to lose sight of “the primary claim of humanity” (1997, 33). Thus, while Nussbaum is clear that, as cosmopolitans, we need not give up our ties to local groups such as the nuclear family, our extended family, our ethnic group, our city, our nation, and even our religion, our central allegiance ought to be to humanity as a whole (1996a).

Nussbaum generally has high regard for the tenets of ancient Stoic cosmopolitanism, although she acknowledges their troubling blind spots, for example, with regard to slavery (1997, 38–39). She also takes issue with them on the subject of providence, for their cosmopolitan notions are grounded in a vision of the universe as guided by providence and possessed of teleological design. Ultimately, she asserts that we can be cosmopolitans without believing in providence:

Humanity can claim our respect just as powerfully whether we think the universe is intrinsically well ordered or whether, with Lucretius, we think that things look pretty random and unprovidential. However humanity emerged, whether by design or by chance, it is what it is and it compels respect. In a sense there is a special dignity and freedom in the choice to constitute our community as universal and moral in the face of a disorderly and unfriendly universe, for then we are not following anyone else's imperatives but our very own. (1997, 43)

WHILE NUSSBAUM TAKES THE COSMOPOLITANISM of ancient Stoicism as her point of departure, Kwame Anthony Appiah begins with stories, often from his childhood. Born in his mother's homeland, England, Appiah returned with his family to his father's native Ghana while he was still an infant. His parents were Christians, but some relatives were Muslim, and still others practiced traditional African religions. His stories artfully portray the way in which this extended family—much like the larger Ghanaian culture—adopted an attitude of “live and let live” with regard to their differences, religious and otherwise, and this attitude is at the heart of his book, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. Like Nussbaum, Appiah looks back to the ancient philosophers, but he also draws on variations of cosmopolitanism that have emerged over the centuries, fashioning his own distinctive brand. He writes:

[There are] two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism. One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our differences. Because there are so many human possibilities worth exploring, we neither expect nor desire that every person or every society should converge on a single mode of life. Whatever our obligations are to others (or theirs to us) they often have the right to go their own way. (2006, xv)

Appiah's vision is animated by a desire to cultivate both a sense of obligation to humankind and what we might call a respectful curiosity about and concern for those who are different from us, as well as a willingness to live with disagreement. Like Nussbaum, Appiah wants to emphasize the universal nature of our obligations as world citizens, but he is more willing than she to envision what might be called "rooted cosmopolitanism." That is, while Nussbaum grants that each person will have local affiliations, Appiah seems willing to admit greater significance to those more particular ties (1996). Appiah often tells the story of his father, who was a Christian, a Ghanaian patriot, and who also, near his death, wrote to his children, "Remember that you are citizens of the world" (2006, xviii). For Nussbaum, patriotism and cosmopolitanism do not sit together easily, but Appiah finds the idea of these simultaneous commitments less troublesome. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that Nussbaum's and Appiah's agreements on cosmopolitanism are wider and deeper than their disagreements.

Appiah's stories depict cosmopolitans, anti-cosmopolitans, as well as those who are both. In his opening chapter, Appiah introduces readers to Sir Richard Francis Burton, a nineteenth-century Englishman who exemplifies dimensions of cosmopolitanism through his mastery of multiple languages, his travel across five continents, and his fascination with other cultures. At the same time, Burton was an anti-cosmopolitan in that he shared the racial and cultural prejudices of Victorian society, looking with contempt on Africans, Arabs, Indians, as well as the Irish and French-Canadians. In 1880 Burton published a lengthy poem—purportedly a translation from ancient Persian, but clearly his own work—in which the narrator asserts:

All Faith is false, all Faith is true:
Truth is the shattered mirror strown
In myriad bits; while each believes
His little bit the whole to own. (2006, 5)

Appiah uses this image of the shattered mirror to suggest that our local commitments, and especially our religious commitments, offer us only shards of a mirror which can reflect, at best, only a part of the truth. According to this view, cosmopolitans recognize that no one has access to the whole truth and thereby can avoid the mistake of thinking that their shard of mirror reflects truth in its entirety. As a result, they are open and receptive to learning from the entire panoply of world cultures and religions.

SO HOW IS A CHRISTIAN TO RESPOND to such cosmopolitan visions? Or, to put it more sharply, can a Christian be a cosmopolitan? I think the answer is both “Yes” and “No.” Let me elaborate on the “No” first.

From a theological perspective, there are several problems with the visions of cosmopolitanism proposed by Nussbaum and Appiah, but I will focus on only a few. The most fundamental is that for both Nussbaum and Appiah, religious (and thus Christian) commitments ought to be subordinated to cosmopolitan ones. This view simply misunderstands what Christianity entails. I am reminded of a cartoon that appeared years ago in *The New Yorker*. The scene is a busy street, presumably in that cosmopolitan city, the Big Apple. An elderly Eastern orthodox monk slowly trudges along the sidewalk, his beard flowing down over his robes, his kamilavkion covering his head. On his chest hangs a large crucifix. Two young women walk by, decked out in fashionable clothes and stiletto heels, designer handbags slung over their shoulders. As they pass, both turn to look at the monk and one exclaims, “Fantastic crucifix!” The irony, of course, is that the young socialites see the crucifix as simply one of a host of possible fashion accessories, while for the monk it represents a way of life that lays total claim on him, one that encompasses all of his existence.

To be fair to Nussbaum and Appiah, neither of them trivializes religious commitments to the extent that these cartoon characters do: They don’t suggest that faith commitments are like fashion accessories to be donned or discarded according to our whims. But both of them treat religious commitments as merely one of a variety of local affiliations which, in one way or another, ought to be subordinated to cosmopolitanism’s universal claims. And this view of Christianity is simply unacceptable, not only for an Eastern orthodox monk, but also for all Christians serious about their faith. (I suspect that it is unacceptable for all devout practitioners of any of the world’s major religions, but I’ll limit my claim to Christianity.)

The demands that faith makes on the believer are comprehensive and complete: Christians cannot compartmentalize their lives, keeping some areas neatly separated from the claims of faith, as if God could be reserved for certain times and places. (Of course, I am speaking here about the life to which serious Christians aspire, not the messy reality of half-hearted commitment that most of us usually muck around in.) The comprehensiveness of faith is a theme sounded throughout the Bible. Leviticus 19, part of the Holiness Code, illustrates this well. It opens with God commanding Moses: “Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev 19:2). The rest of this chapter lists the various ways in which the Israelites are to reflect God’s holiness. Many of these injunctions echo the Ten Commandments: Idol worship is prohibited, and honoring one’s parents is required. Truthfulness and honesty are demanded: thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness. But other commands go beyond the Decalogue: the Israelites are given specific instructions concerning ritual sacrifice and how men are to groom their beards. Witchcraft and tattoos are forbidden. Farmers are to harvest their fields in such a way that the poor and sojourners can gather up the gleanings. The stranger among them is to be treated as one of their own, loved just as God loved Israel when she was a stranger in the land of Egypt. No area of life is untouched or separated from the commitment of faith, and every aspect of life is one in which the believer can, at least potentially, glorify God through willing obedience.

And lest Christians are tempted to dismiss Leviticus, remember that the spirit of Leviticus 19 permeates the sayings of Jesus. When a new follower says, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home,” Jesus’ response makes clear the all-encompassing demands of the Gospel: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:61–62). And when questioned by a lawyer about the great commandment, Jesus answers, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37). These two commandments, comprehensive in their scope, are quoted from Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy. Of course, we can rejoice that grace abounds whenever we, in our sinfulness, fall short of these demands. But there is no doubt that, for Christians, the single most comprehensive commitment is found in their faith, and all others flow from that. This reality is simply inconsistent with Nussbaum’s and Appiah’s versions of cosmopolitanism.

NEITHER NUSSBAUM NOR APPIAH APPEALS to anything transcendent as a foundation on which to ground their cosmopolitanism. This should not surprise us, but it should alert us to ask: What notion of human beings undergirds the cosmopolitanisms of Nussbaum and Appiah? Or, to put it another way, what sort of vision of the cosmopolis—the universe and the society of human beings—lies behind their cosmopolitanisms? Nussbaum explicitly rejects any sense of a providential ordering of the cosmos or a teleological understanding of human beings, arguing simply that humanity “is what it is and it compels respect.” Appiah’s cosmopolitanism, clearly grounded in a secular, post-Christian framework, seems consistent with Nussbaum’s here. But whence flows this basic respect for human beings? Following the ancient Stoics, Nussbaum asserts that human beings deserve to be treated with justice and respect because they are rational and moral beings. The accidents of birth—gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, class, and race—are, she observes, precisely that, accidents and not the basis for our intrinsic worth. Rather, she explains, “Human personhood, by which I mean the possession of practical reason and other basic moral capacities, is the source of our moral worth, and this worth is equal” (1996b, 133). Notwithstanding Nussbaum’s recent writings on persons with disabilities, in our day and age, such a definition of “human personhood” inevitably raises other questions: Do the unborn, the elderly plagued with dementia, or those with other mental disabilities possess the practical reason and moral capacity that qualify them as human beings?

Nussbaum’s cosmopolitanism is also problematic for the Christian because it makes an anti-teleological stance a virtue, when she finds “a special dignity and freedom” in choosing to create a universal and moral community “in the face of a disorderly and unfriendly universe” precisely because “then we are not following anyone else’s imperatives but our very own.” Initially, it might be easy to find these sentiments very appealing and noble, even if they also evoke a sort of sadness and despair. But on closer examination, they seem to me akin to the sin of pride that Augustine describes in his *Confessions*. Pride, the fundamental sin, consists of claiming for oneself the prerogatives of God, as Adam and Eve did in the Garden. They ate the fruit presented to them by the serpent with these tempting words: “You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God*, knowing good and evil” (Gen.

3:4–5). Augustine riffs on this understanding of pride when, in the midst of recounting his own theft of fruit, he presents a catalogues of vices:

Pride imitates what is lofty; but you alone are God most high above all things. What does ambition seek but honour and glory? Yet you alone are worthy of honour and are glorious for eternity... Avarice wishes to have large possessions; you possess everything. Envy contends about excellence; but what is more excellent than you? (*Confessions* 2.6.13)

According to Augustine, each sin is an attempt to put myself in the place of God, to possess some desirable quality independently of God, as if it were not gift—as if I, and not God, were the source of it. Every vice attempts to possess something that is, in itself, good, but to do so apart from God, and thus each is simply a variation on the fundamental sin of pride. Nussbaum’s exhortation that we follow our own imperatives (rather than God’s) in creating a universal and moral community is, from Augustine’s perspective, a seductive temptation.

Practicing cosmopolitanism carries risks for the Christian, at least in the versions advocated by Nussbaum and Appiah. We may lose our moorings in the foundation of our faith. Now, at this point you might think that I am completely rejecting cosmopolitanism. But that would be wrong. In what follows I’d like to suggest how we might think about a distinctively Christian cosmopolitanism, one that flows from rather than trumps Christian faith.

ONE OF THE HALLMARKS OF COSMOPOLITANISM, particularly as Appiah describes it, is the desire to have conversations across borders, to be in dialogue with those who are different from us. Christians have been engaged in this from the Church’s earliest days, both in missionary activity and in the defense of Christianity against its critics, from which the long and distinguished tradition of apologetics developed. One of the earliest Christian apologies is an anonymous second-century work known as the *Epistle to Diognetus*. In the *Epistle*, the author describes for Diognetus the relationship between Christians and the larger, non-Christian world:

Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or customs. They do not live in cities of their own; they do not use a peculiar form of speech; they do not follow an eccentric manner of life... Yet, although they live in Greek and barbarian cities alike...and follow the customs of the country in clothing and food and other matters of daily living, at the same time they give proof of the remarkable and admittedly extraordinary constitution of their own commonwealth. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land. They marry, like everyone else, and they beget children, but they do not cast out their offspring. They share their board with each other, but not their marriage bed. It is true that they are “in the flesh,” but they do not live “according to the flesh.” They busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their own lives they go far beyond what the laws require. They love all of humankind, and by all of humankind are persecuted... They are reviled, and yet they bless....(5.1–15)

This description of the Church is remarkable. Christians are spread throughout the entire known world and span every national, ethnic, and linguistic group. Like all human beings, they live in particular places, but they don't count themselves as citizens of their homeland. Remember Diogenes' reply: "I am a citizen of the world." The *Epistle to Diognetus* seems to be saying something like that, but with a twist: "Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land." Christians recognize every land as home, but at the same time, no land is home, because their true commonwealth is with God. We should be reminded of that "great cloud of witnesses" in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which together with the entire Church understands that we are "strangers and exiles on the earth" and "here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come," the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 11:13–16, 12:22, 13:14). This allegiance to the City of God, according to our anonymous author, does not prevent Christians from participating in the world-wide earthly city. They do so, however, as aliens, and when they contribute to the welfare of the universal earthly city it is precisely because of their love for the heavenly Jerusalem. Further, their love for the City of God leads them to love all human beings, and in response to persecution and revilement, they return words of blessing. In short, the universal commonwealth that Appiah and Nussbaum long for, even if only metaphorically, is at the heart of the *Epistle of Diognetus*. However, the vision of the *Epistle*—unlike those of Appiah and Nussbaum—is grounded in God's prior gift to us, the gift revealed most fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This notion that the commonwealth of Christians is found in God, not in any particular country or nation is also expressed in Augustine's poignant account of the death of his mother, Monica. After Augustine is baptized, he, his mother, and his brother Navigius are in Ostia, Rome's port city. Close to death, Monica turns to her sons and says, "Bury your mother here." Navigius is initially upset because Patrick, Monica's husband, had been buried years earlier in North Africa, Monica's fatherland, and they had expected her to be buried there also. But Monica knows well that her true homeland is not North Africa. She quiets her younger son, saying, "Bury my body anywhere. I have only one request of you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord" (*Confessions* 9.11.27). Like the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, Monica knows that her homeland is not on this earth, but rather with the gathered Christian community, the body of Christ, on its journey to the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Epistle to Diognetus tells us that Christians love others because of their own citizenship in the Kingdom of God, but it also holds up as exemplary an attitude which would preclude Christians from employing force or coercion in their encounters with others. That portion of the *Epistle* on which F. Bland Tucker based the hymn, "The great Creator of the worlds," describes how God set about rescuing human beings:

Now, did [God the Father] send [the Son], as a human mind might assume, to rule by tyranny, fear, and terror? Far from it! He sent him out of kindness and gentleness, like a king sending his son who is himself a king. He sent him as God; he sent him as man to human beings. He willed to save humankind by persuasion, not by compulsion, for compulsion is not God's way of working. In sending him, God called human beings, but did not pursue them; he sent him in love, not in judgment. Yet he will indeed send him someday as our judge...(7.3–6)

Since Christians are called to imitate Christ, the one who chose the way of persuasion and love, there can be little warrant for Christians to use force and compulsion in their encounters with others. Now it is true that Christians have not always lived up to the high calling of the *Epistle of Diognetus*. Indeed, we have too often responded to the world's scorn with our own hatred and violence, and we have even tried to force the Gospel on others. For all of this we should repent. However, our failure to follow Christ's example does not invalidate the truth of the Gospel or the vision at the heart of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, but rather confirms the Christian diagnosis of the human condition.

Earlier I mentioned the central claim of the Christian faith: in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has given the world the most complete revelation of God's very self, and through this, the world's salvation has been accomplished. The comprehensiveness of this claim does not sit easily with many cosmopolitans. Indeed, some appear to assume Christianity is inherently exclusivist or intolerant precisely because it makes such a far-reaching claim. Appiah's version of cosmopolitanism emphasizes the importance of differences among persons and the potential to learn from those. This provides the foundation for the attitude of "live and let live" which animates his cosmopolitanism, but at the same time, it can lead to relativism (notwithstanding his arguments against relativism). Moreover, it seems to lead him to the assumption that those who hold strong religious convictions are almost always intolerant and exclusivistic. Indeed, Appiah labels as intolerant "[m]any American Christians" who "believe that atheists, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and the rest will go to hell unless they accept Jesus Christ" (2006, 141).² Such a view grossly oversimplifies much of the Christian tradition on this issue, and it misunderstands the nature of the comprehensive claims of not only Christianity, but also of many of the world's great religions. Further, it distorts—or is simply unaware of—a long Christian tradition that affirms the value of beliefs found in non-Christian religions and cultures.

To make the sort of comprehensive claim that Christianity does is not a sign of intolerance or arrogance. Indeed, all great religions make such sweeping claims because they are concerned to discover what the proper goal of human life is and, once found, to discern what practices and ways of life will help persons to arrive at it. Further, these great religions commend specific practices and ways of life precisely because finding the true aim of human life and attaining it *are of the utmost importance*. Augustine DiNoia explains this point well when he summarizes the response of the Buddhist scholar Phra Khantipalo to accusations that Buddhism's doctrines are exclusivist:

[I]t is not exclusivistic pretensions that compel a religious community to teach that a certain course of life is necessary for focusing upon and attaining the true aim of life, or that other courses of life can delay or impede human beings from pursuing the right course. The Christian claim that there is no salvation except through Jesus Christ, or the Buddhist claim that there is no attainment of Nirvana except in the following of the Excellent Eightfold Path, reflects not an unwarranted exclusivism on the part of these communities but the seriousness with which each regards the true aim of life and the means necessary to attain and enjoy it. (1992, 8)

One might even go so far as to say that, for Christians or Buddhists, Jews or Muslims, to believe that they have found the true aim of human life and then to keep it hidden out of fear of seeming

exclusivist could be deemed a sort of misanthropy or deceit, or both. Viewing the matter from this perspective, we can see that when adherents of a religious tradition share their beliefs with others, and likewise learn about others' beliefs—as long as this does not involve compulsion—they are practicing a sort of philanthropy. And when Christians do this, they are practicing a philanthropy that imitates the love of Christ who, through the Incarnation, condescended to share the very life of God with us.

BUILDING ON THIS, WE TURN TO THE QUESTION of whether Christianity's sweeping claim about the salvation wrought by God through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus precludes the Christian from recognizing truth in the other religions and cultures of the world. The answer is a resounding "No." Christians have always acknowledged that those outside the Church may have a certain degree of knowledge of the truth about the world and God. Recall God's command to the Israelites to despoil the Egyptians before fleeing Egypt, that is, to "ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, jewelry of silver and of gold" (Exodus 11:2). For early Christians, this event was construed in a spiritual way as referring to pagan learning. In *The Life of Moses*, Gregory of Nyssa interprets the gold and silver of the Egyptians to be pagan knowledge that is useful for Christians in the worship of God (II.112–116). Likewise, in *Confessions*, Augustine relates how his encounter with the books of the Platonists gave him the answer to the vexing problem of the existence of evil. Despite their undeniable errors, these pagan philosophical works, Augustine tells us, are Egyptian gold (7.9.15). Thus, Christians need have no reluctance to engage other cultures and religions or fear of finding truth in them. Indeed, they can respect and admire the riches of other religions and cultures, and even learn from them, for as Augustine reminds us, wherever truth is found, its ultimate source is the Triune God. Of course, it is important to remember that while Egyptian gold can be used to adorn the Ark of the Covenant—to worship God—it can also be used to fashion the golden calf. This is, in part, why there is no set formula for Christians to follow when they cross borders and engage those of other cultures and faiths. In trying to discern the truth offered in and through such encounters, Christians must always return to the central tenets of their faith, rather than bracket their faith or set it aside. Nonetheless, while we should approach such border-crossings without fear and with the love of Christ, decisions about what to think about any particular encounter and how to respond to the other can only be made on an *ad hoc* basis.

Such a positive view of other religions is not limited to ancient Christian authors. *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II "Declaration on the Church's Relation to non-Christian Religions" speaks thus of Buddhism and Hinduism:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of those things which are true and holy in these religions. It regards with respect those ways of acting and living and those precepts and teachings which, though often at variance with what it holds and expounds, frequently reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens everyone. Yet, without ceasing it preaches, and is bound to preach, Christ who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom people find the fullness of religious life and in whom God has reconciled all things to himself (cf. 2 Cor 5.18–19)....

[The Church], therefore, calls upon all its sons and daughters with prudence and charity, through dialogues and cooperation with the followers of other religions, bearing witness to the Christian faith and way of life, to recognise, preserve and promote those spiritual and moral good things as well as the socio-cultural values which are to be found among them. (§2, §4)

Nostra Aetate then turns to Islam and Judaism, declaring the respect that the Church has for these two great monotheistic religions. Moreover, after condemning “all persecutions against any people,” *Nostra Aetate* adds:

Christ, as the church has always maintained and maintains, went willingly and with immense love to his passion and death because of the sins of all people so that all may obtain salvation. It is the duty of the preaching Church, then, to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God’s universal love and the source of all grace. (§4)

Here *Nostra Aetate* does not deny Christianity’s central claims but rather affirms them. Nonetheless, these central claims do not imply, as secular cosmopolitans might assume, that Christians believe salvation is necessarily reserved only for themselves. Once again, there is a long tradition which recognizes that non-Christians may have a share in the salvation procured by Christ, a tradition which in fact hopes and prays for this. As early as the second century, Justin Martyr asserted that Christ, as Logos of God, had been present among and available to peoples in all times and places (including before the Incarnation), and that whenever someone has lived in accord with the Logos, that person can be understood to be his follower. Justin even goes so far as to count the Greek philosophers, Socrates and Heraclitus, among these followers!³ (*First Apology*, ch. 46) Two centuries later, Augustine is generally more pessimistic about Christians and non-Christians alike. Despite this, throughout the *City of God*, he maintains that at the end of time we will discover that some of those whom we thought were members of the earthly city and opposed to God are in fact citizens of the heavenly city, while others whom we assumed to be part of the heavenly city will turn out not to be. Augustine’s perspective should give us pause and remind us of the need for the virtue of humility. Further, other strands within the Christian tradition affirm that the diversity of religions in the world may be part of God’s providential plan for the world’s salvation. That is, while the fullness of truth is to be found in the revelation of Christ, other religions may serve to prepare persons to receive the Gospel message.

Now, I am not so foolish as to deny that some Christians have asserted that non-Christians could not be saved and have treated their non-Christian brothers and sisters with scorn and contempt. I am also not claiming that Hell does not exist, though I do hope and pray that at the end of time everyone will have turned to the Triune God in love and praise, with the result that Hell will be empty.⁴ However, I am trying to demonstrate that—*contra* the views of some secular cosmopolitans—the Christian tradition has a developed and nuanced position with regard to the status of non-Christian religions and their members.

Thus, on the basis of our own tradition, we Christians have the resources for a universal love of humankind as well as the respect for and interest in other cultures and religions that Appiah and Nussbaum seek. Our cosmopolitan vision, however, is distinct from theirs in that it is grounded

in the love of God. And, because we take as our starting point the love of God, in our encounters with those who are different from us, we can imagine many times when our judgments and beliefs will conflict with theirs. Nonetheless, there is a sort of Christian cosmopolitanism intrinsic to the Church, one that, because it flows from the love of Christ, calls us to respond to the other, even in the midst of disagreement, with love.

In closing, I'd like to return to the metaphor of the mirror which Appiah borrowed from Sir Richard Francis Burton. For someone like Appiah, a sort of secular cosmopolitanism makes sense because the mirror is shattered and each person or tradition possesses only a shard. I'd like to contrast this image with one from the medieval Franciscan theologian, Bonaventure. In *The Soul's Journey into God*, Bonaventure uses imagery of a mirror, but this one is very different from that described by Burton. For Bonaventure, every element of creation is like a mirror. Each reflects not the totality of God, for no finite being could do that, but rather some aspect of the infinite God. And unlike Burton's mirror, Bonaventure's is not shattered, but rather connected in a unity that, like a mirrored globe reflecting light infinitely outward into space, points to the eternal Triune God. In Bonaventure's vision, we cannot help but respond to our fellow human beings with respect and love, for like us, they are part of the mirror and equally the object of Christ's love.

Although the Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins was not a Franciscan but a Jesuit, he shared Bonaventure's understanding of the entire world as reflecting God and of human beings as the special object of Christ's love. I will close with one of his sonnets, a poem that beautifully captures this vision at the heart of a Christian cosmopolitanism, one that flows from our faith rather than subverts it:

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 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.

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Notes

1. Nussbaum offers this example with regard to her own daughter (1996b, 135–136).
2. This is part of a larger discussion in which Appiah discusses various Islamic and Christian movements which he describes (imprecisely) as “fundamentalist,” and where he draws a direct connection between belief in religious truth and the tendency to violence. Elsewhere Appiah implies that those who advocate traditional Christian sexual ethics are intolerant and even irrational (e.g., 54–57).
3. However, Justin’s comment needs to be understood within his larger critique of Greek philosophy. See Droge, 1987.
4. For a fascinating analysis of the theological debate on this topic, see Von Balthasar 1988.