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A Romantic Readiness: The Virtue of Hope and the Fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald

Not a whit. We defy augury. There is a
special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be
now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be
now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The
readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves
knows, what is 't to leave betimes? Let be. (Hamlet, V.ii.233-238)

The theological virtue of hope has often been confused or mistaken for a conversational meaning of hope. Often saying one hopes for something is interchangeable with saying that one has the wish for something or the desire that something come to pass. This type of hope indicates the attractiveness of something that is by no means certain. If it was certain, why would we hope for it? The theological virtue of hope is not so. Hope is essential for the Christian and yet what we hope for is certain. Abraham, the father of our faith, lived a life in which the only way he could fulfill his purpose was to live *by* faith and hope, specifically when the Lord promises him that he will bear a son around the age of 100. Instead of wavering at his dismal physical circumstances, Abraham hopes against hope and grows in faith, “Fully convinced that God was able to do what he promised” (Rom. 4:21). Faith (a rational power) and hope (a passional power) are the means by which Abraham fully commits himself to that disposition of hope: being convinced that God will do what He has promised. Thus, Christian hope relies upon nothing but certainty. The American philosopher Peter Kreeft notes: “Just as God’s revelation summarized in the Church’s creeds, defines or expresses the structure of faith, so God’s revelation, in the form of his many *promises*, defines or expresses the structure of hope” (75). Hope is certain for the Christian because it is ultimately a reasonable thing to believe that God will do what He

promises because he has never broken a promise and never will. This truth is consistent through Scripture, the lives of Christians, and the person of Jesus Christ, who himself is the fulfillment of more than 300 divine promises. Hope cannot be an end, but must be directed towards an end, and Christian hope is for heaven, specifically union with Christ (Phil. 1:21). Because everyone who becomes a Christian acknowledges their hope in Christ, this puts Christians in a unique position to match the object of their hope with a fitting disposition. Despite having the supreme object of hope, Jesus Christ, the disposition to our object of hope is often enfeebled, and only Christ can reinvigorate it. When our attention remains fixated on the object of our hope, the disposition will be marked by passion and devotion. But when that attention is diverted, the disposition will be lethargic and faltering. F. Scott Fitzgerald, the agnostic American writer and premier sheik of the 1920's, has written a number of novels that can serve as a guide to cultivating a disposition of hope. The shortcoming of this secular hope is in its various objects; the strength is in the disposition, or passion, that is directed towards those various objects. F. Scott Fitzgerald introduces a disposition of hope that he calls "romantic readiness," which we will see embodied in the protagonists of *This Side of Paradise* and *The Great Gatsby*. By attending to "romantic readiness", Christians can cultivate a disposition of hope worthy of Christ. In this paper, we will view hope through the dual lens of theology and Fitzgerald's fiction: theology because it provides the correct object of hope, fiction because it narrates a suitable passion for that hope.

The Virtue of Hope

Virtue, as described by Aristotle, is a term which promotes full potentiality of being. The four natural virtues are temperance, courage, prudence, and justice. The three theological virtues are faith, hope and love, which Christians add to Aristotle's list of natural virtues. This doctrine comes from 1 Corinthians 13:13: "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the

greatest of these is love” These three are distinctively theological virtues because they are gifts from God and their immediate object is God himself. On the other hand, natural virtues and passions are from the self and are not directed towards God, but to almost anything else, as we shall see. Hope is the only theological virtue that is also a natural passion because the truest essence of hope can be present both in hope towards God and towards a perishable object.

What distinguishes the theological virtue of hope from the natural passion of hope is that it is rooted first and foremost in the person of Jesus Christ; He is both the foundation and the fulfillment of our hope. The Bible does not obscure the fact that our hope is founded in our savior: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (*ESV*, Col. 1:27), and “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain” (Heb. 6:19). Because of Jesus’ priestly role and his death on the cross, Christians are put in a position to live a life marked by hope primarily due to the grace He has given us. Not only is Christ the foundation of our hope but He is also the fulfillment of our hope: “For in this hope we were saved” (Rom. 8:24). When Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected three days later, He participated in a miracle that would point forwards to the resurrection of the saints, including all Christians who call upon the name of the Lord. This is why, traditionally, when the Christian was asked what he hopes in, the answer was always that he hoped in the resurrection of the body. The apostle John foretells this event in Revelation 20: 4-6: “Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” The Bible *guarantees* blessing and power to the saints at the resurrection who hope in Christ in the face of earthly tribulation. Christ’s resurrection both gave us the possibility of hoping (foundation) and promised a final

resurrection for us to hope in (fulfillment). Christ facilitates the salvation of the Christian by setting us on the pilgrimage that ultimately leads us back to Him.

The traditional perspective of the virtue of hope should be coupled with the traditional theological perspective on life. That view is that life is a pilgrimage and the Christian is the pilgrim. The term *status viatoris* is known as the condition of being on the way, and all humans are in this condition of being on the way in life. This condition does not cease until the pilgrim has passed on from this life to the next, in which case his condition is the *status comprehendis*, or the condition of having arrived. The correct orientation of the virtue of hope is beatitude, or union with Christ. Like any journey you would take to a good destination, this journey of life gives the pilgrim the perpetual choice of orienting it towards beatitude or towards a lack of fulfillment, which looks like sin. Hope is the virtue of the *status viatoris* in a way that faith and love cannot be. While both faith and hope are both virtues of the wayfarer, faith is the means by which the pilgrim can see the promises of God (it is a rational virtue), while hope is the means by which the entire body of the pilgrim acts based on the promises he sees in faith with hope's passionate quality. As theologian Charles Pinches puts it, "It is the virtue of the wayfarer. Of course the wayfarer will need the other virtues to proceed on her way, but it is by hope that she keeps moving toward her goal, her eternal happiness. . . hope regards always my own story, stretching it forward to the best possible ending" (362).

The only fitting treatment of an enfeebled hope is a reinvigoration of it by Christ. To regain hope is to regain youthfulness; youth should be associated with vigor, hope, and passion. In fact, the traditional pagan perspective of hope is that youthfulness produces hope, while the Christian view is that supernatural hope produces youthfulness. Pinches reminds us that "Aristotle, as we recall, thought hope was most natural to the youth, slipping away with age" (357). The natural

passion of youthful hope, which is not a disposition, is something that is present to young people but it will go away when the body ceases to perform as it did before. On the other hand, German philosopher Josef Pieper says that “[Supernatural hope] gives man such a ‘long’ future that the past seems ‘short’ however long and rich his life. The theological virtue of hope is the power to wait patiently for a not yet that is more immeasurably distant from us the more closely we approach it” (110). Aristotle is not necessarily wrong in his claim that youthfulness produces hope, but that statement is only true for hope as a natural passion, when it is not directed towards beatitude. Natural hope decreases as man approaches the threshold of death because of his shrinking potentiality. However, when man has supernatural hope for union with Christ, he can enter into a more substantial youthfulness and passion with the knowledge that his hope is secure.¹ Thus, the theological virtue of hope looks like a Christian pilgrim traveling on the *status viatoris* who experiences the futurity and the arduousness of consummate happiness and whose readiness for the beatific vision is heightened as he nears his Savior.

The Fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald

If we have not lost our heads tracking through my rather long theological preliminary, we may move on to examine hope in Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise* and *The Great Gatsby*. It was essential to examine hope through the lens of theology in order to determine the correct object of our hope. The reader must be reminded that though Fitzgerald was agnostic and there is no active God present in these stories, his characters should not be criticized for their failure to hope in Christ. These books are works of art, each part has a purpose, and the purpose I am highlighting is the romantic readiness of their hope. The term “romantic readiness” comes from

¹Natural hope, directed at a great amount of smaller objects in the course of a lifetime, decreases in potentiality as the person approaches the threshold of death. Supernatural hope, on the other hand, has no intermediate objects of hope between the time the pilgrim begins hoping until death. This hope is placed in the moment of unification with Christ at death. The passion and vitality of the pilgrim increases as they approach death because death is the doorway to union with their Savior.

the second page of *The Great Gatsby* through the eyes of narrator Nick Carraway: “it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again”. Romantic readiness in Fitzgerald’s fiction is a natural passion, but it is hauntingly similar to the virtue of hope due to the emphasis of romantic readiness as a disposition. As a writer, Fitzgerald equates a romantic readiness with hope in his works more than once.² I would like to use two examples of Fitzgerald’s fiction to view hope.

The first example of hope comes from Fitzgerald’s first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, which is the initial example of romantic readiness in Fitzgerald’s fiction. Published in 1920 when Fitzgerald was only 23, this story is a youthful, episodic narrative which takes the reader through the entire youth of romantic egotist Amory Blaine. Amory was born to a wealthy family in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, with an ineffectual and unassertive father and a mother charming in her appearance and her nuanced philosophies. The story, situated in the stage of youth, is engrossed in the favorite pastime of many American youths in the 1920s: uninhibited and boundary-challenging romance. The novel highlights four of Amory’s romances, from Isabelle in his early college years, to Clara in his late college years, Rosalind after his graduation, and Eleanor in his post-Rosalind depression. Amory is accompanied throughout his youth by a well-read and understanding Catholic priest he knows as Monsignor Darcy. Amory’s only religious influence, Darcy garners a great deal of Amory’s respect because of his ability to reason honestly with him, his shared interests, and his acute perception of the boy’s being. Meanwhile, Amory’s relationships begin to reveal a dissatisfaction with earthly relationships and a search for a supreme relationship.

²Besides *This Side of Paradise* and *The Great Gatsby*, other books by Fitzgerald which use a similar concept of romantic readiness include *The Love of the Last Tycoon* as well as short stories *Absolution* and *Winter Dreams*.

The state of Amory's romance before arriving at a disposition of romantic readiness is a type of sentimentalism which indicates pleasure and satisfaction with the current reality. It is for this reason that *This Side of Paradise* places a large emphasis on the sentimentalist and the romantic as polar opposites. Amory's dedication to many relationships in his youth shows that he has a clear zeal towards romance if it should arise, though this zeal has traces of sentimentalism. Amory is originally a romantic person only because of his general zeal for relationship and not because of a disposition of romantic readiness. The main occurrences of the tension between the sentimentalist and the romantic are in the disagreements between Amory and his girlfriends throughout the book. Rosalind and Eleanor both tell him that he seems to be a sentimentalist but he denies it both times, reminding them of his "ancient distinction": "No, I'm romantic— a sentimental person thinks things will last— a romantic person hopes against hope that they won't. Sentiment is emotional" (*Paradise* 164). To Amory, the sentimental person is the one who makes choices based on emotion to sustain the current reality of the relationship. On the other hand, Amory's romantic tug is not content with the current reality. His hope is that there is always a better relationship than the one that he is currently in. Amory displays attentiveness to the mystery of romance that many of his friends do not. He does not say where the romantic gets this knowledge, but he knows that there is something chimerical and fictitious about romance as soon as he has entered into it. It must not be overlooked that the romantic, as Amory says, hopes against hope, which is a direct allusion to the Apostle Paul's treatment of Abraham's faith and hope in God in Romans 4:18. The sentimentalist looks to perishable romance as something to fulfill him while the romantic looks for something in the relationship that is not there, which may explain why Amory moves from relationship to relationship in his youth. The romantic is a good steward of the imagination by imagining that which could fulfill himself. Three characters

recognize the conflict between sentimentalism and romanticism in Amory though he seems not to, and the first is Isabelle. After the two have broken up, Amory reflects on just why they broke up:

But his life would not be unfulfilled. He took a sombre satisfaction in thinking that perhaps all along she had been nothing except what he had read into her; that this was her high point, that no one else would ever make her think. Yet that was what she had objected to in him; and Amory was suddenly tired of thinking, thinking!
 “Damn her!” he said bitterly, “she’s spoiled my year” (*Paradise* 92).

Amory realizes that he had been loving a girl for what he had read into her and not what she actually was, and that she had been much better in his imagination than in reality. This passage implies that Amory truly had wanted for his relationship with Isabelle to fulfill him, but he is awakened from this desire by the harsh grip of reality. Amory’s immediate actions show that he thinks this will only happen once and he will be able to love in the future without his imagination hindering him. However, his imagination is still reigning over him in his very next relationship.

As the dogmatic Amory and the perceptive Clara engage in Amory’s favorite thing to do with women (talk about himself), Amory tells her that he is a slave to his emotions, his likes, his hatred of boredom, and to most of his desires. “‘You are not!’ She brought one little fist down on to the other. ‘You’re a slave, a bound helpless slave to one thing in the world, your imagination’” (*Paradise* 138). To Amory, being a slave to his imagination is a bad thing because his relationships with women keep ending. This may make him a poor lover on earth, but it qualifies him as a romantic. He has the imagination for improbable or fantastic relationships that the romantic requires but not the person to fulfill his imagination. Monsignor Darcy finds Amory in this state in his final letter before his death and writes thoughtfully:

You make a great mistake if you think you can be romantic without religion. Sometimes I think that with both of us the secret of success, when we find it, is the mystical element in us: something flows into us that enlarges our personalities, and when it ebbs out our personalities shrink . . . (*Paradise* 204).

Darcy definitely sees in Amory that he is dissatisfied with the relationships he is in and also says earlier in the letter that his relationship with Rosalind was taking the romance out of him.

Monsignor Darcy is the first to suggest that the beatific vision is the only thing that will be able to satisfy the longing for the chimerical and the fictitious within Amory. The characteristic of religion that Darcy is emphasizing is the mystery that corresponds to Amory's growing imagination. Being a romantic entails being unsatisfied with the circumstances and knowing what *will* satisfy, and Amory only has the first part of this vision. As we have learned, hope requires both the desire for something more and the correct foundation of that hope. As the writer of Ecclesiastes wrote, "He has put eternity into man's heart" (Eccl. 3:11), which is the exact same as the "mystical element" within Amory. By the close of the book, Amory commits to the disposition of the romantic, having tapped into the mystical element within himself that it is not normal for a non-Christian to do, but he has not arrived at the proper object of his passion. The culmination of this knowledge is not Amory kneeling before the altar of some church and giving his life to the Lord, nor is the end of the book conclusive. He has not decided what he will do with his romantic tendency, but instead announces to the world the strange, chimerical longing that has become part of him: "He stretched his arms out to the crystalline, radiant sky. 'I know myself,' he cried, 'but that is all'" (*Paradise* 264).

The second example of romantic readiness from the fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald comes from his third novel, published in 1925: *The Great Gatsby*. I have chosen it because Fitzgerald shows a matured romantic readiness in the character of Jay Gatsby. Narrated by Nick Carraway, an outsider from the Midwest, the story gives "intimate revelations" on the life of the "wild, unknown" Gatsby (*Gatsby* 2). This novel, which would later nestle itself into the syllabus of many classrooms and the canon of great American literature, is the story of a man in his thirties

and the pursuit of “his count of enchanted objects”, the most notable of which is the married Daisy Buchanan, whom Gatsby had loved five years before the novel takes place. The central plot line of the narrative is Gatsby’s pursuit of her. As Gatsby’s romantic readiness matures, his morality decreases.³ The disorder of his vast hope which is directed at a human pushes him over the edge of what is considered moral action in most secular contexts. Nevertheless, the quality of Gatsby’s hope is admirable because it is a disposition. The first example of hope in *The Great Gatsby* is when Fitzgerald equates hope with romantic readiness:

If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the ‘creative temperament’— it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again (*Gatsby* 2).

As an author, Fitzgerald is usually fine with leaving readers confused, but he wants to make it clear that Gatsby is not some creature that can adapt to his circumstances or hide his disposition. Gatsby is *marked* by hope. This hope is a gift, originating externally to Gatsby though the narrator does not tell the reader who that external giver is. This hope is defined by Fitzgerald as a romantic readiness, specifically one which he has never before seen. It is rare because Gatsby’s hope is attentive to the “promises of life”. From the time Gatsby takes on the disposition of hope until the time he dies, his life is an unbroken pursuit of those promises, which is the only way hope should be dealt with. The danger in this is the uncertainty in the promises that *life* can provide. Yet Gatsby has committed himself to these promises. Instead of being versatile, faltering in his pursuits, or harboring a “creative temperament”, Gatsby has a disposition of hope,

³In light of these facts, I would ask the reader once more to divorce the *quality* of the passion (which is amiable because it exhibits romantic readiness) from the *object* of that passion (which is morally disordered because it is for a married woman). This must be done because I primarily want to point out the goodness of the passion that he has which few Christians have, and to secondarily point out that only the Christian could fully embody the virtue of hope because only the Christian knows the correct object of that hope.

meaning that he could not abandon it even if he had wanted to. To Fitzgerald, a disposition is a permanent thing, and Gatsby is the embodiment of that.

Gatsby is an early romantic in the same way as Amory Blaine. When Gatsby first meets Daisy, he is pleased and content with their relationship and would not change a thing, but soon has a desire for something more. Gatsby is not content with the current reality but he does not know what will fulfill him. The cardinal difference between Amory and Gatsby is that the latter tries to choose what will fulfill him even if he knows it will probably not. Just like Amory Blaine, Gatsby is discontent with the current reality because he has gone through a process in which he has given up pursuit of a temporary hope and instead obeyed his imagination and the unreal fantasies that come with it: to follow an arduous object of hope. We are given the story of the major transformation in his life: commitment to romantic readiness and the dedication to his imagination, dreams, and a greater reality which he sees in Daisy. Before the transformation, he focuses on self-improvement so he can be in a good position in life, and by doing so, lives a life in which he affirms his own actions. This lifestyle is in obvious conflict with his romantic imagination because self-improvement for his sake alone delineates self-reliance but his fantasies point towards something other than him. The first cognitive dissonance is seen in Gatsby's inner conflict between his imagination and his goals. The Gatsby before the transformation is caught in an inner conflict between his imagination and his goals:

But his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the wash-stand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace. For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing (*Gatsby* 98).

Gatsby's imagination plays a big part in his early life but all it assures him of is the fragility of the earth and the magnificence of that which his imagination is oriented towards. He has great potential for being a romantic but he does not know what to put his hope in until he has "committed himself to the following of a grail" (*Gatsby* 149). The grail turns out to be Daisy and his committal to her is the transformation. As he gets to know her, it becomes clear to him "just how extraordinary a 'nice' girl could be", and he makes the choice that his hope will no longer be affirmed by his own actions but instead by the "ripe mystery" of Daisy Fay (*Gatsby* 149). They stroll down the sidewalk under the light of the moon and soon come to a stop:

His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed like a flower and the incarnation was complete (*Gatsby* 110-111).

When Gatsby kissed Daisy on that autumn night of 1918, he forfeits any possibility of a "creative temperament" by committing to the disposition of romantic readiness, more specifically by joining his "unutterable visions" to Daisy herself. Gatsby forfeits his ability to "romp again like the mind of God" by kissing Daisy. This passage shows that narrator's view of the godlike ability is to feel utter satisfaction in the communion of one's being and with the reality that one creates with his actions; Gatsby gives up his these abilities by deciding that the appropriate object of his romantic readiness is Daisy. Gatsby soon leaves for war and is separated from Daisy for almost five years, all along wishing he was with her. His imagination, which he has already wedded to her, keeps adding to his illusion of Daisy until she is almost unreal.

The climax of the story, which is "a hairbreadth short of the precise numeric dead center of the novel" (Corrigan 162), is literally the midpoint of the book as well as the signal for a turning

point in Gatsby's mind. This scene is when Gatsby finally gets Nick to invite Daisy, who is Nick's cousin, over for tea. She arrives and Gatsby gives her a tour of his colossal, incoherent house. Before he leaves, Nick sees further signs of cognitive dissonance in Gatsby:

As I went over to say good-by I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness. Almost five years! There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams — not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart (*Gatsby* 95-96).

Gatsby is experiencing cognitive dissonance because he has already decided he will put his hope in Daisy but he has no idea that his "creative passion" will surpass the "perishable breath" that Daisy in fact is. In other words, the Daisy in Gatsby's imagination far surpasses who Daisy is and could ever be. Fitzgerald makes the bold claim here that there is no physical flair or novelty that can challenge the eternal imagination inherent in a man's heart. It is at this point that Gatsby first realizes that Daisy may not live up to his idealistic standards, but he does not give up; he cannot give up. He has already given up his God-like abilities that previously enabled him to switch his pursuits. He is devoted to her, even if he realizes there will be no fulfillment.

The second blow to Gatsby's romantic readiness is in a steamy and tense scene in the Plaza Hotel. Gatsby has been trying to get Daisy to say she never loved her husband, only Gatsby. Gatsby gives her a choice but she cannot make up her mind. Daisy's "maybe" on that muggy New York afternoon solidifies the fact that she is not a proper object of romantic readiness. Nick tells us that "He was clutching at some last hope and I couldn't bear to shake him free" (*Gatsby*, 148). Gatsby has been banking on the promises of life for years, but the closest he can get to a promise is a maybe. Gatsby has come to the full realization that Daisy will not satisfy him with a promise, but he cannot leave her. Since Fitzgerald thinks hope is a disposition, Gatsby cannot

simply stop hoping. Gatsby is in this position when he dies. Because he found eternity in his heart, he was in the position to hope more than the normal person, but since the object of his hope was perishable, he ended up forsaken. Gatsby's commitment to an inner romantic readiness is notable because the quality of his hope is substantial despite the fact that it is oriented towards an unworthy object.

III. Conclusion

Fitzgerald's fiction adds to our understanding of the Christian virtue of hope because it reveals that hope is a disposition that should be cultivated as well as showing readers that the longing for mystery and a love supreme is a Christian as well as a human longing. Christians know that Christ is the proper aim of their hope, but it is hard to direct it toward Him because of the futurity and arduousness of the object of our hope. For this reason, it is important to end with an ostensive example of the New Testament Christian living his life with a robust romantic readiness.

The Apostle Paul is the premier Christian example of what romantic readiness looks like, specifically when he writes to the Philippians in custody and generally in his life after conversion. His example demonstrates how the Christian can cultivate a romantic readiness. In the first chapter, he reflects on the possibility of his execution: ". . . it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:20-21). Paul believed in the divine promise of resurrection as a reality greater than the reality that he could see. This gives him an assurance that is grounded in God's higher existence and the reasonability of hope in Christ. He goes on to recognize that to die would actually be a gain to him because physical death means union with Christ. This instills joy within him so that

he can rejoice in the midst of a trial, revitalized by Christ so that he can hold onto the constant disposition hope. Finally, Paul lived outside of prison with the existential urgency that most Christians would only experience within prison. Paul is marked by the unchanging disposition of hope that is constantly reinvigorated because he did not need a limit experience, like the threat of torture and execution during imprisonment, to hold onto Christ with passion and devotion. Paul lived each day with the constant zeal of spreading the gospel to the gentiles but also with the “desire . . . to depart and be with Christ” (Phil. 1:23). Romantic readiness for the Christian is an unbroken series of actions that rely on being fully convinced that God is able to do what he promises and which is not enfeebled over the course of a lifetime.

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