Tributes to Charles Malik

(Chronological Order)

Newsmen who cover politics are gluttons for oratorical punishment. Fate has condemned us to listen to speeches by the thousands -speeches in the House, speeches in the Senate, speeches in state legislative halls, speeches on the campaign trail. Over the past 47 years, by rough calculation, I have listened to 50,000 speeches, and I have forgotten 49,999 of them.

One speech I remember. It was the greatest speech I ever heard. I thought of it the other day in reading that Charles Malik had died on Dee. 28 in Beirut, He had served as Lebanon's ambassador to the United States in the mid-'50s, and later he had served as president of the U.N. General Assembly. On the afternoon of June 11, 1960, he came to Williamsburg, Va., to deliver an address.

James J. Kilpatrick,

"Unforgettable Speech Stunned Audience Into Silence", *Durham Morning Herald*, 1988.

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It was at that small, private two-class school in the village that I began a lifelong association and friendship with one member of my class - Charles Malik. He came from the neighboring village of Bterram (another Syrian name going back to ancient times) and I had met him casually on a few previous occasions. Our personal association at the school began rather cautiously, and at times negatively. First, because he was a relative stranger, coming from another village to study in ours. Second, I was used to being at the top of my class in my previous village school years; and here came a stranger, who soon proved to be a first rate student with an exceedingly brilliant mind, to offer me tough competition. Third, I enjoyed group games, athletics, farm work and the company of wild life, whereas Charles enjoyed more the company of books and always read way ahead of the required assignments. But gradually all these considerations, which seemed to us important at the time, melted away as we began to discover in each other a kindred soul and true friend. This trend continued throughout our high school years in Tripoli, and strengthened at college in Beirut and later as we pursued our life careers. […].

My grade record was excellent, with my friend, Charles Malik, giving me stiff competition and edging ahead of me into first place. But the grade symbol gradually became secondary to us, as we became more deeply concerned with the rewards of learning as an end in itself.

Afif I. Tannous,

Village Roots and beyond: Memoirs of Afif I. Tannous : Written at Intervals between 1972 and 1985 (Beirut: Dar Nelson, 2004).

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I suppose the first great man I ever met was Dr Charles Malek. I knew of Malek even before I arrived at AUB. He had already established a formidable reputation as a noted philosopher. At least half of my teachers at high school in Salt between 1942 and 1945 were AUB graduates and had studied under Malek. Elder brother Jamal, who went to AUB in 1944, and other Jordanian students also studied under Malek. It was difficult for any student not to be influenced by him. The question was only the degree of influence. As I was preparing to go to AUB during the summer of 1945, I learnt a lot from my teachers, my brother and his friends about AUB. Malek always figured large in any conversation. I learnt that the required courses in the freshman and sophomore classes were common for all students, irrespective of their chosen major, and that philosophy was one of the courses required in the sophomore class. So many students had an opportunity to attend Malek's lectures.

When I reached AUB, I was thrilled, as I've already mentioned, to discover that Malek was the resident professor in charge of the dormitory to which I'd been allocated. At that time, the thought that he might eventually become one of my closer friends never entered my mind. To a freshman like me, Malek might as well have been a god on Mount Olympus. […]

I have always admired men, like Malek, who seem to gain what power and influence they have from an inner moral force.

Kamal Shair,

Out of the Middle East: The Emergence of an Arab Global Business (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006).

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The Lebanese diplomat and philosopher Charles Malik is hardly an unknown figure in the recent history of human rights. Indeed, few accounts of the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) have ignored Malik's decisive influence, whether in shaping the specific language of any number of articles, or in sheparding the Declaration through the polarized Cold War bureaucracy of the United Nations. Johannes Morsink places him among the "inner core" of the early UN Human Rights Commission (HRC) members. Paul Gordon Lauren notes that Malik was among the few delegates "to command respect when they spoke," and who had a full grasp of the intellectual and political issues at stake in the UN human rights project. Mary Ann Glendon declares Malik "crucial" to the development of the UDHR—"the right [person] at the right time". But while there is unanimity on the importance of Malik's contributions, and a widespread sense that Malik was, in the words of the British legal historian A. W. Brian Simpson, the "most remarkable member" of the early Human Rights Commission, there is no agreement on what those remarks should be.

Accounts often emphasize Malik's role either to support or deny the claim that the UN human rights regime is "Western" in some fundamental sense. For those highlighting the ecumenical character of the UDHR drafting process, such as Paul Gordon Lauren, Mary Ann Glendon, Susan Waltz, and Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat, Malik represented a "Middle Eastern" perspective that allowed human rights at the UN to transcend their European genealogy. For Makau Mutua, Virginia Leary, and Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, Malik's education at the American University of Beirut and Harvard University, along with what they suppose to be his "individualistic" political philosophy, indicate a "clear" Western orientation that is not mitigated by the Lebanese nameplate in front of him.

John P. Humphrey, the Director of the Secretariat's Human Rights Division, found Malik to be absolutely "dedicated to human rights," and "one of most independent people to ever sit on the commission". Throughout his association with the HRC, which lasted from 1946 to 1953, Malik pursued a vision of international human rights that was deeply personal rather than representative of his government's views or interests. Broadly speaking, Malik's contributions can be summarized as centering on the following themes: creating a robust, legally binding international human rights regime; protecting the autonomy of individuals and "intermediate" institutions against encroachment by the state; establishing a coherent intellectual foundation for the UN human rights program; and defending intellectual and spiritual freedoms, with a particular emphasis on the right of each individual to develop and change in his or her deepest held beliefs.

Often labeled an individualist, Malik is perhaps more accurately described as an anti-statist, and many of his most memorable interventions were intended to position human rights as restraints on state power. He was particularly concerned by the HRC's willingness to subordinate "individual rights" to "those of the national community." Given his reputation, it is ironic that Malik was also the originator of the only right in the Declaration that specifically devolves to a group rather than an individual. Article 16 paragraph 3, reads: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state." Special recognition of and protection for the family, however, was fully in keeping with his anti-statism, as it represents one of many "intermediate groups" that Malik believed were essential buffers between the individual and the state.

Glenn Mitoma,

"Charles H. Malik and Human Rights: Notes on Biography," *Personal Narrative and Political Discourse* 33, no. 1 (Winter 2010).

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As a man of faith, Charles Malik must have known that many of the fruits of his labors would ripen only after he had gone to his rest, that nothing good that he did would ever be lost or in vain. There is much unhappiness and loneliness in his diary, but not despair.

Now it is time for me to try to bring these reflections to a conclusion with a few observations on lay vocations in contemporary public life. Contemplating a struggle like Charles Malik's cannot, of course, tell each one of us how to find our path through the forest, but it seems to me it does provoke some fruitful reflection.

There are two parts of his story that I find myself thinking about a lot. For one thing, it's especially interesting how he came to see suffering and loneliness as things not necessarily to be treated as evils.

And another lesson I take from Malik's story is that we shouldn't worry too much if we don't see our efforts making progress. A human life is pretty short. Just think of what for many of us is the most important vocation of all — parenthood. How many good parents must have died fearing they had failed in the most important task the Lord entrusted to them - raising their children? Yet we all know cases, thank God, where the prayers, and efforts and sacrifices of mothers and fathers bore fruit later on. On these matters it is Saint Ignatius, I think, who had the wisest counsel: "Act as though everything depended on you, but believe that every-thing depends on God." Which it

does!

Mary Ann Glendon,

"The Layperson in the Public Square: Lessons from the Life of Charles Malik," *Sacerdos.*

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