

Foreword

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Stratford Caldecott's new book completes the work that he began with quiet mastery in *The Radiance of Being*. Just as the first volume was an exploration of Catholic metaphysics in light of the Trinity, the second is an exploration of Catholic social theory in light of the same triune mystery. Like twin panels of a diptych that share a common motif, the two books join to display the Trinitarian communion illuminating cosmos and society through the purified bodies of the saints. "Above all," Caldecott writes in his introduction to the new book, "I want to show how the *radiance* I spoke of in the earlier book—the radiance of Trinitarian gift—"can shine through not just the natural but also the social and cultural worlds."

Again and again, *Not As the World Gives* gently draws our attention to the mystery of purity as the matrix of the just society in the image and likeness of the triune God. As Caldecott explains in the first chapter of the book, the pure in heart who behold the Trinitarian light shining through all things, and whose "whole bodies light up" (Matt. 6:22) with the same luminous ardor, necessarily become in their turn "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14), a "city set on a hill" that "cannot be hid" (ibid.). The "simple eye" (Matt. 6:22) that perceives the triune glory in the cosmos (the theme of the first book) is also the "lamp" (ibid.) that irradiates the same light into society (the theme of the second). And it is *this* radiation of glory (in the midst of suffering), Caldecott argues, that opens a "way" for "creative justice," which the world cannot give, yet which the world both desperately needs and, despite its often dogged resistance, secretly desires.

Not As the World Gives is less an account of Catholic Social Teaching than a reminder of its properly theological context: man's vocation to lift the whole of nature "into the freedom of the glory of God's children" (Rom. 8:21), and so into the Trinitarian *communio*

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personarum which that glory reflects. Set against this immense eschatological backdrop, earthly justice appears as a fleeting glimpse of the “new heavens and new earth in which righteousness”—the sophianic economy of triune gift—is finally fully “at home” (2 Pet. 3:13). But Caldecott’s great merit is to reveal this fleeting glimpse as a solid practical ideal, i.e., as a “way of creative justice” at once more revolutionary than worldly utopianism and more realistic than worldly cynicism. His new book is thus a timely reminder that the freshest source of right order, its most luminous pattern, lies less in programs and techniques than in the Beatitudes, the Church’s characteristic way of being in the world precisely by *not being of it*.

According to Caldecott, the “way of creative justice” passes through observance of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which give the love revealed in the Beatitudes its three-fold form. This form, he stresses, governs not only religious consecration, but also, analogously, Christian marriage, whose very *raison d’être* is to embody the *spirit* of the three vows and irradiate it into the world. For the same reason, Caldecott can present Christian marriage as the manifest truth of what he calls the “mystery of gender,” which finds its densest expression in the fruitful communion of man and wife, the conjoint *imago Trinitatis*. This communion stands, in turn, at the source of his own thinking, as he himself hints in his opening acknowledgment of “Léonie Caldecott, with whom,” he writes, “I am united in a *state of life that underpins all the work we have tried to do together for the Church*” (emphasis added).

By setting chastity within the solemn play of conjugal communion, Caldecott recovers the true splendor of sexual purity as the beautiful integrity of embodied souls. But chastity, he goes on to explain, both shapes and reflects the luminous pattern of all truly human polity. Indeed, one of the great lessons of Caldecott’s new book is precisely that personal purity, social justice, and worship coinhere within the undivided wholeness of the “radiant city,” i.e., the social microcosm of a world reconciled in the Trinity. This coinherence underscores, in turn, the book’s central insight that justice is primarily an effulgence of triune *communio*, rather than simply the vindication of “rights” or even the rightly proportioned *cuique*

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suum (though it is of course not less than these things). The communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit that ensouls the Church, Caldecott argues, is also meant to animate our pursuit of earthly justice, whose highest expression is friendship with God, with one another, and with our fellow creatures.

Although Caldecott has a rare perception of the fundamental unity of our current problems—he is a keen, yet sober critic of what George Grant called the “package deal” of modernity—he keeps his gaze calmly focused on the radiant consummation of justice in the rightly ordered *polis* and *kosmos*. This timely vision of cosmo-political justice retrieves an ancient, especially Platonic, contemplation of *dikaioyunê* as a social expression of the radiance of being. And yet, Caldecott suggests, the splendor of justice finds its brightest reflection in the mirror of human “creativity,” i.e., of the “sub-creative” imagination located in the distinctively human middle between intellection and sensation. One of the most beautiful implications of Caldecott’s argument, then, is that *justice itself is poetic*, even as this poetry finds its supreme inspiration and grandest theme in the Trinitarian gift glimpsed through the purity of Christian marriage and consecrated virginity. Far from bypassing created nature, this triune inspiration enables the world to open itself to the fulfillment it longs for, but cannot give itself apart from God.

Like the Colombian philosopher Nicolás Gómez Dávila, who once defined man as a problem lacking any human solution, Caldecott rejects every merely human attempt to master the *conditio humana*. True creativity lies not in technological despotism, but in “creative justice,” the radiance of freedom reborn as pure self-gift from the heart of the Trinity. Because the Holy Spirit is always seeking to enkindle this radiance in us, Caldecott reminds us, the radically new beginning needed for social regeneration requires no more and no less than a pure heart to see and welcome his presence in our mortal flesh. The most practical lesson of this eminently practical book, then, lies not in some program or technique, but in the hope it inspires: the joyful confidence that every circumstance of our embodied existence, however painful or however hidden, can hasten the radiant manifestation of God’s “creative justice”—the

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beautiful order of his own Trinitarian communion—throughout the whole of cosmos and society:

Justice is the key to order. But it requires imagination to create a just society, and to build a culture of life in which the beauty of God's love shines through, in which every mother is supported, every child protected, every sick person helped, every stranger welcomed. Man is a microcosm, and a fallen, broken one at that. Our ideal city is a dream, a fantasy, until we see it arriving like an impossible resurrection. Plato and the others were right: the soul is the key. The ugly struggle for power, the lies and hypocrisy that are so common in the realm of Caesar, can only be defeated by an "inner struggle" like that of the hesychasts in the desert—though even monks rarely attain the social harmony of the earliest disciples. Nothing is possible without prayer, but with God all things are indeed possible. A Christian society may seem a long way off, but that is a mistake: it exists already, in and among those who show mercy and kindness to those around them.