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| [connections](#connections) | [communication](#communication) | [dad](#dad) | [mom](#mom) | [current](#current) |  |  |  |  |  |
| [Old camp baker](file:///C:\Users\aaron\Creating\Writing\Pieces\Family\Whitmer\Family%20Documents\Old_Camp_Baker.docx) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Current

07/15/2022

Don’t be so hard on yourself. One could say the same to you.

Mother muses that she hopes people take advantage of my father’s carpentry skills and learn from him before he dies.

The morning is heavy with rain. Incessant rain. Resigned car honk, laconic in the morning traffic parade. Accelerating engine. Buzzing combustion oven. The fan whirls above me bandying the breeze that rustles the linen curtain as it breaths into the room. It respirates into the dull atmosphere of the office. My two monitors at attention. My letter to you opened through my WhitmerHQ quickly and then a web browser snapped open to a JavaScript on-line challenge. My Suduku. The directions are a little convoluted, but they end up saying something like we are going to give you a number of steps and you have tio provide the calculation for a number reached by starting at zero and adding tree for each odd step and subtracting one for each even step. I solve this problem with this code

function boxSeq(step) {

let result = 0

let count = 0

while (count < step){

count % 2 === 0 ? result += 3 : result -= 1

count += 1

}

return result

}

[...Array(step)].reduce((acc, \_, i) => acc + (i % 2 ? -1 : 3), 0);

return step + (step % 2 \* 2)

return ((step + 1) >> 1) \* 3 - (step >> 1);

Adding a 7 to the end of all the chords in a list.

return arr.map( ele => ele[ele.length - 1] === '7' ? ele : ele + '7')

return arr.map(item=> item.endsWith("7") ? item : item+7)

Helena comes in and suggles up and I feel like I have a major breakthrough with the map function. J can write my own functions and pass them to the map function.

function jazzify(arr) {

return arr.map(concatSeven);

}

const concatSeven = str => {

const len = str.length - 1;

if(str[len] !== '7') {

str += '7';

}

return str;

}

return arr.map(x=> /7$/.test(x) ? x : x + '7')

The limits of the program are the program. Step tells us when to stop.

Programming against the in coming data.

Let’s practice attentive ease. Rested. Balanced. Connected(acupressure, tapping, awareness, mindful engagement. Extended (widen, lengthen, direction, prayer, lifting up), Release, Breath

Woke early. Stretching. Great stretching on porch. Through out day, standing, settling stretches. Light ball work. We thought you’d lost your mind. Very good.

Protocol – an agreed upon procedure.

Good rooting today.

Constructive restful rooting.

06/22/2022

Dear Mom and Dad,

Our trip to Gladstone coincided with June’s full moon. It was a Strawberry moon and rose full and copper-colored over the bay in the most stunning way, almost causing me to collide with a big buck as I biked along the dark stretch of road between Gladstone and Kipling returning from Casey Goodman’s after watching the Golden State Warriors wrap up their NBA championship over the Boston Celtics. The great moon rising, magnified so surprisingly large, hovering low on the horizon over the bay, seemingly shining brighter than even the scattered harbor lights on the other side of bay on the Kipling side of town, completely distracted me. Thankfully the buck was less enthralled by the moon and turned back towards the woods and away from the road instead of running right through me. I really didn’t notice him at all until the rustle of his quick stopping and turning momentarily broke the moon’s Strawberry spell.

We had such a lovely time at 625 Minneapolis Avenue. Swimming in the bay, swinging back and forth on the rope swing, having meals out on the deck, the girls scampering around the playroom and up and down the stairs playing extremely well together, somehow staying off each other’s nerves in a way that is sometimes hard for them to do at home. We had such a nice time, just hanging out and doing little outings around the area.

Helena and I took a wonderful perimeter run around the town, she in the baby jogger that has been serving our family well for nearly 4 decades now, and me in my sandals. We ran to the campground and then past the old clinic and the Pet Casket Factory, down main street past the Dairy Flo (which we ended up visiting twice while in town) then zigzagging along the neighborhood streets beside the highway and past the football field. I had the thought of doing a lap around the track pushing Helena I the jogging stroller, but then thought it best that I follow the posted rules about keeping vehicles off the track. We then raced down Minneapolis on the sidewalk that I’ve called “the rollercoaster” ever since I was a kid. I really played up the drops and dips or the uneven sidewalk and Helena in the baby jogger thought it was great, laughing and calling for more as we hustled along. I picked up the pace on the final leg towards home, past Jones, and the State police post and the pavilion, pushing Helena out away in front of me on the wide carless street and then chasing after her.

Another day I had a lovely solo beach run, mostly on grass from the house around the harbor and then on the beach past the skate park and the beach house, and then across the highway and up the old bluff road, returning down, the packed dirt cow path. It felt so good to run on the sand and the cow path trail and to jog continuously without the block by block stop and go intersections with their stop signs and streetlights.

We also had fun playing at the sports park and running up and down the bunny hill, and then checking out a few holes of the 27 hole disc golf course that stretches around back behind the baseball fields. I’d love to do a jogging round of all 27 holes someday, throwing discs and jogging after them all through the well maintained looking course. It seems like it would be a fun family activity with siblings and nieces and nephews and whoever else wanted to hustle through the 27 holes.

Seeing animals was certainly a highlight-- a bald eagle, chipmunks, deer, crayfish. Esme and I did some crayfishing ‘hunting’ at the Old Dutch Mill and it was really fun. We waded around in the gentle river on the limestone bedrock, attempting to catch crayfish with our improvised plastic oil filter and Starbucks cup implements. Helena napped in the car while Esme and I splashed after the darked crustaceans beside in the rapids running over the small waterfall until dusk began to come on and the mosquitos began to swarm us.

The Buckman's new puppy Gus was another highlight. This summer the girls have been getting a lot of puppy time as our downstairs neighbors recently brought home a very young black lab name Rainbow. Gus was so sweet and very game to romp around and play with the girls. He used Esme as a chew toy a little bit, but she didn’t mind at all, the stinging nips being well worth the joy of the puppy play.

On the way back to Chicago we stopped in a park in Marinette after picking up pasties from Colonel K’s, and picnicked with a flock of geese whose feathers were strewn all over the grassy lawn, an endless collection of quill shaped treasures for the girls to gather up after they’d eaten their half of a pizza pasty.

We also stopped in Port Washington, a bit north of Milwaukee, for ice cream and a shore stroll. The very quaint town was at the height of its summer liveliness and easy, relaxed fun. We passed two outdoor summer concerts one at a park at the bottom of the town’s bluff, a classical concert, and one at the top of the bluff, a classic rock concert.

We walked along the shoreline and scampered around on the craggy boulders of the breakwall, which the girls loved climbing on. Esme took off ahead while I stayed close to spot Helena as here three year old body maneuvered boulder to boulder. She really surprised me with dexterity and her good sense of what her long legs could and could not step across. If she thought she could make the distance between rocks she’d say cheerily “I’ll handle this one.” But if she felt like it was a bit of a stretch, she’d reach a hand back to me and say “You handle this one!” Then there was a wooden stairway with a few rest benches along the way up. Helena who had just blocks before back in town where we’d parked on main street, had been unable/unwilling to walk on her own, insisting that she needed to be carried now powered up the stairs without complaint.

We were rewarded for our climb with a lovely and colorful play structure at the top of the bluff. While the girls played I trotted down a mountain bike trail that took you down the bluff and back to main streets where we’d parked our car, to bring drive it back up to the park allowing the girls to play a bit longer before we got back on the road.

When we finally arrived home to our affectionate cat, it was a cool evening so we opened up the apartment and let the breeze in. Our living space is small and a bit closed in with the city all around, but it does still shine in the summer when it is cool and the breeze can slip in from all sides. The apartment was clean and clutter free from our pre-trip picking up and it was lovely to return to our ordered and settled and breezy living space.

Now it is an overcast Sunday nearly a month since we got back. We went to the beach last night for dinner, biking there and back. Returning home a bit later than we had planned as it was hard to leave our cool, relaxing beach encampment after a week of very hot and humid weather. The girls went to bed late, after bathing to get most of the sand off of them and they both went to sleep without complaint, very tired after a hot, active day. As is their wonderful habit when we do keep them up too late, both girls slept in and awoke in cheerful moods to the grey overcast morning.

Now Helena is playing with her Picasso blocks on the floor, making homes and schools and stores for her animal figurines, happily having them chat and sing to one another. Esme is in the kitchen working on the third chapter of her “Sparkles” book, a story about a cat and her kittens and their many adventures and misadventures. The day is quiet and calm and I am deeply appreciating my lovely girls and my lovely wife and the blissful normalcy of healthy, simple, “normal” family time together.

Here is hoping you are both are having a lovely “normal”, “uneventful” day as well. This coming week seems significant, as I will be really picking up the pace with my application processes. This journey has been incredibly challenging, humbling, centering, scattering, sort of like I have had to take myself apart and then put myself back together again. Ideally, I will soon have some movement on the job front, mentally freeing me up to make some last minute summer travel plans. We would really love to come up and see you guys in August and hopefully will. I feel like I am rounding some sort of inchoate corner here, though will not feel completely at ease until it is rounded and I am beginning to actually get some applications filed and land some promising interviews.

At any rate, thank you both so much for the use of your lovely, clean and ordered home, we had such a nice time as a family. There is a magic to being out and away from your own space, leaving behind the drag of certain patterns and put off tasks. You two have built and maintained such a great space both inside and out, certainly a testament to your hard work and diligence and settled living. You have made a wonderful life and your willingness to share it is a beautiful thing.

Much love to both of you and we all look forward to seeing you soon.

06/02/2022 Are my parents locked into an echo chamber isolated from rational debate?

06/06/2022

Spoke with parents for about an hour yesterday

* Mother’s self-deprecating violin study. But she loves it. But she’s a very uncoordinated person. Playing songs with childish names like “The Puppet” and something..
* Neither of them ask anything about Helena.
* Mom lectures on the baby soothing techniques of the eras. Makes broad statements about how when they were having children they followed the marsupial technique.
* Happily airs here anxieties about inconveniencing people when they visit Charlbury. Sarah has a hard time relaxing. Bernard and his wife will be busy looking after grandkids. They don’t really have concrete plans.
* The only follow up that I get when I share that I am hopeful to get some interviews soon is that we’ll be praying for you.
* One pointed joke about “foot coffins” with dad gets a who biography on the one guy he knows the runs barefoot
  + This guy is tall. Maybe like 220. He lost weight before by cutting our bread and beer. Only drinking wine and got down to like 180. Is that right? He’s from California, moved back to the area to take care of his mother. She died a few years back. He has two daughters in California. He’s a big fan of barefoot running. Ran the whole Hunger run barefoot, no not the hunger run, the Firecracker.
* The details come fast and furious. Maybe correct, maybe not. This is openness. This is sharing.
* Again, again they ask very few questions and inundate with information. Less of a conversation and more of an info dump, complete with personal commentary.
* Dad needs to ask what kind of pace I am running. He’s done some two mile time trials and has gone sub 7 minute pace. I have such a different running project. Trying to get fit and toned and tamp down on extra weight. Build up endurance for sitting and working at a computer.
* People in this touch relationships
  + Laura and Beaux – sexless and snippy. Economic issues now exacerbating their personal connection. The blame game. TV holding them together, their main shared interest.
  + My parents – mother the dominating intellectual force. My father the technocratic manager and the gopher, builder, doer. Both often run themselves down. They could afford to hire people to get some of this stuff down. But they don’t instead they “pick a bushel” of dandelions and make excuses why they have knee pain
  + Trisha and Dan – do all careerist and homebody schlub. Both seeming to suffer in their own ways. Trisha from ideological conscientiousness, Dan from the purity of his nihilist pessimism. Dan half heartedly feeling like he should be working, but seemingly blind to all of the ways that he could be supporting his wife. They interface by playing unpracticed covers of patriotic songs on Memorial day—clarinet and piano.
  + Jinn and Dave – careerist artists in their deep world’s of pain. Ripping into each other and ripping each other up in their genteel poverty. Their learned piety. Nihilistically shitting in one another’s mouth.

Dear Mom and Dad,

* Health
  + Stretching-- alexander, qigong, slow stretching (static stretching), constructive rest.
  + Vegetarian diet with fermented foods
* Tech specifics
  + Ruby
  + App -- writing in a language(s) Ruby, HTML, CSS, various DSL
    - CRUD (create and store (databases)), read, update, destroy/delete
    - TDD (Test Drive Development)-- RSpec -- writing tests to test your code before you write it-- this leads to emergent design. You don’t have to know what the whole thing needs to look like you just have to start building functionality in a principled way-- meaning that there are a bunch of design principles that can lead you along the way to build good applications. These principles have gone from strange abstract concepts to internalized, applicable knowledge. I am learning how to build software!!
    - Git -- version control system -- takes snap shots of your project for more secure, trackable, resettable development, as well as being a tool allowing you to collaborate with other people on coding projects
    - OpenSource software community is very robust
    - The biggest corporations have invested heavily in this sector
  + Routing component that connects App to Web - browser
  + Sinatra -- Ruby on Rails
* This process has seemed extremely slow at times, but as I hit new milesstones and have had more and more pennies drop and I have consolidated my skills and built up my own codebase I have been able to maintain a dogged confidence that this kind of ridiculously drastic transition will be possible.
* The introducing diamond terminology-- the 4 cs’ svia an introduction to some basic data structure concepts.

A lot of my tech journey has been about building knowledge and wherewithal for overcoming my “digital dislocation”. Like yourselves, not being a digital native, I feel like I entered adulthood both tempermentally and technically ill-equipped to deal with computers. Hearing about your frustrations and trials with the medical records transition stood out as just another example here -- whose working for whom?

It is the day after betsy’s 40th birthday and I find myself back on a Courier New kick (a phase or period that I have periodically phased in and out of over the years). I must be happy.

And thus, the font flows from my faux typewriter. Actually, just next to me and below on the table there is an honest to Joseph typewriter. It is a beautiful machine. Though very unforgiving.

I write “below me” because I am writing above the typewriter at my standing desk. A workspace cobbled together on the workroom table from drawers we removed to have a dishwasher installed. Do you know about these new-fangled dishwashing machines? They wash the dishes for you? We’re back in the middle-class, baby! We are really liking our dishwasher. And this standing desk has been just the thing to support my hours of study. My back and neck which had been the worst they’d ever been, are much, much improved! Thus, the Courier New.

Just then I look down to my left and Helen is standing there next to me on this rickety old office swivel chair, she is doing her adorable babble-sing-coo, and I scoop her up before she topples down. She is still pajamaed in yellow ducks and is relaxed and happy and energetic as she almost always is in the morning.

Way more than the dishwasher and standing desk, the wellspring of my joy is the suddenly cobbled together time and wherewithal to be home with my girls while at the same time concretely moving ahead towards an honest to Joseph vocation!

There’s a harmony in there somewhere and its humming pretty good.

I’ve started to work on my old dusty “Clockwinders” novel. I still have a good chuck of it that I never even transcribed from my notebook into my laptop. The transcribing has been a nice way to start dipping back into it.

Your new back yard looks fantastic! A yard is something I can now officially never live without. Our sheltering in place has been make so much more doable by the existence of our lovely garden. Esme, especially has benefited from having her very own secret garden to play and plant and shelter in.

July is running on ahead. These last few days feel significant to me. The next week and then through mid-August I will be making my major Javascript push. CSS and HTML have been going really well! A ton more to learn, but I at least feel like I have a good idea of what I’m working with and where to find the answers to the questions that will pop up.

My main programming project has been this evolving locally hosted website linking together all of the learning resources. It has been a pretty perfect way to immediately apply what I have been learning with CSS and HTML. The possibilities really take off once you throw JS into the mix, so I am really excited to level up in that regard. I am also excited/nervous to really dig into a language with my Ruby base under me. I have high expectations that it will be an easier, smoother experience getting deeper into Javascript and a good test of where I am at in my Developer development. The main thing that I have to keep reminding myself and that does in the moment provide a modicum of solace is that I am fully committed to this career trajectory. I am committed to it until I crash and burn. I don’t plan on crashing and burning, but its nice to be playing for some real stakes. I have chosen a career path and now I have to work my ass off to get into it.

The solace here comes from I actually want to get into this industry. Where exactly, I don’t know, but I feel like that is part of the beauty. The stars have aligned. The training is all there for the taking, basically at zero cost. I have had the interest into diving deeper into the subject for some time he rest of this month feels very significant.

Now is it Saturday morning. The weekend.Good morning. Hope your weekend is unfolding well. Weekend?

We’ve just planted a flag in Sunday. Starting last Sunday, Sunday has become outing morning.

Last Sunday found us at LaBagh woods, a forest preserve in the northwest of the city. It’s a lovely swathe of woods

that abuts the mighty flow interstates 90 and 94.

We watched the dear from the lowlight of the forest

There is coffee in my cup and I am at my standing desk near an open window. Chicago, Chicago, always Chicago, great winging archs to China, swinging archs to China and back to Chicago, Chicago, always Chicago. Nelson Algren documentary dreamily watched from my hole deep inside the couch.

HTML, CSS, Ruby, Ruby-on-Rails, RSpec, Rack, Sinatra, Angular, Agile, PHP and Laravel, C#, .Net, C, C++, Python, JavaScript, JQuery, JSON, AJAX, React, Node.js, MEAN, Mongo DB, SQL, MySQL, REST, APIs, deployment, frontend, backend, frameworks, interfaces, WebSocket, Mobile first, etc, etc, etc,… I love it and want to learn it all and will be doing so for next six months at least.

And in the Semantic UI the U and I the Material Design that we have Bootstraped our way into the light of the HTML and CSS arranged screen and the Javascript takes flight, whispering with JQuery in the middle of the night.

Trying and hacking and calling and striving to find the letter in the heap. There always has to be a heap first. Perhaps the heap is just kept inside, but the heap is always there and it shouldn’t be slighted. It shouldn’t be resented or hated and avoided or punished… for the heap is reality. Reality. Blinding, bewildering reality. And here we have the wherewithal to admit that we have been overcome. We have been overrun and overcome and thrown into the river and washed down among the reeds to the accompaniment of pan flutes and drums.

Drilling down, down, down… getting down the correct place. Settling, settling in, the ocean depths. Blue ocean grey ocean, spectrum of blue on the surface of the water and the surface of the sky with night coming on, the firefly swarm of streetlights come out in dusk. Sand on my feet, legs, arms, sand I our living space again, Sand on the landing.

The Process. The yellow notebooks. Interminable. Just like serenity.

The question of agency is an important one. Its convicting. Especially in the realm of the creative. What is creativity? What is the agency there? Act of will! Submission to a process/apprenticeship. Mouthpiece for some hungry ideology that will not be struck dumb. Chasing a market. Let’s not forget Graphomania (aka Scribomania), just straight up compulsive writing. What’s the agency there? Thankfully, this form of mania typically produces writing that is illegible, or obviously manically repetitive and nonsensical. With all the writing I have been doing for decades and the constant loop of questioning why I am doing the writing, I had to go down the Graphomania route, just to see, make sure the pathology wasn’t part of my writing equation.

There are good compulsions and there are bad complulsions. How to decipher? There is a place in the world for everyone? How do you find yours and occupy it without being an asshole.

It makes me want to break down what my own intention is. Life lives on death. Everybody’s got to eat. The snake king is all mouth and belly. The snake king with his belly trailing behind comes out to engage us.

Root. Connect. Extend

Then my sa

Cleaning out the craft cart…

Sunday afternoon in the sun under the puffy white clouds.

Byt the river, the paving blocks, some trails, races, darting,

Thank for the Christmas basket and the cinnamon bread and for the check.

Canned beets from Dan and Deb. Canned beets from Jane and Greg.

Our hearts together beaten, now together beat.

Forever where we come together we shall overcome.

This hope is our door, our portal.

Be bold sang time.

Recovery can produce extraordinary people. John Kerry, John McCain, Joe Biden all endured really, really tough emotional and physical wounds. But seemingly rose above these tragies and had incredible successful, public lives.

This isolation is a gift if you can truly use it as a means to consolidate and settle-- get out of you rold habits and patterns, trajectories. The way you live your life is just the way you live your days.

Doubt server.

Doubt sewer.

An expert without facts. An expert with wishes and concerns, but also no broad-based evidence. Abusive language in a way that is inconvenient to confront in private, but words that would se confusion-- borrowing meaning from other words, deployed in a way to have the meaning express something othethanhn the original meaning, but with a challenging confidence -- prove my life, prove my obfuscation.

And her tone and words are patronizing. She knows and understand, but has no concrete alternative route-- she has maybe’s and mights, but deploys them rabidly brandishing her shit storm with her professional and familial credentials. She disregards the fact that her position is radical and marginalized -- or struts from this extreme position with pride. Proof of her rightness. The capital insurrection and her getting shot down at the medical conference fro bringing up the fake that latex is a type one carcenegin, but nody wants to talk about taking condums out of the equation of limiting the number of humans being born.

Her political leader has lead her to this frothy state and then abandoned her. Walking back statements. Distancing. Reframing. Respecting the rage, but framing it as patriotism instead of treachery.

But for the Grace of God I might have been arrested in the capital that day.

There is hubris on all sides. How do you respond to hubris though? With more hubris? With patience?

I’ve been stripped to my bones and now I move from this lower, more consolidated place.

Answer with effort.

Answer with discipline.

5/17/2022

In the morning I thought about my father and his kvetching about the 75 moh speed limit in Michigan and his obsessive gas milage tracking in the small spiral notebook he kept in the glove compartment. I thought about his old movies and his openness to well produces culture. Jewish moveie star Juewiwsh proues and directors entertaining the midwestern Caholics in the sticks after thire halp a dizen childn had fle the couty. Kvetchibn aout his best friend for being old and out of shape , soft of glossing ove th fact that this 65 yar old freidn ust ran a 25 kilometer frace and I se the humorm dude gets dehydratetwed because he deons’t want to drink the warm water, and then chugs two wheat beers at the end of the reace and ends up puking his guts out. And ts ah Kevin what a joke, hat a moron, and there is nothing extremely mean abot any of this except for this is such a fucking pattern, my dad has one friend and the narrratives arou dhim are all negative….hye’s overweight… he’s adicte to Pepso…he’s terrible with money.. he lives in porr circumstances… he is a porr planner… If you name it you are couple to it.. also, don’t be a Kevih… It is you. It is part of you, it is your screen, filter the judging, the mocking, Annette dissing uncle Kevin’s wineand implhying some weird relationship with his bguddy in Colorado Springs, these the tiding s and the message the reeawre for having hoster her hat messages wil she carry corth from our afternoon togrther and me losing my mind ti fund yh biy attempting t0 chose judiciously from out overs-stuffed buffet of culture. Am U saying it right, I’,m nit saying it right, but at least, I’ saying it, at least I’m talking, trying to talk, to say, to couple

5/16/2022

Ditching about the 75 mph speed limit because its just a tax grab because people drive fast and it kills their fuel efficiency… why do people track their milaegage?

My father raking the yar, getting his steps, on feet at meet al day. 50th anniversary. His kee issues, unrelated to his running my physichain mother diagnosis.

Mother is having stomach issues. Skipped a party because she felt like she was going to be sick.,

Practicing a lot of violin. Hours of practice.

Let’s just accept that its going to be hard arou d you r parents. Just acccpet that. Overcoming triumphalism. Breathing. Active. Medittion. Absorbing other people’s mental health. Improv games. Now!! Life begins now!!. Live for we just a little bit more each day. Charades. Drawing.

5/12/2022

Most people are a little mentally unstable. Manic parents. Over caffeinated protestant work ethic funneled into ultra conservative Catholicism and nativist, no-nothing politics. Parents who provided materially, but culturellay failed the shit out of us, thus not suppliying us wth a corrected class pattern to reflect their actual income, insuring that none of their children would achieve their level of affluence.

My father was extravagantly competent at low wage trad tasks and spent his time mastering the work typically reserved for slaves or union members.**Waking up to read about the NBA and then checking CNN, NPR, and the BBC, reading the Economist, the Atlantic, coccationslaly didpping into Fox News show content, moved by some morbid curiosity.**

**My dad a wiki on old movites ahtat he has seen recently. Barabara Streisand stared in Yntel and my parents loved it. Amy Oliver was very good, and it was sort of an Amy oliver double feature because they also watched Blah blah and she used to be married to Stephen Spielber. I m interested in Charlie Kaufman—Being Joh Malkovich, Adaptation, Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind, Anomolisa, Sydecho, Ny. And Philip Seymore Kaufman where di your deep, deep soul weariness come from… drugs partially? Hungering for drugs? Which is a real hunger, not a necessary one, but certainlay a real one. I need to get a semen analysis soon.**

**The doctors live in Ada, the nurses live in Rockfor. You think this is funny and you do your sort of snearing laught, like we’re an Ada family obviously, your brother lives there, your sister lives there, why did your other brother put an offer in an on house in Rockfor I do not know what he was thinking.**

03/24/2022

Journey -- as family safe word. Glad to have you both along for the journey.

It is okay to abstract-- if you refer to it, you depend on it- family kvetching, cultural kvetching.

My family while in general quite poor at communication, excels at getting me the message that I need to bend my knee before God, until I do that the well… we are going to keep reminding you that you are living in vain.

It’s hard to take this claim of invain living from someone so vain.

Of course my bizarre and uneven career track wasn’t a result of poor parenting. It’s a spiritual crisis brought on by my having left the fold. Despite the fact that we are all-- in and out of the fold in similar states of transition and crisis.

Authentic peace only exists in Christ.

It pains me that I get more Church speak and evangelism than actual updates of my family that I supposedly so close to.

Kneel before good, knee before me.

Kneel before my conclusions.

My read on life.

My unified narrative of existence.

Dedication to a God is so much more than a belief. It is a practice.

Bow before my concluded narrative of your existence.

God is an explicity named abstraction of the all.

Explicitly naming the unifying principle of life allows us to abstract a lot of things and get on with our contributions to the community.

Dear Mom and Dad,

**Dad**

06/25/2022

My father is a very political person and extremely partisan.

we expect exposure to extreme opposing opinions to worsen how people feel (i.e. more anxious and less happy) and to increase behaviors induced by anxiety (i.e. consuming alcohol and/or junk food) or anger (i.e., getting into arguments or wanting to hit someone):

Just repeating the hit parade from the right wing grape vine.

Them, those people, the Radical left, Communists, They hate your history. They hate your traditions.

Thank God for great American’s like Tucker Carlson… oh and by the way fuck liberals.

Tit for tat politicking without a relational bedrock isn’t good for anyone.

Tit for tat evangelizing without a relational bedrock isn’t good for anyone.

We can’t even teach each other can we?

**06/01/2022**

I do have opinions. betsy and I chat on the porch last night and I feel relaxed and like I have settled opinions. Everything isn’t trying to com out at once. Everything isn’t demanding synthesis. Things simply are as they are, I feel solid and pragmatic.

Ended the month of running strong with three consecutive days of 6 mile efforts in the heat.

**3/07/2022**

See the deal is this -- you maintain correct political positions, and stay the fuck up on your religious cant.

My father doesn’t know me, that shouldn’t make me mad. Be a good friend. Dispose of your waste correctly.

3/2/2022

Gladstone is 16 degrees and snowing to begin the month. Overdrive went out in Dad’s truck. Torque motor. The light comes on if you go over 60.

A finch, a sparrow, a grousebeak.

Why weren’t they pushing vitamin D.

My father runs through his recent running workouts. Humble bragging his way through a couple of solid splits. When it is cold his body doesn’t want to go. He tells me again about going a minute and a half faster.

He brings up how he had Covid when he was coaching and how he just coached through it. They would have had to shut the whole program down otherwise. Be kind. Ask questions. Be patient. Listen.

12/22/2021

Father’s not impressed with these windmills. He says -- no one is talking about planting trees in the Amazon. What’s up with that?

Mom and Dad visited the 17th until the 19th. Arrive on a Friday. Settled in. Biked to McPherson-- Dad onna Divvy and Mom on the back of the Xtracycle. Esme loved it-- riding back from school with Mema on the back of the bike. At school one of Esme’s classmates mom’s greeted us in a Santa suit.Mom was nervous on the back of the bike and make incessant suggestions -- how many times must I say I am “Okay”. She just can’t relinguish control-- she’s not in control at all, but her words are demanding attention. Putting the attention on her, controlling attention to the detriment of the moment.

The next morning I bike Esme to basketball. She practices her pump fakes. Her rebounding. A little kid named Marcel in her glass really has handles!

We hang out in Lincoln Square and visit Timeless Toys and I am impatience and anxious. Can’t get a flow with making plans. A lot of different concerns and a couple of different timelines. I want to be relaxed and flexible, but I feel uptight and tense and anxious.

Dad and I go over to Gene’s and have a kind of frustrating situation with a 4 pack of out of code Beck’s that the cashier won’t sell to us for the out of code sale price despite the fact that I have a picture of the display. He seems unempowered and annoyed. And I kind of get his point -- at the height of the holiday season he could car less as a cashier if his shop misses out on a sale of out of code beer. He could get a manager or he can’t and honestly I really don’t care. I don’t feel like expending any fight or complaint over this 4 pack. In fact I would be quite content to be with my child and my father back out on the street and out of the grocery store. So I return the item upstairs unbought and we leave. My dad returns later and finds a manger and gets two 4 packs. He feels very accomplished by this. In and of itself it doesn’t mean a thing, but it has a whiff of my dad’s manic savings streak. As opposed to the more go with the flow-- be smart, but ultimately it is what it is mentality. Whereas my dad has this never say die mentality of we will get a better deal and we will make this work even if it means making more work for us or causing a little scene or whatever. My sense of flow is amorphous, but I think super important to my sense of wellbeing.

My dad obsessing opver this -- the previous night he was upset about the price of half liter not being exactly 50% the cost of the full liter option. We popped out for a quick drink. A full liter doesn’t feel like a quick drink. I am trying to be considerate of my mother and my wife and my daughters. I can tell this annoys him. I am in can do, let’s do, let’s just get the beer ordered and stop over analyzing the price. We don’t need a full liter. We don’t have time for the full liter. So we pay the “premium” and get the half liter and the whole flow of the evening is going to go better. I feel tired having to defend my flow and explain my flow to my father because it is crystal fucking clear in my mind and I can’t understand why he doesn’t just see it from my perspective. We are obsessing about parallel, but non-overlapping concerns. Which can make interaction and engagement tricky sometimes, but ultimately this disconnect, this rutting if you will, is what makes our complex and specialized country so fucking brilliant and diverse and robust.

In the toy store there is a Disney product that reads and sings songs to kids and that allows people to record stories and songs for children.

What is your approach?

11/24/2021

Makes you wonder what is going on with COVID? My father thinking there is a satanic conspiracy against his way of life, proven by the existence of abortion and atheist liberals and black criminals.

He also believes our country is a force for good in the world and has a proud history and a strong sense of traditional family values free pf divorce and teenage sex and pregnancy …

And somehow this devloles into him being a gloomy conspiratorial cuss, overwhelmed by his 19 grandchildren and 6 chilren, whitout the wherewithal to be present or really connect with them, all he is left with is his cantr and sound bites.

You shouldn’t fear the night and liberals with such a pants piss reaction.

Tried to explain my tool a little bit. The tool that I am developing to help me learn other tools so that I can build a better tool.

Tech literacy has been my single biggest skill development. I have such a better grasp of what tools are available. As well as how to access and use them. Being able to connect to the world of open source software has been a life changing revelation.

Cumulative learning that deepens understanding and improves problem solving, organization, and ease of access.

Vocational direction

Surveyor, nursing home administrator, prison guard, substitute teacher and track coach, doctor, dentist, occupational therapist, nurse, physical therapist, psychologist, university professor,

11/14/2021

Dad is a doer-- kinetic

Good manages manage stress well. They absorb some things. Stop the buck, insulate team so they can focus on their jobs and be as effective and unencumbered as possible. Much like a parent-- acting as a firewall of stress and concerns for the child, allowing the child to flourish and enjoy themselves.

11/02/2021

Spoke with dad and he told me about the funeral he went to at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Erie, Ohio?

1964 little boy who had suffered brain damad from menighitis escaped from a line in the yard and drown in Lake Erie just before his 4th birthday.

Mary Perry’s brother was quite the carpenter-- built the cabins

The Whipples, The Winkleman’s, and the Whitmers

Grandpa Whitmer married a Schmidtz. German Catholics.

Schmidz farm… lost history. Debbie took a brick from the old house.

Dad pulled up a bunch of sod in the yard at home. Legs feeling tired.

Heading to Ann Arbor on Saturday to see Emily and Ben and Beth and Adam and all the kids.

Dan Paul gave him a bunch of whisky 275mil -- 750ml. Euchre and bourbon.

09/13/2021

The squirrels and chipmunks are busy-- the vibrancy of the yard-- the grass -- the wind in the leaves, the trellis with grapes, the bees busily going about their good work.

9/12/2021

My 65 year-old father not getting vaccinated and then contacting Covid not once by twice. The first time he took 12 days off from running. And the second time he took 2 days off. The first time was during track season and in lieu of shutting the program down he (in his mind) soldiered on. The second time was during cross county season and by then he knew the drill.

Thank God for great Americans like Tucker Carlson. My parents did it the right way-- big Catholic family,

6/26/2021 8:18 AM

Running after dad. Feeling like our only strong interface was running. His passion. I could run after him trying to get his attention by engaging in his overriding passion, or I could accept a great silence. Good natured encouragement to explore “accessible” Christian texts, which is fine within the framework of a larger relationship, but what is that relationship.

He’s offering me suggestions about tv shows. I am not watching TV really at all. Not even the NBA playoffs, not even streamed through the projector with the girls down and betsy up for having sex if I just give her a little attention. Something has collapsed in me dad. I am through the looking glass. I am lost in this process. I have achieved everything that I have ever wanted. I am writing and I have a bunch of different writing projects going on and it all feels very expansive and like my life is unfolding—though I must admit I have bouts of doubt where I wonder is this really all just a manic tail chasing exercise. Rabbit holes descended into do not guarantee a pleasant journey, nor a full return. I am working hard and I am working in a way that feels good to me, that feels nourishing. That feels sustainable. I am drawn to this work by an inexplicable, unnameable longing for language. To snatch it from the air. To follow it up through the ether through my own mind and through the minds of others through books and texts and other longer and shorter forms of thought.   
 How does one fully engage with life without becoming a sort of wild maniac, unhinged and isolated from everything they strive for. Handfuls of sand my only hot reminder. This though had against the backdrop of my OPPORTUNITY COST thought. What is the opportunity cost to do what you want to do in this life, sure, what do you give up not doing, but also, how much time and energy do you have to put in just to get the opportunity to do your good work, your necessary work, your nourishing, fulfilling, life sustaining, life completing, mature and generous acts of humane contribution.

Writing has its own sort of COSTS. Extracts its own sort of price. I am still trying to figure out what that is. How do you take on the distractions and challenges to your writing and coding? Do you get angry? Do you find some secret emotional reserve to express an emotional truth you hardly feel because you are tryng to maintain so many different states. Exist on so many different plans. What you are reading. Going there. What you are writing. Memories. Poetic revelries. Rhapsodizing on all the inchoate particles of our souls. Losing myself in there somewhere. Boiling down. Simmering still my roiling stew.

06/19/2021

Dad runs and out and back 5 K. He does 6:51 on the way out. 7:02 for the middle mile and 6:40 on the return of the first mile. This is 21 min pace for a 5K.The Athletic MHSA website is greate. You can easily print out stuff.

Saw Kennedy’s grave. And the grave of Oliver Wendell Holmes who had a house just up on the hill from the National Cemetery.

Emily tripped on a root while running in England and hurt her knee.

Has been watching the Chosen which depicts the time of Christ. He is trying to sell me on it without it feeling like he is trying to sell me on it, but it still feels like he is trying to sell me on it.

It’s just really different. And the music is really neat. You don’t even see Crist until the end of the first series. It’s protestant produced, but the sisters really like it. It was mostly filmed in Idaho. Fish swimming in a circle, then one turns against the tide. IT’s kin dof interesting to watch. You’re not sure what to make of it at first. Nothing like any other Jesus show. Very realistic.

The golden oats are ready to be harvested-- they are not high like wheat.

Ultrasound, microtrauma, damaged, healed, but not as elastic.

06/06/2021

His father walks out by the road on the phone and starts chatting with some people that are walking by. He is checking out their new baby as I hang out on the phone waiting, listening to the muffled, unhurried dialogue on the other side of the line.

I feel unseen. Unregarded. People are supremely uncurious about my being.

Material begets material.

Aaron’s Beard grows on and on.

04/12//2021

I am upset that you can’t accept that I am not a Roman Catholic or a Liberal. I think I was sent to easth to be the non-Catholic, liberal in your life-- I sure hope not because I tie very little of my self identity to my non-Catholic or my liberal status-- this ideologoical combination seems to afford me a lot more space breathing, thinking and living, I have attempted in my life to follow my intuition and my interests and my opportunities.

That love gets run over and sleep deprived and taken for granted.

Prolific producer of polished prose.

We have attempted to get along in life without tbeing “Owned” by a career, I not stating that this has been our intention, but we both value our independence and our ability to organize our own days. We are committed to the work at had,but have made a concerted effort to keep our life lowkey, relatively uncluttered, rhythmic, steady. Betsy has been the rock of this. The endless dinners. Shopping. Out of something. How Hans has done this for his family of 9 and Beth has done this for her family of 8 and how dad did this for our family of 8 is truly astounding. It is some strange cross between a management challenge and an athletic feet.

I do love writing and have the ambition of being a prolific producer of polished prose.

06/06/2021

I feel like I made a good faith effort to understand the faith and to live in the faith and then painfully, honestly with conviction, I left the church. Thank you for sharing your faith with me, but you are right, words do get in the way, they will always separate and divide. The same words will ring differently depending on the ear. The define and redefine themselves. Life a gulf stream proceeding-- a mass of meaning formed in the mold of spirt and humanity and the earth itself -- stone grinding age by age on stone.

What are the fundamental rhetorical issues at play here? I believe deeply in language and its potential to unlock of vocational path, help me come to peace with my past and articulate the green light. I am all in on language. That said, I am certainly not trying to out-knowledge anyone. If anything I am seeking to lose myself in the totality of being.

The truth is something to be conquered?

The truth is something to be negotiated?

How do we approach these wounds with kindness and respect. How can we slip behind language or around it, and commune together in meaning creation. We have to create the meaning for the words.

We have to build the meaning together

Speaker CONSIOUSNES receiver

A tree falls in a wood-- does it make a sound?

You express your truth -- is it a truth expression of truth if no one is there to receive it, or no one who can actually understand it and take it to head and heart is present.

Thus -- all of this truth is contingent on present. The gift of attention. Perhaps just happenstance.

Get behind language, get beyond language. A Zen koan to catalyze 4thought, feeling, sense, practice.

Be careful not to cast your pearls like you were dropping cheap shots.

You are a persistent salesperson who has worn out my patience.

The sale yramid is all about buidlignthe relationship. If you ask for the sale the whole fucking time it doesn’t feel like a relationship, it feels like a transaction.

Call me simple or naïve, but I believe in the possibility and the reality of a pluralistic society where differences are negotiated with civility and mutual respect.

Human belief -- religion -- a life organizing philosophy. What we believe and how we live are often fascinating contradictions.

Mother’s KPI -- the binary description of my relationship with the Catholic Church. 1 for saved. 3 for the devil. Originally here purity test had been aligned with the Evangelical Covenant Church, but they proved to be too liberal and fly-by-night, so they switched their allegiances and rhetoric and financial backing.

Meaning is a creative endeavor. But you don’t seem to believe that, even as you furtively engage in it.

On a civic level you seem to appreciate the importance of checks and balances. This is the heart of our systems ability to evolve and change and respond to the politics of the day. A reality that is always in flux -- economy, technology, social structures, immigration, institutions.

I am trying to put all of these hyperobjects aside and jut approach you as an individual. I am trying to focus in on our relationship. How we treat each other. How we talk to each other. How we approach each other. I was trying to express to you that your approach didn’t feel good to me. It made me feel bad and I was trying to talk through why so that I didn’t just receive the text and then feel bad about it and misunderstood and blamed and more than anything just not close and just distant and that distance is either because one or both of us had given up, so I decided to not give up. To make an effort. I tried to unpack for you and explain what had struck me so sour about your text and why I was so sensitive to it and I tried to talk it through with you because I was feeling open to you and feeling like I might be able to make myself understood. Connect.

But you just doubled down and refused to recognize the snideness in the uneasy breeziness with which you seemingly had to sneak the last evangelizing word. Christen the conversation. Santify it or something.

She campaigned that the family had so much to offer. So much love and vibrancy and economic support. She didn’t get how conditional this all way. How he was pushed out of it with repeated messages that he was ultimately arrogant and willful and ignorant and self-excluding, and even really lack a real spirit of inquiry. Until he had a change of heat he wouldn’t understand the Deep Spiritual Truth they were offering.

She was dismayed that we couldn’t discuss the Penetcost. I was dismayed that she would evangelize to me with such a transparent barb and then wrap herself up in her absolutist position-- our relationship a zero sum game in which she was playing for high stakes and I was trying to beg off with the wager. I suppose I had made my bet. We both had. I was just tired of talking about it.

Language would always get in the way until I yielded to the Holy spirit and invited His guidance into my life.

It’s easy. Just pray this prayer. Come forward for the altar call (the alter call). Go on, rededicate your life to Him.

Maybe I felt like I needed to respond, because I sensed your judgement under your “encouraging words”. The breeziness in which you evoke the Holy Spirit like he’s your own fucking minion or something. It felt unfair. Ungenerous.

You essentially framed my vocational struggle as a willful refusal to follow the will of the holy spirit. Implying that I was not on the right path and that any frustration and hardship I was experiencing was being brought upon myself by myself and my willfulness.

May I name your god for you? May I prepare a god shaped vessel for you? Fill it with your essence.

We must learn the shape of practice.

Practice is the shape of life.

God is the shape of life.

Their religious interface was broken. What was left? Music? Gardening? The family? Gladstone? Newberry? The U.P. the extended family? Her life? Her hobbies, her thoughts and hopes and dreams. What is shaping our the healthy rhythms of her life.

Some folks make their life project all about dividing the world in two. I’ve endeavored to bust it up into a million pieces to force myself to regard it all as one.

What was the 12th century awakening?

Savage superstition

Civilized Enlightenment

Certain spiritual diseases had been expelled from the system.

* Ear of asceticism
* Christianity entered the world to cure the world (software “patch” / “update”
* Mistake of being natural -- leading to nature worship.

Where is the witness-- where is the testimony of what God has done in your life -- where is the good culture and the closesness and the bonding? You pour your heart out and then you destroy it and send me cant instead with the addendum that I can’t possibly understand until I change my heart and have a spirit of sincere inquiry. The fact that I looked at the same TEXTS and came to a different conclusion drives you fucking up the wall.

Why do you need all the truth? Are you greedy?

06/02/2021

You don’t accept my baseline. My right to exist outside of the church. You have committed to making a big part of our relationship about me NOT being in the church and that is hurtful in the same way that my making your NOT being a vegetarian or NOT being a democrat or NOT living in a large city would be hurtful. As a relatively liberal, non-religious person I am unacceptable to you. I am not looking to disabuse you of your beliefs.

What I am trying to do is see how I can mitigate a lot of the corrosive aspects of our culture while at the same time leveraging its bounty and vitality and upon that cresting wave build a life, work a vocation, partner well with my beloved wife, raise my bright, beautiful, challenging, demanding girls. Be a human not driven by reaction and fear, but one that drives from a sense of creativity and fun and play and engagement. Allowing myself to be. To really root down and feel where I am. To be extremely joyful and proud about it. To have a sense of accomplishment about it. You like what you are doing and you like who you are doing it with.

I am tired of our contentious relationship. I am tired of your contentious relationship with my father. You talk incessantly about forgiveness and then you constantly dreg up the past-- all the men controlling your life, your remote father. How much do I analyze and criticize you to my children. I don’t and I won’t. Maybe with my therapist or perhaps with betsy, but all your looping oral processing is neither productive nor very interesting. I don’t know how to approach your old wounds, especially if I feel vulnerable to your attacks and sudden lashing out. Your old hurts that you wrap in whatever religious or political kvetching you find most readily at hand. Something of dad’s tendency to grab whatever was available to swat us with-- a spoon, a rolled up newspaper, etc. The thing being less cruel and out of control than spontaneous and rage fueled action. Oh, shit, we’ve pushed them too far, they have completely fucking lost it!

You patronizing texts-- “Just so you know” the holy spirt offers guidance to those who ask. Emoji blowing a kiss with a winking eye. This dynamic that you have the truth and are just sort of waiting around for me to come to my senses really kills me, more and more it just sort of makes me feel tired. I have truly been looking for a way to approach you that doesn’t stagnate our relationship. It seems that what you are pushing for is that until I am open and accepting of the supremacy of your worldview and I enter into your lexicon of right-wing cult speak, then I will not be acceptable to you. You will continue to attack me and fly off the handle and generally be an unpleasant and corrosive influence in my life. A sore spot requiring draining emotional care and attention, in an unwinnable slog in which I can either roll my belly over and accept this never ending cycle of abusive and profusive apologies, or I can hold steadfast and continue to wedge distance between us.

Leaving the family feed has been a very good thing for me (6/2/2022). I am tried of my mother mitigating my relationships with my siblings. Her busyness has made us all lazy. Now at 40 I find myself questioning how important these sibling relationships are and I am forced to admit that they are not in fact very important. Certainly worth cultivating slowly over time, but definitely not worth trying to persevere as an immediate, every day or even every week connection. We all have moved. Begun lives in other places. And this is good. This is natural. This is right. We must accept and support each other as best we can and accept that healthful distance that exists between us and respect the not insubstantial effort and focus we are all exerting to stay on top of out immediate lives and very involved nuclear families.

The fact of the matter remains, I have not regularly attended church in over two decades. I do not feel compelled to map every particular of my existence to a bible story. I think this is a narrow and naïve way to live, especially if your heart felt expectation is that everyone will also joyfully and willingly map their entire existences to obscure bible stories and references. I believe this world is large and various and diverse and is exactly as it was intended to be.

You yourself have stated plainly that our relationship is irreparable without having your faith be the interface of our relationship. So what then? Where does that leave us? Do we give up? Do we just carry on pretending that we are trying. People who truly love you speak to you in a different way. And you feel that love. If you do not feel that love then they love is not being transmitted. It is being lost in translation. Something is running interference on it. Obscuring it. Creating distance between. You feel their openness. Their goodwill.

You approach our interactions like you are trying to score points. Twist words.

Soul is an interchange of energy.

Spirit-psycho-emotional-physio matrix

This is not a battle. This is not a debate. Don’t you realize that you’re just playing chicken with a scarecrow? But you choose to frame our differences as an issue of my arrogance and willfulness. If not for this we wouldn’t have any issues. If only you would bend the knee to the Catholic Church all of these issues between us would disappear. I must capitulate-- admit my arrogance and wilfullness and accept my sublime inheritance as a Child of the Most High.

How do you forgive and accept without internalizing, preserving the wounds and tending them, because they are the only things we share any longer.

06/01/2021

13:13

What happen at the Pentecost? I am delighted by this question. It really accentuates and articulates the distance between us. Our shattered interfaces. We are caught at the wake of our interface. Finnegan’s Wake where the meanings of words stretch between dimensions and then pop their rivets under the diametreically opposed forces. What do you think happened at the Pentecost ad how literally or symbolically does this apply here. I really have no idea.

Mother slapping me, mother shitting on my documentary, mother hurt by not being wanted along on the MJP trip, mother taking issue with my *Yield* installation*,* mother at Oxford-- what are you smoking these days? Mother after 9/11 -- Will you fight for this country, she had so furtively asked. Mother telling me that her Dad whose really smart told her that he read in a book that Muslims don’t feel that they are morally obliged to tell the truth to Christians. Mother questioning the controversy with the Confederate Flag and saying that there were “a lot of good things about the south,” mother, a medical doctor, wildly claiming that masks are a Nazi symbol, mother telling me that Hell is Cancel Culture. That sometimes God uses great men with large appetites, like King David and Bethsheba. All of the santimonious life denying language. I want out of the idiom, I want out of your little cul-de-saced culture. I think we have both been in denial about how far I am removed from your culture. The fact of the matter is is that I am out. I left a long time ago. You recently asked me to leave, but I have been out for a long time and having to pretend that I still respected and held in awe of your culture has been a painful unhealing wound to carry. I am a critic. I am a malcontent. I am oppositional. And you still react with rage against me-- my direct or indirect expressions of my independence and will. I have come into my own now. I have completely fallen apart. With the help of writing and coding and exercise and alcohol and weed and my supportive wife I have finally been able to strip myself apart and arrive at some consolidated low spot from which to root down from. This is how I choose to live my life. This is how I live.

Mother haranguing about THEM and THEY pushing for extended bar hours. THEY care about people’s health so much with all these Nazi tactics to take away people’s rights and then THEY go and push to let the bars be open all the time.

The windmills frozen in Texas-- proof that all this empty-headed science and socialist style subsidizing is total hokum.

Steps of Grief:

Shock and denial-- disbelief, numbed feeling

Anger and bargaining

Depression

Reconstruction and working through

Acceptance and hope

I feel like my mother and I are caught in the early stages of grief-- lots of denial and anger and bargaining. As I write this on the 19th of April 2022 I truly feel that I have arrived at the Acceptance and Hope for the future portion. I think I have the strength and frankly just the utter exhaustion and resignation to let her go. To let my family go. Whatever comes back will come back. I have left the family feed without any desire to return to it. I have my writing which I will be able to use as an interface with my family. Doing something extremely complex and hard for me. I have had to sacrifice everything, even my family to reach this point. But now that we are here I feel hopeful.

There is no other choice than to face things head on. To look. To see. To see through.

Father-in-law just thinks were better under Trump and that he was tougher on the illegal immigrant situation and that the current administration just doesn’t seem to care. My father in law in his cul-de-sac, only leaves the property behind the wheel of his car. Watching baseball. Picking up dead bodies (750), or driving new and used cars all around the Midwest-- Indianapolis, Cincinatti, Chicago, Milwaukee, Grand Rapids.

This is not all bad. You cannot condemn this as all bad. The local high school radio station is wonderful. The material wealth of the community is obvious. Paved bike paths all along the grided former farmland come housing developments. Groceries just a quick drive away, and liquor and hardware and sushi and fast food-- breakfast offerings all up and down the strip-- Wendy’s, the gas station with their super processed and instantly available grease and calorie mainline.

We are caught in a loop. You repeat your esoteric words with emphasis. I am only asking for some of your famous Christian kindness, but you are so mad that I won’t *join the feast*, that I am so hell bent on *self-exclusion*, that I am so *willfully ignorant*, and that language will only get in the way between us until I come to the conversion with a *true spirit of interest and inquiry*.

Christ transcends. Belief transcends. You know what transcends belief. Practice. Do you know what overtakes ideals and ideas and concepts for truly affecting our situation and the world around us? Practice.

I believe in the impossibility of encapsulation. Life will always transcend.

04/09/2021

Lions, your cycling through our political differences, your running, your nostalgia (old car museum with old machines, only open on Tuesdays near Mt. Pleasant where I was born. Stahlf’s?

*The Way We Were*, the a mature athlete, mids having to chose career over sport, my father, the art of house husbandry, home improvement, baking, cooking, noodles, lasagna, fettucini, spighteti, pot pies, enchiladas tacos chili, ground beef salty in a cup. My father didn’t know what to do with my anxiety and neither did I. I had a panic attack in the gym. My wet shoes dripping on the floor, feeling like I did not belong at all, confused, lost, lights, high walls, banners, raised hoops, the flag, how was the flag there, hanging or just up on the wall? The color guard came to every game, or just some of the games? One game a year? Get people out on a cold winter’s night. Sing the national anthem. The fight song. Watch the back and forth brawl of the cagers. Then read about it under Denny Gralls byline in the local paper. The local sports writer who haunted every gym in the regin for a number of long decades. A point of view need not be didactic. Universal dignity, tradition, dreams, desires, inspirations, Family raising is culture creation.

(04/19/2022 -- a crockpot full of ground beef. I don’t eat meat. Father Jamie their very vocal vegan priest. My staying out of the house for the blessing and the sloppy Joes. Asked by Nick (twice), Marcus, my Dad, my Mom. I don’t eat meat. That morning at the Holiday Inn my mother telling me to *Just leave* her room when I stand up to her angry bullying of my father and then myself. I somewhat immaturely get a few barbs in on my mother, telling her that she doesn’t listen when she says she could say so many things. I teel her she needs psychological help or even psychiatric help. I ask her if she wants to slap me like when I was in high school.

The night before I brought up with my Dad when he references the Bay de Noc Christian School the time that Mr. Rose’s mathematic instruction turned into me having a panic attack and hyperventilating and how that moment has come back to me a lot over the years. Something that I need to confront now and accept as a foundation moment of not taking the authority of adults as being absolute. They actually do not know exactly what they are doing and you are entitled to a healthy does of skepticism and self-protection.

I had also brought up the duct-taping incident, when Mr. Rose decided that he would try to cut down on the idle chatter of he unengaged students (he was teaching three grades in one room, leaving us a lot of independent time to read or do worksheets or copy section of the bible out by hand. The book selection was atrocious. My first hundred page book was *Meg and the Missing Diamonds*, which was a super fluffy book, but I liked it because it was a mystery. I was even inspired to write my own mystery which began with a smoke bomb going off in a classroom and a mysterious man suddenly appearing in brown pants and a red shit. Yes, I did not include the “r” in shirt which my fat ass teacher thought was hilarious and kind of made a big deal about which really embarrassed me and completely overshadowed my first attempt to share a piece of my writing with someone. Mr. Rose was a real dipshit I am thinking now looking back.

I am only interested in my subject and just want to lose myself in my subject and my process of engaging with it. I want to *yield* to it. *Yield to what*, my mother had asked. *What does it mean*? She had demanded. *Yield to ambiguity*? I suggest. *Yield to multiplicity*? She doesn’t like this. She’s heard of the post-moderns and their post truth world views. Their prediction that we will all just retreat into our communities. She has scowled at the deconstructionist-- where did she come across this term.

Gay Brother, Infidelity Brother, Academic brother, druggy brother, alcoholic brother, Crazy sister, Stuck up/hypochondriac sister, drunken/redneck sister.

The universal that becomes the personal. The personal that becomes the universal.

4/6/2021

My father remembering fondly the film *The Way We Were* and reflecting that Kirk Gibson played football for MSU and that the athletes used to play all of the sports. Now you’ve got the girls basketball coach wanted the girls to train all year long.

My daddy wishes things were just a little more like the way they were.

Rage. Anger. Nostalgia.

Truck wretched in the accident he and Emioly were in. He other truck got all shredded by a hailstorm in Wyoming. Recently his over drive went out, couldn’t drive over 55 mph. It was a warranty fix though and he just got his truck back. Really putting in the mmiles. Dc and back. Grand Rapids and Back. Marquette and back.

07/07/2020

Dad =

John Denver

Michael Landon

Bob Villa

Steve Prefontaine

James Taylor

Nicholas Sarcozi

John Paul II

The Beatles

The Monkees

To be in love is to create a religion whose god is fallible.

Father- new roof, new floors, new ceiling, new basement, dig a trench for the water, flush the water out, gravel down in the earth, water line not so far away. Civilly engineer your way out of a tight spot. Liberals and such. I don’t know. I know. Run wire, run, run, run, keep the middle miles to yourself. Kick, push, spit, fartlek, step up, dtep down, intervals, O2 max, shoes, shoes, shoes, running logs, training kit, race bibs, hang a door, change a diapers, Fettucine homemade noodle soup, Enchiladas, pot pies, ground beef browning, turkey burger lean on the stover, steaming in a coffee mug sprinkled with salt, hang a door, transform a door into a breakfast nook, bake some cookies, bake a cake, lead a song, the taste of ground beef with salt, Recalibrate, replace the brake pads, replace the calipers.

OCTOBER2019

01October: phone call

Caught dad on the way home from work. Just back from Nashville. Running in 90 degree weather. They flew in and out of MQT. Cross country team has a really strong 1-2-3, but trails off after that (no pun intended).

He is still frustrated with his siblings over them all missing Caleb and Morgan’s wedding. I need to learn from him. I need to learn to let anger go and replace it with forgiveness. Realign the past.

Man I love my parents and wish I could be open to them. Mother wears her anxieties on her sleeve. They are both wise and good and flawed and honest. Even Ghandi, who’s a secular saint has his weird, shitty aspects. We all do. How do we manage imperfection.

Dad-

Tireless efforts to meet all the multiplying needs. Our family is truly becoming a force dof nature. There is a love that under pines it, but is love enough, or is love so tainted with our own human.

Has she ever thought about writing. Keeping a file on different topics. Collectiong quote and her thoughts on the dieas. Material for future talks, letters, essays, articles, etcetera.

**Mom**

MOTHER!

Mema’s injuries:

* Breaking tailbone in snowmobile crash
* Breaking wrist when she toppled over on the bike unable to get her feet out of the clips.
* Breaking her ribs in Xi’an when she fell on the stairs
* Breaking her ribs in England when she slid off the end of the bench (someone having put a cushion down that was actually longer than the bench.
* On the same trip my dad walking into the reflection pond while carrying Imogen thinking it was the path.
* Stomach sickness/ parasite on second Beijing trip.

Intention:

Mutual understanding

Honesty

Expression

Interface

A conversation to subsume the argument.

The HOT and COLD aspects of the conflict

* My father being especially distant? Or is he just distant?
* My parents generally only talking to me together? Is this something my mom thought up as a check for herself? She does realize that she stirs she up and that she can’t help herself, but then she can’t help doubling down on whatever wildness she stirred up and then trying to shape the argument into something that she feels she is winning. She has the upper hand on. She is vindicated by. But what are we even talking about here? What were we originally talking about? I am not a Christian. I have not attended church in 24 years. I do not have a ready lexicon of a lot of Christian concepts that you share with your Christian children and friends. Yes. This is true. And in your framing of this issue I am in the “not seeking camp” and you level that at me punatively again and again and again. And it doesn’t help. It is distancing and tying. Because you know I know. And I know you know. But my not being a Christian is an incredibly huge rift between us. It is awkward. Its is tragic and it makes me sad, it does. My not being a Christian dominating our relationship is such a drag. It is boring and life-denying. It is telling that you “poured your heart out” and then threw your heart away and sent me some bullshit cant about how I couldn’t understand your special Christian words until I had more of a heart of inquiry. This Perry Mason point was in response to my speaking Mandarin to you. My point which I am sure I mangeled in the heat of the moment was that there are a lot of words that I have floating around in my head that I don’t share with you, I don’t address to you, I don’t throw at you, because I try to feel out what we can connect on, how we can make ourselves understood. For you to through Christian terms at me and then scold me, or dramatically lament your disappointment to me that we can’t even have that conversation. Mom! Wake up! No kidding! I am not a Christian. I have not regularly attended church in 24 years. I feel kind of abused when you repeatedly come back to this kind of high-horse brow beating and the fact that it so thoroughly dominates our relationship is what makes it so untenable. You bulldoze over the fact that you were dragging up some specters of doubt and that your mind was specifically pulling up past endeavors that did not lead to my forever job. You were then trying to tap into that past cycle of disappointment and unrealized hopes and offer up some eternal wisdom, flippantly…you know, just so you know. Within this context it did not feel like a loving mother humbly administering to her wounded, wounded, tired stretched, doubting, pushing, juggling, bumbling, dreaming, coding, writing, do language son, it felt like she was mocking him, or at the very least there was an unseenness, how could she not know, she who loved him so, so deeply not know that this message wouldn’t feel good. And he had not wanted to write her off. He had wanted to use this as an opportunity to connect with her adult to adult and flush out this misunderstanding so that they could continue to build a good texting rapport and feel open and honest with one another. Maintaining a robust interface to handle all those tricky religious and politic concussion grenades that are lobbed back and forth between the plates of time as each generation piles up upon the next. But then while she had revealed that had been more behind it said, well yes, she had just been thinking about water. What ever happened to water, Aaron. Why was she doing this? And then the follow up letter and suddenly our conversation was about my lack of an inquiry spirit. Mother, as a medical doctor, as an astute doctor of psychology—what’s a guy to do with all of this negative messaging. How do we move forward? How do I respond to that last letter? She keeps repeating herself. “You are on the outside.” I realize this, does this mean that we can’t talk to each other because I am tired of the hysterics. I am tired of all of the negative messaging especially at such a vulnerable time for me. I am trying to pull of a career change in the middle of a pandemic and my wife is suffering from severe depression. I am lost in a writing process that you see to actually really be helping me along which I am very grateful. And I think you are helping me to be strong. You are part of my inner critic and your critical voice is important to me, or it was important to me. It is no longer. I am fully out now. I have gone my own way. I am 24 years out of the church. I do not crow this fact. I am not full of animosity for the church, but I know my ambivalence burns for you. But what it feels like is that I have made a choice and you have made a choice and you keep ostracizing me for the choice that I made 24 years ago. And I am tired of our relationship being so much about my not being a Christian. We can’t even have that conversation. You don’t even know what that means.

CULTURE => approaches (how media and socialmedia has affected these approaches)

What is the difference between your impression of this speaker:

1. Oh, I sure hope the Packers win tonight
2. Oh, the packers had better beat the ever-loving fuck out of those satanic fag-bags!

Are these statements the same?

Are these statements both morally equal?

Which one of these people would you like to spend time with?

Which one of these people would you like to actively invest time with to create a shared culture?

In which of the following ways does the following statement reflect your character… here are a list of rationalizations.

Despite the seemingly accepted rule of keeping the feed politics free a Tucker Carlson op-ed inevitably gets posted about the COVID vaccitions. A lot of questions, not a lot of answers my brother tags. My dad chimes in “Thank God for Great Americans like Tucker Carlson emoji, emoji”. Do I say anything about this, especially considered that my last attempt to keep the feed politics free resulted in a huge blow up. Is it not more prudent to just not enter the conversation. How the hell do you establish a proper context when you have a big diverse group of people with varying levels of interest and connection to the topic and weave the conversation, the group interaction into a culture building occasion, a group bonding, group building, something that can be a solidifying, clarifying moment for the culture of the organization.

Political micro-aggressions, using religiously loaded or politically loaded speak. If it is too jargony then it is not inclusive language.

Thoughts on structure:

\* Does God call all people to the clergy? No? Does God call all to salvation? No.

\* Faith is a gift. You cannot come to faith by reason.

\* Is it something you decide? Or is it something that is offered to you out of Grace?

\* I have thought about being Christian and Catholic for decades now and over the years it has become less and less appealing. Outside of being able to stress and conflict free engage with the spiritual culture of our family. The spiritual culture of our family is too intimately tied up with the political culture of our family. My call to temper that unholy alliance and seek out ways, interfaces, dialogues that try to separate the two of them. Because the deal you are offering is a full package one. It is like the price of right and you show up to the showcase showdown with Jesus and the Pope and Rush Limbaugh and Donald Trump and Ruby Guliani, Tucker Carlson, and Marjoire Taylor, Cardinal Newman sitting in the corner, also quiet uncomfortable to have been pulled into some bizarre uniquely 21 century American political charade. You also have a bible and some articles clipped out from a newspaper published by a pagan cult that has an understandable ax to grind with totalitarian China, and a DVD video about the young earth, that arrogant bastard dismissing the entire scientific community as godless and delusional. Whoever and your ill-tempered mood, raging again THEM for doing THAT unconscionable thing. And Donald is muttering and Raging and the pope looks incredibly uncomfortable. And you and dad are sitting there beeming in holy fucking awe without a fucking constructive thought in your head. And you reach out and you offer. But it has to be a package deal doesn’t it. It has to be all or nothing. It has to be WHITE or BLACK. HOLY or UNHOLY. AMERICAN or UNAMERICAN. LIBERAL or CONSERVATIVE.

\* I should have wrote a letter, grieved what I had to grieve.

\* Use email from 10/09/2020 as scaffolding

\* What is our underlying relational truth.

\* I am not better than you, neither of us have to be right. Politcially I believe in our system more than either of the parties that try to control it.

\* Abortion is a right in this country. I accept that and believe it should be the individual State’s right to regulate it and make legal and humanitarian arguments for its place in society. A god that put up with a 50% 5 and under mortality rate for the better part of human history takes a lot of the moralistic absolutism of the argument that humans are being particularly diabolic by taking a more active and intentional role in their procreation.

\* Why does your church seem like much more of an earthly, political project, than a religious practice. Is it a religious practice or a political project.

\* The rise of Individualism has made it much safer and easier to live and work without the necessity of having to explicitly be a member of a political or religious organization. Technology has been helpful with this— we now have a much more abundant and instantaneous collection of channels for developing the personal and professional relationships that allow us to survive and potential flourish in our modern society.

\* We are all exhiles. Familly homeland of Newberry. Famous for its lumber and then it’s mental hospital and then its Prison. ***Wolf Inn*** *-- “*15 miles north of that lumberstop town, where the asylum brought us together and the prison kept us around.”

\* A meal at Chamberlins-- eating there with his Dad. Eating there with his Mom.

\* We ultimately don’t know why we are here. We have divised strategums and elaborate scaffoldings of truth and hierarchy and bureaucracy and tradition and culture.

\* We are a self-centered race of people. Our economy depends on self-centeredness and over-indulgence and waste.

\* This is the only system we have and we can justify much (contradictions, hypocrisy etc) in defense of its preservation.

03/13/2022

It was almost fortunate that we didn’t get to visit Gettysburg when we visited Gettysburg. Just went to the kids museum. The museum focuses on locals who were affected by the conflict, but none of them died or were injured. Meanwhile X number of soldiers and civilians died in the battle of Gettysburg.

05/20/2022

Hot chocolate and watching the planes take off from the airport.

Crying after camp, the week I had away from my family and away from the bullying, clickish, annoying church boys. I don’t matter. I can’t create. The boys at church picking on me. Sexualized comments about my genitals. Didn’t want to shower, self-conscious. Big penis equals friend worthiness. Judged by church friends. Austin wanting to give me a blow job. Relief to be away from them and to be alone. Rejected by boys club in the covenant. Untrusting of new boys club at college. Don’t fit in—your interests and abilities are inferior.

Over scheduled, poor time management skills. To do is to do manically and with drama. Eating out tense, not fun, not a treat. Guilt over ordering a fucking soft drink. Everything’s a fucking hustle—get the best deal. Bend the rules, it’s fine, nobody’s going to say anything and we get a better deal this way. See.

My dad, the jokey, goofy guy, but as soon as things get political or religious he gets real serious, goes straight to anger and frustration. Absolutist hysterics.

03/08/2022

We have a blow up on the morning of moving day when my mom starts to go after my dad about not providing leadership for orchestrating this move. I take issue with this as she is berating him about something that I had not even been made aware was part of the plan. It was a plan in my mother’s head that she did not share with me. Now she is getting upset with my dad and then me when I suggest that Dad isn’t really the leader of this move and the it is Beth and Adam’s move. This insinuation that my mother is being controlling triggers her and we have words that lead her into asking me in a nasty and aggressive voice to leave her hotel room. “Get out” she snarls. I get out. My dad doesn’t say much. He is cowed by her. She’s always getting mad at him. Blowing up at him-- she can’t do this. She has to absolutely stop.

03/03/2022

My mother wants us all to be close, but her manic energy and neurotic stress responses shoots our family culture through with a curdling energy that unrealistically raises expectations, increases drama, and decreases authentic, free flowing conversation and engagement.

Nervous about driving. Backing car into wall. Over caffeinated and over tired and stiff from sitting in the car too much and throwing back out from wrangling small grandchildren. Trying to do too much really.

Her chin length silver hair, neatly and simply bobbed. Her wire glasses, slightly exaggerating the size of her eyes, making her looked bewildered and unnecessaryily elderly.

Tear gas and flares to set the atmosphere ablaze.

Fears and contingencies to frame and reframe our engagements or lack thereof…

03/02/2022

So adroit and expert with her patients, but so hamfisted and autocratic with her family.

Lamarcus story-- she just jumps right into his life and starts giving forceful advice. She connects with this guy and exudes deep empathy, just as she as been doing for decades with her patients.

I want out of your culture of chaos and crisis and blame.

02/27/2022

Mom’s big speech about health and how she doesn’t plan on going to the doctor doesn’t get mammograms, doesn’t want to know. Sort of Belittling the importance of a doctor. Or her. Of her profession. Totally running over the incredible pillar that she has been for people. Truly being a pillar in the community. With answers and direction at really critical times. And Being empathetic and kind and principled about it.

Annette says that our family has something about not going to a therapist.

2/13/2022

Learn the relevant language, learn the relevant skills, maintain the correct political positions, stay current on the familial religious cant and liturgical comings and goings. Caught up on the vogue kvetching of the day-- climate change doesn’t exist, Covid is not that big of a deal, electric cars won’t work in the UP because its too cold, some people tried to scam us out of $200 for a private chef dinner, inflation, we just love those old movies-- “the way things were”, the Henry Ford Museum of out-dated-technology, Marble Arms, the Marble Arms Museum, a museum of things, consumables, things interesting because people used to buy them and make them. Anthropologist of sorts. Crypts of past eras. People once consumed here. Incredible intricacy of creating the standard, the natural, the way something is down, should be down, how it is down nicely, we abstract it, give it over to culture, give it over to business and economy and politics and fashion…on and on along these dead end roads. Leading me through to you.

Unhinged. Off the road. up

02/12/2022

Imammy’s full of judgement,

not least for her own dear self.

Has always worked just like an elf,

To build a place

Where the goodness of her faith

Can ground the great pale platform of her spite.

She’s full of confidence and self-loathing.

Her insights are various and all true with capital Ts.

Suppose we just leave her as she is,

Great fading matriarch of the never beens,

Though if the bitch bites the baby,

How will we let her live?

02/08/2022

Hyperlinked letter to Mom for her birthday

1970s images

1990s images

More current

Obituaries from the Economist. The contextualization is bracing and stimulating-- echoing out to a whole field or fields of knowledge and activity, tradition, politics, intricacy, family, etc.

Dr. Minkus’s funeral-- enthusiastic trip planner for himself and others. Truly a mensch. Metting people at the solstice backyard fire who had spent nearly two decades under his care-- having a doctor you trust allows you to abstract a lot really important things.

A stalagtie like ice chunk hanging down, craggy icicles, heavy icicles, snow encrusted, avalanche, swiss, lsoping swiss mountain side idyllic.

Blue sky backdrop, blue sky drop cloth, blue scenery, blue screen back drop, white back building and a single strait north to south chem-trail streak the white back building now out of the sun, now a dull cement slab.

Now the sun is illuminated the psychologist’s office.

Red printed on white on the blank grey side of the apartment building. Lichter-- a single ionic column communicating, stability, regal foundation, solidity.

Winter light- clear and blue. Cold ice encrusted porch posts. Vaulted on the bank-- black shapes of pigeons backed by the blue spectrum arching from pure pigment to white a the horizon and then the whole pigeon flock takes flight.

01/16/2022

<https://rumble.com/vogxan-scientist-shows-vaccine-effects-in-autopsies.-dont-believe-it-see-for-yours.html>

me: Those are super disturbing claims, Dad. Why do you think Trump developed this kind of poisonous vaccine?

My dad: I have no idea. He didn't. I really don't care who developed it. I have a general distrust of anything that comes out of Washington DC. From the beginning I did not believe in their so called science. The coronavirus is a cold virus that mankind has been trying master for years and you mean to tell me they figure it out all of a sudden? Maybe the "vaccine" is good science but I will continue to believe more time is needed in the lab to test the shot...you can't call it a vaccine. Too many people are getting sick after the shot. FYI on the video., that's it.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Me: Dad that's fine, but when leaders on both sides of the political spectrum are telling us to get the shot. Telling us that it's safe. Where does that leave us? betsy and I are vaccinated. Esmé is vaccinated. We all came down with the Omicron variant. It was very mild, which we were thankful for that. We have a good dose of vaccine skepticism too and have tried to spread out the girls' inoculatuons as far as possible, but face enormous pressure from the medical establishment and the schools etc to have our kids fully vaccinated. This is a tough reality, I don't like it, but I suppose a big part of life and a hard part of life is trying to make the best the decisions with the information that you have. I appreciate your concern your concern and skepticism. I feel like your concern would be more tangibly felt with a call or a chat though as opposed to some random video forwarded from a fringe website that has a lot of documented cases of pushing blatant misinformation.

My mom: Just so you know---we continue to sort this out. We mean NO indictment of you☹️This was a Mayo trained pathologist doing autopsies on people dying after vaccine trying to explain what happened. We literally thought you would be interested!!!. Historically 100,000 children were affected by thalidomide ( drug used for morning sickness --- prescribed with good intention)with missing limbs and untold number of pregnancy losses before they pulled it from the market. Not all children were effected, but it turned off a gene for limb developement. Physicians figured it out by seeing the effects too late--- but data gathering took time.[[2]](#footnote-2) All that to explain: We just want to weigh risk vs benefit. I understand why you chose vaccine!! Your hearts are pure and good!!! My concern is the lack of transparency in the medical world right now so I want to share info you won't hear regarding risk vs benefit. Don't receive it as insulting or fear mongering. My peers share this. [Frontline physicians are Drs literally on the frontline](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/America%27s_Frontline_Doctors). Don't confuse sincere information sharing as some kind of insult. I am so sorry that you have such low level trust for the parents who love you.[[3]](#footnote-3) Censorship is real--- so I guess we both choose our trusted sources--- but Frontline physicians don't work for Rumbl. They are treating patients and assessing and sharing what they see first hand and double blind control studies take time--- so info sharing is essential.[[4]](#footnote-4) We love you so much. I forget you receive info differently from folks we share back and forth--- so forgive us, don't take it wrong, it was meant as interesting, not indicting.

Once again, ny push back by me, any questioning comes with censure. My lack of trust in parents that love me so much. Once again love being deployed as weapon. Proof of my ungratefulness, my unnecessary guardedness.

12/27/2021

Mom has Covid too! Helena says excitedly, trotting in the living room. She is trotting around our apartment with a ring pop in one hand a plush lemur stuffed animal slung over her shoulder-- this is Ziggy aka Zaboo’s brother (Zaboo is a lemur puppet on one of her favorite shows-- Zaboomafoo with a Kratt brothers.) She is energetic and cheerful after a few days of seeming under the weather. Coughing over night. Snotty through the day. Our Christmas tree is up still-- just two days after Christmas. It is not plugged in. A dark green presence in the corner of the room draped in baubles and desultorily strung strands of beads.

We have Covid now. It has taken almost two years, but it finally got to us. The brain fog to finally fully clear my thinking.

Concentrating to the point of pain and then having to respond in a kind, engaged, human way to my children demanding attention. Child cuddling with you, squirming on your lap.

12/22/2021

She has a bead on everyone. Has her stories razor straight and tidy. Danny likes to be told what to do. Karen is controlling. Annette is selfish. Grandpa is good and selfless, but they still bring up how he didn’t visit them for 7 years after they were married though he passed right by the exit where they lived all the fucking time. But now he is good and selfless because he is patient and devoted to carrying for his demented second wife. She doesn’t now where she is-- doesn’t know what is in front of her. And Hans is good. He befriended so many of the odd people around town and that is proof of his goodness and I see it as some weird control thing, not completely at ease in actual social situations, but if the relationship is more of a project then it is comfortable. It is clear who is the more magnanimous actor in this interaction. I can be benevolent to people below me, but catty and argumentative and challenging to the people who are my social equals. They make me feel insecure and insubstantial. There wins and passions make my wins and passions seem pale and inadequate.

Aunt Deb’s years in Pakistan. Read Crime and Punishment and couldn’t figure out what the big deal was. Her father raised Beef Cattle. Was named Duke or something. Was gonna have to move to Costa Rica if that lady got elected. He has a Deer Ranch-- one mile square pinned aread where you can hunt bait pile fed deer all year round. Could write some kind of dystopian nightmare bout the deer thinking that they are free, but they are not free. Creepy footage from CCTV cameras of the der coming to the bait pile under the cover of darkness.

Her father never told her to apply to Washington University and then was disappointed and voiced his disappointment when she didn’t attend there. Talent. Level of education. Achievement. The apple often does fall pretty, pretty close to the tree in some way shape or form.

I never owned being a 4th generation doctor she says -- well own it now why not- and she does at times when it is convenient. “This isn’t me being political” This is just doctor mom sharing her thoughts-- but the problem is her thoughts are ambiguous-- she claims there is no hard science behind the vaccine push.

He talks to that couple at the Christmas party-- everyone at the party seems middle aged and tired and the kids are at home and they will be there in the morning. Life has settled into this list of tasks and action and procrastination.

They are from Columbus. Married young and have teenagers now despite being just about my age. She kvetches about not being able to read. I suggest audio books, she says she can’t follow those either. I suggest that maybe- as a busy mom of three her mind is just crazing some silence.

It’s a full moon tonight, but the sky is milky with clouds and the slightly scummy sheen of the metropolitan light pollution bouncing back down from the heavens.

Mother, you assume so many things and it makes communicating with you insufferable. I feel like I am constantly having to either brace myself against your acrid judgements or defend things that I normally do not need to defend with other people.

I do feel that in a very real way CS is my ticket to full realized adulthood. And low and behold. I am a talented computer scientist.

08/25/2020

You believe yourself to be both arrogant and unconfident. And it is true you are both arrogant and insecure.

10/19/2021

Toxic directness. Top of the head memories. Associations. It was just on my heart. It was just in my head. Honesty. Authenticity.

07/18/2021

Black Lives Matters is an anti-family movement. The January 6th insurrection shouldn’t have happened. It’s like they make it happen. They are trying to push their anti-governement right wing paranoia on me and pass it off as something they thought I’d think was interesting.

Barebones George Floyd until the 4th. Css and html and ruby and Javascript and bleeding, pus-oozing leg ulcers and a super tight neck and back from my push-ups, my tnesioon holding in, my push-ups, my little cards where I would write down my in and out times for coding and then later writing and I would record my push-ups or what I later expanded to health units-- stretching and jogging also provided health units

06/21/2021

* Do you not realize what a controversial figure Rush Limbaugh is? Tucker Carlson? These are partisan propogandists that have built their brand on demonizing the political opposition. I am the political opposition. How would you feel if I was cavalierly posting enthusiastic support for controversial liberal politicians.
* Your olive branch is clutched in the horny talons of your insecurity.

06/13/2021

Relationship 101—learn how to argue without going for the jugular, or without inflaming the main relationship issue by fanning the fire with tangential issues. Keep clear interfaces. Avoid over coupling of interests to avoid a house of cards scenario. Have a firewall. Have a stopgap.

Somewhere around here she texted me her :

“The Holy Spirit is there to lead by invitation, just so you know—kissy face emoji”

When I ask her about it she reveals that it is an expression of doubt in my current path—give that 6 out of her 6 kids have not been able to find a path to their forever career, it sees like there just maybe some other factors at play here other than just like I personally suck at settling into a vocation because I am willfully ignoring God’s plan for my life.

06/08/2021

Talk to me about Protestanism? What was your state during those Proitestant years? Were you deceived? Mistaken? Willfully ignorant? Why weren’t you open to the Catholic truth? Did you feel like something was missing? What changed? I feel like this story is a lot more relevant to me as a fellow human on a spiritual journey than you unloading a bunch of Catholic cant on me that is impossible to even make sense of without investing deeply into the proscribed lexicon. Church talk. The fact that my programming stuff is not super accessible to the unintiated does not prove its depth or truth. It is a system. Your religion is a system of living.

(3/2022) -- late night evangelism from father in law just after I tell him how dismaying my family’s attempts to evangelize to me over the years have become. Like how I feel like they are holding our relationship hostage. He enumerates his disappointments with his kids. Brian is kind of liberal, maybe sliding towards universalism. David has fallen away. He doesn’t really know why. Doesn’t he have a relationship with his son? Do they get together for coffee and enjoy one another’s company? Do they make an effort to have an honest, open relationship. I don’t think so. They are lost to their ideologies and interests, the minutiae of existence. The material collecting in their respective garages. The lenses they affix. Bodies moved. Cars in space. Pictures taken for the year books all around the northeastern quadrant of the state.

You have to buy in thpuogh- you have to believe that the hall of mirros is ultimately an attractive, truth, nourishing place for you to spend your life. Culture-- promoting vitality and brilliance through the interplay of elaborate symbols and presuppotions.

The trees don’t act so elaborately, but they are just about the trust being around. I want god to talk to me the way he talks to tress. Direct connection. Nourishment Each ray of sun. Each morsale of nourishment and encouragement and inspiration and momentatry insight and perspective.

But the fact remains that after having grown up in Church’s neither betsy nor I are drawn to investing in a church community. We’ve thought about it over the years and discussed it and came to a measure, mutually acceptable decision. The fact that you can’t accept that - you foundamentally cannot accept that after all of these years is a dragging, festering sore that I have grown bitter tending.

Who wants to understand and accept the other person more?

Instead you are just like -- take it or leave it -- your brand bends to no man.

Rhetorical flow -- attempting to find the right words, to get behind and around the poisoned language, attempting to find the correct approach.

How do I manage the manically upbeat in me -- mother manically upbeat, beating me up with her drawn out projected conclusions, assumptions, delusions. She runs the world through her cypher, processed entrails to stuff the sausage of her stories.

08/23/2021

Mother compliments our child rearing, our quiet communication, the launches into kvetching about dad’s poor communication

Menominess-- wind for the bay-- white sail boats, polished gleaming classic cars, sun on the fenced in playground.-- flags of the world lined up along the harbor full of the white hauls of the pleasure boats.

08/21/2021

Mother analyzing and providing commentary on the world in real time as it fits in with the latest thing that she has been reading. She felt emboldened by the corrosize tenor of the latest political campaign.

She had referred to my half Jewish friend Micah as David. I referred to her Chinese Doctor friend Dr. Yan as Dr. Wu.

Talk to my mom and she tells me about my Dad’s assistant coach who has a grown daughter with Down Syndrome and she doesn’t want to live any more. His house is a disaster. His wife left him.

Their buddy Dan with his projects starting in every direction-- tree house, sauna, still finishing home, building a garage, putting in a pond, developing a massive garden, various furniture building and refinishing projects, he’s also working on building a guitar.

Loses sense of smell, gets blown up by a keresne stove and burnt up his arms and on his torso. Hosts family for the 4th and the fireworks misfire and shoot at a couple of teens standing by, they both very temporarily lose their hearing and the rest of the ground gets their wits scared out of them as they look up to just see this wall of flames and sparks rocketing straight at the on looking patriots.

06/08/2021

I am sorry that this year has been so fraught. I am sorry that we have not seen eye to eye on many things. I am sorry that you can’t broker any decent. I am sorry for betraying you. I am sorry for letting you down. I am sorry for the distance that has grown between us. I am sorry that I cannot will my way back. I am sorry that the contemporary politics have added to the tension between us.

I am sorry that I have had to bury you this year. But to love you, I have to bury you. To be kind to you I have to bury you. To be nurturing to you I have to bury you. So when we talk, I always assume that you are already dead.

It is very disoreienting to truly feel like you are trying your best to be good, to understand, to be open and yet to continue to fail to see, fail to fall into line, what seems apparent to me, what seems right and true and able to proceed with. I will afmit there are jups in there. There is incomplete. There is ambiguity. There is uncertainty. But my conscious is clear. My heart is open. I am making an effort every single day to get over myself and my needs to nuture and administer to the needs of my family. I am not some martyr or probably even a particulary good person, certainly have no pretensions to saintliness, but I am truly trying. Whenever I push back or try to express some challenge part of our relationship for me you get very defensive—just trying to do the best you can, etc. Suddenly you are the attacked one. I don’t respect you. I don’t appreciate your love. I don’t believe in your God. I am selfish and arrogant and self-excluding, I have a “narrow” liberal worldview that you frame as me not wanting to have challenged. I do not feel challenged by you. I feel condemned. The absoluteness of your truth brokers no room from compromise. I resent the lack of interest you have in our lives. You have never really taken much of an interest in me. You just want to know that I have bent the knee. That is your main priority. Seemingly your only priority and it is not a good approach to our relationship. It sets us up as opponents, opposites. If I am not with you I am against you. I do not feel like I am against you, but the fact that I am not Catholic pits me against you. The fact that my lived experiences puts me in a different mode and leads me to analyzing things differently has apparently made me your enemy. I don’t feel like I am your enemy, but the messages you send me are fierce and consistent and alienating. You say that these issues do not affect our relationship, do not lower me in your respect, but then you don’t treat me with respect. You conflate the issue of our relationship with my relationship with God. You have put God between us and placed yourself solidly between me and the Catholic God. I don’t make this accusation lightly. I have thought about this. I have tried to figure out what could possibly move the needle on this, give us a shot at a less contentious relationship.

Number one I need a job. I need to be back in an arching plan with many things locked in, allowing more wherewithal for the day to day enjoyment and nurturing of my nuclear family and my extended family. Having this sense that life is kind of on pause and will only unpause when I have put in enough preparation work or the quality of our life post-pause is completely contingent on what I am doing right now, what I am learning, what I am pulling together. This has conspired to inject a consistent pressure that has been pushing down on me for more than a year. This has placed me on a slow grinding path of focus and productivity which necessarily has had some distinct parallels with depression—curtailed energy, lack of wherewithal for spontaneous activities (constant fight to avoid and mitigate the spontaneous to keep tacking on my way across the see), inability to make long term plans (obviously the pandemic contributed to this, but also being unemployed, and scrambling to upskill), political and religious tension with family (this has been especially hard because politics and religion have dominated the interface with my family further contributing to my sense of isolation (“Freedom”), especially with my mother so forcefully placing the root cause of this rift at my feet— we have a fraught and distant relationship because of my arrogance, my selfishness, my self-exclusion, my ignorance, my lack of a inquisitive spirit. When you push these messages on me you seem to be intentionally overshadowing all of the efforts I make and have made, you overshadow the sincerity of my spiritual inquiry over the years and my deep commitment to respect religions and the religious practices of other people. Words do get in the way… I do believe we can have direct spiritual experience. Do I have my understanding of this completely canonized? I do not. I recognize this as a legitimate choice—a non-affiliated spirituality. I am aware that this likely strikes you as superficial, insubstantial. That doesn’t bother me. Last October you appeared to have a moment of clarity on the religious front and your made an overture to reboot our relationship, focusing on superficial, the shallow, keeping it comfortable. Whatever happen to “They will know you are Christians by your love” what about the fact that those pursuits, those elements, those approaches are the fruit of your spiritual life. That is life. Yes, the practice of Catholicism is the grounding center of your life. You seem to want to deny me the fruits of your cultivation.

You don’t get to choose whether or not you are religious. You are. We all are. The sum total of our religion is exactly how we live our lives. I want it all. I want to see it all and experience it all. I want to see your love in action. I want to see your wisdom engaging with the world and overwhelming it with your virtue, your humility, your peace that passeth understand.

Instead, I am denied the love, I am denied the life, I am denied living in the fruit. You want me to cultivate with like, like you, in the way that makes sense to you after 6 decades of accumulated experience. Your passion and goodness is dripping with guilt and passive aggression and dismissiveness. Your rhetoric effortlessly conjures up great scaffolds, battlements to frame our disconnection with. At times I feel like I am trying to talk to you and you are talking right through me, right over me, putting words in my mouth and misrepresenting my ideas and life.

Back in October you said I was getting along just fine. What is that even suppose to mean? You generalize about these paths and these narratives and while yes they pass through my story in threads and tendrils, they are far from the complete narrative. Your insistence on generalizing my life into these narrow dichotomies are insulting, alienating, they feel like a capitulation, like if I am not going to believe what you believe then I am simply relegated to “non-believer” status and necessary fall into all of the behaviors and attitudes and narratives of “non-believers”. You know you can do pretty well for a while without God… but it always catches up to you and you will never enjoy true freedom until

06/06/2021

We just try to do the best we can do. I am trying to do the best we can do.

How do you know if something is right? How do you know.

We are caught in a loop. You see something and say it is obvious and true. The trees and the birds speak this truth to you. It informs your practice of your faith, it binds you to your family. It is obvious to you. The most obvious thing. The essentially thing. It is the thing that makes all other things make sense to you. And I don’t see it. I am blind. I have tried to see it. I have lived in the faith. I have felt the beauty of a community built around love and shared values and supporting one another. I have had this foundation of love and I truly am grateful for it.

Upon reaching adulthood I did begin to question many things. You and dad certainly raised me to be skeptical, critical, willing to oppose or opt-out if I felt like the activity, the idea, the trend did not intellectually, spiritually, or just intuitively did not sit well.

The elitist attitude of the Christian-American-Capitalist condition is a stumbling block for me. When you are the richest, most materially successful group of an ethnic minority and you have positioned yourself as having a conception of truth and a lifestyle that you feel is unimpeachably good and correct. You live your life in the American way and are entitled to this success and priveledge because of the wisdom and godliness of your forefathers, your hard work, and the moral correctness of beliefs and practices.

Our family culture brokers zero decent. My crime which I have been continually committing for 24 years now has made our relationship irreparable. This wound between us has come to dominate our relationship ship. The only topic that matters. Everything else is superficial. I am superficial and arrogant and self-isolating and disconnected from God, I need to bite my tongue and suck it up. I need to repress my instincts and lived experiences… I have learned the wrong things, come to the wrong conclusions… water about water? What about water?

I can write and I can lose myself in writing and I can attempt to feel my way into the material and I can sacrifice and deny and collapse.

How did it get this bad.

Following the soreness down. Following the soreness down. Myofascial release of the soreness in my soul.

INPUT

OUTPUT

It feels like you are demanding that I see something that I just cannot see. And it hurts you that I do not see it. You imply that I do not want to see it. You write—I must have so much hate for you.

Have I projected that I enjoy being in disharmony with my parents? Feeling alienated from my family? Feeling like there are landmines everywhere? Feeling like my family really doesn’t care about me and would prefer to not having me around. How is it okay to call for prays for Rush Limbaugh and “Thank God for Great Americans like Tucker Carlson” or rage about THEM being general liberal energy. I find Rush Limbaugh and Tucker Carlson to be corrosive forces in our culture. I find them offensive. And it saddens me that despite repeated issues with politics on family feeds and repeated acknowledgements that that is a good idea you and Hans and Dad apparently don’t care. Which makes me feel like you don’t care about our relationship. We can’t even do the things that we said we were going to do. I think if I had a more functional relationship with my father that wasn’t just built emojis and training splits I might be able to take a post on our family feed like that and not have it read like a FUCK YOU to me. Frankly, it makes me feel unloved, this is following the assumption that you don’t really care about my opinion or whether or not I feel comfortable or welcomed in our family culture. I am a liberal non-Christian. Do I spend the next 24 years “defending” this position? Do I just kind of taper off my association and connection to my family? Do I keep pushing through this particularly fraught time with the hope that calmer seas are ahead and these issues will not feel nearly as apocalyptic, terminal.

But they are apocalyptic. They are terminal. No one is getting out of here alive. The medium is the MESSAGE.

How do we communicate? How can we communicate better?

I tried to have a talk about our relationship. You wanted to talk about the Pentecost. Then you wrote me a note framing the issue as bing about my lack of honest inquiry. I am not here to refute your truth, I am just looking for my mother. You wrote me more about your love and how your parents too so longed to share this understanding with you.

You believe that the only legitimate way to live is as a conservative Catholic. This your truth. This is your end all be all. If you are on the inside of this Christendom then you have arrived. You have faith. But who should get the credit for that? How should you feel about that? Are you lucky and humbled?

Esoteric cant politicized kvetching.

I want to share your life, you seem hung up on making this contingent on sharing your faith first. And I am blind. I am willful. I am arrogant. I cannot defend against any of this. I simply am. I am trying to live and do right by the people around me and love and support then as I can. I have persured a non-traditional career driven by pragmatism, personal interest, and skill development.

It felt like you were trying to leverage my failure to launch a career as some sort of proof of my willful ignoring of the Holy Spirit. The fact that you delivered this quip so casually, but so transparently loaded, made me feel like you were implying that I wasn’t taking this seriously. “Just so you know” … you know I know… you’ve been beating the same message for 24 years at the expensive of deeping our mutural understanding of all those other superficial aspects of life.

I cannot know your faith from your words. I can only know it through your life and through our conversations, through our relationship—a culture unto itself constructed of shared interests and values and words and jokes and memories.

What kind of relationship do you have with your mother?

What kind of relationship do you have with your father?

This implication that I have cut myself off from God strikes me as the most ridiculous thing in the world. God made the world. He is everywhere. But your heart…

God just happens to be everywhere—just not in your heart. But he can come in if you stop being arrogant and self-isolating and I know you have had a hard year and it has been stressful, but any of the bad things that you have felt that you have pushed through and persevered through, doing the hard adult work of taking control of your time, building skills over time—and maybe this is part of the issue—I don’t think you have any understanding or even any interest in how much time I have spent developing my writing, language and coding skills. I am in the middle of a marathon. I am hanging on by a thread. My wife is clinically depressed and out of commission. I am fighting against time and limited resources and yes, I have spent a lot of this year feeling uncomfortable, isolated, constantly confronting my limitations and ignorance and disorganization and fragmentation, pushing back the regrets or haunting missed opportunities of the past. Trying to push through, truly trying to let go of all that I cannot control, believing that these efforts will be enough to meet our needs.

Proceeding humbly, values intact, values settled.

I don’t see it. I have tried to see it. I have not seen it.

I am not allowed to not be a Catholic.

I am so tired to this dynamic dominating our relationship. It is a broken interface, but one you insist on using. Politics is an interface. It can be a way to draw people together or to push them apart. Music can do this. Food. Weather. Activities. Shared blood.

The depression is deepening. My mother is dead. My father is dead. My brother is dead. My sister is dead. We cannot access one another in our approaches. We don’t trust one another. We are caught in our worlds. How do you communicate between worlds? You create another world—a syndechoche

All the ground work that goes into making language possible. The will and intent that has to be there. The nurturing. The truth seeking. The arrangement of values. The perspective. The emotional reaction. The purity tests. The grappling. The intuition. Freedom. I am not free.

At some point the contingent invitation, no matter how well-intentioned begins to chaffs. Especially, if the relationship becomes focused on this contingency point. My non-relgious affiliation has made our relationship untenable. Irreparable. I’m tired of it. I am ashamed. I have failed you, mother and I am ashamed. I have inflamed you against me and committed the most egregious betrayal of your belief system. I have thrown my allegiances behind the dark powers of the devil himself. But its okay. You still respect me and appreciate me and love me the same way that I love my little girls with their angelic faces peacefully resting on their pillows, in their little beds. Your deep loves impels you to not give up on me. To keep sharing the truth with me. To call me arrogant and ignorant and self-excluding and narrow-minded and selfish. You are the only source of these messages in my life. You think you are representing the greatest source of love in my life, but the way your reflect it on me and the way that you define me in relationship to the truth comes across cruel. You are acting from love. You are speaking from conviction. You truly believe that without this shared connection our relationship will only be superficial and lacking any substance. Currently it feels like the only substance in our relationship is abusive evangelizing. Here is the TRUTH! If you do not get it then you are IGNORANT or SELFISH or WILLFUL and I will not stop sharing this TRUTH with you and making the health of our relationship contingent on my accepting this TRUTH. My discomfort with this arrangement is natural. Any push back I give to this dynamic opens me up for criticisms of trying to shut you up or shut me down. What would happen if I suddenly got real outspoken for PLURALISM. Somehow I don’t feel like that would be a position that would be received very well by you. I accept pluralism and believe it is necessary. We have been trying to live with our differences for a long time. I accept the legitamcy of other people’s views and appreciate that we live in a society that offers protections to a wide range of religious and political views and affiliations. The existence of this culture, this society is something that I deeply, deeply appreciate and have come to appreciate more and more deeply that more I have learned about the world we live in and the history of the human race. As I became an adult the conviction the desire to be a part of a church was just absolutely not there. It felt like a great relief to no longer attend church. It felt correct . My spirituality is grounded in a openness to the unknown, the unknowable. I have listened for God in the silence. I have cried out to god in unintelligible, inchoate—know my heart, you know my heart, how can I communicate to my mother. How can I love my mother? I thought I was seeking a private faith. You have framed this as assault on you.

You continually make it about you. Projecting on me your own unresolved relationship with your parents. This is okay. This is something we must accept. We must accept the power and the pain of those we love. The abilities and the liabilities. The strengths and the weaknesses. We have to compassionately try and fill in the blanks for people. We have to reach past ourselves. Ground ourselves in Faith and Hope and Love. This I understand. This I can feel. You can feel love and encouragement when it comes from a place of abundance. It feels warm. The people that really seem to know you and are concerned about you. How do you be true?

Instead you give me cant. Confusing Catholic cant that reads like incoherent, like a schizophrenic reciting an encyclical in a fever dream. You don’t know how to love me. You don’t know how to make me feel loved.

You can say all the words. You can make all the declarations, but how do you make the other person feel loved? How do you act loving when your first reaction isn’t just to listen or humbly agree or truly seeking understanding before trying to reframe the issue with your perspective. We cannot control one another’s mind. We cannot even control how other people understand things. We can attempt to understand how people understand things. We can reflect on how we understand things and why we believe things.

But we have to stay humble. Understanding that the OBVIOUS to you is not the OBVIOUS to other people.

For [it is] by grace you have been saved through faith, and this [is] not from yourselves, [it is] the gift of God, [it is] not from works, so that no-one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that in them we might walk. ([*Eph 2:8-10*](https://www.esv.org/Eph%202%3A8-10/), my translation)

Now I am not saying that you should not be triumphant about your faith, but if it is a gift, it has very little to do with you. It was very little to do with your wisdom. It was very little to do with your broadness. You are fucking lucky and I am unlucky and the lucky one is picking on the unlucky one for not only being unlucky but for also being willful, arrogant, self-excluding, narrow-minded, selfish, hateful to one’s mother, thinks his father is dumb, doesn’t understand the meaning of the Pentecost, you can’t even be yourself around me (which was weird for you to say, because I have said the same thing to you in the past), we can’t even have this important conversation because you are so ignorant and willful. I can’t even talk to you because you are so willful and arrogant. I get enundated with a lot of messages. Over the last two decades you have been the exclusive source for these messages. My family Highway is LOUSY with these billboards. Heading towards family means driving straight into these messages either directly or indirectly.

As you have said, I am free to pursue my own spirituality and my own vocation and my own way of life. Within the context of our family and its culture I am not free. I am hounded and condemned and singled out for my political and religious differences. Obviously these interfaces are broken. How do we fix them? How do we move past them. Especially if the very language we need to reach across to one another is broken. I spoke to you in Mandarin and you did not understand me. The words were foreign to you and you did not know the meanings behind them. I knew you did not know the meaning behind them. I am much farther along in my Mandarin study than you. To build up to that conversation I would have to break it down. I would have to bring you into my culture. I would have to make the words sound appealing, attracting your interest to them. Not pointing out all the ways that your Mandarin is insufficient. That you seem willfully opposed to understanding my language. You are arrogant. You are self-excluding. Now let’s say that I make your Mandarin abilities and interest in Mandarin the most important interface in our relationship. When we are together and you say something wrong or you can’t understand what I am trying to get across to you I get upset. I berate and belittle you. I remind you of how disappointed I am. How all I want to do is just love you and hold you. But I can’t, because you lack the suffieint curiosity.

I feel bad after a particularly abusive attack. And so I write you another note emphasizing my love and how I just want to share the good news with you. This just might do the trick. The off the cuff appeals to my intellect and emotions through knowledge and love and guilt have all been for naught… but… but… I refuse to give up hope. I am HOPE. I am LOVE. I am FAITH. One more meditation… this one on the TRINITY, cause the TRINTIY is the heart and SOUL of our FAITH. This simple facet of our faith elucidates so much of our beautiful Faith Tradition. I think he will understand this. I know I am banking on a pretty quick turnaround in his “lack of authentic inquiry” but maybe that last note and the texts and the phone call loosened some things up.

And it was June—a find time to wrestle with faith and linguistics with the heat and the girls restlessly picking on each other and mom sleeping through the day just completely exhausted, completely shredded by a depression that has stripped me of my helpmate at the exact time that I needed her the most.

I feel so alone right now, Mom. I know I have to be strong. I have to push past this. Consolidate down to that which is most important. My family. Writing. I have chosen. I have made a choice. I have in good faith tried to get over myself and dedicate myself to my family and commit myself to loving my family. I have tried to stay open to God. I don’t know how this could come across as anything less than disingenuous, but it is true. I have prayed to God consistently over the years. I am agnostic about the exact nature of God. The idea that God is that which transcends is the most intuitively true conception of God that I have come across. This is where I have sought God. In quieting. In silence. In the humility of unknowing. If this is arrogance, then it is arrogance. If this is narrowness, then this is narrowness. This is who I am. I accept you, Mother, and I love you. I accept myself, my limitations, my poor self-esteem, my inconsistency, my inchoate vocational vision, my unknowing, my narrowness, my mortality, my weakness, my betrayal, the weight of my faith, doubt, freedom.

I accept the legitimacy of diverse religious experiences. Whereas you maintain that there is only one correct was to be in relation to God. And you have cracked the code. You have A faith. You have A code. And this is a wonderful thing. We create meaning by participating in life. We create consciousness by coming in contact with one another. Our faith, our values our language these are all elements of culture.

Our relationship has become a microcosm of some of the political and religious and regional divides in our country. Our relationship has unfortunately become too much about these elements. These divisions. A chamber of intimacy or just a cell of kvetching.

Knowing that this road will never end.

How do you hold back the boiling- writing, stretching, living, recovering, ordering—abstraction arises out of order and not chaos.

I have a couple of issues with this. Firstly, if this is something that is fated, then what is the point of dithering about it. Secondly, if you oppose it or feel threatened by it or emotionally disturbed by it aren’t you kind of just resisting God’s plan?

Is not Trump an ANTI-CHRIST figure for the right. I mean, according to Revelation, everyone will love the ANTI-CHRIST. Though, you know, maybe not everybody. Politics are tricky. Let’s say at least a highly contentious majority really like the ANTI-CHRIST and quite possibly like a majority of the main Christian faithful. Which raises another question about how will everyone’s judgement be so poor, how will they be following the HOLY SPIRIT and still not be able to recognize the ANTI-CHRIST? Is that because its part of God’s plan, opening up the possibility that the HOLY SPIRT does not always reveal ultimate truth, but is still an agent of ultimate reality.

This battle of good and evil is a powerful way to get behind language. If you buy into this mindset then yes, everything is either GOOD or EVIL. Everything is a spiritual battle. Angels and Demons battling for each and every soul at every single minute. But wait are we in this long, great apocalyptic arch, or are we really just caught in these minor eddies, this microaggressoins where the trajectory of our personal apocalypse is being constantly negotiated and wrangled over, unless… unless we regularly go to mass, eat Jesus actually physical BODY and drink his actual physical BLOOD. And Jesus is the son of GOD. God impregnated a human woman with himself while also remaining present everywhere.

I think the brilliance of the trinity is that it does recognize the importance of our BODY, our MIND, and our SOUL. Our JESUS is our BODY, the HOLY SPIRIT is out MIND, GOD is our SOUL. Is this a spiritual robust conception, yes. Is it incredibly confusing and non-logical (frankly impossible, magical, transcendent). Getting over this initial skepticism to enter into the rich symbolic realm of the Catholic tradition—the many facets cut and developed over the centuries to enhance the light and support and love of its followers. This is a beautiful thing. It is a stumbling block for me that embracing Catholicism comes at the denial of the legitimacy of all other religious experiences. Relegating them to pagan or misguided, or arrogant or selfish or narrow. Especially, if this position is approached aggressively and punitively. Especially given that we live in a society with a very real an important universal culture carved out by our constitution and our shared lives as Americans and Westerners which grants each and everyone of us the right to pursue his or her own inspiration, conscience, experience, learning, relationships. This past year has impressed upon the importance of that distinction. These freedoms and the checks and balances of our government and the integrity of our institutions more deeply than ever had settled into the bedrock of apprehension of this life.

You ask me for a conviction that I cannot fake. When I do not fake you call me arrogant and ignorant and self-isolating.

I have sought the LOGOS. A widening of words. A widening of worlds. An every expanding network of meaning creation. The smoldering, pulsating state of being all around us. The objects—with their histories, acquisitions, sentiment, story, place within the aesthetic and pragmatic of one’s life.

My mother loves to emphasize that Catholicism is not a limiting religion. It is not bondage or coercion. It is an invitation into a system of thought and practice that is freeing, opening up new worlds of exploration. That said, I have a huge problem with JARGON systems. I say this, but I just made a short lived career off the culture creating power of language control. The dust has settled. She makes one more attempt. Asks me if she could send me a MEDITATION to me. She assures me that I can just delete it if I am not interested and that I will not be judged for how I react to it. This cool, nurturing bit of prose radiates with the toxicity that has built up over two decades of these “innoculous” attempts “sales calls”. And then the MEDITATION itself which is on the TRINITY which is not only an incredibly difficult and impossible and transcendent conception, but also something whose existence and centerpiece of Catholic/Christian thought strikes me as something that is way more fascinating for historic and psychological reasons than as a text that would illuminate the ultimate truth and practice of Cathlocism. I have tired. I really have. I have tried to think into and through and behind all the Capitalized and Christian abstracted jargon. I love that she is sending me on the heals of lamenting the inadequacy of words when the receiver of the message lacks the requisite unincredulous openness.

TRUTH is something that is apparent. Felt. Intuited. Sure. Grown. Cultivated. Entwred into with depth and understanding.

I feel like we can all get pretty far committing to most things…

06/05/2021

Emotional abuse from my mother.

She slapped me across the face in the Curtis lake house, something that she had never done before. The fact that she did it there, in front of family, to me so unnecessarily and out o the blue. I had called for a timeout Zach Morris style to something she had accused me of and was attempting to clarify the misunderstanding and she hauled up and slapped me right across the face. The rage I felt in that moment was incredible. I think you lost me then. I felt so betrayed. Embarrassed. Crestfallen. 4th of July cousins bliss to seering rage and physical pain. I walked out of the cabin and found some pines to cry in.

Oxford England. Evensong at the big Christ Church. A pint at the Hobgoblin serving pint across the street. Before Branden’s car accident and Heidi’s suicide. Before Laura and Peter joined William and became Catholic and William disappeared into his video games and regular masses, keeping the Covenant Headquarters running in their plot by the O’Hare across the parking lot from a Hooters. And evensong was worth making it to, the choir sang the mass and it was the most meditative, uplifting, settling, religious experience of my life. Combine that with the easy, relaxed camaraderie and pints with my fellow attendees, and long, slow walks back to our basement, north from the city center up Woodstock Road. And we did not go every day, or even every week, by while we were studying there that was Church for me and that was the last time I regularly attended church and was excited and interested in attending church.

When my father and mother came to visit at the Christmas break when my program had ended when spent some time in London, Oxford and Wales. This would prove ironic since years later my younger sister Emily would a young Brit on-line from Oxford with Welsh roots. She married him and settled in Chalbury, the town in the Cotswolds my friends and I had taken our overnight trip. I remember it being a tiny town. It’s train stop and hostile and pub and open throughway filed networks were enough of a draw for us. We had a really nice time just wandering fields and having dinner at the Pub and going to bed at a wildly reasonable time for a group of college kids cause it was now so dark in the town and so quiet.

Mother had perhaps been going through menopause which I do not want to come off as partronizing, but I do want to raise extenuating factors when it comes to her stormy behavior on the visit. For the most part I think she did have a good time and we have a fine time, but there were a couple of episodes that were disturbing—she freaked out about dad questioning her about the price of a CD and ranted about how she went from her father’s house to her husband’s house and how she earns the money and she can spend it if she wanted to, etc. This all seemed very reasonable, it was just the rage, the outburst, why was she bottling this up? But then some where in her fowl mood she turned on the church and said something about wanting to go to a *real* church. A church that is warm and where people come and greet you and talk to you and ask you where you are from or something? I am not completely sure, but that is the sense I got. The Anglican church was too similar to the stodginess of your Catholic roots and it put you off? All I know is that at this point of being farthest from the religious experience of my youth but then having the sense that even this was not acceptable, authentic to my mother, this kind of broke me. I saw my parents as people. I loved them fully and deeper. I no longer felt obligated to continue reading the same books as them or attend the same meetings.

06/11/2021

Writing as play

For some reason every time we would get a second cat, the first cat which has been the playful cat would become much less playful. The kitten would suddenly become the elder cat. Sometime coaxed into playing by the little one, though more often than not, the older cat would become more reserved, less active, less playful, less fun. More stolid and predictable perhaps, loving and willing to cuddle the younger cat and grooms it and share its food. And so despite the obvious acceptance and affection between the young cat and the old cat, the old cat just did not seem to have it in them to play.

It is difficult to contextualize just how incredible for me it has been to reorient myself to Tech. This process has taken longer because I have also been investing a lot of time into my writing. By combining my writing with a new conception of file management and project development my writing has completely taken off and provided a much needed emotional ballast over this year. It has been nice to have a bunch of material to distill down. John McPhee’s *4th draft* which I ran into last September and read three chapters of launched me on this who new process that has yield thousands of hand written pages that I am now working to funnel into a number of different projects that have begun coalescing almost unbidden. It is truly a bit surreal and I while I have no idea where it is all heading, in the terms of the computer work I have been doing, reading and writing are by far by favorite my favorite and most sanity inducing, maintaining, expanding practices. Getting a few poems “completed” as well as some personal letters have felt the perfect first steps to some of my caterwauling chicken-scratch to catch the light of day.

Perhaps since the arrival of Helena, or since COVID, or since losing my job and launching on this process of career change, drift, reboot, what-have-you, my ability to play with the girls has precipitously dwindled (decreased?). I should say I am up for it sometimes and I do in good faith try to make up for it in other ways, but sometimes with the stress I came carrying and the plates I am spinning and the never-ending struggle to carve out solid blocks of uninterrupted hours of productive concentration, I just do not posses the wherewithal to play.

* Mudgie and Wudgie.
* Little wounded deer
* Naughty Monkey stories
* The Hugo Story (repetitive story emphasizing transitions and what not)

But now here I am writing about these games with some sort of gusto. And it is at this moment that I realize that I can still play. Words, language, *doing language*, writing, reading and on and on. While writing has always been an ambition of mine and something that I have been slowly cultivating over the years, I have never had the feeling that I have had a good process, a procedure, a map, a green light to guide me. I was just sort of stabbing in the dark. Lacking enough time to really give to the issue over the years failed to gain much traction as far as “finishing pieces” and felt like I lacked an aesthetic or a mission to the work.

What has changed this year is that I understand my writing process does not need to be an act of prescriptive oracle spouting first of all. I feel like good writing always comes across very learned and sure of itself and complete and self-contained. In the past I have found it difficult to imagine doing this sort of writing because day to day I do not feel this way. I do not feel complete, nor do I feel self-contained. I feel fragmented and consumed. Writing has indeed become less about taking up my quill and forming finally wrought sentences stroke by stroke and more about learning how to open a vein and spill out as much material as I possibly can, my faith acting being that along the way I will “write past” a of the debris and stagnate psycho-babbling loops and process writing will bubble up with less and less frequency, making way for the fresh ideas, the new combinations.

Today’s breakthrough of thinking of a David and Marie modeled couple that I could superimpose betsy and my relationship over. It would be an easy entry some themes such a relationships, obsessions, interests, talents, discipline, regret, deception, perception. This just kind of bubbled up is now anchoring the “Art School” project which had previously felt pretty insubstantial. Also, this entry, while certainly strongly in the process writing category, does contribute to honing my necessary mission statement, my aesthetic, my cultural contribution, my vibe, my nexus of interests and enthusiasms, my largeness, my smallness. The goal is to understanding this deeply and come to this understanding daily. Pursuing the silence that will one day be my forever home. Listening forward into eternity. Listening back to the accumulating ghosts.

06/03/2021

It truly would appear that we have arrived at a scenario where I am locked out and you are locked in.

Mother-- what is the endgame here? I admit to my selfishness and willfulness and humbly fall into place within the Catholic cosmos, if this is how you are determined to frame things. I accept my heretic status within your context and thus choose to extract myself from that context as I have been rejected and labeled unacceptable in your sphere. If I am unacceptable in your sphere. If the way I communicate is unacceptable and they way I live my life is unacceptable then I fear the only really plausible option is to self-exclude. Is to establish my adult distance from you which I had though was established, but obviously was not because these issues just keep bubbling up over and over again. Making me feel like a bad son. Putting me on the defensive about things that I do not feel compelled to defend. You have created a situation where my only option seems to be protection and distance. I accept this. It has taken me a long time to accept this (4/2022), but I have come a long way in this process and I accept it now. I accept this distance and with root in this distance and what returns after having let it all go will be sufficient. We cannot hold on. We must let go. We must release. Though we do not know why.

I do not accept that your Catholic faith is sufficient for the whole world. There is something culturally genocidal about your position. All other faiths and cultures and lifestyles are blind and evil. Even though you benefit from these other unideal lifestyles each and every day. In fact with all of these other lifestyles and value systems the greatness of this country which you implicitly or sometimes explicitly use as proof our your superior worldview only exists because of our dynamism of diversity and the foundation of slavery and native land appropriation which made the development of this country possible in the first place. Not to mention the huge stock pile of weapons and willingness to inflict disproportionate carnage on our enemies to prove the favored status under heaven position of our pluralistic society (which you would give Christianity all the credit for but none of the blame). Mr. Birkey’s whitebred worldview. MLK solved racism, the US saved the world and proved our moral superiority by our willingness to use nukes … that they free market brings freedom and peace. No… this system is about profits. If you can get on the right side of those profit streams and figure out how to get that cash while at the same time not just totally losing your mind, then more power to you.

But the idea that Catholicism is sufficient for everyone, that is a terrible conclusion for the majority of the people in this world. Especially the protestants, who were so close, but just not quite there in your opinion. Mr. Birkey believes that as long as you put the emphasis on Christ and having a personal relationship then you are in a good church. He liberably brings the Mormons into this fold. See, ol’ Mitt Romney has made some in roads with his people both economically and politically.

Whatever happened to they will know we are Christians by our love?

Seriously… where do we go from here? How do we approach this conversation not as a zero sum game, not simply as a performance of our innate rightness, a voice giving to our grieveance and frustration and disappointment, but as actual engagement, relationship, mutually supportive dialogue.

How do I escape your corrosive loop or repeative, soothing rationalizations.

A faith act -- the value is there. Believe me. And if you don’t believe me, just wait until you see how people are going to react to you in this piece. The conversations that you’ll have. The cultures that you will effortlessly have an in into. The value is there, you just have to believe it is there. See I am just saying words, but if you believe in the meaning behind my words then you will believe that my words are true. But if you don’t believe in that meaning then the full profundity of my words won’t be able to come through.

“What do you think happened at the Pentecost?”

It’s simple… straight-forward.

See we were founded by Christians seeking religious freedom.

Then we defeated slavery in the Civil War and MLK ended racism and we defeated the Russians proving that they and all they represent are evil and backwards and that we are enlightened and innate right about everything and can thus be super self-satisfied with our Action Shoppers and mainstream couponing and well-stocked cupboards, piling up with duplicates and triplicates of the products we have been loyally collecting for 8 decades now.

My weird Catholic friends, my love of even song and the more contemplative tone of the Catholic faith, then my mother raging about wanting to go to a “real church” where people approach you after the sermon and have you fill our a visitors card and invite you for coffee and sheet cake.

The way you apply your faith to our relationship is off-putting to me. This is just something that I need to get over. Forgive myself for. Get tough. Take the space that I need. You have consistently been the only person in myself to angrily attack me about religion and politics and culture. Discussions quickly turn into condemnations and attacks with you heaping insults on me for my arrogance and ignorance and willfulness.

While I have felt compelled to try and keep the peace or just feel awkward and shut my mouth, this has led me to feeling repressed, condemned and ignored. This situation has been compounded by my decade of working a job that entailed a great deal of emotional and intellectual repression. I had to suck up a lot and work hard at shit I did not care about at all and the cumulative affect on my psyche was super negative and could not have NOT contributed to my low feelings of self-worth and confidence, leading me into the consistently negative cycle of burying my feelings and trying to get over myself and stop being such a head case and just suck it up!

I do feel abandoned though. I feel like my mother and my father have abandoned me for my lack of openness to the truth.

Rural urban divide.

Language

Communication gaps, values gaps, maturity gap, focus gap, fragmentation gap, openness and flexibility gap

How do you communicate with a cult member? What should be the approach?

Root | connect | extend

06/02/2021

You believe that I have taken an illegitimate position. I believe you have taken an illegitimate position.

You work very hard to maintain the battle lines you draw and then you seem generally surprised when you find me on the other side trying to pick up the pieces of my shattered self after you blindside me with a unkind grenade.

06/01/2021

Letter from Mom sent after our ***Pentecost***conversation.

I had called to try and explain why I felt put off and kind of alienated by her “The Holy Spirit offers guidance by Invitation.” Follow up with a few rounds of hammering the point that I don’t understand because I refuse to understand. The truth is self-evident, but I choose blindness over sight. All of my problems are my own creation. My vocational struggles are all connected to my disconnection with God. If I were to ask the Holy Spirit to take the reigns of my life then both my spiritual and vocational challenges would be resolved.

You focus on what we cannot talk about and call shallow that which we can talk about. I need more distance from you. I need more distance from my brother. I need more distance from my father. Writing can provide a way. Writing can provide a buffer and an approach. I believe this and I am acting to try and make it happen.

***Until there is real inquiry, words seem to get in the way…***

*Dear Aaron,*

*After 3 pages of pouring my heart out in trying to “explain” it became evident that until there is real inquiry, words seem to get in the way. Language* ***does*** *matter—but desire to understand seems to be a precursor despite the language used.*

*My desire has nothing to do with forcing religion on you and everything to do with an indescribable Freedom in Christ (language you can’t understand unless you desire to).*

*Even the rocks and trees sing of God’s glory—so if I speak of what I know to be* ***good*, *true*,** *and* ***beautiful*** *on occasion … try to comprehend, it is out of pure* ***love*** *not attempting to impugn, shame or guilt.*

*My parents likely felt this way with me… so much they wanted me to understand about God’s love, but all I saw was constraint. He is patient and you have a foundation of love since He created you.*

*So much, Love*

*Aaron*

If it is arrogance to believe I am on the right path, then what does confidence feel like. My mother’s continued insinuation that I am not on the right path and that my inability to achieve vocational actuality is all about my being unopen to the truth of the holy spirit. I haven’t found my dream job because I have not properly asked the Holy Spirit for guidance (i.e. I am not Catholic). But what about Oxford and her raging about wanting to find a *real church*.

This is not a zero sum game. I am not trying to out argue with my mother. I am merely trying to find a way for me to interface with her and not have it be this really fraught thing. I want to give her her proper respect and I want to demand the proper respect be given back to me. When I tried to address the “passive-aggressive” evangelizing, I was trying to say that kind of evangelizing does not work. It seems to simply emphasize our differences rather than make any kind of a good faith effort to draw our relationship closer. There are certain messages that draw us closer, there are certain messages that push us apart. I think we have agreed multiple times in the past about the dangers of texts messages. How the tone of a text message can be very ambiguous. Difficult to interpret. Emojis too. They bring in another level of ambiguity. Are they heart felt or overly casual and kind of smug?

You have been overly casual and smug in your expectation that I accept your religious doctrine. I have been refusing for 24 years. This does put us in a different relationship than you have with your other children. And yes, there are certain things that we can talk about together more fluently than others, that is obvious. My point is how do we move away from having so much of our interaction be about me not being Catholic? If we can’t, then we can’t and that is just kind of our relationship, I guess, I suppose that is what I was taking issue with.

This point is very important to you. That it is my choice. You told me on the phone. And in your text. And then to really driven the point home you wrote me a hand written note stating you really gave it some thought and you have come to the same conclusion.

It feels like we are having two different conversations here. Which is interesting and fascinating and I am truly attempting to feel my way into what the hell is going on here.

This is not a zero sum game.

Confidence is a feeling of self-assurance arising from one’s own abilities or qualities.

I believe you are insecure and have a low self-esteem and therefore feel the need to try and chip away at mine. You have always been like this. Either beating yourself up in some kind of sick act of self-immolation or picking apart your children with an increasingly prickly church lady mawkishness.

Confidence is a state of being clearheaded either that a hypothesis or prediction is correct or that a chosen course of action is the best or most effective.

My mother has always had confidence issues. She projected this conflicted sort of passive-aggressive confrontational approach or attitude. You can hear the judgement, you can hear the lack of accord.

I am assuming that most of my family is either upset with the election results or actually believes they are illegitimate.

How can I respond with peace and calm and confidence and love to blatantly false political claims or the support or defence of blatantly false political claims.

In my opinion former President Trump is a piece of shit. Let me clarify. He is a piece of shit because he does not care about this country. He “leads” us through a torturous and caustic 4 years and it was not all that productive, nor very successful. But his ass goes on and on spouting worthless superlatives as if his achievements should be etched up on the façade of Mt. Rushmore. It’s a façade all right!

You know what happens when you cover for a liar and support a liar though? You become a liar. You are a liar and you have debased yourself our of arrogance, hubris, short-sighted self-righteousness and power-hungriness, posturing for power and so fool fully following and being beholden to the contemporary political currents has poisoned you in your cozy retirement bed.

05/26/2021

Yesterday we had another blow up… I truly regret this, but I will also say, that I in good faith tried to express myself to my mother why her passive-aggressive backhanded patronizing/distancing evangelism did not make me feel love. Instead it made me feel rejected and felt like my mother was constructing this false narrative of my vocational arc, placing the cause of my heretofore inability to launch a forever career, on my arrogance at having not asked the holy spirt for guidance. This is an interesting line of attack considering she has 6 adult children and 6 out of 6 have been unable to launch their forever career. I am happy that I did not open this line of argument. I am disappointed that my mother would not receive my comments as constructive and being put forward in an act of good faith relationship building, drawing closer, than wanting to further distance myself. I tried to explain this and she stated that the relationship was irreparable. Which felt wildly overstated. Our relationship is beyond repair because I won’t attend your church. That is fucked up. I find some solace in how fucked and petty and immature it is. She is so fucking hysterical sometimes. Still that teen just back from her pregnancy confirming doctor’s appointment.

She carried me and birthed me out.

You realize your chosen role in my life. My hell bringer, hell harbinger, hell’s message reminder. The only person who calls me arrogant and the only person who has .

Two facts:

# of people who have called me arrogant: 1 (you)

# of 6 children who have launched their forever career: 0

If I don’t make you understand, you will judge me harshly; I can’t make you understand.

“What about water? Remember when you wanted to do something with water? What happened to that?” This is unbelievelable she is attempting to project her insecurity and uncertainly on me. Shake my confidence in my tech effort? I am quiet for a moment and then it comes to me.

“Mom, I am water.”

Grave digger, RA, waiter, teacher, salesman, interpreter, programmer, writer, rural, urban, domestic, international, English, Mandarin, Ruby, diet, culture, habits… I am water…. Extrovert, introvert, active, passive…

I took issue with the insinuation that I would not resolve my vocational question until I had finally and firmly returned to the Catholic church (invited the Holy Spirit to offer guidance).

My point with language is that we choose language that the other person will understand and if we don’t think they will understand then we try to find creative ways to explain it to them if it is important and sometimes we just have to show and we cannot tell.

Sometimes when you are around someone from a different culture these differences and feeling the need to explain them can be exhausting.

You are making a big deal about this. You are the one that is forever bombarding me with uncontextualized jargon and sloganeering. “Thank God for Great Americans like Tucker Carlson.” MAGA. Pro-Life. Dittohead. The Blah in Blah.

What was her point—that he would remain in darkness until he changed his heart. My point that our relationship is adversely affect by your approach to evangelism. It does not make me feel very good. Or very welcome or very accepted. Your worldview is obviously “Okay, whatever, Aaron, but when you are done living in darkness, the peace that passeth understanding is just over here. All you have to do is come and get it. And its too bad that you are not open to the truth because if you were you would have the Jesus Truth (which you have no idea about because again you are arrogant and willful and hateful to your mother). I know its been 24 years since you last regularly attended church, but hour apostle Paul moment might just be right around the corner. He is Patient. And wants you to be in the Light of Truth. He wants you to have that truth and longs to share it with you. Just like my parents longed to have me understand so many things that I couldn’t understand while they were still living.

05/19/2021

Mother this turmoil is killing me; its teaching me to kill.

05/12/2021

This year has been one of intense career development

05/04/2021

My mother radiates Geiger counter exploding anxiety like a racoon from Chernobyl. Memory and worry and trouble shed from her to me. I have traveled in her womb, consumed her blood, dwelt with her through two decades of stress and celebration, calm and anxiety. Judgement and generalization. It’s just like Doug. It’s just like with Doug. No it is fucking not just like with Doug, but you truly lost me at that myopic read of our relationship. I become Doug. Ben becomes Cecil. Everyone settles into an archetype. Like someone you once knew. How do you stop from doing this? How do you just stay present and away and focused and interest in and connected to people? How do you employ these little helpful cribbing tricks, these quick trick pigeon-holing manuevors, these necessary conclusions that we know we should and should not jump to, that there are connotations and impressions that we believe are true, that gives us the shared knowledge that you and I both know what we are talking about. We don’t have to spell it out. We have an understanding. But what if the understanding you think we have and the understanding that I think we have are not the same thing. What if that knowing looks feels less like acceptance and like-thinking commadraderie and more of tacit purity test or challenge.

I try not to riddle my speech with explicit or implicit PURITY tests. This has become harder in recent years, which I suppose is a phenomenon of all political cycles, but has seemed particularly exacerbated this year, this cycle.

And then you are dead, Mother. You are dead. You have died. I have killed you with my imagination. I have striped you from my being. I have missed you and grieved you and attempted to feel your presence beneath the white sheet pulled up and over your head. You lived in love. You lived in love. You ministered to people’s health. You listened to their problems. You blurred the line between patient and friend. Between socializing and practice. Your practices have always been all tangled up— your vocation, your religion, your politics, your opinions.

You are formable mother. Your way of life has led to unassailable flourishing. Lots of grandkids. Successful marriages of children. Good health and financial security. What is not to like? You aggressive politics. Your arrogance that you have it all figured out. That your good fortune is the judgement of God. Making my psychological and financial and emotional challenges somehow proof of my failure to humble myself before God, which is also now about humbling myself before Donald Trump and my family.

There is a way to be a Cubs fan and not be annoying. There is a way to be a Cubs fan and be really fucking annoying. You are a part of something and you want everyone to join and so you try to figure out how to entice people to join and engage with them so they understand the deep beauty and sense of belonging and nourishment that they would receive by joining. Or you flip it and simply believe that your team is the best and that anyone who does not support this team is kind of stupid and just totally missing out on one of the most compelling aspect of human existence in general and 2021 in particular.

There is nothing wrong with being a huge Cubs fan. But there is not reason you should give other people shit about not being a Cubs fan and you should not actively attack or mock other people for supporting other sport’s teams or organizations.

You have always had this cold dismissal of people that you don’t understand. You have positioned yourself as superior and deeper than other people. More sincere. More dedicated. More open. More enthusiastic. Purer. More just. Honest. Kind. Compassionate. More moderate. Healthy. And yet you live in the UP where most people are not as well off as you or as healthy as you or as educated as you.

All right you spend a decade in a situation where you are better educated and better off than 95% of the people that you serve. And then do that for a decade. And then let’s compare that with my experience of decade of serving people that were in most cases both educationally, career-wise, and financially in a much better place than I was. Most sales I made represented several months to an entire year of wages for me. This individual was just adding to their collection, or treating their high school grad, or surprising their fiancé who was spending how much on the wedding!?! If the wedding gift was $10,000, they I guys… wow… I am not bringing this up to make a moral judgement on what kind of life one should lead or what kind of people it is more beneficial to have interactions with, I do raise this difference though to reflect on the magnitude of the difference in lived experiences between you and I. It’s really astounding. We live in the same country. Have occupied the same region, most of our lives, and, but, yet, still our lives are so different, the cast of characters we have interacted with has been so different. That books we have read are very different. The language we fill our heads with is very different.

What to make of all this difference? How do you wrap your mind around it without losing your mind, or mistreating other people with your bullying certainty? You can bully with certainty. You can bully with doubt. Sometimes things are said to clarify. Sometimes things are said obfuscate. Sometimes things are said to convince. Sometimes things are said to invite. Sometimes things are said to understand. Sometimes things are said to punish and distance. Sometimes things are said by mistake.

05/01/2021

Include something about how writing things down and saving thme and committing to information organizational strategies, but in an agile manner. Getting comfortable with learning new tools and getting good at judging what is a good tool and what is a bad tool. What is an expensive solution. What is an inexpensive solution. Learning to think a new way. Which is what I was not entirely sure how that transformation would happen. Not knowing to knowing. Not being bale to hold all the parameders in my head at the same time to being abel to hold them and move them around a little bit. Internalizing the architecture. Perhaps something akin to Anatomh being souch a fundamental monolith in the medical field. That steep learning curve of just covering the basics. Building your context for what all the interesting practical, applicable technique and skill set are built upon. Learning a new way to think about Data and Information. Information technologies. What connects a librarian and a data processor.

4/27/2021

You’ve have always claimed to seek God’s way, but you have always been on Mary’s way. And sometimes in her way. And sometimes your Way and God’s way overlap. And sometimes your way and Mary’s way overlaps. And God and Mary’s way always overlap. And all ways led to the same place.

4/21/2021

What did you say to me when I told you that I was interested in pursuing tech and programming, you said something like, no— you have to touch people, somehow accusing me of giving into this new age of interaction. Capitulating the right way of living and doing things and interacting with people. A far cry from your selfless administrations to the good people of the hamlet of Happy Rock. You said no, you had no idea what you were talking about, but you said no and expressed your concern that it was a mistake. To your late 30s son. Now the larger question is why would your late 30s son even feel obliged to give weight to your opinion and the answer there is I have maintained my respect and love for you over the years despite your obvious deficits as a person and a mother. The narrowness of your world view. The prickliness with which you preemptively defend your positions, categorize your political grievances wrapped around the language of your spiritual journey. I believe deeply connecting your eternal spiritual journey so intimately and intensely to the temporal political reality of the day is misguided and damaging to both your religious and political projects. This is not to say that your spiritual practice should not inform your political practice, but it is to say that you should be warry and aware that your political practice is informing your spiritual practice.

During our conversation in October, our argument, whatever. I brought up the topic of hell and instead of giving me a Catholic or even a Christian answer you responded with a political one, framing hell within the context of the buzzy and weaponized Cancel Culture. You made a theological statement of faith about the nature of ultimate reality that was both completely lacking in theology or faith, all in some elaborately rationalized effort to seamlessly attach the narrative of the good work of God to the latest crusader sent into battle by the GOP. And, that, in my opinion is a mistake. Which means that you are free.

How do free people love? How do free people interact? Do they rub each other’s perceived politics in each other’s faces? Do they try and express openly their opinions and needs, or is there something more sophisticated, civilized, mature, a considered approach that we could pursue, develop, invest in.

Perhaps this comes across as weak, wishy-washy, only achievable by believing contradictory things simultaneously. Our system is totally corrupt and getting corrupter, but its all we’ve got, so we’d better defend the shit out of it. A two-party political system will never address everyone’s needs in the way that they need to be addressed, but a least there is room for debate. At least there are multiple perspectives that can give voice, announce, articulate, lash out, demonize, insult, belittle, demean, embarrass, chastise.

You were wise to suggest that we reboot the nature of our relationship. Your capitulation is all I have every wanted. If you can truly accept me as your non-Christian son and carry the wound I have inflected upon you with grace then we can continue to develop our relationship. I feel like I have made an effort to not be controversial. Since my ridiculous drunkenness in 2016. Thinking back I don’t regret that at all. It was childish. It was stupid. It was simple minded and ugly. But perhaps the most honest and direct way I have been able to express my discontent with being the family “black sheep” or outsider and the discomfort that has created. I don’t feel at home with you anymore. When I hugged you to say goodbye on the 4th, I cried. You did not cry. I cried because we were poltically and religiously distant and I did not see anyway to overcome this distance. Just that morning your had said that the Confederate flag was not racist. And that there were a lot of good things about the pre-war south. You were aggressively against Black Lives Matters as an organization— Marxists, anti-family, etc. You drew a direct line to the devil from BLM. Seemingly looking for any excuse to ignore the magnitude of the racial inequities in this county that have resulted from our history, our system, our culture.

Holding my baby in the driveway, reminded me about the horrors on abortion. This was a very distancing and ugly thing. Some sort of “pure hearted” attempt to spin your mother and grandmother guilt inducing powers into a political pitch. How should I feel here? Do you want me to drop to my knees and beg your forgiveness for ever having voted for an abortion rights supporting politician? Or do I just keep on as I am, providing you with the proof of my lostness, my selfishness (only care about the wellbeing of my children and don’t give a shit about other children or unborn children). There can be no nuance. There can be no disagreement.

You pushed me in our conversation in October. You just didn’t understand. Why didn’t I have deep motives for the decision that I was making. I didn’t want to discuss it with you. I have been carrying more stress this year than ever before. A stress that is invisible or not, a stress without a clear path or timeline to relief. I have tried to deal with this stress through simplifying and focusing, shaving off interests and pass times and travel and making plans to keep digging and studying and overcoming my tech illiteracy. Within this context to be attacked by Hans in front of the Emily’s relatives and then by you on the phone, I think I snapped a little. My family, which is in theory this boon in my life, did not seem like much of a boon. My family who loves me and is supportive of me seemed to have no fucking idea of where I was or what I was going through or how you could pitch in to mitigate the stress and frustration and tension I had been living with. Instead, it felt opportunistic that in the midst of my desperate attempts to just dig in and focus and put my families economic future ahead of the intense by fleeting political inferno, and to just put my head done and develop some new skills, I was being completely abandoned. You were taking pains to remind me that I was on the other side, the unacceptable side, the side that filled you with rage, the side that was diabolic and unAmerican, the side that didn’t respect our shared history or values, the side the was only hell bent on killing as many babies as possible. Thanks for that.

4/16/2021

But fear not. Get back home to my beloved.

Beautiful children keeping us grounded in what is important.

Bye, daddy, go too work. Bid turmoil of mid or early or late life crises. The best of time and the worst of times rolls on like a continuous booked show. A hit for all seasons. A burlesque of lifes achievements and humiliations. Father time, brother death, sighs of release when everyone’s bedded down safe. Morning will be here soon, drift to sleep in the silver light of the waxin’ moon.

04/12/2021

His writer’s heart splayed open for them. He needed a soft place. That secret calm settled intimacy of family was something that he sorely missed. Felt more settled with betsy’s family.

He was trying to take truth and split it. He was trying to take love and expand it. Stretch it out and around everything he knew. Embracing over all the bad and all the good, the just and the unjust, the efficient and the stomach sickenly wasteful, the hopeful, the despairing, all the disparate pulsating aspects of the word, or the world, of the all.

04/10/2021

Mother feels terrible about this-- all of her feelings of guilt about neglecting us in her early student years-- she was so busy studying, trying to become a doctor--

Betsy is such a nurturing mother-- she has way more wherewithal for fostering a healthy growth in the girls that I feel my parents did. They were very young when they had Hans and then I came along right when Hans was probably getting to be a little easier to manage.

My mother smoking cigarettes on the drive over to Iron River when she would go over there on weekends to do *Locum Tenums*.

Going to that cabin and feeling cold and having gotten that little ROBOT toy out of the bubble bauble vending machine and getting our car stuck in the mud in the woods and then my day getting into that garage and starting up a tracker and using that tracker to pull our car our of the mud.

04/07/2021

Purity test -- why are you arguing with me about who I am voting for?

Tried to just stay away from Trump. She wants me to vote for Trump. Why are you asking me this? Purity test?

Nobody asked you. Ask questions. Don’t just flood opinions. Depict. Describe. Make come alive. Place very carefully. Clearly.

04/06/2021

Are you political leanings completely unacceptable to you? Then that is a problem. My family’s politics gets all puffed up during an election year. We all get all frothed up. Whipped crazy into a ra

04/04/2021

Funnel my narrative into your narrative which is God’s narrative but is your narrative because your’re the one providing the commentary, when really we are all a part of God’s narrraitive and living in sin, living in sin, living in piety with nothing but a bit of atmosphere between us and the stars everlasting.

You want to be a spiritual leader, but you are hyper partisan—do you want to be my mom or my Imam? You can’t mix the two. The world of politics will always soil the world of faith. 1/6/2021 was a black eye to your cause—your politics, your line of thinking and if you can’t see that then damage down was helluva lot deeper than just cosmetic.

This is not a zero sum game. A zero sum life. If you are right then what about everyone else. And I don’t mean just being hell bound, but beyond that-- if everyone who is not a Roman Catholic is then lost, in darkness, in rebellion, ignorant, narrow-minded, confused, evil, why did you support Trump and his “Big Lie” campaign? 1) Were you dumb? 2) Were you racist? 3) Hate Democracy? 4) Or just too pure to be held accountable when the means of your holy ends start sounding shrill and angry and aggressive and aggrieved and unchristian and the Governor becomes a Nazi and your son’s mind becomes a narrow liberal one.

“In the beginning was the word and the word was with us— and the word was in us.”

Something about WORDS having meaning, having import— being weaponized—going beyond anecdote, beyond principle and metaphor— impression, sense, connection.

Perhaps I am here to test your love? I am here to test you. I am love escaping your sphere—finding freedom in my mistakes and humility and shame and I have been bled of my culture and bled of my interests and bilked of my confidence in my mother tongue.

I reject this dynamic—

I have left the church—I am on the outside- no, I do not reject it—I embrace it—the beauty of a Buddhist ceremony—the limits of deep expression lead to ritual. Ritual, the ark of the covenant.

Where are the real Christians, she asks?

Remember when we were in Oxford and I took you to evensong at Christ Church’s Cathedral and you were unsatisfied and said you wanted to go to a REAL church—where was the enlightenment? Where was the maturity? Pissed off and in crisis and “controlled” by dad because he was too frugal. And that was right before I started smoking pot—which is kind of interesting – 20 some years ago—I have now been smoking pot longer than I have not been smoking pot.

A repressive state makes heroes of artists of conscience, artists of individuality, artists of ideas, spontaneity, individuality, self, culturally transcendent. You cannot transcend the state. You cannot transcend the institution that I am representing.

You keep framing this as I am narrow minded, I need to be quiet and bite my tongue, I am disrespectful. I am the difficult one here. I am the problem. I am not the problem. You are not the problem. Obviously the whole thing is way bigger than us. And we are all shot through with insecurities and disappointments.

Let’s stop pretending it is so obvious and apparent. And let’s also not forget that it is heretical to believe that you can find god through reason.

Bragging about you humility.

Ground your humility in the absoluteness of God.

I’m super humble and so is he, but he’s going to fuck you right up for being so goddamned evil.

04/03/2021

Working under assumptions we are free. Free to debate policies. Free to demonize our opponents. I am a heretical outsider. I do not feel the protection of the family. Human fallibility inhibits us from. Makes mother say she should have loved me more nearly every time she sees me.

My parents are both really intense. Insinuating that I may have been sexually molested by Dougie Ebaud’s dad and just, you know casually bringing it up at dinner at some relaxed bar before we enjoy a pitcher of PBR. And why was I left for long period of time. My mother going into her super guilty and apologetic voice—asking me if I remember anything—I don’t, but thank you for planting that possibility in my mind. A moment up there with when you so casually explained to me that the lumps in my chest were breast buds.

**03/31/2021**

Father—industrious, disciplined, good house manager, resourceful

Though angry, inarticulate, stress carrier, griper, over-caffeinated raging and ranting

Mother—intelligent, compassionate, capable, dedicated, loving, embracing of the idea of children and life

Though hyper analytic and judgemental, unnecessarily hypothetical, dominates conversation with the latest thing she has been reading. Has she ever thought about writing. Keeping a file on different topics. Collectiong quote and her thoughts on the dieas. Material for future talks, letters, essays, articles, etcetera.

My parents are such good and full and real people and I love and accept them and loving and accepting them are a part of loving and accepting myself—self-compassion more important than self-confidence.

**03/28/2021**

The ability to be confident in what you know while understanding and accepting that it is not everything. But then what do you do with your unknowing, your ignorance (eternal, cosmic ignorance) which will never be resolved. How do you respond to this state-- these bad feelings, disappointment, fatigue, uncertainty, longing, divisive political messaging. The genius of politics is to divide. The mission of state is to unite, unify, standardize, sustain, develop, ensure freedom, prosperity, protection of rights.

What are we talking about and why?

You position is conservatism is moral. Conservatism is correct.

**03/27/2021**

Maybe I will have my Paul moment and suddenly see the light. I say this to play into her schema. And she loves it and concedes that it is her hope upon hope—she should have loved me more, she should have protected me from the sexual predator she intimates may have sexually molested me she brings up casually at dinner. What the fuck? What the fuck?

We’ve drawn some different conclusions and now have to manage the implications of those conclusions. We have to take responsibility for the fallout.

General- perspective alleviating commitments:

“Give it up to God.”

“Give it to God.”

“You say that, but then you obviously don’t.”

**03/25/2021**

Are you a Christian 1st or an American 1st? Seriously, it is an interesting question.

If you are an American 1st then the universality of your beliefs and message become muffled in a tribal regional ethnic and mythological context that cannot help but corrupt the universality and transcendent of your belief system by its overwhelming subjectivity. The narrow naming of your beliefs becomes American-Christian—you gain great strength of situation and perspective, but you also surrender your grounding in the truly transcendental, spiritual beyond. Politics is myth, but it seems to me that you have mixed it up a little too deeply with your religion to very poor effect.

03/22/2021

Proud male robins conspiring together on the easy slope of the bay window’s tarpaper roof.

And this is an antedote, this reading, this blind falling into books, words, impressions, allowing the author’s to comingle in my imperfect understanding. To linger awhile in the new left. Spiritual seeker, still holding his bible, a long way from a pew, but without spite, without malice, but rejection is malice, opting out is attack. Disengagement is betrayal. Conservativeness approaches sneakily and I am left to answer for the fallen world.

Are we in the realm of the political? Are we in the realm of the real? Are we in the realm of the cultural? The realm of the spiritual. She drags her spiritual into the world. As much as she wants her spirituality to be set apart, as something that the world cannot touch, the world cannot defile, she drags it into the political sphere and tears it and wrenches it and her roiling insecurity and ill-will make for a turmultous river to navigate.

Losing yourself to the process, to life. Not worrying about how it will come across. Slowly sharing. Listening. Truly listening. Will politics solve this problem? How have you been feeling about retirement? Aging? How is your health? How are you practicing good health? What have you been cooking with? Moderation. Wellness. Healthfulness. Knowing what not to do. Not doing what you have done. Living in the fullness of the moment. Virtuous loop. Feeding creation. Feeding learning. Feeding cultivation and fostering of health and goodness. Creating. Not fearing. Not judeging. Engaging. Listening. Following the river. Remaining just the same as the river. The river ins everywhere. It runs through the mountains. Runs to the sea. Runs to the mountains. Runs from the sea. Searches out the sky, alights from thunderheads on the white windmill giants of Miner and Hopedale. Normal and C’Aceur Alcoyle (Idaho).

Lucky to be here in the morning. Lucky to be lost in our thoughts on writing, reflection. Framing. Exploring. Giving yourself over to the process brings a freedom. Trusting the process brings a sort of freedom. Nurturing the process brings a certain freedom. This is the child that takes care of the man. The family. Our life. It is the wellspring. You threw your weight to the right. I stepped left, babysteps to leave the family.

I reject your narrative that there is something wrong with me.

That there is something diabolic in my “refusal” to accept Christ’s invitation to dine. You are as heretical as I am it appears. Wasn’t so and so burned at the stake for being a little too enthusiastic about reasons interface to the divine. Faith is a gift, no? You can impart culture but you cannot impart faith. Faith is out of your hands, no? And yet, you have pretenses of being an arbitar of faith. An apologist. An evangelist. Bringing your rage and insecurity to comingleith the sacraments. Defile the very ideal of purity, you’ve spent your life refining in your mind. And but yet still, I am the liberal narrow mind, because in the midst of battling through my personal limitations and capstoned wherewithal am attempting to teach myself web development and computer science. I am stressed, I am battling self doubt as I ride the Keningsin curve from the fool’s great height to the learner’s value of despair. Lost un the labriyths of my accruing knowledge and the wobbly metaphors I emerge with to explain my deep dives. Amidst the most contentious political season of our lives and during a pandemic that has thrown our economic situation in a completely new arrangement, snapping the decade of consistent earning and commission checks and sales effort and focus, the kinetic, fast-talking, grievance swallowing, suck it up existence, in the midst of this to receive the exact same messaging from my family. The best man of my wedding chastising me to bite my tongue and suck it up. Implying that I was ungrateful of my mother’s love and ignorant of the pious sacrifices she has endured to make my existence even possible. Where is home then? Where is career? Where is the clear path? In the yellow river. In the accruing knowledge. In the overcoming of the inertia of the day. In the managing my rebelling, settling form, keeping up for my girls, swimming up from the depths of my increasingly unshareable knowledge base. Mired in that intermediate fluency of subject suffused with both pretenses to understanding something and growing awareness of the exponentially expanding list of known unknowns. Swimming in the sea as far as you feel comfortable. Being clueless about the truly best path. Do you just go for it and swim clear across the ocean? Do you stick close to the coast line, get to know the more accessible caves and coves? Do you fashion a boat or a rudimentary raft. Should I bring a net? A lifevest. Sunscreen?

You make everything a spiritual issue. My neck was sore as fuck when I was up in July. I was tense. I had been pushing my body in an intense study and calisthenic regime. I was uptight. I needed to be. I needed to be a little desperate and have a candle under my ass. I needed to be a little anxious and afraid and frankly terrified that I was not going to be able to perform my role as the stable provider of my family and yes this was resulting in me carrying some pretty intense stress in my neck and the rest of my body. And you offered some arrogant, well you should bring it god, have you been praying? That is an arrogant and ungodly response that does not even try and connect with the pain that I am feeling and instead somehow turns the blame on me— you are feeling so bad because you are not right with god. Because you are not trusting in his plan it what he has provided for you. When I would argue that I am currently in my most explicit act of faith I have ever been and I have been trying my best to be open to God and open to life and open to my abilities and insights and other people’s abilities and insights. I have been engaged in a process of learning and growing and fostering of tools that will help my family shift towards a more healthful and balanced and auspicious work-life balance. And I have been in the process of letting go. Of giving myself over to this process. In trusting that the inspiration of this idea, which does not feel like it came entirely from me and in many ways doesn’t really make sense. I have never been a big computer guy. Until three years ago I hadn’t even looked at a computer language without any degree of analysis, despite my self-professed deep interest in and fascination with languages of all stripes. My promiscuous curiosity has always been a challenge to my mastery of things, but I think another challenge has been my openness to certain topics or my confidence in my ability to engage and grow in certain ways. Let us call this a lack of self-knowledge. Which is often mistook as a lack of self-confience. I think there is a lot of anxiety we carry around about things we don’t know about. It can worry us to be bad at something. Once we understand that we are not naturally good at something, or do not have a sufficient exposure to something, we just sort of wall it off and add it to the incomprehensible heap. Case in point. Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. When I first came to Chicago I had absolutely no idea how to differentiate between the scripts of these three languages. This ignorance was worn lightly, but it also existed as an iron curtain of influence and awareness. 20 years later this imperceptible divider is much removed, which is not to say that I am an expert on anything Korean, Japanese, and Chinese but I have acquired enough impressions and knowledge to at least differentiate between the script and cultures of the three Asian monoliths. Which powerfully sets me up to acquire more understanding and context for the three cultures. And with my more sophistication because I can now speak to the text as being Korean or Japanese or Chinese rather than just Asian, a term whose generic generalizations has the same quixotic intention of bundling up the Scots and Swiss and Sicilians as being European. But then I fel like knowledge arrives doubly cut. For as your knowledge specializes and more categories are created making the world more understand or at least categorizable and open to structured analysis, the forking paths of knowledge and sophistication (awareness versus depths of knowledge) you at some point, if you are a reasonably curious person realize that the sea of context and depth is infinite, a river in contant flux and renewal. An illusion of uniformity and stasis, despite the infinite cycling, regeneration, seasonal transitoriness, rebirth, death, harvesting— beauty, berries, rock bass.

This is what happens when I let go. This is what happens when I truly commit to the process and raise my sights a bit. And venture off enthusiastically into another direction with the focus and the determination to see it all the way through. As I have taken on this marriage, this family, this vocation (writing/yoga/language/technology)

This idea of vocation being more than just how you make money, but also about how you structure your life and maintain your livelihood. Your livelihood was as a househusband extraordinaire- cook, cleaner, child-raiser, plumber, electrician, carpenter, mechanic, woodcutter, arborist, gardener, landscaper, marathoner, coach, race organizer, educator, political partisan, devote Evangelical Protestant, vocal member of the silent majority, backer of the Christian Coalition, Focused on the Family, anti-Feminist (such an angry, destructive, bloodthirsty, selfish movement), devote Catholic, regular Rush Limbaugh listener, ditto head, taxes were bullshit, public schools corrupt and insalubrious. The real Americans, the Christian ones with easily recognizable American cultural interests and allegiances. Distrustful of foreign colleagues. So and so over proscribes. Another white colleague enabled

03/21/2021

Mother was brilliant and all of us kids spent most of our adult lives trying to overcome the resulting blindness that inevitably came from looking at her too hard.

03/17/2021

I am eternally loved.

03/10/2021

Feeling the need to just keep pushing—going deep into my chrysalis to transform my ability to provide for my family in a sustainable and balanced and abundant way.

03/08/2021

We spoke last night and you and dad were kind and encouraging. You tried to ask insightful questions in your analytic probing voice and my vesitages of irrability perhaps snuck through as you reveal yourself to be pretty out of touch with job searches— “are their tech jobs that would take into account your full range of skills and personality (perhaps to make up for your lake of tech experience and hard skills)” or “where would you even start looking for jobs these days, I suppose no the classified section of the newspaper.” Oh, Sophomore mother, sophomore father I love you so, please be patient with me as I solidify my healthy distance from you, to better appreciate. Collaged images are best taken in from afar. The amalgation of strengths and weaknesses. Your weaknesses offend me so because they are my weaknesses. Your weakness offend me so because they have poisoned me as wel, or at least fixed me in their misdirected earnestness, oblvious of how patronizing and narrowing your framing of the world has felt to me. I have sought to transcend, you have sought to entrap. Every generation is the same. I am chaffing at my parents bouesgeoie values— their materialism, unquestioning nationalism, conservative intransigence and anti-liberal aggression, their angst at all power structures that inconvenience them without the acknowledgement that they are the establishment. Their raging against the establishment without accepting the fact that they are the establishment. Some sort of understanding that they do not believe in institutions, but only the ideology behind the institutions, their razing up the supremacy and infallibility of our political-economic system while at the same time feeling dismayed by the culture that it has produced. Falling back on the blaming of “they” for the aspects of culture and economy that they do not like, without acknowledgement that they are also the “they” or at least complicit in the “they” of the age. The belief that their faith provides them with a deeper understanding of the world than other people in that it upholds and reflects back to them their declared values. The in ability of their “radical values” to break them from their cultural milleu due to their dedication to capitalism, the American Myth (Manifest destiny- God ordained and justifying all of the trampled lives cultures in the wake). They have mistaken the power of man for the power of God. They have equivocated the power of man with the power of God. They have sought earthly consolation in the politics of their time. And I forgive them and I love them, because I choose love and hope and faith of despair. I choose learning and growing and evolution over intransigence and fear and the insecurity/arrogance trap. Words can be weaponized. Are you weaponizing your words or are your words what they should be— bridges, interfaces, paper bits the collect together to collage out your imperfect understanding.

02/26/2021

Mother on the phone blaming Biden for my cousin’s wife being denied a second maternity leave for her Irish Twin surprise birth. Somehow Aldi’s lack of generosity is immediately ascribed to the incoming liberal administration. They claim to care so much… they end up caring a lot and more than making up for Aldi’s lack of generosity with direct payments. But in her emotional attack of the administration my mother doesn’t even break down why my cousin’s wife was denied this 2nd maternity leave. The pooor are often unlucky. Things that could break one of two ways, always seem to break the wrong way for him. Falling into the pattern of unsubstantiated attacks with the ever humble back step to “I don’t know…”

That is longing. This incomplete understanding, this unknowing that elicits fear, that pulls an emotional response from us. Our shadow-play soliloquies casting dark forms of the ideas and images with shards and shades of understanding, all those phantoms flittering about inside of our obsidian crammed skull-holes.

The fire comes up and cools into smooth sheets of black stone that can be polished into mirrors of divination.

02/25/2021

Being pulled into the matrix of doubt and judgement.

Would you agree that demonizing the opposition is a useful tool?

Would you agree that it is ultimately a destructive, self-defeating tactic within a fair-play system.

Demonizing you opponent is a popular extremist position.

Love your enemy as yourself.

Turn the other cheek.

Judge not lest ye be judged.

Easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven

Give to God what is Gods and to Ceaser what is Ceasers.

I don’t want to talk politics with you—you seem to be under some misunderstanding that I am hostile to your religious practices, or somehow you make this into an atttact on your religion – our disagreement was politics—I suppose I turned it more religious as I sought to stick a finger in this stinking religio-political sore.

You project is truth (civilly subjective) and overcoming the enemy (fellow citizens).

Can justify midday fingering drills because music is going to save America.

I’ve notice that you tend to demonize your opponents. Do you think that they are really demons?

Mother, our country is very rich and our borders and not under threat for foreign armies and yet your rhetoric reveals an existential angst to your national narrative. Where’s this all coming from anyway?

02/24/2021

With a zeal for life entrapped and no desire to be challenged.

You’d like to be conformed to.

You can be enraged and I can be enraged.

And we can careen around carrying on like wounded toddlers

Inarticulately bellowing out our litanies of blame

Dog breath serenades,

Hot air to meet in the uncertainty of our lane.

My marbled heart—divided continents of pain

Phrenology with the sea between the plates of my existence

Shifting continents of time

And your lack of understanding.

My branding, rebranding, your branding, rebranding.

A public inquiry, a trial, a hanging, a few involved find their way through rehabilitation.

You stated quietly, but in earnest, that our personal dead could lead us into death—

I cried phlegmatically, pragmatically,

and accept at last accepted your insistent suggestion.

Mother of many, healer of many, mad as hell about the liberals. Genuinely grieving the passing of Rush Limbaugh, would likely deny the existence of White Christian Nationalism. She is like a hipster who would never admit to being a hipster. If you self-identify as a hipster your time of hipness has at last fully passed.

Bohemian to Beat to Folknick to Mod to Hippie to Punk to Disco to New Wave to Hairband to Preppy to Grunge and Alternative and Gangbanging to Dadcore

The Lover

The Leader

The Protestor

The Celebrant

The Lamenter

The Funeral Crier

I am in pursuit of my unknowing and you can call that arrogance or complacency or humanity or whatever, but what ever you call it, those will be your words which you will be responsible for tending to. Your words build up your framework, not mine—freedom is being at liberty to make one’s own mistakes.

“Am I making a mistake, Mom? Tell me I’m making a mistake. Tell me!!”

“You’re making a mistake.”

“I am making a mistake.”

“You’re making a mistake.”

“I am. I am making a mistake.”

“What I am saying son, in my own way, not directly, but in a way that you are free to interpret if your lived experience and intellectual development has brought you to a certain place—son, you are free, you are free son, you are free!!”

How many times in the last year have I told people that I am not trying to entrap them.

This relationship is uncomfortable because I feel like I need to give my parents love and respect, but they do not show me love and respect. They do not see me. They do not understand me and I do not know how to explain myself to them.

What is it, when you come to an UNDERSTANDING. You come to some agreement. You have been able to put your issues aside for the common good based on some stated or unstated compromise. But how do two divergent parties work their way back from lack of UNDERSTANDING to having some semblance of understanding.

I am comparing two different things here. I am looking at our country which is a diverse and complicated whole through the prism of my singular lived experience. Through my family. Through the national divide that has played out over the last two decades as the differences between my family and I have now at last fully solidified and I find myself hemmed in to a relationship that has deteriorated to the point of being mostly negative as my father and I have grown distant and he shows little will for bringing me into the fold on equal terms. To bring me into the fold on equal terms would somehow be a capitulation of all that they believe to be true. My existence and the way I live my life challenges their truth. My existence has become an affront to their truth and they will not let me forget it, nor will they allow our relationship to develop past this irreconcilable difference. And this feels cruel and unlucky and has put me in a position to sort of start grieving the death of my parents. They have passed on into Transparent Obi-won Kenobi territory. They are AVATARS of themselves. I communion with them and hold up their loving ideal, the one that they have communicated to me *look at your girls sleeping in their beds, that love in your heart for them is what I feel for you, I want you to know that, I want you to feel that, I want to communicate that to you.*

Our strength makes us available, our weakness pulls us together.

02/23/2021

You lack the wherewithal. You get mad. Dismissive of the new. Sad. Life has passed you by. The river flows and so forth.

And getting to the end, all she hears is that Christ is in all of us, but she says that is not right, but that we are separated from Christ by original sin and have to dedicate ourselves to the church to reclaim our inheritance as Sons and Daughters of the Most High.

02/22/2021

I believe your politics and the way you politic is an earthly consolation. You give into your anger. Your love is overrun. Don’t let politics overrun your love. Why do you hold on to your rage? There’s a rage run round your reason now. Reason to faith is heresy. Unreason is madness. Freedom. Enslavement.

Do you believe that leisure sitting will really kill you?

02/21/2021

Lacking awareness or understanding of how abhorrent her marriage of Trump/Limbaugh Cancel Culture Worldview where everything has become politicized—my cousins baby being born, the bad weather in Texas, the Confederate Flag, Hate Has No Home, BLM, manufactured world views.

How much control do we have over our ideological fault lines? My family is a trigger because they are close to the source. The source code that everything else has to interface with. There are certain relationships that you have left underdeveloped, distance has crept in and understanding seemed a long way off, understanding seemed necessary.

Embroidary—what to show? What is necessary to show? Appropriate? Offense?

And this idea of chase… and this idea of remain.

Could politics be an earthly consolation? Could politics be a stumbling block for you? Where is your rage coming from and why doesn’t your religion seem to mitigate it at all?

Religious / Spiritual issues vs. Psychological Issues.

Blocked out everything from teacher. Afraid of playing wrong notes. Don’t block. Keep same rhythm, wrong note in right rhythm can work sometimes.

Inhibited vs. Uninhibited

Freedom to make mistakes, freedom to be a damn fool.

Am I making a mistake? Am I making a mistake? Yes, I am making a mistake. I am free. I am free. I am free.

Mother telling me I am making a mistake is mother telling me I am getting free. I am free to make my own mistakes. Free to be unhappy. Free to be slow, stupid, unkind, rebellious, sassy, silly. On a sort of route. On a sort of path. The opening of the way is not an opening. The way has never been open. The way has never been closed. Indirection is a direction. Starboard tack. In the lee of the star. Radiant vision at dawn—color sky longing, mashed potato charm, rouge and blue eye shadow, an old, dingy mirror grinning, winning dance hall strains lilt in the near distance. History enclosed. The lilting music encloses the moment. History in great circles, great sweeping discs, yawning against one another, spheres, crystal gears turning one against the other, sunlight from other suns. Let’s call them stars Light from the stars, cold through the calibrated sweeping gestures of the celestial bodies, dumb certainty, the deep knowing of intent and constant motion, internalized intention—reaching, rooting, light and water where you are—music become but sound, notes, vibrations, a heart palpitating, a gate opening and closing, a mountain, the center of all, which is everywhere, accessible from everywhere, bedlam, stepping through the cesspool, the shit smeared sheets, unlaundered and grey, moldering linens, vermin gnawed upon and vomited on, your feet are sliced by shattered rosary beads, the hands weep with sweat seeping up from the humidity of your psychedelic horror shores.

Pete always said the priesthood wasn’t for everybody.

They say that meth labs smell like cat piss.

Piles of right wing rags with low journalistic standards

Reactionary tracks to fuel the fire with, freestyle wild to.

02/19/2021

In some ways, many ways I am very grateful for my time in the retail world. I had to make my own way. I went from one of the shittiest positions in the luxury goods industry to one of the “best” and I had done it by myself while bringing a couple of kids into the world and establishing a baseline economic hold and security for my family. I had used my Mandarin to make money. I had improved my Mandarin. I had discovered my aptitude and interest for computer. An aptitude and interest that weren’t like a lightening realization, but have been cultivated through a gradual and intentional “opening up” to technology and the use of technology to create lightweight, adaptable, responsive, easily maintainable systems for growth, reference, learning, and grounding to resolve my digital dislocation and vastly increase my comfort level and competency of exploring and employing with digital technologies.

Totoro: girls love of it. Our love of it. Totoro cake. Totoro living in our Christmas try. She sings the song and wants to play it. It’s nice to tap into that kiddy fandom, without having to contest with the McDonald’s tie in. Culture is manufactured. Culture is created. It is truly a beautiful thing, but beauty can also hide ugliness and malignancy. McDonald’s could be framed around a pleasant story of a retired man minority man connecting with his ambitious, enterprising son or grandson for coffee and breakfast at one of the many community restaurants. Or you could indict the whole bullshit institution for doing much to create a culture that produces a disproportionately obese and unhealthy populous. Many people thrive in this system and have the wherewithal over time to find their niche, to settle into their value system, both on a writ large ideological level, but also on a street level pragmatic “how am I going to manage my day and find some sort of flow of consumption and production that doesn’t lead me to losing my mind as I am surrounded by all of these swirling and contradictory messages which I must either react to and oppose, agree with and acquiesce to, or disagree with and absorb. So often these poltically spun asides- “implying that the windmills were a big part of the blame for the suffering in Texas”, that the Biden administration was somehow responsible for Katie not getting her maternity leave approved. You rancor makes you saw things that really don’t make any sense and also pollute a perfectly non-partisan conversation with your dogbreath partisan grievance. I find it offense and annoying and I have for a long time. And if you want to take this as me “cancelling you”, my message for you is grow up. Your politics make you unkind. Your politics are an earthly consolation. You are attempting to turn your eternal truth into earthy power. You are framing an eternal struggle as an earthly one. Now I am not saying that you are wrong to care about politics and care deeply or even to engage, but when this this comes to dominate you conversation patterns and your thinking and the way that you see the world- the good people, the bad people, the people who care about American, the people who don’t care about America, this is an earthy consolation. This is an attachment that is inevitable as all attachments are inevitable, but it is one that I see shading your, in my opinion, deep, more powerful, more radiant, more inviting messages.

Crank: an eccentric person, especially one who is obsessed by a particular subject or theory, a bad-tempered person.

I don’t have a problem with your Catholicism. I think it is beautiful. I do. Do I have the faith. No. Can I come to it by reason? No. That is a heresy. I have checked into this. My bewilderment comes when your spiritual practice is so deeply intertwined with your political practice. And I am not saying values wise. Please, yes, vote your values, we must! But watchout that your religious and political rhetoric don’t intertwine quite so much. I.e. combining salvation theology with cancel culture when I asked you to tell me about hell. Rhetoric is often quite superficial but it is a mirror and when you begin to mirror religion with politics or politics with religion there is an impurity which arises. Politics is a consolation of man is it not. Building a perfected system in God’s image is a vain attempt make our fleeting and temporal political project an eternal affair. These are powerful messages though and I can understand how one would be tempted to intertwine with, or how people desiring power would seek ways to coopt the words and mindset of religiosity. And Abortion is a powerful leaver and that is a great cause to rally the moral hearted around without a doubt. But can we please stop being so naïve to draw the word into two camps. Those who vote Republican because Republicans are pro-life and supported by God and can therefore do no wrong and are working to perfect the world in a more Christian way while the Democrats are or the devil and only seeking to destroy all that which we love and hold dear. Give me a fucking break. Do you have a college education? Do you have any idea how the world actually works? How messed up it is? How even your beloved church is riddled with sin and corruption. Politics is a human project. It is about the control of humans. We give ourselves over to the system to one degree or another and the politic process then proceeds to shape our world for us. This gives urgency to your political convictions. You see the world as being hostile to you values. You see the world as seeking to undo that which Christ has done. Is it really this way? Need you have such a defensive tone. Need you be embattled unto death. Does Christ want you to be so angry. Demostrating for your pagan son every time he talks to you the limits of the peace that patheth understanding.

Because again mother, I don’t care that that you don’t believe in global warming. I don’t care that you don’t support the President. But the fact that your mind and your conversation goes there so frequently seemingly putting you in this perpetual crisis mode, I don’t think its healthy. Because really, what can you do about it? What more can you do about it than put it in God’s hands? Is that not what you believe? If that is not what you believe, then why all the complaint? Why the indignation and bad temper. Why don’t I get off the phone and think, wow, what a kind, loving person? Why do I think, wow, what an irritable political crank. Kindness is our great calling in society. I don’t care how you get there. Come kind. Humankind.

Does your politics make you unkind? Perhaps that question makes you angry. Perhaps you want to hold on to your anger. Perhaps you have already let it go. Perhaps it comes and goes and you have found ways to manage it that are more or less successful.

Modes: anger, annoyance, indignation, concentration.

How do we get in these different moods or modes. What causes them? Diet, spiritual state, emotional state, internal queue, external queue.

02.18.2021

When someone loves you, the way they talk about you is different. You feel safe and comfortable.

Thoughts on structure: Write piece using mom’s email to be as the basis. Zigzagging in and out of her words to delve into the way I am receiving them and what I feel is behind them.

Her words and attitudes juxtapose Donald Trump and the events that played out over the course of the election and frankly the last four years and the last twenty years.

Mother, if you are so free, why are you so angry? If you are so enlightened, why are you so enamored with the politics of your time. Mother, if you are so certain, why are you still so insecure?

Psychological issues were always a spiritual thing in our family, despite the presence of mental illness. . Spiritual crisis, not psychological. The problem is not me. It is the wrong church. The problem is not me it is the hated left. The Femanazis and the snowflakes and the selfish millennials with their cold judgement cast on non-mask wearing flocks of youth. I am nervous about bringing my family places. I am nervous about being around my family. This whole thing has kind of imploded… but we can overcome. We can be the embroidery. We can keep our tricks up.

We have a conversation this morning and mom drops loaded statements left and right and overshares and regals me with extended family news that I really don’t give a shit about. At the next family gathering this… at the next family gathering that… already putting pressure on what it has to be. Tell me, how often do you see Adam and his wife. I bet you pass within a minute of their house all the time. How many times have you gotten together with them in the 10 years or whatever they have been living in Escanaba. You don’t get together with them, why should I? Why should I feel the obligation.

Spoke with mom, she rails on the wind turbines in Texas with the ice storms, she seems to be implying that green energy is unreliable. Seems a little too early to point a lot of fingers in the Texas mess. Another get together with cousins guilt trip. I realize I am done. I really, really do not care about getting together with cousins. Then she goes on to way overshare about Katie’s I.U.D. failure situation and having two babies in a single year which was an issue because she was denied a second full paid maternity leave, presumably as per the company policy. My mother used this as an opportunity to attack the Biden administration. THEY claim to care so much, but they won’t even support a pregnant mother! And Katie and Adam are truly the working poor and most in need. Over the next year Biden would direct thousands of dollars to Katie and Adam, I am certain way more than making up for the wages she lost bby not having a second maternity leave. Now they have three daughers—Scarlet, Adeline, Sophia Rose.

Didn’t ask about Esme’s eye. Exhibited her weird conception of what gets communicated and what doesn’t get communicated. “You heard about…” “Uh…no…”

She did hit some positive notes about sending Helena a gift for her birthday and visiting Adam and Beth and getting some extra time with them because their flight had been delayed on the way to Texas because of the storms. She really enjoyed visiting her brother in Texas and seeing the Texas relatives that braved the aftermath of the storm and the lingering pandemic to gather together for a Bar-be-cue.

Your mother is her own person. She has her own quirks and patterns. You know these patterns—don’t let them surprise you, don’t let them shake you—let them draw you into a deeper compassion for your mother who’s soul seems to be an endlessly chomping tumult.

The sky is full of stars.

My veins are full of blood.

You seems to have just one way to talk to people—which is probably not true—oversimplification… this is something we do—over-simplify one another.

We are messages. We are also reactions to these messages. These headlines—these opinions—these triggers—driving forward, pushing forward, aggressively defend positions preemptively.

I could help Adam—that would be nice wouldn’t it.

Yeah, and just when our wherewithal for socializing has been shattered.

Passive mode—obsessively notating, attempting to make sense.

They didn’t think about that. Who are you campaigning against—what are you trying to prove—have you been to therapy—do you need help—maybe you don’t, perhaps you do.

Critical skills deployed deliberately is engagement.

Critical skills deployed anxiously in casual conversation can be poisonous.

We can do as we do.

We will do as we do.

We have done as we have done.

We do not need to grieve this death again, we do not need to grieve this life again, my empty hand, my heavy heart, heaven obscured by all our psychic cloud cover, put the sun out—return like an aimploding star deep withing your cypher soul.

My parents are partisans. My Partisans.

You partisan rage reaches me like warm dog breath in the dark.

Rush Limbaughs whole project was to vilify the left. Rail against the idiot liberals and what not.

The politics of the day—dog breath in the dark.

Mother on some trip about the left. Convinced she’s right. Unaware of what a bore she’s become. Sure the Packer’s are great and all. But I take issue with the claim that all non-packer fans are fucking communist faggot whores. That just doesn’t seem like a straight through line to my mind. \

Mother to Texas—travel for pleasure, against the grain of the day.

Go back home to your empty house,

feed on the fading memories of the unideal decades

tension and meals delayed

Raging beneath—what kind of person does that—she insists on bringing politics into everything as like a venting mechanism? Or she’s informing? Preaching?

You bury your eternal truths beneath the dog shit politicking you consume.

Your kisses all smell ruthless.

Call back to the womb

And enter the hate echo chamber

Partisan rage fed through specious arguments, disparaging asides and finger jabbing. And I had just called to see about your flight, to see if you were safe and you were. Safe at the home of your beloved daughter and her 6 cabbage patch kids, holding the youngest infant in your retired arms. Lake front property, vehicles, pension and investment all all make the days and hands of work of your 65 years make sense, you have worked hard, you have done a good work—6 children, 5 children-in-law, 19 grandchildren. You have your health, your husband is healthy and strong and active. You are objectively killing it and yet you are still so fucking combative and angry and full of partisan rage. You freely mingle the charity of your eternally optimistic religious speak with the warm dog breath rhetoric of whatever rightwing catchphrases are being peddled. We had a serious opportunity to talk about religion your dear Cathechism et al and you fell back on framing hell as some sort of Cancel Culture apocalypse, which verse of the bible was that in then?

I feel like she had failed her children on some really profoundly fundamental level.

Arrogant! Ignorant! Self-exlcuding! I should have loved you more! Oh by the way you may have been sexually molested, I am not trying to hold anything against anyone, but two decades ago I left the church and I have been settled in this decision for some time. Your perinial picking of this scab has done little but facilitate the domination of our relationship with discord and abuse. I don’t know if you realize this and, honesty, I hope you don’t , because if you do that just makes it all that much crueler, but repeatedly you ask to send me something to read with very kind and reasonable disclaimers about disregarding if I am not open to it and that I do not fall in your favor or your respect etc. But the *Meditations* are often offered up on very conditional or positional language. You won’t be offended, but if will be evidence of my ignorance, self-exclusion and narrow liberal world-view. I am sorry, but this is abusive language and it does not do our relationship respect or our family respect or your practice of your Catholic faith

And if I have somehow framed these scenarios in an unfair way. If I have painted with too many of my grey crayons for your aesthetic, please speak to this wound, speak to this disconnect. Or dismiss, as it were, but these are my thoughts, edited, refined, boiled down, written with care because I really wanted to get down my thoughts on all of this and really try to parse out where all of these emotions are coming from. I am attempting to have a healthy, supportive, adult relationship with my mother.

But language has broken for us. My favored interface. Reading and writing. And it has broken. Reality has become simply a matter of preference for facts.

What is faith though and how is it possible? How is it coherent When one of the first rules of the ineffable is its indescribability?

Me at 8 getting sent to the hall for telling the teach that I had nine lives because I was a cat when a visiting adult taught us about the “Heimlich Manuver” but warned that we should be careful not to push too hard because we each just had one life. And a lot of the kids invited me to their birthday parities and I have fond memories of the roller rink and skating with a girl in each hand, which looking back was an impressive physical and interpersonal balancing act. If we had stayed in Marquette, I probably would have been a lot more confident and ended up a teen dad or something.

61 out of the 62 election lawsuits brought by Trump and his allies were thrown out and the one that proceeded was super frivolous and had nothing to do with a SYSTEMATIC issue with the election process.

Politics is a consolation of man. To be a political animal, a partisan, a die hard to the times, *a la mode*, is to seek consolation in a movement of men, in temporal discrete rightness, the value side of the zero sum game, a political project that will make less and less sense as time goes by, as our grand ideas ceaselessly march towards their individual anachronistic ends.

02/17/2021

Christian truth is the only truth of depth. All else is superficial. Still sort of half-believed this, or at least out of respect for you, didn’t actively oppose it, until this message started coming out of Trump’s dogbreath claptrap and Trump was dragged up like my mother.

02.14.2021

What is our responsibility to fit other people into our narrative? To shoe-horn or just move on?

I feel like I had to intellectualize away religion, to make room for God.

I had to get some distance from religion, to make sufficient room for God.

Jesus => kindness … where does this kindness go when it comes to politics… where is the offering of the other cheek. Where is that deep loving, disarming humility. You come in peace, but you want to keep your guns. You want to fire or fire back at a perceived or actual attack. You seek to use religion to dig in your position, not influence your behavior.

02.13.2021

It is not a zero sum game. Not merely a matter of A or B.

Moderation, goodwill, patience, trust in the system—sure the founders, but what about all the civil servants local and national—what about our extensive legal system whose integrity is extremely important to the preservation of the union. He wanted to change things. He wanted to disrupt and break things. I think it smells of desperation. I feels like the right is beginning to understand that they have been losing since the dawn of time. The snake consumes itself. The moon starves itself and then expands rotund.

He said a couple of funny things and then went away.

Typical meat eating experience: pleasurable umami burst accompanied by some sort of gastrointestinal reminder that it is generally pretty all right to be very much mostly meat free.

Not eating much meat is one of those things that is just so deeply ingrained in our lives that it isn’t really an issue. It is something we do not need to negotiate or discuss. It is simply understood. The more of these understandings you have with someone the closer you feel with them. The fewer you have, the more negotiation and feeling out you need to do. This block, this inability to reach across and sense where someone is coming from, what they know, this is very distancing. How do you move past it? What is the script? So you write “And just so you know the Holy Spirit offers guidance by invitation” emoji. Emoji. What is the message here and how should I receive it and how do you expect me to receive it? You are the pitcher, I am the catcher. We are flashing signs back and forth to one another and then slinging pitches. Trying to overcome all of our control issues and fatigue and you are not my normal catcher, I do not understand all of your signs. And so we throw wilder and wilder. Further and further off one another’s marks.

When we talked you seemed to want to get into the theology of it and took offense with the fact that I would take offense to your offering up of spiritual guidance. The tone of it did not make me feel good and it had nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. It was the insinuation of failure. Which was there. And when we talked on the phone, unprompted you broke down your thought process and seemed to frame coding as just my latest study fads in a long line of failed study fads. “What about water, Aaron.”? Mother, I am water.

And when we talked on the phone, unprompted you broke down your thought process and seemed to frame coding as just my latest study fads in a long line of failed study fads. “What about water, Aaron?” Mother, I am water. What about when you wanted to do something with water?

I am kind of speechless that all of this was there, but I sensed it. And there it was bursting forth. The swiping engagement. *Just so you know*.

Arrogant. Selfish. Isolating. Ignorant. Willful. Lacking a spirit of inquiry. And do we let it go at that. We certainly need to find a new interface. And I believe it could be letters. Or emails. I would prefer letters, but emails, or even phone calls that were guided by the letters. Just keeping them in the loop. Could be a good way for me to get organized. We could send a birthday message to whoever has a birthday that month. Could make it digital.

Losing myself in the process. Beyond hope. To act must have some certainty or have driven all options through narrow approach, specific approach. What do you do with familial pressure and discord? How do you keep family close when there is this looping pattern of pain and argument and miscommunication and willful miscommunication and ideological bludgeoning, attacking, you are not raising this eternal wisdom to instruct or nourish, you are bring it up to point out difference, test my knowledge, emphasize the conversations that we cannot have. There are many conversations that we cannot have. There are many topics that just naturally do not come up or topics that come up but don’t gain traction because we lack a shared interest or synergistic interest in the topic. Caleb and I can ramble on about books and friends and have a very easy time going back and force. It does not devolve into a spiritual crisis each time we speak. I sense that tension and unease and I suppose I wanted to put my finger on it. It is perhaps a different thing for us. You are wrapping it around this idea that you are evangelizing to me. Piously offering up eternal wisdom. Why the backhanded approach? Why the “just so you know”? This making light of this rift. This simplifying it. Pushing it to a specific point. All I have to do to answer my vocation whoas (“Remember Water?” is to invite the Holy Spirit into my heart). And this feels unfair. This feels unkind. This doesn’t feel like a mother nourishing to a son going through the hardest year of his life. It feels like an overly pious self-satisfied, out-of-touch woman more concerned with insecurely proclaiming the rightness and absoluteness of her esoteric knowledge than allowing her supposed fruiting virtures to really share and shine her love on her hurting son in a meaning way. Instead he receives condemnation. And when he tries to speak to this condemnation. When he tries, failingly to have an adult to adult conversation along the lines of you said this and it made me feel like this. And he had felt like that because he sensed her doubt, her sense her allusion to well if this doesn’t work out then… the implication being like other things in the past if this doesn’t work out then there is always the Holy Spirit. The Impication being that my past “failures” and my failure to launch a career has been a direct result of my willful disregard and openness to the Holy Spirit. Once again condemning my spiritual practices out of hand, imposing the assumption that I do not have an inquiring heart and I am in fact hostile to religion. I do not know how to approach the religion question because I feel I will come off as defensive or I will in fact be attacked and inundated with negative messages.

Family messaging is powerful. What your father thinks of you should matter. And your mother. From young we learn to read our parents. Understand their signs. Their implied meanings. Their value systems. I know I am on the outside of yours. I have not regularly attended church in over two decades. I do not speak Catholicese. I do not say that disparagingly. Any specialized knowledge base or system is going to have language that is going to enhance the concepts and the experience of the tradition. The depth meaning to be found in the interplay between language and practice is fathomless.

You lament that I cannot understand you. You lament that we cannot have certain conversations. You lament that without a relationship built around our shared faith we can only have a shallow relationship.

We are caught in a loop. This is a black cloud in my life. It is a failure by me. It is not untrue that it is a result of my willfullness to leave the church. The repeated implication that this decision was not simply a matter of personal choice but one that represents my WILLFULNESS, IGNORANCE, HATE, ARROGANCE, SINFULNESS.

This is all well understood. It is painful to continue to tread this path 24 years after leaving the church. I would like to connect with you more through your faith. I think it is very beautiful and I do feel like I am very lucky to have grown up in a loving and Christian home that truly help love and forgiveness at the heart of its value system. I never loved going to church. I was ultimately grateful for the network of relationships that it created, but from early on I felt a definite aversion to belong and be a member of a church. Betsy and I both feel much more comfortable outside of the church and now see Christianity as a reasonable religious option among other religious options. It is not exceptional.

Is this the battle we are having? My mother believes she is exceptional. Her values. Her religion. Her way of life. And my position is basically that she is not exceptional

So what are you saying? If I vote for a candidate that supports abortion rights how does that affect our relationship? How does that affect how you see me and interact with me? How does it shape what you same to me?

Are we only giving purity tests now?

Can I still expect kindness?

02.10.2021

Who won the 2020 Presidential Election?

Was it free and fair?  
What are you going to do with that opinion?

Was 9-11 an inside job? Bay of Tonkin? MLK? Who killed Kennedy? Any of them? Was it really so bad under the crown? Weren’t there a lot of good things about the South?

Our mania:

Mother of 6, psychology, board member, volunteers to run the Wednesday nigh children’s program at church, sporting events, father running 50-100 miles per week, dad always on the move—working on one of the cars, home improvement, home and yard maintenance, housework, endless laundry, grocery shopping, food preparation, cooking, cleaning the kitchen…music classes, recitals, helping aging parents, projects at Grandmas.

But the guiding metaphors.

The old ones—let’s call them the new gods—

Losing myself in the process. Beyond hope. To act must have some certainty or have driven all options through narrow approach, specific approach. What do you do with familial pressure and discord? How do you keep family close when there is this looping pattern of pain and argument and miscommunication and willful miscommunication and ideological bludgeoning, attacking, you are not raising this eternal wisdom to instruct or nourish, you are bring it up to point out difference, test my knowledge, emphasize the conversations that we cannot have. There are many conversations that we cannot have. There are many topics that just naturally do not come up or topics that come up but don’t gain traction because we lack a shared interest or synergistic interest in the topic. Caleb and I can ramble on about books and friends and have a very easy time going back and force. It does not devolve into a spiritual crisis each time we speak. I sense that tension and unease and I suppose I wanted to put my finger on it. It is perhaps a different thing for us. You are wrapping it around this idea that you are evangelizing to me. Piously offering up eternal wisdom. Why the backhanded approach? Why the “just so you know”? This making light of this rift. This simplifying it. Pushing it to a specific point. All I have to do to answer my vocation whoas (“Remember Water?” is to invite the Holy Spirit into my heart). And this feels unfair. This feels unkind. This doesn’t feel like a mother nourishing to a son going through the hardest year of his life. It feels like an overly pious self-satisfied, out-of-touch woman more concerned with insecurely proclaiming the rightness and absoluteness of her esoteric knowledge than allowing her supposed fruiting virtures to really share and shine her love on her hurting son in a meaning way. Instead he receives condemnation. And when he tries to speak to this condemnation. When he tries, failingly to have an adult to adult conversation along the lines of you said this and it made me feel like this. And he had felt like that because he sensed her doubt, her sense her allusion to well if this doesn’t work out then… the implication being like other things in the past if this doesn’t work out then there is always the Holy Spirit. The Impication being that my past “failures” and my failure to launch a career has been a direct result of my willful disregard and openness to the Holy Spirit. Once again condemning my spiritual practices out of hand, imposing the assumption that I do not have an inquiring heart and I am in fact hostile to religion. I do not know how to approach the religion question because I feel I will come off as defensive or I will in fact be attacked and inundated with negative messages.

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Artifacts offered up into the stream.

Driftwood. Instances offered up. Clippings of eternity. Framed slides. Snapshots of an ever evolving process. Lifeforce. Seeker. Questioner. Practitioner. Condsiderer. Obsessive. Student. Learner. Teacher. Educator. Parent. Sibling. Family archivist. Photographer. Writer. Programmer. Yoga practitioner. lowercase vegetarian.

Pleasurable umami burst accompanied by some sort of gastrointestinal reminder that it is generally pretty all right to be very much mostly meat free.

Not eating much meat is one of those things that is just so deeply ingrained in our lives that it isn’t really an issue. It is something we do not need to negotiate or discuss. It is simply understood. The more of these understandings you have with someone the closer you feel with them. The fewer you have, the more negotiation and feeling out you need to do. This block, this inability to reach across and sense where someone is coming from, what they know, this is very distancing. How do you move past it. What is the script. So you write “And just so you know the Holy Spirit offers guidance by invitation” emoji. Emoji. What is the message here and how should I receive it and how do you expect me to receive it. You are the pitcher, I am the catcher. We are flashing signs back and forth to one another and then slinging pitches. Trying to overcome all of our control issues and fatigue and you are not my normal catcher, I do not understand all of your signs. And so we throw wilder and wilder. Further and further off one another’s marks.

Acting like you are the sole owner of the place and to suggest otherwise is treason.

What can we say to aggression. Micro-aggression.

Weapons wielded by loved ones

All plausibly denied

Old broad manipulation

Big breeder of prize swine

Family- secure, thriving, time—work, life balance, financial, intellectual puruits: tech and writing and Chinese answer all of these questions for me.

Register. Seriousness. Deadpan. Satirical. Sarcastic. Biting. Grating. Encouraging. Supporting. Digging. Convicting. Guilting. Teasing. Quipping. Mothering.

We are not equals. We are not confidantes. We are not discussers. We are not close.

I am lamenting this rift. And I think you are also lamenting this rift. We no longer have a shared language to discuss many of the things that are most dear to us. I left the Church and live outside of its teachings. This is anathema to you and represents an irreparably broken aspect of our relationship. My attempting to express why your Holy Spirit quip felt distancing was in good faith an act to try and draw closer to you. You funneled the conversation into being about me wanting to silence your message. And about how I will never understand the message until I have made honest inquiry. Is this a sudden realization. Are we now on a new plain? Is this final recognition that I am out of the Church? If so, fantastic let us move ahead from here, because obviously we are caught in a fatalistic loop.

I do not have the conviction that Jesus Christ and the Catholic church have a monopoly on truth. It feels wrong and frankly uninteresting to me to approach the world as if that were true. Perhaps the world because somewhat less ambiguous with a strongly anchored perspective, but it does commit one to a very specific cultural structure that we have by way of our free will decided to aschew. Now do we continue to belabor my ignorance, railing on my incompleteness or do we humbly try to approach one another in our incompleteness. I don’t know how to approach you in my incompleteness. I lack faith—my incompleteness is anathema to you.

Any other defect of disability you would have been able to accept. You would have loved me through and celebrated. But not a lose of faith. That was unforgiveable. That was willful and ignorant and arrogant and hateful. That was unacceptable. Unforgiveable. Irreparable.

2.09.2021

Inherited a rebel streak from my mother Rebel spirit zig zagging, zooming through history, gonna fuck it up, gonna find a way to fuck it up.

O2.08.2021

You’ve set up this false narrative where they joy of non-Christians pulling non-Christians out from under the last natural disaster beyond the vale of Christendom. I have seen the footage and the joy seems real to me. I imagine their motiveations for so heartifly participating the muddy, bloody, dirty work of resuce are incredibly similar in their application and incredibly diverse in their conception. We all have stories. And perhaps yes, I chose YIELD. I YIELDED to Ambiguity. I followed the words down the yellow brick road and continue you to. Sorry. Not sorry. I have chosen the multiplicity over you. I have chosen the wide road instead of the narrow. I have narrowed my liberal mind down. I have stripped the spit from my own goodness.

02/06/2021

I hear the dog whistle so clearly now.

The fact that my “liberal leanings” have pitted me against white nationalists felt about right to me. My brother wants to know my heart. Purity test? Always looking for other believers. Like some fucking insecure out-of-town mason.

Yes, it is incumbent upon all of us to figure it out.

Yield to conversations.

Yield to multiplicity.

Yield to ambiguity.

My mother had not been supportive. What does that mean? Yield: Right of Way

Without the depth of conviction to turn my values into a rambunctious political project. And yet somehow these times have done that. I am being pushed into repeatedly declaring my unbelief. Having much of my interaction with the matriarch of our family be about theological questions that I refuse to engage in. My inability or unwillingness to engage in these forms of communication, these symbolic exchanges. If I am bold enough to question the intent of the symbolic exchange, simply trying to give you courtesy of honestly telling you how you made me feel when you wrote than to me and how I sense that there was some kind of hook in it. And there was and you confirmed it when we spoke on the phone? “What about water, Aaron? I just thought? You were really excited about that and what ever happened with water?” And so there it was. That it is what I sensed and that is what I was responding to. And maybe that’s why it being attached to a backhanded evangelistic stab it did feel tender. It felt tender in its implication that I do not have a spiritual life. That I am fully cut off from spiritual guidance and am simply wandering in darkness with Tech simply being my latest folly that I pursue in my attempt to tread water above the depth and despair of the void below. And maybe you are right, but does your insinuation also not have the logical conclusion that you wish me to fail. You wish be to be fully humbled and brought low so that I am left without a choice but to through my cares upon the feet of Jesus and embrace the Catholic Church as my once and future home as I prepare for eternity with the wonderous garden of children that God has bestowed upon our family here on this very earth.

I deeply, deeply appreciate the checks and balances of our government. I appreciate that we have two viable parties. I appreciate that the transition of power back and forth between the parties is traditionally extremely violence free. We have a strong, intact constitution. The American electorate shows a knack for swinging back and forth between the parties to ensure that the checks and balances keep doing their work. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Is that how politics should work. Vibrating back and forth. Progressive and Conservative. Marching forward. Shuffling our feet.

02/05/2021

Deeply weird, deeply esoteric.

Vastly different lived experiences.

Vastly different daily practices.

02/03/2021

And the burning heart of Mary and Mary’s burning heart.

Faith is more powerful than government and nothing is more powerful than god.

Liberty comes from God.

Our rights comes from God.

No earthly forces can take those away.

Creater.

Nature’s God.

Supreme Judge

Providence.

Hardwork – intelligence – prayer

Prayer changes hearts, uplifts souls, inspires action, unites us, expresses the faith of our people, it is one of the blessings of freedom, we all bleed the same red blood and salute the same great American Flag and serve the same all-mighty god.. forever bless this magnificent land.

We are aligning with God, but what God are we talking about?

Does all power come from God? Are all governments who claim to be aligned with God really aligned with God?

I think you find a lot of things kind of irritating and so therefore compelled to irritate other people. I think part of your political project is to spread your irritation.

What are the challenges of your life?

What are the issues that are most actionable.

02/02/2021

Oh to know what is worth sharing.

02.01.2021:

Mother you were calm on the phone. You reflected on how good we have it. You seemed to have your annoyance about being barred from England at bay, seemingly surfeit in perspective.

Speak on speaker phone to you and dad. Dad wants to talk about the restuants being closed. I say okay and we talk about how the plump woman at the bank lost so much weight. They tell me all about the homeschool family hwo sells baked goods and fish fries and supersized burgers the Yoopers homesteading around the big and little Manistique lakes.

Good conversation. The path back to family connection is right there. The Newberry area is a good place to get together. Father, mother at ease, surrounded by comfortable, set history. Where they are experts. It is their milieu. People are more comfortable in their own milieus, no?

You’ve been reading about the 1500s and seem to concede that despite its general depravity and crushingly toxic pre-millennium our modern times really aren’t that bad.

“We’re pretty good at finding something to be mad about.”

Aren’t all issues just landscapes. Some are very lovely, some are very ugly. Good and bad they are all the same though. Agendas are all the same. There is only survival.

01/28/2021

What was talked about and what was not. Mother-in-laws dementia, her insanity. Too many meds and messing herself in her bed or mixing her meds with wine or some shit as people do—and the her going in for electroshock treatments. Against her family’s wishes? Against Grandpa’s wishes?

01/23/2021

Let’s move past these elections. Absurdity exists. Rampant self-interest exists.

01/22/2021- in the run up to the election you told me I was wrong for voting for Joe Biden. I was not. And I refuse to be subjugated by my conservative family. I will not accept being talked down to for not being Catholic, now disparaged for being liberal.

I guess I really would like to know if you think the election was a fraud? And if Donald Trump was the rightful winner.

01/21/2021-

What are your tensions, frustrations, responsibilities? (Flexpoints)?

Political tension in the country.

Political tension in my family.

Religious tensions in my family.

These are factors that I do not feel so acutely outside of my family.

For example in China I was surrounded by people who were in a different political party that I was and had a different religious tradition and radically different world view. And in some ways I felt lest stressed out about these tensions.

My mother pushes religion and politics to the forefront of everything. She is really into religion and politics. But not in a really smart or informed or constructive way. She is resolute in her convictions, but she is also prone to getting pulled into extremist and conspiratorial thinking by political movements on the right. She has an apocalyptic conception of time.

I am attracted to Science Fiction because it is not taken as seriously as religious writing and high literary writing. How do you write without being Prescriptive? Didactic? How do you express things in a way that show where they came from and how they bubbled up. How do you share without bludgeoning. I feel bludgeoned sometimes by my family. They dangle political things out there like what, they want to talk about it or they want to express their ideas. Free speech. The thing with free speech is that yes, you are legally free to do a lot of things and you will be accepted. But in addition to law we are also governed by culture. And culture has many dictates of propriety and manners. These rules can express good will and openness and caring and understanding.

What happens if I don’t agree with you. I don’t agree with you. I am the enemy. Are your political opponents an enemy. Are your political opponents “The Enemy”? Where is the civility here? Because the real enemy, the ones who have the least invested in our system, don’t live here. They don’t give a shit about our laws and the only thing holding them back from taking from us is our strength. Let’s cut the cheese smaller. Cut our reality down narrower. Make the most immediate crisis the most existential threat.

Mother gets bothered and so I get bothered. I have not been well. Or more truly, I have not been super stable. I have stirred myself up and stripped myself down to this very elemental, chrysalis sort of state in which I am seeking to reinvent myself from a luxury goods sales associate to a computer programmer, linguist, writer. And it is working. I have done more with language and computers and writing in the last six months that at any other point in my life. And I have done so against a background of uncertainty (financial, political) while keeping a steady hand on the keel of my family as I work to find the best way to provide fro my wife and two daughters in the shifting landscape of 2020-2021.

It has been an extremely challenging year.

01/18/2021

She’s the boss. That look of incomprehension and fury, the one that proceeded the slap across my face in the summer house by the Big Manistique Lake and mother I am not writing you to blame you for this, this thing or to justify my break from your matriarchy. I want out of the matriarchy. Venum at the break of day. Mother home and hide away. Devil’s come and make their way

Roll over the plains, come home stranger.

Why the judgement face.

Back in August you call the Governor a Nazi and radiate anxiety about Nina texting you about being in Chicago while we walked in a pleasant park together for the first time in some time and I was not enjoying myself. We walked along and saw some of the thousands of trees that had been bowled over in the city on that night—the 10th: **Summary:** A well-organized and long-lived complex of storms produced widespread severe wind damage across Iowa, northern Illinois, and northern Indiana during the day on Monday, August 10. Much of this severe wind was significant (75+ mph winds) resulting in many downed trees, several toppled-over semi trucks, and many communities receiving at least some minor structural damage. Within the broader area of severe winds, 15 tornadoes were confirmed across northern Illinois and northwest Indiana.

I was mostly feeling relaxed, but felt annoyed by the expectation of being a tour guide in a city I had hardly been out in in nearly 5 months. The while trip had felt like a fuck you from my Trump supporting brither, Let’s get all 7 of our kids together in the fucking youth group van and hang out spontaneously on the south side of Chicago, trying to come up with a place to fee his hungry brood after a long day at the museum in which the parents were already starting to lose their shit and even my saintly mother seemed annoyed by all the grand kids and wanted to get the hell out of them, throwing up her hands as they wildly fanned out all over the gift shop inside of heading to the parking garage for goodbyes and so on as the rest of the group was. Esme stuck with me and I felt close to her. Like a family. Calm. Connected. Contained. A family is something that draws you in not pushes you out and scatters you. It is something that centers and balances you. Nourishes and recharges you. Accepts you and embraces you. Seeks out the substance of you among all your many attributes. Finds that which you can feed. Finds ways to be nourishing. Adding. Not subtracting.

01/15/2021

Armed tooth and nail with the sublime,

blunt headed instruments of our personal ideologies

we cudgel one another with abandon.

The parties are cults of punishment.

Ideology is a disguised penal colony.

How to be engaged without being enraged?

Are we necessarily only moved by negative language, negative messages, negative emotions? We need to be more emotive about positive emotions, positive things.

My mother seems to believe that saying whatever comes into your head is honesty. I would disagree with this. Our heads are full of other people’s truths. We are collect messages: personal, political, commercial, religious. These messages attach themselves to us and follow us around, spreading freely to those we spray with them, perhaps taking root, or dwindling away all depending.

I am no longer in your culture. I’ll pray for your culture. And that sounds scary, but I don’t need to give it up to God—God has it, God is on it.

Ground yourself in being.

I don’t think it is necessary for me. Am I arrogant? No. I make this decision humbly and with a heavy heart, aware that I am opening a huge rift between my parents and myself. Am I ignorant? Perhaps, but not willfully so. I have wept and fasted. I have wept and prayed. Do I hate you? “Honestly, why would you say that.” That has ever so much more to do with your insecurity than with me. You are the only person who has ever called me arrogant. You are the person in my life that has most consistently attacked my confidence and attempted to erode my confidence, seemingly both intentionally (with your repeated Christian perspective religious and political condemnations—attacks that are particularly resonate since they deeply affect my placement and sense of belonging and acceptance within our family culture, which you have clearly circumscribed as one marked by judgement heavy conservative Roman Catholic practices and rage-filled right wing politics.

We are very different people—we have traveled very different paths, we have different consumption habits: both food and media, different senses of the credible and the incredible, but I suppose generationally this is inevitable—we both fear the other’s Brave New World, or at least find aspects of it unappealing. She dreams of gold paved streets a string of conservative popes.

My parents sitting in the morning reading – what? The magnificant and building that habit deepened their fraternization with those words—holding them in hearts and minds in silence, breathing, love the Christ on the cross, the passion, praying through the stations, vent frustrations.

01/14/2021-

Mother your anxiety is my anxiety. I have attempted to make different choices. I have attempted to coral it and channel it in different directions. I have used my anxiety to forage different partnerships and friendships, alliances, and allegances. When these divergent position seek to represent and not obfuscate. When they attempt to express and argue without demonizing and

You are in a tough spot because you believe the opposition is evil, which makes it difficult for you to treat the opposition as anything but evil. This evil is the only thing protecting us from our worst Rightest, Nationalist Fascist instincts. All of these things exist. All history exists in the comportment of our governmental business. This government has grown to be so much more than it was at the Revolution at the Civil War. And it continues to grow and grind against the fault-lines of the times. Much more than any specific policy push by this administration, I find the persistent, unrelenting rhetorical and litigious attack on our democratic systems to be most abhorrent and cynical aspect. The culmination of the movement in the Capital Riots is a travesity, and yet truly a coming home to roost moment for the country. What will we accept? How can we oppose? Things are getting more and more tangled…You have tied your understand and your faith to a horrible man that lead our country down a horrible path. And ywhat you call just out rage. I call a pack of lies. But I am not the one who connected politics to religion one to two. That was you.

Is mom finally left us? Gone too far right?

01/13/2021

The need for interfaith interfaces.

Problem of lanague. You want to define the world this way. Yu have gone ahead and tried to define the world for me, both in the generals and the particulars.

I have left your imagined judgement behind.

I leave it behind each day.

I am done with PREEMPTIVE STRESS/IMAGINED STRESS. I am beginning to differentiate between the actual stress and the inclination of the stress.

I am sad that my religious and political convictions make you feel sad. But I am over letting this sadness make me feel like I have failed you in some way or that I am a bad son or a bad person. You think I am wrong. My mother thinks I am wrong. Well, thank you for the support at the most vulnerable time in my adult life as I dig deep down to make a life defining career shift. I don’t have to feel Apologetic about expressing political or religious ideas that you do not agree with. I seek integrity. I seek consistency with my practices. I seek consistency and steadfastness with my being. I don’t want to feel conflicted about being.

You have given me pressure. Your pious words come across as judgemental and corrective. You anger is difficult not to internalize. I feel weak when I am facesd with the fall out of hurting you. This long, slow fall out, this extended betrayal and purgatorial exhile. This lack of interest in my life or my family’s life, which I think partially cmes from a lack of wherewithal, but is a factor that amplifies the feeling of separation, distance, otherness.

But this state of affairs is not my fault. This is more of the human condition. My obsidian stone is what makes me normal. The prehistoric, precognitive reactions I have to things. The subconscious brrowing we do in sleep.

Is this the day I begin writing from my Obsidian Stone. I mean really, viscerally writing form it. Following the pain.

Incohate emotions riddle my body.

01/12/2021

These types of microaggressions do not communicate love, they do not foster a culture of openness and expression. They encourage sloganeering, simplification, mawkish, irrational metaphors, of tenuous epistemological value.

The message I receive is that being a liberal is unacceptable. Voting again Republicans is immoral. Importance of checks and balances, no?

Father distant. Father gone.   
Never much of a leader.

More of a mystic believer.

A body-artist who didn’t give a fuck about nothing. Who had inflicted more pain upon himself than the world ever could.

01/09/2021

Feeling ill at ease about distance from parents. But I shouldn’t I really just want to know that they are okay and that we are okay. I know that we are not okay and that is a problem. In some ways they have died and the heaviness I feel in regards to them is this death grieving. This life grieving. Feeling this distance between us. Worried about their degree of remorselessness and aggression. I shall accept the distance and feel the present as it unfolds.

My mother is an uncouth country doctor. Easily offended by the wider diversity and complexity of the world. When she is in control she can rationalize through it. When she feels threatened though. That is the end of it. She fights when she feels threatened.

I just want you to acknowledge that Liberals are not the enemy of democracy.

You have been poisoned by power.

The church has been poisoned by power.

The magnamity of the church. The wealth. The benefactors. The voting block. The value based voting. The sense of prepackaged identity. We have the package, but it doesn’t mean that it is going to be clean and pretty.

01/07/2021

Normally the onus is on us as writers to reinvent language without the context of our emotional experience. You seem to think that submitting my emotional experience to your language will lead to a similar epiphany. That strikes me as wrong minded.

Your faith is based on faith and to communicate your faith you must use faith.

I am angry with my brother for being so pigheaded. I didn’t want to be the one to say that this would not end well. I did not want to have to defend myself against something that was indefensible.

I have spent many years in denial that this rift is so deep and so significant.

Guess who is not a huge part of our life? You.

I have not enjoyed your company for many years.

Your family has flourished.

Your relationships have not.

How have we not in four decades figured out how to get along harmoniously?

01/06/2021

And we have arrived at the end game of Trumpism- the limits of power within the context of organization.

If the framer’s hadn’t been progressives, we wouldn’t be here now.

Who’s more conservative? A Republican or a Monarchist.

How do you know he is right? You have placed your faith in a charlatan. This guy has anti-Christ all over him. This is how it happens. This is how the anti-Christ shows up. Doing good things. Pushing the Lord’s genda, but then just being a shit bag.

You faith looks like foolishness to me.

And that is not a judgement, that is a conclusion drawn from careful consideration of where we are at. Are you willing to go down that route. Are you willing to die to this cause framed in a particular way. Are you willing to burn to the ground that which has been meticulously built up over many, many years. You believe the election failed us. You believe the courts failed us. What is next? Do we get guns and stant at the capital? Do we over run security and chase the law makers out of doing their constitutional duty.

Mother my job has been emotionally and creatively repressive these last eight years.

Mother you have been emotionally and creatively represseive to me these past 41 years.

I do not define myself by your short-comings, but I also don’t have to kowtow to them.

My mother talks like she knows everything. This may have been what bugged the shit our of Erik with the stock market, when I too had that tendency of talking out of my ass. I have sense justified it as iterative exp,oring and have fallen back oin the defense that I do not proceed with such a sharpened or blunt conception of truth or even established facts. Facts are absolutely negotiable. At least which ones you want to emphasize.

Erik attack me about the bougeousise and the proletariat and the aristocracy. I still feel like I was right about his shit.

He also attacked me about John Denver, really mocking me for what I was playing and being a real dick about it.

I have been gun shy about music because I have either received anxiousness or judgement from pretty much every musical “influence” in my life. My mother, Erik, betsy, myself, I am moving past that.

I can pursue music as I would like to. From a deep solidified place. A natural place. A place that has been foster and not neglected. A place that I celebrate and do not fear. A place that I puruse instead of hide from. A place that nourishes instead of scolds.

I do not know what rifts existed. How can someone completely understand things that that took in as a child. It is incomprehensisble. But those impressions can be mixed and meled with the truths and experiences of mature years. And somewhere in that amalgamation there is a life, an ever pulsating, ever becoming, coming into being, emotional, spiritual machine. A growing and giving and consensus making and taker and settler. A tired, unstuck soul just rolling along.

This past fall. The fall of 2020 I entered into a creative and vocation process that has unfolded into simply my way of being at 41. I am abstracting here. I am bringing order with hindsight to a process that I intentionally tried to let overrun me. Nietzche writes about Dionysous and Apoolo, the two dominate aspects of the human condition. The bringing or order and the bring of disorder.

Kind of an archeic approach, but a lot of the aspects of this process have been archaic and They seem to be promising me, if not creative freedom, then at the very least creative mazes and elliptical processes, which seems to me the most natural vocation one could pursue in this fantastical maze of elliptical processes in which we exist.

My writing my yield mostly poems to completeish fruition, but I am already feeling follishly confident enough to say that there are some other types of writing in the works- short stories, a novel, some essays pretending to be letters, some letters pretending to be essays, and lots of post cards queuing up. The whole process has to be iterative and full of mistakes and learned mistakes and wrong turns that wing around around turn out all right in the end. Upfront inefficiency is the cost of learning, sustained inefficiency is the cost of not.

Working is important. And to work in the way you would like to work is very important. I have lacked a vocation vision. I have leveraged my adaptability streak to cover for this lack of vision. Now I have a vision and I am working mold my modes to this vision. I have been coding. I have been writing. I have been finding ways to work in a challenging environment with a lot of uncertainly behind and ahead. Despite the uncertainty, there has been a groundedness. There has been a wholesomeness in this. There is a centering and a settling. Please do not put me on the defensive when we speak. If you are on the defensive you are not likely to open up to the person you are talking to. When you speak in an aggressive, frustrated, dismissive partisan way I don’t know how you want to be reacted to. Do you want me to echo your outrage. Are you simply reporting to me the news just sort of dipped in rightwing rancor or spin, should I comfort you. Should I tell you its going to be okay. You seem overwroguth. “You want to talk about women’ts lib”. Can we agree that politics and being a political beast (allow it to so thorought sufeit your polite conversation that you become a bore). You think you are speaking your heart? You think you are being honest? Direct? What are you trying to say? Because I will now honestly and directly tell you what I hear. And you can react against me and attack me and say that I am trying to be smarter than you or however else you want to lash out back at me. I am used to it. I have lashed by you justly and unjustly my whole life. Remember when you slapped me at the 4th of July festivities. Remember when you through your hissy fit in Oxford. These wre moments I cam to know you as a person. As a flawed and anger and roiling being filled with inchoate and oddly fluctuates modes and mores. You speak with an absoluteness I have spent decades trying to drop. It’s the pigshit approach to conversation the Nick is so plucky at. That poisonous well of half understood and poorly contextualized insights that goes in to making up the average intellect. Over the even more exaggerated forms of the eager thinker.

My main conclusion is that I want to be kind. And that I truly try to be kind and try to choose kindness when it is in my power. And spread kindness and positivity. Choosing these topics. Not in denial of the challenging and open to discuss them, but in a different realm than the political street fighting that seems to draw fuel from some deep, deep reservoir of human volition, somewhere lurking well below pure reason or goodwill.

I desire to be a protean figure. A creator, a doer, a confident explorer. But not in some oerall waay. Not the exexutive that sees the whole and is hungry for more, but the craftsman with his true line and his dedicated craft. There are many things that we can be and we are becoming them simeply by being.

I support this being through the health of my body, the health of my mind and the health of my spirit. My family is my body, my family is my mind, my family is my spirit.

No one cares what you have to say unless they ask, and then only perhaps.

01/05/2021

You slapped me over the fourth of July and I walked in to the pines.

Like the pines where Nina’s body flew when the motorcycle crashed into the telephone pole.

And he hip was shattered. And her marriage fell apart.

And the high ceilings cou’dnt save them.

Drug sales and sahes up.

Her jean collection never looked better.

Shark week coming.

The older one might be gay.

The younger one might be dumb.

Trauma in the form of priveledge.

Call the car. So much to prove. Testy in a broad, deal making sort of way.

I am hear to engage you in a very particular sort of way.

You slapped me and it caught me so off guard. I did not realize how upset you were. And you lost your temper and slapped me. In front of our extended family and my cousins. And what did I do? Did I lash back out at you. No I walked away. And cried in the pines.

I made a video for Psychology class in high school, that I knew the teacher would like. And he did like it. And he used it as an example for many years. And you mocked it and basically told me it was garbage and a waste of time.

You projected years of dissatisfaction with your job and radiated anxiety about it. This probably came from your father who also had a restive career. This pathology informs my “artistic”/”entrepreneurerial”/”go it alone”/”voyager”/”explorer”/”experiementer”/”curious soul” identifier. Sure, I am here, but I could be there… the essence of a dream is distance, whether stative or locational. You are in the act of becoming.

I am becoming. Obsessed with becoming not in seeking some alchemistic algorithm for growth, but with existing on that razors edge of becoming. That cutting edge. That movement forward. If not in a quantitative aspect, then at least subtly, this liquid mercury that is achieved when one is locked into a process. This ecstatic newness that can be extracted from the bounty of being, when we allow to be. When we pay attention and allow our intention to unencumber itself.

There must be a form though. The form is the receptacle. The form is the staging ground, support, guide, reference.

Allow yourself to breath. Allow yourself to be. Throw your heart into your work. Through your mind into your work. Open your deeply buried heart. You have felt the pressure from these cares. Release them and realize you are releasing them. Realize that this is a process and the importance of it means that it will take time. Perhaps a life time. But you can move forward in that process with the confidence that you are engaging with it in befitting your sense and intuition. True to the direction of your hope.

I could call you and what would I say. I could call you and what could I do. Morning breaks and the boom that announced your becoming has all but faded away. The ringing sings on monotonously. Our limitations are manifest. We best ourselves wrapped up in our marble mouthed confessions. Obsessed with besting ourselves we act selfishly, an elf insulated at home.

But this response was not just all of a sudden. We have been building this thing since 1997 and before.

All of my experiences have had good aspects and bad aspects.

Those bad aspects are no longer a threat. In fact they have now become a good in their way as they have provided a model for understanding future interactions. They provided scheme and warnings and encouragements from the past. You were stoned and said some stupid things. If you are going to get hung up on that then you are lost before the process even starts.

It is not that these things are inaccessible. They are accessible, in fact they keep leaking into your consciousness, like a ping from the RAZNYS… these unordered thoughts that cause you chest to feel tight and your stomach to churn and your back to clench.

Mother you have set up a dichotomy where God alone can cure my ills and if I seek any other means of curing them, if I make moves on my own to attempt to manage or mitigate some challenging aspects of my physicality or psychological- my back is sore- have I been stressed, oh I have, well why am I not praying? Perhaps the core of my anxiety isn’t the pandemic or the fraught political climate in the country, or the fact that I lost my job directly as a result of botb a race riot and a 2 year long contentious passive-aggressive cold war where the stakes were simply me keeping my sanity doing a job that ran hard against my grain for a family business whose values and persona mirrored Donald J.

The TRUMP sign remained illuminated. The RAZNY sign went out on Oak Street at least for a little while.

And my anxiety and frustration is not the result of not having found a vocation that can support my family while at the same time engaging my talents and cherished abilities.

But the cause being… initially my lack of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ… and then my lack of communion in the Catholic Church. And then my lack of political purity or correctness (following the party line, the family line). My family drifted more conservative and I have floated out into the progressive ether.

How am I left to talk about this? Think about this?

Disappointment. Anger. Guilt. Relief. Isolation. Alienation. Voyageur exhilaration. Buddha calm.

Predestined destiny / fate OR free will / free choice.

We are all forced to speak on things that we are not expert in, and we must live with our ignorance. And other people’s. But we can still be kind, can’t we?

Does it bother you that people want different things than you do?

Do you feel threatened by that?

Where is the line between standing up for what you believe and repressing the beliefs of others. When does persuasion become coercion and abuse. Abuse of power. Abuse of mother’s power. Holding our relationship hostage with your strong religious and political beliefs. You are a radical. I am a moderate. You think I am off the mark. I think you are. I resent your rage. You resent my complacency. Yes, I have left the loop of your apocalypse and am prepared to live with whatever that looks like.

I’ll admit, I have been very fragile of late. But could I share this fragility with you, no I could not. You could not meet me as a mother or a friend without making my crisis about you and your faith and that is narcissistic and I don’t want any part of it when I am weak. I have had this tendency to emotionally strip for people. Feeling this need to talk down my achievements or abilities, lest I become too arrogant. Mother slap to my face. Mother guilt trip about the basketball team. I am committed to this thing and unnecessarily you make tension about it. That always seemed artificial to me, that religion was something you had to do in a certain place at a certain time. That strikes me as very artificial. What I do not question is setting aside time for the sacred. But I think the practice of that should not be rigid, but fluid and effusive.

Let my light emanate kindness.

And yet you would defend and stalwartly support an offensive, divisive, inflammatory, arrogant, egotistical, mean-spirited, dishonest, dismissive, combative, defensive, wounded, hurt, complaining, narcissistic

I catch the larger arches periodically.

Less news and more scripture has never been a bad suggestion.

Less news and more literature has never been a bad suggestion.

01/04/2020

Oh mother, you do not know half of my ridiculousness; if you did I do believe you would love me more.

And that is a reflection of your goodness and not my own.

12/30/2020

Moving from MQt sending me to the Bay de Noc Community Christian school. Wanting to send me to school in Paul Gerard’s basement. Fighting about dances. General tension between parents and tension of mother and father. Mother’s strung out management.

Lawyer’s don’t make much money, dad says. What the fuck?

Do maintain that your exact belief system is the only legitimate way to be, the only just way to be—the only true way.

Culture, personality => fear, anxiety

Self-focus, less receptive to family.

Stretch to be more flexible more receptive.

12/28/2020

Has our country been anointed?

Is the church infallible?

Do you unconditionally trust the church?

Do you unconditionally trust the government?

12/26/2020

When it comes to the Whitmers Music is going to be what bind us together. It has to be!

* Family songbook
* Facilitating with Marcus P.A./Keyboard set up.
* Karaoke Setup
* Dance Party set up (playlist—built from suggestions)
* Instruments for the kids—noise makes, shakes, etc.

There is something in our clan. Some fatal instinct towards tightening. Constricting. Channeling. Cutting off. Determining. A tightness that cuts us off from new information. Perhaps this instinct kicks in out of sheer exhaustion. Because we are exhausted. Very tired. Can’t keep up. Can’t keep up. Everything is changing faster than I can reconsider. I am breathless. Exhausted.

12/26/2020

The fear is everywhere and the fear is real. Mother’s mind popping off unfounded conspiracy theories and being unable to articulate just exactly what she was talking about on a Christmas call. ‘Tis the season and our savior’s birth and so on. An outbreak like this in a very specific place is suspicious. And now they have this new strain in this other specific place. I just don’t know.

So many things are so fraught. Pick battles. Try and keep perspective.

What are you implying? What reporting are you basing this on?

Listening to shit. Consuming shit. Spewing shit.

Language problem. Controlling vocabulary. Framing program with predefined language. Running script with predefined methods, keywords.

Amplify.

Flood the zone with shit

What are you saying?

What do you think?

Who are you blaming here exactly?

Radiating anxiousness and ambiguously emanating ill-will.

Mommy on the warpath. Get down. Get out of the way.

You have been very kind and patient

Now just be your kind and patient self

Don’t be a critical bastard—do what you need to do to get free from others

When you are dating you only see the two of you

When you get married you marry the whole world.

You are politically domineering and religiously domineering.

Often uses the tiring victim tactics.

I won’t say his name. I shall censure myself.

12/23/2020

Most people are not Catholic. You have found your niche. Good for you!

That said, I think you way you treat your non-Christian son is despicable.

Mother you are ridiculous because you don’t mind trying to make your children uncomfortable with politics. What makes me uncomfortable about your politics is its cravenness—gushing love for Trump and Tucker and Rush, following of specious news stories, Nazi accuser, masks are a Nazi symbol… what they fuck!?! There were a lot of good things about the south.

My parents with their 6 children and 17 grandchildren, they are retiring at 65 in great health with a solid retirement plan intact and yet they have this fundamental rage and anger that Mr. Trump so effectively tapped into, which did not surprise me really. I see Trump as the perfect politician to bring Rush Limbaugh style political discourse to the halls of government.

Grew up on denigrated Soccer Moms, Fema-Nazis, Radical left, these nativist arguments divide and obfuscate and rhapsodize about some kind of embattled nostalgic vision of what our country is, was, and will be. Why so much personal advertisement?

Bite your tongue, suck it up—fascist, right wing pressure. You’re a helluva stormtrooper young goodman Brown.

All these subtle pressures that lead to sullen ends, if not violent ones.

You crazy progressives with your wild experiments in living.

I like you. I want to understand you, so we can get along better. I feel I am making a good faith effort to get along with you and you are just kind of being mean to me because I am different.

You are trying to manufacture a fight and I don’t want to fight. While your dedication to the good fight is proof of your proof.

The key to any close relationship is the good faith ability to fight—the constructive fight, the love tussel—tension underpinned by some sort of mutual commitment to above all preserve the relationship and affirm the other person. Our relationship is important to me. While it is no longer necessary, I have decided that it is important and worth fighting for and suffering for.

You are shading in the OBVIOUSNESS of your truth from the safe vantage of an adult life solidly run—your passion and commitment have overcome your prickles—we know things about you—you hold up, you tear down—there are only two ways to be: STATUS QUO or REFORM

Politics thrives on the fault lines of the status quo.

Oh, how to be circumspect without being cynical.

How to respond with human love or divine love to the dumb and the derivative.

Intentions: Why did you do that? Why did you say that? What is your intention?

9 out of 10 black women voted for Biden

7 out of 10 Latinx women voted for Biden

White women have voted Republican since 1952 except LBJ & Bill Clinton’s reelection.

There are a lot of subtle things going on here—I used to hear my mom who was going to be upset with me for having a difference of opinion—now I just hear an aging, self-centered matriarch whose desperately trying to defend the status quo because it worked out pretty well for her. Her path has worked out, wonderful, enjoy it, revel in it, let’s not forget hard it was, let’s not forget about the dearth of vocational vision you passed on to your children with your sterling example of career resentment. Not sure why none of my kids found a career before 40?

I am not blaming, I am looking for symptoms to trace back—I am looking for rivulets to follow towards the sea. Lines through the labyrinth, slightly sloping floors, steadily descending towards the source.

Why are you so hell bent on selling me your vision of heaven, which is the most airy, blank canvas description that I have ever fucking heard.

Miscarriages and pregnancy. The trauma and stress of pregnancy.

Are certain laws more sacred than others?

What about the reforms of Vatican II?

Understand past reforms to understand where the church is now?

You are talking about the country club now—a privileged members only context—you have paid your dues of time and treasure, you have learned the language, the solipsistic symbols and proofs.

As an epistemological position, **solipsism** holds that knowledge of anything outside one's own mind is unsure; the external world and other minds cannot be known and might not exist outside the mind.

Is not intellect the heretical approach? Can we really expect expressible access to the mind of God? We are left to faith, hope, love, and the greatest of these is love. Who was the best Christian? How much politicking did he do? You got your cake and can eat it too. Screw you. Give to God what is God and Caesar what is Caesar’s. Does Donald Trump typify faith, hope, and love to you?

Is politics sacred or secular?

Engaging in the secular under the pretense of the sacred. That is hypocritical.

12/21/2020

How do you see the world? Are we all one way? Salvation bound or Devil’s plaything?

What if the devil gets in everywhere—even into your faith, your righteous politics.

You believe all wild truth feeds at your bait pile.

Now when exactly did I stop following God? You have no idea what kind of relationship I have to God. You are attempting to hem me into your Catholic pidgin. God is bigger than Catholicism.

Do you think the creator of the universe can be complete encapsulated in the Catholic church. I believe God transcends the church. All churches. You are lost in your metaphors. I am lost in mine.

12/20/2020

Kvetching about the lock down and whatever local restrictions that they run into. Praising places that are not locked down. Telling us that we just have to visit. My dad feels compelled to bring up or reference the great climate change hoax. These people pray for Rush Limbaugh and his on-going battle with cancer. They call for prayer for Rush Limbaugh and Donald Trump from their English relatives. They refer to Kamala Harris’s work as the Attorney General of California as “diabolitical”. The Liberal Governor of Michigan who shares our last name gets christened “governor Nazi”. These are college educated people in a state where fellow Michiganders had been plotting to kidnap Governor Nazi. I get to hear about my narrow liberal view (because I don’t accept Catholicism) and how BLM is just a fundraising slush fund for the worst aspects of the liberal agenda. The protests are about Marxism. The protests are about destroying the traditional family. The confederate flag is no racist and there were a lot of good things about the pre-civil war south. We believe people should world things out between themselves. Like when Ben Carson moved into a white neighborhood and his neighbor immediately ran his “non-racist” confederate flag up his flag pole to welcome his new black neighbor. Did Dr. Carson run right over there and rip it down? No! he bided his time and believed in America and wouldn’t you know all his other neighbors ran American flags up their flag poles and peer-pressured the embarrassing racist neighbor into putting his “racist symbol” away because it was making their community look ugly, or simply revealing the ugliness that is there, but that is attempted to obfuscate at all possible turns. Way led to way and Ben Carson and his racist neighbor ended up getting along fine, so you see America doesn’t have a race problem that can’t be solved one flag at a time, of neighborhood racist at a time.

But what about the fact that even in a very affluent neighborhood people feel it all right to try to discriminate and intimidate their neighbor based on race. Was this an isolated incident? Or do we have a systematic problem. First of all why were there so few black people in that neighborhood to begin with? Why did Carson live there? Why are there so few black doctors?

Can we make American Great Again?

* Crime is way down
* Abortion is way down

Compare the 1980s to the 2020s

* If the liberals are so bad and they have had so much control, how specifically is the country worse off than it was in the 1980s?

People can gain advantage by convincing people of the goodness (hope) of things and the badness (fear)

12/19/2020

Wouldn’t you agree that God is beyond our limited human comprehension?

And that Grace is a gift from God?

We don’t choose grace—

There is nothing we can do to affect grace and make ourselves more worthy of it and but yet still we do have the power to reject grace. So we don’t have power in the positive, but we have power in the negative. Our fallenness by its very nature is demonic and diabolic, no? How you say— a foregone conclusion?

And I feel this coldness from my father and I wonder why—

Mother’s years of harping on the messages, the distant father,

Spent her whole adult life bitching about her father and how distant

He was. Did he ever say anything to you about you faith? Did you guys every talk about it?

Was it a source of contention between you? And had he really grown embittered and jingoistic. Emphasizing things in polite conversation like it’s been proven that Muslims don’t feel like they are morally obligated to tell the truth to Christians. This is a racist statement. It makes a generalized derogatory judgement on a who group of people who are incredibly diverse.

But what about this coldness from my father. The forever distance. The limited shared topics of conversation. His self-involved living style. Mother’s mania to connect has extended his reach. He has developed versatile practices that travel. He is a good man. He is a bad man. Beyond sentiment. Demanding to see things are they are. Drunk on the syrupy, saccrhine sentiments of triumphant absolutism. Polishing jewels with suffering so they emit more light through all eternity. Shine for what? For God’s glory? So there is a narcissist at the center of the universe. The cyclical progression of time looks more real. Yes, we have personal apocalypses and national and continental apocalypses, but the seasons continue, we revolve around the sun, the moon cycles, longed for hope, baby becomes child becomes mother, becomes fond memory, bridge of love, conduit of goodness and love and tenderness. Community healer, kind ear, and tender heart. Child advocate, born and unborn,

12/18/2020

When did Christians lose their exclusivity to depth?

When did the Christians give up their corner on the deeper meaning market?

If your deeper meanings were true you wouldn’t be such an angry person.

I am in an existential crisis, trying to push out the noise and turmoil of a year that has trully gone off the tracks and learn a completely new skill set while at the same time reconciling myself to my absolutely necessity of engaging with life through writing. And instead of sending me some swett not of encouragement or a thoughtful, I don’t know, something, you send me some bullshit Catholic shit about my having a purpose set forth for me by go which may only become clear to me after I die. Which is all well and good, but that does not preclude our necessity of engaging in the struggle. Trying to support our family. Trying to flow all available resources into answering the question of how I can best financially support them while at the same time leaves some wherewithal to continue to grow and flourish as well and now just get dragged down and alienating by my means of production.

I am trying to be the practical one here. Trying to buckle down and learn hard skills and my family comes at me with Angels and Virgins and Shrouds and Frothy mouthed real estate Tycoon Reality TV star savior. I in good faith ask about hell. “What is hell, mother?” And she rambles out something about Cancel Cutlure and frankly this kind of sickens me. And this is maybe where I dip the deepest in to the refreshingly brisk pools of hypocrisy, but that that is bullshit. You straight up responded to a theological question with a political answer. And that is bullshit. That is wrong. That is an abuse of language and logic and belief and somehow makes sense to you because you are holding all of the connections, but reads to me like you are perilously trapped in your times, despite your claims that your life ordering principle is on the eternal order of things.

So, yes, maybe I did make a mistake.

Tell me I made a mistake.

Josh standing up and announcing that he peed in his pants and he’s proud of it.

The hypnotist was from Chicago.

The shroud of Turin is material proof of the truth of Christ and the Roman Catholic church, only a fool would believe otherwise.

My father likes to talk about the weather cycles and how they are natural and not caused by climate change or global warming. He does not quote sources, but he is quite certain about these cycles. We are usually doing something else why he muses— driving somewhere, jogging, and I always wonder, why is he talking about this again? I am not sure if he talks about these cycles with his other children. I should ask my brothers, my sisters. It would be strange if he mostly talked about them to me. Which I have at times wondered if he does, but I am not sure. I will have to ask my siblings about these cycles to see if dad discusses them with them. I hope he does. I hope he brings up the cycles to them with frequency and not just to me alone.

**Today?**

**Recently?**

**Since I last saw you?**

**Specific follow up arching to last conversation.**

**Lead with a story that made you think of the personal, prompted you to reach out.**

**Family history**

**Current events**

**Family plans, hopes, dreams**

**Projects**

**Current events**

**Health**

Diet

Disease

Injury

Reading

Practice

**Fitness**

Practice

Injury

Journal

**Technology (love, hate)**

**Apps**

**Sports**

**Weather**

Recently

Look forward to

Want to dial up…

**Housing**

Repair/maintenance

Furnishings

Redecorating

Moving/buying/selling

Dream home

How many homes? Biggest? Smallest?

**Travel plans**

**Upcoming events**

**Hobbies**

New

Old

**Music**

Making

Concerts

Listening

T**V/Movies**

**Books**

**Church/Organization**

**Acquaintance updates, announcements, gossip**

**Friends**

**Babies**

**Old People**

**Students**

**Food**

Cooking

Eating out

Grocery shopping

We’ll try to avoid making each other feel bad about our politics or our religious differences and just keep it nice and shallow by keeping up on a smattering of the above topics.

The light at the end of the tunnel

Burned out your eyes.

Your lingering suspicious

Fueled your despise.

Sweet poison, bitter nectar

The inevitable darkness of lies.

Let’s just say we practice what we preach,

Or even better just practice, don’t preach.

You know how much preparation and study it takes to get a preaching license.

That shit is powerful. Its regulated pretty hard! And you just come in here all unlicensed just shooting your mouth off! What the fuck!!

Advertising.

The pitch.

The sale

Rhetoric is not dead,

Not dead at all.

Flaccid rhetoric, a saccharine tone

That seemed to threaten take my word for it.

My subjective enthusiasm is all the proof required, no?

Aggressive tactics and tone.

Define and conquer.

Fox speak.

Ditto heads

12/17/2020

Salvation offered by God is transcendent. Salvation offered by you an emphasis of my exile. And I can be sensitive to this and try to avoid it, or I can touch it and put my finger in the wound. The wound is real. I have been given up for dead by you. I am a project. I need prayer. I need articles. I need devotionals. You live in a simple place, or a place that you have at least attempted to abstract into a state of manageable simplicity. There is light. There is dark. We seek the light or we seek the dark. We are on the path of light or the path of dark.

Perspectives keep shifting and the hateful becomes the beloved and the beloved becomes the hateful.

Betsy and I have divorced and Esme and I are on a long road trip out west- the two of us. We stop at a grocery store with an enormous parking lot somewhere way out in big sky country. The grocery store is flat and rectangular, tan and blending into the scrubby big sky landscape.

After we shop for our supplies, we are checking out and Esme makes a wild discovery. Betsy, her mother, she has not seen in some time is standing before her. What at first appears to be a woman who just looks similar to betsy but with different hair, is in fact betsy with different hair. Her hair is markedly different and quite fantastic, it is slithering and writhing with lush green vines, clusters of regal grapes begin unfolding from the curls of her hair, her whole aura seems to brighten and glow and then she blossoms forth with berry brambles, apple boughs laden with luscious orbs, Oak leaves, vermillion stalks of woody asparagus, evil green nightshade, a copse of trees , palm frauds, a venus fly trap, a redwood sapling, a thatch of cacti, a bursting banana bough, peaches oozing soused in sweetness, straining on their thin appendaged bough.

Fixing for an evacuation from your politics, crawling down from the cross that you cut out for me.

Looking for a land where I can be free.

They say the devil is so clever, but Christ he always wins.

Hey say always tell the truth, especially among friends.

You said forget your origins,

Dwell upon your ends

Fire and brimstone

Psychological citadel,

An intellectual midget in his own right.

Thank you for freeing me

Caught in your gravity

Needed some heat to push me through

In your boiling heart its as if you knew.

To thine own heart be true

Unless it ain’t like mine.

Apocalyptic politics

Rocket from the Crypt.

Losing my grip on all I’ve mined, stript.

Imammy

Imam for a mom

And he turns to her and he goes,

I know you’re just a figment of my imagination

And all, but please, go on…

“Beginning with gratitude to the one who created us, protected us, and ordained we are still alive.”

Emojis… I am so thankful you appreciate His finest handiwork.

Your coded slights are mind numbing and heart numbing.

You are a sick person mother. Your love of your conceptions of God

Has clouded your ability to be and deal directly with the world.

I do appreciate his great work, but only as far as it is an extension of myself. Deadpan.

We shall continue to work, pray…  
Religious microaggress.

Let’s just admit it. Nobody really knows exactly what they are doing.

We need a leader who will be a leader for everyone. Not just his base.

Uh, oh, Trump, you awoke black America.

Cancel Culture- holding people accountable for offensive things they have said and done.

If you are seeking a public role— there is increased security. If you are going to “Publish” a position on the record, then you may be held accountable for it.

Redemption can occur, so can a downfall…

Any time you have a purge there will be excesses. Especially of the only arbitrator is public opinion (swayed by source, context, packaging, bias)

Meet me in our shared humanity.

Please don’t just hide behind your deity

Sure you started this, but you can’t finish it completely

This way works because its working.

Mother you are afraid of the world and you are wise for there is much to fear, but bury your sighs, dry your tears, for the world nees us to be brave. And don’t look now, but the world is here.

Awaiting us expectantly. I have made the decision to stop being afraid and to let my wounds heal and I stepped through a door and my path unfolded ever before me.

Keep it tight.

Keep it intentional.

No own goals.

I apologize for my superficial personal goals: Pragmatic, kind, patient, understanding, complimentary, warm, engaging.

12/17/2020

I chose my words carefully when speaking to my parents and then feel badly about the need for being so careful.

Newman devotional response from father => I don’t give a goddman about anything until you bend the knee and start living like a godly Catholic. This is all violent and untrue and I reject it. Your approach to this has stagnated our relationship. Our relationship is broken because my relationship with God is broken.

Everyone is good and evil

Everyone is at least a little good.

Everyone is at least a little evil.

I refuse to be your liberal whipping boy.

I choose not to be your liberal whipping boy.

Or perhaps I am not deep enough, my liberal view too narrow.

How do you square the fact that your sex illuminated pope protected sexual predators?

Was the election stolen? Is our electoral process fraudulent?

Why do you seem so angry and insecure and threatened?

Your hot political words push me away. How couldn’t they. You have your messages, sure, but what do you want me to say? What do you want be to say.

The way you politic is mean and unkind.

And I apparently inflicted some pain and rilied you all up by my audacity to go my own way. All artists put their mothers away in their graves long before their mothers are in their graves. Writers shouldn’t publically write about their mother’s too much. People have their own mother myths to contend with.

12/15/2020

The fundamental things is yes, maybe yes, maybe the fundamental thing is yes, I am opting out of your apocalypse.

Coming to Chicago and telling the very possibly Jewish violin shop working from whom she is trying to get some kind of free assessment of its value cause she’s thinking of buying it from a friend to help her out, but still she doesn’t want to get jewed, you know? My father is a neurotic dealer maker and value seeker. He would have done well in business. I get all my hustle from my dad.

Betsy coming back from China and having the Year of “It doesn’t hurt to ask” logic that she had begun developing during our stay in China during which for better or worse most things were necessarily or optionally negotiable. What a weird, awkward pissing match negotiating can be. The is a service to be rendered. The seller obviously has some price threshold in mind, but refuses to enter into the open market by publically positing their prices.

You and Hans have both said hurtful, unkind things to me. I don’t trust that you won’t do that again. It puts me in a certain mindset when I approach you. Should I be defensive, hardened? How can I be open if I feel like I could be whacked, microagressed at any given moment in your presence. Be kind to me. Stop beating me with your cross. Exclude me from your circle.

12/14/2020

You uninvitedly injected your rage into a calm and peaceful place.

Mother, you are no longer a religious person—you are a power person. You have been emboldened by a secular force and it has shaped the very words upon your tongue. “They!” “Them!” “Nazi!” “Diabolical!” “Pray for Rush!” “Thank God for Great Americans like Tucker Carlson”.

And you undying faith in the ideology of the “free-market” despite your perennial dissatisfaction with the local money and power individuals. Was this really a fair system? The tool and dye shop owner gets to put his name on parks he bequeath while his employees have to bum grocery money till the end of the month because their trying to get by on slave wages. Did we chose this system because it always leads to the most moral and just outcomes for individuals? Is our Government primarily a moral institution or merely a legal one? The morality of the electorate shall determine the nature of the government.

Mother you have this tone of voice where you shift into this “oh-so-objective-judge-and-jury” mode and at that point I feel like there is just no talking to you. You are enraged. Off the handle. Go on the offensive, deploying tacky sales tactics to railroad me into agreeing that some plank-point of her world-view was categorically correct within the context of some contrived controversy.

My mother had a very demanding job and six children and a husband to support. Stress was inevitable, but so too was joy. I had a wonderful and warm childhood supported by my parents and older brother and four younger siblings. Socialized into such a large family I think helped me to become a natural leader as it taught to the importance to look out for other people, seek consensus, value harmony, over getting my own way. Some of this was beat into me— Nintendo’s flung at my head, basketballs flung at my head, Risk Boards flipped.

12/06/2020

Mother, father,

Your motherage and your fatherage frighten me..

Already gone,

having left not by night,

but by broad day,

so please don’t call me back,

just to send me away.

Just to remind me that I’m gone.

Our culture has become very hyper. Maybe I should cut back on the old caffeine.

12/13/2020

Where can I expect kindness, familiarity?

12/03/2020

Rush Limbaugh and his ilk have been terrible for politics. His “entertainment” branded political rage fest influence the way millions of people talked about politics. Their tone. A tone that Trump heard clearer than anyone. When I was younger I had often thought in an off hand way why Limbaugh didn’t run for office if he had so many great ideas and such a jazzy way of communicating them. Well them the whole pill popping thing came out and the fact that the guy made so much money doing HIS thing. Why would he cash in INFLUENCE for increased vulnerability. He didn’t have term limits the EIB. \

He was a very effective right wing propagandist. It truly makes me sad that so many people hold him in such high regard. I occasionally read transcripts of his show and it is such a fluffy mush of red belly poll baiting that it kind of turns my stomach. Your defensiveness makes me defensive. Everything gets fed into the insatiable appetite of your apocalyptic narrative.

That said, I am very sorry for raising my voice and being in general ridiculous during our October conversation. I have been working hard and working through some things and managing a lot of uncertainty. Tense time. That all said, I am very bullish on the future. Betsy and I are more solid than ever— we are now fully broken in as a family of four, our world feels like it is expanding and growing towards new connections once again.

Our apartment continues to be a delight suffuse with light on sunny and cloudy days, our back porch affords us a wonderful panorama of the sky to the south where the light plays upon the clouds. We are coming up on 5 years here. betsy and I often talk about how grateful we are for this home.

12/03/2020

You say you can accept me, but you can’t. You are much more comfortable setting up this Prodigal Son or Lost sheep dynamic. You seem oblivious that your politics makes you harder to approach than your religion.

Donald Trump and Rush Limbaugh are repugnant and its offensive to me that you support them with such uncritical fervor. Your righteous rage convinces you that you are free to say whatever you want in whatever tone devil can care whose offended. This are principles and self-evident truths. They are not. I like Emerson’s take on politics, here is something he wrote in 1844— before the civil war!

The America where only white land owning males could participate in our hallowed democratic process is an American that I don’t recognize. That is its beauty! It’s promise. This shape shifting. Rumbling, tumbling, conflicted, tradition obsessed, ego shading continent, wanting to be the best, the smartest, the truest, the healthiest, the most efficient. America has progressed from that its nascent beginnings not by accident, not by happenstance, but by progressives of every political ilk and stripe that had some inkling of how to improve the lot of the body politic and through each election and fashion season we have evolved the system we now enjoy. At every step of this process it has been the engagement and bartering and horse-trading of conservatives and progressives. The “hot personalities” have come and gone. Shall we remember them too as saints. Rush. Tucker.

12/02/2020

Prescriptive without being dismissive.

Learning how to fight without going for the throat.

Showing that the love is there and that the love has a greater grip on you that than rage.

Or how not to be prescriptive, just descriptive, of informative or engaging.

Messages:

I should have loved you more.

You narrow liberal world view.

Ignorance.

Self-exclusion

Selfishness.

Oh, and also, you may have been sexually abused… we are so sorry…

Only care about my own children and only in as much as they represent an extension of myself.

I was at an incredibly low, stressed, beaten down, vulnerable, protean, addicted, unhealthy stressed, imploding states… and then to be told to “Bit my lip and suck it up and implying that I do not respect my mother or appreciate her.”

You guys made these rules and then you walk all over them and claim victim or go on the war path if anyone applies the rules in a way that you find inconvenient.

Politics goes from a basic difference in opinion to nastiness and derision very quickly in our family it feels like.

I said that your politics were aggressive and that it was your tone. I was not attacking your values, but I was criticizing your tone and so and I screamed it for affect and I hope you remember what I sounded like because that is the most honest, loving think I have ever screamed at you. Your political tone is a disgrace to your Catholic values and undercuts all of your moral goodness. Your politics are an earthly consolation and a disgrace. I am embarrassed by your reactionary politics and your willingness to parrot whatever the latest right-wing attack line happens to be. This is so far against anything that Jesus would be about.

For in the end is not the point the approach? Is not the point the world-view, the feeling, the culture, the way of doing, being…

The last four years have felt like a trauma with my good, moral, loving mother and father aligned with a political monster. A liar, a man who does not give a shit about the integrity of our system and political traditions. A man who knows only personal power and division. A man who road his the dog whistle smash mouth act into the White House on the support of under educated white people and rural Christian conservatives. The counties that voted for him accounted for only 30% of our countries economic activity, this according to the Bloomberg Group. Biden’s counties while much fewer in number accounted for 70%.

I celebrate the engagement of this election. I celebrate the authenticity of it and the security of it and no matter how many times Jesus Christ’s man on the scene, Donald T. spuriously claims that he has won.

We knew he was going to do this and that doing this was wrong, but we knew he would do this and that is frustrating. He fired his politically appointed cyber security official for doing his job because his fact based job performance contradicted Trump’s LIES. He lies so much. Your devotion to him is pretty twisted. Your referring to masks as a Nazi symbol is ridiculous. You referring to Governor Whitmer as Governor Nazi. Your abandoning your Catholic Theology to frame hell in terms of “Cancel Culture”— you allowed a Trumpian Right Wing Campaign to inform and twist your theology and the messaging of that theology. Not to mention a campaign that has larger been used to defend white supremacists and power abusers.

I’ll ask you again. What I of more value to you— your religious truth or your political truth. Are your religious and political truths the same?

Fox and Rush seek to stir— they seek to inflame, self-congratulate, stir-up angst and frustration. How many times does Rush say “I know, I know” and then begin feeding into the worst impulses of people to dehumanize the opposition. You have chosen to dehumanize the opposition in your defense of unborn children. And that is fine— but remember, I am the opposition.

I have feelings and political leanings and I have bitten my tongue many times and avoided opening a political conversation with you guys because I love you so much as people and with our limited time together I would rather not waste time reopening old wounds or cataloging our known differences, or having a party line regurgitation fest. Where can I vote? Let my vote do the talking.

The world is changing always. Old myths breed new ones. The child is the father of the man. God is reborn in every generation— in every being. We have acknowledged God by our very existence.

11/30/2020

The importance of marriage => basis of the family.

Anecdote about Phil’s Catholic friend not attending his second wedding. God was at your first wedding, so that’s the one I attended.

Don’t tell you have not seen good Christian people get tripped up on theological doctrine and act in some really inhumane, unloving ways.

And you have to start with “don’t tell me” ? What happened to curtailing all the selling?

That bright vacant look, that illumination of warmth and joy and magnanimousness that narrows to judgement and sharp condemnation. The microaggression that is supposed to be more human than the excommunication or the class barrier.

We don’t know how we will age. We are usually young when we make the decision to marry and we do not know then how we will age.

You guys fought. There was tension. There were a lot of moves. I was an anxious child. Poop in my pants. Christian school— these tensions, traumas, experiences, whatever are probably what dislodged me from the U.P. Bay de Noc Christian School. Mr. Rose was a bear of a man, claimed that he could run backwards very quickly— who the hell was this guy? He seemed kind enough, but had quite a temper, duct-taped our mouths for talking, for being bored, as he tried to simultaneous manage three different grade levels. The incident at Covenant Point was so alienating— intimations of my experience at Christian school, tired up, good-fun, I realized I didn’t want to be initiated. I wanted to get the fuck out of there. Didn’t want to be brough into the fold— fuck you and your conforming sentiments. And once again— video games suck!

These are not excuses. These are incidents that explain my pathology— my reaction to rules and teachers. My ultimate distrust of authority and managers and kind of people in a way. Don’t really trust my own mother or father to interface with me kindly and compassionately with regards to religion and politics. The demand a sort of triumphalism to attend to their ideological scaffolding. I want agility. A sort of conspicuous consumption of ideas. Political positions .

I was so upset, murderously upset about the sub lying to us about our punishment and extra weekend homework and getting a check from Mr. Lagina when he wrote my name and Casey’s name on the board and then added a check without giving us a warning because we were lost in conversation chatting about the papers that we were getting back from the teacher. The class apparrantly was in on it too. That burned and seemed unfair and seemed completely against the point and the spirit of the whole check and name system and was also the only check that I received the entire year. I did not have to sit out dodgeball because I handed in one of my tickets. And despite this I still ended the year with the most tickets and thus got some extra prizes and treats and what not. The following year in 6th grade I received the “Principle’s Award” recognizing my all around engagement and achievement as a student.

And yes mother, I am passive aggressive

And calculating and I do try to anticipate things—

Pay attention, manager my affairs,

Keep in decent shape

Keep drilling down to the bedrock of my amorphous vocational instinct:

Writer, programming, being…

Oh my weakness, oh my strength.

Why do you think God designed it for it to be culturally more seamless and therefore markedly easier for Westerners to find the one true religion?

We are flesh, we are spirit; we are strength, we are weakness.

Nothing I will do will ever reach you because I have lost my faith.

11/29/2020

And can we both at least agree that faith is a gift?

Heritage, something bestowed. An inheritance of ideas and practices and ways of living.

I will heal through this rift. I am healing through this rift.

I will heal by writing. I will heal by loving my family.

I will heal by keeping rooted and balanced, composed, not superficially, but pragmatically, literally, ordered, focused, collected, clear.

You’ve made your selection, I’ve finally, finally, fully made mine.

It is problematic for me to believe that everyone is wrong unless they believe exactly like me.

And not only is everyone wrong, but they are also immoral, under the influence of the devil and whether they know it or not out to destroy everything that I hold near and dear in this existence.

People who do not share my religious and political beliefs and wrong and headed to hell.

Christian liberals are wrong and headed to hell.

Secular liberals are wrong and headed to hell.

The language gap. The intention gap.

You are the old way, the world forever revolts before you.

Salvation. Mythic language. Striped. Applied to religion and politics and all. We make all other decision in our lives very pragmatically (or do we), but politics must go beyond pragmatics and connect with the ideological and in some cases religious identities of individuals. Giving us the sense that our values are in control. Our values have won the day.

Who do you trust more to improve civilization? God or Progress? This is obviously a false dichotomy, but politics is all about creating false dichotomies. Turning the grind of bureaucracy into some sort of burning hearted clash of the titans. And no one is wrong here. The emotion is real. The emotion is there. Often manipulated and funneled through false alternatives, but we are simple this: action, reaction; theis, antithesis, synthesis. If we are passionate about this life then we must be angry. If we believe that there is injustice I the world then we must be righteously enraged and engaged. We should be proud to allow our unmitigated rhetoric infiltrate the very fabric of our lives. We should let our political passions dominate our language and our thinking. We should think about these issues correctly. We should ride the party line. We should feel upset if we hear other people not following the party line. We should repeat slogans in support of our ideological standard bearers latest attack.

God bless you.

I’m praying for you.

He’s in a better place.

God Bless America.

By the blood of Christ I ride on glory bound.

Stitching together a culture. Carrying forth tradition and sentiment.

I don’t believe our human understanding can completely fathom the one true good.

They are unknowable.

Sure I believe in God. And I believe They are a good god. Let’s admit it. It is extremely fucked up and primate that God is male and then he creates Adam first and to this day women get treated like shit by men who expect them to be subservient to them and fucking blame them for everything. My mother this, my mother that, my fucking step-mother, my mother-in-law, my aunt…

My life is not a rebellion against you or a rebellion against your beliefs. It truly isn’t. I love you both deeply and am so indebted to the life you have given me and all the support you have poured into foster my life.

I am not called to be Catholic. I am not called to be a dittohead. I am not called to be many things. But I am called to do some things and live my life. The last decade has not been easy, nor should it have been. I was in the process of becoming an adult, a parent. Fully transitioning to this next, life dominating phase.

Doubt is not always a pleasant condition, but certainty is absurd.

Is the depth of your conviction matched by an equally deep good judgement about when to deploy it?

That is hack job politics. Fraud.

And all is an interminable chain of longing…

Who calls your bullshit?

We have chosen different paths.

We have chose different practices.

We are not a level playing field. You are an a grieved mother. I am the frustrated son.

It made me feel sad and alienated when you demonized my political chose as the worst kind of darkness. That sets us up in a situation where I am in darkness and only you hold the hope and the light. Is that the way to see the world, because you also strike me as a very insecure person. Someone who does not make me feel very loved. You challenge me sure. And I suppose that ultimately will be a great gift to my development as a person and a writing and a thinker and a human. But I do not feel seen by you. I do not feel like you have tried to understand me. You pugnaciousness has made it difficult to understand and get close to you. I don’t understand this pain and insecurity, but I think I am learning it as I age and confront the weight each day of all the inevitable unknowing that will forever suffuse this existence.

You are enlightened. I have a narrow liberal view. And Dad, it made me sad, when you sent me some random 45 min. video of some guy who in the first couple minutes of the video basically claimed that the Shroud of Turin is some sort of undisputed material proof of the truth claims of the Catholic Church. His self-righteous tone seeming to imply that if you didn’t think that it was a little much to jump from a controversial rag that is not even officially recognized by the Catholic church, as proving the truth of the Catholic church then you were kind of dumb, or unreasonable. Just sort of hiding your head in the sand. Why the intolerance for lack of certainty? Why the aggressiveness towards people that don’t GET your truth. Sure there are people that are hostile to your religion. And there are other people the are confused by it. And there are other people that hear your message of love, but don’t feel it.

You long established, ever-weather cult is one of the most incredible and enduring institutions of our kind. But it has only endured bby being flexible and evolving. Looking out of its interests. Being politically savvy. Changing with the times. Progressing. Every waging pitched pew aisle battles between the conservatives and the progressives. The game is impassioned. The game is high-staked, the game is epic and historical and not going anywhere anytime soon and I know we all love it, but can we at least just admit from time to time that it is in fact a game.

I feel I had to get on the outside of a few things. A few cultures. A few habits. A few patterns. And I had to get into some new things. A new career. A new skill set. A new mind set. A new pattern of sleeping and eating and drinking. I had to change how I worked and how I was. It is May 2021 now and I have achieved this. I am now eating and drinking and sleeping and working and exercising in ways that are different that before and I am very glad about this because I feel healthier and I am writing more and I am further along the Web Development skill set development process that I had ever imagined that I would be. I am finally, at long last, figuring out how to sustain long thoughts. One of the keys is learning to not expect that they will be sustained continually, but that if you have some structures in place you can find ways to still them together over time within the context of a set process of creation and recreation.

11/24/2020

Mother, your message to me seems to be this:

Unless I agree with the length and breadth of your worldview,

I will never know the good and never be at peace, (happy, self-actualized)

I have accepted y

our wisdom on many things and my love for you has made me trust

You unconditionally. You are such a rebel, mother, you are such a rebel.

You could tell that he had thought about this and he was trying very hard to contextualize it just right, because if it wasn’t textualized just right it would not be true or it would not come across as true.

So he hemmed and he hawed and he dithered and tried to mutter out some approximation of the insight that had hit him so hard and directly and had so radically transformed his life.

Left but naught but to DO language as I have always done and shall continue to do so in an evolving, maturing manner.

“They had not more authority for them, no more foundation, than for those you have just undermined, and so, as though it were the yoke of a tyrant, they shake off all those other concepts which has been impressed upon them by the authority of Law and the awesomeness of ancient custom.”

* Montainge

Infinite learning and staggering subtlety.

Man’s intellect as is that Truth by which it has pleased God in his goodness to enlighten us, we can only grasp that Truth and lodge it within us if God favors us with the privilege of further help, beyond the natural order.

Discursive reasoning.

Only faith can embrace, with a lively certainty, the high mysteries of our religion.

Use of human tools which God has granted us

Clarify the truth of his belief

Giving god everything mind (reasoning for god), body, spirt.

“If a ray of God’s light touched us even lightly, it would be everywhere apparent: not only our words, but our deeds would bear its lustre and its brightness. Everything emanating from us would be seen shining with that noble light.”

Truth produces virtue, virtue is the distinctive mark of Truth.

Pagans and other religions have hope, trust, deliverances, ceremonies, penances, and martyrdoms.

God owes help to our faith, our religion, not our passions.

If we were to accept the great promise of everlasting blessedness the dying man would not complain that he is being loosened asunder, but would rather, rejoice to be ‘going outside’, likfe a snake casting off its skin, or an old stag casting off his over-long antlers.

Plato forbid teaching of threats from gods.

Mother, you have chosen a very specific path and I have too. Let us try not to collide too violently when we so rarely pass, I choose humbly, but I also respect you choice as well.

I am stirred up— I am broken by this, but the break is just a symptom of an underlying discomfort and sadness that I have about the disconnect I have with my family over religion and politics.

This religious and political interface is broken— I am either wrong or I push back and you get mad. I am wrong and I just have to suck it up. This is a message I have been wrestling with for years in one shape or another and having these messages fully articulated by my family so powerfully and directly has been liberating. For the last month and a half I have been attempting to build myself back up after confronting the void. The self-abyss. My mid-life crisis. I have come to the end of this path and am not cutting loose and heading in a new direction.

Upon the mountain I found a new perspective. The eternal return— life living upon death— the mountain of being being everywhere— the importance of ritural and the sacred. Why is your faith important to you? I am a heretic— I am also a Cubs fan— how much do you hear me speaking about this tribalism. Packers. Democrats. Chicagoans. I am not hip to it. We are individuals engaged in our very own personal experiments in living. In some ways we are anti-ideologues— this is not an easy position— but I fall back on pragmatism over principle if there is an irresolvable conflict. Laws and rules, politics, decorum, etc. These are incredibly complicated propositions. We make our claim— we have our say— let’s do as we do and say that which we will. Speak to me— desperate for words that I can feel. We do language and we pursue language in the cacophony of being. Pursuing the right silence.

Do you wish I were a martyr? Tears and

Being is a lake large like the ocean is large.

And yes I will admit that my family is no longer a shining, unconditional source of acceptance and warmth and encouragement, but is instead a source of anxiety, rage, tension, conflict, unease.

Lack of vacation has broken me. Lack of career settling and consolidating. Lake of career satisfaction, opening wherewithal for other things. Long weekends. Extended vacations. Everything has been a pressure cooker. Things seem so hemmed in. The lack of space and time in my world feels stultifying at times. Exhausting.

And then the Trump rift. Me getting roaring damn drunk and delirious. Feeling like the only way I could make it was to be soused. And then I was crying and telling them how we needed to be a family and how I loved them and we had to pull together, but it was over. We were lost to each other. I was out to sea as far as they were concerned and I was.

And then I was so fucking hungover the next morning. Marcus and I go pretty drunk when he came to visit last March and Rob and I would drink when he would come to visit and drinking with Gareth and drinking with Ben and drinking with Evan and drinking with Phil and drinking, drinking, always fucking drinking. Enjoying people’s company much more when I am drunk.

Gareth was fun to drink with despite the fact that as a co-worker he could be annoying as fuck!

She asks me in that bright, hey, now I am really going to listen to you, whether or not I have any good news sources that are telling me what the conditions in England are right now with COVID. This seems to imply that we are not getting our news from the same source and somehow that our sources would be saying different things about the facts on the ground. I think the facts are facts. People’s reactions to those facts obviously vary. Is she not satisfied with her facts? Does she think I have a more favorable set of facts from an alternative news source? Oh, my family is not great at asking questions…

It strikes me right now that your apocalyptic worldview is incredibly selfish, it places you at the dead center of the universe. Your own personal salvation is your most over-riding concern, your drama is placed at the dead center of all time and all space. That is fucking absurd.

The likelihood of our existence is non-zero. Given infinite space and infinite time our existence must recur an infinite number of times.

Newtonian cosmology assumes that time and space are infinite.

“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” Ecclesiastes.

All idealism is mendaciousness before the necessary.

Nick Cave: “Matti, forgive me if this makes no sense to you, but perhaps there is a way to summon your wife and dear brother and release them from your despair so that they can attend to you in their imagined presence, and guide you forward until things get better. For they do, in time, they do.”

News is something somebody doesn’t want you to read; all the rest is just advertising.

I’ve tried out different forms of social media, but none of them felt quite right, none of them reallys tuck in the end.

There were irreconcilable differences in our thoughts about eternal consequences and it really spoiled our finite interactions.

Are you going to let eternity spoil our finite interactions?

The challenges:

Working holidays, lack of vacation, living out of state, different political leanings, different religious leanings.

11/23/2020

Man can no longer find God’s truth in nature, unless he is enlightened by God and cleansed of original sin. But enlightened man can read the book of nature. The unenlightened is unable to read that true science which leads to eternal life. Man left to his own can no longer read God’s creatures. Creatures == everything in the universe. Only faith can embrace, with lively certainly, the high mysteries of our religion. Christian’s emanate light. Do they? Why don’t I feel love or illuminated by you?

Should I explain myself in a photo collage?

I’m really not trying to be complicated.

I am trying to simplify.

Perhaps God sent me here to finger your truth. Maybe God sent me here to temper you, to test you. Literally the day after I raised concerns about your aggressive politics the plot against the Michigan Governor broke— remember the one you called Governor Nazi?

Please don’t let your political rage poison our family culture. It makes me feel unwelcome. If the stated claims of our politics is to make a more perfect union, how is that even possible, if we cannot cultivate a more open and inclusive family culture.

I have for the most part tried to avoid political dialogue, or if I have I have tried to steer it in a broader, less partisan direction. But if your ideas of discussing politics seem to be kvetching about liberals and black people, which is not constructive, kind, or very Christian in content and tone.

If you have a problem with any of this, that is find. Feel free to respond in kind in which ever way you feel compelled. I have composed this letter in an effort to be clear, kind, settled and open. I am also preparing this letter as a document to refer to both my own stated claims and ambitions and hopes for our relationship, but also so that you have as clear as possible understanding of where I am coming from. Heretics, if they are not dumb, learn quickly to keep their mouths shut.

I challenge both of us to focus on making the relationship more about substance than ideology. You seemed to poo-poo this. Saying that we just need to focus on the superficial. I could try to unpack why this is such a heartful framing, basically saying that if our relationship is not built through this two way interface through Christ and the Church then it will be superficial and insubstantial. This is patently absurd and speaks to a very pessimistic view of the possibilities of connection and growth and learning that can happen between people with different world views. Your message to be has been consistent. Join or be marked as an outsider. Join or continue to break your mothers heart. Join or be selfish. Join or be ignorant. Join or be diabolic. There are only two ways. The way that I have found and all other ways. That which is not my way is selfish and ignorant and diabolic. Only my way and my understanding of the way is good and light and perfect. And any insinuation otherwise will fill me with rage and disgust. The voice of the devil has found me. Out! Out! Out you devil! The truth will not kotow to your sophistry and modern “openness” and “inclusivity” and “diverse meaning making”…

But seen from another way our economy is dependent on a diversity of meaning making. For the free-market to work, people have to be free to follow their interests and their appetites. Without a diversity of meaning making which is only possible in a polytheistic society we would not have the diversity or the robustness of our economy. 70% economic activity in Biden counties; 30% in Trump counties. What makes America Great? Trump counties? Biden counties? Or both? No single election is truly existential, or if it truly comes to that our system will have already become so impossibly rickety that it will indeed be due for a revolution.

Cycle, revolution, evolution.

Thesis, Antithesis, Sythesis.

A grand theory of everything.

I can only be an expert about our relationship.

Creative engagement. An act of alchemy to raise lower, denser, darker, unrefined emotions and memories and impressions into high, more filtered, distilled, insightful, compassionate, encouraging, creative, illuminating, exuberant acts of uninhibited life.

Transforming inhibition and restraint and inertia into release and catalyst and flow.

11/22/2020

I no longer have to fear you mother—

I no longer have to fear hurting you.

You seem to hurt easily, you seem very sensitive indeed.

But I think you can be won over as well.

Endless yardwork

She wants a connection with cousin Mike and Cousin Bobby

And she can be warm and kind to them

And doesn’t have the burden of their flaming souls.

Roll out the flaming balls of ignited souls.

Oversimplification rarely helps us resolve a complicated problem.

Steamroll, bludgeon, smother, disenfranchise, shut up, shut down.

Where is your peace that passes understanding?

You are a very angry, selfish, and insecure person beneath your church marm façade. So fuck off.

11/20/2020

Everything has to have a salvation message for you, or you fell it needs to—

Redemption, a suspension of disbelief, scribbling out relief from your unhinged dictations. There is still hope for the girl. There is still so much hope for the girl.

You cannot protect you children from the extremes. The extremes exist. Politics. Weather. Opinions. We are creations of balance. The framer whose fields are forever too wet or too dry, too sun exposed, or starving for light. Forever trying to thread the needle on the conditions. End up with a surplus. Anticipate challenges. Store up supplies for winter. Learn the seasons. Find the rhythms. Celebrate the milestones. Learn to learn from the land.

I feel like I am a man subject to all the gods.

Fallen man, his fallible law and language

And but yet still an organizing force.

A hypothesis put forward.

Defended. Deconstructed. Gone to war about.

Supported by reason and a well-funded and enterprising legal priesthood

That stands at the heart of our civil project.

Brainstorming

* Focus on quantity
* No criticism
* Encourage wild ideas
* Combine and improve ideas
* My truths are all foreknown.
* I’m naked to the bone.
* Disarmed for my protection.
* A shield of naked flesh.
* A lot of questions, not many answers.
* Setting up a confrontation.
* Looking for a fight.
* Stating something to prove his rightness.
* How smart he is.
* How indignant the other side makes him.
* The rage of history rattling the clapboard shutters on their hinges.
* A provocateur.
* This is a style.
* An entertainer.
* A coiner of phrases.
* An exaggerator.
* But what is his intention?
* What is his heart?
* What is his milleu? Purpose? Intention? Role?
* Is this the best source? Why do you listen to him?

11/18/2020

Ignorance and selfishness… are these my only options?

How do you manage your relationship with your non-Catholic children?

Your rage makes me uneasy

And I feel offended by your insinuation that

My value system is creating a personalized hell,

Cause it’s not just my problem now is it?

Did your sick puppy pit you against your own pope?

11/16/2020

How do fundamentalist accept their fallen children without winding up fellating the devil in their inchoate rage.

Let us pray for peace. Ask her to pray with me. Any time we might fight. Let’s just pray. Bring it before god.

Politics is in a mythic sphere, not a holy one, but whose to say whether or not a myth is or is not holy these days?

You’re curated rage slays me these days.

I apologize, but I do not possess the wherewithal to politic right now. I’m more focused on personal survival.

Ignorance! Selfishness! Are these my only two options?

11/14/2020

Your words were supposed to be mints

But the stink of rage has tainted the fresh smell puke tang

Strangled— I am left jabbing and jabbing, searching for a vein.

Pressure + resistance = current (flow)

May your mother’s heart know I have always loved you so and with a cosmic love at that

Rays of light radiating from me straight to thee right to where thou art.

Wouldn’t you agree that we have different modes of communication. Wouldn’t you agree that politicking is a specific and uniquely corrosive and polarizing way of communicating? Thank God for great Americans like Tucker Carlson.

A specific mode of communication in league with preaching, conversion sorties, sales pitches, etc.

You build up by dragging down. You denigrate to burnish.

How do you build people up always.

11/13/2020

Your liberal mindset seems so narrow to me. This my mother whose main news sources seem to be social media and a right-wing anti-communist rag run by a yoga cult (Falun Gong). I appreciate the variety, but question her lack research rigor and out of hand dismissal of mainstream news sources. You have rejected the reality of the world and so now seek to cherry pick, or lifestyle select, sources that amplify your biases and presuppositions. Liberals are treated very poorly on Fox News. NBC etc. appear to really try and offer a more balanced, “mainstream” inclusive viewership, perhaps a more balanced approach, but that seems like an awfully subjective pronouncement to make. That being what it is, being mainstream institutions they have a responsibility, the beat, the economic incentive to cover the mainstream institutions, and to fundamentally accept them if they have not shown themselves to be fatally flawed— or to seek to reform them if they are.

Conservative Catholics: I wonder about Marc Jr.’s relationship with his parents. Is he pressing them to be more Catholic?

Why are you so angry, Mother?

Why are you so angry, Father?

In the vale of great surprises

Daniel’s message, blood of the moon on us.

In the vale of great disguises

How shall I live with your ghost

Everything I feel returns to you somehow.

Faith in reason

I’ve waste my life playing dumb.

Blind faith. God’s grace.

I am grieving my mother— the distance, the separation, her eventually, inevitable earthly departure, and mine as well.

How do you balance tender love that makes you vulnerable with sufficient independence and stability? Vulnerable, but solid.

Sweet mother, capable matriarch, my distance is not a case of hatred. I hold you in high regard and hold up my love to you daily, loving you deeply and purely from afar— and deeply and purely nearly when we are able to be near. I can love you because I no longer fear your disapproval or apocalyptic worldview, your spell has ceased to dazzle me guilt spun. I walk away calmly, I shall never run. My heart is more open now my

11/11/2020

Mother’s broken ribs.

Mother’s sanguine ankles,

Mother’s splenetic temper.

Mother’s parasitic gut and loping mind.

Mothers fattening arms and hallowed out eyes,

Mother’s quick drawn guns.

Mother’s prescription pad.

Mother’s apocalypse.

Mother’s flesh, mother’s blood, mother’s Christ.

Then mother’s Mary,

Mother’s saints, and Krauts and Jerrys

Mothers bran quartet

Mother’s faries

Mother on-call, mother’s mothering

Mother’s relief

Mother’s withdrawl

Mother’s hackneyed verses

Satanic Daoist chamrs

Mother’s lullaby and sleep

Mother’s face upon the sky

Mother’s footprints on the beach.

11/10/2020

You preach and pray and get all hot under the collar.

I think I will just stick to being a heretic. Might stay healthy, might get sick. Regardless, I

I’ll stick to being a heretic. I really don’t give a lick. I’ll stick to being a heretic.

You take at instead of talking to, I suppose you’re the one that trained me to too. Wickedly dismissive of the other side. The are not just inferior, by immoral and diabolic, and dangerous.

We have an adult relationship. Does this deny the fact that my life with you was my foundation— no, do we have a lot built on top of that foundation now, yes we do.

“Communism” and “Fascism” are kneejerk words used forever to divide Americans.

Strength in difference, comfort where we overlap.

Respecting the process.

Your politics has taken on this tone of zero compromise. OF we must answer the threat of the mortal enemy not we must engage with community members to work together about how our community should be run. The Good neighborliness has all been drained out of it. Certain ways of talking work in certain contexts. Partisan talk shows have a certain interface, namely you just passively sit there and laugh and nod your head and feel appropriately outraged. Like a laugh track of rolling liberal attacks and insults. You just have to keep the stead insutls and outrage and exasperation coming, but exasperation is not a good look for politics. Politics is at it most simple meeting your neighbor at their fence to discuss something that mutuall affects you both and the way that conversation goes is going to be very contingent on how your fence has been constructed. Maybe there isn’t a fence, maybe its and invisible one that will soncially metal the skull of their pooch if she tries to make her escape, are you called over with a welcoming wave, is he holding a gun, is he holding an aggressive sign that tries to distill all political discourse down to a three word phrase or an acronym.

I need to escapes my rage. I need to escape my uncertainty because these things make us insecure, these things make us volatile and mind locked. These rages and uncertainties cut us off from other people and cut us off from ourselves ultimately.

You seem to not accept the legitimacy of supporting the opposition or the opositions importance. You are kind of dumb in that regard. What I see as a much bigger threat are the total domination of one party. We need two strong parties that have a sense of the deepest grievances in the country, the deepest issues, but then we need political parties that can work constructively within the imperfect institutions that we have been developing over many, many decades.

I think we have a fine adult mother and child relationship and I think it can be better. I hope I am not coming off here like I have all the answers. I hope my openness comes through, but by openness what do I mean there. My openness to being openly received. I am open to other people, but I want to be openly received. And when I am not openly received then I am not wanted.

For example, Hans, does not want me a as God father to his kids. Acts me about my politics and tells me to bit my tongue and suck it up and show respect to my mother who loves me more than I will ever know. I am grateful for that attact because it crystalized a sense that I am had for years and that I have had to put up with for years and fight against not feeling resentful or put upon by, but I think has ultimately really distanced me from certain family members and I would get all emotional about it, but I think what I have done is just try to accept it. Accept the estrangement and distance. I do not see a way back in the short term and if in the long term there is a way, fantastic, otherwise, life is too short to try and shoehorn in relationships that just don’t fit with the shape of your existence.

Mother you have at times pressed the issue on getting people together, often over populating our time together and out family gatherings. Making it a broad festive group get together, but also eroding the feeling of a core unit, which I have very little connection to. We were a team. But just a cross-country team. We all had the same name on our jersey but we were out there lost in our own races.

I believe you are write in one thing though. God stops being known when we stop looking.

We are fellow citizens. Not enemy combatants.

Red meat and an inherited economy ain’t gonna cut it.

Red meat callousness and a war on facts aint gonna cut it at all.

Any aid that comes near T is required to don protective garb according to a person familiar with the matter.

There are so many messages floating around out there. I have realized that the first message that comes to mind is not necessarily the first message I want to share. It is a starting point, but just because it was thought does not mean it needs to be shared. What is my intention? Releasing some need in my to get these words out? Am I seeking to inform or educate? Am I enlisting help? Asking in earnest for a new perspective? Truly, what is my intention?

**I write to keep an inventory of my thoughts. I write to pin my thoughts to a place and have a place to return to them and consider them and turn them over and grow them. I am not here to hide. I am not here to prepare even. I am here to live because I love to live in words and writing allows me to enter words more immediately then speech because there is so much more context that can be created with writing, or not created, you can communicate in impressions. You can allude. You do not need to set up or respond to something that your companion has just said. You can be slow but appear quick. You can marry your reticence to your most pointed, casual, let slip delivery. Feeling and weighing before speaking. Six months since I fell out with my family and no direct considered response. I want that. I want honesty. But I also do not want to write some bullshit expositional theme paper on why I am right and they are wrong. I believe we both can be right, but you believe we both cannot be write. Which seems like a very magnanimous, or perhaps arch position for me to take, but it is what I believe and more importantly how I am living my life. You apparently want me to feel conflicted about this. Well, you keep bringing it up and feeding out grapeshot proofs that your side is right or superior or righter or more moral or more flourishing or whatever. Its this moreness, this sense of competition, this zero sum game that I have been seeking to understand. Accept. Grow past. I don’t know. What is possible?**

11/06/2020

Miracle, the answer to the corona virus, nation of miracles, he was winning and then miraculously then he wasn’t. Sharpie gate- weather system was worried about contradicting the President and the President was just talking out of his ass about weather, but then had the audacity to try and pawn off an obviously altered map, a map that had been altered with a sharpie marker… “Stop the Steal”. Mass campaign that I note here on the 11/05/2020 and that would ultimate reach its ultimate crescendo on 01/06/2020 on the day congress had gathered to certify the electoral college votes (and also just the vote in general) only to have their work interrupted by an angry mob of “Stop the steal” enraged Trump supporters. The whole thing was disgraceful and sordid and shook the institutions of our country right to the core. They endured though. They held. The sum greater than the parts, no matter how powerful the branch, the trunk kept us whole despite his lies.

But this was all later. Now. Right now. We are still in November, 2020. Three days ago we held an election. Trump once again had levered boomers latent rebellious nature to rebel against sense and logic and facts in his endless electioning and tweet firestorms. Truly taking the bully pulpit to some new heights of bully. Even as his wax figurine first lady is pushing for great bully awareness and protectful. It would be farcical if it wasn’t so goddamned weird and sad. And the Christian right are all up his ass. My parents just enthrall. You know sometimes God uses fornicating mean (no another word meaning sexually impure) men who were strong leaders, ro something about god understanding and needing strong leaders with libidos or some weird shit. This is why I need to jot this stuff down. This is why it is such a discipline. Just like my CRM work in my watch selling career, if I am going to stay on top of all of this I am going to need to deal with it consistently.

11/03/2020

Would your worldview crumble if America was no longer exceptional?

Esme’s literacy has grounded me deeply in the magic of language once again. The wonder of WORDS! These subtly shaded abstractions, strange stews of connotation and rhythm and rhyme and image and logic, sensation, sentiment, something of stone, something of ether.

10/31/2020

Your misguided spiritual guidance has felt like violence at times

At lease to my mind.

I’m sorry, but I’ve committed no crime

And there remains nothing between

Me and the sublime,

But for your deranged mind games

That strike me as foolish and cruel and unkind.

10/28/2020

Have no fear, your wounds will heal

Our wounds are very real,

But they are not all.

Your pain is your pain.

I cannot heal you.

I did not cereat your wounds

You did not create mine.

My wounds came from my consciousness

And My consciousness has changed

and my consciousness is now healing me where I am.

Where I have to be.

I have entered the eternal.

We are in the eternal

Our organs are not immortal,

But their substance is.  
listen to your body

Christ overcame the weakness of his body

Overcoming the temporal natural of our body to ground ourselves in the eternaI

I grew up and out.

Grew beyond your shadow.

There is no comfort in the shadow of the cross

I point out that having had a choice about her abortion likely made a big difference in how she things about the whole thing and how the whole thing played out. You got to be the moral hero instead of the societal victim. You made great out of a potentially disastrous situation.

Fate fated frees us to be willy nilly

Man ordained or God ordained. Who can really say?

Sometimes we are just seeking some non-judgemental understanding.

Most of the people I am close to and share things with freely don’t judge me quite so hard or consistently and they don’t lob debate grenades at me just for what… fun… intellectual stimulation, advertising, campaigning, did your last little tirade there just make our union that much more perfect?

10/27/2020

You pulled your investments out of your more volatile holdings just after the Wall Street first Covid stimulus pop and before the Covid drag dipped it back down a bit. Long term it has continued to bubble, bubble, up… Old girl has 6 living children, 5 children-n-law, soon to be 19 grandchildren. And, but, still the fucking sky is falling down. She watches whatever videos pop into her toxic FB feed. Did you kno that the President of Ghana is sounding the alarm on the international coronavirus conspiracy? Do you know how vehemently our dear leader oppose pedophilia. He does bigly.

I know I am your son and that you love me, but I also know you well enough that I cannot trust you to do things that will HURT me, which you engage in out of some sort of SELF-RIGHTEOUS, “instructive” love? The love of GODS judgement? You have raised me well. I have some psychological issues I anm working through but the seem to be so intricately connected to this process I am engaged in to fully come into my own as an artist. Shit you can’t really show other people till after the fact. Till you have done the thing and found the mode, then if they really want to know how you found the mode, or if you get to a point in your life when you need a quick refresher on how you yourself originally found the mode, it will be here, laid out. A experiential road map, perhaps not giving directions form A to B exactly, but certainly tracking the progress. The thoughts you had along the way. The outpu. The tendrils of story. The letter and postcard buds. The finding rhythm in Boogaloo Joe Jones and his psychedelic guitar. John Fahey, Skiffle, south side blues and Jazz. I feel like some new doors are opening up to me. And I am writing this in here like I am having this thoughtnon the 27th of October, but I am not.

Mother, you raised, me well, so well, I thank you, I am grateful, I truly am, now please, please, please, just fuck off.

I would never say this to my mother directly, but it is the intekllectually underpinning or subtext of our relationship moving forward. And I want to find the nuance here. The nuance that makes me seem less like a particular asshole and more of a general human who has done with great pain, agonizing p[ain what I should have accomplished, much more emotionally neutrally a long time ago.

I am now free and independent and open to love her and I am no longer emotionally beholden to her religious and political views.

I feel like I have tried to stay under the radar. As if I feel like thegenearl trend of the wold is okay. It is moving in the right direction. It will lurch , it will schrink back, the tide comes in, the tide goes out, but in general things are mobbing along, changing decade to decade. Progressing if you will. Progresing despite ourselves, our humanness. Our selfishness. Our necessary self-interest. The encumbancy of taking care of one’s own shit and the potential minefield of personal shit maintenance. Life, Liberty and the PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS (RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR SHIT / GET YOUR SHIT TOGETHER / MANAGE YOUR OWN SHIT / LOVE THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU WITHOUT MAKING THEM MISERABLE / ACCEPTING THE LOVE OFFERED TO YOU WITHOUT ALLOWING IT TO MAKE YOU MISERABLE

My family has much to teach me. And I them. We are equals. I am as holy as thine. Am I not as holy as thine. What are these different levels of holiness. Can someone be more holy than someone else. What does that mean? Are they more deserving of Salvation. Have they achieved a hire level of salvation? Does God somehow value them more? Is it like an aesthetic thing then?

I will not bring up HIS name shae had defensively typed. She was the Radical. Beholden to a golden calf. Lost now past 40 years. Never gonna enter Canaan now. And the Rat crawled back at 41.

New cycles began:

1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020…

You have helped me mother to get out. You have helped me to get over. I learned over time that it is okay to be away.

10/23/2020

Work it out- think it out. The arrogance of a man and his vocation- crying babe pressed upon wife- the door mat we all clean our feet on. Other mother offended. Pushed away at last for distance. Space. Breathing Room. Marcus and Hans contentious relationship with mother. Kill your father. Fuck you mother, fuck your father, kill you mother, steal the key, abscond.   
 People shot bulllets- all these bullets. It is truly a battle for the national character- all right then, shut up and vote then. We cannot be overcome. There is a perspective that transcends the time. We shall make war on ourselves- conflicted on how to make things better. What the coronavirus proves to us is that running a country is about more than just shoveling fuel into the stock boiler. People’s lives are also affected by public health, race relations, shifting demographics and a balancing act of disparate interests. Trump has been an effective demogogue. He unleased a new breed of populists and nativism. Trumpism… a strategy can come on like a hurricane, but is no ultimately coalition building. Mr. Trump goes for broke and he has bankrupted numerous times- financially, morally, etc.- in the process. His tenacity and inability to self-reflect seems to achieve something on an individual level- single-mindedness can be a powerful tool- framing things in absolute black and white can be an effective political ltool, if you choose your fulcrum correctly, but when you try to trun everything into a fulcrum you risk alienating the majority of the people that you come in contact with. The bull has been to the China shop and the country gets now weight in on his redecorating job.

10/22/2020

Mary- making a religion our of mother Mary’s pain. Something has to change.

10/20/2020

Mother, are you slightly on the spectrum?

I write this and it may seem like a slight, but I have so much respect for you, and would have even more respect for you if you actually were on the spectrum, no? All that you have been able to achieved, despite your challenges?

I have been horribly depressed and have heavily medicated myself to socialize- and I wonder why?

10/25/2020

“No one wants to be lied to,” said my mother the ardent Trump supporter

10/24/2020

True or false the secular is synonymous with the Satanic?

What would you say if I told you I was an awestuck agnostic?

10/17/2020

Convicted of how disrespectful and painful it was for me to step out of the fold. And not knowing what to do with these conflicted emotions….

I don’t need alcohol and marijuana to settle or stir up my thoughts.

I don’t need Mary to save my soul

Or set the baseline of the world.

Establish the level horizon line.

Oh mother you set the zero of the horizon line and the height of the steeple. You set the sight line of my eyes and the solidity beneath my feet.

But alas, alas, time has passed,

And while I do not what to shout. Wihtore gard to your apocalypse –

I want out.

1016/2020

Father, why the sleeplessness.

Father, why the grinding hard of teeth.

You can make room for my skepticism and we can grow in our mutually imperfect faith journies, or we can continue to be dicks to each other. and smother one another with lack of understanding.

Smother the flame of each other with our lack of understanding.

My curtness was not rage. Nor disgust, Nor dispising you” I am tired. I am harried. I am in the most intense process of my entire life and I may play if off and refer you to my larger arching plan, but please know I am working my tail off and I have been carrying stress through this wwwhole thing, which I don’t put forth as proof of my martyrdom or some sort of piping of my personal horn, but to give some coloring, some sort of sympathetic snap shot of my personal position this past year. I am trying to stay positive and work through things. I am doing everything in my wherewithal to ensyure that we will transition out of this “disaster” in a better position career wise, artistically financially, work life balance wise. This ahs taken some doing. This has taken some sacrifice. This has taken some headdown and boxing myself in soer tof habits. I wont’ change anything, I apologize if I have seem stressed or overly sensitive or volatile. I think this process has had many aspects akin to depression. And not just as a punitive negative thing, but as a focusing thing, a striping away process, freeing me from the multiplicity of attention distributers. So many good. Things. I have set some things aside, but I will be back. I have also gotten so new systems set in place which are sallowing me to work in greater, more patient archs. I am painting in layers. Subsequent layers laid down when the previous layers have had a chance to dry. I have been gibung things to align in my mind and on the paper and the com[uter screen before me. I have been ttrying to settle into my mind and see. I have taken pains to live more intuitively. I have been assaulted by multiple crisis that have created space. I have fought for these practices. The gifts of these practices continue to unfold as the months roll on.

10/15/2020

Felt bad about being so direct with my dad. Responding curtly telling him that his case might be a little more persuasive if he’d stop talking about Angels and apparitions so much. There is this family dynamic that my dad is not as intellectual as his wife or his kids. This is a whackdoodle designation and doesn’t mean shit, but still has some sort of influence on our family dynamic. The irony being that my dad is by far the most talented practical genius in the family. Solid with money and home economics, repair, improvement, car work etc. He will figure it out. New bathroom. He is on it. On his own time. Give him the freedom and he will figure it out. He will not take the most efficient route, but he will learn along the way and quickly apply what he has learned and overcome the complicated and the convoluted via iteration and effort and sheer openness of time and manic free will and effort and trying and trying until he succeeds.

Good singing session today. Feeling open chested. Feeling good and in my body today. Went for a good run and it was nice to kick out my legs.

You might not see it this way, dad, but I was standing up to your insecure religious bullying. You think you are proselytizing, it feels like otherness making to me. I know it is very important to you, but to make it real or accessible to other people you necessarily have to modulate the way you speak about it, otherwise you are positioning yourself as an insider against the outsiders which is never much of relationship building dynamic. Purists all talk a sort of way and read the right books and attend the correct services and such. And they know the rituals. They know the references. Sometimes they get so steeped in their culture that it inhibits them from connecting with people outside of that culture. Especially if the engagements between the parties constantly gets hijacked by the cultural differences existing between the two individuals. Especially if one of the parities is constantly bringing up sensitive topics or emphasizing differences in a provocative or at the very least ambiously intentioned assertion. What is you intention of bringing up abortion while holding my baby standing in the front drive of your home. Are you trying to convince me that abortion is immoral and wrong? Are you hoping that this will flip me Republican or convert me to Catholicism? Instead I feel like you are a) bringing up this topic because of me and I find it sad and insulting and gross that this is one of your go to topics of conversation with me. And do we talk about this so much because it is something that I bring up. I do not believe it is. But you do. You are defining our relationship by this topic, by the unnatural frequency with which you bring up this topic or direct our conversation in this direction.

Language is a system. Certain syntaxes and semantics get called with much more frequency than others and thus naturally get introduced and reinforced from an early stage in learning development. The more fundamental, the more frequently encountered.

This basic building principle of language speaks to why advertising is so valuable. Maximized messaging. The message is that we ARE and we will continue to BE.

Your anger is telling us something. I was angry too. I am more at peace now. I can move forward. We can move forward.

I can appreciate your faith and your practice of it. But your judgement comes heavily cast.

And I have no use for your floundering, unchanneled rage.

Like some ecological disaster, papered over and left to the lawyers to assign the blame.

I assure you this is a much bigger problem for you than it is for me— I feel like I have worked through this and refuse to be apologetic about my difference of opinion or perspective from you.

Received a youtube link from my dad- he is sharing a story of a man who has found peace and purpose with God. This is wonderful, this gentleman had a very personal, very subjective religious experience and he seems to have found personal fulfillment. That’s wonderful and very personal and super subjective. And if you think it can somehow convince me rationally that my not being a part of the Catholic church is a big problem, well I hate to tell you but that is a heresy…

Also thank you for the email, dad, super glad you are looking out for my soul while doing very little to cultivate our relationship in this real world.

Confronting my relationship with my father and trying to move past the anger and disappointment and resentment and lack of acceptance or interest, or deep connection. Obviously, a big part of this is on me, but I have really tried to boil it down and it takes two to tangle. The distance I feel with my father is real. He still hasn’t called me. He and my mom called together and mom did most of the talking. Maybe I have to shut mom down a little bit to get to dad. But then dad gets on and he just wants to talk about how the restaurants are still closed. And then mother concedes that they are all up in arms that their rights are being trampled on just because they can’t go to England to see their daughter and grandkids. I make the joke that they are elite just by having a passport given only about 25% of Americans even have their passport (less trying to make the point that they are elite, though introducing that into the conversation, she readily concurs that she is elite, sure were are all elites now aren’t we…).

Did you know that Mary and the Angels are older than Medieval thought. Older than Christian thought even.

Politics is all about power struggle. Theology with its struggle for belief orthodoxy has always been political. It has always been about what is possible, necessary.

I believe that has had way more influence on the Church and used it for his various ends than God. Go ahead, prove me wrong.

Wait… what are we trying to prove here?

If it is not emotional will it attract us. If it is not emotional will be even give it attention.

That grain of sand grinding against my psyche, I’ll losing my mind, drooling my viscous brain juice all of the place. Pearls of wisdom like kidney stones, always in production.

Cradle Catholics unawre of what an infinite gift

They have in the church with everyone else dying of thirs

Way far out in the desert. Poor bastards.

Roy Schoeman, a Jewish-American scholar, attributes his devotion to Christianity to the appearance to him of an apparition of the Virgin Mary. He instantly laid out the dialectic that Catholicism is either medieval superstition and science has all the answers, or that science is an ungodly, inhumane force challenging the deeper more humane spiritual truth of Catholicism. Why all the dialectics, brother? Is it time to take sides already?

The Shroud of Turin, Miracles of Fatima, Mediveal Miracles of Lorde, Tilm of Guatelupe. The theory of materialism is false because of all the irrefutable evidence against it. This materialism vs. Catholicism seems to be an important project to Prof. Schoeman. But again, isn’t this just shoehorning reality into a paltry two options. That seems like a mistake. Convenient. But Mistaken.

The Shroud of Turin was first mentioned in 1354… denounced in 1389… 2020: Catholic Church neither formally endorses nor rejects the Shroud.

It has become clear that

All of the evidence points nowhere

In particular.

At least in Roy Schoeman’s opinion. What an arrogant bastard that guy is. The Shroad of Turin is unrefuteable material proof of the truth of Catholicism. Bullshit. That’s not even a position of the church. You are lazy and fascist in your demands, in your one true faith, in your position of the elect. Where is the humility? Where is the brokenness and a warmth and wisdom. No your faith is not an excuse for your humanity. And unkindness is of course very much a part of us. But please do not parade your unkindness and anger as some holy exhaltation. What you are subjecting us to is an emotional Bowl Movement. We are trained from a very young age to take care of our physical bowel movements in private. It’s a process. It takes training. Discipline. Habit. But we get good at it. What you are bringing us here is an emotional bowel movement, a very human necessary act that is by definition more of an emotional process. And one most people reach adulthood tragically ill-prepared to deal with these routine passages of the rich emotional experience of humans through us. We are the spectrum of these emotions and that is a very healthy and right reality. The problem arises when any of these emotions are not allowed to fully flow through. They get stuck. They get trapped. We get caught into degenerative emotional loops because we do not know how to healthily clear out these emotions. And thus instead of establishing a clean, efficient way for processing and evacuating these emotions, we all bound around with a leaky colostomy bag of half processed emotions. Peppering our speech and modes and attitudes with irrational tinges of spit of frustration of intensity of emotion beyond what the situation actually warrants. Our frustration in one part of our lives begin to leak into other parts and color those other parts. We are in need of a better emotional BM routine, but we don’t know to manage that change.

Presence of God. Intimate conversation with god. What language does God speak? Does he speak politically, religiously, poetically, when does the peace that passes understanding come into play? i

I felt like there has to be real meaning and purpose to life.

And this is correct. We create this meaning by living.

All of these other things— culture, religion, politics, interests, these are accidents,

The stuff of like, the specifics is experienced through the interfaces of these other things.

These intricate human projects and fields and practices.

We cannot be afraid to engage, for that is where life truly is.

Of course we should have trepidation about where we

Through our lot in, but if we throw our lot in with true companions

Our journey will be pleasant even if our path isn’t always.

You have found an oasis and everyone else is in the desert?

How can you say Catholicism is the only legitimate religion? How does this make you think about people who devoutly practice another religion? Are they deluded? Evil? Stupid? Corrupt? Sinful? Do you really believe that all non-Catholics, the vast, vast majority present day and historical humans? What are your expectations of heaven? How does your faith help you on a day to day basis? How does your faith help you deal with negative emotions? Anger? Rage? Disappointment? Annoyance? Fear? Anxiety?

Catholicism is not the only legitimate religion and I am so glad. What would this world be like if we were all standardized behind the same set of rigid beliefs? This interplay of differing and often contradictory ideals and their intended and unintended consequences are the coal store that keeps the burning belly of our boiler burning.

Turn the other cheek. It is your anger that I can’t deal with. That bubbles up in me an irrational anger and frustration. Why are we even having this conversation? Your anger is something that I am biologically programmed to respond to and fear and grieve.

You have anger issues. I am sure that they would be worse without the mitigating influence of religion, but that does not fully forgive or mitigate your anger, nor does it prove the rightness or truth or perfection of your imperfect religious practice. We are more interested in the practice than the religion, and the practice only inasmuch as they are improving the soil, bearing fruit in the limbs overhead, embracing me.

“We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the church.”

You know what your anger tells me? There are other issues at play here. Cause if you are really at the Oasis and you are still this fucking angry, and I am out in the desert doing my thing, I think I would prefer to remain out here, thank you very much.

I believe in life. I believe there are many, many ways of knowing.

Don’t know that I have an argument to make beyond that life is beautiful, life is nuance, hard.

Be beautiful. Be nuanced. Be hard.

Are you a radical? Do you support the kidnapping of the governor? Do you believe the rhetoric you embraced contributed to creating a political climate in which these types of radical actions are less surprising? Expected? Liberate Michigan? Lock her up?

Did you not refer to Governor Whitmer as Governor Nazi? Are you enlightened? Should I hold you to a higher standard. If I used offensive or inflammatory language would you call me on it. When is this type of vitrol appropriate? Desirable. We make the rules of social discourse. Or at least we have a hand in regulating them. Adding our two cents in as the moments arise. I feel like our discourse should be aspiration. A discourse as aspirational as your ideals.

Please keep ascribing to me your words impressions of liberals and hold those biases dearly in your heart in place of my presence.

Is part of being a good person not making other people uncomfortable. Not making people feel abd about things that they do not understand. Things that people have not been able to spend time with. I feel like in your enthusiasm for splitting the world in two you have neglected to notice what a clumsy bludgeon your politicking tools are.

Tried to get some reading in last night— but just felt tired again— just felt the oblivion of the night descending upon me and so I followed her into the depths and in the depths I while away the early A.M. hours on our green cat-scratched couch.

Writing, including details as they bubble up— suggest themselves, you know, what can you say to art— the million choices that go in to all that you would like to make— and some make and make it— and other fall apart angry and shitty— bitched out and mother consumed— you called the Governor a Nazi, you floated out highly debatable assertions into national conversations on race and equality and the like— social justice.

I want to fly over the tropes and the traps of white liberation. We cannot help but be sucked into the politicking of the moment though can we…

Would love to say that I only do politicks in the even of all out war.

Politicking is all about dividing. Setting up camps. Securing funding. Using the scalpel and the sledgehammer of language to railroad the conversation inti a narrow set of clear choices— it is the opposite of reality and the opposite of the free market— a proliferation of choice, ultimate choice, ultimate competition.

In the political arena there have been concerted efforts by both parties to restrict the “free market” of the political system— there certainly has been much written about this. I accept that we have a system— I recognize that it is limited and imperfect and I accept that.

Otters have a pocket for their favorite rock.

**10/14/2020**

Do you see my movement away from your faith and politics as a threat to your way of life? Have you connected me into this larger narrative of things that threaten your way of life? Your conception of yourself, the fidelity of your overarching narrative

I have repressed my opinions and emotion for the stability of my family. It made me a little unstable.

Now I must be stable for my family. And less repressed.

There have always been outrages. What people get outraged about is very much a part of politics. It has to be. Rage. Grievance. Spin. Distrust. Reform. Suppression. Yellow journalism.

My reasons are not deep enough.

I am shallow.

I have a narrow world view.

I am the superficial one. I have refused the truth of the Catholic Church.

I have self-excluded from the celebration and the communion with Christ.

This argument is both heretical, impolite, and frankly kind of mean.

Something about a collection of messages that my mother has sent me. Break them up into a poem and intersperse them with direct quote from my mother.

The Governor of Michigan is a Nazi.

Will you fight for this country?

Barak Obama has a silver tongue.

Kamala Harris has engaged in the most diabolic darkness.

He had refused the blood again.

Vision of a priest with impossibly coifed thatch of hair and orange spray tan.

Radiating light from his white vestements.

*This is my body broken for you*. *And it’s a good body. Some say the best. And this is my blood. Its really blood. Its really my blood, the realest blood you might ever drink. It tastes like wine which is good, you don’t want blood tasting blood, believe me. This is the real deal. It’s great blood. The purest and we drink this pure blood in remembrance of him. Because you know, we should remember him when we are drinking his actual blood. Just think of it, galloons of this stuff, real blood, being drunk all around the world. Little Christs just greedily guzzling it down. It’s beautiful. You’re beautiful. You’re very special. We love you. We’ll be back in some form. Maybe bread? Maybe wine? Maybe a TV show. Who knows? Maybe radio. Rush said I would be very good at the radio. I am very good at TV and so of course I should be very good at radio. Never did movies. They take to long. Too much time. And then you’re all big on a screen and people have to leave their homes to go see you. No, I want to be on the small screen. Bigly! The smaller the screen, the bigger I look.*

*We remember things in our blood and our body. America remembers. American memories are truly great!*

Fleshy suntan loath applied tan. This

Is God not this sense of the existence of cosmic forces beyond me?

Perhaps its bets if we first bury the past

Smother the bitch dumb in her bed.

I grew weary of your fear and rage

What are you so afraid of anyway

Don’t you know that no one gets out of here alive?

She didn’t love me enough.

She said that didn’t she.

I should have love you more.

So she didn’t love me enough, young parent, going through medical school, stressed, stretched. Fett finally under her and time for the second family. Super mom, miracle mom. Juggling mom. Teamed with super da. Juggling Dad. Mr. Mom Dad. Dad who was Mr. Mom. Coach. WHits Coach Whits. Runner. Super Runner. Suer Dad. Church. Sports. Youth Group. Wednesday nights. Church, Sunday morning. Sometimes fternoon. Sometimes evening. Church trips. Fundraisers. Summer camps. Retreats. Lay-witness weekends. Mission trips. Camping trips. Trip camps. Seminars. Youth rallies. Conversion calls. Husky voiced prayers. Calls for sexual purity. Calls for humility. Calls for serving your fellow man. Calls for resisting Satan. Calls to spread the good word of Jesus, with tie-in t-shirts too boot. We spend the night on the floor of a local Baptist church. Where I was baptized actually and where some other kids and I would race from the sanctuary to the kitchen to claim the remains of the communion bread every communion Sunday. Which strikes me as super germy now, but at the time was a total treat. I love the soft clumps of the inner, dense, glutonous dough better than the crusty, hardened exterior.

But that was years ago.

Fast ahead to now and I have left the breadth of Christ for he narrowness of me.\

An inlet, sorely not a sea. And yet am I not happy. I have my challenges, yes, ahead and behind, there are many challenges that come to mind, but we are just beginning to come into ourselves and are just now feeling a new fullness and I think I really do need to step away from the ritualistic space and get head and heavy into the here and now and if it means I have to slow down the creative stuff so be it. I jst need to be, need ot be making sure that I am getting into a flow day, but day. And in this run up to my birthday it seems like an opportune time to really dial in and get some things down. Thinking about it. Now is the time. If I can make significant strides to having my github page and my professional website up. I am shooting to be server and database fluent by the end of March. This is kind of my bootcamp season. These next ten weeks as I look to round the corner from enthusiastic hobbyist to earnstwhile applicant.

**10/13/2020**

We are at the beach and she catches me off guard with a comment about Governor Nazi. Wait. What? Did she just take the last name that our family shares with the Governor of Michigan and substitute it with the word Nazi?

My brother’s family is exhausted— the boys who are both around Esme’s age have run wild and their parents are exhausted and spaced out. The kids go barging into the gift shop when they should be heading to the parking garage- this dynamic time and gain the unwieldy big family— I don’t have the desire or the wherewithal for it. The squeeze comes in the election year. It has been a banner 4 years, a bunch of conservative judges added to the courts, including three to the supreme court.

We’ve added 4 grandchildren to the mix with three more on the way… so let’s just call it 7 because life begins at conception. Which is fine until you consider the 900,000 miscarriages that occur every year in America. That’s a fuck ton of lives snuffed our before they could be horn— There she is a whole lot of biology tied up with them opaque spiritual truths.

And the next day the 12 arrests for the plot to kidnap Governor Whitmer and I am horrified and kind of traumatized. I have self-diagnosed myself as having BPD which I mostly attribute to my inability to fully heal the festering wounds of politics and religion and I have psychic scars and I compulsively consume more alcohol and pot than I should. Oh, fuck, I am America.

The spin doctors have always been there but under this Trump-Limbaugh ticket ticket has turned meanewr, nastier, less grounded in concrete leadership or even values and instead the president has retreated into the mythological tropes of the office and the country. Some vague idea of tradiation and past greatness as if any of this greatness would have ebeen achieved without the pressure and work and sacfifice of the progrewssives, But I think when You start to demonize parties on either side—the gig is up! Because, as they should be, they are mirros. They are two sides of the same coin. But this president failed us on…

Sometimes for illustrative purposes, simplicity is important.

PROGRESSIVE-CONSERVATIVE  
LIFE-DEATH

We’ve added 7 babies to the family in the last seven years. Which is a fine number. Another number is the 3.6 million miscarriages that occurred during that time in the U.S. That’s a fuck ton of lives snuffed out before they could be born— there is a whole lot of biology tied up with these opaque spiteful truths.

And the next day, the day after our blowup, oh, no, oh, no dear Mema is annoyed. The cage is rattled, the morther tiger nipped. Matriarch Mary challenged in the settling seat of her retirement. We have a blow up. She pushes. I push back. She has a certain rgument in her head and is working through it. I have a certain argument in my head and I am working through it. I scream at her “IT’S YOUR TONE!!!!” Not wanting to attack her values. Not wanting to attack her choice to choose the other candidate. My reason wasn’t for not choosing Trump wasn’t deep enough, there must be a deeper reason! A flashback to your agonizing over the ambiguous ending of Lost. There just seemed like there was so much more… so many questions were left unanswered. And is that not the truest ending of us all? So we blow up. I get inspired by the Buddha and lguh like a maniac, forced and kind of manical in an intentional act to push out the negative energy in me. I get it out and am spent. Mema spends the day brooding about it and shooting me really, thoughtful and considered and incredibly patronizing emails in some sort of slapdash effort to reinforce the heretofore status quo of black sheep son fallen from the fold, refusing the invitation to dine with the Christ. I am hurt on so many levels by this. I am hurt because she does not get that her continued evangelist tone with me reads like rejection and lack of acceptance. Her shit is short-sleeve button-ups and backpacks to me. And I won’t accept that I inability to accept it as some sort of failure. But her is the rub. It is a failure. It is an objective failure of my family that I have somehow been complicit in. And I cannot not see it as a failure and a tragedy without disrespecting my family. I truly hope you know that I don’t see my ideological exhile from this family as some sort of triumphant thing. Because it is not. It is a breakdown. It is a distancing. It is a lose. It is scar. I am sorry.

You cannot rationalize your way to faith. That is a heresy. I am a heretic. Just not that kind. If Christ has not chosen me, then he has not chose me. That is fate. If he has chosen me and I somehow do not realize it, then due to his perported perfect character I believe the message will get through in a timely manner. I am not afraid of death. I have been afraid of life, but no more. I do not fear the rush of time towards the grave, I do not fear the wasted time, the sloshed water bucket time, the some total dead time of our inefficiencies. For we live in these inefficiencies. We exist in these inefficiencies. We work in these inefficiencies. Our life’s work is to figure out how to make these ineffciences work. Our life’s work is to try and figure out how to work with these inefficiencies. Our inefficiencies are mainly sufficient.

So yes, wow, we blow up and we have this exchange and *Mother!* and *Amerikana* were birthday out of that moment, or took a more mature step forward in that moment. And then the next day, the very day after I so wildly accused your side of aggression, twelves arrests are made in Michigan over a plot to kinap Governor Whitmer and I am horrifiece and kind of traumatized. I have self-diagnosed as having BPD which I mostly attribute to my inability to fully heal the festering wounds of politics and religion that have left me feeling alienated from my family, reeling with psychic scars and compulsively consuming more alcohol and pot than I should. Oh, fuck, I am America.

The spin doctors have always been there but under this Trump-Limbaugh regime it has turned meaner, nastier, less grounded in truth, or even concrete value-based leadership, instead the president has retreated into the mythological tropes of the office and the country. Some vague idea of traditions and past greatness— as of any of this greatness would have been achieved without the pressure and work and sacrifice of the preogressive wing of U.S. politics, the very force, organization that he demonizes as an enemy within. When you start to demonize parties on either side— the gig is up because, as they should be, they are two sides of the same coin. But this president failed us on so many fronts- failed to unite us against the pandemic, or racial injustice, failed to unite us around the election and our institutions. He institutionalized his “outsiderness” and lionized his “revolutionary” credentials. Successfully built a cult of personality in which loyalty to him personally- over party, over country became the mission. He’s the only one that can protect us. He’s the only one that is fighting for us. He’s the only one we can believe.

**10/13/2020**

Your rage and unapologetic melding of ancient church teachings and contemporary politicized buzz words has cast your mortal understanding and ultimate lack of abiding wisdom in sharp relief and cauterized the festering wounds of separation that have lingered through the years. Its clear to see you are just like me. Perhaps we can be friends again. Thank you 2020— thank you for your terrible clarity. I am truly grateful and I believe the changes in me— the calming, the acceptance will make me feel much less unsettled and defensive in the future when confronted with these religious-political attacks/distancing confrontations.

I apologize for not being able to healthfully engage with you politically. At the moment it really does seem pointless though. I an very grateful for the vote and the calm organized process we will be able to use to resolve this election year’s differences.

It did hurt that in the moment when I am working hard to get my head right and focus so as to ensure that my family is safe and secure and our place in society is maintained and improved (work-life balance, future building, better benefits, less cross character employ)— I come under attack from the family that I most need to be connected to and supported by in this super contentious and precarious year, moment

**10/12/2020**

You political venom, either bubbling up from your soul itself or just anxiously aping whatever partisan scoff line you’re circulating. Its perverted. It’s a perversion of your values. Persisely because it sounds so unkind. You can take this as some clever liberal way to make you question your conservative values or some paranoid thought as that or you could receive this as a firm but loving perspective that your political tone and the assumptions that it radiates is poisonous and clouds the messages that more accurately reflect the heart that I know and love. Politics and framing everything from a winner take all lens is an earthly consolation. It is trying to have your cake and eat it too. At its purest it seeks to bring to earth a shade of that heavenly state beyond, an impossibility in this dualistic, tainted, first-fallen world. We are left to ask— what is our fruit? We can talk and write all day long about our values or aspirational “virtues”, but what is our fruit? What are we producing? What is our tone? Let’s not worry quite yet about how we are being received, but let us reflect a moment on our messages. Do they reflect our heart? Are they aspirational? Inquisitive? Are we attempting to engage or inform or opine? And if so, what color are we bringing into the conversation? Are we brightening it? Are we darkening it? Are we responding with love and kindness and patience and GOOD HUMOR? Good humor is so key here. Especially as you age and the frustrations pile up, good humor is truly a gift. I think we have the responsibility for tending to our own humors. “Knowing ourselves” as the ancient Greek Oracle prophesied. Know your mind; your subtle mind. Know your body; your subtle body. Give yourself to your projects. Find a way to give yourself to your projects. Find your way to jump into the river. Certainly figure out the rough arc and trajectory of your journey and take stock of provisions, wherewithals, abutting timelines, transitions, inefficiencies, distractions, but then once the space and time have been ascertained— jump!!! That is something that I don’t think I had ever been able to do with the full on wild freedom and inefficient chattiness that I have currently built up to. It is useless an fluffy, but somewhere in the cut back tangles of my “thoughts on craft throwaway asides” I am finding my voice. I am shutting out all the other voices and all the other competing phrasing and langugaes and ideas and directions and projects and needs and wants and dreams and simple going for the next apparent key. The key that appears next in my thought flow which has somehow allowed the invisible firings in my brian to spontaneous represent themselves on my computer screen one letter at a time. I am not thinking ahead, I am not lokking behind, I am simply writing in space and writing in time and finding in this practice the right silence that I need to fully come into myself as a person and a writer and a programmer and a husband and a father and a son and a brother and a friend and a neighbor and a citizen and a human. I can be because I have found my voice. My writing process gives me a culamtive structure from which to build and maintain my voice. Not in any sort of gold mining expedition where I am after the most lucrative idea or something like that. I am teasing out my intuitive sense of voice which is apparent in the subtlely different approaches I take in voice with all of the different pieces that I have begun. Exploring moving in and out of these subtley different voices, seeking to weave them together and fill an echo chamber of production that can ping back and forth stylistically. It is also here that I am working on identifying my themes. All writers have themes or at the very least some sort of system of aesthetic mise-en-scene that creates a hallmark style from a constellation of discrete elements.

No human system can fully capture the can capture eternal truth.

People are the truth.

A civil society thrives when it can weave its truths together, cohesively.

And remember, the truth is the people.

In a modern pluralistic society your foundamentalist political views feel untenable and unnecessarily soul draining. Gay rights fine… abortion rights fine… are the wealthy more disporortionately wealthy at any other time in our history- yes. Something is amiss, especially with so much money being in politics. Power will always skew towards the moneyed. And the VIP section is always roped off. Your ceremonies are lovely, but from another time and land. Another realm, cold and far away, inviting but insecure and punitive at the point of refusal. My worship follows me everywhere, whispering God is Good. Good is God. Go. Be Good.

Goodbye, dear Imam,

Let my mother know I am here

Please have her ring when she gets just a bit more clear.

I am so proud that you are such a strong woman of faith and the career that you have has has been righteous and service oriented and abundant in providing for your family bursting forth. You and dad are amazing and I am incredibley proud of who you are and how well you have set yourself up for retirement- good relationship wth kids, have your health, financials are in order. You guys are truly aspirational.

I hope to high hell that I am not as angry and closed minded and judgemental as you are when I am your age.

You were radicalized by the radio! Oh, shit! That joking tone. That I’m going to say some crazy shit and you might just think I am joking.

You broker zero opposition.

Write me off as pejorative liberal, narrow-minded, ignorant, in need of sucking it up and biting my tongue,

Mother I love you. I am so proud that you are such a strong woman of faith. Don’t assume I think you are a gool. In fact, I think you are dad are brilliant and absolutely killing it! You are both in your mid-sixites in wonderful health with a vibrant growing family!

What about tolerance though. You do not tolerate

Dialetical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Emotional dysregulation

Borderline Personality Disorder

Marginalization of her values and disrespectful.

Fear of being unloved and abandoned.

Insecure.

Lack of confidence.

Play music, activity, ride it out, mindful: wave don’t block or turn your back.

“zoned out” ground yourself- ice, breathing, pushups, stretching, meditation, pray, warm bath, shower, get help, possibly get Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

This horrible feeling of my mother being upset with me—

But not for any specific action that I can correct, or even apologize for.

Female complain-

My mother is upset with my path

My wife is upset with my path

My daughters are upset with my path.

My cat who is a male but still very catty being a cat seems to be upset with my path.

Gayle Hammer: “Maybe you should have done that 20 years ago?” Why is Gayle such a bitch? I mean she isn’t wrong, but come on. I appreciate her bitchiness in this regard in some ways. I felt convicted about it. It’s like I float out these reads on things to see what other people think rather than just sticking by my read. And I am making a read and I am acting on it. Even if I am withholding judgement that is a form of a read, you are holding out for more information to complete your final assessment. And maybe that is your read. I don’t know enough yet to get emotional about it.

I don’t know enough about it to get emotional about it.

Someone starved to death yesterday. Probably true and I should on some ideological level be really upset by this. But it is a generalized hypothetical without anyperson connection to the victim. And therefore even though the death is tragic and I respond emotionally to tragic occurrences, this occurrence is emotionally distant from me.

My mother’s religious and political extremism are both at a manageable distance from me. I need to learn from my mother. I need to take from her what she is offering. I need to be open and honest with her. I need to pursue her and my dad just a bit. In my own way. Honor them, if not follow their every precept.

You fed into the rage that sought to overthrow a democratically elected governor. You referred to her yourself as Governor Nazi on Aug.14,2020 in the park in Chicago with such an embittered rage in your voice that I pitied you. Pitied you. I am sorry. I feel ashamed to admit it, but I pitied the cravenness of it. I pitied the cloudness of your saintly heart and being and the good work of your life and the flourishing family that you have and the healthful, well-provisioned retirement you had laid out ahead of you and I pitied your rancor. I pitied your short-sighted reactionary self-righteousness which is at its least aggressive just plain mawkish and though more often takes a tone of teeth and anger, that special well of spite all partisans have for the life affirming advisory. I know what I see and I see pain. I see unmanaged pain. I don’t see a life well managed and well reasoned. I see a life built on fear and anger.

When you said that, it was one of the most disgusting things I have ever heard you say and revealed you to be a selfish, foolish, hard-hearted partisan, a horrible example for your children and grandchildren, and frankly an abdication of leadership in grace and holiness as you inisist on positioning yourself as our all-powerful, broke no decision Imam. Decent is arrogance and ignorance and narrowness. You know what Esme does when I say no, when I deny her request, she cries, she protests. No was I really free to make that “free will” decision. That “free will” reply. No, I am being trained by my daughter to say YES. To take the path of least resistance if I want an amicable relationship with her. This hissy fitting and grandstanding and vent receiving is a form of manipulation and unkindness and poor communication. It’s something that needs to be nipped in the bud, so I send her to her room for a timeout. Could juxtapose argument with daughter and argument with mother.

If you want to be my mom, wonderful, lovely, would love to have you, if you insist on being my politically addicted Imam— where just to talk to you is to get washed over by your politically tinged assertions and spun or framed situations. Seriously, why all the politics. It obviously is obsessing you, but to what end? Is it making you happier? Is it making the world at large a better place? Is it making your immediate world better? Is it modeling prudent and civil civic engagement? Where is your heart? Is it the burning heart of Mary? Or the clogged up heart of an Ass?

**10/10/2020**

Right wing plot to Kidnap Gretchen Whitmer unveiled. Literally the day after I accused my mother and my brother of aggressive politics. 1/6/2021- less than 3 months later right wing rioters riled up by the president and his supporters stormed the capital building. Beating security guards with American flags.

Oh, mother matriacrch,

Archangel Gabriel— his terrible hair before us

And they demanded a King.

The spirt of the Lord came upon him and he burned with anger.

He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces and sent the pieces by messenger throughout Isreal. This is what will be done to the Oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel.

Same manner in which you have supplicated before your God in your moments of frailty. The messages that have drawn me away from where you have headed we implanted in a first run of your insistence on true believers, which in my youth were Evangelical Protestants from warm churches. The cold Catholics were not the true believers, nor were their houses of worship “real churches.” This was a quote from our trip to Oxford when I tried to connect with you spiritually by bringing you to a holy evensong and then later you expressed your desire to go to a “real church” .

I am sure you would have something to say about this now and I am sure I have not represented the whole interchange, but the upshot was that I had just started to try and re-commit to Christianity and connect with you and day through that, which I had thought would be a slam dunk, but instead I was pushed further away and confronted with you middle-aged angst and rebellion and selfishness and uncharitable attitude. I think you were going through some things at this time— menopause maybe, but it was a powerful warning to me that the spiritual shelter of the church seemed to offer a truly uninspired way of seeing the world. So much resistance to things that were different. Rather than being interested in the good of things that were different you seemed to reject them as impure, inauthentic… what arrogance! What a shitty example for your child! I did not come back to the Church. Though within a month I began my 22 year relationship with Marijuana without much compunction. I was choosing the new and the open and the unafraid. And while my conscience was not totally killed nor my respect for Christian teachings nor my love of my parents I believe my exit from organized religion was at last complete. By 21 I was wholeheartedly not a church-goer. Which is totally true. The last time I attended religious ceremonies somewhat regularly was that semester in Oxford in 1999.

So, yes, ironically just at the moment when due to academic frustration, my first pass with binge drinking, most intense cultural shock and homesickness and romantic despair and disappointment had all conspired to create a tender opening for me to approach the Anglican or even the Catholic church (three of my peers converted within the year, including the college girl who broke my heart and was so crazy towards me).

Attending that mass and then retiring to a pub for a pint before a slow walk home through Oxford’s Medieval streets is definitely one of my very fondest memories of my time in Oxford. You still roiling with your Catholic rebellion scornfully expressed your desire to go to a “real church”, a warmer church, a more relational church.

I think, Mom, and this actually feels kind of cruel to express (the cruelty of honesty no?), that broke the camel’s back. I felt like your religiosity had made blinded you to other forms of spiritual expression, even relatively very similar ones, if not even more historically connected to your beloved “original church” that you seem to have been searching for since your late teens. Have you found it now? I hope you have. I truly do. But don’t let your enlightenment make you unkind, please. Don’t let your enlightenment make you blind.

Your religiosity had made you blind and oppositional to experiences that had brought me calm and comfort and that had begun to make me reconsider a “Christian Path” that seemed much truer and realer and more appealing to me than the brand of Evangelical Christianity and the mawkish cultural retinue that trailed in its wake. I wanted out. Anglicanism, or Laura and Peter and William’s Catholicism could potentially have bee a new direction.

Liberating myself from small town Evangelical Conserative myopathy seemed like a solid, moral, and appealing project.

You accused me of passive-aggressiveness which I aggressively and wholly owned though passive-aggressively opined that this tendency had potentially been foster by our unfortunately family dynamic.

Now that I have reached a new plateau with my thinking about it and broken through a major psychological barrier in relation to my relationships with my family, which had bas been a significant drag opn my pscyhologcailly over the decades as we have grown further and further apart and I have internalized their anti-liberal messaging in an attempt to humbly accept my punishment for leaving the family trust, casting off the family religious and political plateform, not pursuing a health care carrier (my mother initially was unsupportive of both my interest in Law and my interest in programming, seeming to imply that there was something immoral or ultimately unfilling about a job that doesn’t administer to people’s physical needs. Which, despite my qualms about the corrosive affects of too much digitization too quickly, struck me as a profoundly naïve and retrograde mindset. There is not a job in this world that a bit of tech experience and comfort and excellent typing skills would not aid. My mother sought comfort in a solid, straight path career. I have not bee so lucky or lazy or uncreative or disciplined, or whatever has led to my being 42 and still in ultimate pursuit of my long-term lane.

“You don’t seem very in control of your politics.” (This said to my mother in reaction to the conspiracy revelations in Michigan and well before Trumps lose and the Jan. 6th insurrection.)

Drive a golden stake right through the heart of the day, the country, my heart.

The Trump- Razny similarities are manifold. I’ve seen this type of leadership up close and, girl, it is not pretty.

Exorcise the overblown blowhard already.

Get ready for culture and carnage.

Hitch your carnage to the engine of love

Drunk beside my baby and my deceased amigo

Craving Aristotle as I orient myself to objects

Basking in the golden glow of our dear leader.

**10/09/2020**

To try and win my back to the faith my mother peppered me with a few texts and emails inviting me “to dine with Christ” . I thought you were supposed to dine on Christ. Doesn’t she realize I am a vegetarian?

She sent me some links to articles written by learned Catholic illuminaries with the cavat that reading these works by individuals so much wiser than your stupid mother. This would allow me to be fully informed about what I was missing out so that my not dining with Jesus would be out of “self-exclusion” rather than ignorance. Which to me read like my two ways forward here were capitulation and acceptance of a faith that I did not have (did you know that it’s a heresy to say that you can come to faith by reason? Are you a heretic? If so, we have much in common).

This selfishness furthered a message expressed by my mother that my lack of support for the Republican party and their “Pro-life” agenda was proof of my selfishness in that I did not care about children that were not my own and that I only cared about my children as an extension of myself. (my lack of 24/7 boiling rage about abortion and my lack of support for Donald J. Trump was proof of this.).

I truly hope I can craft this into something more than just a broadside vent. At this pint I have enough of an emotional buffer that the whole situation is kind of incredible to me and gives me the best understanding of some of the grievances of white conservative Christains and the way they frame their grievances. Why is it so goddamned raid-roid in its fever pitch. Has their ever been an incumbent President with such an “anti-“ message. Frankly, an “anti-government” message. A deliberate effort to erode trust in government and media in an effort to control messaging and position the Trump adminstation as the soul arbiter of truth. Conveniently taking the language and black/white mindset of Conservative Christians. And I had always wondered how we would become fascists. These fault lines still need mining, and minding.

At this point Trump doesn’t’ even stand for anything. His allies are not are not based on shared ideology, but rather loyalty. He has a bucket full of worn tropes demonizing the west, which seem ever more absurd as no complains about or refuses to cash the checks issued to them by their government. This message is largely missing with white educated suburbanites, though seemingly continues to play well in the “provinces”. I truly believe at this point he knows he’s done, but that from here on out he weill do everything inhis [ower to solidify his fire-brand brand with his most ardent supporters. He doesn’t need the whole country to be enthusiastic about him, but if 43% of the voting population can get behind him and some percentage of those supporters are more loyal to him than the Republican Party, I am sure he will be able to dovetail this disastrous 4 year run into a robust political/business operation post-Presidency, save for any lingering legal or debt troubles which he may have ultimately exacerbated by his profound hubris.

How do you deal with your insecurities? Cause I think you take them out on your children.

But yes, I am "self-excluding" from YOUR world view along with anyone who is not I though this had been clear for a long time.

**From:** aaron whitmer <[aaronwhitmer@yahoo.com](mailto:aaronwhitmer@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 8:04:34 AM  
**To:** Mary Whitmer <[Mema56whit@charter.net](mailto:Mema56whit@charter.net)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sent with love just to offer a perspective— not to force

Are ignorance and selfishness my only options?

**From:** aaron whitmer <[aaronwhitmer@yahoo.com](mailto:aaronwhitmer@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 8:00:44 AM  
**To:** Mary Whitmer <[Mema56whit@charter.net](mailto:Mema56whit@charter.net)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sent with love just to offer a perspective— not to force

Ignorance?

**From:** Mary Whitmer <[Mema56whit@charter.net](mailto:Mema56whit@charter.net)>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 7:39:51 AM  
**To:** Aaron Whitmer <[aaronwhitmer@yahoo.com](mailto:aaronwhitmer@yahoo.com)>  
**Subject:** Sent with love just to offer a perspective— not to force

Aaron,  
Please don’t receive this sharing as being judged, hassled, or preached to. I will share as has been shared with me—- that changed the course of my life. Delete if not interested. But at least it will not be out of ignorance you walk without Christ— it will be out of self exclusion—- because He loves you and beckons you to dine with Him💕  
  
MEDITATION OF THE DAY  
Welcoming the “Stronger One”  
  
God alone is the happiness of our souls: the contemplation of him, and nothing but it, is able fully to open and relieve the mind, to unlock, occupy, and fix our affections…. None but the presence of our Maker can enter us, for to none besides can the whole heart in all its thoughts and feelings be unlocked and subjected. Behold, he says, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and eat with him, and he with me (Rv 3:20). My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him (Jn 14:23). God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts (Gal 4:6). God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything (1 Jn 3:20). It is this feeling of simple and absolute confidence and communion which soothes and satisfies those to whom it is given.  
Life passes, riches fly away, popularity is fickle, the senses decay, the world changes, friends die. One alone is constant. One alone is true to us. One alone can be true. One alone can be all things to us. One alone can supply our needs. One alone can train us up to our full perfection. One alone can give a meaning to our complex and intricate nature. One alone can give us tune and harmony. One alone can form and possess us. Are we allowed to put ourselves under his guidance? This surely is the only question. Has he really made us his children, and taken possession of us by his Holy Spirit? Are we still in his kingdom of grace, in spite of our sins?… We trust, that, in spite of our sins, he will receive us still, every one of us, if we seek his face in love unfeigned, and holy fear. Let us then do our part, as he has done his, and much more. Let us say with the Psalmist, Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Ps 73:25-6).  
Saint John Henry Newman  
Saint John Henry Newman († 1890), a cardinal, established the Oratory in Birmingham, England, and was a preacher of great eloquence. [From Waiting for Christ: Meditations for Advent and Christmas. © 2015, Augustine Institute, Greenwood Village, CO.]  
  
Love,  
Mom(Mother)😘  
  
  
I don’t trust you politically, mother,

Nor you I. You are too stogie to me,

I’m too permissive to you.

The pain that she thinks this constitutes a forward moving relationship.

**10/09/2020**

Aaron,

Put down your defenses, pour a cup of coffee—-just read my boring thoughts—- return your thoughts if you wish( as we both are free), but in terms of relationship—- we’ll focus on the physical world, children’s beauty, challenges and humor, gardens growing, musical endeavors—— whatever you’re comfortable with.

When I long for something eternally good for my children hope prevails, but I feel the closed door so I respect your desire for no more unwanted intrusion to your worldview. God remains at that door so I rest in that peace. He is patient even when I am not, He is loving even when I am perceived as not. Your “ liberal” mind seems so narrow to me to not even consider writings of converts far smarter and educated and experienced in life than your stupid, narrow minded mother. Even just to consider the words they express. You gave us the book “Poems every Catholic should know”. John Henry Neumann had a beautiful entry in that collection. I thought beauty was born of Truth so that was my failed attempt to connect with your literary, intelligent side. Your disdain is no longer disguised—- but fortunately I am better able to handle it, because as I grow closer to eternity, I care far less about what you think of me— and far more about what you think of God— because I long for us all to be with Him someday—- as I long to be with my own Mother and Father eventually.

You are naturally “ virtuous” in your temperment unlike those of us who are more insecure and prone to anger. Do not think my appeals to you are rooted in disappointment or thinking less of you. I have always marvelled at your kindness, gentleness, industriousness,hospitality,intelligence, courageousness, adventurous and loving ways ( handsome too). But perhaps weakness and vulnerability in me has made my need for Christ more evident to me—- to keep from self destruction or worldly consolations. You are getting along fine without Christ. I know all too well how deceiving that false security is—- but those are discoveries we all make in our own way. You are free, son. I am also free—- and no longer feel guilt for your rejection of Christ or me. The lover of your soul will not abandon his effort to draw you to himself—- and you will know true freedom then, but until then— feel free from my vain attempts to bring something beautiful, that is perceived as bondage by a worldview you hold that I hope holds the promise I suspect you see in it. I suspect we both want a kinder, gentler world.

We’ll keep the relationship light, superficial and comfortable—- as my goal has never been to offend or control as you seem to think. I respect you and betsy, I love our grandchildren, I enjoy our time together—— so I will try hard to live love—- without mentioning His name😉.

With nothing but love for you,

Mom

Offend, control

“virtuous” Guilt, pressure, judge, question, unload upon, radiate tension to.

I think we agree

Nazi = theWorst

People call you Dr. ourLastName,

which has always made me proud

so when you whom I revere

referred to Governor ourLastName

as Governor theWorst—

I despaired. Felt betrayed by your wisdom and goodness which has always been presented to me as some sort of gold standard or ideal that OImust live up to or face exclusion from familial intimacy and acceptance (I have 17 nieces and nephews and zero god children.).

hath the Word incarnate ceased its worth in time?

We are tense individuals. I am seeking to break that cycle.

Wanting to calm the flare. Lower my pilot light.

Zealousness does age well.

Find my practices.

I am finding my practices.

Family. Writing. Coding. Poetry. Guitar. Yoga. Meditation.

I apologize for our blow up in October and I am sorry for my slow response. I am a slow person. Deliberate? Sporadically. DeliberATE? Incessantly.

I had a moral imperative to vote for a President I deeply distrusted and whose post election antics have only confirmed that my distrust was well founded.

Such looseness with the truth and such tenacity to push a lie with and attempting to coerce the full force of the federal government to line up behind it. That is tyranny. The 8-0 decision by the supreme court was a beautiful moment. It confirmed for me the wisdom of our union. The resiliency of the checks and the balances of the system. Perfect. No. But resilient. Evolving. But brilliantly structured. We have a good country. A country that truly is objectively the greatest in the history of the world in terms of our wealth and resources. Why the angst? Why the apocalypse? Why the populism and the fear? What is wrong? What do you see as the solution? What is your vision beyond just conservatism? What is that? Status quo? What ever happened to a more perfect union?

**“The two parties which divide the state, the party of Conservatism and that of Innovation, are very old, and have disputed the possession of the world ever since it was made. This quarrel is the subject of civil history. The conservative party established the reverend hierarchies and monarchies of the most ancient world. The battle of patrician and plebeian, of parent state and colony, of old usage and accommodation to new facts, of the rich and the poor, reappears in all countries and times. The war rages not only in battle-fields, in national councils, and ecclesiastical synods, but agitates every man's bosom with opposing advantages every hour. On rolls the old world meantime, and now one, now the other gets the day, and still the fight renews itself as if for the first time, under new names and hot personalities.”**

* **Ralph Waldo Emerson December 9, 1841**

You pushed me for an deeper answer and my deeper answer was that more than anything I didn’t want to argue with you. I didn’t want the precious few minutes I had to connect with my mother to be embroiled in the incessant churn of the political sphere. Am I unreasonable in this? You turn tact and accuse me of trying to shut you up. Trying to silence your inconvenient truths. I ask you, what is your intent in bringing them up? What is your intent on harping on them? What is your intent of trying to leverage them in convincing? guilting? Me into believing that the moral imperative of Trump’s PRO-LIFEness necessitated that I vote for him despite my deep distrust.

It causes me deep, deep cognitive dissonance to have my mother whom I so deeply love and respect and whom I believe to be a wise and moral person, was so emphatically critical of my decision to vote for a candidate I deeply distrusted and whose post-election behavior, pre-election behavior notwithstanding, keen confirmed my judgement call. The Supreme Court itself confirmed my judgement call. I feel I made the right call, cognitive dissonance notwithstanding. Dear mother, I do deeply love and respect you. You are a moral and religious person, but sometimes you are not very nice. Be nice. Or don’t, but don’t expect me to be nice back. Which I don’t say as a threat, I say as a promise, I say in the spirit of openness. I will speak me mind and I encourage you to as well, but keep in mind, our words and time are limited and much like my phone call with Hans, as he rambled on about the historic and contemporary of the Detroit Lion’s organization, I sometimes find myself wondering why do we talk about what we talk about.

Hans telling me all about the Lion’s and their inability to get a Bill Belecheck like organization off the ground.

I try to check my ego at the door,

I place my guns upon the table.

But I keep this knife within my boot,

Because you don’t know and I am able.

But first, but first,

For mirth and thirst

Let’s try to sell what can’t be bought.

Let’s drink our senselessness well-thought.

Somehow the politics (and I say somehow with an eyeroll cause it always fucking does and will until the goddman Catholic Calaphate is established. And then all we’ll hear about is how the bishops keep fucking up the church. Just like their critique of the Pope right now. Her updated 21st century Trumpian rightwing eschatological conception of hell as mapped over the progressive opposition is a work in progress in which cancel culture is working to fully imprision each and everyone of us in our own personal hells. Or if hell is too loaded of a word, let’s just call it their “own little world.” My response to that is okay, I think we are all there and its called consciousness, though this consciousness has been with us for all times and is our very own personal responsibility to manage. I will be the first to admit that I have not always managed my consciousness well. But I understand that now. I’m having kind of a woke moment and I think what jarred it was Trump. I believe Mr. Trump has set me free. Breaking from your family’s religious and political traditions ain’t easy, but seemingly the egregiousness of Mr. Trump and my family’s complete lack of critical engagement with his shortcomings, just snaps the fiber on the moral hold their worldview had on me, or at least the filial acknowledgment and respect of the sanctity of the worldview’s meaning chain. But when to come to the Jesus means you’ve gotta kiss the big Don’s ring, I am sufficiently grossed out and disgusted to a depth that feels like a kind of world-weary enlightenment. The sage musings of the sufficiently middle-aged. Accepting middle age on the early side. Not fighting the inevitable. Inviting it. Grounding myself in the bounty of the season, not pining for the fruits and fields of other seasons. The mirror I was raised to regard and began to not like. And I mean all of it. Cause its not just Catholicism or some shit like that. I am really fine with their Catholicism until they start passing judgement on our choice to plan our family rather than turn betsy into a fucking farm animal. But for me it’s their embrace of Trumpism, so deeply to the point that they honestly seem to hold him in higher regard than their own pope! It is frankly disturbing.

We have not really been able to engage. They occasionally will try to get into it about one issue or another, but it is hard because I think we each think the other has been I don’t know sort brainwashed! I suppose it is good to be engaged with people who see the world so radically different than you. The difference is actually fine, the seething rage, mean spirited broadsides, and general endtimes sort of angst and frustrations are fucking insufferable. I think I may have at last (or at least for another election cycle) staved off another round of my mother’s passive aggressive theological-political inquisitions/false alternative sales pitches. The big difference at this exact moment is I feel such a relief. In the most direct way today at 41 I told my mother that yes I am “self-selecting” out of her world area (and really have been for a very long time… did she forget? It has really surprised me how freeing this whole process has been.

Beyond that politics are not really that huge of a thing to me. I generally take a long view and don’t really see a harm in the country taking back and forth between right and left, rewarding and punishing the parties for their effectiveness in approving our countries. The details of how all of that works itself out, I realize I generally don’t really care as long as people have the right to hold their own view points and express them without any mean-spirited retaliation. I am certainly a consensus guy which makes me a bit anathema to my family, morally weak I am sure. But you know what, I am absolutely fine with that. The power my MOTHER carries over me can never be escaped, and its not even desirable to throw off that power, but I did need some kind of deep psychological retrenchment to restructure my mother’s place in my personal mythology. I believe the changes in my will allow me to love her more openly, freely, less guarded, while at the same time, in my new found maturity, I will have a much greater emotional wherewithal to deal with future religious of political issues in the future. Big sigh of relief. I am still processing through everything that this means, but the feeling is incredible. I am drinking less. I have lost 20 pounds and I am stretching and meditating everyday. Not to mention writing like a mother fucker, learning coding and keeping up and continuing to build up my Mandarin Chinese skills. Losing my job has certainly been a challenging, scary, uncertain, disorienting, reorienting, redrawing, resetting, consolidating, growing, tumbling experience. Lordy, Lordy, what else is in store for 40….

Having listened to your twice-told tales,

Prey hear three times of mine.

Let’s annoit ourselves in rhyme,

Flesh away our mortal days.

Seek the company of sorcerers and whores.

Besmirch the name of Christ,

wear women’s lingerie,

Fornicate with strangers

Masturbate out in the hay.

Consume a sea of drugs,

And slash a score of throats,

Then raise a stout-walled castle,

Run round by a blood-filled moat.

But don’t worry,

we’ll stay connected,

all will be well.

Expect fragmented dispatches

from my solitary cell,

As I while away eternity

in my personal hell.

You’ll notice that I in our October conversation I never rhetorically attacked President Trump beyond saying I thought he did an unsatisfactory job so I was not supporting the reupping of his contract. Why am I not well within my rights as a grown adult to have that be my answer to my mother regarding a sticky political subject? Why? I was polite. I was calm. I was honest. But you push. You do not accept. And that makes me feel so frustrated. I feel like I cannot be open with you because you will either attack me or turn any moment of closeness or vulnerability into either an opportunity to evangelize to me. This is probably not fair to you, but I am truly trying to be honest and straight forward with you, because I do what to preserve and grow our relationship, but I can’t deal with the tension. I am down with it and it is unacceptable. You need to decide to get over it and quell your anger towards me or towards our alienation. I am stupid and riddled with limitations, but I am living my life and, yes, despite not identifying as I Christian, I believe practicing forgiveness is something I deeply believe in.

I don’t need to defend myself. I don’t need to defend my beliefs or why I am not Catholic or why I am not raising my girls Catholic.

This last decade has been difficult. I have worked hard. I have been in the trenches

10/05/2020

How do you think about heaven?

How do you know about angels?

What does it mean that all things are only through Jesus and we only exist through Jesus?

**Dr. Mary Whitmer Retires from Family Medicine Practice at OSF St. Francis Hospital & Medical Group**

*4/29/2019 - Escanaba, Michigan*

* [](https://www.osfhealthcare.org/media/newscenter_uploads/whitmer_mary_2.jpg)

*Mary Whitmer, DO*

OSF HealthCare announces Mary Whitmer, DO will retire from OSF HealthCare St. Francis Hospital & Medical Group – Gladstone after 32 years of service. Dr. Whitmer’s last day serving patients in the Gladstone practice will be Wednesday, May 1, 2019. Dr. Whitmer will remain on the OSF St. Francis Hospital Medical Staff and continue to provide care to residents of our local nursing home facilities.

Dr. Whitmer began her career in 1988 as a private practice physician in Gladstone. In 1995, the practice merged with OSF and today is OSF HealthCare St. Francis Hospital & Medical Group – Gladstone. She spent her entire career serving patients out of the OSF Gladstone Clinic on Michigan Avenue until 2017 when OSF HealthCare built the existing building on 4th Avenue NE.

“We have been blessed to have Dr. Whitmer serve the Gladstone community for so many years. She has been a mainstay in the health care community, providing expertise and serving her patients with great compassion. As Dr. Whitmer shifts focus, we are thankful the residents of the local nursing homes will remain under her exceptional care,” said Dave Lord, President of OSF St. Francis Hospital.

Patients of Dr. Whitmer will not need to do anything, as they will automatically be enrolled with Dr. Keirsten Smith, a family medicine and sports medicine physician who joined OSF St. Francis Hospital & Medical Group – Gladstone in January. If patients wish to transfer their care to any other OSF HealthCare provider or have additional questions, they may call (906) 428-3273.

04/06/2020

I understand that even people that say they love you and who believe that they love you can still sabotage your life and fuck it up.

I accept that people who say they love you can still fuck your life up.

Even love can fuck your life up.

26JULY2019

Spoke with Mema on the phone and she gushed about Gianna’s loving goodness. Connected it to all the time she has spent with her loving mother perhaps. She stated that Beth is really committed to homeschooling Gianna and that Adam and Beth are considering moving to be closer to friends and their homeschooling community.

02OCTOBER2019

Spoke on the phone and then FaceTime.

* Just back from Catholic Conference on Physician burnout in Nashville @ GOO
* Taking violin lessons and really enjoying it!
* Austin and Shanna have finalized their adoption of their foster son.
* Love this woman so much. I need to communicate that and not let my reactionary self-protection keep me from being close to her: be encouraging, be complimentary. Speak the love you feel.

26JULY2019

Had a longish conversation via FaceTime while mom was between nursing home visits. She looked and sounded happy and healthy. Her silver hair illuminated in the diffused light in the cabin of her SUV. She is 63 and working and taking care of the elders in her community with such a sense of servanthood. She wants to be a saint and approaches that sometime. I admire her and am saddened by the political and spiritual gulf between us. And I will work to keep moving across this.

**08/21/2021**

**Mom-**

Confidence— don’t I look like I was just beaming with confidence? What’s wrong with me now. Your empathy. Your warmth. You efforts to express your love emotionally, practically, etc.

You are such a good and full and real person and I love and accept them and loving and accepting them are a part of loving and accepting myself—self-compassion more important than self-confidence.

Deep acceptance of flaws without complaclency—wuise judicious, mature, mitigation of the flaws and offense and lifelessly- Mitigate with love and goodwill. Your values and your attitudes should not overshadow your love. If your love is not palpable then your values love whatever moral authority or goodness that your faithfuly living has sought to infuse in them. We must lead with more love and less aggression.

Hans I reject many ways in which you live your life and have made a good faith effort to transcend some of your more life deadening habits.

Our ability to listen and meld our ideas.

Writing—have you ever considered writing? Slowly over time collecting and editing thoughts on various topics. Then plugging that material or shades and refractions of it into various writing projects—poems, letters, essays, stories, a novel speeches… etc…

Just realized that both of my Grandfathers are going to die in the same small sub division.

As if she has done all of this work and now you are just trying to undo it.

4/18/2022

Had not realized how much distance I really needed until I took a bit more of it. I was taking my time. I was taking my fucking time. I was taking my mind. I was taking my fucking mind.

4/25/2022

$150 for hotel where she told me to “just leave” … so I left.

We are healers -- doctors, nurses, Pas, Physical therapists, occupational therapist, dentists, prison guards

05/23/2022

Inundated with details. Relevant because I know these people? I’ve known these people in the past. She calls to talk. For her to talk. Can’t match her conversation style, velocity, don’t want to. Interrupts me in the middle of

Should I call them and ask them for a loan? No. Instead I request my $10,000 from my 401K. Don’t look back. Move ahead. Live in the moment. You are strong. You have a strengthened foundation. A consolidated foundation.

Nostalgia. Oil and grease and spice of China. Susan remembering our trip. Feeling overwhelmed by the spice. She needs milk. Betsy eats with relish and then vomits. I am up half the night with my mind racing and my stomach gurgling. Pooping out, strange desiccated half digested entrails making trails, darggin their feet through my entrails. I am done with meat. It does not agree with me. I don not agree with it. My habitual drinking is deadening too. Lighten my head, I feel heavy after being inundated by my mother and father’s 80 mile per hour barrage of family updates -- the cousin who has had a hard time since her boss died and her issues with her new boss, and her sister who looks great at 50, but is making a mistake moving to the desert, or at least her mom thinks so, maybe that’s just her mom’s bias though, her mom who has had a terrible history with shitty guys and who has avoided bringing a man into her life for decades now and has lived better because of it, all these tall girls. The party being rained on, the little girl who suck her finger in refried beans and her finger blowing up like a balloon. Microwave faster, hotter, distracted mother pulled in a million different directions, moving to a cul-de-sac and then the teenage granddaughter who wants to change schools and get a fresh start, she is turning into such a little lady a d speaking so much more intelligently, her sickness as a child possibly retarding her mental development? And her dad teaching theology, humbling experience, but he’s in a good headspace, trying to make the messages relevant to the kids, a great challenge, how to administer a test, he was hired out of desperation after the former teacher, a younger guy who just a few years ago had been a student at the school, an outcast, weird kid, unaccepted, comes back and is buddy, buddy with the other kids, they look up to him, he buys weed and alcohol and they party together and he gets caught and loses his job and they need a fill in for the rest of the school year, and the tornado in Gaylord, look at the Hobby Lobby, oh, my the roof is all collapsed in, and 5 guys! Oh, no, the Goodwill, its totally collapsed. Oh, the business owners, why the owners, what about the workers, aren’t they way more vulnerable. Her son who felt an identity crisis because he was in his 30s and working in the restaurant industry trying to get himself through business school, but I just hate that he felt like he had to feel insecure about that and embarrassed. I point out that we live in a capitalist society and that our jobs are our identities, what are we producing, how are we spending our days, what tier are we on, but she just hates that this sad from the fat-bottom seat of retirement with the house and the cars to think of and being oblivious that her other son, me, could use some financial support, money in the back, money in funds, money coming in from social security, money coming in from pension, another grand a month for being the medical director of a nursing home, but with minimal responsibilities, off to England for three weeks to see her good Catholic daughter, full of inchoate career advice, don’t sell yourself short, throw your net wide, where are these jobs where the hired employees get this expensive training, you have the whole package, your language skills, your coding, your selling experience, and you’re kind, your goodness with children, *Be not afraid*, and what about water, remember when you had a vision for doing something with water, and I am shut down, I am a child, she is the Mother, doesn’t ask shit about her grandchildren that are my children, rambles on with scattered updates about the other grandchildren and not wanting to show favoritism, making sure to split their time between different houses.

And this whole conversation makes me feel alienated and unheard, I a three or four or whatever and getting spanked for feeling afraid when I come home to our row townhouse and all these kids jump our and surprise me because its my birthday and I didn’t even know it was my birthday and I feel made and angry and kind of stupid and out-of-control, I didn’t know it was my birthday, I am caught off guard I have an emotional reaction and they manage it poorly and I get spanked and sent to my room and I recover and we have a party, but some how a pattern has been set. And we move away from those friends and I make new friends for a year and then we move away from there and I make new friends and we move away from their after two years and I make new friends at a super small school where I have 5 kids in my class and its in another town over and the continuity of my world is broken up again and the kids at church that live in my neighborhood and are a bit older pick on me and are mean and I feel trapped and a few years later I go to summer camp without them and have an incredible time and it feels like a new beginning and I cry my eyes out when my mother picks me up and I feel like my mother doesn’t get why I’m crying and I have performance anxiety and I am forced to be Jonah in a musical, but I have to perform and my school situation is bad, limited friend group, lots of down time in school as the teacher teachers three different grades and I talk and I get duct tape overt my mouth and I can’t figure out my math and the teacher gets frustrated with me because I sound insolent or something and he roughly removes me from the classroom and I start to hyperventilate, something I had done before and my brother would cover my mouth when I cried, when he hurt me, he would cover my mouth so he wouldn’t get in trouble, my violent brother who took the joy out of games, by being enraged whenever I won, turngin the board over and scattering the pieces, dropping the Nintendo on me, kicking the basketball at my head, criticizing me for having my own opinions, oh fount of knowledge and opinions and insecurity, pious Jesus boy and constant philanderer, preying on younger girls when he returns to town to be a spiritual leader to the youths in the community, eventually going to Seminary and keeping his MO dating an undergraduate woman and one of his brother’s friends and being creepy and overly physical and pressingly physical and just generally being an embarrassment and then leaving the school suddenly and damaging his brother’s connection to his friend whose father was a professor in the seminary, though providing a bridge back to Chicago where he (me) was able to reconnect with future wife and the rest of that is history, but the brother relationship was very strained and then the lightening conversion to Catholicism and marriage and jumping into having kids and converting the rest of the family to the Catholic faith and then giving a terrible, unprepared speech, sermon at my wedding which somehow managed to offended pretty much everybody in attendance, his message of love, his wanting to give a really good speech running hard against his scattered, manic existence and unprocessed thought processes, biases, emotional distance, getting tired, pulling shirt up over nose, breathing shallowly, shutting up, shutting down, getting small, restricting my breath like my brother covering my mouth when I was crying, like my father’s unsympathetic exasperation when I had some kind o fa panic attack when I walked into the gymnasium of kids I didn’t know dripping snow melt all over the corner of the high polish would floor.

And I’ve been damaged by this, mother implying that I was probably sexually molested as a very small child. Do you remember anything she asks? Oh, I am so sorry, I should have loved you more. Mommy should have been their for you more when I was in medical school, I just wanted to hold you and it tore me up to have to leave you behind, and is this about me or about her, she has always done this ladling her unprocessed, unsettled emotions on us and then telling us to turn towards the light and forgiving as she has done as she has been freed as her loop keeps cycling around and around and all I want is out.

I buy my freedom with a tax penalty as I cash in my $10K retirement fund, trading the future for the present as wall street cyclically stumbles and housing prices reach an all-time high and food costs round up and up and up. And my uncertainly gnaws at me and the voice of doubt and the voice of trauma and the voice of nostalgia is mother’s milk, curdled and unpalatable, the sustenance that grew me now chokes me in my attempt to break free, rambling to my wife about this, finding my root, find Alexander.

**connections**

* [2019 UP. State Finals](C:\\Users\\aaron\\Creating\\Writing\\Pieces\\Family\\Whitmer\\Family Documents\\2019 UP State Champions Track and Field Article.docx)
* [Papa’s Birthday List](C:\\Users\\aaron\\Creating\\Writing\\Pieces\\Family\\Whitmer\\Family Documents\\Whitmer Birthdays-Names.JPG)

**Communication**

* [2020 birtday letter](C:\\Users\\aaron\\Creating\\Writing\\Pieces\\Family\\Whitmer\\Family Documents\\2020.12.06.gary_whitmer.docx) **-- Dad**
* [**2022 July letter – Mom and Dad**](file:///C:\Users\aaron\Creating\Writing\Pieces\Family\Whitmer\2022.07.24.mom_and_dad_whitmer.docx)

1. Father’s typical anger response. Later when we talk he runs through a list of grievances. What’s happened to our Universities-- DePaul is not a Catholic University. Black Lives Matters is anti-family. Nothing good comes out of Washington. CNN is sensational. Admits that he can’t listen to Sean Hannity. He likes Tucker Carlson, but has no defense of his falsehoods, exaggerations and inflammatory rhetoric. They raised the speed limit to 75 in order to get more gas tax revenue. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Fear mongering no? [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. An insult. Exquisitely passive aggressive and manipulative. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Admitting that none of this “proof” has be substantiated. Sharing with whom? The public? Other professionals? [↑](#footnote-ref-4)