

DANIEL RHODES

Loyola University of Chicago

TIME EMPTIED AND TIME RENEWED: THE DOMINION OF
CAPITAL AND A THEO-POLITICS OF *CONTRETEMPS*

In his long-awaited interjection into the debates on the future of Marxism after the collapse of Soviet state communism, Jacques Derrida introduces the notion of *contretemps*.¹ It is a concept that appears amid his call for a New International to bear the legacy of critique in a (final) epoch dominated by the new world order with its ten pervasive plagues.

As is to be expected however, Derrida is no orthodox Marxist, and his intervention seeks, in part, to proffer a deconstructionist critique of the canonical concepts of class, history, party, etc. At the same time, he seeks to channel the critical spirit of Marx in order to re-politicize the current moment, introducing *contretemps* in order to highlight the persistent openness and counter-temporality intrinsic to the work of democracy. The details of Derrida's heterodoxy and his dispute with more mainstream Marxists, however, are not of primary interest for this essay. Still, I take his notion of *contretemps* to be an entry point for looking at how the church can draw upon Marxist insights for reimagining its own transformative political practice, particularly in an age of global capital.

Like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, wherein the ghost of the murdered Danish king continues to disturb his perplexed son, Derrida's engagement suggests that the specter of Marx haunts the dominion of global capital, as a troubled spirit arising from the ache of a society whose relations have been pulled out of joint. At the heart of an unfettered and regnant capital, he suggests, is a distorted time. Derrida asserts, "The age is off its hinges. Everything, beginning with time, seems out of kilter, unjust, dis-adjusted," as the time of quantifiable instants and unlimited accumulation distorts the structure and rhythm of social and political relations.²

Given the madness and the dislocation of time, a resistance that works toward democracy, justice, and solidarity must be something of an untimely, out-of-step practice. The concept, as Derrida develops it, and as it is then expanded by the French Marxist, Daniel Bensaïd, suggests the performance of a political time heterogeneous to the order of the regnant regime, a rhythm

¹ Jacques Derrida introduces this term in *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (1994; reprint, New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), 96. The term in French bears the meaning both of a disagreement and untimely or inopportune action. Derrida, undoubtedly, plays on both meanings to convey his dispute with orthodox Marxism as well as his call for untimely political involvement.

² Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 96.

and tempo that seeks to right these distorted relations. Structured by dissonant socio-political processes, *contretemps* moves out of sync with capital flows in search of justice and in witness to an alternative order.³ The struggle against the global reign of a disfigured political economy is, in this view, a struggle for/of time itself, wherein politics regains primacy over the determinist universal history of capital.

Pursuing a Marxish reading of capital time and an understanding of ecclesial practice developed in light of the notion of *contretemps*, this essay attempts to do three things.⁴ First, I want to examine the nature of the dislocated time of capital, exposing it as a regime of accumulation that operates by homogenizing and quantifying time, therein emptying it of all meaning and significance. Second, I will sketch a politics of *contretemps* derived from the explications of Bensaïd that seeks to complicate time so as to saturate it with political possibility, charging it with potent contingency and activating it for permanent revolution. In the end, however, I will show that while this view of *contretemps* may serve to introduce a political exigency, it remains forestalled by both its struggle to locate a structured and choreographed community capable of enacting such an alternative as well as a larger view of history and the cosmos capable of imbuing it with significance.

Lastly, I develop a theo-politics of the practice of *contretemps* derived from a Free Church ecclesiology to argue for its embodiment in the social and political practices of the Table and the Rule of Christ. Beyond offering simply an alternative geometric representation of time patterned by its calendric measure, following this “baptist vision”⁵, I will contend that, when performed in the full freedom of self-critical deliberation, these ecclesial practices enact the alternative daily tempos of a

³ Ibid., 110. Derrida states, “I believe in the political virtue of the *contretemps*. And if a *contretemps* does not have the good luck, a more or less calculated luck, to come *just in time*, then the inopportuneness of a strategy (political or other) may still *bear witness*, precisely [justement], to justice, bear witness, at least, to the justice which is demanded and about which we were saying a moment ago that it must be disadjusted, irreducible to exactness [justesse] and to law.”

⁴ I am indebted to Benjamin Kunkel for the use of the term “Marxish.” See his *Utopia or Bust: A Guide to the Present Crisis* (New York: Verso, 2014).

⁵ My “baptist vision” is derived from James Wm. McClendon, Jr.’s outline of such in his *Ethics: Systematic Theology Volume I*, Second Edition (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002; reprint, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012) in conversation with Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology, Volume 2: The Works of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). It is also shaped by the ecclesiological contributions of John Howard Yoder of whom a word must be said. Much has come to light lately about Yoder’s abusive actions and his disregard for his victims as well as his refusal to submit to, and even his attempt to distort, the very ecclesial processes he is so keen to stress as constitutive of the church. That the theologian was able to continually rationalize his own disregard for the processes and those involved remains for me a very deep problem not simply with respect to the discordance between theory and practice but more importantly for the integrity of his theology as a whole. This is, no doubt, a difficult and pertinent question I hope the reader will not take my use of his work to have somehow easily resolved.

counter-politics out of step with the process of capital and infused by the reign of God. Joined in a *koinonia* constituted by the presence of Christ and participant in an ongoing political process of deliberative forgiveness empowered by the will of God in the Spirit, the gathered community embodies a distinct mode of fellowship, collective discernment, and conflict resolution configured to the new age of the kingdom. A new humanity continually reconstituted and reformed in this self-critical yet Spirit-empowered process, the believing community acts in consonance with a time reconfigured eschatologically to the renewal of creaturely existence. In doing so, it contests the meaninglessness of capital's empty time and the dominion of its circuits.

I. Time Emptied: The Dominion of Capital

In the chapter on money in the *Grundrisse*, Marx states that for capital "the determination of time remains, of course, essential" because the key to the entire process is the "economization of time." At its core, then, he summarizes, "all economy ultimately reduces itself" to the "[e]conomy of time."⁶ Such is the basis of the order of capital. Within this order, the circuits of capital have succeeded in shaping a regnant social time that greatly defines the experience of time itself in all of its dimensions, whether they be biological, psychic, cosmological, or of course, socio-political.

As a dominant time, it also informs rationality and orders history, establishing its hegemony through a process that quantifies and homogenizes time for exchange and accumulation, ultimately distorting its human quality by monetizing it.⁷ Within this system "time is money," designating the way in which capital solidifies its unrivalled dominion and ascendancy over the social and the political.⁸

⁶ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Rough Draft), trans. Martin Nicolaus (1973; repr., London: Penguin Books, 1993), 172-73. Highlighting Marx's insight, Daniel Bensaïd states that because "Capital is a specific, contradictory conceptual organization of social time..., the category of time is at the heart of the critique of political economy." Daniel Bensaïd, *Marx for Our Times: Adventures and Misadventures of a Critique*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2002), 74, 77.

⁷ My view of the dynamic character of capital's dominion is indebted to the insight of Louis Althusser. As Fredric Jameson notes in his introduction to *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Althusser provided a real contribution in reconceiving the static or simplistic notions of base and superstructure. He states, "When one combines the base-and-superstructure formula with the problem of social reproduction [as Althusser did], everything changes. The former is now set in motion as it were, and a whole new account of social temporality is required which it is the function of the influential Althusserian conception of the Ideological State Apparatus (as distinguished from the repressive apparatuses of the State) to supply" (Fredric Jameson, "Introduction," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, by Louis Althusser (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), xiii).

⁸ Benjamin Franklin, "Poor Richard's Almanac, Jan. 1751," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. L.W. Labaree, W.J. Bell, H. C. Boatfield, and H. H. Fineman, vol. 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961),

In order to better understand how capital captures time and thereby establishes its reign across social and political life and even in the subjectivity of its denizens, I want to take a closer look at the history, configuration, and rationality of capital time in order to illuminate the way it distorts and captures this essential dimension of creaturely existence for the purpose of accumulation.⁹ If, as one philosopher has put it, “every culture is first and foremost a particular experience of time,” then this analysis will not only seek to provide a critical understanding of the diminished character of life under capital’s reign, but it will also suggest that “no new culture is possible without an alteration in this experience.” Following this Marxish intuition, then, not only will my aim be to clarify the challenge posed by the dominion of capital, but also to show that any true alternative to this regime must first and foremost “change time.”¹⁰

Time is intrinsically difficult to conceive and because of this the human experience of time is often conceptualized indirectly, that is, with respect to spatial images.¹¹ As a peculiar configuration of time having emerged in the West, capital instills its own geometric representation in its subjects and their activities. Under capital, time as rectilinear, homogeneous, and infinitely accruable has replaced a sense of circular social and cosmic (or sacred) time.

Similarly, time as storied is also eviscerated. While other more expansive accounts of capital temporality exist, a brief recap of this history will help to clarify how the hegemony of capital crystalized in the ascendancy of its determination of time and why its dominion is concentrated here.¹² To elucidate this, I will rely most heavily on the path cut by Éric Alliez whose chiasmic reading of the history of philosophy displays how the conception of time becomes dislodged from the framework of the polis and the cosmos only then to be reconfigured through financialization for the process of exchange and accumulation.¹³

86-7, cited in E.P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past & Present* 38, no.1 (1967): 89.

⁹ I have in mind Marx’s comment in the *Grundrisse* stating that “It is not individuals who are set free by free competition; it is, rather, capital which is set free.” Marx, *Grundrisse*, 650.

¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 2007), 99. In this essay, Agamben argues that the failure of Marxism is due to its failure to develop a practice and experience of time that sufficiently correlates with its concept of history.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹² See, for example, E.P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism” and Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

¹³ Éric Alliez, *Capital Times: Tales from the Conquest of Time*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, vol. 6. *Theory Out of Bounds* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). It is worth noting here that Teresa Brennan, among others, provides an insightful and parallel analysis of how ecologically capital pulls time out of joint by transposing technological reproduction on and over the natural process of resource reproduction. In her own way she describes how the arrow of capital outruns and dislocates the circular time of nature. See Teresa Brennan, “Why the Time is Out of Joint: Marx’s Political Economy without the Subject,” *South Atlantic* 97, no. 2 (Spring 1998):

According to Alliez, the origin of the homogenous and rectilinear time of capital appears already in Aristotle's discussion of chrematistics in the *Politics*. Because by nature the charging of interest monetizes time, Aristotle recognized that the practice of chrematistics (or the art of money-making) severed and disfigured the social and political lineaments of the polis, ultimately "[emptying] the city of its self-presence."¹⁴ As a result, it was not possible to fully integrate this technique of money-making, or money lending, into the life of the city state.

While it was a skill that inevitably developed within the workings of the city, it always remained at odds or incompletely reconciled to it, a contradiction the Aristotelian polis is never able to resolve.¹⁵ A vector dislodged from the natural movement of the cosmos and the just movement of the polis, the art of chrematistics redirected time from their circular movement, consequently, disordering human relations by conforming them to a quantified time incommensurate with the epistemic and ontological register of Aristotelian philosophy.

As a result, the city must continually curtail this practice by forcing the vector back into the circle and by asserting the common good over the circulatory aim of the techniques of finance.¹⁶ Still, the conflict between these two times persists in Aristotle's vision of the polis, as the disembodied and rectilinear time of money-making remains irreconcilable with the integrated, self-present, circular time of the virtuous city.

Under the subsequent influence of Neoplatonism and Augustinian Christianity, a new sense of time emerged, one that sought to reconcile the circular and linear conceptions in its own way. In a world disconnected from the stability of the polis, Neoplatonism universalized time while interiorizing it, suffusing it with the "audacity" of the soul whose time is new at every given moment. As Alliez puts it, for Plotinus, time is the living movement of the soul, whose desire extends toward the external, material world.

Given that matter is always in flux, however, this temporal movement remains always fleeting.¹⁷ Whereas for Plato and Aristotle proper time was derivative of the eternal immutability of the cosmos whose circularity represented its eternity, within Neo-Platonism the line of fleeting time and the circle of eternal being converge in the soul's (*psuche*) emanation from the atemporal intellect (*nous*). Setting the fine points of philosophy aside, what is critical to see here for the development of the experience of time is that a "transposition from cosmology (out of which comes the soul of the Platonic world) to anthropology and psychology" has occurred, as now it is the divergent vector of external desire and temporal consciousness that must continually (for the virtuous) be bent back into the eternal present of the

263-280.

¹⁴ Alliez, *Capital Times*, xvii.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1-25.

¹⁷ Ibid., 32.

intellect, subsuming *psuche* to *nous*.¹⁸

Furthermore, for Plotinus, the harmonization of the soul to the intellect within the individual participates in the universal reconciliation of Being as an instance of the overall unfolding and enfolding of the cosmic Soul under the eternal principle of the formal Intellect. The gathering of the Soul (temporal) back to the Intellect (eternal) is both individual and cosmic according to the logical schema of emanation. Neo-Platonism's internalized time, experienced as the movement of a series of fleeting instants, however, would gain a new frame of reference and resonance in the philosophical theology of St. Augustine.

Working within and at points against this Neo-Platonic conception, Augustine reconceived time in a decisive way for the Western tradition.¹⁹ It would be impossible to do complete justice to the complexity of Augustine's thought in the small amount of space I have here to cover it, but for the purpose of my argument one main aspect that emerges from Augustine's rendition of time must be mentioned. Theologically Augustine's conception of time is influenced by his sense of salvation history, wherein time is not rendered circular but instead drives forward with a clear sense of direction.²⁰

And yet, influenced by Neo-Platonism, Augustine also sees time as an "interior phenomenon," a series of irreversible and fleeting instants registered upon the will's conscious engagement.²¹ The human, for Augustine, *is* time. Within the Augustinian understanding, however, *homo temporalis* remains a question to herself, as her experience of time (as a series of fleeting instants) cannot fully grasp the direction of salvation history and its congruence with eternity. Here the question of the relation between time and eternity is driven further into the will, as only a will perfected through a divinely graced memory can become congruent with the eternity of God.

Thus, on the one hand, time in its original and eschatological register remains good for Augustine. In its primordial form, it stands in natural, harmonious relation to eternity as the creaturely distention that images God. On the other hand, because humanity is fallen the current experience of time is dislocated from this original and salvific presence. Human temporality takes on a degenerative, earthly quality, a corrupt intention having distorted its distention. Thus, a disjointed time of decay characterizes the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁹ Augustine's engagement with the theme of time appears in Book 11 of his *Confessions*. For critical commentary on his conception of time, see Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 103-05; Antonio Negri, *Time for Revolution*, trans. Matteo Mandarini (New York: Continuum, 2003), 30-36; and Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For a theologically critical engagement with Augustine's conception of time, see Jenson, *Systematic Theology, Volume 2*, 29ff.

²⁰ St. Augustine, *City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Classics, 1984; reprint Penguin Books, 1987), 12.21. Also see Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 103.

²¹ Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 103-104.

earthly city, while the heavenly city, only intimated by those schooled in humility through the contemplation of the sacrament, remains an invisible and timeless end experienced simply as the complete annihilation of human, earthly time.²²

Irreconcilable spatial configurations continue to inform Augustine's conception of time, providing the geometric incommensurability that pervades his rendering of the relationship between the two cities. Hence, time, for Augustine, becomes synonymous with the direction of the intensive movement of the human will, a movement within the fallen state of humanity corrupted by avarice and cupidity that turns continually away from the eternal and toward itself or material things. In his dialectical construction of time, earthly time falls away in disconnection from the eternal transcendent, even as it maintains the vestige of directionality bequeathed to it by the linear trajectory of salvation history.

Earthly time, consequently, takes on an independence and autonomy of its own in contradistinction from the heavenly sphere.²³ The cultural representation of these developments in the experience of time can be seen in the writing of history itself—a practice which in Herodotus and Thucydides was intent on holding up and procuring the eternal in the face of the degenerative flux of temporal events and in Polybius and Livy becomes more focused on the stability and achievement of the virtuous statesman in the face of temporal decay. Augustine's autobiography set against the negative history of the earthly city in the City of God merely transposes this view of time into a Christian trajectory and frame. His view implants a determinative fissure in the Western notion time, setting the tangible experience of earthly time's irreversible, rectilinear, and fleeting moments over against the stable realm of the eternally divine, all-encompassing present the salvific movement of which cannot be known.

The relation between these discrete realms preoccupied the theological and philosophical disputes of the Middle Ages, as realists and nominalists provided their own attempts to synthesize and define the quantified time of world and the simple, transcendent eternal. None of these can be equated with proto-capital time, although the distinction forms the backdrop from which capital time ultimately emerged.

While certainly not even or flat in its development or simple in its

²² Alliez, *Capital Times*, 100ff. Commenting on the internal, invisible location of Christian faith that emerges in Augustine, Alliez notes earlier, "Far from there being a social norm, there remains for the Christian only an internal difference, which is revealed in the temporal dialectics of *intention* and *distention*. In the heart of the subject, in one's innermost heart [*son for interne*], is where there is the projected shadow of the ontological fracture and of transcendence, whose process of expression is merged with the history of the principle of individuality. The chain of being broken, the divinity abandons the world to creation in order to coil back into the great spaces and vast palaces of memory." *Ibid.*, 88.

²³ *Ibid.*, 82.

trajectory, the ascendancy of the homogenous and quantified time of capital began to emerge in the later Middle Ages, amid the new social, political, and economic experiences that arose with the development of urban cities. As Alliez suggests, the synchronized hustle and bustle of the new cities with their increasing celerity and more complex circuits of burgeoning commerce would exemplify an embodiment of autonomous earthly time.²⁴

Prefigured in the monastery and facilitated theologically by the concept of purgatory, which served practically to link God's time (transcendent) with earthly time in a quantitative relation, as historians Jacques Le Goff and E.P. Thompson have shown, the advent of merchant time took off in the late Middle Ages as the clock began to replace time marked by the ringing of church bells.²⁵ In no way was this transition monochromatic, neither were diverse or hybrid configurations of time eliminated as if by some decisive historical break.

Still, village clocks erected by merchants began to project a new experience of time, one distinct from the liturgical experience of time correlated with the holy days, masses, and seasons of the church or structured in the resolutions of canon law. A more rational and secular ordering of temporality arranged according to the homogenous segments of the working day slowly, and unevenly, crystalized as the dominant experience of time.²⁶ As mercantilism expanded and more peasants migrated from their traditional lands to these new enterprising urban centers, the cities grew in prominence and communal life was increasingly orchestrated by their tempos and rhythms.

The advent of urban work as wage labor monetized time. According to E.P. Thompson, such an experience amounted to a revolution in the nature of time: "Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent."²⁷ Furthermore, the quantitative and segmented experience of time only intensified as working hours of mercantilism varyingly gave way to the factories of the industrial revolution. A diffusion of clocks and watches accompanied the expansion of industry, as a way of synchronizing labor and

²⁴ Ibid., 229.

²⁵ Alliez notes that the infatuation with the detailed scheduling of the day, so characteristic of merchant time and capital time, arises within the Benedictine monasteries (143-44) and that the doctrine of purgatory and the selling of indulgences redeemed merchant practice by establishing a relation of exchange between this world and usurious time and the next world, or, God's time. The heavenly city could be accessed with the golden key (xxiv). Also, Jacques Le Goff notes the way in which merchant practice is rehabilitated starting in the thirteenth century and developing through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He too notes the connection to the concept of Purgatory. See Jacques Le Goff, *Money and the Middle Ages: An Essay in Historical Anthropology*, trans. Jean Birrell (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 68-71. With respect to the role of clocks in connection to the shift in perspective on time, see Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, 29-52; and E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," 69.

²⁶ Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, 36.

²⁷ E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," 61.

exchange, and these mechanisms for regulating the experience of time set new physiological and psychosomatic rhythms.²⁸

Combined with a growing sense of progress, derived from the secularization of salvation history and realized in the advent of industrial innovation, a homogenous and rectilinear representation of time continued to coalesce at the heart of maturing capitalism.²⁹ The pace and path of these developments was uneven, for there was no unified organizing plan or structure for them. Nonetheless, as their circuits became more and more integrated and interfused a shared configuration of time emerged at the core of the process.

Again to glimpse the cultural manifestation of this emerging experience of time, Montesquieu's *Letters from Paris* is illustrative. The epistolary novel at one and the same time shows how a growing sense of alienation accompanies the burgeoning sense of historical progress correlated to the emerging capital time that is becoming more pervasive and yet remains, because of uneven development, somewhat strange. Presenting European society to itself through the eyes of a foreigner, Montesquieu not only captures in representative form this inherent alienation but is also able in the same representation to communicate its sense of advancing civilization.

At the center of industrial capitalism, Marx realized, "time as the measure of the exchange value of labor power renders its varied expressions homogenous and comparable from the point of view of the market."³⁰ By quantifying time "capital 'usurps' time," liberating it from all other determinations so as to claim all time for itself. In this process, the central paradox of capital emerges whereby in its dedication to minimizing all constrictions on time and liberating it for production it also harnesses and "binds the time of human beings."³¹ Rendering time quantifiable, capital transmogrifies the heterogeneous qualities of life (use, enjoyment, rest, mourning, etc.) into homogenous and exchangeable components, conforming them to a common measure.

In contrast to a culture oriented by the stable calendric rhythm of holy days and ecclesial seasons, or the stable rotation of the cosmos and polis, within capitalist culture all moments are interchangeable, allowing them more easily to be captured within its circulatory flows. For, as Marx reminds us, "Moments are the elements of profits."³²

As the source of productivity, time rendered as quantifiable and rectilinear not only orders the social and political to accumulation but orients and shapes the human subject to this experience as well. It's disjointed time, configured as a series of homogenous and irreversible units ordered to growth and accumulation

²⁸ Ibid., 69.

²⁹ Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 105.

³⁰ William James Booth, "Economies of Time: On the Idea of Time in Marx's Political Economy," *Political Theory* 19, no.1 (Feb. 1991): 8.

³¹ Ibid., 14.

³² Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (1976; reprint, London: Penguin Books, 1990), 352.

becomes the culturally dominant experience of time under the imperial sign of money.

Time has become fully monetized, and *homo temporalis* has become *homo economicus*. The result, as Marx recognized, is that the person herself becomes completely determined by this experience of time. Within the domain of the fallen, earthly city, “Time is everything, man is nothing; he is at most time’s carcass. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything; hour for hour, day for day.”³³

It would be left to Immanuel Kant, the Prussian champion of the Enlightenment, to develop the philosophical scaffold of capital time that still serves to legitimate and rationalize this experience. According to Alliez, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* marks the most crucial turning point in the Western configuration of time because, by locating a certain configuration of time at the heart of human consciousness, he brings the transcendental aspect of pure time into subjective unity with the quantitative and sequential flow of earthly time.³⁴ Attempting to cut a path between the rationalism of Leibniz and the skepticism of Hume, Kant turns his attention to the process-of-putting-together intrinsic to subjectivity that makes the knowledge of things possible, if limited. And inscribed at the base of his attempt to limn the structures of rationality and, therefore, the subject herself is a particular conception of the experience of time, one ultimately correlated to capital.³⁵

For Kant, because time is both the “formal condition of the manifold of inner sense” and “contained in every empirical representation,” one’s own sense of herself is homogenized to her experience of external objects in and through time, as the “transcendental schema” that allows for their unification.³⁶ The

³³ Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, ed. C. P. Dutt and V. Chattopadhyaya (New York: International Publishers, 1892), 47.

³⁴ Alliez, *Capital Times*, 231. On this Kantian transition, also see Kenneth Surin, *Freedom Not Yet: Liberation and the Next World Order* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 22-23.

³⁵ Twisting Augustine’s sense of time, Kant sees time as the mind’s essential connectedness to the body. It is inner bodiliness, if you will. The person is time, as she is ensouled body. But this also means that rationality itself is at heart ordered by a certain representation of time. Even stable truths for Kant are graspable for us only in relation to the concrete line of time. Here we can make sense of Kant’s enigmatic view of the synthetic *a priori*. For instance, such mathematical truths as $7 + 5 = 12$ for him are synthetic exactly because they bear within themselves already the imprint of time as a result of the inner grammar of our consciousness even as they are not derived from experience of the outside world. See the discussion of the transcendental aesthetic in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Pt. I, Sec. II, 178-192. Hence, in Kant’s philosophy, time is both what so naturally connects us to the world but also what inevitably keeps us, as a rule of this grammar, at arm’s length from its deepest truths.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Pt. II, Div. I, Bk. II, Ch. I., 272. In Kant’s philosophy the transcendental realm of the heavenly city, as Carl Becker has noted, has become lodged within the very subjectivity of the individual as the ground of her consciousness. See Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of*

core and medium of the transcendental power of judgment, then, is time, which, as the fabric of the imagination, also provides the mind with the capacity to establish a rapprochement with the understanding through the process of schematization. "Hence," as Kant states, "an application of the category to appearances becomes possible by means of the transcendental time-determination which, as the schema of the concept of the understanding, mediates the subsumption of the latter under the former."³⁷

With respect to human subjectivity, and this subjectivity is considered to be universal for Kant, time functions as the form and the medium within which the imagination makes possible our understanding of the outside world because it is time that serves to homogenize the subject and the object with one another. In short, just as time is the element and power by which human subjectivity orders and arranges the world in a manner that is useful, conceptualizing intuition, it is also through temporalizing the world that we master the objective world, filling our thoughts with content.³⁸

Kant's philosophical sketch lodges the quantitative and homogenous time of capital within the transcendental unity of apperception, solidifying the hegemony of this time within subjectivity. "From this point of view then," as Antonio Negri observes, "the *Critique of Pure Reason* serves to found the bourgeois conception of time, both in its superior form [internal and external, *not* internal and/or external], and in its schematic project."³⁹ Kant, that is to say, normalizes the disjointed

the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1932). For Kant, while we do not have direct access even to this unity, the inner sense of the transcendental unity of apperception is that of a line; we experience ourselves, the contiguous unity of ourselves, as a line. *Ibid.*, 271n. Louis Dupré further substantiates this point in saying, for Kant "precisely the inner time consciousness gives structure and meaning to existence," due to the fact that "the self's outward orientation extenuated its sense of inner identity, reducing it virtually to a connecting link among successive and wholly contingent experiences." See Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 159.

³⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Pt. II. Div. I. Bk. II. Ch. I., 272.

Furthermore Kant goes on to state, "From this it is clear that the schematism of the understanding through the transcendental synthesis of imagination comes down to nothing other than the unity of all the manifold of intuition in inner sense, and thus indirectly to the unity of apperception, as the function that corresponds to inner sense (to a receptivity)." *Ibid.*, 276.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Pt. II. Intro., 193-94.

³⁹ Negri, *Time for Revolution*, 60. This is also the point at which Negri begins to formulate his own revolutionary theoretic of time, based upon the surplus of life that resides even within a time seemingly captured by capital. The excess of life-time, he thinks, can be the source of a new collective and antagonistic time embodied in the negative work of the proletariat acting out of the multiplicity and fecundity of life itself. In this way, Negri (and Hardt for that matter), maintains a certain commitment to Hegel, as the collective consciousness via the fecund assemblages of desire (or should we call it spirit) latent within an excessive immanence continues to constitute,

(economized) time of capital, theorizing it as the ordering mechanism of pure reason actualized in process of schematization as the way the subject makes sense out of her world.

The result is that the quantitative and rectilinear time of capital accumulation, of money and profit, of production and consumption with their linkages in circulation, distribution, and exchange, are lodged within the subject, as the very field of resonance within which the world makes sense and becomes knowable.⁴⁰ A true turning point in the conception of time, Kant provides modern, capitalist culture with a philosophical rendering of the subject's self-understanding and its understanding of the world in the form of rationality determined by and correlated to the homogenous and rectilinear time of accumulation.

Coincidentally, a primordial wedge is also driven between the subject and the object so as to allow this configuration of time to determine how objects are understood, used, and rendered for human subjects. Capital time dictates how objects become property as the phenomenological world becomes intelligible only in its synchronization with the purposiveness of exchange and accumulation that now structure its rhythmic movements.

One final development needs to be noted with regard to the dominion of the homogenous and rectilinear time of capital, one that broadens and deepens the capture of the experience of time under the disjointed rule of capital. This final development emerges with the technologies of globalization, wherein the internal and external horizon of time becomes sealed and comprehensively determined by capital, allowing it seemingly to encompass the totality of life. As an aspect of its persistent search for profits, internally, capital continually strains toward reducing time to zero in an attempt to capture and homogenize time completely by breaking it into ever-smaller, exchangeable segments.⁴¹ Within this culture the time of capital production and

almost from behind our backs, its own oppositions to the totalizing reach of capital.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 61. Kant's connection to bourgeois time as an eighteenth century champion of emerging capitalism, while somewhat implicit in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is absolutely evident in his essay on the "Idea For a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose." In this essay, Kant makes the argument that a certain purposiveness can be attributed to nature and this "highest purpose of nature" is achieved, ironically, through the "unsocial sociability" of humanity actualized in the market. Immanuel Kant, "Idea For a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H.B. Nisbet, 2nd ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (1991; reprint, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 44-5.

⁴¹ In his analysis of the process of capital, Marx elicits the implicit dream of capital to reduce circulation time to zero. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 538-9. Notice also that the connection between production time and circulation time gives rise to the mechanism of credit, as an attempt to valorize the non-value generating barrier of circulation time (658-60). Through credit and the complete monetization of time, capital aims to overcome this barrier through the creation of what Negri calls "productive circulation" (*Time for Revolution*, 65), and is conveyed by

circulation increasingly become the time of life, as the nanoseconds of investment and exchange reach ever closer to the dream of zero with the purpose of capturing every moment for profit.⁴²

At the level of culture, as Fredric Jameson has argued, this experience of the end of temporality makes its way “in terms of something like existential uneven development” from the sense of “deep time” intrinsic to the modern novel, as they sought to reconcile the two opposing temporalities of the city where they now lived and the countryside in which they were born to the postmodern Hollywood action flick and its near “zero degree of plot.”⁴³ Intensifying the Kantian relation of the subject to objects as the discipline of infinitesimally quantified, rectilinear, and empty time shapes the collective imaginary under a now fully matured capitalism. To quote Jameson again,

Rather than a period style, therefore, it seems more desirable to stage the “end of temporality” as a situation faced by postmodernity in general and to which its artists and subjects are obliged to respond in a variety of ways. This situation has been characterized as a dramatic and alarming shrinkage of existential time and the reduction to a present that hardly qualifies as such any longer, given the virtual effacement of that past and future that can alone define the present in the first place.⁴⁴

On a global level, technologies serve to flatten time on the external edge of the regime’s continuum with the threat of complete nullification through military destruction. Prominently displaying its capacity to annihilate any alternatives, global capital establishes an external horizon to life, promulgating that the only way to survive is to become synchronized to its time and

Marx in the ultimate equation of capital: $M - M'$. Similarly, David Harvey’s work on the “space-time compression” of capital notes from a geographical perspective how capital reshapes human relations. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1990). Finally, this temporalization of space is noted by Negri as well. He adds, “Space is temporalized, it becomes dynamic: it is a condition of the constitutive realization of time. With Marx, time becomes the exclusive material of the construction of life.” Negri, *Time for Revolution*, 35.

⁴² Negri, *Time for Revolution*, 44. As David Harvey, remarks, “For instance we all too easily forget that the hour was largely an invention of the thirteenth century, that the minute and the second became common measures only as late as the seventeenth century and it is only in recent times that terms like ‘nanoseconds’ have been invented.” David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx’s Capital* (London: Verso, 2010), 147. One example of the infinitesimal capture of time by capital can be seen in the Flash Crash of May 6, 2010, wherein the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost nearly 1000 points in a matter of minutes only to make that loss up a few minutes later, as the drastic volatility of this event was apparently facilitated by computer generated high-frequency trading.

⁴³ Fredric Jameson, “The End of Temporality,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Summer 2003): 699, 715

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 708.

integrated into its regime of accumulation. There is not alternative to the immediacy of the market, a reality ensured by the state-finance nexus. Marking this horizon is the nuclear bomb, the real, if excessive, threat posed to any outlier, refusing to be incorporated into its empire.⁴⁵

Outside capital time, is the bomb: the nihilation of time as the exact reflection of the internal zero-drive of the process. The hegemony of capital, the power of the economic institutions and financial corporations at the heart of it, congeals with the state as a military-industrial complex that paves the way for the ascendancy of capital and bolsters its global circuits.⁴⁶ Capital time, subsumes human existence both objectively and subjectively in the formation of an ontically derived metaphysics of its own.

The flat and homogenous time of capital, thus, achieves a kind of total triumph, not only, as Marx suggests, accomplishing the “annihilation of space by time” but also subjects all times to the instant absolute present of accumulation.⁴⁷ The bourgeois Kantian subject is solidified and reified in a global dominion ordered by the empty and homogeneous, and therefore, dislocated or disjointed time of capital. The rhythm of the process of accumulation, thus, is not only normalized within the subjectivity but also governs the structuring practices of society and gives shape to its objective order. Gutted of any significance and configured in opposition to the polis and its social relations, life

⁴⁵ Negri, *Time for Revolution*, 64-70. As Hardt and Negri have pointed out, key to the global imperialism of capitalist sovereignty are: “the bomb, money, and ether.” With respect to the bomb, they continue, “This is an operation of absolute violence, a new metaphysical horizon, which completely changes the conception whereby the sovereign state had a monopoly of legitimate physical force.” Hence, “From no other standpoint is the passage from modernity to postmodernity and from modern sovereignty to Empire more evident than it is from the standpoint of the bomb.” Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 345.

⁴⁶ The relation between the technological dominance of the U.S. industrial-military complex and the global success of capitalism is well documented. Not only is this the basis of Francis Fukuyama’s widely popular thesis in *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006), but a similar argument is developed by Philip Bobbitt in *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History* (New York: Knopf, 2002), and can be inferred to stand behind the destructive and asymmetrical relations of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO chronicled by Joseph Stiglitz in *Globalization and Its Discontents*. The gestures of resistance enacted by radical states such as North Korean or Iran have engaged exactly on this horizon, as they seek to claim independence from Western hegemony through the development of a counter-bomb. In doing so, however, not only do they create the possibility of a catastrophically violent clash, but they also fail to recognize that the productive capacity for arms outside the orb of capital is dwarfed significantly by the capacity of the regime to produce the technologies essential for a dominant war machine. While resistance may be possible on some level, as we have seen with Al Qaeda and now ISIS, this resistance cannot really challenge the productive capacity, the financial dominance, or the global military might of the state-capital system.

⁴⁷ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 539.

under the dominion of capital serves only accumulation. It is a regnant regime that can only be countered, therefore, by nothing other than the real transformation of time itself.

II. Changing Time?: A Politics of Contretemps

My intention in this essay is not to parse the theoretical differences between the various Marxish figures I have engaged, but to work with their concepts to diagnose the current configuration and to expose the nature of the dominion of global capital. It is no accident that they all raise the question of whether there remains any possibility for contesting the logic, circuits, and global hegemony of capital by changing time and in doing so cultivating new subjectivities and reconfiguring culture. The problem of revolution is particularly difficult given that because capital's reign is constituted primarily in time and not just space, allowing it to function as a system of fluid openness, it orchestrates life through what appears to be the rational and immediate liberty of free markets.

At a macro-level this is how it can exist as a decentered and deterritorialized order, appearing as an unparalleled manifestation of freedom whose dynamic mechanisms of creative destruction and unfettered mobility seemingly generate limitless opportunity and integrate all interests. And yet, belying this openness on the macro-level, a certain microphysical totality is at work within capital, as it acts to synchronize all of existence to the process of accumulation. On this level it is empire as sect; its openness is its very closure and totality. A dominion constituted in its emptying, via homogenization and quantification, of time, capital is exposed as being at heart a formidable cult of nihilism that remains quite difficult to escape or resist.

Truth be told, even time within capital remains heterogeneous and multiple. Despite its attempt to subsume all facets of life to the smooth time of exchange and accumulation, discordant times persist between and within the varying moments of the process. Indeed, this temporal multiplicity is the "germ of crises" capital cannot expunge. Thus, as has already been suggested, it must rely upon the coercive apparatuses of the state to reintegrate such discordant times.⁴⁸ Rectifying or constraining the divergence that gives rise to the crisis, the state plays a central role in congealing and executing capital power. Capital's dominion is a rule revealed to be just as dependent on coercion as it is on the activity of free markets. Indeed, the violence of the state resides at the source of the emergence of markets, for essential to political economy is the suppression of all discordant times to that of capital.⁴⁹ It is a

⁴⁸ Daniel Bensaïd, *An Impatient Life: A Political Memoir*, trans. David Fernbach (New York: Verso, 2013), 306.

⁴⁹ Ibid. The indelible connection between the violence of the state and the emergence of the market is also described by David Graeber. As he notes there is an intimate connection between quantification (market logic) and violence (state power), "[turning] human relations into mathematics." David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, Updated and Expanded Edition (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2014), 14.

Commenting further on this connection, he states, "In [the] common-

market-state without politics.

Given this situation, the revolutionary political task, according to Daniel Bensaïd, is to take advantage of the “arrhythmias of crisis” intrinsic to the structure of capital time so as to cultivate and embolden alternative times.⁵⁰ Exploiting the discordance of times endemic to human existence, an asynchrony even the dominant circulatory flows of capital cannot eviscerate, the practice of *contretemps* aims to free persons in their time (their time of joy, labor, eating, agony, love, etc.) from the chronometric hold of the market.

Thus, *contretemps* is at the same time a critique of capital time and an exigent politics. Profaning the status quo through a critique that demystifies the seeming inevitability of capital and disenchants its logical superiority, Bensaïd’s reading of Marx elicits a “syncopated history” set against the homogenous and empty time of capital and evokes a newly social and political time “tuned into [a] ‘revolutionary frequency.’”⁵¹ To this extent, Bensaïd’s development of *contretemps* draws heavily off of the thought of Walter Benjamin.

It is Benjamin’s sense of messianic time, a “now-time” [*Jetztzeit*],⁵² that Bensaïd extends to contrast the crude homogenization of time within the history of capital. As he puts it, “Lacerated and torn, messianic time destroys the myth of a homogeneous history of being, its beginnings and decline.”⁵³ In contrast to the empty and quantified moments of duration or the monotonous line of progress-as-accumulation, messianic time resonates with an urgency of action emerging from the doubling back, skipping forward, or fits and starts of an aleatory history.

Thus, Benjamin develops a historical materialism pregnant with a temporality attuned to transitions and interruptions, rifts and spurts. As Bensaïd avers, Benjamin finds in Marx a “new representation of time as social relation” and this discovery makes it possible then to conceptualize “anachronisms and *contretemps*.”⁵⁴ No longer the prophet of historical determinism, Marx is freed from this arcane orthodox straight-jacket by Benjamin and becomes, for Bensaïd, a proponent of an “aleatory materialism, allied with the subtleties of messianic reason.”⁵⁵ Emphasizing an alternative conception of time as social relation,

sense view, the State and the Market tower above all else as diametrically opposed principles. Historical reality reveals, however, that they were born together and have always been intertwined. The one thing all of these misconceptions have in common... is that they tend to reduce all human relations to exchange, as if our ties to society, even to the cosmos itself, can be imagined in the same terms as a business deal.” *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁰ Bensaïd, *Marx for Our Times*, 77.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵² Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940*, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. and ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006), 395.

⁵³ Bensaïd, *Marx for Our Times*, 88.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Bensaïd, *Impatient Life*, 285.

with all of its contingency, particularity, and potency, Bensaïd asserts, Marx does not so much construct a universal history as he combines critique and politics to politicize the present such that “history becomes intelligible to anyone who wishes to engage in action to change the world. ‘Politics attains primacy over history.’”⁵⁶

The art of *contretemps*, then, aims to subvert and to resist the de-politicization of life under capital with its smoothing out of time by eliciting the discordant tempos and rhythms of real relations and human action so as to privilege extant moments of crisis and heightened political judgment. In this sense, it means to cultivate an embodied attunement to cultural and societal untimeliness as a presence of permanent revolution: to become out of joint with a disjointed capital time. As Bensaïd puts it, such “Messianic times, when an older order breaks without the new order having yet taken shape [as a moment pregnant with political possibility], are necessarily out of joint.”⁵⁷

Contretemps, thus, suggests the radicalization of Marx’s critique so as to re-politicize it, igniting a new discordance or asynchrony to the reign of capital.⁵⁸ Illuminating the field of resistance and counter-practice, the art of *contretemps* seeks to interject a new political cadence into the public realm, cultivating a different mode of judgment that is more open and receptive to ruptures and asynchronies. Given that “politics is precisely the point where... discordant times intersect,” the public practice of a new time initiates conflict and debate.⁵⁹ Attending to the friction, rifts, and fissures that arise from the intersection of discordant times, the possibility for a political judgment not reliant on markets or capital flows to resolve conflicts and to discern outcomes can be employed.⁶⁰

Therefore, the aim of *contretemps* is not simply to acknowledge discordant times, but to discover in their intersection a renewed politics.⁶¹ In short, *contretemps* points to the possibility of resistance through the enactment of a qualitatively different

⁵⁶ Bensaïd, *Marx for Our Times*, 87 quoting Benjamin, *The Archades Project*, 388-89.

⁵⁷ Bensaïd, *Impatient Life*, 291.

⁵⁸ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 107.

⁵⁹ Bensaïd, *Marx for Our Times*, 22. While I do not have space to engage the full breadth of his argument, the ecological is, according to Bensaïd, one of the most obvious places where the conflict of times can be seen. He states, “The quarrel between ecology and economies (as understood by classical and neoclassical economies at least) refers to the divorce between two heterogeneous temporalities: an economic temporality punctuated by the reproduction of capital and labour-power; and an ecological temporality governed by the storing and consumption of energy, which is also stored time.” *Ibid.*, 344.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶¹ Bensaïd says, “To rescue politics from these threats of disappearance, it has to be conceived anew, as the site of deliberation and decision where different spaces and rhythms combine. Those of the economy, of information, of ecology and of law are no longer in tune with one another. We have therefore to abandon the mirage of a politically homogeneous space and time, and learn to conceive the sites and moments of a future politics.” *Impatient Life*, 319.

temporality, a manifold temporality saturated with a multiplicity of experiences.

Change, especially as *contretemps*, however, does not come easy, neither is it historically inevitable. In Bensaïd's own admission, the untimely revolution has been harder to achieve than most of his fellow Marxist thinkers and activists believed, even as it remains no less necessary. Failure is an ever-present possibility.⁶² Nonetheless, similar to other figures such as Badiou, Agamben, and Negri, Bensaïd's project aims at cultivating new political subjectivities that escape the strictures of market logic and the enclosure of the regime of accumulation.⁶³ In fact, it is the generation of such alternative political subjectivities through breaking with capital time that Bensaïd takes to be both the arduous task and urgent responsibility of those dedicated to liberation and reconfigured social relations. Such is the potential of training in *contretemps*.

Despite having described the lineaments of alternative politics and signaling the central element of time in the formation of political subjectivities, Bensaïd's development of *contretemps* as a practice suffers two major difficulties that have forestalled its actualization. First, while he does attempt to salvage some sense of class as a strategic category from Marx's conceptual reserve, Bensaïd (as does Derrida) struggles to connect the practice of *contretemps* to any real community, thus leaving it to float or wander somewhat disembodied or ephemeral.

Without a community of support and shared practices, it remains to be seen how those involved will be habituated out of the isolation and alienation consonant with consumer culture. Second, it is not clear that the emphasis on the exigency of the present in Bensaïd's consideration of revolution is not simply a reiteration of the privileging of such latent to capitalism itself instead of being the intervention of a truly different order.⁶⁴ Neither is it clear how such an art of revolution could be sustained without these discordant times dissolving in endless fragmentation. Lacking a pattern for renewal, it is not clear how it could avoid simply dissolving into chaos, even as Bensaïd may not necessarily see this as a problem, or succumb to being recolonized by capital circuits.

Second, and more importantly for my purposes, lacking a theological orientation not only is it hard to perceive how such engagement could be sustained in the face of such immense challenges, but it also seems likely to fall prey to a solidarity born

⁶² Ibid., 313, 290.

⁶³ While I am not insinuating that all of these theorists are the same, I do see a shared concern among them for seeking new political subjectivities. Badiou's pursuits run within a Platonic framework whereas Negri follows Deleuze and radical Aristotelianism. Agamben moves more within a course of inverted Heideggerianism, inflected with Benjamin's messianism and Foucault's attention to discipline, governance, and sovereignty. Bensaïd, as more of the practitioner of the group, draws off of Benjamin and Gramsci.

⁶⁴ Jameson offers a similar critique of Deleuze and Guattari in "The End of Temporality," 710-711.

of resentment and hatred that inclines toward violence thereby occluding the political project. While I remain quite sympathetic to this outlook and even foresee the possibility of new strategic alliances between Christianity and Marxish approaches, the task of changing time here ultimately seems prone to reproducing relations of brute force.⁶⁵

Yet, a theo-politics of *contretemps*, one set within an ecclesial practice of political deliberation, collective discernment, and practical judgment, however, could provide a way within the church to begin to resist the homogenization of time under capital and enact counter-structures of transformation. As I will argue below, following McClendon's "baptist" vision, only an alternative community constituted by a constellation of unique transformative social processes could pose a real challenge to the regnant way of resolving conflicts and making decisions under capital, thereby, renewing time.

III. Time Renewed: A Theo-Politics of Contretemps

If the conquest of capital, as a Marxish read suggests, congeals in the subsuming of space, social relations, nature, and even the faculties of human subjectivity within its rectilinear and homogeneous time, then as Bensaïd and others make clear only the enactment of a dissonant time can truly contest its dominion. Such a socio-political enactment, however, has proven difficult to cultivate and sustain, an issue that impinges on the church just as much as it does any other social body.

Nevertheless, by sketching in this final section a theo-politics of *contretemps*, I will contend that the social practices constitutive of the church, when fully embraced and performed, offer the possibility of enacting a distinctly alternative time consonant with a newly configured arrangement of power and communal relations. Working within a Free Church ecclesiology that is no less sacramental, following McClendon, I will suggest that the covenant meal and the politics of forgiveness (otherwise referred to as binding and loosing or the Rule of Christ) are powerful practices that not only structure the distinct temporality of the social body of the church but also present a means of temporal transformation to be enacted first in the community and then making their way out to the wider society.

Where the table is the practice of the end epiclestically infused into the present as the active communion of God and humanity in the presence of Christ, the ongoing conversation of the politics of forgiveness opens a reconfigured organization of power in the Spirit that makes possible the embodiment of that end in its current context. Thus, in the time of this gathering, in its eating and deliberating in the presence of Christ by the power of the Spirit, new tempos and rhythms are developed that restructure relations by synchronizing them to the reign of God.

⁶⁵ One can only recall here Marx's axiom that "between equal rights, force decides." Marx, *Capital*, Vol I, 344.

As material and political practices, the meal joins the community in the solidarity of the *koinonia* of the Triune life of love and the practice of reconciling dialogue offers it a means of collective discernment, practical judgment, and conflict resolution necessary for recognizing when its communal life has gone off track or its relations have become distorted or abusive and need to be realigned or adjusted. When conducted in concert with the recognition of gifts and the open meeting, a mode of politics emerges that institutes a new kind of society being configured by a renewed time, one discordant to the competition, atomization, and contractual arrangements intrinsic to the empty ordering-time of capital.

Beyond appeals to the macro-level distinctiveness of the liturgical calendar or a Eucharistic ontology, I argue, the material and social processes of these practices are a means of counter-acting the micro-physics of capital's dominion because the alternative structure of relations in the meal and the newly constituted arrangement of power intrinsic to the mode of governance of the Rule of Christ offer a way for the ecclesial body to move toward and in congruence with the reign of God.

To make sense of this ecclesiology one must first grasp its cosmology, complete with its specifically theological sense of time. From this perspective, the cosmos is not solely an immanent frame confined by the laws of matter or material forces nor is time left untouched by the transformative work of God in Christ. Theologically, because the cosmos originates and is sustained by God, it does not exist on its own and is not simply bound by the capacities of its own potentiality or innate processes. More specifically, "in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ a new kind of time, end-time, has begun; in Christ a new 'world order' (2 Cor. 5:17 NEB) has come to be."⁶⁶

Seen through the cross and resurrection, a transformation of the time and finitude of creaturely existence is already achieved while continuing to unfold. That is to say, there is no neat distinction between earthly time and eternity if by this is communicated their stringent incommensurability, for in the life of the social body of those joined to the history and work of Jesus Christ the two are not incongruent. Here time is reconfigured by the infusion of its end even as this advent does not mean time is over. The cut of the *kairotic* advent here is not vertical, but horizontal wherein the line of chronic time is cut internally along its length as the end fills and imbues it, instilling it with new direction.⁶⁷ A new time

⁶⁶ McClendon, *Ethics*, 271. It should be clear that Barth's discussion of Jesus Christ as the "Lord of Time" in the *Church Dogmatics*, III/2 stands in the background of McClendon's statement. Were it to be more developed with respect to the Triune life, I think something like Robert Jenson's conception would be necessary to make this perspective intelligible. See Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002; reprint of Augsburg Fortress, 1982) and *Systematic Theology, Volume I: The Triune God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁶⁷ My construal of time here has also been influenced by Giorgio Agamben's reading of St. Paul in *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, translated by Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA:

constituting a “new order” is opened, complete with “a new way of construing the world.”⁶⁸

Following the biblical understanding, a time being made consonant with its fulfillment orients and animates the community. Infused with the dynamic content of the divine life, time for the church is not set aside to make space for eternity but God’s reign is established through the healing of time in a real, material kingdom gathered in concert with the Triune life. Relativizing all other configurations of time in the *kairotic* advent of the end, the truth of things, of the cosmos and history and of ethics, find their meaning in Jesus Christ whose life also transforms them.⁶⁹

As occurs in *ecdysis* where the old shell is sloughed off as the new emerges from within, or as when reading a novel the time of the story begins to take precedence over the duration of one’s reading, “a reign that reshapes time itself” gives rise to a new age demarcating a new way of life resonate with the living narrative of Jesus in whom God’s purpose for creation is fulfilled.⁷⁰

The advent of the reign of God established in the person of Jesus and cemented in his victory over and disenchantment of the regnant powers of the world through his life, death, and resurrection, is not merely an abstract principle. For as McClendon recognizes, such an eschatological outlook already is an ethic given that the presence of the end in Jesus also conveys and makes possible the way there. In him “God’s life-imparting self in action” provides a “new dynamism for followers of the Way” through the Spirit, bringing them into concert with the divine life and its righteous love and peaceableness.⁷¹

Thus, rather than upholding an abstract moral individual or unnecessarily distinguishing an ideal social from a degenerative political, this Free Church perspective connects such metaphysical peaceableness to the social manifestation and political operations of the church. As it embodies the “new humanity,” a practice that most assuredly requires the transformation and reconfiguration of relations within, the church “is the good news” of this impossible possibility.⁷² The decisive event of Jesus initiates and makes possible a new way of life with a distinct pattern of social relations

Stanford University Press, 2005). See particularly his discussion of Apelles’ Cut (49-50).

⁶⁸ McClendon, *Ethics*, 262, 270.

⁶⁹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 80. John Howard Yoder, “Historiography as a ministry to Renewal,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 42, no. 3-4 (1997): 217. To cite Zizioulas in connection with Yoder signals that I tend to agree with the critique of Zizioulas’s monarchalism and its corresponding ecclesiological order offered by Miroslav Volf in *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998).

⁷⁰ McClendon, *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Volume 2* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), 66.

⁷¹ McClendon, *Ethics*, 271, 276.

⁷² John Howard Yoder, *Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical*, edited by Michael G. Cartwright (1994; reprint, Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 91.

consonant to the will of God.

As a people whose “purpose is love in the way of the cross and in the power of the resurrection,” the community’s own processes and arrangements embody the new age as they enact alternative rhythms and flows resonant with the meaning of Jesus.⁷³ Such an eschatologically charged ecclesiology stands in sharp contrast to other theological challenges to capitalism that juxtapose a metaphysical or ontological peaceableness to the competitive and violent ontology of political economy. Such approaches, whether they be of a Radical Orthodox slant or otherwise, frequently fail sufficiently to detail how this ontology informs the power relations of its social theory in a way that can truly reconcile conflicts or make decisions without defaulting to crude and suspect notions of authority and, therefore, seem inept to counteract the politics of the Pax Americana or the ontic peaceableness of the empire of global capital.

As a community constituted in such alternative rhythms and tempos, solidified and actualized in its own unique social practices and processes, the church is a corporate manifestation of *contretemps*.⁷⁴ It is not just that in Christianity time is calculated differently or correlated to the church year as opposed to the operations of markets or the ceaseless seasons of consumption. And it is not just that a new conception of time prevails within a Christian outlook that stresses a qualitative understanding of time versus a geometrical or quantitative one.

But, more importantly, it is that the advent of the new age in Christ sets in motion new and distinct communal processes that reconfigure social relations and structures transforming and reorganizing power relations and, thus, fill creaturely existence with new content as they act together in concert with a renewed temporality. For McClendon, this is most centrally experienced in the “solidarity” and “koinonia” of the covenant meal wherein the followers of Christ are united in oneness with him, incorporating them together into the divine life.⁷⁵ Gathered in the presence of their end, and thereby already beginning to participate in it, the meal is a central practice that defines the moral life of the community, establishing and maintaining it as a distinct people

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the interconnection of subjectivity and social practice, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (1977; reprint, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990). While Bourdieu is certainly no theologian and the communities he has in view are not the church, his insights are no less helpful for understanding the social body of the believing community.

⁷⁵ McClendon, *Ethics*, 218-19. In my view, with some slight adjustment McClendon’s baptist construal of the table should find great support and development in the relational ontology of Zizioulas. Speaking to the *koinonia* of the table fellowship, Zizioulas states, “The Eucharistic community is the Body of Christ *par excellence* simply because it incarnates and realizes our communion within the very life and communion of the Trinity, in a way that preserves the eschatological character of truth while making it an integral part of history.” (Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 114).

whose unique social rhythms and tempos move in consonance to a time that is being healed.

Rather than romanticizing this practice, however, in a way that suggests it cannot go wrong or be coopted by the regnant system, McClendon avers that to understand the church as a political and social reality is to recognize the necessity for it to resolve its own conflicts, to discern its failures, to deliberate on and learn from new information, and to rearrange its structures when they are found to be distorted. Hence, a second central practice is needed, offering the community a peculiar way or mode through which to resynchronize itself to the life of God and one another, allowing it to continually embody its own distinctive (un)timeliness. At the heart of this new people, thus, is a unique mode of ethical reasoning and political discernment joined to a peculiar organization of power, a process of reconciling contesting interests or conflicting perspectives that sustains it and renews its distinctiveness by resynchronizing the community in its creaturely existence to the life and reign of God.

The question for any community, as McClendon recognizes, is not only how it is established and sustained, but also as part of this how it will govern itself so as to “be kept on track?”⁷⁶ In the church, just as in any human polity, conflicts and problems arise, situations change, and new circumstances present new challenges; its powerful practices can go astray.⁷⁷ This much is evident from the apostolic witness itself. Hence, necessary for gathering in communion with God is “discerning the body”, a point Paul makes quite clear for the Corinthians and which is the source of their failure (I Cor. 11:29).

In order to incarnate continually the reconciliation, justice, provision, forgiveness, and love of God, the community must know how to negotiate its own failures, to resolve the conflicts that arise in its midst, and to discern where it has become dissonant with the kingdom of God and will, thus, need to make changes in order to remain faithful to its commitments through a “politics of forgiveness.”⁷⁸ As McClendon observes, “In terms of technique, the answer lay in a never-ending congregational conversation about Jesus’ way—a conversation that may now engage only two or three, but again will involve the gathered *ekklēsia* itself.”⁷⁹

In short, to persist as the community it is called to be, the church must continually evaluate its practices and power relations, make

⁷⁶ McClendon, *Ethics*, 225.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁷⁸ McClendon, *Ethics*, 222. One should see in this social process an ongoing practice of the self-critical “deliberative reproduction” discussed by Kathryn Tanner in *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 45. However, Yoder’s sacramental realism would of course incline him to see this process as connected less to the transcendence of God as it commonly understood and more to the hypertemporal nature of the Triune life. See John Howard Yoder, *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 276.

⁷⁹ McClendon, *Ethics*, 225-26.

decisions, consider how social pressures and external forces have maligned its structures, and address the issues and problems that arise in its midst in an open and personal way that is available to all of its members. And in this process Christ promises to be just as present as in the Eucharistic meal (Matt. 18: 20).⁸⁰ The practice of the politics of forgiveness through binding and loosing and open meeting is how the community deals with these issues as well as discerns the lead of the Spirit.⁸¹ It is the exercise of the Rule of Christ, or this enriched practice of the office of the Keys, through which the Spirit empowers the community procedurally to discern, to act, and to reconfigure its standards where necessary.⁸²

Often mistaken for crude and hierarchically disfigured executions of community discipline or excommunication, the Rule of Christ is instead a pastoral process of governance whose mode is both firm and flexible because it is orchestrated for forgiveness while not being constricted only to egregious cases.⁸³ The Scriptural basis of this process resides most centrally in Jesus instruction for how to deal with wrongs in the community recounted in Matthew 18:15-20, one of the few places where Jesus speaks directly to and of the “church.”

Hence, it offers a certain rhythm for engaging torts that occur within the community, in a way that seeks reconciliation through accountability and forgiveness. As it does so the community will

⁸⁰ McClendon, *Doctrine*, 378.

⁸¹ In her explanation of the Anabaptist practice of the open meeting Gayle Gerber Koontz states, “‘seeking together the will of God’ implied an intentional process of discernment through which [the church] would come to know the mind of Christ for specific questions or situations. Community discernment was basic to ethics.” See “Meeting in the Power of the Spirit: Ecclesiology, Ethics, and the Practice of Discernment,” in *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas, et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 338.

⁸² The Rule of Christ was understood by the Radical Reformers as a means of communal organization and discipline that cannot be divorced from a Christology stressing the lordship, or kingly office, of Christ. As Yoder argues, “The rule of Christ was a technical term referring to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 18:15-20: If believers commit an offense, talk to them about it. The Swiss Brethren made this not simply a good piece of advice in pastoral relationships or personal reconciliation but a definition of the church. These verses in Matthew 18 are the only place in the words of Jesus where the word *church* is used, with the admonition to his disciples to do this. For the Zurich radicals, then, the way to reform the church is by observing the rule of Christ, not by getting city council votes or episcopal rulings. If something is wrong with the church, believers should talk about it. The way to reform a church is to talk to one another, to deal with offenses; the result will be forgiveness and reconciliation.” It was the alternative to a reform by coercion, the alternative to the sword, as Yoder continues, “so *rule of Christ* should not be equated with *ban*. The noncoercive process of admonition and reconciliation is the way to handle conflict; it is the alternative to the sword. The reason we do not use the sword is that we have this other instrument to use in the Christian community.” John Howard Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, ed. Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 170, 173.

⁸³ McClendon, *Ethics*, 224, 226.

find it necessary to set limits on individual action, to define more clearly what is permissible or forbidden with respect to its relations, and to offer guidance for each other on following the “way” of Jesus, within a judicial process “in which forgiveness and not punishment is the norm.”⁸⁴ Moving within the personal texture of particular cases, this exercise of the Rule of Christ through accountable and reconciling dialogue allows for both community regulation and creativity as it invites the insight of other members into what discipleship means in specific situations.

Thus, forgiveness and discernment are interrelated as are individual and collective practical discernment in a mode of governance characterized by open receptivity, personal attentiveness, and entrusted to the power and guidance of the Spirit. By nature the act of forgiveness implies that those involved together share an understanding of what counts as wrong, or the sin that needs to be forgiven. In addition, the process of working through forgiveness in personal dialogue often involves more expansive moral inquiry, inviting communal discernment as the community reflects upon its standards, assesses its commitments and arrangements, and looks to discover how it might need to change them going forward. The mode of forgiveness remains essential given the fact that no disagreement or dispute within a community can be engaged neutrally even as each registers with varying intensity upon the parties involved.

Finally, this type of ongoing conversation allows the community to determine specifically and personally the line between individual freedom and responsibility to the whole. Because the personal experience of offense is itself what initiates the forgiving concern to counsel, and maybe, admonish or pardon, the absence of offense also leaves room for matters of individual liberty thereby avoiding constrictive totalitarianism.

The practice of the politics of forgiveness is an ongoing process of shaping the community as it orchestrates the exercise of power and power relations within the social body of the church through a politics that determines how the community engages everything from simple torts to larger adaptive challenges.⁸⁵ By providing a way to address individual abuses, to discover and engage systemic corruptions or oppressions, as well as a means of discerning how to go forward when the way is not clear, the community practice provides a means of reconstituting and re-synchronizing this distinct people whose end epictetically informs and determines its active operations.

The distinctive power of the Spirit informs this process of receptivity and vulnerable attentiveness, working in it to harmonize them to make shared and authoritative judgments. As a result, the community need not inevitably fall prey to the forces of degeneration and dissolution. Even so, such a process remains contingent and is not insusceptible to failure. As a mode of governance that foregrounds the local community, while certainly

⁸⁴ McClendon, *Ethics*, 226-227.

⁸⁵ Larry Rasmussen, “Shaping Communities,” in *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, edited by Dorothy C. Bass (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 120.

not disavowing the church catholic, its vulnerability and contingency are real and remain necessarily so.

Resisting the temptation to take refuge in legal abstraction or to secure a certain kind of peace in the decision of a centralized authority, the process puts the work of the politics within the community itself where real offenses are felt and named, where the specifics of issues can be wrestled with, where the complexities of discernment are felt, and where tactile forgiving care and love can define gospel justice.⁸⁶ Exercising discernment in this way, the church performs a judicial power that moves in concert with the reign God exercises over all creation through the Son and in the freedom of the Spirit as it moves toward the rectification of all breaches and shortcomings of community while remaining cognizant of its own limited perspective.

Not utopic, the process is rather a real discipline, or *habitus*, the practice of which exercises a certain kind of power and therefore gives rise to a peculiar kind of political subject.⁸⁷ In learning to engage conflicts, deliberate alternative perspectives, and discern resolutions through a tempo and rhythm of vulnerable openness aimed at forgiveness, the community can learn to configure its social relations and structural arrangements drawing heavily upon received wisdom and the established practices of inherited institutions while remaining receptive to new insights that call for making adjustments.

Here, a unique possibility for the necessary transformation of renewal opens up for the church willing to learn from the practice of community organizing. In contrast to an order dominated by the structuring tempos of exchange, contract, or the quantified time of accumulation, through the gift of the presence of Christ through the power of the Spirit in this ongoing process God gives the church time for meaningful dialogue, patient discernment, and caring attention to wrongs that arise, thereby, imbuing it with an alternative political subjectivity in its enactment.

The advantage of this Free Church orientation is that it does not resort to theological spatial fixes in order to resolve the crucial issue of temporal captivity under capital, spatial fixes that persist either as universal utopian alternatives whose actuality is both as unlikely and undesirable as a return to Christendom or as an acquiescence to the modern universal framework of the secular whose prefigured neutrality already disciplines the community's enactment through its fabricated role for religion. Neither the complex space under Christendom of Radical Orthodoxy nor the

⁸⁶ John Howard Yoder, *Revolutionary Christianity: the 1966 South American Lectures*, edited by Paul Martens et al. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 19.

⁸⁷ On the notion of *habitus*, see Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 52-65. Further, we can agree with Foucault's analysis of the interconnection between power and knowledge, yet while recognizing that not all power is the same. There are different kinds of power. For a concept of *habitus* more resonant with radically democratic modes of collective engagement see Romand Coles, *Visionary Pragmatism: Radical and Ecological Democracy in Neoliberal Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

faithful participation in the categories of the secular suffice for engaging late capital on the level of a counteraction.

What is necessary is not simply a new theoretical constitution no matter how complex nor a dedication to the containment and reform of capital excesses. On the contrary, a transformation on the level and dimension of time is what is required to deliver us from the captivity of capital. Oriented to a view of the present that is being flooded by its dynamic end, the community's mode of operation no longer remains captive to the imaginative limits and capacities of capital time. For it, lines and circles no longer remain conceptually appropriate for attempting to explain time but instead something on the level of beat, rhythm, tempo, or score become more fitting as they tend to encompass not only regularity, duration, and content but also corporate power, agency, and diversifications of narrative intensity as well. A temporalization and materialization of ecclesial politics that breaks down the entire secular/ sacred framework in what Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles have tried to name the "radical ordinary" comes into view.

Neither a simple negation of each nor a negation of their negations that settles for an atemporal eternal, but a rich combination of their terms opens up the complex notion of the apocalyptic materialism, recasting the rules that had governed both in their opposition and social indexes. Within this perspective, the community does not crystalize into an alternative location or sphere but stands out in its running ahead of the world temporally opening up time and history.⁸⁸ Such is a never-ending work that

⁸⁸ See Romand Coles and Stanley Hauerwas, *Christianity, Democracy, and the Radical Ordinary: Conversations between a Radical Democrat and a Christian* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007). I've tried to elaborate on Coles' and Hauerwas' notion through recourse to a Greimas Square, where S1 is the sacred and S2 is its opposite the secular. Hence, ~S1 is the contradiction of the sacred, or, the "not sacred" and ~S2 is the contradiction of the secular, or, the "not secular". Hence the radical ordinary, or what I have called the "apocalyptic" is the complex metaterm as the compound of the two initial terms: sacred and secular. Of course the privileging of this complex metaterm recasts the entire configuration of time and its social dimensions. This view is also informed by Yoder's comment that "the church precedes the world epistemologically" and "axiologically." John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (1984, reprint, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 11. That churches are being led back to the practice of binding and loosing through their involvement in community organizing can only be seen as filling out more completely the arguments suggested by Coles and Hauerwas. As a result, my own view of how theologically to understand what congregations involved in this activity are doing can be distinguished from the framework developed by Luke Bretherton in *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015) whose account of broad-based community organizing despite its attempt to re-envision the secular continues to think it within the contradictions and rules of this dominant temporal framework. Not only do I think this framework predetermines the content of organizing for Bretherton, but it also seems to ignore the important imperializing (and therefore polarizing) tendencies intrinsic to notions of the secular itself as outlined by Saba Mahmood in *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report*

remains continually pioneering and dissatisfied, discerning thick and innovative practices of justice and peace as it seeks to refract current particular circumstance through the prism of God's loving reign made known in Christ.

The depth of this process is not captured if one understands this simply as slowing down. Instead, it is that a different end suffuses the process determining its moments of celerity and patience in a time and history that has been elongated, or better, enriched. Acting in resonance with the reign of God, the end that in Christ has now encroached up the present serving to enhance, expand, and redirect it, the community moves forward at a pace and cadence attune to the will of God, embodying a time made new because it is filled with more possibilities for moving slowly when things are unclear or rapidly when the community together agrees on an opening. No longer is its time flattened or emptied, distorted or debased in being rendered up for crude accumulation.

But through the enactment of discerning forgiveness, through loving deliberation in pursuit of resolution, time is healed and renewed as it becomes filled with the life and meaning of God's love manifest in a real social institution. Those inhabiting this time, thus, find themselves being conformed to the very life of God under the Rule of Christ. They exhibit new political subjectivities emboldened and commissioned to bear one another's burdens, to forgive, to practice peace, and to make divinely binding decisions together in love.

A certain cadence, set by something of a divinely ordained social *ostinato*, sets the pattern of relations of the concrete community of the church, constituting it as a new humanity and allowing it to move as the first fruits of creaturely existence whose time is being healed. This people thus regains its peculiarity as it embodies the possibility of this new social time, and in doing so, can be the good news that provides a real alternative to the structures and organizing powers of world. When it does so the community moves as an "intropolation," exhibiting a new structure whose distinct rhythm and tempo generates frequencies and waves that impact the surrounding society.⁸⁹

As a social body in its own right, it gathers "to do business in His name, to find what it means here and now to put into practice this different quality of life which is God's promise to them and to the world and their promise to God and service to the world," as a beachhead and pilot of the new age.⁹⁰ Rediscovering its political reality consonant with the person and work of Christ, the church can function as a *contretemps* of its own in this right, challenging

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

⁸⁹ Antje Jackelén introduces this term in, *Time and Eternity: The Question of Time in Church, Science, and Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2005), 213. She also goes on to note the close connection between temporality and power, especially when, as I think Jenson prompts us to do, considering time in a relational manner (229).

⁹⁰ John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism* (1971; reprint, Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 30-1.

the debased time of capital. Within the structure of the old age and amidst its power, God in Christ inaugurates a new humanity, a people constituted by the new age of a time that is being healed and renewed, a time given for reconciliation and the restoration of creaturely existence. This public is the church; and its politics is the revolutionary Rule of Christ.

As *contretemps* the alternative process of conflict resolution and discernment is not a sect but a catalytic counter-structure. Against the distorted and homogenously quantified time of accumulation and exchange, the process of the politics of forgiveness operates in a mode of deliberation and discernment that privileges face-to-face interactions, forgiveness, mutual agreement, community input and prayerful listening, and the possibility of reconciliation and starting anew as opposed to the impersonal rule of contracts and the quantified laws of profitability, efficiency, exchange, and accumulation.

As stated this is not a simple opposition of slow time to the celerity of capital time, for such sentimentality will only lead to a paralyzed and parochial nostalgia, uncritically valuing the one over and against the other.⁹¹ Again, neither is it a static spatial alternative, for none such alternative could really counter the complex circulatory dominion of capital. A church of *contretemps* resists societal establishment and remains dynamically flexible in its community-building as its mode of community governance is decentralized though it is no less powerful, rigorous, or thick in its practice. As such it will be more informed by practices of deliberation and collective discernment, especially in an era where the speed and simplicity of executive decision-making dominates, but this does not mean that it will only move languidly.

For in contrast to an era where ceaseless change serves to perform the task of homogenizing reality, a community harboring discordant time(s) can instigate real change that embodies a true celerity that runs ahead. Indeed, as it is being storied into the event of Jesus Christ, its renewed history not only subjects reality to re-narration but also reconfigures action by opening it up to more fellow pilgrims and certain accelerations, jolts, and ruptures or decelerations, pauses, and closer consideration.

From the pattern of relations instituted and maintained in its covenant meal and reconstituted in its process of practical judgment, the church publicly practices this art, infiltrating the processes of capital and its time with an alternative mode of

⁹¹ The focus of Connolly's critique in this regard is of course Sheldon Wolin, whose vision of radical democracy resembles the image of the church I have attempted to sketch. While remaining somewhat skeptical of the pluralism Connolly seeks to promote, I think he is exactly right about the need not simply "to slow the world down, but...to work with and against a world moving faster than heretofore to promote a positive ethos..." William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 142-43. My thinking has also been influenced by Coles' insightful discussion of Connolly's work. Coles, *Visionary Pragmatism*, 36-40.

operation determined by a different purpose. In this way the church functions as something of a minoritarian-experimental bloc,⁹² operating as a public witness and servant to the world by making available a new social embodiment of time determined by a different content and counter-flow. Sticking to the track of Jesus's way and following in resonance to the event of his life, the church exercises a "creative deviance on the front line" that resists the norms and structures of the dominant culture while offering positive alternatives.⁹³

A new, alternative order, the community's public practices mark the way to humanity's true end, and as they do so its own independent (trans)formation serves as a transformative pressure on the wider society. A political practice of untimeliness, it can serve as "pilot project, and podium, pedagogical base and sometime power base" that challenges capital's regime of accumulation.⁹⁴

Abiding in this new age parturied in Christ, the church as Christ's body in the Spirit is enabled to deliberate and make political judgments that enact an alternative to capital time and instead flow with the "order of redemption."⁹⁵ In a way that moves beyond simply a critique of the system, it is the true independence and freedom of the church as *contretemps* that establishes the possibility for a real alternative to the order of global capital. As a politic and structure in its own right, the church acting in this practice shirks neither social responsibility nor effectiveness, but ultimately redefines them in light of Christ. It refuses any preoccupation with otherworldliness or hermetic purity that would render it immaterial and unavailable publicly.

Moving with the pace and rhythm of God's justice and love, the community carves a trail of this time-being-renewed in opposition to the governing techniques of capital. Far from awaiting the annihilation of the world and its structures, this mode of communal discernment and practical reason work within them to open the world in a way that here and now already begins to embody its end, reconfiguring the cosmos and history beyond their immanent limits. Enacting this new time in its own social life, the church tastes real freedom and moves in this freedom to make the justice of God's reign in Christ available where it is needed.

As the practice of *contretemps*, the politics of the Rule of Christ resists the capturing of time by capital, disrupting it and countering it with an alternative mode of collective discernment. Thus, moving in accord with the new organization of power in the Spirit, through this process the church can begin to embody the peculiar pattern of social relations consonant with the reign of God. Additionally, as the church continually performs this practice it offers a transformative politics that not only resists the

⁹² I am alluding here to elements of Gramsci's notion of a "historic bloc." See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 366.

⁹³ Rasmussen, "Shaping Communities," 125.

⁹⁴ Yoder, *Royal Priesthood*, 126.

⁹⁵ Yoder, *Royal Priesthood*, 371.

orchestrations of capital's regime of accumulation, scrambling and disturbing them, but also opens new and different ways of configuring and constituting reality.

Redeeming and renewing the time, such an ecclesial practice opens the possibility for a truly revolutionary politics against which even the present dominion of capital cannot prevail because it cannot ultimately catch.

Dan Rhodes teaches at Loyola University of Chicago where he is Faculty Co-Ordinator of Contextual Education. He is also Editor-in-Chief of *The Other Journal*. He holds a Th.D. from Duke University Divinity School. He is a co-editor with Christian Amondson and Silas Morgan of *Faces of Debt: Theological Calls and Struggles for Material Forgiveness* (a joint project of *Syndicate Theology* and *The Other Journal*).