

THE RECONSECRATION OF MAN

by Carl R. Trueman



Last fall I [argued](#) that our current cultural moment is characterized by desecration. And at the heart of desecration lies the repudiation of the notion that human beings are made in God's image. To destroy the human in reality is thus to destroy the divine by proxy. **Trans ideology and pro-abortion politics are exhilarating because they make their proponents feel like God. That's why so many seem to take such delight in the acts of cultural demolition that mark the radical ends of the political spectrum.** But there are subtler ways of desecration to which we are all potentially vulnerable. Lack

of gratitude is one. And this needs to be a foundational part of any discussion as to how we can move from the desecration of man to his reconsecration.

Gratitude is an interesting, potent thing. My mother taught me always to say “thank you” whenever I was given anything, even by somebody paid to do so, such as a waiter in a restaurant. And when your mother tells you something, it tends to be inscribed on your character forever. To this day I immediately look with some contempt upon those who do not express thanks for even the smallest services provided by others. But the example of a waiter raises the fascinating question: Why should I express gratitude to someone who is merely doing something for which he is paid? I feel no such need to thank the ATM that delivers cash on demand or the website that issues my theater tickets. The answer is that in **expressing gratitude even to someone who is required to act toward me in a certain way, I acknowledge that person as a person, a fellow human being.** That is why I thank the cashier in the booth who issues my rail ticket but do not thank the machine in the wall that does the same. The former is a person. By expressing gratitude to someone even if it is simply for the work they are paid to do, I acknowledge them as a person, not merely a thing or an instrument or an automaton. And in acknowledging them as person I act as a person too.

That is why **gratitude lies at the heart of Christianity.** It is foundational to God’s relationship to his people in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 10, **God makes his care for the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner key to Israel’s ethical attitude: She is to do the same because, when she was a sojourner in Egypt, the Lord cared for her. Gratitude should lead to a “paying forward” of kindness.** Then, in the New Testament, the calls to be thankful abound. **Thankfulness**

is to be a key element of the daily life of every Christian and a central characteristic of the practical, visible Christian life. The point is that, of all human attitudes, gratitude acknowledges our dependency upon others—both God and other human beings—and that is one of the things that marks us out as truly human and unique. Can any other creature on the face of the planet be grateful? When I express gratitude to God, I acknowledge my personal dependency upon him, I also act as a person myself, and I am inclined to acknowledge his image as found in those around me. **Gratitude is both profoundly theological and personally transformative. It is part of consecration.**

I was reminded of the practical beauty of this last week when I had the privilege of speaking at the synod of the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word, part of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). It was a week of singular encouragement. I had many formal and informal conversations with men and women involved in the day-to-day work of the church at the local level. In particular, conversations with others from around the world—some from places where ministry comes with acute personal risks and costs—was both humbling and inspiring in equal measure.

But perhaps the most striking thing about the delegates with whom I spoke was their gratitude. **The good humor, the resilience in the face of suffering, and the zeal for the gospel were all built upon a basic gratitude—to God for his action in Christ and to the church for her faithful witness to that.** And what became clear was that amidst all of the ideological and cultural chaos by which they were surrounded—whether in the polarized political climate of the USA or the more immediately physical hostile

environments in other parts of the world—none with whom I spoke had lost sight of the underlying humanity even of those who opposed them.

Desecration can take many forms, but it is always characterized by certain things: a delight in dehumanizing those made in God's image; and an absence of gratitude to God that, if present, would immediately temper any tendency to anger and bitterness toward others. The Christianity I witnessed at the synod was marked by cheerfulness and hospitality, both of which the Bible makes clear are functions of gratitude. **Perhaps the road to consecration begins with the cultivation of a humble attitude of thankfulness for the gospel and for those who show forth that gospel in their own lives.**

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