THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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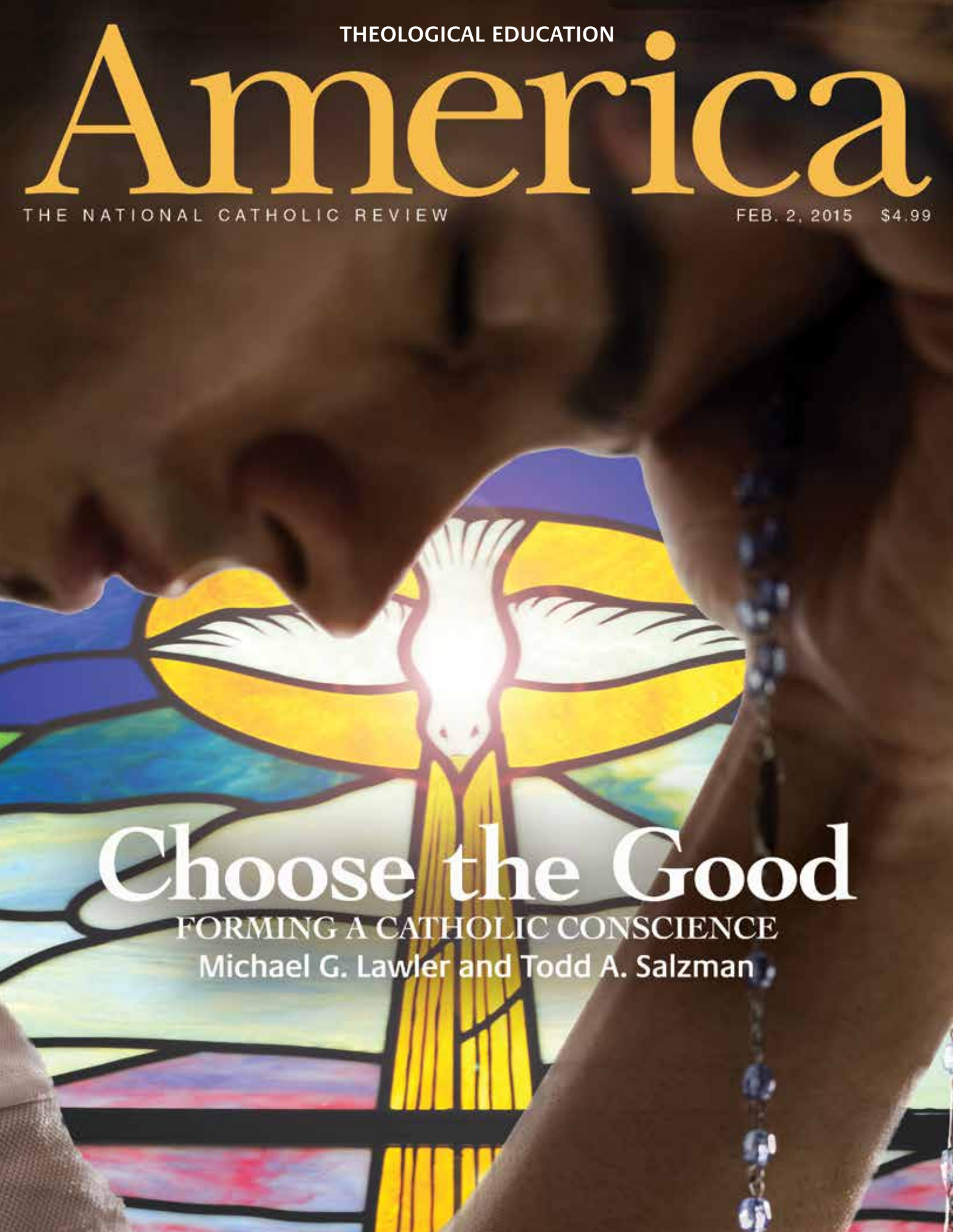

Choose the Good

FORMING A CATHOLIC CONSCIENCE

Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman

OF MANY THINGS

I well remember where I was on the evening of July 16, 1984. I had settled into our modest living room in Massachusetts to watch the Democratic National Convention with my Dad. He wasn't a Democrat, but he had nurtured a lifelong interest in politics, one he bequeathed to his fourth son. By 1984, at the age of 12, I was following the comings and goings of the U.S. Senate the way my brothers followed the box scores for the Red Sox.

That summer night, which became an early morning on the East Coast, Governor Mario M. Cuomo of New York delivered the convention's keynote address to a packed hall and a watching world. This was the sort of event everybody watched back then, mainly because there was nothing else to watch: every network—all three of them—was broadcasting the speech.

Mr. Cuomo's speech was a rhetorical tour de force, a blistering indictment of the Reagan presidency, which had transformed the country, Mr. Cuomo argued, not into the shining city on a hill of which Mr. Reagan so often spoke, but into "a tale of two cities," where "there is despair, Mr. President, in the faces you don't see, in the places you don't visit in your shining city." It was the moral duty of government, Mr. Cuomo argued, to protect and empower those who were living in the shadows of life. The longtime ABC News commentator David Brinkley said it was one of the greatest convention speeches he had ever heard. It sure felt that way to me. It still does.

When I learned on New Year's Day that Governor Cuomo had died at the age of 82, my mind flashed back at once to that night. I also thought, however, of another of Mr. Cuomo's speeches, the one delivered at Notre Dame a mere two months after his triumph in San Francisco. There Mr. Cuomo made the case for the "I'm personally opposed to it but don't wish to impose my morality on another" argument concerning abortion. "The Catholic public official," he said, "lives the political truth most Catholics through most of American history have accepted and insisted on: the truth that to assure our freedom we must allow others the same freedom, even if occasionally it produces conduct by them which we would hold to be sinful."

That is an inarguably true statement. The history of Catholic political action, as well as our current prudential choices, attests to it. Yet no one was arguing then that every sinful act should be proscribed by law. The argument was and remains that there are some acts that are held by Catholics to be sinful that should be proscribed by law, not simply because the church views them as sinful but because they involve grave matters of life and death. Homicide, assisted suicide and rape are good examples—as is abortion, in the judgment of many people.

The argument Mr. Cuomo needed to make at Notre Dame was why abortion was different from those other morally grave issues. Why should we exempt abortion from the list? Why is it an imposition on another's freedom to codify a moral judgment with regard to abortion but not with regard to economic policy? To put it another way: Why is government action morally required in his convention speech but not in his Notre Dame speech? What is the decisive difference?

I wish Mario Cuomo had answered those questions. His answers may not have proved satisfactory, but they would have added a lot to the conversation. If any public figure of the last five decades could have done that, it would have been he. He had the smarts and he had the conviction. "We believe in a government strong enough to use words like 'love' and 'compassion' and smart enough to convert our noblest aspirations into practical realities," he once said. Amen, Mr. Cuomo. R.I.P.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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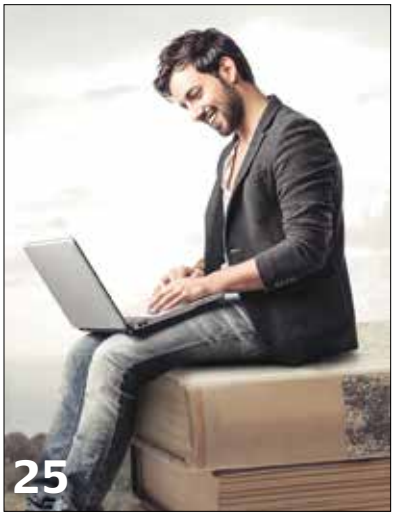

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ON THE WEB

Gerard O'Connell reports from **Sri Lanka** and the Philippines, and Mathew N. Schmalz visits the **Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu**. Full digital highlights on page 20 and at americamagazineorg/webfeatures.

The Ongoing Ebola Crisis

As the Ebola crisis fades from the headlines in the United States, its devastation is still a daily reality for West Africans. With over 30 new Ebola cases every day and over 8,000 dead, the disease continues to severely affect the African population and economy, particularly in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. In an effort to slow its spread, governments in the hardest-hit countries have shut down schools, sealed borders and even banned citizens from public gatherings, measures that hurt already impoverished regions and struggling economies.

These actions have also led to significant losses in areas like agriculture, construction, arts and tourism. According to the World Bank, countries in West Africa will lose an estimated $4 billion in economic activity in 2015. Along with these economic losses, over 500,000 people have gone hungry because of Ebola's effects on farming, a number that is expected to double by March. School shutdowns have led to a rise in crime. Teenagers roam the streets and police officers, either too distracted by the fight against Ebola or fearful of contracting the disease, are not providing adequate levels of supervision and enforcement.

The United Nations World Food Program has given over 20 million pounds of food to these nations, but more needs to be done. While the threat of the Ebola crisis spreading to the United States and other Western nations has been all but extinguished, attention still must be given to the true victims of the epidemic.

Solitary Nation

To its supporters, segregated housing in prisons is a vital, commonsense security measure that protects inmates and correctional officers from dangerous individuals, and the mentally unstable from themselves. To its opponents, solitary confinement constitutes cruel and unusual punishment. Last year state legislatures, courts and corrections departments found the middle ground in various reform efforts. According to the Marshall Project, a nonprofit news organization dedicated to criminal justice issues, 10 states passed 14 measures in 2014 that limit or abolish solitary confinement for juveniles or the mentally ill, improve special housing conditions or reduce the proportion of inmates kept in segregated units.

These are all encouraging developments, and momentum seems to be keeping up in the early weeks of 2015. In January the Pennsylvania prison system introduced new diversionary treatment units to house mentally ill inmates who would otherwise end up in "the hole." In New York City, the Board of Correction announced it would end the use of solitary confinement for inmates under the age of 21 on Rikers Island, which has come under heightened scrutiny after tragic inmate deaths and several investigative reports exposed routine abuse and neglect at the second largest jail in the United States.

Pope Francis, in an address to the delegates of the International Association of Penal Law, described the isolation at high security prisons as torture inflicted with no "specific objective…a genuine surplus of pain added to the actual suffering of imprisonment." There has been much debate in this country about whether the Central Intelligence Agency's interrogation tactics abroad amounted to torture. It is time for Americans to consider the troubling treatment of prisoners closer to home as well.

Have Mercy

A statement issued on Dec. 22 by the German Bishops' Conference suggests that the church there is prepared to assume a vanguard role in the pastoral care for divorced and remarried Catholics. The pope has argued that the de facto excommunication, as he has described it, of divorced and remarried Catholics must end, though how to end it without damaging doctrine on the indissolubility of marriage remains uncertain.

Some bishops advocate streamlining the current annulment process, which is perceived to be burdensome and unsympathetic, as the only doctrinally sound path forward. But the majority of German bishops, perhaps emboldened by the pope's sentiments on the issue, now favor "differentiated solutions that do justice to the individual case and under certain conditions allow admission to the sacraments." That position has raised concerns far beyond the German church. Can the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church continue to be so described if conferences begin to strike off on their own on fundamental matters? The disaffection experienced by the divorced and remarried is the source of great spiritual and psychological pain. Responding with mercy merits the acceptance of some degree of risk. It could be that careful local experimentation on this difficult pastoral challenge is warranted, even wise.

The German bishops' statement is a welcome addition to this important dialogue. Prudence requires, however, that pastors everywhere proceed with caution. As this magazine has previously argued, any change to the regulations should also account for the men and women who have derived spiritual benefit from their fidelity to the church's current discipline and should not be seen as a revolutionary gesture on the part of a few, but rather as a response of the entire church to the signs of the times.

EDITORIAL

Liberté

In the aftermath of last month's rampage in France—17 people died at the hands of three Muslim terrorists, who were subsequently killed by French police—many strident supporters of Western civilization turned their anger and fear on the Muslim world as a whole. In Germany record numbers came out for demonstrations against immigration; in France retaliatory attacks struck mosques and Muslim-owned businesses; and in the United Kingdom politicians seized on the violence to issue sneering rejections of multiculturalism.

After enduring years of terrorist strikes by Islamic extremists—from Sept. 11, 2001, to Jan. 7—the West appears now trapped in a reactionary loop, defaulting to military and rhetorical responses that do little to terminate this unwarranted and increasingly perilous clash of civilizations. In the wake of the Paris attack, shaken citizens and leaders are calling for deeper scrutiny and control of Muslim communities in the West and an immigration blockade that would presumably end any further weakening of Christian and secular hegemony in Europe. Those ambitions neatly dovetail, of course, with the aims of Muslim extremists, whether on the front lines in Syria or operating behind the scenes in Saudi Arabia. They would like nothing more than a mindlessly vigorous reaction from the West to buttress an ideology whose life-breath is conflict.

A more promising response to this latest outrage was a national examination of conscience of sorts undertaken in France, where the persisting isolation and deficit of opportunity of Muslim communities have become a blight that crosses generations. Indeed, such self-reflection would prove a benefit elsewhere. While Western media focused almost exclusively on the hostage drama in Paris, hundreds, perhaps thousands of people were being slaughtered by Boko Haram militants in Nigeria's northeastern Borno State. The imbalance of coverage suggests an inequity in the valuing of news—and people—that has implications extending far beyond editorial offices.

Pope Francis has frequently condemned the invocation of faith as a justification for violence, and he did so again in the wake of the attacks on the staff of the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo. But the pope took a step back from a full-throated defense of free expression, suggesting that some subjects, religion for example, should be off limits. While his off-the-cuff remarks may have been insufficiently nuanced, it is not hard to be sympathetic to the pope's concerns. Freedom of expression is an absolute right, but it does not come without obligations. Communal harmony is also a social good worth protecting.

Charlie Hebdo relied heavily on blunt provocation as a rhetorical and stylistic device, to the point that its staff acknowledged and accepted the possibility of a violent reaction. Should the state have intervened, for their protection and out of sensitivity to France's Muslim communities, to restrain the magazine's cartoonists and editors? Despite the senseless violence that terrorized Paris, **America** continues to believe that restraints on speech should be set through dialogue and civic consensus, not by government or religious edict. Any insistence that journalists, filmmakers, cartoonists, etc., bend Western norms of free speech to the expectations and sensitivities of specific communities to the point of snapping those norms should be rejected. But plenty of room remains for the mutual respect and sensitivity sought by the pope. Still, there will always be outliers whose views require not acceptance but protection.

"Political correctness" was one of the labels applied in the effort to identify a cultural debility that somehow encouraged this violence, the sociopathy of the terrorists themselves being deemed insufficient explanation. But is it mere political correctness to say that it is irrational and unjust—as well as counterproductive—to treat all members of the Islamic world as a threat because of the actions of a minority among them? Most victims of Islamist extremism, after all, are other Muslims, just as are most of the people fighting—and dying—to put down Islamist terror.

A more mature reaction to such violence is required. Extremism and hopelessness are the enemies that must be contained, not a faith or a people. There are extremists in every culture and every nation, who must be pursued as criminals, not treated as cultural or ethnic types that justify widespread suppression. And not every incident of terrorism, no matter how outrageous, amounts to an existential standoff between the West and Islam.

Outreach and sensitivity to likely allies in the Islamic world, whether they make their homes in the Middle East or the Middle West, cannot be denigrated as self-flagellating political correctness. Today, on the contrary, they may be strategically the wisest path forward. Just now, extremism is a plague on both our houses—the West and Islam—and the best way to delegitimize it is through more dialogue and cooperation, not deeper recrimination and resentment.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/CLOUD MINE AMSTERDAM

REPLY ALL

Why They Come

Re "A Nation of Immigrants" (Editorial, 1/5): I agree the issue of illegal immigration is more complex than a border fix. Shouldn't we ask: why do they come? I had the mistaken impression back in the days of the Clinton administration that Mexican farmers would welcome the North American Free Trade Agreement. I thought U.S. companies would be working on both sides of the border for the good of all. Now I see these so-called "illegals" as more like refugees, fleeing from conditions that we as U.S. citizens help create and maintain. We continually wash our hands like Pilate. The Los Angeles Times had a report on the produce we buy from Mexico ("Hardship on Mexico's Farms, a Bounty for U.S. Tables," 12/7/14). The situation is not pretty. Many are not simply coming here to "improve" their situation but are escaping a certain life of slavery that we should abhor.

JOHN ADAMS
Online Comment

One-Sided Story

Jesuits are known for rigorous thought and logical analysis. "Majority Rules" (12/22/14), Mark Davis's emotive review of Max Blumenthal's *Goliath*, exhibited neither. Assertions that for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "only Jewish suffering matters" or that he "constantly evokes the Holocaust to oppose a Palestinian state," preferring "a status quo in which the subservient population is managed," are utterly unsupportable, vicious libels. Really risible is Mr. Davis's pitiful contention that "any criticism of Israel is harshly condemned."

How lightly, though, does Mr. Davis slight perpetual Palestinian provocations. Hamas's thousands of random rocket attacks on southern Israel allowed civilians mere seconds to seek secure shelter. Its dozens of tunnels burrowed deep into Israel would have facilitated murder and kidnapping. Palestinian media are awash in incessant incitement against Israel and Jews. Terrorists are lauded as "martyrs"; any concessions are anathema.

Echoing Mr. Blumenthal, Mr. Davis questioned Israel's very legitimacy, unwittingly revealing the key to continuation of the conflict. Arab refusal to countenance a sovereign Jewish Mideast state has been a constant since the rejection of the United Nations Partition Plan in 1947. Israel has often seriously offered peace. When will the Arabs finally say yes?

RICHARD D. WILKINS
Syracuse, N.Y.

Holy Families

Re "A More Perfect Union," by Helen Alvaré (12/22/14): We are the godparents of two boys adopted from Vietnam and Guatemala. One parent has served as president of his parish council and is now a lector and choir member. The other parent has chaired the parish liturgical committee, served on the diocesan liturgical commission and is now a eucharistic minister. Both of these gay men have also taught religious education classes. Baptized and confirmed, the boys have progressed through the parish catechetical program. The older is a sophomore in a Catholic high school, and his younger brother will join him for middle school at the same campus. Their family is a role model for complementarity as described by Helen Alvaré: a spousal analogy of "God's identity and relationship to humanity" and of "marriage and family life as the school of learning the meaning of life as loving mutual service and sacrifice—Jesus' way of life."

STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to "Marketing Motherhood: The Meaning of Vocation in a Secular World," by Elizabeth Stoker Bruenig (1/5).

As a mother of four children ages 7 and under, I really appreciated this article's perspective. There are a great number of competing voices trying to prescribe parenting methods. And as a parent, you are judged for your choices almost everywhere, from people at the store to your own relatives. But the best thing I have found is to attune fully to the children I have—not the ones I wish I had and not someone else's—and make decisions based upon their individual needs and strengths. Parenting is a humbling experience.

STEPHANIE DAHL

I wouldn't dream of downplaying the value of motherhood, but single, childless women are invisible in the church. Or rather, they are very visible, but the church neither sees nor acknowledges them as having any value.

MARIA EVANS

There is nothing in this article specific to "motherhood"—it's really just an article about parenting. The assumption that only mothers see parenthood as a calling is not only inaccurate but very sexist and supports the antiquated notion that it's up to the mother to raise the children. Thankfully there is a new generation of fathers who are actively invested in parenthood. I work full time, but I also take my kids to school, feed them, change them, play with them and put them to bed nearly every night. The times are a-changin'.

KEVIN MALLON

Since Ms. Bruenig pulls out the old Max Weber arguments, can I remind folks that Protestantism should not be identified with capitalism? Some Protestants celebrate capitalism, as do many Catholics. I'm not among the pro-capitalism Protestant crowd, and I do not believe there is anything in the essence of Protestantism that lends itself to capitalist ideology.

RACHEL JENNINGS

We don't accept all Ms. Alvaré says, but we agree that complementarity must "begin with the radical equality of men and women"—as long as that radical equality acknowledges the God-given sexual orientations of these men and women and all that entails. Our two godchildren are not being raised by their biological parents but by their gay parents, who through their complementary (though not in the reproductive sense) and loving relationship have created a family life every bit as authentic and holy—and, yes, life-giving—as that of any heterosexual relationship we know of, including our own.

CASEY AND MARY ELLEN LOPATA
Rochester, N.Y.

Celebrating Mass

In "Family in Focus" (12/8/14), the Rev. Robert P. Imbelli writes that the practice of eucharistic adoration is "integral to the process of discernment we will undertake" ahead of the synod in 2015. Instead of eucharistic adoration, we might help ourselves as the people of God by first better understanding the eucharistic celebration we participate in weekly—the Mass.

While the Second Vatican Council did much to help us understand the Eucharist, we still lag in demonstrating to all how central this service is. I have even heard some ask that a Mass not be celebrated at their funeral since "it is so impersonal." We have not learned that the Eucharist is the heart of who we are. Rather, we have surrounded it with politics and bad news instead of the good news that it is. So we continue to propound marriage as the symbol of Christ and his church, while knowing little about either of them.

BILL MAZZELLA
Online Comment

All Are Called

I appreciate Bishop Michael F. Burbidge's thoughtful piece, "The Ongoing Call" (11/17/14), and understand the need for vocations. As a bishop, his concern must of necessity focus on priests and consecrated religious. Yet I wonder if priestly and religious vocations would be better served by first focusing attention on the priesthood of the people as a starting point. At baptism, all the faithful are consecrated priest, prophet and king and called to serve Christ. Nourished by the Eucharist and strengthened by confirmation, this consecrated priesthood of the people constitutes the entire wellspring from which all vocations flow—married, single, religious and ordained.

While consecrated religious and the sacerdotal priesthood have specific and necessary roles within the church, so too do permanent deacons and those called to the married and single life. As Bishop Burbidge so aptly points out, the Year of Consecrated Life is indeed a wonderful opportunity to gratefully remember that all Catholic men and women have been consecrated—some to the priesthood of the people, some to sacramental priesthood. Together, the people of God are indeed diverse, and each in his or her own way witnesses to the good news of Jesus and helps us look to the future with hope.

ANTHONY MACIOROWSKI
Online Comment

Poet Pride

Angela Alaimo O'Donnell is identified in her columns as a writer, professor and associate director of American Catholic Studies at Fordham University—but this description is incomplete. It does not allude to her as a published poet of note. Too many poets in the United States seem to hide or be hidden behind a spiritually secondary description, when their immortality will be in their poetry rather than in their essays or their classroom experience.

America's Chicago correspondent, Judith Valente, is also a prize-winning poet. Mary Oliver, perhaps the only woman in the United States who can live well exclusively from her income as a poet, has written an introduction to one of Ms. Valente's volumes of poetry.

Some of us know that people look at you funny if you identify yourself as a poet, but let's not let these women be shy or be shy for them. With writers like them and Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J., **America** enhances the literary and cultural dimension of this reader's life.

ERNEST C. RASKAUSKAS SR.
Potomac, Md.

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"And I promise to stop gambling. By the way, Father, any chance you know who God likes in the big game?"

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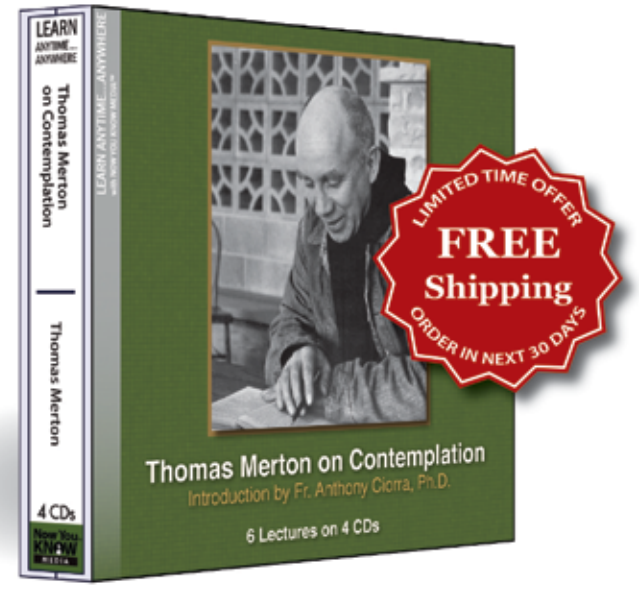

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MANILA, PHILIPPINES

Pope Urges Government Response To Poverty as 'Moral Imperative'

AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN. Pope Francis made time in Manila on Jan. 16 to visit with the young residents of a home for former street children.

Beginning the second leg of his South Asian journey, Pope Francis did not mince words when he addressed government and church leaders of the Philippines on Jan. 16. A day after his triumphal arrival from Sri Lanka, he called on them to combat and eliminate "scandalous" social inequalities and injustices as well as the corruption that is widespread in this archipelago of 100 million people, more than 50 percent of them mired in poverty.

During a speech at the Presidential Palace, he told President Benigno Aquino III and the nation's other political and civic leaders that if they are to face "the demands of the present" and "pass on to the coming generations a society of authentic justice, solidarity and peace," they must "ensure social justice and respect for human dignity." This is a "moral imperative," he added.

Well aware of the resistance to social reform by a number of the powerful and very rich families in this land, the Jesuit pope, who has seen something similar in Argentina, told state authorities that "reforming the social structures that perpetuate poverty and the exclusion of the poor first requires a conversion of heart and mind."

Then, in a message that goes right to the heart of the problems with the Filipino political system, marked as it is by family dynasties, cronyism and corruption, Francis said, "It is now, more than ever, necessary that political leaders be outstanding for honesty, integrity and commitment to the common good. In this way they will help preserve the rich human and natural resources with which God has blessed this country." Then they will be able to bring together "the moral resources" that are needed to face today's problems and pass on "a society of authentic justice, solidarity and peace."

Later, during Mass at the Manila Cathedral, Pope Francis said, "The church in the Philippines is called to acknowledge and combat the causes of deeply rooted inequality and injustice that mar the face of Filipino society, plainly contradicting the teaching of Christ." He told the country's bishops and clergy that "the Gospel calls Christians to live lives of honesty, integrity and concern for the common good." He put them on their guard against "the great danger" of "a certain materialism that can creep into our lives and compromise the witness we offer.

"Only by becoming poor ourselves, by stripping away our complacency, will we be able to identify with the least of our brothers and sisters," the pope said. By doing so, he added, "we will see things in a new light and thus respond with honesty and integrity to the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel in a society that has grown comfortable with social exclusion, polarization and scandalous inequality."

Departing from his text, he said: "The poor are at the center of the Gospel; they are at the heart of the Gospel. If we take away the poor from the Gospel, then we cannot understand the whole message of Jesus Christ."

Pope Francis' concrete concern for the poor reappears again and again, and this day in Manila was no exception. After Mass he visited a center near the cathedral where he met former street children; he talked with them and embraced them before imparting his blessing. One does not have to walk far in this metropolis of 10 million people to see the poor Filipinos the pope is speaking about.

This same poverty has forced 10

million Filipinos to emigrate to find work elsewhere. The need for social justice and elimination of inequalities is an urgent need in this country. Pope Francis' forceful call for this is timely and, given his moral authority, it could be a game changer.

GERARD O'CONNELL

CLIMATE CHANGE

Catholic Environmental Group Debuts as Pope Visits Philippines

A worldwide campaign is emerging among Catholic individuals and organizations concerned about climate change and protecting the environment. The Global Catholic Climate Movement went public on Jan. 14, coinciding with the visit of Pope Francis to the Philippines.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, Philippines, planned to deliver the global Catholic effort's belief and mission statement to the pope in a private meeting sometime during the pope's Jan. 15-19 visit to the country, said organization leaders. While in the Philippines, the pope planned to meet survivors of one of the most powerful tropical cyclones ever recorded. Typhoon Haiyan, fed by warming of the ocean, which scientists attribute to human-induced climate change, devastated a wide swath of the central Philippines in November 2013.

STORM DAMAGE. The destroyed cathedral in Palo, Philippines—Typhoon Haiyan was one of the most powerful tropical cyclones ever recorded.

Pope Francis is "deeply interested in the issue. It's not something new," said Pablo Canziani, senior scientist at Argentina's National Scientific and Technical Research Council, adding that Pope Francis understands that the issues of climate change and human development are intertwined. "You have to work on both together," said Canziani, who discussed technical climate change issues several times with Pope Francis when the pope was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The movement includes nearly two dozen Catholic leaders and organizations in Africa, Asia, Australia, North America and South America. U.S. partners include the Franciscan Action Network, CatholicEcology.net, Catholic Rural Life, GreenFaith and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

The new organization will connect people around the world to carry out programs rooted in Catholic teaching on environmental concerns, said Allen Ottaro, co-founder and executive director of the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya.

The effort also is meant to support the pope as he prepares an encyclical on the environment, anticipated in July, Ottaro said. "I would imagine that the pope would feel the accompaniment of lay Catholics and religious and organizations in different parts of the world," Ottaro said. "We hope that it would be a living document, that it would not end up on shelves, that it would be lived and preached."

The movement's introductory statement draws from Scripture and Catholic social teaching. It underscores the importance of action to mitigate climate change backed by prayer and reflection. "Our collaboration echoes the global dimensions of the Catholic Church and a shared sense of responsibility to care for God's beautiful, life-giving creation. We are inspired by church teachings and guided by the virtue of prudence—understood by St. Thomas Aquinas as 'right reason applied to action,'" the statement said.

"So in light of growing scientific evidence and real-world experiences, we offer our prayer for God's healing grace as we work in the world to care and advocate for the needy and all creation," it said.

The organization plans to invite Catholics to fast and pray for solutions to climate change during Lent. Patrick Carolan, executive director of the U.S.-based Franciscan Action Network, said a rolling fast is being planned with Catholics in a different country each day centering their actions on the environment during Lent. One day also will be set aside for Catholics worldwide to fast and pray together.

Carolan said the organization formed after various Catholic organizations from around the world participated in the People's Climate March in September in New York. "It's all part of the global mission of protecting creation," he explained. "We're all connected, and we're seeing more and more that what happens to somebody in Bangladesh affects someone in the United States."

Pope Suggests Limits On Free Expression

Asked by a French reporter on a flight from Sri Lanka to the Philippines on Jan. 15 to compare freedom of religion and freedom of expression as human rights, Pope Francis condemned violence in the name of God but said freedom of expression should be limited by respect for religion and that mockery of faith can be expected to provoke violence. Pope Francis linked his answer to the attacks Jan. 7 at the offices of Charlie Hebdo in Paris, apparently in retaliation for the newspaper's publication of cartoons mocking Islam's Prophet Muhammad. "One cannot offend, make war, kill in the name of one's own religion, that is, in the name of God." The pope said freedom of expression was a "fundamental human right" like freedom of religion, but one that must be exercised "without giving offense.... One cannot provoke, one cannot insult other people's faith; one cannot make fun of faith." The pope said those who "make fun or toy with other people's religions, these people provoke.... There is a limit. Every religion has its dignity."

Human Dignity In the Holy Land

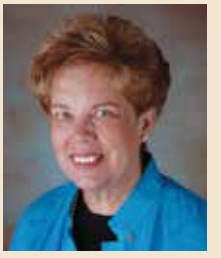
The path to peace in the Holy Land requires respect for the human rights and dignity of both Israelis and Palestinians, said bishops from Europe, South Africa and North America, gathered in the Holy Land on Jan. 15 as the Co-Ordination of Episcopal Conferences in Support of the Church of the Holy Land. "After the failed negotiations and ensuing violence of 2014, we urge public officials to be creative, to take new approaches, to build bridges, not walls," the bishops wrote in a statement. "We must humanize the conflict by fostering more interaction between Israelis and Palestinians. Peace will only come when all parties respect the fact that the Holy Land is sacred to three faiths and home to two peoples." They added, "Many tens of thousands of families in Gaza lack adequate shelter. In the latest freezing weather, at least two infants died of exposure. The continuing blockade dramatically impedes rebuilding and contributes to desperation that undermines Israelis' legitimate hopes for security. It also creates intolerable levels of unemployment and pushes ordinary people into deeper poverty."

Markets Alone Are Not the Answer

The world cannot wait for an economic system that will cause poverty to fix itself, Pope Francis said. "Markets and financial speculation cannot enjoy absolute autonomy," he said. There must be "programs, mechanisms and procedures aimed at a better distribution of resources, job creation and the integral advancement of those who are excluded," Pope Francis said in a recently published interview. "We cannot wait any longer to fix the structural causes of poverty, to cure our society from a disease that can only bring on new crises," he said. While noting the positive outcomes of the current globalized economy in lifting many people from poverty, the pope said it also "condemned many others to die of hunger." While globalization raised the level of global wealth, income disparity also increased and new forms of poverty have emerged, he said.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS



Donna Markham

Donna Markham, an Adrian Dominican sister, has been chosen to succeed the Rev. Larry Snyder as the new president of Catholic Charities USA, beginning in June. ✦ Surprising even the people who have been promoting the sainthood of **Blessed Junipero Serra,** Pope Francis announced on Jan. 15 that he hopes to canonize the 18th-century Spanish Franciscan in September. ✦ On Jan. 12 German bishops "totally" distanced the church from an **anti-Islamic movement** that staged mass demonstrations in Dresden and other cities, but they also urged a better understanding of public fears and opinions. ✦ A panel of theologians advising the Vatican's Congregation for Saints' Causes voted unanimously on Jan. 8 to recognize El Salvador's assassinated **Oscar Romero as a martyr**, declaring that the archbishop had been killed "in hatred for the faith." ✦ In an interview published in late December, Bishop Johan Bonny of Antwerp urged the church to **find ways to recognize same-sex relationships** in which "exclusivity, loyalty and care are central to each other." ✦ The Rev. Father Noor Alqasmosa, a Syriac Catholic, warned that **funding will soon run** out to feed and house thousands of Iraqi Christians who took refuge in Jordan from Islamic State militants, adding that the Iraqis increasingly feel hopeless and abandoned.

DISPATCH | LONDON

Light Piercing Shadow in 2015

The first days of January always cast their shadow over the coming year's events, just as the final dwindling days of December encompass and focus the year just ending. We're meant to look back, if not in anger, at least with relief that we got through it, and it seems, each year with an increasing sense that things are getting worse, not better.

At this time of year, there seems always to be a human disaster to shock us. Ten years ago it was the Indian Ocean tsunami; this year it was the Asian Airlines air disaster, the attacks in Paris, Ebola, the Islamic State and the latest horrors endured by desperate refugees adrift on the Mediterranean. But the light that shone over Bethlehem gestures to the divine wisdom born into this chaos, one that simultaneously attracted human wisdom from a far country, bearing gifts.

It is hard, as I write in these first days of January, so short and dark in this hemisphere, to trust that wisdom or to see that light. There is a lot of shadow.

Where, then, might light pierce the shadow in 2015?

The anticipated encyclical of Pope Francis on ecological concerns will be one source of bright light. We know that it will pull no punches; this pope doesn't do that. It will be an energizing challenge from a pontiff who has no intention of retreating into a privatized world of religious purity, untainted by messy reality. One Jesuit writer in the United Kingdom predicts that the pope will once again underline urgency, reminding world leaders that inaction is not an option and that "the time to find global solutions is running out."

As he has stated about challenges posed by other social issues, like human trafficking and the refugee crisis, the pope will stress the need for collective action and trust. A clear link will be drawn between poverty and care for creation, between human ecology and natural ecology. The encyclical will be controversial and will ask much of each of us and of the church in the United Kingdom and everywhere.

The encyclical of Pope Francis on ecological concerns will be one source of bright light.

Additional light comes from those in the front line of the fight against Ebola, especially a young Glaswegian nurse. Returning for Christmas from service in Sierra Leone, she fell ill with Ebola herself and was immediately transferred from Glasgow to a specialist hospital in London. The U.N. secretary general and the head of the U.N.'s anti-Ebola unit think there is a long way to go in combatting this outbreak and that the world's response has been inadequate. But there are people like this young health professional who will forgo Western home comforts to help the sufferers. Little of their bravery and selflessness made its way into the screaming headlines that focused entirely on this first "outbreak," as one tabloid put it, of Ebola in the United Kingdom.

In Britain, in 2015 there will be a general election in May. All the early media commentary agrees in predicting that the outcome is entirely unpredictable. One intriguing forecast sees the vibrant Scottish National Party entering a coalition, holding the balance of power in the House of Commons and demanding further devolution of powers to Edinburgh, as promised but not delivered in the days before September's no vote in the referendum.

Yet what draws the eye is the issue of poverty, particularly among the working poor. People are speaking out. The Anglican archbishop of Canterbury in December said that he found the predicament of poor working families in a way more shocking than what he'd seen in a recent visit to Congo. This might not be the only, or even the main, issue in the election, but it will be prominent and the voice of faith will be heard.

When those who follow Christ in the Ignatian tradition look back, for example, at the end of the day or at the end of the year, they know always to look forward in hope too. Using St. Ignatius' popular prayer exercise the examen, which takes the stuff of our daily existence as the matter for prayer, they know to begin their review by asking the good Spirit for light to see their recent lives as God did and to end it by looking ahead consciously in a hopeful spirit, avoiding fear.

If we have noticed God's wisdom and light in what we have reviewed, we can confidently expect more of the same as we look ahead. Remembering to be grateful helps us to avoid being overcome by those shadows and to be just a little bit better equipped to bring wisdom and light into the real world of 2015.

DAVID STEWART

DAVID STEWART, S.J., *is* ***America****'s London correspondent.*

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NATHAN SCHNEIDER

Family Time

For a country whose politicians make so much of "family values," it's perplexing that the United States remains the only industrialized country on the planet with no requirement for paid parental leave. Parents not lucky enough to have a job that offers a few paid weeks off must choose between those vital first days with their newborns and the paycheck that provides for them. Since our health care system is still largely tied to full-time work, a parent who wants to be at home part of the week may have to give up access to a doctor. The time it takes to be a parent, it turns out, can be costly.

Frida Berrigan learned the preciousness of family time early on. Her parents, Phil Berrigan and Elizabeth McAlister, were the first couple of the Catholic peace movement and spent 11 of their 29 years of marriage separated by prison bars. Her wise, delightful new book, *It Runs in the Family*, recalls that uncommon upbringing in light of her first few years as a mother. (As one of her editors at the online publication Waging Nonviolence, I had a small role in its gestation.) A priority that runs throughout the book is time.

"My husband and I made a choice to live on one salary," Berrigan writes. "We don't have a lot of extra money, but we do have more time for family, for each other, and for the world."

With her own family, she makes some choices differently than her parents did—choices at once radical and traditional. She doesn't risk long prison sentences, but she's still a leader of Witness Against Torture, a campaign to close the Guantánamo prison camp and end the war on terror's detention and interrogation practices. She's a stay-at-home mom, but her husband does much of the cooking. Living simply on his social worker's paycheck, they purposely keep their income below the federal tax threshold to avoid contributing to the government's outsized military budget. They go to a Unitarian Universalist church together; but when she goes to Mass, she prefers smells and bells over the guitar hymns of her childhood. She tries to be a nonviolent mom, but sometimes she loses her cool and has to repent for dumping water on little Seamus's head.

> A simple life is enough to make one seem like a radical.

Berrigan's presence, in all that she does at home and for the world, is a choice. She left a job at a think tank and with it the false prospect of having everything. She made the choice to value time over money. "It is a humbling, human, hard choice," she writes. But choosing time also means that she can help out at her local food co-op and work in the garden and write a book. With less she can do more.

Many of our stranger perversions have to do with abundance and scarcity. Las Vegas keeps its fountains running in the desert while we turn off the water for struggling Detroiters surrounded by the Great Lakes. Homelessness is on the rise in New York City even as there are enough empty apartments to house everyone. We give up vast portions of the finite time of our lives to get hold of money that is created out of thin air.

That time is becoming even more scarce. Among professionals, the workday is becoming longer as the email on our phones brings the office into every waking hour. Retail and food-service workers, meanwhile, have less control over their schedules because employers use software to optimize shifts for short-term profits rather than healthy, sustaining workplaces.

Technology was supposed to free us; the colonial-era preacher Jonathan Edwards imagined that, for Christians of the future, "there will be so many contrivances and inventions to facilitate and expedite their necessary secular business that they will have more time for more noble exercise." Instead, we've used our contrivances and inventions to squeeze more time out of one another.

Time is holy. That's why the Third Commandment insists that some of it be set aside for God. Without time, there is no worship, no real democracy, no nourishment of families. Freedom is a platitude without the time to exercise it. So is talk of family values without valuing families' time—for fathers as well as mothers, for high schoolers as well as infants.

In lieu of a society that treats time as the gift that it is, Frida Berrigan is keeping up her own family's tradition of being a sign of contradiction. Other families' ways of valuing time may not look like hers. But in any case it's strange how today a simple life is enough to make one seem like a radical.

NATHAN SCHNEIDER *is the author of* Thank You, Anarchy *and* God in Proof. *Website: TheRowBoat.com; Twitter: @nathanairplane.*

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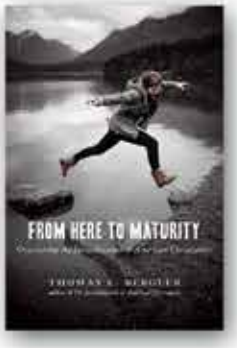

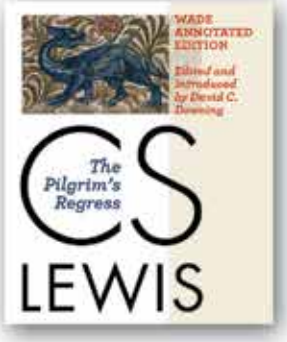

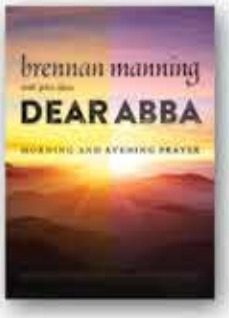

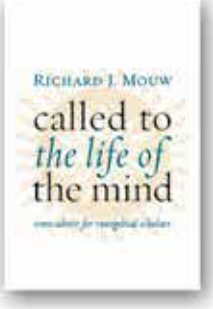

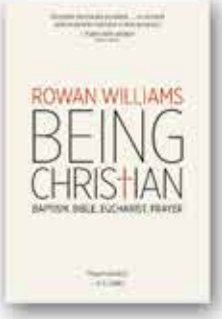

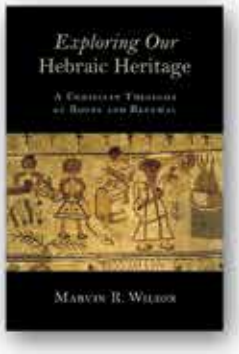

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Following Faithfully

The Catholic way to choose the good

BY MICHAEL G. LAWLER AND TODD A. SALZMAN

After much free and honest talk—what Pope Francis in his final address to the Synod on the Family last October praised as "a spirit of collegiality and synodality"—and the revelation of significant divisions among the world's bishops, we now await the ongoing discussions in preparation for the second session of the Synod on the Family in October. Unfortunately, none of the synod fathers sought to defend the long-standing Catholic way to make a moral choice, namely, individual conscience, the "law inscribed by God" in human hearts, "the most secret core and sanctuary of man...[where] he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depth. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor" ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," No. 16).

The Rev. Joseph Ratzinger, who at the time was a theological expert at the Second Vatican Council, commented on this passage: "Over the pope as the expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. Conscience confronts [the individual] with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which in the last resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even of the official church."

Thomas Aquinas, in his book of *Sentences* (IV, 38, 2, 4), established the authority and inviolability of conscience in words similar to Father Ratzinger's: "Anyone upon whom the ecclesiastical authorities, in ignorance of the true facts, impose a demand that offends against his clear conscience should perish in excommunication rather than violate his conscience." For any Catholic in search of truth, no stronger statement on the authority and inviolability of personal conscience could be found, but Aquinas goes further. He insists that even the dictate of an erroneous conscience must be followed and that to act against such a dictate is immoral.

Seven hundred years later, the last hundred of which saw the rights of individual conscience regularly challenged in the church, Vatican II's "Decree on Religious Freedom" embraced Aquinas's judgment on the inviolability of conscience: "In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience faithfully, in order that he may come to God, for whom he was created. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious" (No. 3). In the 1960s, such words were seldom heard in Catholic magisterial circles, but the undoubted reality is that they are ideas that are deeply rooted in the Catholic moral tradition and, indeed, are constitutive of it.

From Aquinas we learn that conscience is related to reason. Reason distinguishes humans from all other animals, and together with the will is deeply involved in the process of coming to truth. All knowledge begins with experience and proceeds through understanding to judgment and decision, which is actualized in action. Conscience is the rational act of practical judgment that something is right or wrong, to be done or not done. It acts in two ways. It directs us to do or not to do something; and, if some action has been done, it tests whether that action is right or not right.

Two Approaches to Conscience

In a church that is truly catholic or universal, we find different theological approaches to many noninfallible teachings. Here are examples of two major approaches to conscience through the teachings of two well-known moral theologians. The theologian Germain Grisez holds that the only way to form one's conscience is to conform it to the teaching of the church. "In morals," he writes, "a faithful Catholic never will permit his or her own opinions, any seemingly cogent deliverances of experience, even supposedly scientific arguments, or the contradictory belief of the whole world outside the faith to override the church's clear and firm teaching." For Professor Grisez and theologians who agree with him, including St. John Paul II, conscience is ultimately about obedience to church teaching. John Paul's apostolic exhortation "On the Family" is wholly rooted in the truth of sexuality and marriage as taught by the church and the obligation of the laity to make that truth their own and to obey it, a position he strongly reinforced in his encyclical "The Splendor of Truth."

The revisionist theologian Bernhard Häring, C.Ss.R., is diametrically opposed to that stance. In the context of his

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overall approach to moral theology, which stresses God's summons to all women and men to goodness and each individual's response of a moral life, conscience, "man's innermost yearning toward 'wholeness,' which manifests itself in openness to neighbor and community in a common searching for goodness and truth," must be free and inviolable, and "the church must affirm the freedom of conscience *itself*." Church doctrine is at the service of women and men as they use conscience in their search for goodness, truth and Christian wholeness; conscience is not at the service of doctrine. "It staggers the imagination," Häring writes, "to think that an earthly authority or an ecclesiastical magisterium could take away from man his own decision of conscience."

An important, and sadly oft-ignored, corollary flows from the foregoing. One lone theological voice does not make a tradition; and if a sincere and right conscience is inviolable, then the sincere and right consciences of theologians like both Grisez and Häring are inviolable. Both stances must acknowledge this broad Catholic conscience-tradition and open themselves to mutual dialogue in the search to expand and deepen their own and the diverse Catholic understandings of moral goodness and truth.

What Pope Francis writes in "The Joy of the Gospel" is profoundly pertinent here: "Differing currents of thought in philosophy, theology, and pastoral practice, if open to being reconciled by the Spirit in respect and love, can enable the church to grow, since all of them help to express more clearly the immense riches of God's word. For those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance, this might appear as undesirable and leading to confusion. But, in fact, such variety serves to bring out and develop different facets of the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel." We hold with Aquinas that the moral life and the spiritual life are not separate. The Christian moral life is also the Christian spiritual life, and the strategy of ethics and moral theology, according to Aquinas, "is not primarily to assist us in making good decisions or to help us in resolving problems of conscience," still less to win points in debate. No, in response to God's call, its goal is "the total transformation of ourselves into people who can call God's kingdom their home."

The judgment of conscience, then, comes at the end of a

rational process of experience, understanding, judgment and decision. This process includes a natural, innate grasp of moral principles that Aquinas calls *synderesis*. He never makes these principles clear anywhere, for he believes they are self-evident and indemonstrable. To make a right decision of conscience on a moral question involves both a grasp of first principles, like "good is to be done and evil is to be avoided," and the gathering of as much evidence as possible, consciously weighing and understanding the evidence and its implications, and finally making as honest a judgment as is humanly possible that this action is good and to be done and that the alternative action is evil and to be avoided. A moral action is one that comes as the outcome of such a process.

Prudence is a cardinal virtue around which all other virtues pivot, integrating agents and their actions.

Prudential Judgments

Since conscience is a practical judgment that comes at the end of a rational, deliberative process, it necessarily involves the virtue of prudence, the virtue by which right reason is applied to action. Aquinas locates prudence in the intellect along with *synderesis* and *conscientia*. *Synderesis* provides the first principles of practical reason; prudence discerns those principles, applies them to particular situations and enables *conscientia* to make practical judgments that this is the right thing to do on this occasion, with this right intention. Prudence, therefore, needs to know both the general moral principles of reason and the individual situation in which human action takes place. It is the task of prudence to monitor the process of deliberation and judgment to ensure, for instance, that this is the right occasion, the right person and the right intention for reaching out in compassion toward the poor. Prudence is a cardinal virtue around which all other virtues pivot, integrating agents and their actions.

Unfortunately, in the human condition all judgments, even the most prudential practical judgments of conscience, can be in error. Ethicists note that there are two poles in every moral judgment. It is always a free, rational human person or subject who makes a judgment, so one pole of the judgment is a subjective pole; but every judgment is made about some objective reality—poverty or sexual activity, for instance—so there is always also an objective pole. The subject arrives at his or her judgment either by following the rational process outlined above or by negligently shortchanging that process.

If the rational error of understanding and judgment can be ascribed to some moral fault, taking "little trouble to find out what is true and good" ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," No. 16), for instance, then the wrong understanding and practical judgment of conscience flowing from it are both deemed to be vincibly ignorant, and therefore culpable, and cannot be morally followed. If "the reason or conscience is mistaken through voluntary error, whether directly or from negligence," Aquinas posits, "then because it is a matter a person ought to know about, it does not excuse the will from evil in following the reason or conscience thus going astray." If the error cannot be ascribed to some moral fault, then both the understanding and the practical judgment of conscience flowing from it are deemed to be invincibly ignorant and non-culpable and not only can but must be followed, even contrary to ecclesiastical authority. Subjects are bound not only to conscience but also for conscience—that is, they must do all in their power to ensure that conscience is right.

There is one final consideration to be added here. The morality of an action is largely, though not exclusively, controlled by the subject's intention. A good intention, giving alms to the poor because the poor need help and to help them is the right and Christian thing to do, results in a morally good action. A bad intention, giving alms to the poor because I want to be seen and to be praised by men (Mt 6:2, 5; see Lk 18:10-14), will result in a morally bad action.

To Know Together

A decision of right conscience is clearly a complex process; and although it is an individual process, it is far from an individualistic process. The Latin word *conscientia* literally means "knowledge together," perhaps better rendered as "to know together." It suggests what human experience universally demonstrates, that being liberated from the confining prison of one's individual self into the broadening and challenging company of others is a surer way to come to right knowledge of the truth, including moral truth, and right practical judgment, including moral judgment, of what one ought to do or not do. This communal search for truth, conscience and morality builds a sure safeguard against both an isolating egoism and a personal relativism that negates all universal truth. The community-relatedness of consciences has been part of the Christian tradition since Paul, who clearly believed in the inviolability and primacy of conscience and who wrote to his beloved Corinthian Christians that the "stronger" members of the community in conscience should be sensitive to and careful of the "weaker" members, whose consciences might easily be "defiled" by the stronger conscience's most conscientious actions (1 Cor 8:7-13).

At this point a final and sometimes pressing question arises. Among the communities to which Catholics belong

is the Catholic Church. Though that statement appears obvious, when we try to clarify it further by asking what is specifically meant by "church," it actually becomes less clear, for there are several distinct meanings of the word in contemporary Catholic theology. For our purpose here, we focus on the two major ones: church as institution and church as communion. Between the two Vatican councils (1870 -1963), the dominant understanding of church was the institutional, hierarchical one. In 1964, with the publication of Vatican II's "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," a new model, or more accurately a renewed model, became available—namely, the model of church as a communion of the "people of God" (No. 9-17).

The ecclesiologist Yves Congar, O.P., demonstrated that the communion model of church effectively prevailed in the West during the first 1,000 years of Christian history, whereas the hierarchical model dominated only between the 11-century reformation and Vatican II. These two models continue to be available to anyone who asks about church teaching and conscience and they confuse the answer to a final question here: How are Catholics to behave in conscience when their understanding of a noninfallible teaching of the magisterium differs from that proposed by the magisterium—as the majority of Catholic faithful now do, for instance, on contraception and Communion for the divorced and remarried? Congar points out that when the church is conceived as a hierarchical institution, obedience to church authority is called for; when it is conceived of as a communion, dialogue and consensus are called for. These same two answers to our question continue to be offered in the church today.

The holy people of God, "The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" teaches, share in Christ's prophetic or teaching office. "The body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of faith which characterizes the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when from the bishops down to the last member of the laity, it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals" (No. 12). The Holy One referred to is, of course, the Holy Spirit of God, "the Spirit of truth" whom Jesus first promised (Jn 14: 16-17; 15:26) and then sent to the apostles and to the entire church (Jn 20:22). That sending is both signified and effected in the Catholic Church by the anointings in the sacraments of initiation. Each and every Catholic, therefore, carries within herself and himself the Spirit of truth to lead her and him into all truth, including moral truth. Therefore, as John writes to the faithful of old, "The anointing that you received from [Christ] abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you...his anointing teaches you about all things" (1 Jn 2:20, 27).

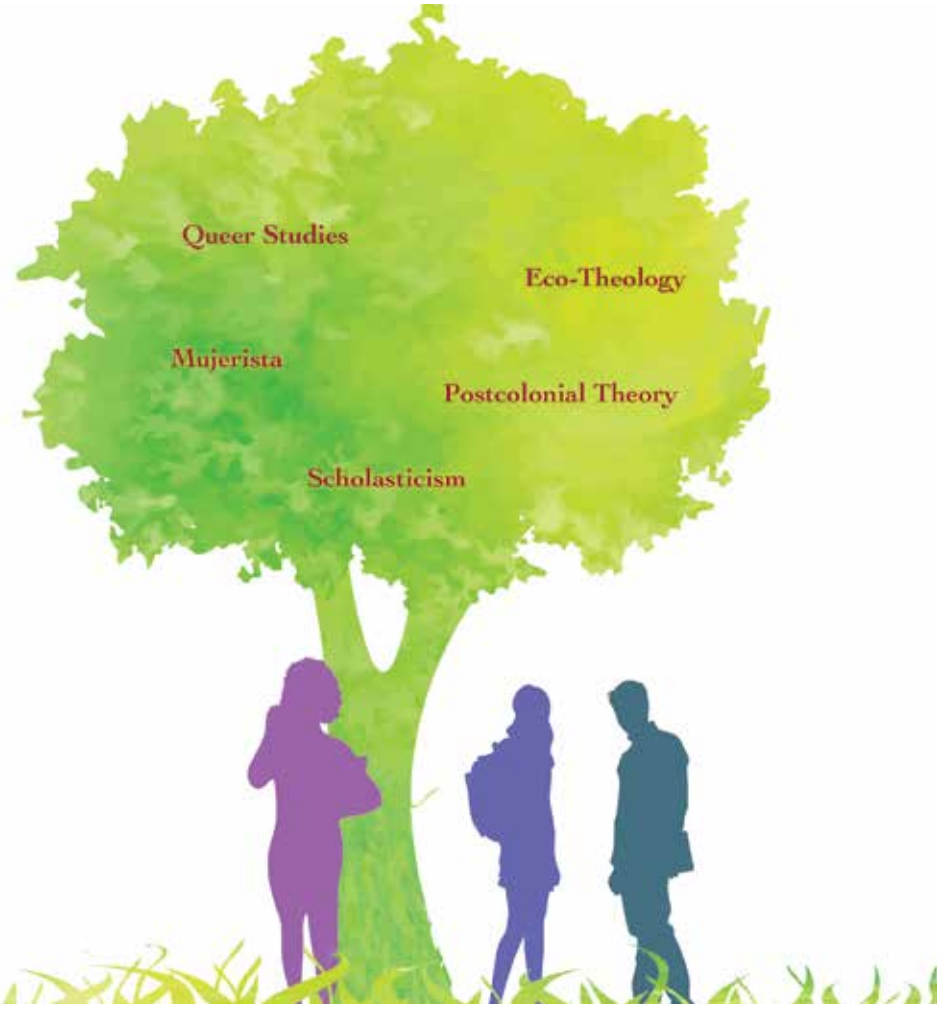
The International Theological Commission, an arm of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, recently taught ("Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church," 2014) that the faithful "have an instinct for the truth of the Gospel, which enables them to recognize and endorse authentic Christian doctrine and practice and to reject what is false." The "instinct for the truth" the commission refers to is the "*sensus fidei*" so emphasized by the Second Vatican Council. "Banishing the caricature of an active hierarchy and a passive laity," the commission continues, "and in particular the notion of a strict separation between the teaching church (*ecclesia docens*) and the learning church (*ecclesia discens*), the council taught that all the baptized participate in their own proper way in the three offices of Christ as prophet, priest and king. In particular it taught that Christ fulfills his prophetic office not only by means of the hierarchy but also via the laity." The attainment of moral truth in the Catholic tradition, therefore, involves a dialogical process in the communion-church in "a spirit of collegiality and synodality" from the "bishops down to the last member of the laity"; and when that process has been conscientiously completed, both the highest bishop and the last member of the laity are finally "alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths" ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," No. 16) and has to make that practical judgment of conscience that this is what I must believe or not believe, do or not do.

To repeat the opening of this essay, no Catholic is "to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor... is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious" ("Declaration on Religious Freedom," No. 3) or moral. Joseph Ratzinger pointed out that "not everything that exists in the church must for that reason be also a legitimate tradition.... There is a distorting as well as legitimate tradition." The long adherence of the church to teachings on the taking of interest on loans, slavery and religious freedom are well-known examples of distorting moral traditions that it now rejects. Father Ratzinger concluded to what is obvious: "consequently tradition must not be considered only affirmatively but also critically." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* repeats the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and places both the council's and the church's teaching beyond doubt: women and men have "the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions" (No. 1782). In his homily at the synod's closing Mass, Pope Francis told the assembled bishops that "God is not afraid of new things. That is why he is continuously surprising us, and guiding us in unexpected ways." The authority and inviolability of a well-informed and therefore well-formed conscience is not among those new things; it is the long-standing Catholic way to choosing the true and the good. A

Theology's New Turn

A survey of contemporary movements

BY THOMAS P. RAUSCH



The words had a vaguely alien sound: postcolonial, mujerista, queer, eco-theological. But as I sat on our theology department's hiring committee and read applicants' dossiers, it was clear that the thinking behind these labels is shaping the work of many who are finishing doctoral studies in theology today and are moving into the schools. Disciplines once considered marginal now dominate the academy.

When I began my own theological studies after the Second Vatican Council, Catholic theology was moving out of the seminaries and into the universities and graduate schools. The church's traditional emphasis on neo-Scholasticism, a method once described by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as "far removed from the real world," had already given way to the work of theologians whose work had so enriched the council. Among them were Karl Rahner, S.J., Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., Joseph Ratzinger, Hans Küng, Karl Barth and especially the French *ressourcement* theologians Yves Congar, O.P., Henri de Lubac, S.J., Jean Daniélou, S.J., and Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., who sought to recover the formative biblical, patristic and liturgical sources of the Catholic tradition.

If these theologies were different from the abstract, nonhistorical arguments of the neo-Scholastics, they were still largely European works, universal in conception, focused on the church and its tradition as understood in the West. But already the theological horizon was changing. Influenced by the postmodernist ethos, theology was becoming increasingly pluralistic, contextual and postcolonial. With the postconciliar ferment in Latin America, the new practitioners of the theology of liberation were already emphasizing a radically contextual theology, rooted in the social *realidad* of their often oppressive societies and based on praxis.

Postcolonial Theory

The postmodern ethos also found expression in the work of the postcolonial theorists. Concerned about the negative impact of Western colonialism on literature, history, politics, cultures and their peoples, they seek to "decolonize" or "deconstruct" Western ways of knowing as well as the restrictive identities constructed on mutually exclusive "binaries," male/female, white/black, first world/third world, heterosexual/homosexual and so on. But postcolonial theory is not

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easy to grasp. It employs an abstract, postmodern language and a lexicon of bewildering terms. Its practitioners speak of difference, agency, whiteness, hybridity, homogenization, recoding, social location, heteronormativity and hegemony, and they employ strategies like deconstruction, dispossessing of the self and border crossings. They have moved beyond the identity politics of the 1980s and early '90s to a focus on culture, which for them involves more than geography, politics, religion and ethnicity. They see it as a complex web of relationships shaped by race, class, gender and sexuality that influences our thinking and results in privilege and marginalization.

Thus postcolonial theorists challenge Western, universalist ways of thinking that ignore social location, the effects of colonialism and its new form of globalizing capitalism, which displaces women, people of color and others who are different, creating modern diasporas. Their method is deconstruction, not to destroy but to reveal the exclusionary character of imperialism and privilege and the constructed character of much that is considered normative, making room for the disadvantaged other.

Many of them are determinedly secular, ignoring the power religion still holds for people in the Southern Hemisphere, although, as Susan Abraham ironically observes, their work reflects a "neocolonial" secular culture in its efforts to eliminate the religious. As postcolonial theory became increasingly popular in the academy, its methods soon began moving into the church. Two areas of theological concern particularly influenced by postcolonial theory are feminist studies and queer studies.

Feminist Studies

While biblical scholarship was long dominated by the universalist approach of the historical-critical method, in the 1980s a new feminist hermeneutic emerged, developed to uncover the suppressed presence of women in New Testament texts. At the same time, others began to elaborate a feminist spirituality, raising consciousness by sharing personal stories, particularly about their experience of disempowerment, and taking women's embodied existence seriously, including aspects of female sexuality often ignored by religion, for example childbirth and menstruation. They also emphasize the goodness of the material and the bodily, including nonhuman nature, and thus ecology—what is often called eco-feminism.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, postcolonial theorists, many of them women of color, began to challenge these early feminists. They noted the liberal and secular framework of their work, that it was largely a Western phenomenon. It assumed a universalist posture, embracing all women, not recognizing the privileged position the theologians enjoyed by reason of their whiteness. Early efforts included womanist and mujerista theologies, for black and Hispanic women respectively. A second generation of postcolonial critics, among them Kwok Pui-lan, Tina Beattie, Gale Yee and Musa Dube, highlighted new concerns like hybridity, deterritorialization, hyphenated or multiple identities and the relations between race, colonialism and patriarchy. They saw the biblical story of Rahab the prostitute, for example, in the second chapter of the Book of Joshua, as a story of the sexual and territorial dispossession of native women.

More radical secular feminists argue that not just gender but our understanding of nature itself is socially constructed. Concerned to reject the claim that anatomy is destiny, they end up failing to acknowledge the significance of the body, denying any real meaning to nature. These feminists, including some Christians, show a resistance to theology more characteristic of the Enlightenment, even to the extent of silencing the voices of women of faith.

Not all feminists are allergic to theology. Tina Beattie argues that the feminist theological body is neither the disembodied body of the gender theorists nor the essentialized body of some Catholic feminists. Rather it is a sacramental body whose true meaning, notwithstanding its questioning of the patriarchal and clerical dynamics of exclusion and control, is to be found through its incorporation into the Christian story in prayer, worship and daily life. She cites, though in a critical way, Pope John Paul II's theology of the bodily self as gift precisely in our creation as male and female.

Queer Studies

Another movement, queer studies—which developed in the early 1990s out of feminist studies, with its argument that gender and sexual identities are socially constructed—sought to deconstruct conventional notions of "heteronormativity." Reclaiming the term *queer* as a term for studies on homosexuality is deliberately provocative, and some of its practitioners are clearly hostile to Christianity. But many are practicing Catholics who are also homosexual. They represent a community that in spite of a number of positive statements from the U.S. bishops—"Always Our Children," for example (1997)—are often marginalized in the church. Their language is frequently off-putting, speaking of "queering theology" or even "queering Christ." They see homosexuality as a socially constructed category of exclusion. Their intention is neither to attack the church nor to reject all sexual norms but to make room for those whose gendered and sexual identities make them "other" by finding resources within the tradition that may have been overlooked.

Theologians working in this area, like Carter Heyward, Robert Gros and Gary David Comstock, seek to reconfigure the valuing of Christian relationality beyond reproductive difference, stressing the inability to set limits to the church's

inclusivity by setting boundaries that may be based on privileged notions of normativity. And they stress that human relationality reflects the relationality of our triune God. Graham Ward seeks to move to a broader understanding of relationality by reflecting on the "displacement" of the risen body of Jesus into the church, which in the process becomes multigendered—not just male and female, but embracing many expressions of being sexual. This is exemplified in the now ubiquitous use of the initials L.G.B.T.: lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

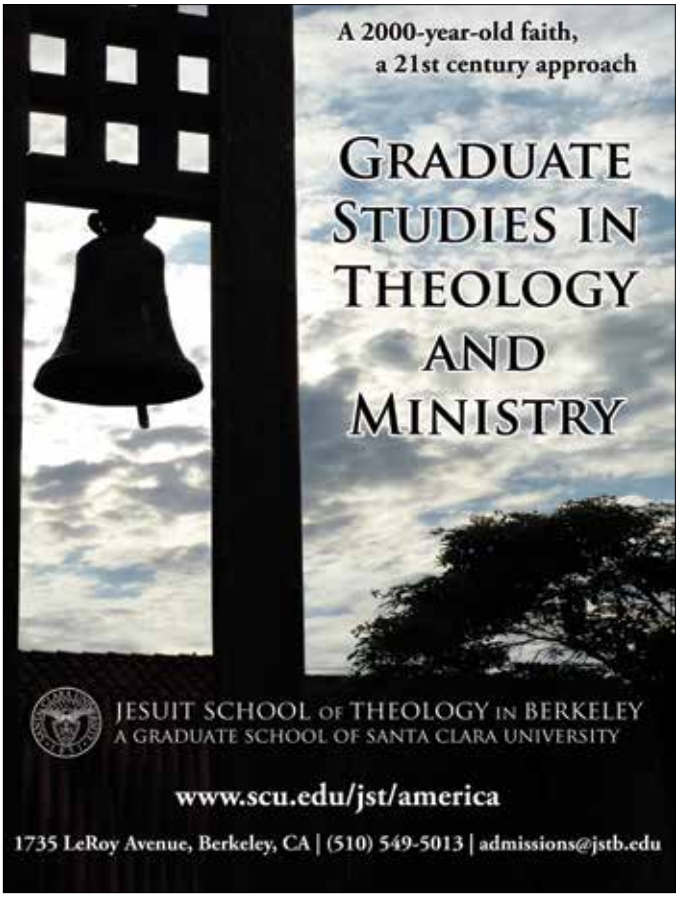
Thus Graham Ward argues that being male or female exceeds its anatomical reference; the malleability of the body opens up to a broader, eschatological sociality that signifies partnership, covenant, fellowship and helpmates. For him, same-sex relationships reveal a love that goes beyond biological reproduction on the way to the redemption represented by the coming of the kingdom. Thus he envisions the church as an erotic community: "Our desire for God is constituted by God's desire for us such that redemption, which is our being transformed into the image of God, is an economy of desire."

Eco-theology

Other theologians are focusing their concerns on the life of our fragile planet. Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., asks what has happened to our belief that the natural world is God's creation, which means that God is its beginning, its continuing existence and its goal. Without God's intentionality, creation would cease to exist, for God not only sustains it at every moment but in some mysterious way brings it to completion in the divine life.

Sister Johnson argues that Greek dualistic thinking led to the medieval distinction between the natural and the supernatural, with the result that nature was excluded from the realm of grace. The modern era transformed the biblical mandate from "dominion" over nature (Gen 1:26) to domination. Nature was to be used, not cared for; and as Europeans began to colonize other lands, they assumed the right to dominate their darker-skinned, indigenous peoples. Sister Johnson goes on to uncover the Spirit's life-giving presence in the natural world, in a creation groaning like a woman in childbirth, longing to be set free (Rom 8:18-25). And she reminds us of Pope John Paul II's words, "respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join humanity in praising God." So dominion is not quite right; we are a community with creation, a complex, mutually dependent network of living beings, an ecosystem reflecting the glory of God.

Besides their concern for the protection of the planet, some eco-theologians have taken on the cause of animal welfare, appealing to the example of Mahatma Gandhi and



Albert Schweitzer. Gandhi's principle of *ahimsa*, nonviolence, embraced the animal kingdom as well as the human. Gandhi's principle influenced Schweitzer, the Protestant theologian who spent most of his life tending the sick in Africa. From his youth Schweitzer had shown concern for animals. Later he wrote, "There slowly grew up in me an unshakeable conviction that we have no right to inflict suffering and death on another living creature unless there is some unavoidable need for it." This conviction grew into reverence for all living things, from the amoeba to the human, and led him eventually, like Gandhi, to embrace vegetarianism.

A New Conversation

As the Catholic Church begins to function more and more as a world church, there will be new tensions between the postcolonial churches of the global South and those of the West, the periphery and the center, and with those who feel their inclusion is less than full. The church needs to embrace all God's children, women and men, gay and straight, the gifted, the wounded and hurting, and those on the margins.

There are signs that a new, broader and much needed conversation has begun under Pope Francis. He has spoken several times of the jurisdictional status of episcopal conferences. He mentioned this again in his apostolic exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel," saying that their status, including genuine doctrinal authority, has not been sufficiently elaborated and citing at several points the concerns of the bishops of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Also unprecedented was the survey on contraception, same-sex unions, cohabitation, marriage and divorce sent by Rome to all the bishops of the world in preparation for the Synod of Bishops on the Family this October.

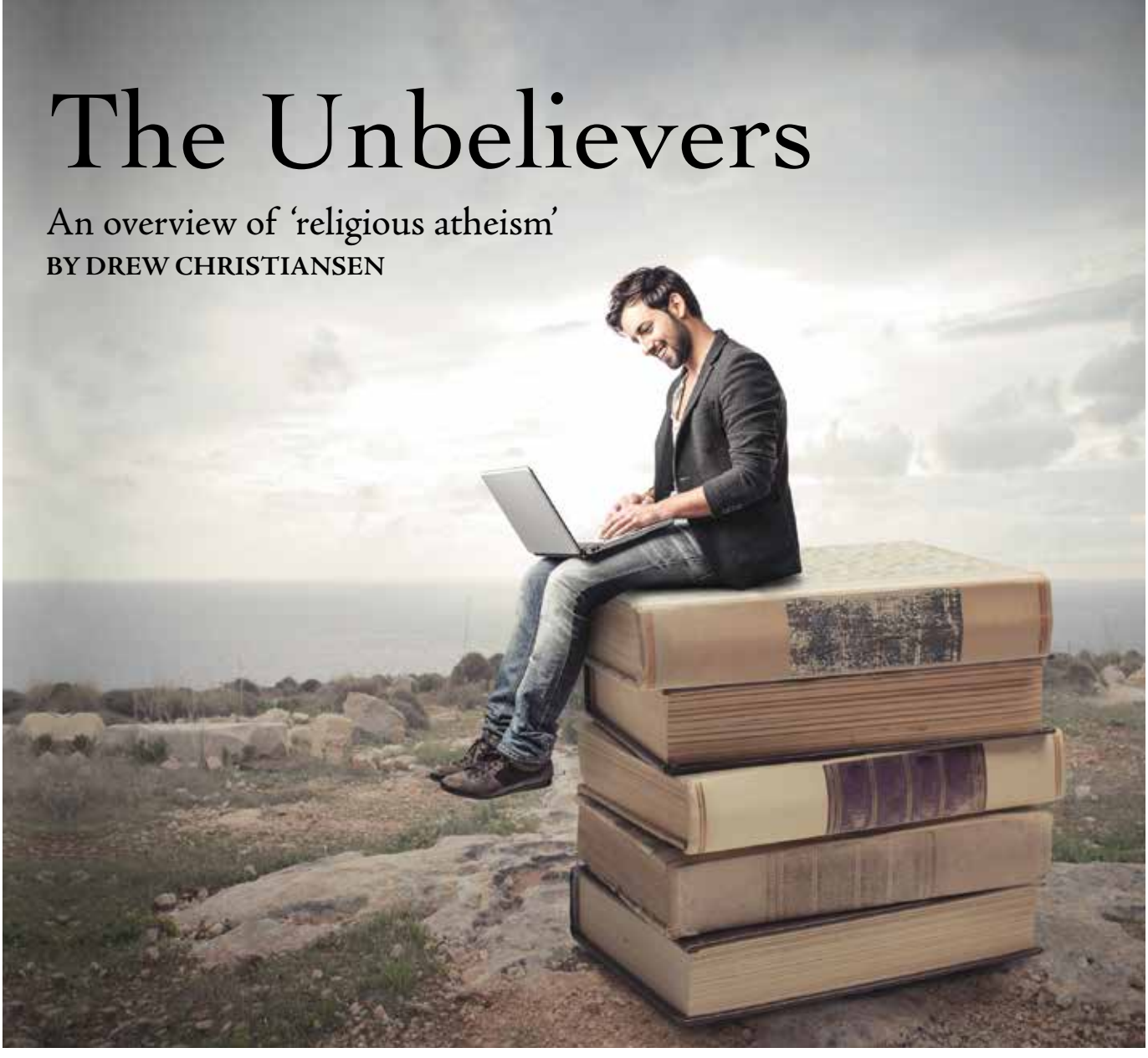
In July the International Theological Commission released a study, "The Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church." Reflecting on the "sense of the faith" both of the individual believer and of the whole church, the study called attention to "the role played by the laity with regard to the development of the moral teaching of the Church," commenting that the "magisterium needs means by which to consult the faithful" (Nos. 73-74). Even more remarkable, it responded affirmatively to the question of whether separated Christians should be understood as participating in and contributing to the *sensus fidelium* in some manner (No. 86), suggesting that the Catholic Church might learn something from other churches.

How is the *sensus fidei* formed? The study recognizes that it cannot be reduced to an expression of popular opinion. The study points to active participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the church as fundamental, in addition to listening to the word of God, openness to reason and adherence to the magisterium. A deeper appreciation for the *sensus fidei* means that the church is becoming a true communion, not a structure of the teachers and the taught (No. 4).

The Unbelievers

An overview of 'religious atheism'

BY DREW CHRISTIANSEN



In his apostolic exhortation on evangelization, "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis wrote about the centrality of dialogue with the world for evangelization. We must dialogue, he insisted, even with those who hold erroneous views, because they possess insights that are gifts for us as well. In that spirit, I review here several works of "religious atheism," books whose unbelieving authors take religion seriously. I do so in the hope of exploring the possibilities of dialogue with a qualitatively different breed of atheist than the polemical atheists of the first decade of the century.

Religion in Question

For many years Thomas Nagel has been a leading figure in American philosophy. In his later years, he has become a gadfly to his fellow philosophers. His deconstruction of scientific materialism as the de facto metaphysic of contemporary science and Western culture (*Mind and Cosmos*, 2012) was a cause célèbre among American intellectuals. No less a challenge to contemporary philosophy was Nagel's charge, in his 2005 essay entitled "Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament" and a 2007 book of the same name, that the discipline had turned its back on one of the classic tasks of philosophers—to help people make sense of their lives.

Nagel's "religious temperament" consists in the desire to make a whole of our lives, including integrating them with the cosmos. After a review of modern philosophers, Nagel concludes that an "evolutionary Platonism" would best satisfy that need. He favors Plato for the aspirational (transcendental) element in his philosophy; and from Darwinism, the accepted scientific view of modern culture, he makes the human ascent part of the cosmic story.

Reading the tentative conclusion of his argument, I naturally thought of Teilhardian spirituality, which can surely

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be described as an evolutionary Platonism. But apparently Teilhard was not within Nagel's intellectual horizon, for Nagel makes no mention of him. He makes no attempt, moreover, to explore how other religious thinkers may have developed a similar holistic system of thought. Instead, without real explanation but only a couple of conditional dismissals, he walks away from the question he has so ably explored. Given the remaining options—atheism, humanism and the absurd—Nagel cavalierly responds, "The absurd has my vote."

But in *Mind and Cosmos*, Nagel took up the question of transcendence once again. He argued for the insufficiency of the Neo-Darwinian point of view and admitted "teleological elements" are necessary to understand our place in the universe. But once again he demurred, saying, "In the present intellectual climate, such a possibility is unlikely to be taken seriously."

Nagel signaled a discontent among nonbelieving philosophers with the dry agnosticism that had become the orthodoxy of their profession. In Ronald Dworkin's last book, *Religion Without God* (Harvard, 2013) the late legal and political philosopher professed a belief in "the mystery and beauty of life" not explained by scientific naturalism. Nonetheless, he held that one might accept the mystery without positing the existence of God. For Dworkin "religious atheism" is not an oxymoron. Atheists are religious when they wonder at the mystery of life and make a meaningful whole of their own lives. As with Nagel, Dworkin demonstrates no interest in what contemporary religious thinkers might have to say. There is no dialogue with theology or religious intellectuals more broadly.

Doing Without God

In addition to philosophical arguments for taking religious longings seriously, like those of Nagel and Dworkin, there have been rich studies of how philosophers and others have filled the cultural lacunae created by the loss of religious faith. One of the earliest and most influential was Alain de Botton's popular *Religion for Atheists* (2012). De Botton, a practical philosopher and essayist, identified a range of enjoyments that, in their dismissal of organized religion, atheists denied themselves. They included music, including the joy of singing with others, art, architecture, community and festivity, as Charles Taylor calls it. To satisfy these needs, de Botton founded a Sunday assembly where non-believers can savor these enjoyments unburdened by any creed.

More recently, the intellectual historian Peter Watson, in *The Age of Atheists: How We Have Sought to Live Since the Death of God* (Simon and Schuster, 2014), has explored how, since the 19th century, Western intellectuals of many sorts have tried to supply for the absence of faith in Western culture. The book is a veritable encyclopedia of unbelief and atheistic religion. What unites most of the authors, though not all, is the attitude that "the 'transcendent' impulse must be resisted." Watson aims to show that over the last two centuries, many people have found a great many ways to live fulfilling lives without God. He favors the formula of the Canadian philosopher Mark Kingwell. "Happiness," Kingwell writes, "is about the ability to reflect on one's life and find it worthwhile."

We must acknowledge that a deficit of freedom in Catholic culture is an obstacle to modern men and women hearing the Gospel.

I was particularly impressed by Watson's wide-ranging treatment of poetry: Mallarmé and Valéry, Herder and Rilke, Yeats and Heaney, Owen and Auden, Neruda, Stevens and Milosz. For its devotees, poetry has become a surrogate for religion. For Stefan Georg, the powerful heart of poetry was praise, the pinnacle of worship. "The purpose of poetry," wrote Wallace Stevens, "is to make life complete in itself." And again, "it is the role of the poet to supply the satisfactions of belief."

Watson gets some things wrong and misses others. He repeatedly treats Søren Kierkegaard, a critic of bourgeois religion, as if he were a nonbeliever rather than a radical Christian. His treatment of Whitehead omits the philosopher's *Religion in the Making* and his masterful chapter "Peace," the crowning—religious—emotion of civilization, in *Adventures of Ideas*; and he leaves the misimpression that Michael Polanyi played at religion rather than making a significant contribution to the reconciliation of science and religion. He also underplays the full power of "presence" in George Steiner's art criticism. Steiner is not one of those who resist the impulse to transcendence. His writing shows he fully appreciates its lure but holds back from surrender.

But Watson does not hide the recurring dissatisfaction of seculars with the incompleteness of their solutions. More than a few of his secular figures are "melancholy atheists, unbelievers with guilty consciences," as a biographer of Rilke described the poet. "[E]ven atheists," Watson concedes, quoting Dworkin on religious atheism, "can feel 'a sense of fundamentality.'" He cites Jürgen Habermas's defense of religion as "the outcome of a history of reason" along with science. Religions articulate, Habermas wrote, "an awareness of what is lacking or absent" in our lives. In the end Watson leaves unbelievers only slight consolation. "In modern society," he concludes, "it is easier—less of a burden—to be secular than to be religious."

Seculars as Exemplary Believers

Simon Critchley falls into a category all by himself. There is

no one quite like him on the American philosophical scene. A political philosopher, he believes political change requires faith; but, ironically, unbelievers who have undergone a paradoxical inner transformation, not religious believers attached to creeds and churches, are the ones who possess genuine faith.

Critchley's *The Faith of the Faithless* is a demanding set of essays combining an eclectic set of philosophical sources with mystical and Pauline texts. The philosophers include: Rousseau, Badiou, John Gray, Heidegger and Benjamin; the religious figures: Marguerite Porete, Paul and Kierkegaard. The overture to the book is an account of the Christianity of Oscar Wilde, who, Critchley relates, underwent a transformation in prison, so that in sin and repentant suffering he experienced "an infinite ethical demand." That demand was the focus of a previous Critchley book, *Infinitely Demanding* (2007).

As a political philosopher, Critchley holds that only self-denying love can provide the glue that will hold a just society together. But what interests him most in this book is not the political question but the spiritual transformation of the human subject, as reflected in the purgative moments in mystical ascent and the paradoxical moves of philosophical religion.

Critchley concludes with a reading of Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. What matters is "the rigor" of one's love. Has one "hacked away" at the self, or, rather, is one constantly hacking away, so as to make room for the "other"? One must be "striving" continuously—"at every moment"—in "a process of decreation and impoverishment" to empty oneself to love's invasion.

It is unbelievers, not those of any denominational faith, Critichley contends, who are better able to live this rigorist faith with the constant "urgency of active engagement." For "without security guarantees or rewards," the "faithless" are able to give themselves in an unmediated way to Kierkegaardian inwardness, where they "abide with the infinite demand of love."

Critchley's claim that unbelievers in his sense, "the faithless," are exemplary believers is at once the most daring and dubious assertion he makes. For the band of seculars willing to give themselves over to self-abandonment on the model of Porete or to unrelenting acts of faith following Kierkegaard would be very few indeed. There is no space for intersubjectivity, no mention of friendship or communion. Even the other in Kierkegaard's triad of the self-God-and-other vanishes, and in the end God is swallowed up, as by a black hole, by the endlessly self-emptying self.

No Substitute for the Real Thing

In *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Belknap/Harvard, 2014) Martha Nussbaum, one of the pre-eminent moral and political philosophers working in the United States today, examines the way civil religion has been utilized to evoke positive political virtues, like loyalty, patriotism, compassion and, remarkably, love. The historical foundations of her argument lie in the efforts of 19th- and 20th-century intellectuals, like Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill, to develop civil religions to provide the social cohesion religion had previously given. But she concedes that civil religion can supplement religion but not supplant the real thing. "[B]y now," she writes, "we have reason to think that under conditions of freedom there will remain a plurality of religions and secular doctrines of life, many of which will continue to attract allegiance."

What we need in real life for spiritual uplift, Nussbaum believes, is a vividness of experience not found in academic philosophy, a richness that religion provides. Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet, philosopher and educational theorist, is the author from whom Nussbaum draws the greatest inspiration. To her eyes, Tagore's "religion of man" has the advantage of sensitivity to culture and individual expression,

gifts earlier philosophical civil religions neglected.

Nussbaum also notes that Roman Catholicism, unlike the philosophies of Comte or Mill, has "very shrewdly" respected and incorporated elements of traditional cultures into the practice of its own faith. Likewise, the church's acceptance of artists like "a J. S. Bach, an El Greco, a Gerard Manley Hopkins" reveals an openness to "the exercise of imagination with personal integrity," which philosophical civil religions suppress in the interest of uniformity of expression. Unlike Nagel and Dworkin but like de Botton, Nussbaum esteems the aesthetic enjoyments religion provides as well as the more specifically religious benefits, like the broadening of sympathy, shared devotion, models of life (saints) and especially the cultivation of prized affections and virtues.

What is lacking in religion and constructed civil religion alike, though Mill and Tagore wrestled with it, she observes, is the fostering of personal freedom in the context of community and a shared worldview. In the end, her plea is that a human politics requires emotional engagement of a public with fellow citizens. It may be done perhaps in some constructed religions, like Tagore's, or in traditional religions within a liberal state; and it can also be promoted with a pedagogy of emotions Nussbaum attempts to provide in the rest of her book.

Five Lessons for Dialogue

The new openness to religion among both professional philosophers and those we might call philosophers of life is good news for Christians concerned about dialogue with the secular world. The hostile polemics of the New Atheists are behind us. Times are ripe for better informed, serious dialogue between believers and religiously sensitive intellectuals. Here are five lessons I take away from these books for dialogue with unbelieving artists and intellectuals.

1) *The arts as a commonwealth.* The fact that many secular thinkers—like de Botton, the philosophers of religion and Nussbaum—see the arts inspired by faith and lived in liturgical celebrations as goods they are missing out on and need to provide for themselves in community suggests that the arts provide a field in which Christians and nonbelievers have gifts to share with one another that may provide for fruitful encounters.

In past centuries apologists spoke of employing pagan learning as a propaedeutic to understanding the faith as "the spoliation of the Egyptians." In these more ecumenical times, we speak of gifts we share. What is missing in many cases is not just true appreciation for the gifts of unbelievers but basic knowledge of the culture of the other party. For that reason, there is a genuine need of a sharing of gifts of one another's spiritual cultures. Catholics, for example, need to acquaint themselves with the poetry, music and art of Nussbaum's liberal symbolic universe. In that sense, the arts, Christian and secular, may prove a commonwealth we can share together. Christians have as much to learn from it as to impart to it.

2) *Essential Starting Points.* Finding comprehensive meaning for our lives (Nagel) and encountering the mystery in which we live (Dworkin) are serious religious questions. Engagement with such questions opens ground for common pursuit of the most basic questions in philosophical and fundamental theology. They are questions that theologians have also examined. There is progress to be made in pursuing them in common. Some clearing of the ground will be necessary to overcome simplistic anthropomorphic notions of God, a fault not just of the New Atheists but of more sophisticated unbelieving thinkers as well. Nonetheless, dialogue on such questions offers an opportunity to share religious experience and explore the profound yearnings that run through it.

Clarifying how and why the experience of mystery and transcendence leads Christian thinkers to believe in God but does not inspire secular thinkers to do the same is in order. I am not naïve enough to believe that such conversations will lead nonbelievers to see the light. Where secular thinkers are sensitive to faith, there is every reason to clear away as much misunderstanding as possible and for Christian thinkers to share with them their explorations of the same phenomena, even as they hear unbelievers unravel their doubts.

3) *Philosophy and Religion as Ways of Life.* Thinkers like Comte, Tagore and de Botton demonstrate that philosophy can be more than an ivory-tower intellectual exercise. It can also serve, as the late Pierre Hadot reminded us, as "a way of life" concerned with living and dying well (*Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 1981/95 *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, 1995/2002). One form of existing interfaith dialogue is intermonastic dialogue, where monks and nuns of the world's great religions come together to share their styles of prayer and ways of life with one another. Ecumenical monasteries like Taizé and Bossey, moreover, where Christians of different denominations and searchers with none at all share a common life together, have met with interest and approval from both the Holy See and people who are religiously unaffiliated. With its charism of unity, Focolare opens its communities to Muslims and atheists as well as to non-Catholic Christians, where the guests, in their own ways, share the life of the Focolarini.

These mixed communities are facts of our "secular age," as Charles Taylor describes it, where religious boundaries are more porous and fluid than in the past. Is it inconceivable, then, that well-formed Christian believers and "religiously musical" philosophers might come together to explore philosophy and religion as ways of life rather than as competing systems of ideas? Exploring ways of life together might open up alternative ways of knowing, prompt both sides to express their deepest convictions, and so press Christians to express their faith in more articulate, understandable ways.

4) *A More Perfect Religious Freedom.* The hardest challenge that religiously attuned philosophers present to Christian believers, and particularly to Catholics, has to do with religious freedom. It is not just a problem for Christians, either. As Nussbaum explains, the philosophers of civil religion and other liberals like Mozart also wrestled with the problem and found only partial answers. After the Second Vatican Council, John Courtney Murray, S.J., argued that just as the council had articulated the case for religious freedom from state coercion, the time had come to formulate the case for freedom within the institutional church.

A Catholic theology of freedom will not ape the individualism of secular liberal culture. Catholicism is a personalist, communitarian and creedal tradition, so any theology of ecclesial freedom will be colored by those dimensions of the faith. Nevertheless, the liberal tradition and secular philosophy more broadly do challenge us to develop, in theory and practice, a more adequate and ample conception of the freedom of persons and groups than we presently have.

We must acknowledge that a deficit of freedom in Catholic culture is an obstacle to modern men and women hearing the Gospel. Likewise, for many contemporary Catholics the same deficit in freedom is an impediment to whole-hearted discipleship, resulting in avoidance, resentment and cognitive dissonance within individuals and harmful divisions within the one body of Christ. Our capacities to live the Gospel fully and proclaim it boldly are stunted by insufficient respect for mature religious freedom within the church.

5) *Faith, Truth and Mysticism.* The most remarkable development for me among the religious atheists is Critichley's appropriation of "faith" for unbelievers. Dialogue with nonbelievers on the modes of religious knowing might help clarify what Christians mean by faith. Furthermore, including mysticism, as Critichley does, may help further illuminate faith as "personal knowledge" of God, a theme that Pope Francis (building on the work of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) explored in the encyclical "The Light of Faith."

The religious question has come to maturity among some secular thinkers at least. It is time for Christians to engage them, trusting, as Pope Francis has said, that the Spirit works in the world as well as in the church and that there are gifts for both in mutual engagement. A

Redeeming the Bible

Can Scripture be a source of unity rather than division?

BY PAULINE A. VIVIANO

I have cringed every time—during 45 years of studying and teaching Scripture in Catholic universities and dioceses—I heard Scripture being quoted out of context and used in support of any number of opposing positions. The Bible has been dragged into arguments to justify war and to argue for pacifism, to support slavery and to oppose it, to keep women "in their place" and to insist on their liberation, and most recently to support government programs subsidizing the poor and to eliminate such programs. Is it possible to use the Bible sensibly or must it continue to be a weapon of division in a community whose founder prayed that "they may all be one" (Jn 17:21)? To address this question we must step back to consider what constitutes a sensible use of the Bible; to do that, we must enter the murky and confusing world of biblical interpretation.

Even a precursory look at the history of biblical interpretation reveals a morass of complementary and conflicting approaches to the biblical text. At the risk of oversimplifying, there are those methods focused on discovering the literal sense of the text and those that delve beneath the surface of the text to discover a spiritual sense, a meaning relevant to the people for whom the Bible is sacred text. The literal or plain sense refers to what the text actually says as this can best be determined. The spiritual sense refers to a "deeper" meaning of the text. Though at times there were as many as seven spiritual senses, these eventually coalesced into three: the allegorical sense, which included what is now called typology; the moral sense; and the anagogic sense.

The anagogic sense, which focuses on what the biblical text has to tell us about heaven, has not been prominent in the history of interpretation, possibly because there is so little about the afterlife in the Bible. The moral sense is alive and well. Preachers seeking to make the biblical text relevant to the people in the pews often draw out the moral sense of the text to endorse certain attitudes and behaviors. The allegorical/typological sense involves a search for hidden meanings. It enabled the early church to connect the Old Testament and the New Testament, finding within the Old Testament the foreshadowing of events and persons of the New Testament (typology); it enabled the early church to "redeem" offensive and obscure texts by looking for meaning not in the "letter" of the text but in its "spirit" (allegory).

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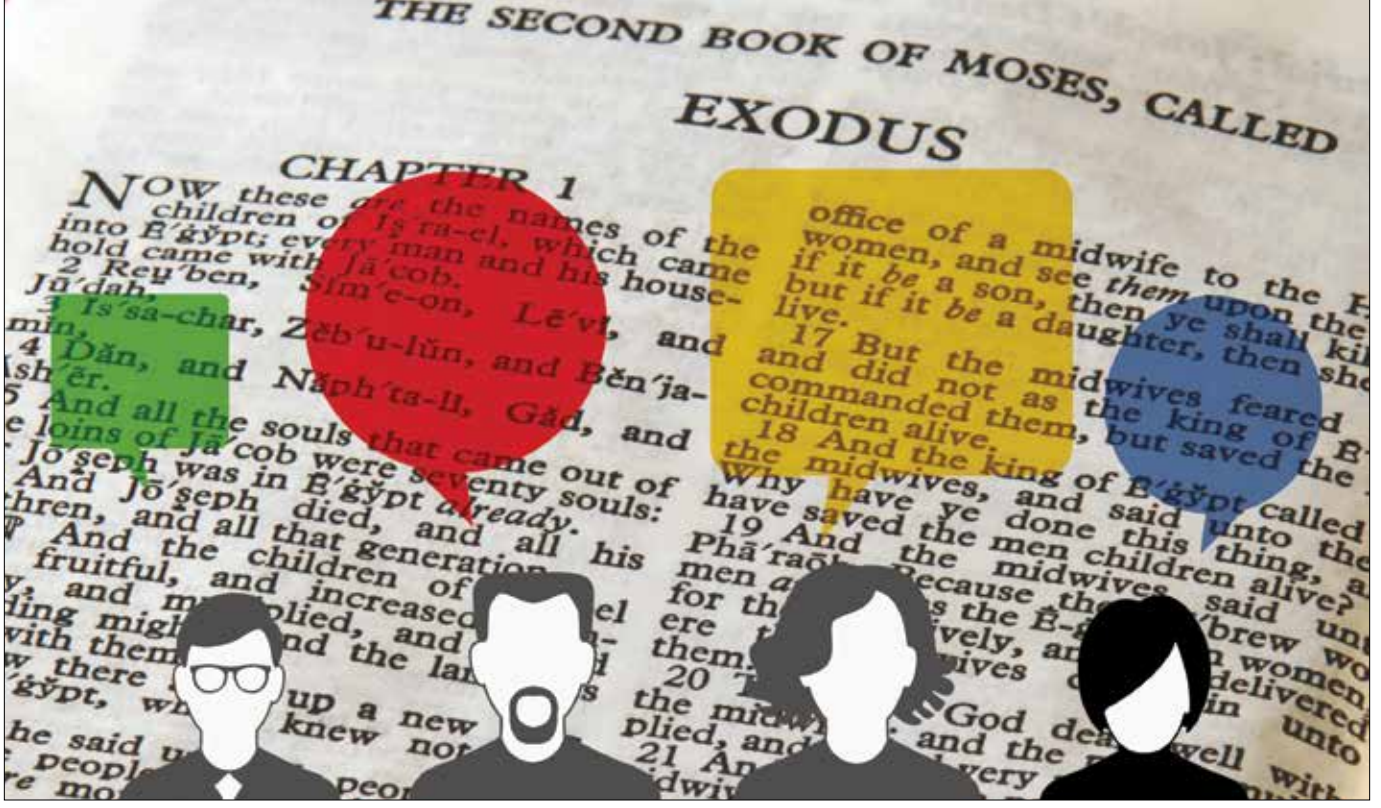
Meaning Matters

In the long history of Christian interpretation of the Bible, most theologians were comfortable accepting both literal and spiritual interpretations of the biblical text, even if an individual theologian had a preference for one side or the other, but matters began to change with the Reformation and later the Enlightenment. The Reformers, following in the steps of Martin Luther, who had an aversion to allegorical interpretation, stressed the literal sense of the text, but it was a "literal sense" determined in accordance with Protestant theology. Later theologians, influenced by the Enlightenment, were also concerned with the literal sense, but it was the literal sense as it could be determined from within the historical and literary contexts of the text under consideration. The exaltation of reason over faith, the discoveries resulting from improved methods of archaeology, advances in the studies of ancient languages and manuscripts, the increasing rigor of scientific inquiry—all had a part to play in the emergence of the historical critical method, which is not one method but a collection of methods that seek to interpret a text from within its historical, social and literary contexts. Its concern is the literal sense of the text, but the literal sense as understood against the backdrop of the age and author who produced the text.

The Catholic Church, in response to the Protestant Reformation, continued to endorse the multiple senses of Scripture and insisted upon magisterial oversight with respect to issues of interpretation. But even in the Catholic Church a concern for the literal sense began to dominate. St. Thomas Aquinas already had given considerable weight to the literal sense, stating that "all the senses are founded on one—the literal—from which alone can any argument be drawn, and not from those intended in allegory" (*Summa Theologiae* I, 1, 10, ad. 1). Nearly seven centuries later in 1943, in the encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu," Pope Pius XII sided with Aquinas on the importance of the literal sense in his exhortation: "Let the Catholic exegete under-



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take the task, of all those imposed on him the greatest, that namely of discovering and expounding the genuine meaning of the sacred books. In the performance of this task let the interpreters bear in mind that their foremost and greatest endeavor should be to discern and define clearly that sense of the biblical words which is called literal" (No. 23). The encouragement to Catholic biblical scholars to use historical critical method to determine the literal sense of the text was confirmed by the "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" of the Second Vatican Council (No. 12). The spiritual sense of Scripture, though of historic, theological and liturgical importance, had been set aside: "The allegorical interpretation of Scripture so characteristic of patristic exegesis runs the risk of being something of an embarrassment to people today" ("The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," 1993, No. 173).

Interpreting the Bible Today

In some ways the present situation with respect to the interpretation of biblical texts still seesaws between those who prefer the literal sense and those who prefer the spiritual sense, but the situation is more complicated and more polarized today. It is complicated in two ways: by the rise of fundamentalism and by a more nuanced understanding of the role of the reader in the process of interpretation. Fundamentalism arose as a response to historical critical method which called into question the historicity of many of the biblical stories and also challenged some doctrines of the Christian church. Fundamentalism makes claims to be a "literal" interpretation of the biblical text, but it owes more to the ideology of the 19th century than to the biblical text itself. The literal sense from a fundamentalist perspective becomes an insistence on the factual accuracy of the Bible, which it takes to be inerrant in all its claims.

Historical critical biblical scholars insist that they are also concerned with a literal interpretation of the biblical text, but they insist that the meaning of text can best be determined by understanding that text from within its historical and literary context. If they focus on a text by Isaiah, for example, they seek to understand what the author intended and how the audience of the time would have heard Isaiah. They are also sensitive to whether the text is prose or poetry, whether it is history or story or essay, whether the author is using metaphors and speaking figuratively. They recognize that the biblical text contains historical, scientific and even theological errors, for it reflects the knowledge of the people responsible for its production and transmission; the biblical text is from a people who had a different world view and limited historical and scientific knowledge. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile these two different ways of understanding the literal sense of a text.

The second complication emerges from a more nuanced understanding of the role of the reader in the process of interpretation. Concern with the spiritual sense of the biblical text arose because this ancient text was believed to be relevant to believers who lived centuries later and for whom that text was now considered sacred text. The gap between the ancient world of the text and the contemporary world of its readers needed to be bridged, and a search for the spiritual sense of the text filled in that gap. Today, instead of speaking of a "spiritual" sense, we recognize that readers bring to bear upon a text under examination their own issues and

concerns, their own worldview, and these have an impact on even the most objectively guided search for meaning.

The emphasis on the role of the reader has led to the proliferation of new "isms" in the field of biblical interpretation: liberation criticism, feminist criticism, post-colonialism, the new historicism. These various approaches to the biblical text take into account the role of class, culture, ethnicity and race, gender or politics in the formation of texts and in their interpretation. Many of the practitioners of these "isms" employ historical critical or literary critical methods, but what makes them distinctive is that the text is explicitly read through a particular lens that shapes the meaning "found" in a text. I include here also readers who insist on the importance of a "faith hermeneutics" or theological approach to the interpretation of the Bible, a position best represented by Pope Benedict XVI. This approach privileges faith or theological doctrine as the lens through which to interpret the biblical text. Though these interpretive stances are not the same as the spiritual interpretation of the patristic period, they share with the patristic period a search for meaning that is relevant to the "people in the pew." The opposition here is between what the text meant (the historical critical meaning) and what the text means (the concern of the people in the pew).

Readers bring to bear upon a text their own issues and concerns, and these have an impact on even the most objectively guided search for meaning.

Two questions emerge from this historical summary: How do fundamentalists talk to historical critical interpreters, and how do we negotiate between what the text meant and what the text means? I doubt that fundamentalists and historical critical interpreters will ever agree, for their basic presuppositions stand in opposition; but instead of arguing about whether the creation stories of Genesis are scientific accounts or myths, can we agree that we are creatures dependent upon a Creator and explore what that means? Instead of getting bogged down by debates regarding the historical accuracy of the patriarchal narratives, of the Exodus with its plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea, of the conquest and subsequent history of Israel, can we focus rather on what it means to be called, to be saved, to be a covenanted people (Genesis through Kings)? Can we learn from the prophets the importance of loyalty to God (Hosea, Jeremiah) and of living in justice (Amos, Isaiah, Micah)? Can we learn from Israel how to pray in joy and sorrow, in need and in thanksgiving (Psalms), and how to find God reflected in the world (Israel's wisdom traditions)? Can we move beyond the simplistic notions of suffering and sin as the author of Job did and as Jesus did in the New Testament? Instead of being bogged down by "Did it happen this way?" can we explore, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as presented in the Gospels, what it means to be human? Can we agree that it means to live in obedience to God and to "lose oneself" in the love of the other as Jesus did? Can we explore what it means that we have been reconciled, that we have been be forgiven, that we have access to God in Christ? Can we talk about what it means to say that "God is love" and what love means and how we as a community of believers mediate God's self-giving love to this world? Can we explore what resurrection means and its implications for our lives as Christians? As a biblical scholar I find the historical questions of great interest and of great importance, but in the interest of dialogue can we agree to disagree on the contentious issues and focus on what unites us as believers who seek to love God and love our neighbor?

This brings me to my second question: how do we negotiate between what the text meant and what the text means? I find it problematic to draw a dichotomy between what a text meant and what it means. If what a text means is not integrally connected to what a text meant, then we can say anything we want about the meaning of any text. If this is the case, why read one text as opposed to another? We must also recognize that not every text will have meaning for us today because our world is too different. We need to recognize that the Bible speaks with many voices representing various responses to changing historical situations. It says many things about who God is and what God is about. There is no one image of God and no one response on God's part in the Bible. The Bible says many things about what it is to be human, and it is not always consistent in what it prescribes in the laws and in its wisdom writing. It all too often reflects the limited understanding of its own time and place. We live in a very different time and place. We need to enter into dialogue with these voices of the past, but at the same time we need to take our experiences into account and bring that to bear upon the biblical text as we address the issues of war, patriarchal systems, the economy, social roles, etc. We hear the many voices in the Bible, but as believers our voices also need to be heard. We learn from the Bible what it means to be the people of God, but as believers our experience is also of values to today's community of believers. We find in the Bible the revelation of God's love expressed in the Old Testament and most fully in the gift of his Son in the New, but God's love is also expressed in our world. It is expressed through us as we live in God's love. A

Francis Chooses Electors

Pope Francis is engaged in a slow but determined process to remake the College of Cardinals and renew the electors who will choose his successor. His aim is to increase the college's universality by affirming the churches on the peripheries, to correct present imbalances and to ensure there is a variety of suitable candidates to succeed him at the next conclave.

He is remolding the college through carefully measured steps, but he may have to increase the overall number of papal electors if he wishes to reach all these goals within five years.

First of all, he is moving away, slowly but surely, from the Eurocentrism that has been the hallmark of the College of Cardinals for centuries (in which Italians were always the overwhelming bloc). He is doing this in a variety of ways. In Italy, for example, he has broken the career system and the unwritten tradition according to which appointment to certain major sees automatically brought the red hat with it. So he has not made the patriarch of Venice or the archbishop of Turin a cardinal, but he has given red hats to the bishops of the dioceses of Perugia, Ancona and Agrigento.

He is seeking, moreover, to reduce the number of red hats in Europe by placing the old continent (excluding Italy) on a par with Asia and Africa in the 2014 and 2015 consistories. He actually gave one more red hat to Asia and Latin America than to Europe (excluding Italy) in 2015.

He is also seeking to correct the imbalance in the number of cardinal electors from the United States that has built up over the past half century. This goal is more achievable over the next three to five years. Today, the United States has 11 electors, whereas Brazil, Mexico and the Philippines have far fewer cardinals but many more Catholics. Francis could reduce the number of electors from the United States to single digits in that time frame by making fewer U.S. cardinals as the current crop cease to be electors by reason of age.

Pope Francis is reducing drastically the number of cardinals in the Roman Curia. In the past they exercised enormous influence in the conclaves. Today they count for some 25 percent of the electors. But as he indicated in last December's interview with Elisabetta Piqué (my wife) for La Nación, with the reform of the Roman Curia only the heads of the congregations will be cardinals. That would reduce their number significantly.

> Francis is remolding the College of Cardinals through carefully measured steps.

On the other hand, the pope "from the end of the world" knows what it means to be on the periphery and to not count for much at the center. He is conscious that many churches and church leaders living in the peripheries are often in great poverty or in conflict situations, but up to now they have not counted much when it comes to decision-making in Rome. He wants to affirm their full citizenship in the church, so in the 2014 and 2015 consistories he assigned red hats to prelates from Burkina Faso, Haiti, Nicaragua, Panama, Ivory Coast, Cape Verde, Tonga and Myanmar. Most of these countries did not have cardinals before.

Above all else, however, Francis is looking very carefully at the pastoral profile of the man to whom he gives the red hat. In Italy, for example, in the 2014 and 2015 consistories he has carefully chosen pastors who are prayerful, courageous, open-minded, humble men with a simple lifestyle, not careerists or ideologues, pastors committed to the culture of encounter, not men of confrontation. The identikit of these and future cardinals in this pontificate can be found in the Argentine pope's programmatic document, "The Joy of the Gospel," and in the talks he gave to the nuncios at the end of June 2013, and to the Congregation for Bishops in February 2014.

Following this month's consistory there will be 125 cardinal electors, 31 of them created by Pope Francis, divided as follows: 57 Europeans (including 26 Italians), 15 Africans, 14 Asians, 15 North Americans (Canada 4, U.S. 11), 22 from Central and South America (including Mexico), 2 from Oceania (Australia and New Zealand).

It is becoming clear, however, that even if Francis follows his current logic, he will not be able to substantially correct the European and Italian imbalance among the electors within five years unless he increases the overall number of electors from the present 120 to 140 or more and assigns the extra red hats to those outside Europe. That possibility cannot be ruled out.

GERARD O'CONNELL

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VANTAGE POINT: 2008

Cuba Sí, Castro No!

THE EDITORS

Time has accomplished what a U.S.-supported invasion, a crushing economic embargo, the collapse of the Soviet Union and any number of external and internal catastrophes could not: the removal of Fidel Castro from direct control over the people of Cuba. Suffering from failing health, Castro has finally ceded power after five decades. The apparent political demise of El Jefe offers a unique opportunity for the people of Cuba and for their closest neighbor to the north to pull out of a half-century spiral of enmity and antagonism.

Fidel is not the only Castro in Cuba, nor the only hard-liner; his brother Raúl has been the de facto ruler of the country for two years now. February elections elevated Raúl to the office of the presidency and other hard-liners to positions of greater power, muting expectations of rapid change. But Raúl has spoken publicly about the need for structural changes in Cuba, and is believed to favor more widespread economic reforms. His advanced age also suggests his rule will not be a long one, and a new generation of younger Cuban leaders may soon take on more responsibility.

Cuba is blessed with prodigious natural resources and a well-educated population, but is bedeviled by the same forces (including a brain drain of skilled professionals to other Western nations) that have brought low so many of its Caribbean neighbors. Should Cuba's internal security apparatus break down in the aftermath of any transfer of power from the Castros, Cuba and the United States could face an enormous wave of attempted immigration to the United States, straining American resources while further damaging Cuba's prospects for economic prosperity. Much as South Korea has done in preparation for the eventual fall of Pyongyang, so too must American politicians and diplomats work for a "soft landing" for Cuba in the coming years, helping its people make the transition from a socialist state to a market economy with a minimum of economic and political disruption.

A useful first step will be a measured easing of the American economic embargo, which has played just as much a role in the economic privation of Cuba as the most misbegotten of Castro's policies. It is also a relic of a bygone age, begun as a bulwark against socialist revolution but now little more than an expression of an irrational grudge. Worse, it has given Castro a raison d'être. Recent years have seen Canadian and European investment in the Cuban economy growing, while the vast resources of the Cuban-American community are not directed toward its own roots. Should the sitting president lift the embargo, there is no question that many Cuban-Americans would be outraged and express their dissatisfaction demonstrably. President Bush is in a unique position to make such a potentially unpopular choice, since his status as a lame duck gives him some freedom from traditional political pressures.

While it is important to recognize the legitimate grievances of Cuban exiles in Florida and elsewhere, the United States will need to make clear to any future Cuban government that the United States will not support efforts toward repatriation of land or economic assets and is willing to bury its historical grudges, much as we have done in recent years with the government of Vietnam.

The United States can also recognize the legitimate accomplishments of the Castro regime, including its achievements in education, health care and racial harmony. The Cuban people may seek capitalism's prosperity, but not at the expense of socialism's gains. Any careful transition to new economic structures should not repeat the mistakes the United States made in Russia and Eastern Europe after the cold war, endorsing an economic free-for-all but failing to support local social institutions. Changes in Cuba provide a chance for the United States to restore the international reputation so damaged by the war in Iraq. With Cuba, America can show that its seeming arrogance is matched by appropriate munificence.

John F. Kennedy, whose support for the failed Bay of Pigs invasion convinced Castro that the United States could not be trusted, nevertheless once spoke to the newly free nations of the world in words of particular pertinence now, promising that "one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny." Fidel Castro has long accused the United States of seeking to return Cuba to a colonial outpost of its imperialist ambitions. The actions we take toward Cuba in the next few years can be our chance to assuage similar reservations among the Cuban people.

This editorial originally appeared in ***America*** *on March 10, 2008.*

How Not to Preach

The Vatican has recently become a fount of advice on how to preach. Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel" gives tips on the Sunday sermon, and the Congregation for Divine Worship's new *Directory on Preaching* analyzes the nature of the liturgical homily. As a veteran of 60 years in the pews and 30 years in the pulpit, I would like to offer my own advice on how not to preach.

1. *It's all about you.* Keep the sermon strictly autobiographical. Your congregation is dying to know all about your last vacation. There's no need to discuss that pesky reading about Abraham and Isaac and the knife.

I recently heard a sermon about a priest's socks. Father explained how difficult it is to keep pairs of socks together. He noted his preferred detergent for washing socks and the advantages of using a clothesline over a dryer. He said there was a controversy over whether priests should wear all-black socks or whether they could add stripes. (News to me.) We kept waiting for the spiritual punchline. Was the lost sock like the lost sheep in the parable of the Good Shepherd? It remained a mystery. The sermon concluded with the revelation that he found doing the laundry difficult at times.

On a darker note, I once heard a sermon in which the preacher discussed the problem of resentment. The theme matched the Gospel, which featured the apostles' jealous squabbling among themselves. Warming to his subject, the preacher described his own resentment against his brother (the prize-winning athlete), his sixth-grade teacher (too critical) and then his dear mother (too distant). As we cringed into our missalettes, I wondered if Doctor Phil would rush from the sacristy to take over the bathos in the sanctuary.

You were not ordained to tell your own story. You were ordained to proclaim someone else's.

2. *Rely on the Holy Spirit alone.* There's no need to prepare.

One of the popular homiletic genres these days is the Magellan sermon. In the space of 20 minutes, the congregation is treated to a tour of the world as the preacher unloads a catalogue of random, unrelated thoughts. In one recent Magellan improvisation, we learned that Samuel heard a noise like a whisper, that we should be patient with the hearing-impaired, that the turnout for the Christmas bazaar was just great (applause), that recent events in the Middle East are disturbing and that we should be careful about what we post on Facebook. And, oh, there's a mistake in the bulletin. The second collection will be taken up for our music ministry, not for scholarships to the grade school.

You were not ordained to tell your own story.

Yes, you are overworked. Still, your parishioners have a right to a beginning, middle and end in your sermon. They hunger for one, clear, sustained insight into Scripture, the fruit of your prayer and study on the biblical lessons.

3. *Keep it light.* Always prefer the sentimental to the doctrinal. Don't bother the congregation with such complications as the Atonement. Keep it beige and soothing.

It was Easter Sunday in a packed church. The preacher began by telling us that Christian hope means "Tomorrow will always be more beautiful than today." We waited for the theological development. The resurrection of the body? Immortality? The last judgment? We received only more of the same magical thinking, closer to Hallmark Cards than to the Gospel according to St. Luke we had just heard.

Now permit me to offer two positive counsels to preachers.

First, fall in love with God's word in Scripture. Let the great hymn of creation, fall and redemption become your personal theme song. Walk around in the Bible. Pitch your tent in it. If possible, learn biblical Hebrew and Greek. You are giving your congregation a word of hope that no government and no psychological technique can provide, because it is a hope rooted in Christ's conquest of sin and death itself.

Second, love the people addressed by your sermon. A distinguished Protestant preacher once remarked that he began each week with an hour in his church. He walked up and down the aisle, imagining the various parishioners he would see on a typical Sunday. He asked God to show him how the sermon he was preparing could actually meet their particular needs and questions. It is in the persevering study of God's word and in this loving intercession for one's listeners that the Holy Spirit really begins to teach us how to preach.

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MUSIC | DAVID NANTAIS

SING, RAP, PRAISE

Teaching rock, hip-hop and religion

I dare speculate that few religion courses at Catholic universities cover "Pussy Riot's Theology," "Nit Grit 'Hood Theology" and the spiritual significance of pop star Lorde's ubiquitous tune, "Royals." These themes, however, resonate with students in a course I developed and taught at the University of Detroit Mercy.

It began in 2008, when I spent a very intellectually and musically stimulating weekend at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., with some fellow theologian-musicians. We played music and talked about God and discussed how these passions fit together in our lives. It's a topic I eventually tackled at book-length (see sidebar), and I began to think that the conversation might be a fruitful one to have with my students as well. In the fall of 2013, after my proposal for a new class had been accepted, 11 students registered for the class called "Rock, Hip-Hop and Religion." It was the perfect number of students for a course that relied on a lot of listening, both to music and to each other during discussions.

Serious academic attention to popular music and religion has grown significantly in recent years. Some professional theology and religious studies conferences include specialty groups in this area, and several scholars have delivered papers about the intersection of popular music and the sacred. At the meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America in 2011, for example, the theologian Michael Iafrate presented his paper, "'I'm a Human, Not a Statue': Saints and Saintliness in the Church of Punk Rock." Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., holds one of the most credible and stimulating conferences on religion and music in the United States every two years, and it has attracted a wide range of important thinkers who continue to add to the ever-growing corpus of work in this field.

Figuring out which books to use for my course, which articles to read and how much I needed to dive into historical theological ideas to buttress our class discussions was a very difficult task. I ultimately chose three books for the course (see sidebar). And I supplemented readings from these texts with a variety of articles from an array of sources like Rolling Stone, **America**, Books and Culture and The Chronicle of Higher Education.

The students were all expected to analyze three songs. The process unfolded like this: each student played a song for the class and then offered a five-minute analysis of the theological and spiritual themes in the song. This was not simply an exegesis of song lyrics but rather a more in-depth discussion of how the various parts of the song (rhythm, timbre, tempo, instrument choices, tone and, yes, lyrics) all contribute to communicating something about the "sacred."

The presentations were at first a bit superficial, but soon the students were able to integrate the reading material, become more facile with theological language and offer more substantive explanations. On a few occasions stu-

NEW EVANGELISTS? U2 performs in Milan, Italy.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ VALERIA73

dents became unexpectedly choked up while speaking about the songs—the emotional connection with the music could not be repressed by typical academic mores.

I soon learned which themes from the readings captured the imagination of these students. Three ideas were particularly important to them. The first was nit grit 'hood theology, as outlined by Daniel White Hodge in his book *The Soul of Hip Hop*. Hodge explains that in the face of racism, urban decay and diminishing opportunities for African-Americans, simplistic theological responses are not sufficient. Why ask God to bless us with more when so many have nothing? Why are innocent people being murdered while criminals are thriving?

Hodge points to the deceased hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur as one who professed a nit grit 'hood theology, even in the face of criticism from his community. He, like many in his generation, demanded a deeper analysis of complex social justice issues, showed a strong concern for those who are often forgotten and expressed an appreciation for building a sense of community in one's neighborhood. As Hodge states, "Let's pray about it" is an insufficient response. There must be action.

The second important theme was the role of religion and spirituality in the history of rock and roll, especially as represented by Motown records. I would have failed as a teacher of music and religion in the city of Detroit had I not organized a field trip to the Motown Museum, the home of the original Studio A, created by Barry Gordy. The young African-Americans who became the early stars of Motown came largely from an inner-city evangelical Protestant community. This is reflected in their singing style and the social justice themes of their songs—most notably in Marvin Gaye's classic album "What's Going On?"

The use of the tambourine, which plays a prominent role on several Motown hits, was borrowed from black church choirs. Motown also played an important role by recording numerous African-American religious and political leaders and releasing their speeches for the public. Most famous among these was an early version of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered in Detroit in 1963.

Finally, one task of this course was to help students reflect on how their musical tastes can be integrated with their spiritual practices and religious beliefs. One tool for this is the film "Taqwacore," a documentary about young adult Muslims who play in a punk rock band. The overarching theme of this film is the clash of cultures—immigrant parents attempting to preserve traditional customs and their "Americanized" children who explore what it means to be a part of a U.S. culture that fears them in the post-9/11 era.

These tensions result in plenty of frustration for the young Muslim-Americans, many of whom were the same age as my students, and the anger and aggression expressed in punk served as the perfect medium for them. Few if any of my students had to face the struggles of the young Muslim punk rockers portrayed in the film, but the dynamic of wrestling with the oft-competing messages of popular culture and traditional religious dogma is one they found familiar.

One of the persistent challenges of the course was in deciding how much historical and theological material to introduce. For example, if I play the song "Mothers of the Disappeared" from U2's 1987 masterpiece "The Joshua Tree" as an illustration of a song that addresses a particular social justice concern, I cannot help but delve into the controversy surrounding U.S. foreign policy in Central America in the 1980s and the injustices suffered by tens of thousands in El Salvador and elsewhere. That would logically lead to the Salvadoran martyrs (the church women and the Central American University Jesuits especially) and the history and role of liberation theology in shaping the Christian perspective on God's preferential option for the poor and suffering. Throughout the semester, my appreciation for my students' musical taste grew. And I was pleasantly surprised by the depth of analysis each of them offered about the music they loved—and the theology they found within it.

Further Reading on Rock and Faith

Rock-a My Soul, by David Nantais (Liturgical Press)

The Soul of Hip Hop: Rims, Timbs and a Cultural Theology, by Daniel White Hodge (InterVarsity Press)

Secular Music and Sacred Theology, edited by Tom Beaudoin (Liturgical Press)

Personal Jesus: How Popular Music Shapes our Souls, by Clive Marsh and Vaughan S. Roberts (Engaging Culture)

Your Neighbor's Hymnal: What Popular Music Teaches Us about Faith, Hope and Love, by Jeffrey F. Keuss (Wipf & Stock Pub)

Broken Hallelujahs: Why Popular Music Matters to Those Seeking God, by Christian Scharen (Brazos Press)

Call Me the Seeker: Listening to Religion in Popular Music, by Michael J. Gilmour (Bloomsbury Academic)

Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music, by Jeremy S. Begbie and Robert Johnston (Engaging Culture)

Rock and Theology blog archives: www.rockandtheology.com

DAVID NANTAIS *is an adjunct professor of philosophy and religious studies at University of Detroit Mercy and author of* Rock-a My Soul: An Invitation to Rock Your Religion *(Liturgical Press).*

FOLEY POETRY CONTEST

Poems are being accepted for the 2015 Foley Poetry Award.

Each entrant is asked to submit only one typed, unpublished poem on any topic. The poem should be 30 lines or fewer and not under consideration elsewhere. Include contact information on the same page as the poem. Poems will not be returned.

Please do not submit poems by email or fax.

Submissions must be postmarked between Jan. 1 and March 31, 2015.

Poems received outside the designated period will be treated as regular poetry submissions and are not eligible for the prize.

The winning poem will be published in the June 8-15 issue of **America**. Three runner-up poems will be published in subsequent issues. Notable entrants also may be considered for inclusion on our poetry site, americaliterary.tumblr.com.

Cash prize: $1,000

Send poems to:
Foley Poetry Contest
America Magazine
106 West 56th Street
New York, NY 10019

CLASS MATTERS

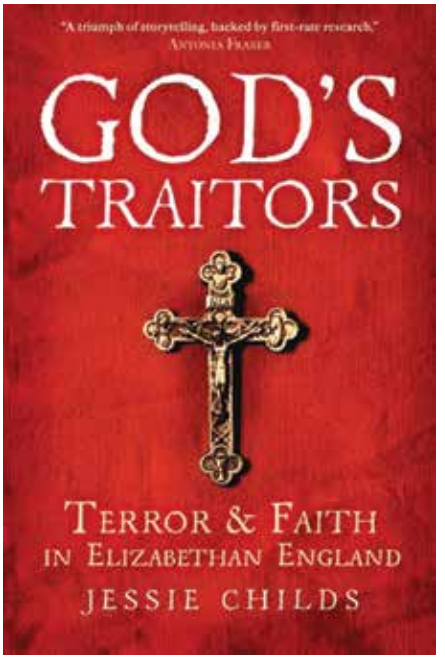
GOD'S TRAITORS
Terror and Faith in Elizabethan England

By Jessie Childs
Oxford University Press. 472p $29.95

As numerous books, films and television series in recent years have demonstrated, there is a fascination, both in the scholarly world and among the wider public, with the Tudor period of English history in general and perhaps with the Elizabethan era in particular. In the context of the fascinating and at times fanatical Europe of the 16th century, with the intersecting currents of the Renaissance, the Reformation and the age of overseas explorations and missionary outreach, England generally overcame certain insular tendencies and interacted with numerous continental developments.

Yet the Tudor response to the European Reformation(s) was particularly idiosyncratic. No other country witnessed such a see-saw as England, moving as it did from so-called "Catholicism without the pope" during the later years of Henry VIII, to the evangelical Protestantism of the brief reign of Edward VI, followed by the reinvigorated Catholicism of the even briefer reign of Mary and finally to the Protestant state church under the "supreme governor," Elizabeth I. Of particular importance, and unlike her half-siblings, Elizabeth had a long reign of almost 45 years, giving her regime the time, resources and pressure to implant if not impose a relatively permanent religious settlement on the majority of the population.

The response of the Catholic minority varied depending on time, place and circumstances. Jessie Childs has contributed to the growing scholarship on the Catholic Elizabethans with *God's Traitors: Terror and Faith in Elizabethan England*. Her interesting approach is to focus on a particular Catholic family, the Vauxes of Harrowden Hall in Northamptonshire, over a series of decades. This prominent family from the Midlands generally tried, like many of their co-religionists, to maintain dual loyalties: to the ancient Catholic faith



and the pope on the one hand, and to queen and country on the other. When this proved difficult or nearly impossible, many members of the family were willing to face a series of increasingly severe penalties, including potentially crippling fines.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out, as the author consistently does here, that persecution, however real and devastating it could be, waxed and waned depending on a range of factors, including the national and international political and religious climate, as well as the significant variables of class and gender. Being a woman in a man's world certainly had its disadvantages, but it could also afford "the weaker sex" some advantages and escape hatches that they could use to their benefit, as Eleanor, Anne and Eliza Vaux discovered. In fact, Queen Elizabeth herself sometimes shrewdly played the gender card!

With regard to distinctions based on class, Elizabethan society, as was the norm in the pre-modern world, was quite hierarchical, and both the nobility and gentry benefitted in various ways from their acclaimed exalted status. What a commoner could or might not get away with, an aristocrat often could. An intriguing example involved the plight of Henry Vaux in the 1580s. Facing crushing fines, he petitioned the crown for forbearance based on an appeal to conscience. Rather surprisingly, Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley, the queen's principal advisor, interceded for Lord Vaux. Burghley was known for his strongly anti-Catholic stance, but because of Vaux's noble status and their shared county connections, Burghley came to the rescue. As Childs aptly comments: "His sympathetic intervention serves as a reminder that no one was predictable in Elizabethan England and nothing was ever quite what it seemed."

In any event, crucial to the long-term survival of a recusant Catholic community was the pastoral and sacramental role of the clergy. While the secular clergy formed the sizable part of the Catholic priesthood in England, the Jesuits, while relatively small in numbers, exerted considerable influence on the mission as a whole and especially among the upper classes. Childs makes clear how much the Vauxes and the Jesuits depended on each other, the former for spiritual succor and the latter for financial assistance and protection, including often life-saving priest holes. Among the Jesuits, Henry Garnet, the superior of the mission, and John Gerard, perhaps the most successful of the missioners, were particularly well

connected with the Vaux circle of family and friends.

Yet even these connections were not always enough. Gerard was captured and tortured, though he managed a daring escape from the Tower of London and eventually went into exile. Garnet, after 20 years of service on the mission, was ensnared, probably unfairly, in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and suffered a traitor's death by being hanged, drawn and quartered. Childs correctly (and cleverly) characterizes Garnet and Gerard as manifesting, respectively, "circumspection and chutzpah."

Overall, this monograph incorporates a good range of primary and secondary sources, though one could always quibble about some significant sources that are not referred to. The author is up to date about many of the significant historiographical issues and debates, including revisionist views on the creativity of the (short-lived) Marian Catholic revival. Her views, however, concerning the Jesuits' mindset being largely tied to the "Counter" Reformation and Philip II's supposed "messianic vision" are too one-dimensional. Still, this is an insightful study of the plight of Elizabethan Catholics using the extended Vaux family as a lens through which to view the heroics and heartaches of being a religious minority in the late 16th century. This expansive case study tells us a lot about both "terror and faith in Elizabethan England."

ROBERT E. SCULLY, S.J., *is a professor of history and law at Le Moyne College. He is the author of* Into the Lion's Den: The Jesuit Mission in Elizabethan England and Wales, 1580-1603 *(Institute of Jesuit Sources).*

LÚCÁS CHAN

EVER ANCIENT, EVER NEW

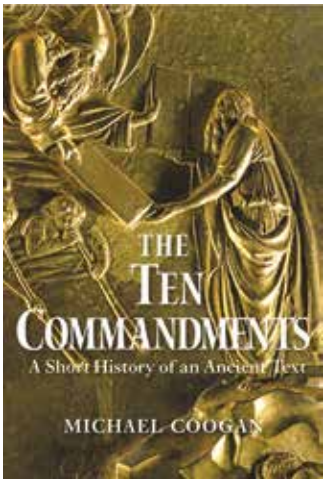
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
A Short History of an Ancient Text

By Michael Coogan
Yale University Press. 192p. $25

In the past 12 months, at least nine new books in English on the Ten Commandments have been published by Christian and Jewish writers, both biblical scholars and ethicists. One may wonder what makes the renowned biblical scholar and Harvard Old Testament/Hebrew Bible lecturer Michael D. Coogan's *The Ten Commandments* different from others.

First and foremost is his contention that there are three biblical versions of the Ten Commandments. Coogan's claim departs from the common view that there are two basic versions, one in Exodus 20, the other in Deuteronomy 5. This third version, which he finds in Exodus 34, is known as the Ritual Decalogue.

Another distinctive feature of Coogan's work is its aim to present a short history of this ancient text. Coogan differs from other writers who focus on the text's original meaning or its present implications. While he agrees with growing scholarly consensus that "[b]efore we can decide on the relevance for our time of a text that is several thousand years old, we should determine what it meant in its original setting, to its first audiences," Coogan believes that considering the historical (and literary) context as well as the ancient history of the text is the proper starting point.



In three chapters, Coogan gives the histories of the three versions of the Ten Commandments, tracing the background and treating questions that would occur to many readers, like the originality and plurality of the documents. Only then does he offer a brief exegesis of each commandment found in Exodus 20. Coogan moves on to describe how the Ten Commandments were received within the early Christian Church—the Decalogue alone was considered to be universal and hence binding on all Christians. The Jewish community countered this Christian claim, Coogan notes, by declaring all the commandments in the Torah equally binding.

Although the author does not offer a hermeneutics for the entire text, his discussion of the abridgements of the text since biblical times points to two major issues: the origin of the text and our right to edit or interpret the text. He argues that the Ten Commandments "could not have been divinely given" and that the contents are historically conditioned. His conclusion: "With its various versions and interpretations of the Decalogue, the Bible both forces us and even authorizes us to continue to do the same—to reformulate, to interpret, and even to ignore and to reject." In this way, a fluid rather than literal observance is needed, a point he draws in discussing selected subjects: making images of God, Sabbath observance, slavery and women's subordination to men.

These issues aside, the remote context of Coogan's work is the ongoing debate over displaying the Ten Commandments in public places,

like the Supreme Court, a controversy to which he returns at the end of his book. He points out that the Ten Commandments are the "primary text of Yahweh's contract, his covenant, with the Israelites" resembling an ancient treaty. For some, it is part of the "history of law" and part of the history of the Untied States. So Coogan floats the idea of a modified historical display of the code, without explicit reference to divine origin or formal religious contents.

Coogan's deeper concern, however, is that the North American controversy is really not about the Ten Commandments itself but about imposing certain human values claimed by religious groups. That, he argues, would contradict the "underlying values of the Bible" and of the Ten Commandments themselves, especially the value of equal respect of others, which are still valid and authoritative today.

His treatment of each commandment is both accurate and informative, and in line with the current scholarship (e.g., the actual meaning of Exodus 20:13 points to intentional killing). He also skillfully, through the lens of history, shows what they originally meant for Israelites and how they are related to other Hebrew and contemporary texts.

But treating this important ancient text in a concise book format is always a challenge for even excellent scholars. I find this to be problematic when Coogan explores the original meanings of the commandments. Why, for example, does he choose the version in Exodus 20 as the base text if he argues that the Ritual Decalogue is the oldest among the three? Or why does he spend so much time on the first four commandments, which concern respect toward God?

By contrast, some of the remaining commandments are treated too briefly to be satisfactory, especially the prohibitions on adultery and stealing. At

times he misses some necessary explanations. For example, in discussing the commandment against murder, Coogan refers without any explanation to those texts that talk about God's demand for total extermination of the entire enemy. We might also expect more substantial arguments to support his decision to use "kidnap" as an alternative translation for "steal" in Ex 20:15.

Finally, from a Catholic ethicist's viewpoint, Coogan's reflection on the contemporary meaning of the commandments may raise some concerns: on what grounds, for example, does he select his subjects for discussion? Moreover, when criticizing the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*'s view on sexual offenses, he seems to think that its source is singularly biblical and not also from the natural law tradition.

Still, much as Daniel Harrington, S.J., the late biblical scholar and longtime contributor to **America**, did in some of his later works, Coogan does us a great favor by introducing one of the world's most famous and yet least understood ancient texts in a very concise, accessible manner. Coogan's book would also serve as a fine complement to those recent ones more interested in the historical reception of the commandments or even a contemporary understanding of them and their relevance for us today, like Dominik Markl's *The Decalogue and Its Cultural Influence* and Rabbi Rifat Sonsino's *And God Spoke: Ten Commandments and Contemporary Ethics*.

LÚCÁS CHAN, S.J., *lectures in Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. He is the author of* The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life *and* Biblical Ethics in the Twenty-first Century: Developments, Emerging Consensus, and Future Directions.

J. J. CARNEY

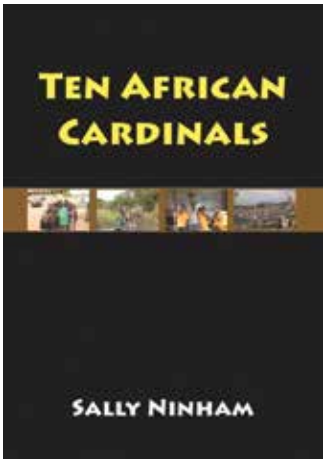
HASTY CONCLUSIONS

TEN AFRICAN CARDINALS

By Sally Ninham
Connor Court Publishing. 350p $29.95

The old maxim states that you should never judge a book by its cover. But in the case of Sally Ninham's *Ten African Cardinals*, the cover lends ample insight into the book's content. On the front are four miniature snapshots from Africa, mostly of children. On the back cover is a giant image of Sally Ninham herself. Likewise, *Ten African Cardinals* provides considerable insight into Dr. Ninham's personal encounter with Africa but considerably less insight into the complex reality of today's African Catholic Church or the men who lead it.

In this regard, *Ten African Cardinals* reads best as a personal memoir and "insider/outsider" travel narrative. Dr. Ninham's introduction describes her own "outsider" status in great detail. To summarize, she is a white, upper-middle class, highly educated wife and mother of five, a religious skeptic living in a secularized Australian context. She has undertaken the task of interviewing her polar opposites—10 African Catholic male church leaders serving deeply religious African societies. In the process of interviewing "her cardinals," visiting Africa and writing the book, Ninham experiences something akin to a spiritual awakening. By the end of her journey, she has become increasingly critical of her own post-1960s Western cultural assumptions. As she writes, "discovering the limitations in my thinking has been a grand adventure and a privilege. I have travelled into my own heart of darkness and back out into the light of Africa, trying to prove my worth as a writer and as a woman, but learning that the only thing that really matters is love."



Each of the main chapters of *Ten African Cardinals* adopts a similar structure. Dr. Ninham begins by offering a demographic and statistical profile of each cardinal's country before delving into a brief history of the local Catholic church. Ninham then narrates her dogged efforts to track down each coveted interview subject and (where applicable) her experience in the African country. Each chapter ends with a transcript of her interview with the respective African cardinal.

To be sure, Ninham's work includes many valuable insights. Drawing heavily from the late British Catholic historian Adrian Hastings, Ninham's opening chapter offers an accessible synthesis of Catholic history in Africa, explaining the church's remarkable 20th-century growth in terms of both Western modernization and African inculturation. Her conversations with Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala of Uganda and Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana reveal the captivating personalities of two dynamic postcolonial Catholic leaders.

Interviews with Cardinal José Marion Dos Santos and Archbishop Jaime Pedro Gonçalves of Mozambique offer fascinating personal insight into the Catholic hierarchy's mediating role in ending Mozambique's brutal civil war in the late 1980s and early 1990s. (The image of a Catholic bishop riding a motorbike into the

bush to negotiate with rebel leaders is a memorable one.) Even less conciliatory figures like Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria are drawn with full brushstrokes. As was true for many of Ninham's interview subjects, international immersion served a critical role in shaping Arinze's identity as a Catholic leader, even as these experiences produced a degree of cultural and geographic alienation from his own Nigerian roots.

Ninham's interviews are uneven, however. Her chapter on Cardinal Wilfrid Napier of South Africa largely ignores the local Catholic Church's engagement with apartheid in the late 20th-century, one of the more fascinating narratives in modern Catholic history. Her interview with Cardinal Robert Sarah of Guinea lacks depth, and the chapter on Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo of Congo should have been cut all together. Not only did Ninham fail to obtain an interview with Monsengwo, but her analysis of the Congolese war through the lens of Hutu power propaganda is dangerously misinformed. She spends much of her chapter on Cardinal Bernard Agré of Ivory Coast interviewing another local bishop, Raymond Ahoua. Ahoua is especially adept at putting Ninham on the defensive, helping to ensure that Ninham uncritically parrots Ahoua's views to a broader audience.

"The truths I assumed were self-evident about Africa were quite fairly, and indeed brazenly, depicted by Ahoua as an expression of arrogance, a mask for personal insecurity, fear and ignorance that derived from my Western, feminist origins." Again, one learns much here about Ninham's own intellectual journey, and her self-critical awareness should be commended. But the lingering question is whether Ahoua's own analysis is above reproach simply because he represents the "African other."

In her conclusion, Ninham moves too quickly to synthesize the voices of the African cardinals. Instead of reflecting on the evident theological and pastoral differences between figures like Arinze and Wamala, Ninham forces all of them into one metanarrative, arguing that Africa's Catholic cardinals have adopted "a single approach to human suffering and human struggle that derives from Catholic doctrine." Rhetoric trumps reality as Ninham descends into hagiography: "they [the cardinals] alone understand the extent of their challenges at home"; "all have taken brave stands to keep their governments honest"; "indeed they are beloved" by their populations. A more balanced conclusion would humanize rather than canonize, diversify rather than simply harmonize. In this regard, I would recommend Ian Linden's *Global Catholicism: Towards a Networked Church* (Hurst, 2012) for the reader looking for a more nuanced study of post-Vatican II Catholic leadership in Africa.

I should add in closing that I read *Ten African Cardinals* while journey-

ing through Rwanda. Building on my own past research on Catholic history in Rwanda, I had returned to the Land of 1,000 Hills to interview dozens of local Catholic leaders involved in post-genocide reconciliation work. It may be that Rwanda is not the best place to read Ninham's rosy portrait of Catholic leadership in Africa. There are remarkable Catholic leaders in Rwanda, but this country's history reveals that the church has, to quote one late Rwandan bishop, "feet of clay." It is tempting to uncritically accept glowing narratives like *Ten African Cardinals*, especially as a Catholic believer looking for good news beyond the beleaguered Western church. But the reality of African Christianity is far more complex and, dare I say it, more interesting.

J. J. CARNEY *is assistant professor of theology at Creighton University in Omaha and author of* Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era *(Oxford University Press, 2014).*

CLASSIFIED

Books

Charles de Foucauld: Journey to Tamanrasset, by Antoine Chatelard. http://www.brothercharles.org/wordpress/.

Religion & Civility (faith & reason) Together; www.wordunlimited.com.

Positions

PRINCIPAL. St. Ann School in Decatur, Ala., 3-K to 8th grade. A dynamic, Christ-centered leader is needed to serve as principal at St. Ann School (www.stanndecatur.org) in Decatur, Ala. This opportunity is best suited for a forward-thinking professional with innovative ideas to guide the student body and faculty toward excellence in academics, faith formation, service and technology. Relevant experience includes curriculum/instruction, faculty supervision, financial management and proven innovation in education. Candidate must be a practicing Roman Catholic. A master's degree in educational administration (or related field), and Alabama administrator certification (or eligibility) preferred. Fluency in Spanish is a plus.

Interested and qualified candidates should submit: (1) letter of introduction, addressing the requirements/skills listed above; (2) résumé; (3) names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of five professional references; and (4) statement addressing the value of today's Catholic elementary school, including its unique Catholic identity, to: Annunciation of the Lord Catholic Church, Principal Search Committee, 3910 Spring Avenue, Decatur, AL 35603; parish@annunlord.com; or fax to (256) 353-8994.

DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES AND PROFESSOR OF CATHOLIC STUDIES. The University of St. Thomas invites applications for the director of its Center for Catholic Studies. The person appointed to this position will also hold a tenured faculty position in the Department of Catholic Studies, to begin September 2015 at the rank of professor.

The Department and the Center for Catholic Studies comprise an integrated project at St. Thomas. While the Department focuses principally on degree-granting activities, the Center oversees the work of three major institutes and a quarterly journal. It also sponsors multiple lectures and faculty development programs. The director of the Center will be responsible for coordinating the work of these institutes as well as other forms of outreach within the university and the broader community. This will include work with benefactors and other development activities.

The Department offers an undergraduate major and minor as well as a graduate degree (M.A.) in Catholic studies. In our teaching and scholarship, we are committed to the complementarity of faith and reason across all academic disciplines, to sustaining and developing the richness and breadth of the Catholic intellectual tradition and to the general principles articulated in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. We seek candidates who share these commitments. For the uniquely qualified individual, the appointment may be made as the Koch Endowed Chair in Catholic Studies.

We are interested in individuals with competence in multiple elements of the Catholic intellectual tradition (such as theology, philosophy, history, literature or art). The successful candidate will have formal preparation in at least one of these disciplines but will be expected to give evidence of ability to teach and do scholarship across disciplinary boundaries.

The successful candidate will hold the Ph.D. prior to appointment and be eligible for promotion to or appointment at the rank of full professor. As a consequence, we expect to see evidence of superior teaching skills, leadership ability and achievement in scholarship that contributes in significant ways to the Catholic intellectual tradition. The standard teaching load is expected to be two courses (eight credits) per year, including opportunities to teach on the graduate level. There are also the customary nonteaching duties.

Applications should be submitted online at https://jobs.stthomas.edu and must include a curriculum vitae. You will be asked to copy/paste a position-specific cover letter into your application.

Applicants should complete the reference section of the application. No references will be contacted without first getting the permission of the candidate.

For further information, please contact: Dr. Terence Langan, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, University of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105; Ph: (651) 962 6001; t9langan@stthomas.edu

Established in 1885, the University of St. Thomas is located in the major metropolitan area of Minneapolis-St. Paul and is Minnesota's largest private university. Its 10,000 students pursue degrees in a wide range of liberal arts, professional, and graduate programs.

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Translator

Luis Baudry-Simón, translator (from English into Spanish): newsletters, articles, essays, websites, pastoral letters, ministry resources, motivational conferences, spirituality material, etc. Contact: luisbaudrysimon@gmail.com (815) 694-0713.

America (ISSN 000-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 5-12, 19-26, April 13-20, May 25-June 1, June 8-15, 22-29, July 6-13, 20-27, Aug. 3-10, 17-24, Aug. 31-Sept. 7, Dec. 7-14, 21-28) by America Press, Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019. Periodical postage is paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Circulation: (800) 627-9533. Subscription: United States $69 per year; add U.S. $30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. $69 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, P.O. Box 293159, Kettering, OH 45429.

The Work of the Kingdom

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), FEB. 8, 2015

Readings: Jb 7:1–7; Ps 147:1–6; 1 Cor 9:16–23; Mk 1:29–39

"Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also" (Mk 1:38)

Our evaluation of work is equivocal. A person without work is in a precarious situation, financially and emotionally, and being jobless can erode a sense of worth. But those lucky enough to have jobs seem always to be plotting when to retire. Although work is sometimes a burden, it is also necessary. The tension between the need to work and the desire to leave it behind is inherent in the human condition.

The late John Hughes wrote that "human work has been viewed as having a profoundly ambiguous nature throughout the Christian tradition. In the Scriptures apparently differing views lie side by side, and cannot be easily separated.... Work in some sense seems to be inseparable from the nature of humanity in its aboriginal goodness, yet this seems not to be necessarily the same as the work that is characterized by toil and struggle" (*The End of Work*).

Job reflects the relentless toil of human work in his answer to God: "Do not human beings have a hard service on earth, and are not their days like the days of a laborer?" Job gives voice to the negative sense of work as burden, but though work has a more positive dimension, the Sabbath shows us that work is ultimately relative to what Hughes calls the "higher reality of rest." The true human goal is life in God's rest, yet it seems this too requires some work.

A distinction can be made between the drudgery of daily work and the work for God's kingdom in the New Testament, but it is not the case that we can simply pronounce the work of this world unimportant. There is a goodness that inheres in the work of this world, and we must guard against two distortions of human work: that our work becomes an idol, or that we reject all work to become idle.

Perhaps we can see the goodness of work most fully in evangelization. The apostle Paul had to work in a trade to support himself as a tent-maker, according to Acts 18:3, but it was the work of the Gospel that was most significant for him.

Paul, however, refused to take payment for this work of preaching the Gospel, stating: "If I proclaim the Gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the Gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the Gospel." Paul's work was in the service of the kingdom that all might enter in and participate in God's eternal rest.

Jesus himself knew the goodness and necessity of work and rest, not just our true goal, to rest in contemplation of God, but in the need to rest from human toil. Jesus' goal on earth was to work for the establishment of the kingdom, and this is why we see his mission in the context of a balance between work and rest. After Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law in the Gospel of Mark, who resumes her own work of service immediately after she is healed, and after "he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons," he went to seek his own rest in "a deserted place, and there he prayed." Jesus too needed this time of re-creation.

Yet when Peter and the others tracked Jesus down—"hunted for him," says Mark—Jesus did not complain. Jesus responded, "let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." The New American Bible translation of Mark captures the Greek of this last phrase more closely, "for this purpose have I come." Jesus had work to do and it was essential that it get done.

We ourselves must seek a balance in our own lives, for our work here is necessary and good, but it is not our final purpose. Our final purpose is to enter into the kingdom, so that we might enjoy eternal rest in God's presence.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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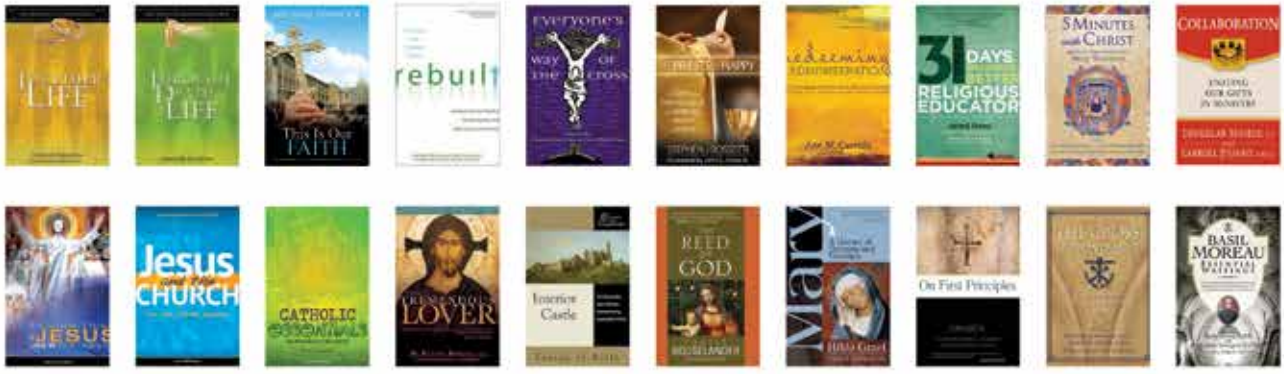

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