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Violence, Hiddenness, and the Human Condition: A Closer Look at Gay Bashing and Slut Shaming

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and *I hid myself*." (Gen. 3:6–10, emphasis mine).[1]

The biblical narrative of Adam and Eve has played a central role in shaping the Western Christian imaginary, especially in theological

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1. All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

formulations of the human condition. As the story goes, Adam and Eve are commanded by God not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Tricked by the serpent, they violate God's command and eat the forbidden fruit. Realizing what they have done and hearing God in the garden, Adam and Eve hide themselves. God finds Adam and Eve and asks them to account for their actions. In responding, Adam places the blame on Eve, saying "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12). God, then, turns to Eve who also bypasses responsibility stating "The serpent tricked me, and I ate" (Gen. 3:13). In the end, the first humans and their descendants are cast out of paradise, punished by God.

Central to the work of theological anthropology is a wrestling with the place of God and human beings in the brokenness that marks the human condition. Within Christian tradition, the story of Adam and Eve has often been interpreted to name disobedience of divine commands and the ensuing punishment as the root of human suffering. The first humans, created in the image and likeness of God, were given all that they needed in order to be happy. Yet, willful disobedience, the desire to be in control, to be like God, and human fallibility get in the way, ruining paradise for everyone in the future. In the narrative, suffering enters the picture as a consequence of punishment given by God. Adam now must earn his food by the sweat of his brow, as the land has been cursed (Gen. 3:19). Eve's pain greatly multiplies in childbirth (Gen. 3:16). Enmity marks not only the relationships between man and woman (Gen. 3:17), but also among human beings and the natural world (Gen. 3:15). The future is pretty dim in this story. Moreover, the character of divine-human relations is likened to that of punitive parenting of children who are constantly testing the limits. As the parent of a toddler, I can imagine why God might have been a little frustrated with Adam

and Eve. (Maybe there was a good reason for asking them not to eat of the fruit of that particular tree. Who knows, maybe God had just cleaned it up and didn't want to pick up the mess again!) Yet, the problem, when we look at the narrative and its implications for theological anthropology, is that we are not all toddlers. Being a "good" Christian, family member, or child can't be chalked up to blind obedience to commands, parental or divine. (This is true even for toddlers.) Moreover, as Patrick Cheng, whose work I will discuss in a later chapter, has argued, the punishment issued forth by God does not fit the crime. As he explains, "To the extent that Adam and Eve were tricked by the serpent to eat of the fruit, they arguably did not intend to commit a criminal act. And even if they did have a criminal intent, it seems unjust to impute criminal intent upon their descendants (that is, all of us) who simply inherited this sin through biological transmission."[2] Such a punitive model for divine-human relations seems to be predicated upon distrust instead of mutuality. Punitive parenting creates a climate of fear, scrupulosity, resentment, and shame—encouraging escapism and mistrust. The same can be said of theologies that depict God as a punitive father more concerned with human infractions of the divine commands than the well-being of God's children. Ironically, such a theologically framework encourages, instead of discourages, radical self-absorption. Carter Heyward notes, "Most of us do not take to heart each day the fact that, in God, our lives are connected at the root of who each of us is and who all of us are."[3] Namely, we have yet to acknowledge the depth of our sacred interdependence. We forget that our own well-being can only be secured in relation to the well-being of others. Fear teaches us to hide vulnerability beneath a masquerade of false

2. Patrick S. Cheng, *From Sin to Amazing Grace: Discovering the Queer Christ* (New York: Seabury, 2012), 37.

3. Carter Heyward, *Saving Jesus from Those Who Are Right: Rethinking What It Means to Be Christian* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 83.

innocence. We tend to our own needs and wants apart from a serious consideration of the flourishing of others. This reaction cannot be chalked up to individual failings. Rather, the problem of unethical passivity must be understood within the current Christian theological and cultural milieu, wherein violence and hiddenness continue to mark the human condition individually and collectively.

As Elizabeth Johnson poignantly reminds us about the function of language for God, "neither abstract in content nor neutral in its effect, speaking about God sums up, unifies, and expresses a faith community's sense of ultimate mystery, the world view and expectation of order devolving from this, and the concomitant orientation of human life and devotion."[4] The symbol of God represents what the community "takes to be the highest good, the profoundest truth, the most appealing beauty."[5] Theological language gives form to the theo-ethical imagination of the community and the individual. God's incomprehensibility serves as a powerful reminder that all God-talk is limited and should not be used literally or exclusively. This does not mean that all symbols for God are equal in value. Rather, it necessitates a careful consideration of the ways in which symbols function to shape what we value and desire in a given context.

As Americans, we inhabit a culture that encourages escapism—from authentic relationships with ourselves, with God, and with another. This is not to say that all relationships are superficial. Rather, as I have suggested, we are not very good at sitting with pain. We tend to engage in a politics of distraction, to shy away from making the really hard decisions (after all, isn't there an app for that?). In doing so, we risk becoming immune to violence happening

4. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 4.
5. Ibid.

in our midst. The problem of moral indifference is compounded by the relatively sheltered lives we live.[6] We continue to live, work, and worship in largely class and race-segregated environments. Such isolation allows us to maintain the façade that the resources to which we have access are readily available to everyone, and, therefore, tricks us into believing there is no need for change. As such, the question becomes how to speak meaningfully about human participation in violence and the suffering it causes, given the Western valuation of escapism, individualism, and mindless conformity?

I have often wondered whether the story of Adam and Eve is not so much about disobedience of divine commands, but humanity's attempt to hide and the violence that ensues from our hiding.[7] Namely, the narrative in Genesis calls us to ask, to what degree are we hiding—from ourselves, from one another, and perhaps, even from God? This question, and its deep theological roots, is worth keeping in mind in view of bystander participation in violence. In contexts marked by violence, hiding can be risky business, encouraging passivity and escapism, and sapping the world of the vital and creative energy needed for transformation. Genuine care for and nurturing of others is not possible when we are hiding.[8] Compassion only becomes possible when we come out of the shadows and come face to face with vulnerability—human and divine. To the degree that

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6. Mary Elizabeth Hobgood, *Dismantling Privilege: An Ethics of Accountability*, rev. and updated ed. (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2009), 21.

7. I am certainly not the first to ask this question. One of the more famous constructions is that of Reinhold Niebuhr. See *Human Nature*, vol. 1 of *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 178–79. Niebuhr has been critiqued by feminist scholars of religion: Valerie Saiving Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *The Journal of Religion* 40, no. 2 (1960): 100–12; Susan Nelson, "The Sin of Hiding: A Feminist Critique of Reinhold Niebuhr's Account of the Sin of Pride," *Soundings* 65 (1982): 316–27; and Judith Plaskow, *Sex, Sin, and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980). For a contemporary discussion, see the essays that are part of the roundtable discussion in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 28, no.1 (2012): 75–133.

8. Nelson, "The Sin of Hiding," 325.

violence touches us all and is truly inescapable, a return to paradise is no longer possible. I am not suggesting that healing is impossible. Rather I contend that innocence is a myth, one with which we must reckon in the movement toward healing. Given the pervasiveness of violence, we can no longer afford to hide from ourselves, the divine, and one another. Too much life is at stake.

Our relationship to power is much more complex than dualistic notions of innocence/guilt and good/evil seem to suggest. We continue to need theologies of sin and grace that allow for a greater understanding of the moral ambiguities in which people live their lives. As Alejandro García Rivera has suggested, we walk in the garden of good and evil.[9] Sin, grace, innocence, and guilt cannot always be parsed within lived experience. Dualistic frameworks not only encourage escapism, but they leave us bereft of language to name the ways in which bystanders participate in human violation—as well as their potential to work toward healing.

This chapter begins to draw out implications of unethical passivity for Christian theology by taking a closer look at the problems of violence and hiddenness and their place in a twenty-first-century Western context. In doing so, we will take a closer look at one particular form of violence: bullying. Bullying provides a clear example of the relationship between covert and overt forms of violence and points to the way in which we all (victim-survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders) get caught up in the cycle of violence. In particular, the dynamics involved in bullying violence are a helpful starting point for dissecting the significance of passive bystanding in supporting the use of power as dominance.

Unchecked, bullying normalizes the humiliation and dehumanization of those who are the "least among us," forming the

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9. Alejandro García-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), 142.

building blocks of structural injustice and systemic oppression. It teaches children and reinforces for adults that getting ahead in life means exerting power over those who are vulnerable in society, or at least staying silent when others do. What we learn as children and practice as adults informs our identity and our vision for the future. All too often, we wait to talk about violence until it's too late. Certainly, no analysis of violence can be complete until all the evidence is shown. Yet, one of the aims of this book is to get us talking, from a theological point of view, about violence prevention. In order to do so, we have to examine the assumptions we often carry about what constitutes violent activity and the way in which cultural mores shape these assumptions.

Violence, Hiddenness, and the Human Condition

To speak of violence is to speak of hiddenness. While violence continues to be manifest in overt forms around the globe, most citizens of the Western world do not experience it as such. By and large, war happens on foreign soil, rendering our knowledge and experience of it secondhand through the news media. We do not know the working conditions of those who make most of our clothing. Inhumane and unsafe working conditions are masked behind department store lighting. In the age of online shopping, products arrive at our house in neatly wrapped packages after the click of a button. While women continue to make strides in the workplace and in public leadership, the prevalence of domestic violence reveals that home is one of the most dangerous places for women and children.[10] The distance most white and middle-class

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10. Women are much more likely to be physically assaulted or sexually violated by an intimate partner than a stranger. As reported by the World Health Organization in 2012, risk factors for being a victim-survivor to intimate partner violence include "low education, witnessing violence between partners, exposure to abuse during childhood and attitudes accepting violence

Americans have from violence allows for what Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite has termed a culture of doublespeak, "where war is named peace and what passes for peace is really war, . . . where economic practice creates poverty and is presented as the cure for poverty, where violence in the home is called family values, and family values are the barest kind of contempt for children, women, and the elderly."[11] Such a culture of doublespeak and doublethink becomes permissible because of the distance most elites keep from violence. "When people starve, they know it is not abundance: when they are abused, they know it is not love, when they are shot, they know it is not peace; and when death is all around, they know it is not life."[12] Such hypocrisy is only possible for those who occupy locations of social power, as wealth affords one the opportunity to purchase an escape from violence. By location of social power and privilege, I am referring to the ways in which one's class, race, gender, ethnicity, or orientation gives a person access to political, social, economic, or cultural advantages that are not shared by all. With economic capital, one can purchase distance from struggling neighborhoods, underfunded schools, and from those who are different by virtue of race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. To a degree, the ability to flee violence is a marker of social privilege. Hurricane Katrina serves as a poignant reminder of this reality.[13] In the aftermath, the question frequently asked by those who occupied sites of social power and privilege was, why didn't people leave before the storm hit? Leaving

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and gender inequality." For more, see "Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence against Women: Fact Sheet," *World Health Organization*, http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/.

11. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "Militarism in North American Perspective," in *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, ed. Mary John Mananzan et al., (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996, 2004), 123.

12. Ibid., 123–24.

13. Bryan N. Massingale offers a poignant analysis of the aftermath of Katrina in *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), 30–33. His analysis will be presented in detail in the next chapter.

requires financial resources (access to a car, gas, and the cash to fund temporary housing) as well as the emotional security that comes with the knowledge that insurance will cover what damage is done to your possessions while you are gone. In the United States, access to financial resources continues to be divided along racial lines. Recent research out of the Urban Institute illustrates that in 2010 the average wealth of whites in the United States was approximately six times that of Hispanics or African Americans.[14]

Violence involves not only personal harm or injury, but it is also structural or systemic. In this book, I use the term *structural violence* or *systemic violence* to name the ways in which social systems exploit some people to the benefit of others.[15] Examples of structural violence include elitism, heterosexism, sexism, racism, poverty, and ethnocentrism. Often, interpersonal violence and structural violence are interrelated. Structural violence creates social injustice. The violence that is rooted in the everyday evils of systemic and institutional oppression is harder to root out because it often escapes recognition.[16] Practices of social exclusion, coercion, and intimidation continue to undergird human relationality within personal, social, and institutional spheres. These practices, which often go unnamed, foster unprecedented levels of social privilege for a select few at the expense of many. Mary Elizabeth Hobgood emphasizes, "Our society has successfully normalized the social relations that comprise class, race, and sex/gender systems and the unshared power arrangements they reproduce. . . . We do not notice how the patterned behaviors that we engage in daily, either as

14. Signe-Mary McKernan, Caroline Ratcliffe, Eugene Steuerle, and Sisi Zhang, "Less Than Equal: Racial Disparities in Wealth Accumulation," *Urban Institute*, http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412802-Less-Than-Equal-Racial-Disparities-in-Wealth-Accumulation.pdf.

15. Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–91.

16. Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, trans. Ann Patrick Ware (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 1.

individuals or as affiliates of institutions, exploit, silence, disable, or marginalize some as they confer status, profits and benefits on elites."[17] Instead, we consider them a normal part of life. Evil of this sort is rarely chosen, yet it continues to form the seedbed of sins of omission, unethical passivity, and blind obedience to forces of hegemony.

The invisibility of structural violence is further compounded by the increasingly covert forms in which present-day racism, sexism, and heterosexism are manifest. The research of renowned Columbia psychologist Derald Wing Sue illustrates that contemporary manifestations of racism, sexism, and heterosexism are more disguised than their predecessors: "It is not the White supremacists, Klansmen, or Skinheads, for example, who pose the greatest threat to people of color, but rather well-intentioned people, who are strongly motivated by egalitarian values, who believe in their own morality, and who experience themselves as fair-minded decent people who would never consciously discriminate."[18] Rather, racism most often appears as unconscious bias, in the stereotypical prejudices that white people hold about people of color. These include assumptions about lower intelligence, presumptions about criminality, assertions that race plays a minor role in life success, and the denial or pretense that a white person does not see race. Because racism is so deeply ingrained in our culture, these understandings are very rarely made explicit. They are tacitly transmitted and often unconscious. Yet, unintentional and unconscious violence is not less harmful. In fact, it is more difficult to address because it goes unnamed. Furthermore, it leaves recipients of racial microaggressions in the pernicious position

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17. Hobgood, *Dismantling Privilege*, 18.
18. Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 23. In this book, I made the conscious decision to offer in-text descriptors only for those scholars whose expertise falls outside the area of theological and religious studies.

of being perceived as "making a mountain out of a mole-hill," or unable to pinpoint the source of discrimination.[19]

Parallel statements can be made of sexism. "In today's societal climate, it is not politically correct to hold overtly sexist attitudes or engage in obvious discriminatory actions towards women. . . . To be accused of being a sexist or of holding sex-role stereotypes toward women is to be considered unenlightened and a bigot. The strong social sanctions against sexism have changed its face and it has morphed into a more ambiguous, subtle and invisible form."[20] In the workplace, women continue to receive messages (explicit and implicit) that professional advancement is tied to compliance with sexual advances from male superiors or that their worth is defined in terms of physical attractiveness. As Pamela Cooper-White discusses, sexual harassment "is more serious than it seems, because, although it is sometimes more elusive and difficult for victims to prove, and it may not cause physical pain (although prolonged harassment can often cause stress-related illness as in the case of Anita Hill) it has long-term and devastating consequences, both economic and psychological, for victims."[21] Citing a 2005 study conducted by the American Association of University Professors, Cooper-White notes that more than 80 percent of college women report being sexually harassed.[22] The same study reveals that slightly over half of college males report harassing someone. Harassment "creates an environment

19. Ibid., 91.
20. Ibid., 169.
21. Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 87.
22. Catherine Hill and Elena Silva, "Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus," *American Association of University Women Educational Foundation,* 2005, http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/drawing-the-line-sexual-harassment-on-campus.pdf. For the incidence of sexual harassment in schools, see Catherine Hill and Holly Kearl, "Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at Schools," *American Association of University Women,* 2011, http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/Crossing-the-Line-Sexual-Harassment-at-School.pdf. Forty-eight percent of students grades 7–12 surveyed indicated they had experienced sexual harassment at school during the 2010–2011 academic year.

of stress, insecurity, and fear that reduces a woman's identity, role, and worth to her sexuality alone. It erodes her confidence, her initiative, and even her health, with direct consequences for her ability to work competitively and well."[23] As such, sexual harassment directly impacts the material and emotional situation of women. While there are laws against harassment in the workplace, these laws are often undermined by the coding of structural violence in cultural mores and prejudices, which render it invisible to the privileged eye. For example, use of sexual innuendo to put female employees "in their place" in turn has the effect of "silencing" women, making it more difficult for them to speak up at meetings, to offer contributions, and to raise their own questions and concerns. Moreover, as Traci C. West illustrates, sexual violence is often compounded by racism and classism. Stereotypical assumptions about the nature of black womanhood call into question the credibility of victims and survivors of intimate violence, making them less likely to report incidents to authorities.[24] The false presumption that women are liars and temptresses can permeate a victim–survivor's self–perception, further compounding the voicelessness that many experience.

Racism, sexism, and heterosexism are materialized in microaggressions. Racial, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions "reflect a worldview of superiority–inferiority, albeit in much more subtle but equally harmful manner as overt forms of oppression."[25] These forms of violence often remain invisible because of cultural conditioning predicated upon the normalcy of structural and social inequities that are protected by silence and passivity. "Modern forms of bias, especially, the unconscious kind, are

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23. Cooper–White, *Cry of Tamar,* 90.
24. Traci C. West, *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 60.
25. Sue, *Microaggressions*, 132.

more likely to be manifest in a failure to help rather than in a desire to hurt."[26] Research conducted by cultural psychologist John T. Dovidio demonstrated that race played a factor in whether white bystanders helped a stranded motorist with a disabled vehicle. White bystanders, who believed that others also saw the motorist, helped a black person half as often as a white individual (38 percent versus 75 percent).[27] Research has documented that microaggressions can cause significant harm, including assailing the mental health of recipients, creating a hostile and invalidating work or campus climate, perpetuating stereotypes, and contributing to physical health problems.[28]

Thus far we have discussed some of the ways in which violence is hidden, from the invisibility of structural violence to the ways in which violence silences the voices of those in harm's way. Yet, this is only one part of the equation. The other piece has to do with the ways in which hiding, in the form of isolation, individualism, and segregation, generates violence. Hiding only remains permissible in view of the relatively isolated lives we live. Economic and racial privilege play a pivotal role in isolating entire groups of people from one another (e.g., rich from the poor, whites from nonwhites). As Steven Marche writes in *The Atlantic*, "Despite its deleterious effect on health, loneliness is one of the first things ordinary Americans spend their money achieving. With money, you flee the cramped city to a house in the suburbs or, if you can afford it, a McMansion in the exurbs, inevitably spending more time in your car. Loneliness is at the American core, a by-product of a long-standing national appetite for independence."[29] As Marche goes on to say, isolation is exacerbated by the digital age in which we live.

26. Ibid.
27. John F. Dovidio et al., "Why Can't We All Just Get Along: Interpersonal Biases and Interracial Distrust," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 8 (2002): 88–102.
28. The literature on this point is too numerous to cite here. For a summary, see Sue, *Microaggressions*, 52–56.

MIT researcher Sherry Turkle argues that despite increasing "connectivity," Americans' technology is actually making us lonelier than ever. In *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, Turkle argues that electronic communication is changing the way we understand ourselves. Turkle paints a picture of the human person as both tethered and markedly absent.[30] Despite the constant companionship offered by social media sites, these relationships are ones of expediency. Technology allows us to respond to friends, family, and coworkers when it is convenient for us. Emailing and texting save us time and the messiness of face-to-face communication. Ignoring others and their feelings is not only easier, but a way of life. A student interviewed by Turkle expresses the problem as follows: "An online apology. It's cheap. It's easy. All you have to do is type 'I'm sorry.' You don't have to have any emotion, any believability in your voice or anything."[31] You don't have to make eye contact with the person whom you have hurt. You can avoid the discomfort of witnessing another person's pain. In this way, the networked world in which we live plays a role in hiding suffering, as it offers a ready escape from our own complicity in the pain of other human beings.

While social media is supposed to free up our time, to unclutter our lives, it is actually making us busier than ever. As most of my students will admit, maintaining an online presence takes a great deal of time and effort. Failure to do so comes at quite a price. When asked to participate in a "Facebook or social media fast," my students protest, saying, "If you aren't online all the time, you are out of

29. Stephen Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?," April 2, 2012, *The Atlantic*, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/05/is-facebook-making-us-lonely/308930/.
30. Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic, 2012), 155.
31. Ibid., 196.

the mix." You become a "social leper." In order to stay connected, you have to be connected 24/7. The only way to accomplish this level of connectivity is by multitasking. This is true for teenagers and adults. Multitasking is not always a bad thing. Multitasking is a critical skill in many professions that can lead to creative innovations. It is vital for most parenting. (Truth be told, without multitasking, we would never eat dinner in our house.) Yet, as the saying goes, you can have "too much of a good thing." Constant multitasking rewires our attention span. In so doing, activities requiring patience and long-term dedication seem less attractive. To a degree, the constant pressure to be as efficient as possible pushes us to look for a quick fix. Our drive to get a lot done very quickly has political and social consequences. Most social problems require sustained efforts over time. One has to wonder whether the next generation will have the time or interest to pursue civic and political engagement.[32]

New media creates possibilities for human relationship in ways we could not have imagined a decade ago. Yet, as moral theologians have argued, it is imperative that we ask about the ethical character of these relationships.[33] In particular, we need to consider the ways in which new forms of connectivity shape the human capacity for love: of oneself and others. The case can be made that new media increases opportunities for involvement in social justice campaigns and social awareness, like Kony 2012 or Occupy Wall Street.[34] On the other hand, a constant online presence creates an environment where we are never really focused on one activity or person. We are

32. Christian Smith makes this point in *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 224.
33. Maureen H. O'Connell, "No More Time for Nostalgia: Millennial Morality and Remixing the Catholic Moral Tradition," paper given at the College Theology Society's Annual Convention, Omaha, NE, May 31, 2013.
34. Kony 2012 was video campaign created by Invisible Children Fund that sought to expose the violence done to civilians in the Sudan by LRA warlord Joseph Kony and his resistance fighters. For more, visit http://invisiblechildren.com/kony/#epic-progress. For more information on Occupy Wall Street visit, http://occupywallst.org/.

always interrupted. We have lost the art of listening—to ourselves and to others.

Though hardly a Luddite, I'll admit that I spend less time on Facebook than most. Too much time on Facebook leaves me anxious or depressed, critical of my own accomplishments or lack thereof, jealous of the exotic vacations others took, and wondering whether my toddler is enrolled in enough extracurricular activities. Too much time on Facebook leads me to determine my own worth in competition with the achievements of others. I am hardly alone in this. As Turkle argues, hyperconnectivity heightens the tendency to rely upon external sources of validation in determining our sense of self-worth and identity.[35] You can ask your friends to weigh in on anything from clothing purchases to what drink you should get at Starbucks. Moreover, the "other" to whom we are turning for validation and comparison is disguised behind a profile. While the "art" of online profile-making allows us to play with our identity, it also teaches us to hide our imperfections and vulnerability. We put our best "face" forward and suppress our failings. People typically don't broadcast on Facebook about a job interview gone wrong or about a comment that truly hurt their feelings.[36] The problems with this are manifold. Not only does constant exposure to a profile, instead of an individual's identity, set up unhealthy expectations about what constitutes the good life, but it voids us of the necessary skills for addressing failure, disappointment, and rejection—all of which are essential to the theo-ethical praxis of self-love.[37] Moreover, one also has to wonder whether compassion, the praxis of suffering

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35. Turkle, *Alone Together*, 176.

36. As Turkle points out, the place for this kind of sharing is the online confessional. This is particularly true for those who are thirty-five and older. See *Alone Together*, 231..

37. For more discussion, see Maureen H. O'Connell, "No More Time for Nostalgia: Millennial Morality and a Catholic Tradition Mash-Up," in *Handing on the Faith*, College Theology Society Annual Volume, 59), ed. Matthew Sutton and William Portier (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014), 75–87.