A Review of Religion, Politics & Culture

Commonweal

FEBRUARY 6, 2015

TERROR IN PARIS

William T. Cavanaugh
The Editors

An Interview with
Archbishop Blase Cupich

Theological Books Issue

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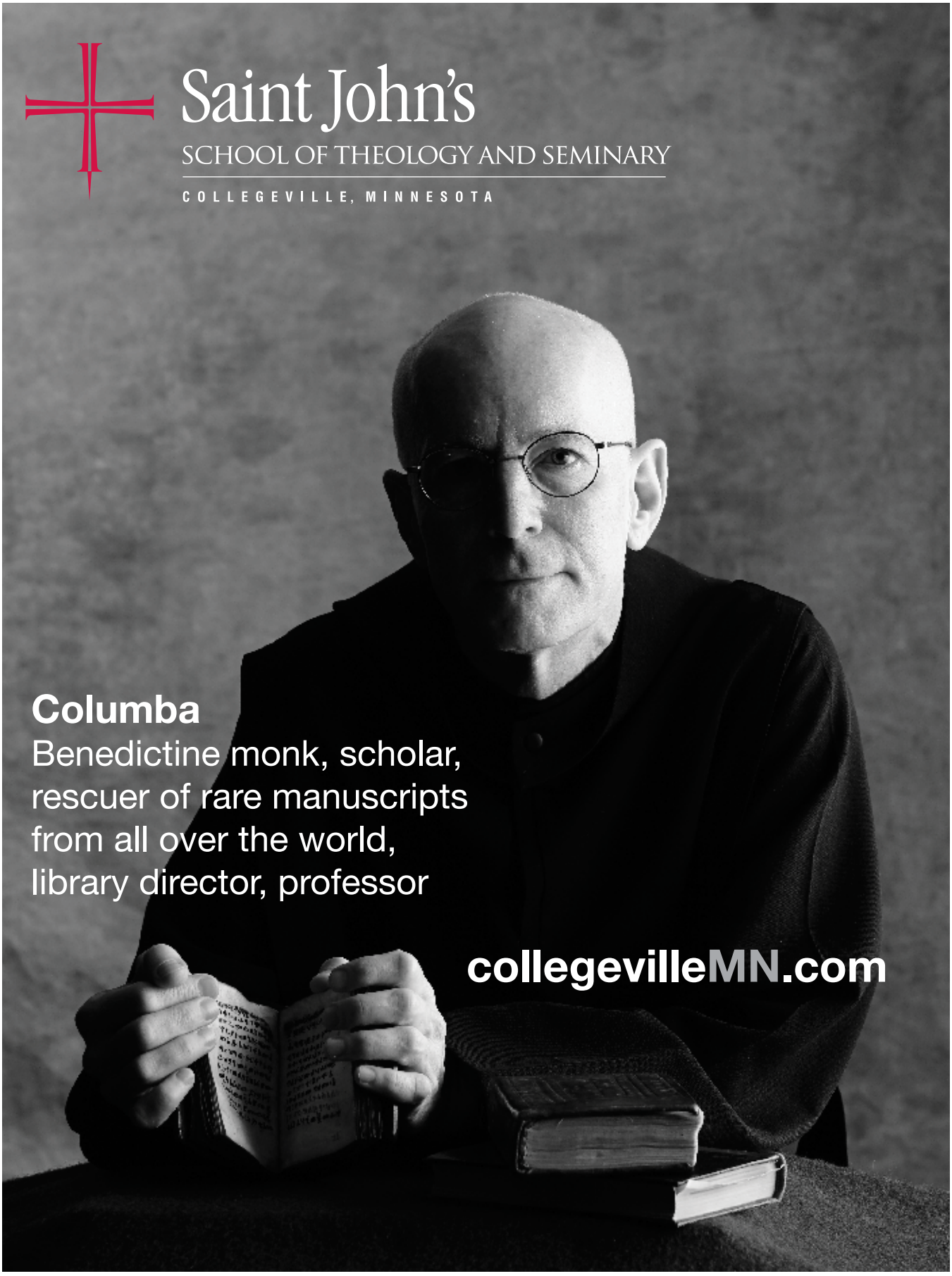
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LETTERS

Human error, borders, monsters, bells

PERFECTION

I had to respond to an aside in Paul Baumann's December 8 dotCommonweal piece regarding the shakeup at the *New Republic*, in which he describes its staff's loyalty as "about as common as a typo-free newspaper (or magazine)."

I have been reading the "dead tree" version of *Commonweal* for twenty years, and, as I often tell friends, there are only two publications in which I have yet to discover a typo: *Commonweal* and the *Onion*. Be proud! Happy New Year.

LAURIE ZELESNIKAR
Medford, Ore.

CORRECTION

I wrote to the editors about Thomas Albert Howard's article on Ignaz von Döllinger ("A Matter of Conscience," October 10, 2014). Thank you for publishing the letter (December 19, 2014), but you misspelled Worcester, Massachusetts, as "Worchester."

I checked my original letter and found that I did spell it correctly.

Because I am visiting professor of art history at the College of the Holy Cross, which is located in Worcester, this is embarrassing. Thank you.

JOYCE POLISTENA
Worcester, Mass.

THE EDITORS REPLY

Our apologies for embarrassing Joyce Polistena—and for bursting Laurie Zelesnikar's bubble.

BORDERLINES

Thank you for your wonderful editorial "Out of the Shadows" (December 19, 2014) on bishops' celebration of the liturgy on the Mexican border. You are indeed "calling attention to the human cost of the broken immigration system."

Most of our social problems (including the immigration mess) arise when our public officials, civil or ecclesiastical, do nothing. So it was quite refreshing to read about our bishops giving public witness to the Christian values we proclaim every day. We proclaim these values not only when we are in church but especially when we move from one border to another. Every day we are coming closer to living in a world without borders.

WILLIAM J. RADEMACHER
Las Cruces, N.Mex.

IN BAD COMPANY

Reading your editorial about former vice president Dick Cheney ("Shameless," January 9), I had the impression that you view him as an aberration in the American body politic. If only. In fact, he follows in a long line of patriotic zealots throughout U.S. history. In the past they spouted sayings like, "My country, right or wrong." They think their version of patriotism is the only valid one. People like that should not be merely shunned or ignored. They need to be confronted for the ethical myopia they espouse. It's the patriotic thing to do.

MICHAEL PETRELLI
Haddon Township, N.J.

THE RING OF TRUTH

Tom Quigley's article "The Bells of Balangiga" (January 9) suggests that if the United States returned the bells to the people of the Philippines, it might symbolically close an unfortunate chapter in our relationship. The seal on the bell that is shown in the article is the great seal of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans). The bells belong to the order, it seems. Perhaps simply returning the bells to the Franciscans would serve as a positive step in redressing that dark period of our history.

SIMEON DISTEFANO, OFM
New York, N.Y.

From the Editors

Call It Courage

In response to the events of September 11, 2001, the French newspaper *Le Monde* famously ran a headline declaring, "Nous sommes tous Américains" (We are all Americans). After the January 7 attack on the offices of the weekly satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, a parallel expression of solidarity soon began appearing on banners, public monuments, and social media: "Je suis Charlie." Never mind that many of those who repeated these words—including many Americans—had never seen the publication, and would likely find it offensive if they did. Even if the slogan seemed a little too easy, the solidarity was genuine. In targeting *Charlie Hebdo* for having published irreverent cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, the terrorists, Cherif and Saïd Kouachi, not only attacked a legendary journalistic institution, well known in France if not elsewhere; they also attacked a principle central to all liberal democracies: the freedom to speak one's mind, to write and, in this case, draw freely, without fear of being either locked up or gunned down.

As the theologian William T. Cavanaugh points out in this issue (page 8), not all victims of terrorism are heroes, and there's nothing especially heroic in giving offense just for the fun of it, even if, like *Charlie Hebdo*, one does so indiscriminately. But whether one finds the publication's special brand of lewd iconoclasm funny or blasphemous or both—*à chacun son gout*—one can admire its staff for their willingness to go on doing what they knew might get them killed, for refusing to let zealots armed with Kalashnikovs determine the boundaries of permissible discourse. Ross Douthat of the *New York Times* put it well when, after conceding that "a society's liberty is not proportional to the quantity of blasphemy it produces," he went on, "If publishing something might get you slaughtered and you publish it anyway, by definition you *are* striking a blow for freedom, and that's precisely the context when you need your fellow citizens to set aside their squeamishness and rise to your defense."

Not everyone has been ready to do so. One of the least edifying responses to the carnage came from the Catholic League's William A. Donohue, who suggested, before the blood was dry, that the editor of *Charlie Hebdo* had been partly responsible for his own death, and that it was not courage but narcissism that led him and his colleagues to persevere, even after their office was firebombed in 2011. These comments were, even by Donohue's standards, remarkably obtuse. Then again, if you make a comfortable living stoking sectarian resentments, what *do* you say about a story like this one?

Some worry that the French will overreact to the coordinated attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher grocery store, which together left seventeen people dead in addition to the three terrorists. In the following week, there were at least sixty threats and attacks directed at Muslims in France. As it cracks down on domestic terrorist networks, the French government will also have to protect and reassure its Muslim population, most of whom were appalled by the violence committed in the name of their religion.

Some worry that France's allies, including the United States, will also overreact—or react in the wrong way, by succumbing to the kind of hysteria that allows unscrupulous politicians to draw their countries into unnecessary wars. Within days of the attacks, prominent Republicans in Washington were lining up to tell the media how this just goes to show what they've been saying all along: that we need to return to Bush-era interrogation and detention policies (Sen. Lindsey Graham); that President Obama is allowing ISIS to thrive (Sen. John McCain); that the president has lulled Americans into a false sense of security (Sens. Susan Collins and Marco Rubio). Both the timing and the content of these remarks were opportunistic. It may be too soon to say what the events of January 7 portend for Europe and the United States, but it is already much too late to try to vindicate the previous administration's disastrous response to 9/11.

That said, there is also a risk of *under*reacting to this latest outbreak of violence, by treating it as if it were an isolated event rather than part of a much larger pattern. A few weeks earlier, twenty-three people were injured in Nantes and Dijon when two "lone wolf" terrorists drove their vehicles into crowds of Christmas shoppers. Around the same time, an Islamicist took eighteen hostages in a Sydney café; two of them were killed. Two months before that, a down-at-heels Muslim convert killed a Canadian reservist at the National War Memorial in Ottawa. The list goes on. Some of these attacks may have been planned and funded by terrorist organizations in the Middle East; others appear to have been alarmingly spontaneous. But they were all inspired by the same poisonous ideology, which turns alienated and insecure young people into suicidal jihadists. It is no good pretending this ideology will disappear or cease to afflict us if only the *Charlie Hebdo*s of the world can be persuaded to exercise a little more tact and self-restraint. The groups behind these attacks are demanding vengeance or submission, not better manners. ■

January 20, 2015

Fr. Nonomen

True Confession

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Forty-seven years. At first, I didn't think I'd heard her correctly, even though we sat face-to-face in the quiet church. She said it again: "It's been forty-seven years since my last confession."

It never fails to thrill me when someone decides to give this sacrament another shot after such a long time away. I am respectful of the courage it takes to overcome the nervousness and anxiety. I am humbled by the fact that he or she *chose* this church and *this* priest. I am aware of the beautiful and complex fragility of the human being who sits in front of me, and I am awed by the Spirit that never gives up, the Spirit who ceaselessly urges us closer to the divine. All of this causes me to ask the first question I always ask. Right after a heartfelt word of welcome (and a reminder to take a deep breath!), I ask: "Why now? Why tonight? What was it about today that would bring you here after so many years?"

I used to expect that something tragic had just happened to impel a person to seek a priest with a stole, perhaps some sort of loss or a grim medical diagnosis. That is almost never the case. In practically every instance, revisiting the sacrament is simply something a person has been considering for a while, sometimes years. Then something catches their attention, like the Lenten campaign that stirred the woman mentioned above. The campaign is the brilliantly straightforward idea that during the weeks of Lent, the doors of every church in the diocese are open every Wednesday night from eight until ten for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Just walk in.

Like many others before her, that woman did just that. In these souls, who are mostly searching for a place to talk about God and faith, there are some lessons for the church. First, reports of the death of the Sacrament of Reconciliation are greatly exaggerated. True, there are no longer long lines of people waiting for a quick absolution on Saturday afternoons. Or at wedding rehearsals! What is more common is the uncomfortable, and instantly recognizable, look on the face of a parent attending a formation session for a child's first

Reconciliation. The look betrays the fact that the parent never darkened the confessional a second time after being initiated into the sacrament as a child.

Yet my experiences Wednesday evenings in Lent have convinced me that the sacrament is still very much alive. It still has a vital pulse, but you have to look for it in new places and perhaps speak of it using new language. For instance, weekends are precious family time for young families, since the rest of the week is taken up with hectic commuting schedules and after-school activities. As a consequence, going to Reconciliation in the middle of a Saturday afternoon makes little sense. So why not offer the sacrament on evenings during the week? You will be surprised by who shows up. People often stop in to church for a little quiet time to shake off the stresses of the job just before going home. If a priest is available he can provide an invitation to "sacramentalize" that time. The result is often a way of reconnecting life to a sense of God and faith.

Also, I've worked with many counselors and therapists over the years who have directed their patients toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The ritual can be powerfully adapted to speak to a variety of needs, including twelve-step recovery programs, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and issues of grief and loss.

I should be clear that I'm not referring here to a "say one Our Father and two Hail Marys" sort of confession. The celebration of the sacrament that I have in mind is more about spiritual direction and tracing the areas of growth and the lines of grace in a person's life. Not all priests are skilled at facilitating that encounter, but I believe that every diocese has at least a few who possess the compassionate, healing nature of Christ that is fundamental to the sacrament. We would all do well to seek them out, receive their blessing, and ask their advice about this still-evolving practice. Maybe that would result in fewer fifty-year gaps between confessions and a holier, healthier church. ■

Fr. Nonomen *is the pastor of a suburban church. He has been a priest for more than twenty years.*

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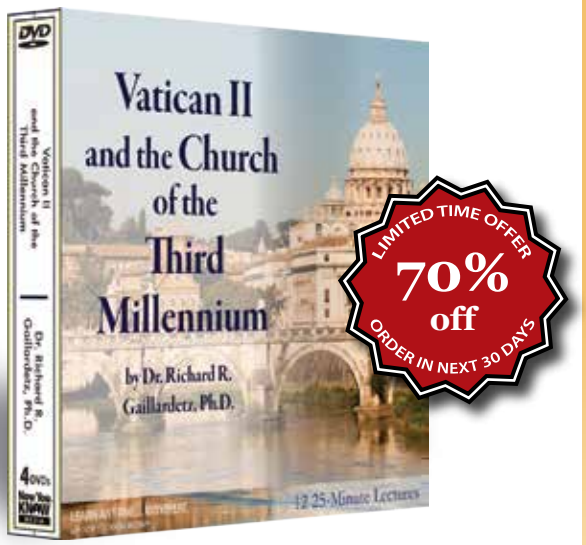

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William T. Cavanaugh

Victims, Not Heroes

MOURNING THE DEAD WITHOUT GLORIFYING *CHARLIE HEBDO*

The massacres in Paris were horrific, and people are rightly scared and outraged. Nothing justifies the slaughter, and the Catholic League's Bill Donohue is dead wrong to claim that the editor of *Charlie Hebdo* is partly to blame for "the role he played in his tragic death." Stéphane Charbonnier and the others who were killed were victims of an evil terrorist act (as were those murdered at the kosher Hyper Cacher supermarket), and to suggest they somehow contributed to their own deaths is to go too far toward justifying the killing.

In the reaction to the massacre, however, those who died at *Charlie Hebdo* have been claimed not only as victims but as heroes and martyrs for free speech and tolerance. This makes me uneasy. Not every victim is a martyr, and one does not become a hero simply by offending people. *Hustler*'s Larry Flynt did not make himself a hero of free speech by running cartoons of women being gang raped as "entertainment."

People who defend the right of people to offend, on the other hand, sometimes do act heroically. Some might claim the ACLU as heroes for defending the right of neo-Nazis to march in the heavily Jewish town of Skokie, Illinois. No decent person, however, would claim Frank Collins and his pathetic band of Nazis as heroes for trying to provoke the citizens of Skokie.

As the Skokie case illustrates, the right to offend is rarely as clear-cut as defenders of free speech make it sound. A friend of mine who lived in Skokie for years has remarked on how odd it is that you can march down the middle of the street brandishing swastikas and chanting anti-Semitic slogans, but you can't smoke a cigarette within thirty feet of a public building. The difference between the two acts can be explained in terms of the difference between speech and acts—or "names" and "sticks and stones"—but even liberal societies recognize that some kinds of speech can break bones. At all levels of society there are sanctions against "hate speech." Although Germany today is a liberal democracy, it is illegal to march there under the Nazi banner, because some kinds of speech have real consequences.

The editors of *Charlie Hebdo* themselves recognized the importance of some limits. In 1996, they gathered 170,000 signatures on a petition calling for the right-wing National Front party to be banned. In 2000, journalist Mona Chollet was fired from the magazine after protesting an article by editor Philippe Val in which he called Palestinians "non-civilized." In 2008, Val fired veteran cartoonist Siné over an article deemed anti-Semitic.

Such limits, however, did not seem to apply in other cases. *Charlie Hebdo* published cartoons depicting the prophet

Muhammad in pornographic poses, nuns masturbating, a black cabinet minister as a monkey, and the three persons of the Trinity locked in a homosexual orgy. They did not just lampoon Muslim terrorists à la the *Onion*, whose first post-9/11 issue hilariously declared "Hijackers Surprised to Find Selves in Hell." *Charlie Hebdo* attacked Muslims as such, as well as Christians and many others. In a liberal society, they certainly have the legal right to do so. To hold them up as heroes and martyrs for tolerance, however, seems acutely inappropriate.

Tolerance is not only a legal principle that leans against criminalizing unpopular forms of speech. Tolerance is also claimed by liberal society as a virtue, a habit of respect for the deeply held convictions of others, even those very different from one's own. But the banner of tolerance today is ironically being claimed by those, like historian Timothy Garton Ash, who are insisting that the offensive cartoons of Muhammad be republished as widely as possible, lest the terrorists be seen to have "won."

Defenders of free speech often attribute to Voltaire the famous sentiment, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Muslims might be excused for being astonished at people who sneer at the world's great faith traditions but declare themselves ready to die for Nazis, pornographers, and bigots. This is not the best that the Western tradition has to offer. If we want peace, we should mourn the victims of violence and reject the totalitarian impulse implicit in terrorism. But in doing so, we must not glorify contempt for the non-secular "other," those many Muslims, Christians, and Jews who do not think that blasphemy, racism, and pornography are something to celebrate. ■

William T. Cavanaugh *is professor of theology at DePaul University.*

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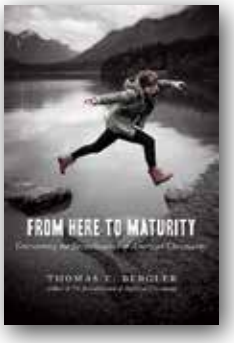

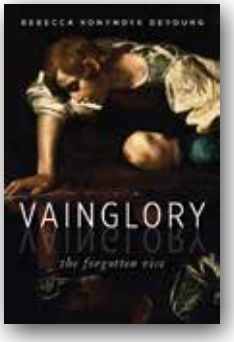

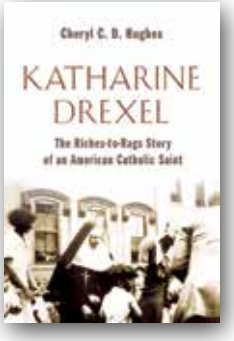

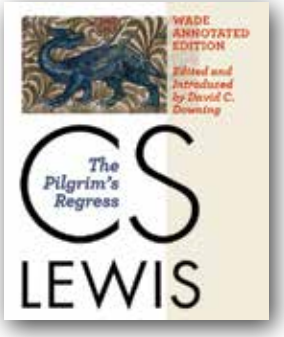

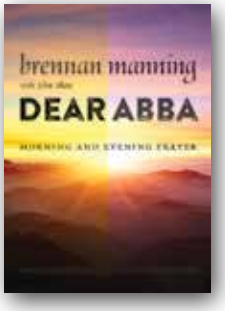

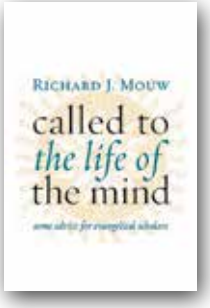

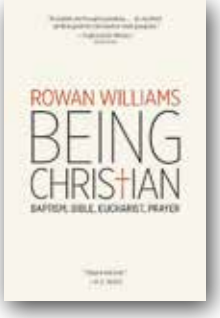

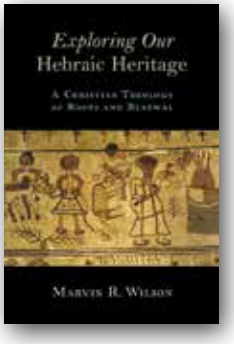

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A Listening Church

An interview with Archbishop Blase Cupich

Grant Gallicho

In November 2014, Blase Cupich succeeded Cardinal Francis George to become the ninth archbishop of Chicago—the nation's third-largest diocese. It was Pope Francis's first major episcopal appointment in the United States. Cupich had previously been the bishop of two much smaller dioceses: Spokane, Washington, and Rapid City, South Dakota. In 1975, he was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Omaha, Nebraska, where he was pastor of two parishes before being made bishop of Rapid City in 1998. Archbishop Cupich has served on several committees, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Ad Hoc Committee on Scripture Translation, as well as the Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People, which he chaired from 2008 to 2011. In December, Grant Gallicho spoke with the archbishop in Chicago. This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

GRANT GALLICHO: It has been about a month since you became archbishop of Chicago. What has surprised you most since you arrived?

BLASE CUPICH: I'm not easily surprised. A pleasant surprise has been the consistently high quality of the presbyterate here. There is a unique character to Chicago priests. They have been the resource for a lot of national movements, organizations—such as Catholic Extension [a charitable organization that invests in poor mission parishes], which I'm the chancellor of. That is a heritage that continues today, and it has not been diminished in any way by the diversity of the presbyterate, a diversity that has grown. I was recently at the shrine for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Hispanic priests who were part of that celebration are well loved, high quality, very pastoral. I visited a Hispanic parish, a Polish parish, and an African-American parish, and again I saw the high quality of the priests. Sometimes in presbyterates, there's a spottiness to the pastoral ministry. Not here.

GG: One of the first questions you were asked after it was announced that you would become archbishop was, "What is your agenda?" Your response was that you wanted to listen to the needs of Chicago Catholics. What have you been hearing?

Archbishop Blase Cupich at his installation Mass on November 18, 2014.

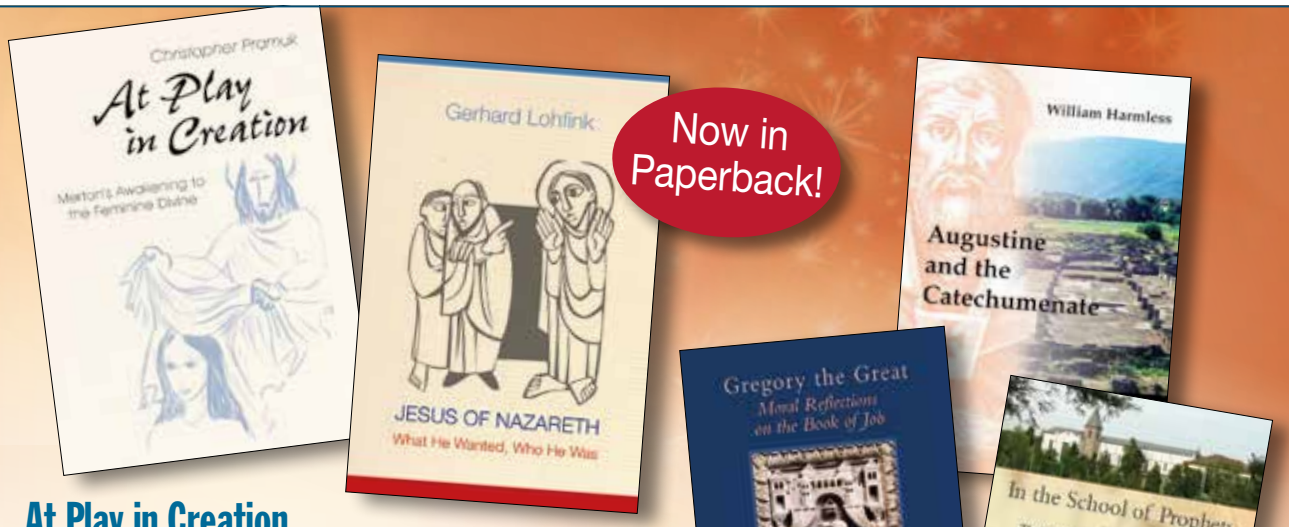
CNS PHOTO / CHARLES REX ARBOGAST, REUTERS

BC: People are responding to this opportunity of transition with excitement about things that can be done. But that excitement is not just about the transition here in Chicago, but about what Pope Francis is doing. I'm moving along on the crest of the wave that he has created. That's to my advantage, because there is a new enthusiasm, an awareness of what it means to be church. The fact that the media has tied my wagon to his horse has been very helpful because there is a way in which the Holy Father is opening us to look at how the church can be of service to the world. That's something I've always believed. People ask me whether I like what the pope is saying. I say, "Yeah, but I've been saying this for forty years as a priest." The real enthusiasm that people have for the life of the church and for the moment of transition in this archdiocese is tied in many ways to what the pope is doing.

GG: These are leaner times for the Catholic Church in the United States. The Archdiocese of New York is in the middle of another painful round of parish closings. Closer to home, your predecessor Cardinal Francis George recently closed several Catholic schools. A December *Chicago* magazine article surveyed local Catholics and found fewer of them attending Mass than ever before. Of course the church is about more than just keeping up numbers. But is there anything that can be done—is there anything a bishop can do—to reverse this trend? Or is the church just managing decline?

BC: First of all, whether it's in New York or here, there are

Grant Gallicho *is an associate editor of* Commonweal.



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—From the introduction by Mark DelCogliano

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demographic changes that we can't ignore. It's a complex scene. We have various areas within the Archdiocese of Chicago where birthrates are down, where people have moved out, and those neighborhoods have changed dramatically. Another part of it is that a lot of people have been impacted either by the sexual-abuse scandal or by the erosion of their spiritual life by secularism. But it's also tied to a growing trend of people not wanting to identify with communities or organizations. Volunteerism is down. That cultural shift is part of the equation of declining church attendance.

There are, however, some targeted things we can do. For instance, I think people will take notice that we are being good stewards when we are not afraid to make hard decisions about reconfiguring parishes and schools so that we use limited resources in a way that's going to benefit the most people. Good stewardship is very important. We shouldn't be afraid to make the hard decisions because people like good stewardship.

The other piece of this is finding ways to bind up the wounds of people, to reach out to those who have been alienated from the church for one reason or another—and be very programmatic about finding ways to invite them back. When it comes to young people, we should challenge the tendency in society to want to go it alone. I think of the scene in Robert Bellah's book *Habits of the Heart* in which a woman called Sheila is asked about her own system of beliefs, and she calls it "Sheilaism." We can challenge that. The way to do it is not by saying, "You're not going to Mass and so there's a problem." Rather, we can say, "We have an opportunity to better society and to better the common good. We work for the poor. Come and work for the poor with us."

Pope Francis recently met with the Pope St. John XXIII Community, which was created in the 1960s to address the problem of young people who were alienated from the church. What this group did was to say to them, "We're not going to bug you about church attendance. But here are the poor. Let's work for those who are disabled." This has been a public association of the faithful for almost fifty years. Pope Francis celebrated their work. So there are many ways we can do it.

What the pope is about—and what we have to be about—is not a culture of confrontation, but a culture of encounter. That's what took place with regard to the decision to renew diplomatic relations with Cuba. My father always said that you can find something wrong with anybody. But that doesn't get you anywhere. You've got to encourage the good that's there.

GG: The first Sunday Mass you celebrated following your installation was at St. Agatha, a parish that has been wounded by revelations about the now-laicized abuser Daniel McCormack. In the homily of your installation Mass, you spoke about the need to rebuild trust broken by bishops who have mishandled abuse cases. You said that holding bishops accountable is a "sacred duty." Every time I return to Chicago, my hometown, I'm struck by how shaken local Catholics remain over the McCormack case. According to that *Chicago* magazine survey, the issue local Catholics are most concerned about is sexual abuse. But when it comes to accountability for bishops, a lot of people still wonder: Where is that happening, or how might that happen?

BC: I know that this is a very important topic that is going to be decided soon by the Holy See and the pope's sexual-abuse commission, headed by Cardinal Seán O'Malley. In November, the cardinal gave an interview on *60 Minutes* and indicated that this has to be part of the equation. It is part of our good stewardship in terms of governance. There has to be a way in which we are held accountable. We're held accountable for financial mismanagement, for personal morals, but we also have to be held accountable when it comes to protecting the vulnerable under our care. So I'm fully supportive of what Cardinal O'Malley said on *60 Minutes*.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops did, however, in 2002, pass a resolution about our commitment to mutual accountability. There has to be some mechanism by which the Holy See triggers that too. It's not just our part, but the universal church has to deal with this.

Let me say something too about folks who are really shaken, as you said. It is a healthy sign that they're shaken. We should be shaken. We should not diminish or dismiss it as unimportant. That should say something to us. There's a healthy sensitivity about what's right and wrong. Maybe there was a past era in which people would say, "Well, you know, kids will bounce back" or "It really doesn't harm them." But there is maturity—a spiritual maturity—and a social awareness people come to that allows them to be shaken. And that's good. We should tell people, "You should be shaken by this." We all should be shaken by this—so that this never happens again.

GG: Another theme of your installation Mass homily was the plight of the immigrant. Why is there such persistent political and cultural gridlock on this issue? What is the church's role in helping the country break free of that?

BC: Some people are afraid of being overrun because our borders do not seem to be secure. In this era of terrorism, that is a concern that people have. We do have to be a country that abides by its laws and secures its borders. Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles wrote a beautiful book called *Immigration and the Next America*, in which he was very sympathetic to that. Yet at the same time a lot of people are ignoring the fact that the folks who have come here have been invited here—maybe not overtly, but in terms of creating a whole system of labor that no one else wants to do.

I lived in eastern Washington the past four years, and I can tell you the growers would not be able to continue their business without people who come here—even without documentation—to pick the vegetables and the fruit. We're

There is no moment in time that can be so idealized that it undermines the idea that the tradition is a living one. It is a living tradition not because of anything we say, but because the risen Christ is always doing something new in the life of the church.

not talking about people who just want to come in and violate our laws. We have invited them by creating this market for employment, and we have to own that. So how do you address all those concerns, including the aspirations of people, which God has given to them, to better their family life?

The other part of the problem is that some immigrants have experienced violence in their countries. And why? Because of gangs. And why gangs? Because of drugs. Who's giving them the money for the drugs and the guns? We are. I'm really surprised that religious and civil leaders have not spoken more strongly to condemn recreational drug users who are in fact funding the violence that people who come to this country are trying to escape. That's a story that has not been told. We have a responsibility to raise our voices about that.

GG: As you mentioned, the pope speaks often about the need to foster a culture of encounter and accompaniment. This seems key to his idea of church—a church that goes out of itself and should not fear the discomfort that entails. How is that approach changing the temperament of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops?

BC: Institutions are constitutionally prone to protecting themselves, and being conservative in that sense. There are any number of forces in our society today that erode institutional life. We can't be naïve about that. There are those who would like to truncate the freedom of religion—especially of the Catholic Church, given its footprint in society. At the same time, we can't let that drive our agenda. That's what the business of "Be not afraid," which John Paul II said, is about. We have to be mission-oriented.

In the readings for the Feast of the Assumption, Mary goes off to the hill country to visit Elizabeth, and the image that one comes away with is that this dragon—mentioned in the first reading from Revelation—is chasing Mary. But Mary is not directed by the dragon's pursuit. In the Gospel we hear that she is directed by her desire to help Elizabeth. The church has to use that image of itself. The trajectory of our pilgrimage is not going to be determined by an escape from forces that are out to harm us. It has to be a trajectory that is determined by helping people. That's why the pope said we can't be a self-referential church.

GG: The ethic of accompaniment seems to have guided the pope's design of the recent Extraordinary Synod on the Family. Some bishops expressed some confusion about that meeting—whether it was over the media's coverage of the synod, or what actually took place.

BC: The media is not to blame at all. I think the media reported what actually took place. What really took place at the synod was that a majority of the bishops voted for all the proposals that were there in the final summary document. And I think Cardinal Timothy Dolan said that at the November bishops meeting. It's true that three of the paragraphs [about divorce and gay people] did not get two-thirds majority support, but they got more than a majority. That's what's new. That's the story. Those hot-button topics had been highlighted, and the majority of synod bishops voted for proposals that said we need to consider aspects of these issues.

The pope has a firm belief that the spirit of the risen Lord is working in our midst and is alive in the hearts of people—and we cannot squelch that voice. We have to look for ways to listen to how the Lord is working in the lives of people. That's why the pope said to the synod fathers, "Don't come to the synod and say 'You can't say that'"—because it may be the spirit of Christ who is calling us to say these things. And we have to listen to that.

GG: The Vatican has developed another document for the world's bishops in advance of next October's synod, asking them for more input from the people in the pews. How do you intend to implement that here in Chicago?

BC: I have met with my archdiocesan women's council, the presbyteral council leadership, and my archdiocesan pastoral council. I gave them the *relatio* of the synod [the summary document] and asked them to propose a way in which there can be an effective—not necessarily widespread—consultation with their various constituencies, so that I can be informed, and our priests can be informed to speak articulately to our people. That will help me respond to the Holy See. It will also help me while talking with my brother bishops about this, since we are probably going to address this at our June meeting.

What I did last year in Spokane I want to do here too. We're going to have a day-long presentation for priests on two things: First, what are the canonical issues here? A good canonist will tell you that there are multiple ways in which we can be sensitive to our people's needs. Second, we have to unpack this notion of the theology of the family. Cardinal Walter Kasper gave a talk about this to the cardinals last year, which has been published as a book called *The Gospel of the Family*. In Spokane,

I gave all my priests a copy. Then I brought in a priest who knows Cardinal Kasper's theology quite well, Msgr. John Strynkowski, and he helped them understand what Kasper is saying.

I think people are making a mistake about Cardinal Kasper's book. They're only looking at the fifth chapter [which proposes that some divorced and remarried Catholics might be readmitted to Communion]. He has four other chapters about the theology of the family and marriage that are immensely rich, and that we have to attend to. It's only then that you can begin to look at his proposals, which are pretty narrow in terms of their possible application.

GG: The synod deliberations also raised underlying theological questions about doctrine. What do you think the synod process itself says about the nature of church teaching?

BC: Ours is a living tradition. It always has been. There is no moment in time that can be so idealized that it undermines the idea that the tradition is a living one. It is a living tradition not because of anything we say, but because the risen Christ is always doing something new in the life of the church. In Pope Francis's *Evangelii gaudium*, there is a whole section in which he talks about the idea that Christ is always doing something new in the lives of his people as he accompanies them.

I taught liturgical theology for a number of years, and the point that I made early on to my students was: Imagine what it took for the early church to change the way it celebrated the Eucharist. This is evident in the Pauline and Lucan narratives. At the beginning, there was a blessing cup, then came the breaking of the bread. Then they had the full meal, and then the second cup. And all of a sudden—we see this in Corinthians—they decided that the meal portion had to come out because it was a source of division within the community. So they collapsed the breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup, without the meal. Just think of the imagination it took, and the change that had to take place spiritually and culturally, for them to remove the Eucharist from that meal setting. That shows you there is a living tradition here.

It's the same thing with regard to moving from Greek to Latin. That was a big shift. Greek was a sacred language. Then you have this vulgar Latin—that's why we call it the Vulgate. Take, for another example, the circumcision issue. So it is a living tradition, but what that reveals isn't so much about the ideas we come up with. It's about how we're sensitive to the spirit of the risen Christ moving in our midst, creating something new in the life of the church. That's the humility that we're called to—and that's the conversion we're called to.

The pope has said that this is a moment in which we are all called to conversion. That's also true for the leaders of the church. Are we so tied to and comforted by a particular way in which we've operated that we have grown immune to the grace of Christ's newness? That's a very important question for us. What kind of conversion do we have to have in our lives as leaders in this moment?

GG: The pope will visit Philadelphia in September for the conclusion of the World Day of Families. What do you expect to see, given American Catholics' vastly different views on some of Francis's signature issues, such as immigration and economic justice?

BC: Maybe there are voices who don't agree with the pope on Cuba, on immigration, on the way he reads the economy. But if you talk with the people in the pews and others, their opinion of him is overwhelmingly positive. There is pushback from different sectors. I see some Catholics who are even criticizing the move to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba. They're not overtly criticizing the pope for his involvement in this. But the pope's fingerprints are all over this. It's clear that he was instrumental in making it happen. If a poll were done today, it would show that the vast majority of Catholics are euphoric over this Holy Father. So I think his visit will be a great moment for the Catholic Church in this country. ■

Right the First Time

Benedict XVI on Communion for the Remarried

William McDonough

In recent years Pope Benedict XVI has been overseeing the publication of his *opera omnia*, or collected works. Assisted by the current prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Benedict is republishing, under the name Joseph Ratzinger, all his theological writings, nine volumes of which have been issued so far (in German, by Verlag Herder). The most recent volume contains a 1972 essay, on the indissolubility of marriage, whose conclusion Benedict has seen fit to rewrite. The original essay, written when Ratzinger was a forty-five-year-old professor of theology at Regensburg, had proposed that divorced and civilly remarried Catholics be allowed to return to Communion in some circumstances. In an important change, that proposal is conspicuously missing from the newly rewritten conclusion.

Cardinal Walter Kasper and Pope Benedict at the Vatican in 2009

The original conclusion acknowledged both that the church is "of the New Covenant" and that it remains "in a world in which there continues to exist unchanged 'the hardness of heart' (Matthew 19:8)" of prior times. And so church practice "must begin in the concrete"—taking into account the damage done, even by the church itself, through such "hardness of heart." Specifically, with regard to Scripture's clear teaching on the indissolubility of marriage, Ratzinger in 1972 concluded that, in some second marriages, it would be "immoral" to demand separation as a condition for allowing the spouses to return to Communion. "When the second marriage produces moral obligations with regard to the children, the family, and even the wife and there are no analogous obligations stemming from the first marriage," Ratzinger wrote, "openness to eucharistic Communion, after a trial period, certainly seems to be just and fully in line with the tradition of the church."

The new, rewritten conclusion retains the original essay's observation about our human hardness of heart, but proceeds to note that we are in a new "concrete" situation—and then asks a question Ratzinger did not ask forty-three years ago: "So what can be done concretely, especially at a time in which the faith is being watered down more and more, even within the church?" Times have changed, Benedict seems to be saying, and readmission to the sacraments is no longer an option. Instead he recommends that divorced Catholics who have civilly remarried be offered "intense spiritual communion with the Lord," including a blessing at Sunday Mass when they "approach the altar with their hands folded over their chests." Spiritual communion, yes; sacramental communion, no.

Times may indeed have changed since 1972—but have they changed so radically as to invalidate the earlier essay's conclusion? That earlier essay had appealed to such Church Fathers as Origen, St. Basil, and St. Augustine to argue *both* that the indissolubility of marriage has been "definitive" church doctrine from the beginning *and* that "within the ideal that is in fact determinative for the church, there was evidently again and again in the concrete pastoral application a more elastic practice." For remarried Christians that more "elastic practice" included, in some cases, returning to the sacraments.

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The original essay's concluding paragraph began by restating the "irrevocable" nature of marital consent, then added: "This does not rule out that the eucharistic Communion of the church should also embrace persons who recognize this doctrine and this principle of life but find themselves in an emergency situation of a special nature in which they have particular need for full communion with the Body of the Lord." In its final sentence the essay called this twofold claim a "sign of contradiction that will remain in the church's faith." Indeed this sign of contradiction is "essential" to the church, Ratzinger argued, whose Lord "proclaimed to his disciples that they must not presume to be above their master, who was rejected by the pious and the liberal."

Why did he change his mind? There is a complicated back story to Benedict's revision, one containing some theological and ecclesial infighting. Last February the 1972 article by Ratzinger was cited—approvingly—by Cardinal Walter Kasper in his introductory remarks to the consistory of cardinals convened by Pope Francis to discuss the issue of the family, preparatory to last fall's synod; in affirming his view that the divorced and remarried should be admitted to Communion, Kasper cited Ratzinger's essay as offering "an appropriate solution" to the dilemma. Yet that 1972 article was the first and only time Ratzinger ever took such a position publicly. Thereafter he reverted to the traditional ban on Communion, and actually helped strengthen it when, as prefect of the CDF, he signed the September 1994 letter to the bishops in which the Holy See rejected the more liberal position staked out by certain bishops—including Kasper. Apparently Ratzinger's dissatisfaction at Kasper's use of his essay last year led to his decision to recast its conclusion in his collected works.

It is, in the view of many, an unfortunate alteration, a diminution of the vision of faith put forth in the earlier essay's conclusion. In sum, for Ratzinger forty-three years ago, a willingness to live within the tension between a definitive doctrinal claim and a pastoral duty to embrace those of "particular need" was not a contradiction needing to be ironed out, but rather a sign of discipleship. This willingness is missing from the new conclusion, which dissolves that "essential contradiction" by dropping a pastoral embrace in favor of a definitive doctrine. Effectively, Benedict forgets what his earlier essay held as fundamental.

Such forgetting finds a sharp challenge in an idea first expressed by German Catholic theologian Johannes Metz in 1977, just a few years after Ratzinger's original essay. Metz said that at the center of Christianity stands the "dangerous memory" of the death and resurrection of Jesus, with its promise of the coming Kingdom of God (*Faith in History and Society*). We must cultivate this dangerous memory to

TWO POEMS
by Stephen Rybicki

RESURRECTION

What became of the many others like us
That first Easter morning
Who stared out the back windows of their houses
With blank cups of coffee in their hands
And saw nothing but overcast skies and leafless trees
And weeping weather that mourned for Spring
And did not hear a knock at the door
Or receive a telephone call
From a recently deceased loved one
Or pass Him along the road to an ancient city
Or see the sun rise up from a hole in the earth
Like Hosanna

I LAZARUS

What could I make of the grass
But a gate to the skies
Looking up
Clouds floating by
Like the shapes of the dead ones
As radiant as angels
And when I opened the earth
Their tombs were all empty
My mother and father
The first to speak
Come here son
O how we missed you
All I could do was weep

Stephen Rybicki is a poet and reference librarian at Macomb Community College, and lives in Romeo, Michigan.

overcome any temptation to "bathe everything from the past in a soft, conciliatory light," Metz insisted, and instead allow the past to "reveal new and dangerous insights for the present." What we need is a fuller memory of the past, but Benedict's rewritten conclusion moves in the opposite direction; it forgets what is difficult about the past and thus avoids "dangerous insights for the present."

I have had my own reasons to revisit the past of late. My eighty-two-year-old mother has recently taken to telling me and my siblings stories that we had not heard before—difficult stories about her life growing up in Boston. In October, she and I flew from Minnesota to visit her last remaining brother, then eighty-eight and living with advanced dementia in a Boston nursing home. On the flight, my mother told me of a phone conversation she'd had with her brother a few years before, when he was still conversational. "Was our childhood as bad as I remember it?" she had asked her brother. "Worse," he replied. At the nursing home my uncle did not speak, but smiled in what seemed to be wordless recognition of my mother. The visit turned out to be their last; he died three weeks later.

These events have further opened the floodgates for my mother, increasing her desire to look back and understand dangerous memories from her early life. They center around the difficulties created by her mother's alcoholism, divorce, and remarriage. One memory concerns another family who would help on Sundays by taking my mother to church with them. "My mother wasn't allowed inside the church, divorcée that she was," my mother recalled. "The other family would not physically step into our house, but would honk their car horn from our driveway to let me know it was time to come with them." Another memory concerned one of her grade-school teachers—in her Catholic school—who from time to time would instruct her to stand so the rest of the class could "see what the child of a divorcée looks like."

My mother does not in the least lay her life's challenges at the feet of the church. *Her* mother's alcoholism interrupted her early life more than the church's teaching about divorce and remarriage, and the consolation and hope my mother has received from decades of active membership in the church far outweigh the suffering. Still, her difficult stories were fresh in my mind and heart when I read Benedict's revised conclusion—and when a colleague shared with me some of her own memories of being a Catholic-school seventh-grader, in the early 1960s. After suffering many years of spousal abuse, my colleague's mother had gotten up the courage to divorce her husband. Word had apparently gotten out, and "I was called out of class one morning," my colleague recalled, "and told that the pastor wanted to see me. Monsignor was in the office and told me that my mother would go to hell, unless I talked her out of getting divorced."

My colleague was so overwhelmed by that visit that she remained silent about it for years. When she finally did tell

her mother, she learned that the monsignor had phoned her those many years before with the same message—reminding her, over the telephone, that she was a sinner, was not welcome to Communion, and would certainly end up in hell if she failed to raise her children in the Catholic faith.

My colleague's mother eventually remarried, and for years she and her husband brought her children to Sunday Mass and remained in the pew while the children went to Communion. This woman apologized for the rest of her life for "leaving" the church; in her sixties and dying, this divorced and remarried woman wrote a letter to her own mother (who outlived her) that included the following sentence: "Please tell me that you understand what I did, and that you hope we will meet again in heaven."

These stories have something to say to any of us wanting to take seriously the sign of contradiction, the dangerous memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Not to allow such stories into our lives is a failure of compassion—a word that, as Johannes Metz points out, literally means a "willingness to suffer the sufferings of others." I am not suggesting that Pope Benedict lacks compassion. But I am suggesting that something is missing from his account of the past—namely, that tension he earlier called essential to church faith. His new conclusion comes, he writes, "at a time in which the faith is being watered down more and more"; but in my view it is not adequate to what is being asked of us now. What we need is not to drop the "essential contradiction" he referred to in 1972, but to learn how to live with it, and in it, together.

In fact, Pope Francis seems now to be asking precisely this of us. At the end of October's first installment of the two-part Synod on the Family, he asked all present to open themselves to a year of "true spiritual discernment," so that when the synod reconvenes next October it can "find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront."

How do we achieve such discernment? In his 2011 book *Katholische Kirche: Wesen, Wirklichkeit, Sendung*, Cardinal Walter Kasper—appropriately enough—named three rules for discerning the movement of the Spirit in the church. I find the one Kasper calls "ecclesiological" especially timely. "The Spirit is a Spirit of unity," he writes. "The Spirit does not divide, but brings together and orders charisms within the church into a whole.... Prophetic speech must serve the building up of the community." This rule sounds very much like Ratzinger's 1972 concern that we attend to those in emergency situations who "have a particular need for full communion with the Body of the Lord."

Might not opening ourselves to hear the stories of people whose lives have been deeply affected by church pastoral practice around divorce and remarriage help us understand what true communion might be? Might it not assist us in learning how to build up the community—and so contribute to the year of true spiritual discernment that Francis recommends? ■

Richard Alleva

Hidden Heroes

'UNBROKEN' & 'THE IMITATION GAME'

Dramatizing the full story of Louis Zamperini's life—as recounted in Laura Hillenbrand's bestselling book, *Unbroken*—would require a TV miniseries, not a two-hour feature film. Consider: A near-delinquent childhood in 1920s California redeemed by athletic achievement as a long-distance track star (competition in the 1936 Berlin Olympics won him no medals, but he did set an American speed record); then service as a bombardier in World War II, leading to a crash into the Pacific, where Zamperini survived sun, sharks, and starvation for forty-seven days aboard a raft; then rescue and capture by Japanese troops, who threw him into a prison-camp-from-hell, where he was singled out for special abuse by the man in charge, a sadist known as the Bird; then postwar PTSD, relieved by a happy marriage and a new embrace of Christianity, thanks to the young Billy Graham. Whew! In other words, enough material for several films.

And that was precisely the problem confronting Angelina Jolie and her scriptwriters: how to make a coherent movie, and not a patchwork, out of this cornucopia of adventure and misery. I don't fault Jolie at all for wrapping up Zamperini's postwar experiences with a short postscript and a clip of a happy Louie in old age. After all the athletics, combat, and torture, the movie would have had to reposition itself as a psychological drama of therapy and conversion, an entirely different kind of story.

But Jolie didn't settle for mere tidiness. She and Jack O'Connell, the actor who plays Zamperini, have filled out Hillenbrand's portrait of an energetic and plucky youth by making him an inveterate *noticer*, who gazes with wonderment at the things that a careless or hurried eye might miss. As a child at Mass, his gaze drifts from the plaster Christ over the altar to a pretty girl in the opposite aisle. Whipped by his father for his latest transgression, he ruefully looks down a staircase at his careworn mother lovingly preparing a meal: this sight may do more for him than the whipping. As a soldier he takes in the deceptive splendor of his bomb exploding on target like a flower whitely blooming, and we can intuit that his awe is mixed with horror. How malignly appropriate, then, for this constant observer to be forbidden by the cruel Bird to look his torturer in the eye.

Jolie uses the sheer horizonality of the screen well, and her compositions, beautifully burnished by the great cinematographer Roger Deakins, are always dramatic, never merely decorative. This helps make the first third of *Unbroken* a first-rate adventure story. But once the Bird unleashes his sick campaign to break Louie's spirit, the movie must become more than an action film, and here it only partially succeeds. There are memorable scenes—for example, Louie's temporary release from captivity to make a radio broadcast in a Tokyo, where the sights of civilization almost overwhelm the sense-starved youth. And the makeover of the book's Bird (a mere stupid thug) into the movie's sexually ambiguous sadist is well served by the performance of Miyavi, a Japanese rock star, whose slight hesitation before settling on the final word of each English sentence succinctly conveys a cruelty grounded in self-doubt. Yet the atrocious suffering is presented a little too tastefully, as if the director were muffling the cruelty to make the film more suitable for its Christmas release. And the pacing is too smoothly measured, considering that the emotions of all the prisoners (none of them memorable supporting characters) must have zigzagged in and out of the psychological states of terror, desolation, boredom, listlessness, exhaustion, and delirium. It's not that Jolie prettifies anything—there is plenty of violence and squalor on display—but somehow we remain discomfited onlookers rather than partners in the characters' pain.

The entire movie is too obviously geared to celebrate a Triumph of the Human Spirit. For example: the climactic scene in which Louie is ordered by the Bird, on pain of death, to hold a wooden beam across his shoulders for hours. This moment is drawn from a real incident, but when Zamperini triumphantly hoists his burden over his head and bellows his victory while the commandant sinks to his knees in despair—the villain broken, the hero unbroken—a note of directorial calculation spoils the impact. No doubt Jolie sees Zamperini as a paragon of sheer endurance, and so he was. But he was also a man capable of hating his tormentors and planning to take vengeance on them. When the movie's Louie contemplates murdering the commandant, he is soon persuaded by a fellow captive that enduring is the real way to win. But, as Hillenbrand's book informs us, Zamperini and some other prisoners actually went ahead with their plan to kill the Bird—not only out of hatred but as an act of sheer self-defense. And, by poisoning him with feces from the prisoners' latrine, they came damn close to succeeding. (The Bird survived, but just barely.) To be sure, Zamperini later forgave all his captors and came to respect the Japanese people, but only after passing through the very human stages of resentment and vengefulness. As noted, Jolie couldn't include every part of Zamperini's story, for reasons of both length and narrative coherence, but did she keep his disgusting though understandable act of self-defense out of her movie in order to portray him as a saint of stoicism? I would have preferred the whole man, warts and all.

If the facts of Zamperini's heroism were lost because of the post–World War II trend of burying bad memories, mathematician Alan Turing's decisive role in cracking the Nazis' Enigma code, an achievement that saved countless Allied troops, was temporarily obscured by the determination of military intelligence to keep the decryption operation hush-hush even after the war was won. Also, it didn't help that Turing's homosexuality didn't fit the popular idea of heroism. Nor did his suicide in 1954, after a chemical castration he accepted as the alternative to imprisonment for "acts of gross indecency." If Turing's reputation managed to survive among fellow scientists, it was because his theoretical work on computing—the "Turing Universal Machine"—helped bring about our present digital age.

Cryptanalysis, spinning rotors, and statistical comparisons of letter repetitions may not be the stuff of exciting cinema, but for *The Imitation Game* (largely based on Andrew Hodges's biography, *Alan Turing: The Enigma*), scriptwriter Graham Moore and director Morten Tyldum finesse the problem in two ways. First, Moore uses Turing's arrest in 1951 as a framing device. A detective, trying to investigate the burglary of Turing's apartment and irritated by his non-cooperation, comes to suspect that the break-in had something to do with Turing's wartime activities, and that the mathematician may even be a "mole" feeding state secrets to the Soviets. Turing's response is to tell the detective the whole story of the code-cracking, which is visualized for us as a flashback. I found this setup a bit hard to swallow: it's hardly likely that Turing, pledged to secrecy about his role in the war, would have offered the detailed and intimate account we get in the film to an ordinary London cop.

Second, and more convincingly, director Tyldum and his excellent cast make the most of the personality conflicts, romantic detours, and mind-grinding work that took place in Bletchley Park, the code-crackers' base of operations in Buckinghamshire. Turing, supremely eccentric, inevitably clashes with his less obsessive co-workers, but they come to appreciate and defer to his genius. Turing is played by Benedict Cumberbatch, who has made a specialty of such roles. If you've seen him on PBS as Sherlock Holmes, another socially isolated obsessive, you'll know what to expect here, and the formula works niftily. There is something quintessentially British about this approach to the material: on the one hand, the half-mocking, half-admiring tolerance of eccentricity and, on the other, the stiff-upper-lip expectation that disparate personalities will get over their differences when duty calls, and pull together. This entails some clichés, as when the operation's administrator, Commander Denniston, is portrayed as such a bigoted fogey that he unites all the Bletchley brains against him in support of Alan. Nevertheless, both the writing and the acting skillfully adduce the comic, heroic, and tragic aspects of Turing's nature.

The comedy comes from the mathematician's maddening ineptitude at picking up social cues. When a coworker tries to invite him out to eat by saying, "We're going to lunch, Alan," Turing can register this only as a statement of fact. But that same lack of emotional resonance leaves unfettered his heroic drive to see the job through, while his colleagues become distressed that every failure on their part means more casualties. Tragically, his obsessive concern with the Universal Machine after the war leads him to choose chemical castration over imprisonment, which would interrupt his work. He doesn't understand that the bogus chemistry intended to suppress his sexuality will finally destroy his intellect, too. I learned from the Hodges biography that Turing was surprisingly bad at chess, that supremely strategic game. So was he utterly devoid of guile, cunning, and even self-preserving forethought? Was he the Prince Myshkin of mathematics? ■

Eve Tushnet

Queen of Hearts

'PICTURING MARY: WOMAN, MOTHER, IDEA'

The most beautiful portrayal of Marian devotion I've seen in literature came unexpectedly in *New York Times* columnist David Carr's 2009 addiction memoir, *The Night of the Gun: A Reporter Investigates the Darkest Story of His Life—His Own*. Carr, finally drug-free and sober, had been been diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma; the treatments left him too weak to move, and he resorted to giving his three-year-old daughter Meagan cash for the pizza guy so they could eat.

> "Keep the change," I'd hear her say per my instructions to some stunned guy who probably took the story back to the shop. On nights when I was too tired to tuck them in, I would lie there and hear her tell [her sister] Erin it was time to say prayers before bed.
>
> "Lovely lady, dressed in blue, teach me how to pray..."

Mary has had so many titles, from the lyrical "Star of the Sea" to the martial "Exterminatrix of Heresies." There's a Mary for every mood. Mary champions the oppressed and heralds the overturning of the social order ("He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly"). She guides philosophy and, by her intercessory prayers, undoes the impossible knots of our lives.

"Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea," at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., through April 12, 2015, pulls together an impressive collection of paintings, sculptures, and liturgical vestments in order to suggest the wide range of Marian images in Western art. The show includes works by Michelangelo, Fra Filippo Lippi, Caravaggio, Artemisia Gentileschi, Botticelli, Rembrandt, and Dürer. It shows Mary as Seat of Wisdom; Mary as Mother of Mercy, sheltering little kneeling penitents under her golden cloak; and Mary as Queen of Heaven with the serpent trampled underfoot. But by far the most common attribute on display in this show, just as in Carr's children's prayer, is Mary's tenderness: she is portrayed as the ordinary mother of an extraordinary son.

The exhibition is well designed. It's limited: "Western art" turns out to mean mostly Italian with some French and Low Countries, from about the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The wall captions spell out the nuances of doctrine, making the exhibit accessible to people who have no idea what the Assumption is. There are some bobbles. One weird caption describes a chasuble as "a large, sleeveless garment worn by priests as they say the Eucharist, or 'Mass.'" But most of the captions make sense. The walls have been painted in rich tones of turquoise, blue, and purple, which not only highlight the artwork but subtly recall Mary's blue robes and the purple robes of priests.

Madonna of the Book *by Sandro Botticelli, 1480–81*

The walls are inscribed with passages from classic Marian texts, including the *Divine Comedy* and the Litany of Loreto. These weave the images into a fabric of devotion and prayer.

Here, Mary rarely looks directly at the viewer. Sometimes she looks down in apprehension or sorrow; occasionally she looks up to heaven in ecstasy; most often she looks at her child. Elisabetta Siriani's 1663 *Virgin and Child* shows a Christ one can only call adorable, as he crowns his mother with a garland of roses. She holds him protectively, and bows her head to receive the crown.

Although the captions note that Mary's image gets more down-to-earth during the Renaissance, even much earlier depictions show Jesus interacting with her like any other baby with his mom. He's shown burrowing toward her breast, ready to nurse, in a pose familiar to all mothers. A painting by Artemisia Gentileschi presents a focused, watchful Mary and a Christ child who is completely intent on her nursing breast. The two appear in humble surroundings. Mary's own clothing is a rich Renaissance pink, but we also see rough linen, simple wooden furniture, and bare feet.

Emphasizing Mary's humanity was often a way to emphasize the humanity of Christ. The Madonna and Child portrait by the "Master of the Winking Eyes" (the eyes are in fact quite odd) has Mary draping her veil over her baby's head as well as her own, signifying that she—like all of us—shares a common human nature with Christ. Sandro Botticelli's luminous *Madonna of the Book* poses the baby Jesus between Mary and the text, reminding the viewer—as the caption notes—that he is the Word made flesh.

Almost all these portrayals, even the gentlest, include hints that foreshadow the Crucifixion. These can be subtle and

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ARTS

symbolic (a lamb or a pelican) or more obvious (a sarcophagus or even a tiny cross held by the infant John the Baptist). The infant Jesus is often portrayed asleep, and this too can be interpreted as a prefiguration of his death. There are also two rooms devoted to images of the Crucifixion, one of them entirely given over to a huge painting by Giorgio Vasari. On the wall opposite this Crucifixion scene is inscribed the opening of the "Stabat Mater." Francescuccio Ghissi's *The Dead Christ and Angels; Adoration of the Infant Jesus* pairs the two ends of Jesus' life. The brilliant tempera-and-gold painting shows two different ways of reigning from within helplessness: the infant's prone body streams with light, as blood streams from the palms of Jesus' dead body, still nailed to the Cross.

Among the most powerful depictions of the Crucifixion in this show is the Master of Sant'Anastasia's horrifying fourteenth-century stone sculpture. Jesus' neck hangs at an impossible, broken angle. Ropes of muscle stand out on his thin, racked arms. His mother pleads at his feet, while a skull beneath the Cross seems to laugh and St. John the Evangelist looks away in anguish. The sculptor even carved the lines of pain between Mary's knitted brows. The big, blunt, shovel-shaped faces make the scene somehow even sadder: there's no prettiness to distract from the sordid misery.

It's easy to identify with Mary in both the Crucifixion scenes and the images of the Madonna and Child. Many of us have felt anguish as we helplessly watch a suffering and dying loved one. Many of us have felt the mixture of joy, need, and care of a mother cradling her infant. Mary and Jesus entered into the most common experiences of human life: the exhaustion, the worry, the intimate tenderness, the cheap clothes and bare feet; the humiliation, powerlessness, sorrow, and love.

But these most relatable moments in Mary's life aren't the whole story. Angelo Pellegrini's silver sculpture *Immaculate Conception and Symbols of the Evangelists*, right at the entrance to the exhibit, shows a Mary much harder to identify with: a glinting celestial queen. The reason she has commanded so much attention over the centuries isn't just that she and her son are like us (although they are). They are also different. He is not solely a man suffering on a cross, but also the glorified Son of God who rose from the dead with his wounds still visible. She is not solely a mother comforting her child, but the Queen of Heaven. She can guide our troubled lives because her own was immaculate. Because she is more than solely a parent, she can guide children in a way even their own parents can't. She's the lovely lady in the blue dress—and the one who teaches us to pray. ■

Crucifixion *by Giorgio Vasari, ca. 1560s*

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Luke Timothy Johnson

History & Divinity

How Jesus Became God

The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee

Bart D. Ehrman

HarperCollins, $27.99 416 pp.

Bart Ehrman has made a career out of what might be called counter-apologetics. In books with catchy titles such as *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture, Misquoting Jesus*, and *Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them)*, he has vigorously, perhaps even obsessively, sought to exorcise others of the demons of Evangelical faith that once also held him captive. With his disarming style and gift for clear exposition, he is a stalwart of the "scholars have shown" and "now it can be told" style of religious popularization.

Ehrman, who teaches at the University of North Carolina, writes as an agnostic who gets maximum mileage out of the fact that he was once a "true believer"—indeed, a fundamentalist. The tools of historical-critical scholarship now give him a privileged perspective on his youthful credulity. Ehrman's personal story of creedal captivity and academic liberation is a principal theme of *How Jesus Became God*. All the arguments he once marshalled as a young apologist at the Moody Bible Institute, he now seeks to demolish as an instructor of undergraduates and a presence in the media.

Ehrman is disingenuous, however, when he writes that he does "not take a stand on the theological question of Jesus' divine status," but is only "interested in the historical development that led to the affirmation that he is God." Reducing the confession of Jesus as Lord to nothing more than a "historical development" among ancient people, however, is effectively to deny the truth of Christianity's central claim.

The heart of the book—and the place where Ehrman's devotion to historical criticism makes his analysis weakest—is his argument concerning the post-mortem visions of Jesus by Mary, Peter, and Paul. Before tackling that puzzle, however, Ehrman deals with the easy targets of ill-informed Christian apologetics. For example, was Jesus the only figure in antiquity to whom divinity was ascribed? No. Ehrman rehearses the multiple cases of ascensions and appearances and apotheioses and divine manifestations in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature. Did Jesus think of himself as divine? No. The author deftly shows how isolated Jesus' self-referential claims are in John's gospel. Ehrman also devotes nearly a hundred pages to a superficial recital of Christological formulations from the New Testament to the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). As this sketchy survey is designed to show, calling Jesus "divine" does not yet answer the question "Divine in what sense?" Christians, of course, divided and subdivided over that question for centuries.

But how did the conviction that Jesus is divine arise in the first place? It arose because followers believed Jesus was raised from the dead. Predictably, Ehrman devotes a lot of space to the gospels' empty-tomb accounts. He rightly notes that even if these stories could be verified—which they cannot—they would not by themselves lead to the conviction that Jesus is God. At most, the empty tomb might indicate that Jesus was resuscitated—that is, resumed his empirical, mortal, *earthly* life.

Detail of The Resurrection *by Piero della Francesca, 1463*

Ehrman also rightly insists that the New Testament claims far more than a vestigial post-mortem existence for Jesus. The Resurrection, according to the first disciples, is not a resuscitation (a thoroughly historical event) but the exaltation of Jesus to "the right hand of God." His becoming "Lord" means that he shares completely in the presence and power of God. It is as "Lord" that Jesus is perceived by the first believers to be "God."

Jesus' exaltation to God's own life is not, however, as it concerns Jesus himself, a historical event. If one must use temporal terms, Jesus' exaltation is better called an eschatological event. Thinking about the Resurrection in temporal terms, however, is misleading. The Resurrection is better spoken of as an existential reality; not as one event among others but as an act of God that reveals and changes the structures of existence. Paul speaks of the resurrection-life as a "new creation" (Gal 6:15) in which everything old has passed away and "behold, everything is new" (2 Cor 5:17).

It is in trying to come to terms with the Resurrection accounts that Ehrman's commitment to a single way of knowing—the historical—limits and ultimately distorts his analysis. Like all those whose thinking is essentially positivist—which includes most defenders as well as critics of Christianity—Ehrman seeks a *historical* cause for what is in fact a reality that transcends historical categories altogether.

The only plausible "historical" cause for the claim of Resurrection are the post-mortem visions of Jesus ascribed to certain followers, especially Mary, Peter, and Paul. Like the empty-tomb stories, such "appearance accounts" are, as Ehrman notes, a cornerstone of the tradition (see, for example, 1 Cor 9:1; 15:3–8). And like the empty-tomb stories, they have been subjected to intense historical-critical scrutiny. Predictably, the conclusions scholars come to about the authenticity of the visions tend to confirm the premises brought to the inquiry by the investigators themselves. Ehrman devotes considerable space to this problem before concluding that historians cannot determine the sincerity or veracity of such visions. Exactly right. Nevertheless, Ehrman goes on to argue that such visions are the basis of the belief that Jesus is the exalted Lord.

Like the empty-tomb accounts, however, even if the visions are true they do not necessarily lead to the claims being made about Jesus' divinity. As Ehrman faithfully reports, visions of the dead abound in ancient literature. Yet it does not follow that the one appearing among the gods shares fully in the power and presence of the Lord of the universe. Ehrman exposes, but does not close, a gap between effect and cause. Post-mortem visions are neither a necessary nor a sufficient reason for confessing that "Jesus is Lord."

To close that gap we must turn to a register of language in the New Testament's earliest writings (the letters of Paul) that Ehrman's historicist blinders do not allow him to consider. Paul speaks of the "new creation" as a reality that is experienced, not by a few visionaries, but by all the members of his churches. This new creation is at work through the presence of a personal, transcendent, and transforming power called the Holy Spirit.

The Resurrection experience, in Paul's letters, is not something that happened to Jesus alone. It is happening now to those who have been given this power through the one Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 15:45 as having become "life-giving spirit"—a statement oddly absent from Ehrman's discussion of that chapter in First Corinthians. Similarly, Ehrman fails to consider 1 Corinthians 12:3, where Paul states emphatically that "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." The presence of the transforming power of the Spirit among believers is the basis for Paul's remarkable language about the Holy Spirit "dwelling" in them (Rom 8:9) and their being "in the Holy Spirit"

(1 Cor 12:2–3). In the same way, Paul speaks about Christ "dwelling" in his followers, and their being "in Christ " (Rom 8:9–10).

In short, it was not the reports concerning an empty tomb or claims about post-mortem visions among a few of Jesus' followers that caused the early Christians to recognize Jesus' divinity. It was the shared experience of divine power—manifested in a variety of wonders and gifts and new capacities of existence—among those who had all "drunk the same spirit" and had become members of "Christ's body" (1 Cor 12:12–27).

This experiential claim, moreover, helps explain why, in the very earliest writings, Jesus' divinity is not simply a matter of God's "adopting" an ordinary human being, but the vindication of one who in some sense was already at work in creation (1 Cor 8:6) and in the story of Israel (1 Cor 10:4); thus, already in Paul we find a robust "incarnational" Christology (Phil 2:5–11). It is the experience of Christ as "life-giving spirit"—not just back then but always—that enables the perception of Jesus as fully divine, so tenaciously embraced by the orthodox through the centuries of Christological debates.

The greatest deficiency in Ehrman's work is that he does not even seem aware of the language of religious *experience* that pervades Paul's letters and that paradoxically provides us with the earliest *historical* evidence for the basis of Christian convictions. The deficiency is not his alone, to be sure. It characterizes all those who seek to secure or discredit the truth of the Gospel by means of merely verifiable facts. But the good news is not and never has been based in verifiable fact; from the beginning and still today, it is based in the experience of God's power. ■

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John Cavadini

Peripheral Vision

The Great Reformer

Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope

Austin Ivereigh

Henry Holt, $30, 445 pp.

The Great Reformer is a magnificent book that should gain a wide readership. It is a tour de force of biographical research and good judgment, and it provides useful background information to readers who are new to Argentine history, the Jesuits, or Catholic language and customs. Austin Ivereigh manages to illuminate every aspect of Francis's leadership—especially the unusual aspects that have attracted admiration from some and worry from others, and in many cases both at once.

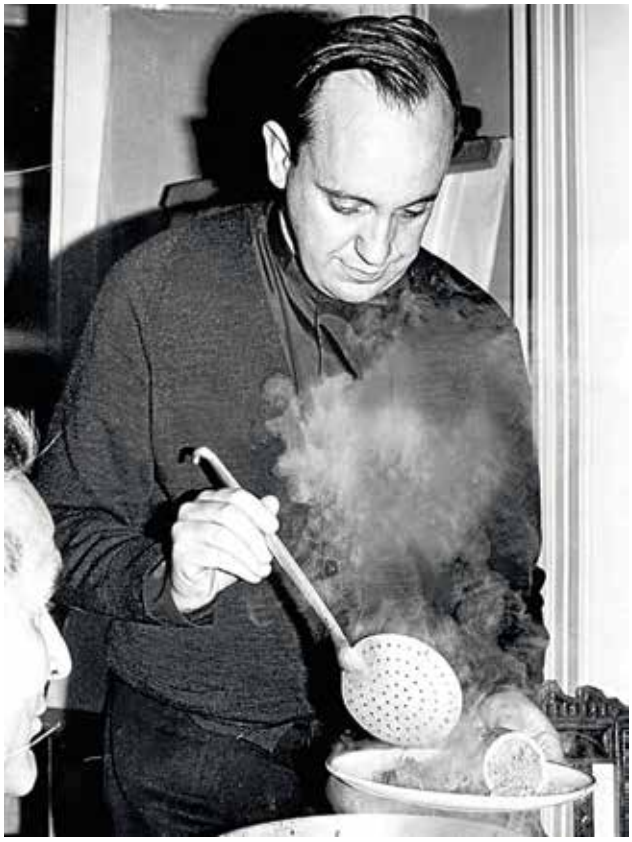
Ivereigh has organized his book chronologically, but each chapter begins with some quality of Francis's life as pope that illuminates—or is illuminated by—the period in Francis's life covered in that chapter. For example, the opening chapter, which describes Francis's own immigrant background, is prefaced with an account of his papal visit to Lampedusa, where he met with African immigrants to Italy. Similarly, the chapter on his election as a Jesuit provincial at age thirty-six begins by describing his intimate style as pope, a style that reflects his insistence—both as a provincial and now as pontiff—on personal encounter with the poor. As provincial, Jorgé Bergoglio lived at the Colegio Máximo, a Jesuit seminary. There he helped people escape Argentina's military dictatorship, although he would later be (falsely) accused of collaborating with the dictatorship. The chapter recounting Bergoglio's early years as archbishop of Buenos Aires, including his pivotal role at the Latin American bishops conference at Aparecida in 2007, is prefaced with an account of how he became a candidate for pope at the conclave that finally elected Pope Benedict XVI—and of why Bergoglio withdrew his name.

As its title indicates, the book tells the story of someone whose whole life as a leader in the church has been dedicated to reform—first in his own Jesuit province, then in the archdiocese of Buenos Aires, and finally as pope. Francis's principles for reform have been remarkably consistent. They were, in the first instance, based on his reading of the works of St. Ignatius Loyola, himself a reformer. They were also based on his knowledge of the history of the Jesuits and, in particular, of the Jesuit-sponsored communities of indigenous people called "Reductions" or "groupings," which the Jesuit missionaries organized in order to protect the Indians from the greed of the Spanish colonists. "The Jesuits acted, essentially, as seventeenth-century community organizers among the poor," Ivereigh writes. The independence of the Jesuits and their indigenous communities offended the absolutist monarchs of Portugal, France, and Spain; and so the Jesuits were ordered to withdraw.

Another source for Bergoglio's theory of renewal of church culture and life was Yves Congar's *True and False Reform in the Church* (1950). Congar taught that true reform "was always rooted in pastoral concern for ordinary faithful people: it was oriented to, and shaped by, the periphery, not the center." Again and again, Bergoglio launched his programs and initiatives with the exhortation to go out to the peripheries and, once there, not to impose an "ideology" but to learn from the people—from the *santo pueblo fiel de Dios*, "God's holy faithful people." As Ivereigh puts it, true reform involves not eschewing but honoring and learning from "the forms of popular religiosity—the devotions and the processions, the shrine festivals and the offerings, the novenas and the rosaries—which

are described so powerfully in the Aparecida document [written by Bergoglio] as the place where the poor encounter God, make vital decisions, and are converted." The *pueblo fiel* serve as "the hermeneutic of true reform."

Bergoglio's first target of reform in Argentina was the Society of Jesus, which had experienced such a severe dearth of vocations that not even one person was ordained in the province the year after his own ordination. He implemented a bold new program at the Colegio Máximo, combining a return to humanistic education with direct missionary outreach to the poor and manual labor (because the poor are those who have to work). "It was," writes Ivereigh, "a radical *inculturation* into the lives of God's holy faithful people," including learning and praying the devotions the people were fond of. Bergoglio's idea for the seminarians was that "only by sharing the lives of the poor… could they discover 'the true possibilities of justice in the world,' as opposed to 'an abstract justice which fails to give life.'" Students found this vision "deeply attractive" and the Colegio began to overflow with vocations, even as the neighboring poor community of San Miguel was transfigured. But Bergoglio's reform was eventually disowned by the older, left-leaning Jesuits, who did not believe it was sufficiently grounded in a scientific analysis of the social situation of the poor, and were offended to discover Jesuit seminarians learning and praying the devotions of the uneducated.



Jorgé Bergoglio in Buenos Aires (undated)

In 1992 Bergoglio was named auxillary bishop in the archdiocese of Buenos Aires under Archbishop Antonio Quarracino, who "had seen the way Bergoglio's pastoral operation had transformed San Miguel and was shocked at how the Jesuits had ostracized him." Bergoglio set about reforming the church in Buenos Aires along the same pastoral lines he had already used with the Jesuits. Overall, this meant a program of going to the peripheries as a way of combating what the French Jesuit theologian Henri de Lubac had called "spiritual worldliness" ("using the church for temporal ends—for political or personal gain—so turning it into an instrument of human maneuvering"). It was Bergoglio's goal, as bishop, to reform the local church, to save it from an "elaborate network of spiritual worldliness stretching from the church in Buenos Aires to the Vatican," Ivereigh writes. Bergoglio attended to four major areas: "the poor, politics, education, and dialogue with other churches and faiths." In his mind, these four were all related to one another. The option for the poor required a critique of power; it also meant a renewal and expansion of the church's educational ministries. Meanwhile, developing relationships with other Christians and with Jews and Muslims enabled the option for the poor to become an interreligious priority. By going to the peripheries of society, Bergoglio was able to inspire people to retrieve the basics of civic engagement—caring for one's neighbors and identifying their good with one's own. The left wanted more ideology; the right demanded more patriotism. But Bergoglio remained focused on neighborliness and practical solidarity.

As archbishop of Buenos Aires, he played a crucial role in the general meeting of CELAM (the conference of the Episcopate in Latin America) at Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007. Given the task of drafting the meeting's concluding document, Bergoglio stuck close to the *puebla fiel* approach. The document was, Ivereigh says, "the expression of a new maturity, of a local church come of age." Ivereigh argues that the whole conference represented a breakthrough.

In its vision and vigor, its fierce advocacy of the poor and its missionary spirituality, its bold proclamation of the birth of a new springtime of faith, Aparecida was now the program, the key to a major new effort of evangelization in Latin America.

Ivereigh compares Aparecida's success to the timid and inward-looking conclusions of the recent Synod for the New Evangelization, which ended up reinforcing the sense of a church "in desolation, turned in on itself, excessively focused on the shadows, with an exaggerated fear of perceived threats." It was "the rich-world church…blaming the culture, rather than itself, for its decline." As for the Aparecida document, "Nowhere else in the world was there anything to compare with it. That made it, just as obviously, the program for the universal church. All that was needed now was a Latin American pope to bring the flame out from the periphery, into Catholicism's increasingly tired and desolate center." Thus we come, in Ivereigh's book, to the Francis papacy,

CNS PHOTO / COURTESY OF MARIA ELENA BERGOGLIO VIA REUTERS

with the Latin American church making a credible bid to replace the European church as a "source church" for the rest of the world.

At the time of Argentina's bicentenary, the Argentine bishops conference, under Bergoglio's presidency, released a document inviting the country to an ambitious project of renewal based on the common good, in the spirit of Aparecida. Ivereigh argues that the "deep thinking" behind this document can be found in some of Bergoglio's more recent writings. As Ivereigh explains:

> What held the *pueblo* back was no longer messianic Marxist ideology but what he called a "theist gnosticism," a new, disembodied thinking that in church terms could be expressed as "God without church, a church without Christ, Christ without a people." Against this elite "airspray theism," Bergoglio set what he called *lo concreto católico*, the "concrete Catholic thing," which was at the heart of the history and culture of the Latin-American people.

This "concrete Catholic thing" is, even more than Pope Francis himself, at the heart of Ivereigh's book. Through an exposition of the pope's accomplishments, Ivereigh lovingly presents "the concrete Catholic thing" as something that still has the power to create true solidarity, hope, and renewal in church and in the world. Commenting on Francis's exhortations against spiritual worldliness, Ivereigh notes, "The church, Francis endlessly pointed out, was not an NGO but a love story, and the men and women were links in this 'chain of love.' 'If we do not understand this,' said Francis, 'we have understood nothing of what the church is.'" The question put to the reader is: Can we still, even in the twenty-first century, believe in a love story? In *this* love story? If so, Ivereigh suggests, and *only* if so, we can begin to see the possibilities for genuine reform in our own hearts and in the church. ■

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Mary Lee Freeman

Celibate, but Not Alone

Gay and Catholic

Accepting My Sexuality, Finding Community, Living My Faith

Eve Tushnet

Ave Maria Press, $15.95, 215 pp.

Eve Tushnet is, as she puts it, "the poster child for a poster nobody wants on their wall." Raised "somewhere between atheism and Reform Judaism" and moved to convert to Catholicism while a questioning bisexual sophomore at Yale, Tushnet has for the past ten years been the blogosphere's resident celibate lesbian.

As readers of *Commonweal* and a host of other publications know, she writes with a style that is at once self-deprecating and confident, earnest and wickedly witty. In *Gay and Catholic,* her first book, she stays true to form.

Tushnet is nothing if not forthright. In the introduction she states, "God wants you to love. He wants you to increase the tenderness and beauty in his world. This book is about the many different ways in which that call to love can play out for people who are gay or experience same-sex attraction *and* accept the historical Christian teaching on chastity."

Eve Tushnet

The project begins with a memoirish sixty pages that call to mind Anne Lamott's *Help, Thanks, Wow*. Both women write with the honesty and gallows humor that come from having emerged, gratefully, from the hell of alcoholism, and from having recognized and embraced oneself as an odd bird and a child of God.

About the intellectual and spiritual development that led her to an acceptance of church teaching on homosexuality, Tushnet describes a series of helpful but ultimately unsatisfactory conversations with fellow students at Yale and with the priest teaching her RCIA group. The breakthrough, it seems, came when Tushnet—who, despite her best efforts, "didn't understand the church's teaching on this issue [and] didn't like it"—changed her tack. "Instead of asking myself whether I understood the reasoning behind the church's teaching—the reasoning of God—I asked myself whether I was *more sure* that gay sex was morally neutral or more sure that the Catholic Church had the authority to teach sexual morality. And much to my surprise and dismay, I found that I was more sure of the second."

Other gay Catholics, of course, come to the same crossroad and are not so quick or able to equate the reasoning behind the church's teaching on homosexuality with the "reasoning of God." Tushnet never does present a compelling case for the teaching itself, but that is not the point of her inaugural book: "I lack the patience and academic temperament to do more than throw out suggestions, criticisms, and provocations.... I no longer think that a major part of my work as a queer Catholic is illuminating the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the church's teaching on

homosexuality." Fair enough. Provoke, suggest, criticize—these are indeed her best moves. And who better suited than an adult convert to make them?

Tushnet's perspective as a convert is everywhere in evidence but unfortunately gives her a kind of tone-deafness to the situation of born-and-raised Catholics who discern themselves to be gay. Many of us cannot help but see in our partnerships a flourishing of our Catholic faith, and not its undoing. For Tushnet, though, an undoing is precisely what those partnerships are, always and everywhere, and so one encounters frequently in her book breezy but brutal dismissals of most actual gay Catholics. For those who believe marriage is their vocation, Tushnet has little helpful to say. Gay Catholics who live in civil marriages or pursue romantic relationships are an impossibility; they are gay, clearly, but no longer really Catholic. The same church door Tushnet came in is the one she assumes they used to hightail it out. In one astonishing sentence in a discussion of potential pitfalls in the celibate life, she writes, "For people with same-sex attraction, same-sex friendships can obviously also present temptations to lust *and thereby to leaving the church*" [emphasis mine].

Tushnet seems to soften her stance in a discussion about whether the Alcoholics Anonymous imagery of "surrender" is problematic for women, pointing out, "Not everyone has the same spiritual needs I have, and therefore not everyone will be helped by the language, metaphors, and corresponding self-understandings that have helped me. Therefore, when people reject one metaphor for their lives…they may be expressing a genuine insight into their own spiritual needs and their own path to God."

Eight pages later, the magnanimity is gone:

> This is, I think, one of the biggest truths about all vocations, not just gay people's vocations: the sacrifice God wants isn't always the sacrifice you wanted to make. And when you know how ready you are to sacrifice a great deal, *as long as you get to do it on your own terms*, it can feel especially painful and unfair when God asks you for something different, a sacrifice you never wanted. Good gay relationships are often sacrificial. They are loyal, vulnerable, forms of loving service, and a school for humility and forgiveness. But they aren't the sacrifice God is calling you to make.

As I sit here on my living room couch on a Saturday afternoon, my partner and teen and preteen sons living their bustling lives all around me, I just do not know how Tushnet can be so sure. I have, she says, been "drawn away from [my] true vocation into a false facsimile of a vocation."

Certainly, the tone-deafness goes both ways. Tushnet shares, "I've never been ashamed of being gay that I can recall, but there have been times when the frequent small, grinding humiliations of explaining my celibacy left me feeling worn down, resentful, and equal parts self-righteous and ashamed."

It is in the second half of the book, "You Are Called to Love," that Tushnet shines. She is to be applauded for wanting to move beyond the clichéd image of "the miserable, life-denying celibate who has been twisted by the evil Catholic Church." She is keenly attuned to the value of articulating experiences that some readers will recognize as akin to their own, even if imperfectly so. Gay Catholics who embrace a call to celibacy and take up this book will feel less alone on the road. And that, in the end, is Tushnet's hope, for she understands that in isolation we wither, and in true community we flourish.

In a church that insists even its hermits be attached to a religious community or diocese, how can a gay, celibate Catholic survive, let alone thrive? Here, Tushnet draws profitably on lessons learned in the slog of addiction recovery, and can write convincingly with the wisdom of the battle-scarred that for both sobriety and celibacy, temptation-avoidance is an incomplete, negative strategy. In the same way that sobriety is not the same as not-drinking, celibacy is clearly not the same as not having sex.

Tushnet's status as an adult convert serves her well, here, too, as one imagines her entering that door into the church, looking around, and saying bluntly, "Well, this won't work!" Tushnet, like (and unlike) Andrew Sullivan before her, shines a light on the undervalued theology of friendship, and writes movingly about the necessarily outward-looking call to live lives of love and service. Traditional narratives in

which homosexuality is understood as being inherently disordered and narcissistic are easily and swiftly skewered.

In "You Are Called to Love" Tushnet is part AA sponsor, part nagging mother, part advice columnist, and part spiritual director. Sometimes the cheery encouragement can get a bit silly: "First of all, you have to throw a few handfuls of glitter into the void. You have to put yourself out there! If…someone says something you like, mention it to them. Maybe ask if they want to grab coffee.... Don't be pushy, but don't be shy.... This may seem like a little thing, but seriously, throw parties." Her you-can-do-it tone—entirely appropriate in context—makes even more stunning her masterful and moving answer, in an appendix of "frequently asked questions," to the query, "What if following the church's teaching here is terrible for my mental health?" With a Pope Francis–like attunement to loneliness, yearning, and misery, Tushnet's nuanced answers—she wisely gives a range—are remarkable in their compassion and humility.

Tushnet refuses to be pigeonholed right up through the final sections of the book. In the middle of a chapter titled "Challenges within Your Vocation," this convert who has spent the last 154 pages explaining how and why she lives in fidelity to the church's teaching says nonchalantly, "I feel very lucky to have entered the church with a high level of anti-clericalism and cynicism about the clergy." In her subsequent discussion of "clean anger" and "resentful anger," she offers the remedy of praying to saints who had their own righteous troubles with the church. In Tushnet fashion, though, she doesn't stop there. "The bishops put out some kind of statement on homosexuality, asymptotically approaching understanding at the speed of a dying snail, and I throw on a Pet Shop Boys album." In the future, those of us not in possession of Pet Shop Boys albums might take such occasions to treat ourselves to a rereading of Tushnet's book. ■

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William Mattison

Loose Ends

Ethics as a Work of Charity

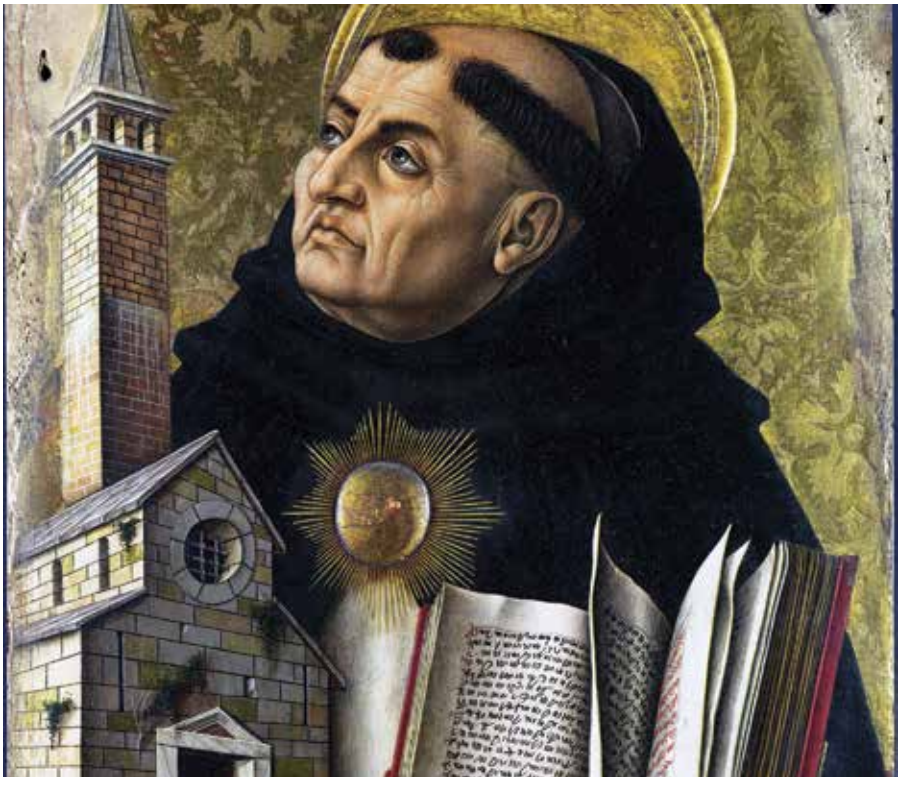
Thomas Aquinas and Pagan Virtue

David Decosimo

Stanford University Press, $65, 376 pp.

Building on the work of Elizabeth Anscombe, Joseph Pieper, and others, contemporary thinkers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, and Julia Annas have redirected moral theology toward the tradition of virtue and a focus on personal qualities. More recently, a second generation of scholars—Jean Porter and John Bowlin come to mind—has pushed this work further, offering a more technical analysis of virtue. With *Ethics as a Work of Charity: Thomas Aquinas and Pagan Virtue*, David Decosimo joins their ranks.

Decosimo, who teaches in the Theology Department at Loyola University Maryland, presents a lucid and innovative argument about the disputed status of "pagan virtue" in debates in Christian ethics. To some readers, the very notion of "pagan virtue" will raise eyebrows. Yet while most Christians today continue to believe that Christian faith permeates and transforms all aspects of a believer's life, most also affirm that people of any religious faith—or none—are capable of living virtuous lives. The tension is clear. How can it be true both that a person can be virtuous regardless of faith, and that faith is crucial for how we live? The "pagan virtue" debate takes up this seeming paradox, and it is far from an obscure academic concern. We find ourselves collaborating and enjoying activities with colleagues, friends, and even family members of different faiths, or no faith at all. How can the value of their contributions be recognized in a manner that does not jeopardize the centrality of faith in our understanding of the moral life?



St. Thomas Aquinas *by Carlo Crivelli, 1476*

The thirteenth century saw the introduction of Aristotle and his "pagan" vision of virtue to skeptical medieval Scholastics for whom there was no greater authority—save Scripture—than Augustine. Confronting this conflict, Thomas Aquinas posited a synthesis of Aristotelian and Augustinian thought. Scholars today tend to emphasize either Aquinas's Augustinian *or* his Aristotelian commitment, but Decosimo posits instead that Aquinas's affirmation of the possibility of pagan virtue is due precisely to an Augustinian "commitment to charity and an expectation that God is drawing all things to himself." He claims "it is not merely a theological but a profoundly Trinitarian and Christocentric vision that founds and propels [Thomas's] recognition of pagan virtue."

Decosimo calls his own method "prophetic Thomism." In his estimate, Thomas shows us how to bring together both "outsiders" (e.g., Aristotle) and "insiders" (e.g., Augustine). Unafraid to take a stand or disagree with a prominent line of thought, Decosimo is nonetheless charitable in his reading of others, seeking always to glean kernels of truth in the positions of those with whom he disagrees.

Ethics as a Work of Charity is a refutation of those interpreters of Aquinas—the scholar Thomas Osborne serves as the main foil—who claim the Angelic Doctor had no significant place for pagan virtue in his vision of the moral life. Here the discussion becomes somewhat arcane. Decosimo adopts the common strategy of defending the possibility of pagan virtue in Thomas by showing how he simultaneously affirms the greater perfection of the infused (i.e., graced) virtues, which point us toward God, while also affirming the genuine (albeit less perfect) goodness of the non-graced virtues that point us toward natural flourishing. To use Aquinas's stock example, one can certainly eschew gluttony without the help of God's grace. But in the graced life of discipleship, eating will nevertheless be done differently. In fasting, saying grace, and enjoying eucharistic table fellowship, Christians approach eating with a different ultimate purpose and meaning. Sometimes this is obvious to others, and sometimes it is not.

The most innovative parts of the book concern the nature of virtue. One tactic of those who deny pagan virtue is to claim—correctly—that Thomas commonly uses the term "virtue" to describe different levels of disposition, the lower of which do not actually qualify as virtues on Thomas's own terms. Decosimo's task is to prove that pagan virtues do indeed qualify as virtues in the robust sense. To this end, he explains that for Thomas a virtue is a disposition in one's character to good action, by which he means action that is very stable, connected to other good dispositions, and ruled by right reasoning. This is not a new analysis, yet Decosimo explicates it with dexterity.

Ethics as a Work of Charity also treats the difficult issue of the acquisition of virtue. Much as the transition from childhood to adulthood can be difficult to pinpoint exactly, so can the growth of virtue. The appropriate response is neither to "lower the bar" of virtue too far—we should not neglect the often arduous development in character that precedes the attainment of virtue—nor to raise it so high that we neglect the growth that is possible and indeed necessary after one has attained a virtue.

Decosimo broadens the discussion by including far more than innate natural dispositions. Some of us, for example, are predisposed to behave calmly. But others train themselves not to lose their tempers. This practiced discipline may resemble a full-fledged virtue, but Decosimo rightly notes that while differing from an innate propensity, it still lacks the guidance by right reason that characterizes a virtue. Mere "custom"—either at the individual or communal level—does not qualify as virtue unless it is enacted with deep understanding of the goods toward which we strive.

The argument in support of pagan virtue put forth in this book is perhaps most innovative for its deepening of our notion of virtue itself. This includes Decosimo's consideration of the nature and function of a person's "last end." The "last end" in the virtue-ethics tradition comprises our overall conception of reality and the corresponding happiness we seek above all things—imperatives that affect all that we do. In the context of the pagan-virtue debate Decosimo must ask: "If the purported virtuous pagan is not acting for a last end of God, what is her

last end?" Augustine's suspicion was that it must ultimately be one's self, and hence his famous reference to "splendid vices"—seeming pagan virtues that—since they are not oriented ultimately toward love of God—actually serve prideful ends.

Those Thomistic interpreters who defend pagan virtue commonly leave the answer to the last-end question vague, calling it "natural happiness" or the "political [meaning communal] good" attained by justice. Decosimo for his part insists that insufficient attention gets paid to what this last end looks like from the "perspective of the acting person." Rather than assuming that the moral lives of all nonbelievers are ultimately prideful, he seeks complexity in the content and function of their last end. In order to "leave room" for pagan virtue—since by definition the nonbeliever is not ordered to God as his or her last end—Decosimo depicts the last end more as a collection of beliefs, allowing him to maintain simultaneously that the nonbeliever has a last end distinct from that of the believer *and* that the person's acts "most of the time" need not be ordered toward that end.

Here Decosimo stretches Thomas's thought beyond the breaking point. He is right that the perennial question of pagan virtue must turn more explicitly to the composition of the last end and its relation to a person's acts and habits. But in presenting such a fragmented vision of the last end, he ironically sacrifices the very stability, connectivity, and guidance by right reason that characterize genuine virtue.

Ethics as a Work of Charity makes a substantial contribution to a perennial debate in Thomistic moral theology. Decosimo's affirmation of the possibility of pagan virtue perceptively interprets Thomas Aquinas, even if his more ambitious speculations on the nature and function of the "last end" require further refinement. ■

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Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt

Shaving Ockham

Minding the Modern

Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge

Thomas Pfau

Notre Dame, $38, 688 pp.

Thomas Pfau's *Minding the Modern* is an example of what we might call the genealogical unmasking of modernity. Such genealogies are usually thought to have originated with Nietzsche, who famously sought to reveal the pretentions of Judeo-Christian "slave morality" by telling the story of its origins in the *ressentiment* of the weak against the strong. The basic form of this genre involves taking a present phenomenon that seems to be simply obvious and unquestionable and giving an account of its origins and development that reveals it to be historically contingent and therefore dubious.

There has been a proliferation of these genealogies in the fields of philosophy and theology over the past forty years, and Pfau draws on several of them in constructing his. Particularly significant sources for Pfau's narrative are Hans Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory*, Louis Dupré's *Passage to Modernity*, and Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*. Pfau shares with all these writers a sense that there is something wrong with the modern world, and that an account of the genesis and development of modernity will help us diagnose the ailment and prescribe a cure.

William of Ockham

What, according to Pfau, afflicts modernity? At one point, he offers the following list of "notions" that are presumed in the "disciplinary, professional, and institutional habits" of modernity: "the public sphere, possessive individualism, an axiomatically secular (means/end) model of rationality, and a disciplinary and professional concept of 'labor' alternately fashioned or critiqued by modern discourses of political economy and academic Marxism." But these are secondary symptoms of a more fundamental malaise—"the supposition that the spheres of human knowledge and human action, theoretical and practical rationality, are fundamentally distinct and possibly altogether unrelated." In other words, the modern world has divided itself up into a realm of "facts," which reason identifies and catalogues, and a realm of "values," which are the spontaneous product of the will. Reason and the will operate independently of each other. To paraphrase Pascal, the will has its reasons about which reason knows nothing. Reason might lead us to enter into various forms of social contract for our own preservation, and those contracts might constrain the will, but willing itself remains fundamentally irrational. This understanding of the relationship of reason and will is often called "voluntarism." It is the root cause of the pervasive emotivism of modern moral discourse. It also explains the presumption that social norms are essentially coercive—though sometimes necessary—impositions on our individual freedom. The consequences of this are simultaneously personal and political. "A political community no longer capable of distinguishing between engaging an idea and holding an opinion…is almost certainly in advanced decline," Pfau warns.

In Pfau's account, the self was understood as an integrated nexus of reason and will until the late thirteenth century, when Franciscan theologians like William of Ockham began pulling reason and will apart from each other. According to Pfau, Ockham's nominalism sets the trajectory for the modern evacuation of the self. It does this by replacing common natures (such as "squareness" or "humanity") with common names shared by individuals; by emphasizing the omnipotence of God in terms of a distinction between God's absolute power (what God *can* do) and God's ordained power (what God has in fact *willed* to do); and by understanding the moral life as a willing obedience to God's law rather than as the cultivation of virtue in light of our perception of God's truth. The net effect of this "momentous shift from the Thomistic synthesis of Aristotelianism and Augustinianism" is a theology "wherein agents, situations, and meanings are no longer connected to an underlying rational order or substantial form but, instead, prove inherently discontinuous." In other words, there is no inherent order of things, or of the self, but only a contingent order willed by the omnipotent God. In Thomas Hobbes, three centuries later, this Franciscan theology is secularized, with the omnipotent self taking the place of an omnipotent God. Like the God of nominalism, this self is essentially *will*, unconstrained by reason, with no intrinsic nature apart from the identity it chooses for itself. For Pfau, the tag team of Ockham and Hobbes are responsible for the fundamental contours of modernity.

As Pfau notes, this is a story that has been told before by such luminaries as Blumenberg, Milbank, Taylor, and Dupré. (I confess that many years ago I myself wrote a book that included a similar narrative.) So what, if anything, is new here? Pfau says that earlier genealogical accounts of modernity "unfolded as high-altitude surveys of intellectual shifts," whereas his account rests on "the kind of close, textual analysis that, at its best, has always been the bread and butter of literary studies." And, sure enough, Pfau has lengthy discussions of a dizzying array of figures: Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Ockham, Hobbes, Cudworth, Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Hutcheson, Locke, Hume, Adam Smith, Blake, and, particularly, Coleridge. The last few chapters of the book are a dense treatment of Coleridge's philosophical, theological, and political thought that presents him as a vital resource for responding to modern voluntarism.

As is clear from that list, this is largely an Anglo-Protestant story and, while one would hardly wish for a book this long to be any longer, I can't help wondering how the narrative would have looked had some attention been paid to, say, Spain or Italy. Did modernity really flow into the rest of the world from the British Isles (even Ockham is English), or does Pfau's selection of figures serve his narrative purposes? Would attention to early-modern Catholic cultures have resulted in a less dramatic rupture between the modern and the premodern?

Not everyone gets close literary analysis. Numerous figures simply get grouped together in lists of names that are supposed to represent a certain type of thinker or movement of thought. Not only are such lists stylistically unfortunate, they are sometimes puzzling. Take, for example, a list representing the "tradition" that rejects the concept of mind because of "its alleged indemonstrability in terms of the modern scientific method." The list includes Nietzsche, Frege, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Derrida, Lyotard, Daniel Dennett, and David Chalmers. One can only imagine the horror Daniel Dennett would feel at finding himself in the same category as Lyotard, and the presence of Frege and Wittgenstein on this list will be perplexing to many who have read them. Pfau may have good, textually grounded reasons for this list, but he doesn't offer them here. And so this and other lists he presents function as rhetorical flourishes, or bludgeons, not as arguments.

These are relatively minor complaints. More troubling are Pfau's accounts of some of the figures to whom he *does* give close attention. The Anglo-Protestant figures Pfau focuses on are beyond my area of expertise, so I cannot judge with any confidence how accurate and insightful his treatments of them are. But I am familiar with medieval philosophy and theology, and I find some of his claims about both Ockham and Aqui-

nas to be dubious. To put it bluntly, the discussion of Ockham hardly lives up to Pfau's stated goal of "close, textual analysis." In the twenty-two-page chapter that deals with Ockham, there are, by my count, six actual citations from Ockham's text, plus one citation of Ockham drawn from a secondary source. Given the pivotal role he plays in Pfau's narrative, one would expect a closer reading of Ockham's own words. In the few places where Pfau does quote him (as opposed to the many places where Pfau quotes secondary sources that summarize Ockham's views, often in tendentious ways), we tend to get provocative fragments (e.g., "no act is necessarily virtuous") without any context. Reading only Pfau, one wouldn't know that Ockham has extensive discussions of the nature of virtue, and that he does in fact believe that an act of the will by which God is loved above all things is necessarily virtuous. Nor could one guess from Pfau's account that, despite Ockham's emphasis on the will, he believed the accord of action with "right reason" is a key feature of virtue. Ockham is justly known for his dialectical acumen, and to fail to engage the actual arguments underlying his positions is to do him an injustice. One need not agree with Ockham (and I don't) to think that he receives shabby treatment here.

Pfau's discussion of Aquinas is skewed by his desire to put Aquinas at as great a distance from Ockham as possible. Ockham's view that "the good is whatever God wills" is contrasted with the view, attributed to Aquinas, that "God must will whatever is (determined by nature) as good." But this is clearly wrong, both as a matter of theology and as an interpretation of Aquinas. One need not be a radical voluntarist to hold that, while human beings love things on account of their goodness, the things are good in the first place because of God's love for them. And, indeed, this is Aquinas's view (see *Summa theologiae* 1 q. 20 a. 2). Had it not been, the suspicions of Aquinas's contemporaries that he had subjected the divine will to necessity would have been correct.

Similarly, Pfau's account of Aquinas seems to minimize the distinction between faith and reason, the better to distance Aquinas's view from Ockham's. Here's how Pfau formulates Aquinas's position: "whatever rational orientation the individual may conceivably achieve…has to be located in an economy of operative and cooperative grace." But this makes it sound as if, for Aquinas, natural reason and supernatural faith are both gifts in precisely the same way—as if there is an identity between the order of nature and the order of grace. Ironically, the view here ascribed to Aquinas seems more like the illuminationist view of his Franciscan contemporary Bonaventure, who, according to Pfau, is partly responsible for the Franciscan "disenchantment of Aristotelian and Thomist cosmology." Thomas is much clearer—particularly in his mature theology—in distinguishing God's gift of creation and general

providence from God's free gift of saving grace (see *Summa theologiae* 1–2 q. 109 a. 6). In his effort to paint Aquinas in the boldest nonvoluntarist colors possible, Pfau again seems to compromise a distinction Thomas takes great pains to preserve.

Aside from my qualms about some of the specific claims made about specific thinkers, I have a more general qualm about the exclusive focus on thinkers. Though Pfau does occasionally mention material conditions that accompanied intellectual shifts, this is really a story of ideas. But was modernity really produced by theologians and philosophers rather than—to name but a few events and movements—the Black Death, the Italian Renaissance, the printing press, the discovery by Europe of the western hemisphere, the Reformation, the invention of the telescope and microscope, and the so-called Wars of Religion that accompanied the rise of the nation state? Pfau's narrative mentions these things only in passing or not at all.

This focus on ideas and thinkers is hardly unique to Pfau. Genealogists tend to give accounts of the origins of modernity that focus on ideas. Perhaps this is because genealogists tend to be academics; and academics are, by profession, thinkers. We academics like to believe that our culture thought its way into the dilemma of modernity, because then we could think our way out of it. We hope to achieve what Pfau, near the beginning of his book, calls "a comprehensive grasp of our historical situation." But what if our narratives of ideas give us a false sense of comprehension? Might we be better served by a more complex narrative that includes not only thinkers and their ideas, but also the imponderable complexity of natural and social forces?

Do Pfau's questionable claims about Aquinas and Ockham make his account of our current situation any less convincing? He mentions that certain historical claims that John Milbank has made concerning Ockham's key role in creating the opposition between "right order" and "individual rights" have been shown by other scholars to be mistaken. Pfau adds, however, that it doesn't matter what the genesis of modern notions of individual rights is; what matters is that we no longer ground these rights in the notion of "right order." But if the assessment of our modern malaise can stand without the genealogical narrative, what is the point of the narrative? Nietzsche was already convinced that Judeo-Christian morality was pernicious before he began his genealogical inquiry, and he constructed his narrative to bolster that conviction. Perhaps this is true of all genealogies, including Pfau's: their purpose is not to tell us about the past but to strengthen our convictions about the present. If this is so, then genealogy ironically turns out to be a strikingly voluntarist genre, oriented more toward the will than toward the intellect. This should come as no surprise, since Nietzsche, the progenitor of the genre, was modernity's supreme voluntarist.

I, for one, do think there's something to Pfau's assessment of our culture as voluntaristic. In our public discourse we can find ample evidence that assertions of rights seem disconnected from any shared sense what is or is not right. In my discussions with students I frequently see appeals to feeling or experience trumping any reasoned argument. And in our consumer culture we see ourselves subjected to appeals that presume we are nothing but engines of irrational desire. Yet my agreement with Pfau's assessment of our present does not require me to accept his geneology. In fact, I am inclined to think that the malaise of modern voluntarism is simply one form of the perennial malaise of the human race, whose genesis is to be found not in Ockham and his progeny, but long ago in a garden.

Perhaps the problem is not the quality of Pfau's narrative but the narrative strategy itself. Perhaps the time has come to retire genealogy and return to old-fashioned argumentation. Rather than tell a story about where voluntarism came from, why not concentrate on why voluntarism is wrong? But I wonder if Pfau even sees this as an option, since he notes at the outset that "modern and premodern constructions of the world truly *are* incommensurable." So those who prize reason and right order and those who prize the will and individual rights do not share a framework of agreed-upon truths that would make a productive argument between them possible. For the genealogist, the best we can hope for is to out-narrate our opponent. But perhaps we do not need a comprehensive framework but only a few finger- and toe-holds. If we truly aspire to the kind of faith in reason that Pfau finds in the premodern world, then maybe we should trust that modernity has not entirely corrupted human nature and that true arguments can still find a purchase eight hundred years after Ockham. ■

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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 (MA) 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 PhD 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 non-teaching duties.

Applications should be submitted online at https://jobs.stthomas.edu and must include a curriculum vitae. You will be asked to include 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, 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.

Inspired by Catholic intellectual tradition, the University of St. Thomas educates students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good, and seeks to develop individuals who combine career competency with cultural awareness and intellectual curiosity. The successful candidate will possess a commitment to the ideals of this mission.

The University of St. Thomas has a strong commitment to the principles of diversity and inclusion, to equal opportunity policies and practices, and to the principles and goals of affirmative action. In that spirit, the university welcomes nominations and applications from a broad and diverse applicant pool.

The position will remain open until filled but to ensure consideration candidates should apply before January 30, 2015.

The University of St. Thomas (UST), Minnesota Human Resources Department advertises the official job listing on its website. If you are viewing this posting from a site other than "Jobs at UST", the University assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of information.

UST is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

A Late Confession

Francine Dempsey

Sexual sin was an important topic in Catholic schools of the 1960s. I assume that is why, at the inner-city grade school to which I was sent as a brand-new nun, the eighth-grade girls were in one classroom and the eighth-grade boys in another: the divide-and-conquer sex-education system.

Strangely, the sin of violence was never discussed.

I was assigned to teach science and geography to the eighth graders, none of whom cared about archipelagoes or whether they always saw the same side of the moon at night.

I had attended a Catholic high school where the brothers taught the boys and the sisters taught the girls, separately. I attended a Catholic women's college. I entered a community of religious women. Emerging from my enclosed garden, I had long forgotten the ways of eighth-grade boys in classrooms.

Five-foot-seven, I was dressed in a rigid, white, starched headpiece and deep-black flowing robes. I was called by the strong name of Sr. John Constance. The eighth-grade boys were not fooled. I was a feather they blew every which way they chose.

I was schooled in prayer. I meditated for an hour before school and after. I prayed the rosary. I kept long silences. I fasted. I was obedient. I was in my assigned classes on time every day, without exception. I spent hours late into the night in my small convent room preparing the next day's lessons, and praying that I would get through the next day without breaking down in tears, or bolting.

Bolting from Edward.

Edward was a tall thirteen-year-old, a blond, crew-cut, blue-eyed, tough, totally self-confident adolescent who wore a smirk on his face. His blue uniform trousers were worn, faded hand-me-downs from his two older brothers. His white shirts were all gray and too tight to button at the top. His regulation blue tie usually hung loose. His man-sized shoes were scuffed, unpolished, the soles worn, uneven. From the first day he was the unofficial torturer in charge of breaking me down.

When I wrote on the blackboard, my back to the class, aluminum-foil balls whizzed past my veiled head. Edward.

I explained the lessons in their yellow science books as if I had an audience listening, passed out with shaking hands the maps I had mimeographed early that morning. I collected the homework from the few who bothered to do it, gave tests that came back to me with doodles in place of answers, and tried to stop the endless talking, joking, walking around, yelling out the windows to truant friends, the squeaking of chalk on the blackboards, the throwing of chalk at each other, the eating, the doing God knows what in the cloakroom at the back of the classroom.

All led by Edward.

When the noise class leaked out the door and down the hall to the office, Sr. Louise Marie's footsteps came pounding along the hall to my classroom.

In charge of the school, the convent, and everyone in them, she was close to six feet tall with broad shoulders, big brown eyes, and a firm, set mouth and jaw framed in white starch. Standing in my doorway, hands on her hips with an "I dare you" posture that would have stopped the Four Horsemen of Notre Dame at the goal line, she waited. I pointed at Edward and off he would go with her. He'd return shortly, always flushed but ready to behave. I didn't want to know where they went or what happened. But each time the period of quiet that followed seemed shorter as the school year grew longer and longer.

One April day Edward somehow ended up standing in front of my desk, facing me, as I stood between two rows of student desks, facing him. I can't remember what put us into this battle stance, but I do remember the smirk on his face that communicated to me and the entire class: *Hey, Sister. Everyone's watchin'. Whatcha gonna do about me?*

Detail of Christ Taken Prisoner *by Duccio di Buoninsegna, 1308–11*

My hand went up and smacked his face—so hard the crack sounded through the room. A look of utter surprise on Edward's face. The class, still. Hushed. They didn't think I had it in me. I didn't think I had it in me.

I still feel my hand striking Edward's face. I never talk about it. I have never confessed it.

Now, five decades later, my story told, I can forgive Edward. I can forgive myself. And, if I could, I would ask Edward to forgive me. ■

Francine Dempsey, CSJ, *is a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet in Albany, New York.*

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Application deadline:
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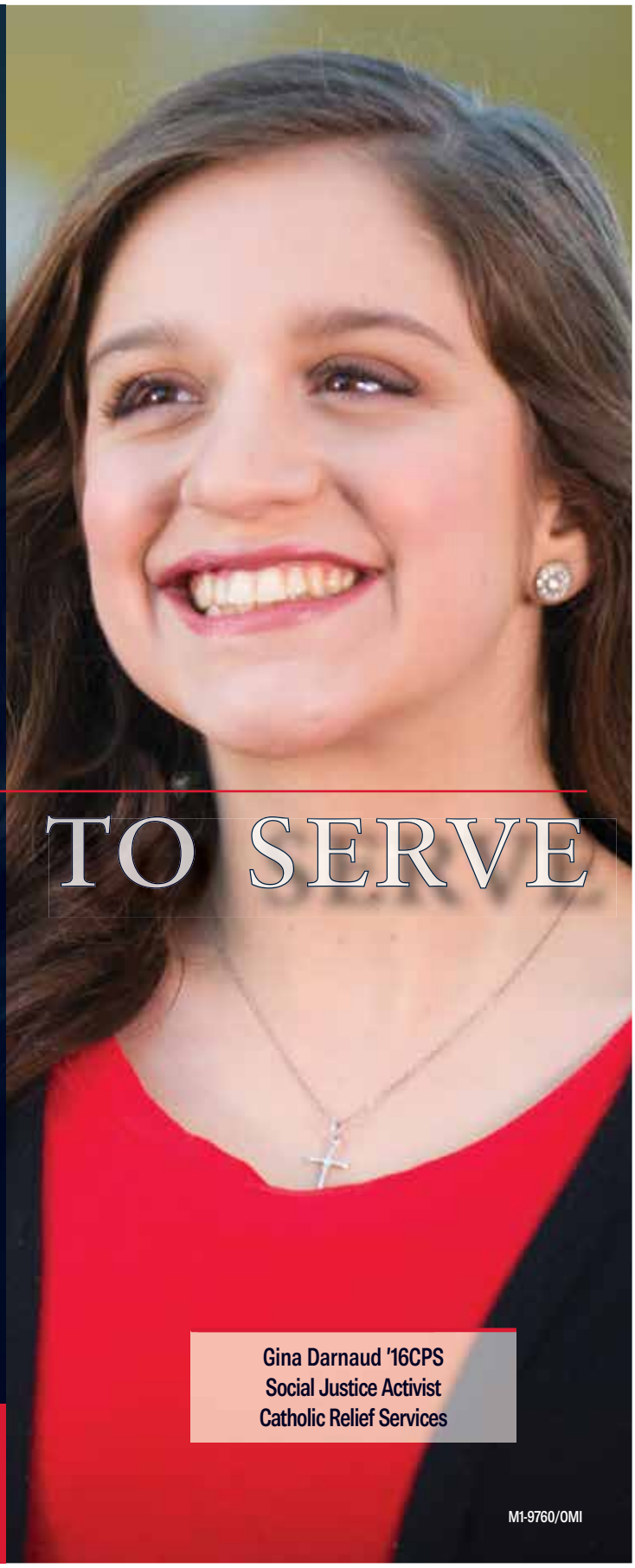

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