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James Sheehan

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Robin Darling Young

Jesus Was Not an Actor
Jerry Ryan

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LETTERS

Teaching prisoners, seminarians & ourselves

SHORTSIGHTED

Kudos to Robert Cowan ("Prisoner's Dilemma," March 6) for saying that the objections that scuttled Governor Andrew Cuomo's plan to pay for college classes for prison inmates were "shortsighted." By refusing to fund what these politicians sardonically labeled "Attica University," they show themselves penny-wise but pound-foolish, as well as ostrich-like in their refusal to see some basic facts.

Cowan's statement that "with access to college-level courses, prisoners are much less likely to return to the behaviors that landed them in jail in the first place" has been demonstrated time and time again. Fewer than 2 percent of the released graduates of Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison, highlighted in the HBO documentary *Sing Sing U*, have returned to the penal system. This has saved the public millions of dollars. Just as important, these college-educated men have returned to their communities, gotten jobs (not without difficulty), helped keep their children in school, and modeled how our penal system might actually accomplish justice and restoration rather than punishment and serial recidivism.

Today we see signs that many people are waking up to the terrible effects of policies that have caused the mass incarceration of poor minorities. As part of this recognition, perhaps those who complain about the cost of educating felons can look clear-eyed at the more devastating price of ignorance—their own as well as that of so many under-educated who inhabit our prisons.

PAUL E. DINTER
Ossining, N.Y.

NO WONDER

The trio of authors you assembled to address the training of priests was spot on ("Clerical Errors," March 6). The church, beyond any hesitation, has a long way to go. As a survivor of clerical abuse, I must focus on your first writer, Paul Blaschko, and his experience in the seminary. I was horrified. What Blaschko witnessed as common practices with respect to sexuality and human development can only be described as draconian. No wonder some men are inclined to abuse. Most do not. I've been blessed to know many good and holy priests who are well grounded and have deep friendships with both men and women. Over time, life has taught them that they, regardless of celibacy, are complex sexual persons who need intimacy just like all pilgrims in Christ.

MARK JOSEPH WILLIAMS
Far Hills, N.J.

CREATIVE TENSION

Is it just me, or would Andrew Bacevich's review of Elizabeth Samet's *No Man's Land* (March 6) have fit just as well with your series of articles on how we train our priests ("Clerical Errors") in the same issue?

According to Bacevich, the main thesis of Samet's book is that war is chaos—"never, ever what you expect it to be"—and requires leaders who have a capacity for creativity. "To assume that inculcating an identifiable set of attitudes, habits, and skills provides an adequate preparation...is to do a tremendous disservice to those sent to fight, especially in positions of leadership," as Bacevich summarizes Samet's argument.

I have no first-hand knowledge of military training, and it's been over thirty years since I was in seminary (during a relatively creative period in many U.S. seminaries), but I wonder whether Samet's critique of how the military trains its leaders might also apply to how the church trains its leaders.

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The problem, Samet says, is that "training does not inculcate creativity. Its whole purpose is to enforce conformity, binding rather than liberating." I hope today's seminarians experience their training as more liberating than binding; I hope too that they are being encouraged to develop "imaginations bold enough to anticipate a future that may look nothing like the past or remarkably like some forgotten past."

DAVE CUSHING
Waterloo, Iowa

TORN

Regarding Luke Timothy Johnson's review of Bart Ehrman's *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (February 6): I'm not even Christian; I'm Jewish, so why am I torn between the historicism of Ehrman and the sturdy belief of Johnson? It is said of Franz Kafka that he had two fixed ideas: 1) there is no God, and 2) that he exists. F. Scott Fitzgerald held that the mark of a sound mind is the ability to keep two opposing views and still function. That describes perfectly my struggle to choose between two respected figures.

Ever since I picked up a pocketbook New Testament over four decades ago I have been addicted to the study of early Christianity. My shelves are stacked with E. P. Sanders, Fr. Raymond Brown, Albert Schweitzer, Fredriksen, Wills, even Bultmann. Magazines like *Commonweal, U.S. Catholic*, and the *Christian Century* arrive along with *Jewish Social Studies, Moment*, and the *Jerusalem Post*.

Early on I got skeptical looks from Jewish friends when I equated the rapid spread of Christianity with the lasting power of Judaism, both miraculous in their own right. But it is a sign of our technological world that I experienced no conflict until I started listening to the Great Courses CDs on long car rides. I listened to Ehrman and Johnson. As a practicing skeptic, my first favorite was Ehrman, who has a strong appeal for us college-educated, secular-minded types who tell ourselves we're just seeking "truth." Ehrman is historically seductive on early Christianity, with a hard eye for "facts." He recommends reading the New Testament "horizontally," better to see all the inconsistencies: The gospels cannot have been written by eye witnesses. Did Jesus die on the night before Passover, as in John, or the day of the holiday, as in Matthew? How did the single mention of Mary Magdalen turn her into a prostitute? And what about pseudigrafia and those extra chapters of Mark? Ehrman, a Scripture scholar and prolific author, smooths the guide for the perplexed by repeatedly proclaiming that he is not denouncing, merely trying to be historical.

That was all very well and good until I discovered Luke Timothy Johnson, who gently puts all that historical data aside, spurning Schweitzer, Vermes, Renan, et al. as essentially irrelevant, not even bothering to refute any of the points I mentioned. His posture leads one into the lush pastures of experiential belief and—let no one deny it—he is very good. When I mentioned Johnson to a Jewish scholar, he smiled, himself no automatic true believer, and said, "He is the best." I cannot do better than Great Courses, which describes Johnson as "one who maintains that the most familiar aspects of Christianity—its myths, institutions, ideas and morality—are only its outer 'husk,'" "as opposed to its 'kernel'…which still holds the secret to its ability to attract new followers."

I suspect there are many Christians who share this conflict. Every once in a while I hear an echo from the Christian side of the fence about the burden of pure belief. The problem is certainly not unknown among adherents of both faiths; witness Augustine for Christians and Maimonides for Jews, both prime witnesses to the struggle for belief. As a Jew, the best answer I can summon is the response of the people to Moses (Exodus 24:7): *We will do and we will hear*—exactly the opposite of ordinary logic. Surely I will go on pondering which one to choose. Perhaps I will never be decisive. Perhaps the struggle is its own reward.

HAROLD TICKTIN
Shaker Heights, Ohio

From the Editors

Held to Account

In a March 2014 interview, Pope Francis was given an opportunity to comment on the sexual-abuse scandal, a subject he had said remarkably little about since his election. Acknowledging the "deep wounds" suffered by victims, Francis went on to defend the church as the only public institution to address such crimes "with transparency and responsibility." No one else has done more, he continued, and yet "the church is the only one to be attacked."

Those ill-advised remarks took many by surprise, coming as they did just a few months after Francis had announced a new Commission for the Protection of Minors and asked the world's bishops to support its work. The commission, which includes two victims, wasted no time publicly stating its highest priority: accountability for negligent bishops. In November 2014, Cardinal Séan O'Malley—president of the commission—told *60 Minutes* that the Holy See needed to "urgently address" one of the most painful cases to emerge in the U.S. church: Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph, who was convicted of failing to report child abuse in 2012. Last month, following a Vatican investigation, Pope Francis removed him.

In December 2010—nearly a decade after the U.S. bishops pledged "zero tolerance" for abusive priests—Finn learned that Fr. Shawn Ratigan's personal computer contained possibly pornographic photos of children. Five months after the photos were discovered, and without Finn's knowledge, the vicar general turned the cleric in to the police. Ratigan, now laicized, is serving a fifty-year sentence in federal prison after pleading guilty to possessing and creating child pornography. (Federal sentencing law is especially hard on child pornographers.)

For nearly three years, Kansas City Catholics have been wondering whether a pope would replace Finn with a bishop who would put the safety of children first. On April 21, they got their answer. In a terse statement, the Holy See announced that Pope Francis had accepted Finn's resignation. The brevity of that statement was inversely proportional to its significance for the global church.

In 2001, for example, French Bishop Pierre Pican was convicted of failing to report an allegation against a priest. He later received a letter of support from Cardinal Dario Castrillón Hoyos, then prefect of the Congregation for Clergy. Unlike Finn, who is sixty-two, Pican remained in office until the mandatory retirement age of seventy-five. As John Allen noted in the *Boston Globe*, no one at the Vatican has come to Finn's defense. Should Catholics expect to see a wave of episcopal resignations? Probably not. Many of the most egregious offenders are no longer in office. But this decision sends a strong message: The era of tolerating bishops who fail to protect the most vulnerable under their care has come to an end. This pope will hold them to account.

Victims' advocates have protested that the Holy See obfuscated the true reason for Finn's resignation in its press release, which only mentioned the pertinent canon law (that a bishop who cannot fulfill his office because of illness or another "grave cause" should resign). They also criticize the pope for taking too long to oust Finn. On the first issue, they have a point. Francis has lauded the supposed "transparency" with which the church has handled this crisis. While there's little doubt that the world's bishops interpret this resignation as a warning against mishandling abuse cases, the rest of the church, especially victims, deserve a clearer explanation.

But when it comes to the second complaint—that Francis should have moved faster—the pope's critics may fail to appreciate what he is really up to. Francis is running a church with five thousand bishops. In order to educate himself about the controversy in Kansas City, a diocese of about 133,000 in a country he's never visited, Francis initiated an investigation last September. He allowed that process to run its course, despite increasingly strenuous calls to sack Finn. The pope's favored methods of listening and deliberation—most evident in the Synod on the Family—are themselves instruments of justice.

"Families need to know that the church is making every effort to protect their children," Pope Francis wrote in a February letter to bishops. "They should also know that they have every right to turn to the church with full confidence, for it is a safe and secure home." For decades, U.S. Catholics have seen bishops who ignored or covered up abuse go unpunished. With the decision to remove Finn—and to create the Commission for the Protection of Minors—Francis has gone a long way toward dressing one of the scandal's deepest wounds. His work is far from over, but in the meantime he has given Catholics something that has been in short supply throughout this terrible crisis: hope. ■

DO NO HARM

J. Peter Nixon

A close friend of mine recently finalized his divorce. He and his wife had been separated for a year and the last few years of their marriage had been difficult. They were very active in our parish. He no longer attends Mass here. I've continued to meet and pray with him as he walks this journey. Given this experience, one might suppose that I would be among those hoping for some change in the church's discipline regarding divorce and remarriage. To be honest, however, I find myself torn in multiple directions and unsure about what I would do if I were a bishop attending the upcoming synod.

Part of this is generational. I grew up in the 1970s, when divorce became more widespread than it had been previously. I still have vivid and difficult memories of when the parents of my best friend in grade school divorced. Another close friend, whose parents divorced when we were in high school, never quite seemed to recover from the experience. My own parents—who recently celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary—also went through some difficult times in the early '70s.

The indissolubility of marriage has also been central to my own spiritual journey as a married layman. I see marriage as a vocation that, in its own way, is as challenging and demanding a path to holiness as the various forms of religious life that the church has historically championed. My marriage has brought me and my wife great joy. Like most marriages, however, it has also involved periods of suffering that we have borne for the love of one another and the love of Christ. In the midst of difficulties, it is a powerful thing to remember that I swore before the altar of God that with this person and no other I would work out my salvation as long as we both shall live.

The debate over the church's teaching on divorce is often portrayed as a conflict between an abstract legalism and the messy reality of human experience. But the experience that needs to be considered is not merely the experience of divorced and remarried couples seeking the sacraments, but also the experience of married couples (and their children) whose marriages have been strengthened, and at times even sustained, by the church's efforts to support marriage and strongly discourage divorce.

The good folks at Georgetown's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate report that 28 percent of Catholics who have ever married have experienced divorce. While a daunting figure in many ways, it is significantly below the rate for Protestants (39 percent) and those with no religious affiliation (42 percent). There are many factors that explain these differences, but one of them is almost certainly the strong presumption against divorce that has historically been deeply woven into the church's culture.

I worry about what some of the proposals discussed at the previous synod would do to this culture. Many of the advocates of reform suggested their proposed changes would apply to a narrow range of hard cases; "not for everyone, not for no one" in Cardinal Marx's formulation. I have never known a divorce that was not a hard case and it's hard to imagine local bishops not coming under enormous pressure over time to be more accommodating. Couple this with a streamlined annulment process and the church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage—which all parties in the synod debate argued should remain unchanged—would look considerably weaker in practice than in theory.

One idea to counter this problem would be to couple the reform proposals with a more aggressive pastoral effort to support marriage, such as a renewed commitment to movements like Marriage Encounter and Retrouvaille and outreach to civilly married couples interested in bringing their marriage into the church. I find the idea intriguing, and should the synod ultimately recommend any changes, I hope that efforts like this are part of the package.

Human history, however, should make us skeptical that cultural norms can be sustained without imposing burdens on anyone. Most communities have historically relied on some combination of hard and soft sanctions to discourage behavior of which they disapprove. Just ask anyone who still smokes cigarettes! Relying on positive reinforcement alone has a poor track record of success. How many Catholics actually go to the trouble of choosing a personal penance now that the prohibition against the eating of meat on Fridays is no longer in force? I will confess that my own experience in this regard is not encouraging.

I suspect there are people on both sides of the current debate who will dislike the direction of these reflections. Defenders of the current discipline ground their arguments in the words of Jesus himself and the centuries-long practice of the Western church, not in the sociology of religion. Reformers, for their part, may be uncomfortable with the idea that individuals should be made to suffer for the sake of an abstract norm that fails to take into account the specificity of their circumstances. A weakening of the church's witness against divorce, however, could lead to consequences that would be anything but abstract. Those consequences would be measured in broken marriages, severed friendships, and psychological and economic harm to children, which is real and measurable. ■

A version of this article first appeared on dotCommonweal on April 13.

CNS FILE PHOTO / JON L. HENDRICKS

Jo McGowan

Spare the Rod

TREATING VIOLENCE LIKE A CONTAGION

I was in the Delhi airport last week, waiting for a flight to Scotland. Like most foreign flights, it was leaving at a ghastly hour—4:30 a.m. I was exhausted and the journey hadn't even started.

I wasn't the only one. A young mother pushed her luggage cart in my direction. Her toddler sat perched on top of the suitcases, sleepy, a croissant on a plate in his lap. As I watched, the cart jolted to a stop and the croissant slid off the plate and landed on the floor. The child was suddenly wide awake. He glanced up at me with a look of pure fear; at the same moment, his mother saw what had happened.

She hissed something like "Now look what you've done." She was speaking Dutch or German, so I don't actually know what she said, but the tone and the menace were clear. The child was in big trouble and he knew it. The hideous scene escalated. Mom slapped the boy surreptitiously and flung him on the seat beside me. When he toppled off just moments later, she picked him up roughly by his arm, and, holding him too tightly, muttered threateningly into his ear. He calmed down briefly, but when he set her off again a bit later, she took him aside and slapped him twice in the face and then shook his little body hard.

I was flying to Scotland to attend a conference on violence against children. The irony was appalling. I walked over to where she was now sitting on another row of seats, cradling the trembling boy and trying to soothe him to sleep. "Can I hold him a while so you can get a break?" I asked gently. The offer was turned down, surprisingly politely. Then I told her I was very concerned about what I had seen and thought she needed to seek help when she got home. Until my flight was announced, I kept my eye on that row of benches, determined that kid would not come to harm again, at least not on my watch.

Half the world's children—around one billion kids—experience violence in their lives, according to Dr. James Mercy of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, who spoke at the conference in Edinburgh. A public-health expert, Mercy knows all too well the effect of such experience: high rates of depression, criminal behavior, domestic violence, rape, substance abuse, broken marriages, eating disorders, and acquired disabilities.

"Violence in our society is an epidemic," according to Karyn McCluskey, who directs the Violence Reduction Unit in Scotland. And she would know: Glasgow, where McCluskey works, was once the murder capital of Europe.

Not any more. McCluskey's approach to addressing the violence in her city has been startlingly effective. Not surprisingly, given her background as a forensic psychologist and former nurse, her solution was a medical one. As she explained in her keynote speech at the conference, "Violence works like an infectious disease. It's passed on. You can catch it. Your life is not predictable or manageable. You may have alcoholic parents, suffer domestic violence. Nobody cares about you. You're incapable of empathy: you're then hardwired for violence." This insight informs her unit's entire approach to reducing violence. "We follow World Health Guidelines for any other epidemic," she explained. "Isolate the contagion. Prevent transmission. Treat outbreaks instantly and aggressively."

Her inspiration came from an American criminologist named David Kennedy, who had designed a program to combat gang violence in Boston and later in Cincinnati. The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV), which Kennedy helped McCluskey develop in Glasgow, "calls in" known gang members for a tough, no-nonsense invitation-only event with three basic features: a uniformed cop reading them the riot act—zero tolerance, not only for offenders but for all members of the offender's gang; a promise of support (education, training, job placements) for those who renounce violence; and, finally, heart-wrenching testimonies from physicians who have treated victims and from parents who have lost children to violence.

The initiative has been remarkably successful. Among the more than five hundred gang members in Glasgow who have been part of the program since 2008, violent offences are down by 46 percent. Arrests for weapons possession have fallen by 85 percent.

But McCluskey isn't satisfied, because she's still worried about the kind of thing I saw at the Delhi airport on my way to Scotland. "Ask any grandmother out on the [public housing] estates, and she'll tell you exactly what the problem is," McCluskey says. "It's the parents, she'll tell you. The families."

So parent training is the key piece of McCluskey's program to end violence against children. It's not the easiest solution, but it's the only one that makes any sense. Children exposed to violence from infancy accept it as normal. They are blind, through no fault of their own, to the suffering it causes. "At the end of the day, it's empathy." McCluskey insists. "Empathy is what keeps us together. It's all really about people getting on with other people. Because if you bring a kid up in a war zone, you're going to get a warrior." ■

Robin Darling Young

Does the Earth Have Rights?

WHAT TO EXPECT—AND HOPE FOR—IN THE POPE'S NEXT ENCYCLICAL

When Pope Francis issues his encyclical on the environment this spring or early summer, some American Catholics will welcome it—but only some. Broadly speaking, Catholic opinion on climate change matches the American political spectrum, and thus the polemics around this polarizing issue are Catholic polemics as well. As numerous recent articles make clear, Francis is concerned about global warning. Catholics who oppose policies meant to halt or ameliorate climate change—Catholic climate skeptics—grant the pope's authority in the moral realm, but dispute his expertise in climate science. Some have not hesitated to call him out on his views, at times harshly. One called Francis imprudent and apocalyptic; another said he was "an ally of the far left," a "Marxist" who has been "snookered" by climate-change ideologues.

Ironically, Catholic foes of Francis's probable environmental teaching find themselves in a position similar to that of a very different group: those who turned away from another encyclical, *Humanae vitae*, almost half a century ago. Most American Catholics, even if they accepted that encyclical's prophetic criticism of sexual freedom in the West, evaded its strictures; adopting the mantra of William F. Buckley and Garry Wills, they whispered "mater, si; magistra no," used birth control, and continued to receive Communion. Yet dissenting Catholics of the 1960s did not publicly deride the holy father, even when prominent theologians opposed the teaching. Lay Catholics in the twenty-first century, however, emboldened by electronic media, feel free to slam the pope.

It seems clear that they are in the minority. As *New Yorker* writer Elizabeth Kolbert pointed out recently, while few in our country—of any political persuasion—are ready to accept the discipline required to slow climate change, most Americans *do* believe that the atmosphere is warming rapidly, and that we are already observing the consequences of this warming. A recent poll conducted jointly by the nonprofit Resources for the Future, Stanford University, and the *New York Times* demonstrates that large majorities of Democratic and independent voters, and even 41 percent of Republican voters, credit the scientific projections behind predictions of climate disaster and believe that government at various levels should address the problem. Catholics who dispute global warming, meanwhile, are so strongly opposed to Francis on this point that they are willing to insult him personally and even dispute papal authority itself.

As for what the pope hopes to accomplish with his forthcoming teaching, the worldwide college of bishops formally constitutes the audience for an encyclical. Francis does not intend the document to address bishops alone, however, but Catholics worldwide—and more than Catholics. Indeed, he wants to speak to all human beings. He has already begun to do this by sharing his opinions on environmental degradation, and he will follow the encyclical with an autumn address to the United Nations General Assembly. Later, he will meet with other world religious leaders ahead of the UN Climate Conference in Paris in December—a conference aimed at producing a legally binding global agreement on climate.

Francis is not the first pope to address the world at large; both Paul VI and John Paul II used their stature and influence to try to steer world opinion. But those earlier pontiffs usually weighed in on international political movements or crises, such as the nuclear-arms race. Francis, in effect, is taking on the entirety of the industrial revolution and the vast and increasingly concentrated wealth that has resulted from it.

And here the Catholic tradition comes up against something very difficult. That tradition, as critics insist, is indeed ill equipped to deal with a problem that is simultaneously social/political and individual/moral. Yet these dimensions are intertwined in the matter of climate change, since all humans, not just corporations and governments, are implicated in the burning of fossil fuels and the resultant atmospheric changes. How to balance individual moral responsibility, described in the moral teachings of the church, against a general Catholic or human responsibility as developed in more than a century of modern Catholic social teaching?

CNS PHOTO / NASA HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

The ability to extract fossil fuels from the earth has granted developed nations rising life expectancies and levels of material comfort previously unknown to humanity. Now we discover that in burning these fuels we have altered the earth's delicate atmosphere in various ways. Some of these changes are life-threatening: lengthy droughts that interrupt reliable harvests, rising oceans that may eventually inundate coastal cities. Such prospects have elicited a range of views. In *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein optimistically claims that climate change can provide an opportunity to reorganize human society for the better; Elizabeth Kolbert, on the other hand, has demonstrated that in order to be truly environmentally sustainable, electricity consumption would have to be reduced to shockingly low levels. Yet the kind of economic growth that sponsors our way of life depends upon *increasing* fossil-fuel consumption, not lessening it. We are in a bind. Clearly we are finding it difficult to muster the collective generosity toward future generations—our grandchildren—that can prevent them from suffering the effects of climate change.

Here, many believe, Catholic social teaching has something to offer. One can argue that its preferential option for the poor extends to those future grandchildren of ours. Likewise, Catholic groups have invoked the principle of subsidiarity, which dictates that action in accordance with Catholic teaching take place at the most local level possible, to draw attention to the problem, especially in Hispanic Catholic communities here and in Latin America. And Catholic moral and social teaching can deal credibly with the worldview that contemporary science presupposes. This will surprise some. A climate scientist remarked to me, after a conference on climate change and the common good at the University of Notre Dame a few years ago, that he was pleasantly surprised to learn that the magisterium of the Catholic Church accepts the results of experimental science.

In fact, contrary to such impressions, Catholic tradition has always possessed the resources to embrace science. Early Christian tradition made a promising start when it interpreted ancient stories of creation in a non-literal, yet theistic, account of the origin of the cosmos. And despite the development of a strain of theology marked by supernaturalism, the philosophical approach associated with Thomas Aquinas made it possible for Catholic teaching to accommodate and even sponsor scientific discoveries. Well before the waning of anti-modernism in the twentieth century and the decrees of Vatican II, Catholic teaching learned to accommodate evolution and scientific biblical inquiry, tempering its conservatism with an openness to progressive scholarship. The social encyclicals beginning with Leo XIII highlight this development; and though many critics of the church claim to discern an affinity between church teachings and fundamentalism's rejection of such scientific bulwarks as evolution, the highest-level institutions of the church put the lie to such a connection.

Francis came to the papacy armed with a powerful concern for the poor of the Third World, who stand to suffer most from climate calamity—whether those living in low-lying island nations like the Philippines, or climate refugees from Africa seeking surer food supplies. When he arrived at the Vatican he found it supplied not merely with a troublesome Curia, but also with scientific institutes. The scientists staffing these institutes know well that since 1950 there has been a sevenfold increase in urban population worldwide; that energy use has increased fivefold and fertilizer eightfold; that crops are menaced by depletion of fresh water and nutrients in the soil. They know that forests have been clear-cut and land degraded; that invasive animal species flourish everywhere, replacing natural predators; that the marine ecosystem is in danger; that species extinction is now accelerating at a shocking rate, damaging the diversity on which life on the planet depends.

They are also aware of the possibility of drastic atmospheric warming—up to 6 degrees centigrade in the next century. And they understand that only an international effort with binding agreements can reverse current trends. Yet the sole international body currently capable of forging such agreements, the United Nations, is weak and divided. Its subsidiary body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, has regularly issued reports on climate change for a quarter century, and yet little on the international level has been accomplished. Indeed, global fossil-fuel consumption is currently skyrocketing, aided by new extraction technologies. Politically, developing countries have shown themselves unwilling to refrain from building their own economies on the same fossil-fuel use that made first-world countries rich and comfortable.

THE FLAMINGO

The pink of her plumage
is borrowed from the shells of shrimp she
snaps from the muddy grasses, as step-by-step
she extends her stride across
a kingdom not river, not sea,

safe because she is a replica
of another and another, copies every one.
She gazes, She gazes again,
a hunger
of no cunning, a swimmer of no depth.
Even her beauty is doubtful—
peering, straightening,
she drips water from a beak
too bent to be a weapon too mute for song.
Emptily alert, she is

as tall as she needs to be
to attend to the multitude
that feeds in salt-shallows trodden green,
rises to cloud the sun,
and descends again to
reedy afterthought. Nothing is hers.

—Michael Cadnum

Michael Cadnumcis the author of thirty-five books, including the novel Seize the Storm.

How will Francis address a problem that is at once urgent and yet still only partially unobservable—a crisis unfolding slowly, over many decades? Certainly he will extend the teachings of his predecessors, John Paul II and Benedict XVI. In his 1990 World Day of Peace Message, John Paul lamented "the lack of respect for life evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution," deeming it "manifestly unjust that a privileged few should continue to accumulate excess goods, squandering available resources, while masses of people are living in conditions of misery at the very lowest level of subsistence." Catholics, he said, were obliged to protect creation against "industrial waste, fossil fuels, and deforestation." Benedict spoke even more often than John Paul about climate change, and, with his approval, the 2011 report of the Vatican Academy of Sciences urged "all people and nations to recognize the serious and potentially irreversible impacts of global warming caused by the anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants."

Francis is likely to repeat these exhortations while amplifying their urgency considerably. Judging from statements by his secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and by Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, chancellor of the academy that issued the 2011 report, the pope is likely to say that climate change cannot be solved by the free market. He has already criticized capitalism for encouraging consumerism and creating extremes of poverty and wealth. But he may go further now, and address our duty to other species and to the integrity of a creation that is losing many of those species. He may end up moving beyond traditional calls for good stewardship by acknowledging, at least implicitly, that nature itself has rights—rights that are being flagrantly violated by human beings.

"We have, in a sense, lorded it over nature, over Sister Earth, over Mother Earth," Pope Francis remarked to journalists recently. Was he really implying that created nature—the environment—has rights of its own? Such a view on the part of the pope would be a significant development in Catholic thinking about the inherent worth of creation apart from the humans who dominate it. We shall soon find out if he meant it. ■

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A Continent Adrift

How Greece & Ukraine Are Testing Europe

James J. Sheehan

A German friend of mine once shared this childhood memory: It was the late spring of 1945, during Nazism's long, violent endgame; allied infantry had finally broken the backbone of the German army's resistance while allied aircraft rained death and destruction on the civilian population. In the final months of the war, my friend's father, a middle-aged businessman, had been drafted into the Wehrmacht as part of the Nazis' last, desperate effort to delay defeat. He was fortunate enough to be taken prisoner almost at once and even more fortunate to be able to slip away from his captors and make his way home. The morning after his return, as the family gathered for breakfast, he appeared dressed in suit and tie, ready to go back to the office. There was, he announced, obviously a great deal of work to be done. I have often thought of this story as a kind of parable for postwar Germany where, amid the confused devastation of defeat, the survivors set out to rebuild their lives.

The years immediately after 1945 were difficult for the survivors of six years of total war, political repression, and racial murder. In Eastern Europe, the Soviets imposed Communist regimes with ruthless brutality, while in the West millions of frightened, hungry people searched for shelter and sustenance. It has been estimated that in 1945 a quarter of the German population was homeless. Even for the winners, the fruits of victory were dry and bitter. Britain, whose survival had made the Allies' victory possible, continued to confront shortages for years; rationing of food and fuel did not end until 1954. And yet, when seen from the perspective of the present, what is most remarkable about the postwar era is the speed and depth of Western Europe's recovery.

This recovery rested on two accomplishments, both enjoying broad popular support and embedded in a network of institutions. First, a new security structure gathered Western European states in a military and political alliance directed against the Soviet Union and guaranteed by the United States. As a result, for the first time in history, the danger of an armed conflict between European powers receded and eventually disappeared. Germany and France, the antagonists in two world wars, opened their borders and shared important sovereign powers. The second set of accomplishments both depended on and reinforced the first: sustained economic growth improved living standards and helped produce an unprecedented amount of cooperation among European states. NATO and the European Union, the two most significant institutional expressions of these trends, turned out to be tough and flexible enough to survive the end of the Cold War in 1989 and to absorb the newly independent states of Eastern Europe. They continue to provide the essential foundation of the European international system. We tend to take these things for granted, but it should be among the historian's tasks to remind us how, when viewed from the perspective of Europe's violent past, truly remarkable they are, how long they have lasted, and how much they have accomplished.

Berlin, July 1945

James J. Sheehan *is professor of history emeritus at Stanford University and the author of* Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?, *among other books.*

In many ways, the problems Europeans face in 2015 came from pushing the accomplishments of the postwar era too far. As part of the renewed impetus for greater European integration in the 1990s, a common European currency was introduced, but without a firm institutional foundation. At the same time, NATO expanded to include the former members of the Soviet bloc without taking into account Russian security interests and perceptions. Both of these policies seemed like good ideas at the time. The Euro, born during a period of economic dynamism and post–Cold War euphoria, was seen as an effective way to bind the newly unified Germany to the European project. As had often happened during the process of European integration, political institutions would, or so the Euro's advocates hoped, follow in the wake of economic achievements. The eastern expansion of NATO, encouraged by Washington and eagerly sought by the governments of the new post-Communist states, seemed like a way to consolidate democratic regimes in Eastern Europe and avoid the kind of instability that engulfed the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Russia, the advocates of NATO expansion insisted, was sufficiently weakened by its internal troubles and distracted by other problems that it would have no choice but to accept the extension of Western power into what had traditionally been its own sphere of influence.

It is now clear that neither of these optimistic assessments turned out to be true. Beginning in 2008, the Eurozone entered a prolonged crisis from which no clear end is in sight. Greece is the most prominent and pressing but by no means the only site of this crisis, in which governments must try to make international fiscal policy without international fiscal institutions. Much more serious are Vladimir Putin's efforts to protect Russia's sphere of influence by supporting the secession of Crimea and supplying pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. This has produced a civil war that reawakened the specter of international violence that Europeans hoped had been banished forever. In some ways, the civil war in Ukraine resembles the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia after 1989, but with a significant difference that is based on both history and geography: in Ukraine a major power is directly involved, which means that this crisis is inexorably enmeshed in a web of other international issues, including the civil war in Syria and attempts to reach a nuclear-arms deal with Iran, all of which involve complex negotiations with Russia. In the end, the Western powers were able to impose a kind of solution—imperfect, in some ways unjust, but clearly better than no solution at all—on the Yugoslav situation. This is much less likely to happen in Ukraine.

The intersection of the Greek and Ukrainian crises is most apparent to the Germans, who have the biggest stakes in both. Germany has the economic resources to help the Greeks recover and, as a major creditor, has the most to lose should the Greeks default. But German voters are reluctant to put their own prosperity at risk to bail out what many of them regard as a corrupt and irresponsible system. The Greeks, on the other hand, suffering under draconian austerity measures, view German demands as self-serving and vindictive, especially in the light of how Nazi Germany behaved in Greece during the Second World War. Berlin also urgently desires a peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian conflict, which is, after all, in Germany's neighborhood, a part of Europe in which it has deep economic, cultural, and security interests. As in Greece, German policy in Ukraine is shadowed by the complex memories of the Second World War.

> The most difficult problem in political analysis is to tell the difference between weather and climate—that is, to distinguish between the inevitable storms that periodically occur, often leaving wreckage in their wake, and those long-term alterations in temperature and precipitation that have less obvious but more lasting consequences.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has worked tirelessly to craft a solution to these two crises. In a series of complex and exhausting meetings, she has tried to find a formula that will satisfy the newly elected Greek government, which is pledged to end austerity, the European bankers, and her own skeptical countrymen. At the same time, she has searched for a way to support the Ukrainian government, encourage reform in the restive eastern regions, and persuade the Russians to stop enabling communal violence. With remarkable patience and extraordinary stamina, she has asserted German international power and has become, rather reluctantly, Europe's most important leader.

As I write in late March, the outcomes of both the Greek and Ukrainian crises remain open. Efforts are underway in Berlin to patch together a new solution to the Greek problem that can be sold to both the Greek and German electorates. The chances for a European resolution of Greece's economic difficulties are not good: it seems to me highly likely (if by no means certain) that Greece will have to leave the Eurozone, a painful but in the end unavoidable solution to an intractable political dilemma. How much collateral damage

this will create for the European Union will depend on how skillfully European leaders can manage the Greek departure. The European Union will almost certainly survive, shaken but intact.

As the negotiations with Greece drag on, a fragile ceasefire has, at least temporarily, pushed Ukraine off the front pages of Western newspapers. Here too the odds are against a swift and satisfactory solution. In eastern Ukraine, the civil strife will probably continue, waxing and waning as Putin continues a dangerous game that is driven by the imperatives of Russian domestic policies as well as his perception of Russia's security interests. Nevertheless, while there may well be other outbreaks of violence throughout the shattered zone along Russia's western and southern periphery, it seems unlikely that this violence will penetrate further west, for example into the Baltic states or Poland. Like the EU, NATO may be shaken by a newly antagonistic Russia, but it will most probably survive.

The most difficult problem in political analysis is to tell the difference between weather and climate—that is, to distinguish between the inevitable storms that periodically occur, often leaving wreckage in their wake, and those long-term alterations in temperature and precipitation that have less obvious but more lasting consequences. Such changes in the political climate are the result of deeply rooted demographic, economic, and cultural developments, sometimes accelerated by events, more often slowly transforming people's expectations about how their world does and should work. There is no doubt that Europe has had some bad weather recently. But is the climate beginning to change? Are the relatively temperate decades that followed the Second World War coming to an end? Is, after seventy years, the postwar era over?

There are surely signs that the political landscape has begun to shift, shaking the consensus on which postwar public life was based. People's initial response to the economic crisis of 2008 was to punish the incumbents, who were driven out of office throughout Europe. Some have recovered, many have not. In most of Europe, democratic Socialist parties have been especially hard hit, in part because of the long-term decline in the political power of organized labor, in part because the left was blamed for mismanaging the economy. But in many countries, all the established political parties seem to be losing ground. Britain, which held a general election on May 7, is a particularly dramatic example of this trend. At the beginning of the postwar era, British politics was dominated by two more or less evenly matched parties, Conservative and Labour: in 1951, they won 97 percent of the vote. In 2010, they got just over 60 percent. Only about one in ten British voters now strongly identifies with one of the major parties; smaller parties—Greens, Liberals, Scottish nationalists, and the United Kingdom Independence Party—have grown in number and vitality. In Germany, the two major parties, the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, govern in a so-called Grand Coalition, largely because neither is strong enough to form a viable majority on its own. Chancellor Merkel remains popular; her party much less so. The most potentially significant example of the erosion of established parties is France, where the principal beneficiary seems to be the National Front, which has tried to jettison its right-wing radical image without losing its appeal as a catchall party for the discontented and disconnected. An electoral victory of the National Front would be a disaster, both for France and for Europe.

Everywhere in Europe, from the advocates of autonomy in Scotland and Catalonia, to the students occupying the administration building at the University of Amsterdam, to the angry crowds in the streets of Athens and Madrid, to the supporters of the National Front in France and of the even more sinister right-wing groups elsewhere, one finds a growing restlessness, a disaffection with the status quo, an urge to express anger and frustration. This mood reflects very real sources of discontent and dislocation, especially the massive unemployment that now seems to be a permanent part of Europe's weaker economies. But the mood extends beyond economically challenged states like Spain and Greece into the more prosperous and economically vibrant north. And it is everywhere fed by anxieties, often exaggerated and manipulated, about Europe's growing Muslim minority. There is no doubt that throughout Europe, many people's political loyalties have become detached from their traditional moorings and are now significantly more volatile and unstable. How many of these people can be captured by the parties that play on popular fears and frustration remains a fundamental question about Europe's future and the best indication of whether its political climate has in fact permanently changed.

"In political activity," Michael Oakeshott reminds us, "men sail a boundless and bottomless sea; there is neither harbor for shelter nor floor for anchorage, neither starting place nor appointed destination." Sometimes the best anyone can do is to stay afloat, try to remain on course, avoid the uncharted whirlpools and reefs that suddenly and inevitably appear. Political problems are rarely solved; sometimes they disappear or are replaced by others, most often they are managed and contained. In managing the problems of the moment, Europeans still have a great many advantages: a number of strong, productive economies, a skilled and disciplined work force, a relatively honest and efficient administrative apparatus. Above all, they have the positive momentum created by seven decades of relative stability, peace, and prosperity. Protecting this legacy is the major challenge facing European governments. To do so they will need patience, flexibility, and luck—that blend of *virtú* and *fortuna* about which Machiavelli wrote with such insight and conviction. And, like the citizens of every democracy, including our own, they will need to nourish the capacity to hope, surely the most important of the theological virtues for our public lives. Without hope, the door to the future is closed. ■

SOME OCTAVES ON HOLY ORDERS

for Thomas Meagher and Ryan Justin Adams, Presbyters

Non sum qualis eram

A vestibule bathed in stained glass light
for naming and claiming, chrism and oil.
The fidgeting novices swaddled in white,
laved and anointed, joyously hoist up
heavenward, buried with the crucified.
The blood-proud elders, all kinship and foibles,
I loved those Saturdays with dads and moms,
the bracing splash in the baptismal font.

Binding and loosing was frightening business:
the fear of perdition and comeuppance—
the jot and tittle of guilt and contrition,
the shalt and thou shalt not accountancy
of holding on and letting go, remission
of sins in trade for true repentances.
Bless me father for I have sinned, they'd plead.
I'd give out Hail Mary's and Glory Be's.

That *hoc est corpus* with the loaf and cup—
the body and blood work of sacrifice—
a transubstantiation, bit and sup,
table and blade replaced by host and chalice;
the fervent with their open palms and mugs,
after Melchizedek's ancient praxis,
the endless, famished line of them—vapors
of a life's long work and love's hard labor.

Every year the archbishop visits
to have a look around and count receipts,
to tap the faces of brothers and sisters,
their flaming uraeuses, their Paraclete
hissing above, gifts of tongues and spirits,
this laying on of hands, a bloom, replete:
much like the descent of the holy ghost
on frightened disciples, gobsmacked and aghast.

I might have married. I know about love:
the heart's privations, the body's urgency.
For years I ached but offered it all up
for suffering souls and prayed for constancy.
The calling I got was the faintest summons,
an intimation only, a sense of things,
a soul ramifying and forever
silent, beyond silence listened for.

The blessed sacrament: viaticum—
a toll for the boatmen at the crossing,
a balm for the road home, an extreme unction
against the shaken faith, the getting lost.
Last rites, last words, the *lacrimae rerum*:
the way their old eyes reddened at the blessing—
my thumb tracing crosses with the unguent—
makes me think there must be something to it.

In Romans, chapter one, verse twenty-five,
Paul claims mistaking creatures for creator
is much the same as trading truth for lies,
as if the made thing were itself the maker.
Yeats wrestled with such curiosities
in that poem: *great-rooted blossomer?*
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

And after fifty years, they look the same:
the thing itself, the idea of the thing
the ancients and the infants, sinners, saints,
all fellow pilgrims, saved and suffering,
the passion and the passionate, the same
but different. Wherefore my surety:
The way and truth and life? Our holy orders?
The bottom line? God's love. Love one another.

—Thomas Lynch

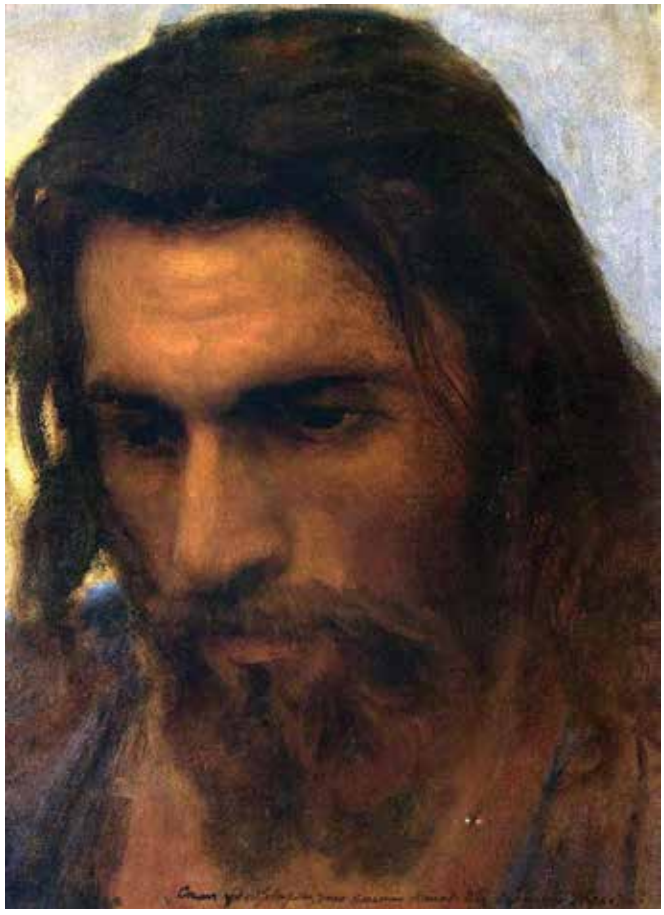
Knowing Jesus

Easier Said than Done

Jerry Ryan

A while back, I was asked to write about "what the person of Jesus meant to me." I took this as a request to describe my personal relationship to Jesus. To my humiliation—and perhaps to my enlightenment—I realized that I didn't have a clue about how to answer this. Did I even have such a relationship? In faith, I believe that Jesus has a relationship to me—but is this reciprocal? And to what point? In the ordinary course of my days, my chief preoccupation is not to put on the mind of Christ, to refer everything to him as to one constantly accompanying me. My chief preoccupation is trying not to get hurt or bored too much in the give-and-take of daily life.

But there is another way of interpreting the question. It could mean: How do I see Jesus of Nazareth? I see Jesus as the church presents him to me, through Scripture and through the apostolic tradition as defined in the great councils—as true God and true man, one Person in two natures "without separation, without mixture, without confusion and without change." I take this teaching at its word, very literally. When we affirm that Jesus of Nazareth is true God of true God, that must be understood absolutely. When we affirm that Jesus is true man, that too must be understood absolutely. One of the Holy Trinity, who thundered on Mount Sinai and before whom the seraphim veil their faces, became an insignificant worker in an occupied and oppressed country, was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem as "an utter and ignominious failure" and put to death as a political agitator. Neither of these terms should be watered down even though, psychologically, we cannot conceive them simultaneously. Our faith does not ask us to try to reconcile these absolutes; it asks us to affirm them. Sometimes we will be struck more by the fact that Jesus is every bit as human as you or I; on other occasions it will be the fact that he is God. When we speak of the mystery of the Incarnation, we will necessarily emphasize one or the other of these terms. Any attempt to reconcile the two terms rationally would lead to a diminution of both. I don't think we should be afraid to follow these affirmations to their necessary consequences. This man who plunks himself down by a well in Samaria, tired, hungry, and thirsty, is the co-eternal Word through whom all things were made.



Head of Christ study by Ivan Kramskoi, circa 1872

When we affirm that Jesus is true man, I think this applies not only to his human nature but also to his human destiny. The adage of St. Athanasius that "what has not been assumed has not been redeemed," which became the rule of orthodoxy during the Christological disputes, tells us something about the way God is man. A human being evolves, learns, is shaped by his surroundings, fears and hesitates, has good days and bad—all this is part of being human, limited and vulnerable. Our God did not play at

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being man. The human nature that was integrated into the second person of the Trinity was not an abstract human nature; it was taken from the flesh of Mary of Nazareth in the days when Quirinius was governor of Syria. When we speak of the historical humanity of Jesus, then, we are concentrating on one aspect of a scandalous mystery. One of the Holy Trinity became, in all truth, our brother and "like us in every way except sin," and we affirm everything that this implies. Biblical criticism, rightly used, brings this reality into relief. In his *Introduction to New Testament Christology*, Raymond Brown concludes that there is no compelling evidence in the synoptic gospels that Jesus ever presented himself as God or had a clear vision of the redemptive nature of his passion and death. This became clear to the church only after Pentecost, and then little by little. Like the rest of us, Jesus had to learn obedience in a certain obscurity, truly resist the temptations that presented themselves throughout his whole life, discover his destiny progressively. Is this incompatible with his divine nature? Chalcedon says no—that God became true man. In this sense, no Christology can be too "low." Nor can there be a Christology that is too "high." This very tension is essential to the mystery.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has insisted that Jesus of Nazareth had the "beatific vision." But this does not mean that the vision illuminated his consciousness in such a way that past, present, and future were all perfectly clear to him, or that he always understood his divine identity in all its aspects. Otherwise he would be like an actor merely playing the role of a man—an idea I find repugnant. So how did the beatific vision affect Jesus before his glorification? Perhaps we can imagine it along the lines of how sanctifying grace affects us: it guides us as a kind of instinct when we are faithful to it, and yet it remains beyond our conceptual grasp. Just as sanctifying grace is a participation in the divine life, the grace of the hypostatic union would have been experienced by Jesus as an eternal identity but also as a total poverty and dependence. Jesus, Word of God and son of Mary, would have been aware that he receives absolutely everything from the Father—that without the Father he is nothing—and he would have experienced this as no one else has. The cry of the abandoned Christ on the Cross is that of a divine and human dereliction beyond words, beyond imaginings.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has insisted that Jesus of Nazareth had the "beatific vision." But this does not mean that the vision illuminated his consciousness in such a way that past, present, and future were all perfectly clear to him, or that he always understood his divine identity in all its aspects. Otherwise he would be like an actor merely playing the role of a man—an idea I find repugnant.

Yet this historical Jesus who walked the streets of Nazareth and Capernaum, who suffered under Pontius Pilate and rose on the third day, is essentially a memory. His presence to me today is otherwise mysterious. His presence is as hidden as it was in Nazareth, where he was simply known as the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother to James and Joseph and Jude and Simon. He has promised to be with us until the end of the world, as he was present in the silence of Nazareth and in the silence of the Cross. His brothers and sisters and mothers will forever be those who, in the depths of their hearts, hear the word of God and keep it, whether they realize it or not. His presence is hidden in the Eucharist and in the people of good will who surround us and who, in the secret of their hearts, shelter Jesus and resemble him—as siblings resemble one another.

St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote: "Never think of the Son without thinking of the Spirit." The reverse would be equally true: Never think of the Spirit without thinking of the Son. For St. Irenaeus, the Son and the Spirit are "the two hands of the Father" that always work together. This is evident in the gospels. If it is Jesus who promises to send the Holy Spirit to accompany his disciples after his glorification, it is the Spirit who announced Jesus through the prophets; it is through the Spirit that he becomes incarnate in the womb of Mary, is manifested in the waters of the Jordan, is led into the desert, and is resurrected from the dead. In the Eucharist, it is the Spirit that transforms the gifts and is present in the body and blood of Christ consumed by the community. The Spirit reveals and sends Jesus, as Jesus reveals and sends the Spirit, and both reveal the Father. This is an aspect of the Trinity that has often been neglected in the Western Church. Without the Spirit the Word cannot be heard. Without the Word the Spirit is inarticulate.

In the book *Examining the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*, Robert Imbelli points out that, after a long period of Christo-monism in the church, there is now a sort of Holy Spirit–monism: a vague, generic "spirituality" that neglects Christ. Perhaps the relationship between Word and Spirit is somewhat analogous to the relationship between God and man in Christology. We have difficulty in imagining the two terms simultaneously and tend to oppose them, whereas they are always both present and active together. We oppose the "institutional church," structured by the Word, to the "prophetic church" structured by the Spirit. But the institutional church should itself be prophetic, the Word leading to the Spirit and the Spirit to the Word. Obviously, this has not always been the case in the church's history—and it will never be entirely the case until the consummation of the

Kingdom—but this is the eschatological reality toward which we tend and for which we hope.

Still, when I look at the historical Jesus and the mystery of the church, I'm looking at things from the outside, as it were, seeing them as objects. I can be in awe of these mysteries and the quality of love they manifest, just as I have been in awe of the Alhambra of Grenada, the Cathedral of Chartres, or the Winged Victory of Samothrace, where one passes from simple beauty to irresistible magic. Such an appreciation is, I believe, very good and a kind of grace. By itself, however, it does not put me in contact with the person of Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Life of the world, and the Life of my life. It can remain at the level of a consoling, edifying, and elevating poetic intuition.

True experimental knowledge of Jesus comes only through the Holy Spirit, and it does not come easily. What makes it hard is not any lack of generosity on the part of God but our own opacity. In an article in the February 27, 2004, issue of *Commonweal*, Rachelle Linner cited a passage from Flannery O'Connor that immediately resonated in me: "Human nature is so faulty that it can resist any amount of grace and most of the time it does." Most of the time, I am much more aware of this resistance than of whatever might somehow get past it.

There are those who speak of the encounter with the person of Jesus as a pivotal, decisive experience. Such an experience might, indeed, be valid for some. Its authenticity will manifest itself by its fruits. Kierkegaard, on another level, speaks of a decisive act of commitment—and we are constantly summoned to "conversion," to repent and change. Classical theology has the angels deciding their destiny in a single, unalterable choice. I sometimes dream of being able to imitate such an act, one that would free me from all my ambiguities and contradictions, my half-hearted aspirations and ineffectual resolutions. This is not the way things work, however. For us, the life of faith is not an instantaneous, once-and-for-all decision, but a long series of decisions, a pilgrimage that, like any other journey, includes its share of tedium, confusion, and risk. So my relationship to the living Christ and the life-giving Spirit remains a mystery to me. I entrust myself into the hands of a God who is greatly merciful and knows out of what clay he has fashioned us. He has also said, "He who comes to me, I will not cast out." I take him at his word. ■

Two Poems by Peter Cooley

SUNDAY MORNINGS

I've never found another name for Heaven
except heaven-here—this walk around the block—
our meeting-place-between we live our lives,
terra infirma, the green planet, my summer morning
New Orleans awakens today, just for me.

Little gods—the sun caught on a leaf,
the iridescence shimmering its gold,
the magnolia's fallen instant in my hand
as sun encases both of us, seconds—
all documentary of the eternal.

Citizen, I wanted you to know
theologies, but I have lost my way
in stars again, come down as fallen leaves,
two, three, the ground churning with four, five, six,
these tiniest of gods I name, re-name

by close inspection, my nose to the dirt—
aphid, dung beetle, sprung rhythm of the bees.
their countless resurrection, deaths, rebirths.

I SAY

it's there. I'm walking around the block now.
Gold in the upper branches of the trees,
of course, but wilder, richer inside stars
the sidewalk opens as I lift my feet,

then set them down on hues no one has seen
except the ant, the grub, the angleworm.
They have no need for mirrors in their dark—
they know themselves by fastenings they displace—

as I do, every minute I'm awake,
even in these lines, given by them to me.
They take their reassurance from the ground
I crave in others, looking in their eyes.

I see you reading this. We're both alive.

Peter Cooley is Senior Mellon Professor of the Humanities, Professor of English, and Director of Creative Writing at Tulane University in New Orleans. Carnegie Mellon University Press just released his ninth book, Night Bus to the Afterlife. *Cooley is the Poetry Editor of* Christianity and Literature.

Richard Alleva

Happily Ever After

'EFFIE GRAY' & 'CINDERELLA'

This has been a dreadful year at the movies for the great Victorian art critic John Ruskin. The otherwise superb biopic *Mr. Turner* portrays the man as an effeminate popinjay whose gaseous generalizations are dismissed by the very painter whose work he extolls. As David Denby observed in his *New Yorker* review, this may have been writer-director Mike Leigh's "way of putting down critics who reduce an artist's work to banal words."

Now, in *Effie Gray*, a film about Ruskin's disastrous marriage, written by Emma Thompson and directed by Richard Laxton, the eminent Victorian comes across as a monument of male cluelessness—a man whose sexual hang-ups and ignorance of female sexual and emotional needs end up sending his teenage Scottish bride to bed with psychosomatic ills. Trapped in the house of her in-laws, who (according to the movie) treated her first as a pet and later as inconvenient baggage, Effie Gray finally sued successfully for an annulment, married the pre-Raphaelite artist John Everett Millais, bore him children during a long and apparently happy marriage, and lived to a ripe old age.

The case itself certainly illustrates how a sexual peculiarity could reinforce domestic tyranny in a Victorian household, but Emma Thompson has descried fairy-tale possibilities in the facts. In the film's first scene, we see Effie (an all-too-placid Dakota Fanning) dreamily strolling through a garden while her off-screen voice recounts a bedtime story to a child—probably her younger sister—about a maiden who married a man with wicked parents. Intermittently throughout the film we are encouraged to see Effie as a sort of real-life Cinderella, plucked from the bucolic bliss of her native Scotland and trapped in a gloomy mansion, with her mother-in-law enacting the part of the traditional wicked stepmother and the handsome and sexually normal Millais eventually filling the role of Prince Charming. Thompson has even written herself in as fairy godmother—Lady Eastlake, wife of the president of the Royal Academy. A bluestocking who deplores the custom of women dropping their family name for their husbands' and sniffs at the way men dominate dinner-party conversations, Lady Eastlake urges Effie on to independence and finally provides her with a capable lawyer who effects the annulment. Thompson's performance is a delight: the best single moment in the movie is when the kindly aristocrat, flustered at the revelation of her protégé's persistent virginity, tries to lift a teacup to her lips and can't quite do it. But for the fairy-tale vein in her screenplay to work, the director would have to bring more flair, more texture, and more daring to the project than Richard Laxton does.

I may have been spoiled by *Mr. Turner*'s bracing, unpredictable realism, but the kind of well-groomed historical reconstruction offered by *Effie Gray* has been on display all too often, usually on PBS at 9 p.m. on Sunday nights. The movie's dark, velvety lighting makes it look as though it had been filmed through a veil, and the visual gentility sucks the dramatic oxygen out of even the most potentially turbulent scenes. The placement of the actors in most shots seems merely conventional and the editing is metronomic. Such smothering good taste, such measured tempos, such ensuing boredom! Movies about stuffy people don't have to be stuffy. In the 1970s I hated the vulgarity of Ken Russell's historical freakshows (*The Music Lovers, The Devils*, etc.), but *Effie Gray* made me wish Russell were at the helm here, goosing the proceedings into some semblance of life.

Dakota Fanning in Effie Gray

ADOPT FILMS

Some of Thompson's script might have benefited from a bit less Victorian delicacy and a bit more frankness. There is a latent kinkiness in the way Ruskin insists on Effie accompanying him and Millais on a trip to Scotland, where the painter is to do the critic's portrait. The three sleep in the same room in a cottage. Is Ruskin trying, consciously or unconsciously, to relieve Effie's sexual frustration by maneuvering her into bed with Millais? A less reticent director might have conjured up myriad glimpses of forbidden, half-expressed longings, but Laxton opts instead for postcard views and furrowed brows. He's more uptight than Effie's in-laws.

The movie also suffers from a lack of balance. Thompson's script is so focused on Effie's plight that it never explores Ruskin's point of view. Ruskin could be a hectoring moralizer, but his writings also display a passionate nature. And though I'm not so naïve as to believe that an author's conduct exactly mirrors his work, surely the sensitive mind that produced the best sentences of *The Stones of Venice* must, at some level of consciousness, have realized that his wife was in pain. At the very least, he must have understood that their marriage was not like other marriages. Wasn't he in torment, too, and shouldn't we see this? The collision of his dreams with Effie's could have produced real drama. But Thompson's script combines with Greg Wise's mummified performance as Ruskin to give us a Victorian caricature that belongs in a monster movie, not the fastidious costume drama that Laxton has assembled.

While Emma Thompson found a hint of Cinderella in the Ruskin-Gray imbroglio, how did her ex-husband Kenneth Branagh do with the real Cinderella in his new adaptation of the fairy tale for Disney? Moderately well, in my opinion.

As usual with any Branagh production not drawn from Shakespeare, there is a sense of rush, of expediency, of getting the job done soon because there's another one waiting in the wings that might be more interesting. Haste ruined his 1994 *Frankenstein*, but this version of the famous Charles Perrault story about a drudge who becomes a princess delivers something of the original's grace and wit. The pumpkin-into-coach transformation could have been more magical, but the rush to return before midnight achieves excitement and humor with the horses, coachman, and footmen evincing both panic and relief as they shrink back into small animals. (No more imperial trimmings, but at least we're back home!) And though my favorite character from the Disney 1949 animated version, the gloatingly vicious cat Lucifer, gets little attention here, there is some of that character's feline malevolence in the performance of the superb Cate Blanchett, who plays the stepmother. The script (by Chris Weitz) somewhat mitigates her wickedness by playing up her insecurity as the second wife of a man who still recalls his first spouse with obvious wistfulness. But Blanchett gratifyingly resists all such psychologizing; she knows she's playing an archetype, not a person. Feel free to hiss: the actress would revel in it.

Branagh also had the good sense to cast Lily James as his heroine. James is an actress who can convey goodness without a trace of smugness. (The animated blonde in the 1949 version always struck me as a mean-girl cheerleader type.) Yet something about Cinderella's casual forgiveness of her tormentors at the end of this new film both amused and annoyed me. In Perrault, the heroine not only forgives her two stepsisters but also gets them married to aristocrats at court. In the Grimm brothers' version, the wretched pair go to the royal wedding where two little doves, probably dispatched by Cinderella's dead mother, peck out one eye from each of the stepsisters; then, after the wedding, the poor dears lose the remaining ones. In Branagh's version, neither Gallic noblesse oblige nor Teutonic retribution will do. Once Cinderella extends her forgiveness, the unpleasant relatives simply vanish. Poof. Evil is erased as if it never existed. How American. How Disney. ■

How to Blow Up Two Heads at Once (Gentlemen), *2006,* by *Yinka Shonibare*

SINDIKA DOKOLO COLLECTION, LUANDA. PHOTOGRAPH BY AXEL SCHNEIDER. © MUSEUM FÜR MODERNE KUNST, FRANKFURT.

Eve Tushnet

Common Hells, Private Heavens

'THE DIVINE COMEDY: HEAVEN, PURGATORY, AND HELL REVISITED BY CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ARTISTS'

I'm sitting in hell with a couple of little boys, who are trying to prove they're not scared. We're watching a cloth-wrapped figure prostrate itself and bang its fists against the floor, as sobs and wordless singing give way to a howled "I, I, I surrender!" Behind us stretches a huge black coiling thing that looks like a well-fed python. "It's just a video," one kid says in a subdued voice.

We're in the depths of the National Museum of African Art, where "The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell Revisited by Contemporary African Artists" will run through August 2. The show, which originated in Frankfurt before coming to the United States, features artworks inspired either by Dante's great poem or by the poem's setting in the three realms of the afterlife. It's a big, meandering show. A visitor's winding progress from hell in the lowest level to heaven on the ground floor has rich symbolic resonance, but it's easy to get lost—and perhaps that fact has its own symbolism.

The Hell rooms are the most consistently effective. They're dark, with black walls; only the captions and the art itself are spotlit. You're greeted by Wim Botha's 2013 sculpture, *Prism 10 (Dead Laocoön)*. A central lead-gray figure is being seized and pulled by two others. All three are faceless, and their stretched bodies seem to be made out of taffy. Walking around the sculpture reveals a hint of wings. Across the canvas of Julie Mehretu's 2009 *Fragment*, patches of watery ink have been wiped and scraped with small strokes. Red, black, and blue lines crisscross behind the drifts of ink, creating ghostly hints of architectural plans. The whole image seems to be endlessly crossing itself out.

The thing that looks like a python is one of the scarier pieces in the exhibition. Nicholas Hlobo's 2012 *Tyaphaka* is made of rubber, ribbon, hosepipe, and packing material. It's big enough to swallow you: a lumpy black coil that narrows at one end. At that end

lie three round objects—like severed heads with hair made of multicolored ribbons. "Please do not touch," the caption warns, but I doubt anyone is tempted.

There is also some gallows humor: Yinka Shonibare's 2006 *How to Blow Up Two Heads at Once* shows duelists, dressed in gorgeous tailcoats and breeches, holding one another at gunpoint, glamorous—and headless. There are mysterious pieces, like Mouna Karray's 2014 *The Rope*. In these ink drawings made to look like photographs, a person is dragged through an autumn wood by a doppelgänger. Parts of the image explode in white light. This could be an image of compulsion: an unwilling soul dragged endlessly back to familiar sins. Or it could be an image of the soul resisting the pull toward freedom. The autumnal setting hints at sadness, but the dissolving white light suggests transcendence.

Berry Bickle's video series are among the few works to explicitly place Dante in Africa. Bickle interleaves silent-era film images of Dante and Beatrice with footage of interviews with torture survivors and a man walking across a trash heap. In *Virgil in Limbo*, the man on the trash heap says, "It's better that we stay here in Hell. We share the life with the flies." But even here there's a hint of hope: "This Hell will be Heaven one day."

And with that—and a sigh of relief—we exit Hell. In Purgatory the museum walls are gray, not black, and there's subdued lighting. The wall caption introducing this area doesn't explain what Purgatory actually is, its most basic religious meaning. The museum does note, "It is a state of longing, a place in between." The spiritual and emotional content of both the Purgatory and Heaven sections of the exhibit is much more varied than that of Hell. Art can easily evoke horror; evoking repentance or beatitude is much harder.

Some of the artworks have an obvious purgatorial significance. The bluntest is Dimitri Fagbohoun's 2014

The Silent Way Beatrice, *2013, by Maurice Pefura*

COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST. PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANKO KHOURY.

Silence, *an installation of 22 mats and stilettos, 2008–2014, by Zoulikha Bouabdellah. Courtesy of the artist.*

Refrigerium. A video playing outside a confessional explores the narrator's relationship with his deceased father: Is he in Heaven? In Hell, in Purgatory? The confessional's side doors, where penitents would enter, can be opened, and in one of them there's an image you won't forget: On the ledge beneath the grille—right where you'd rest your hands during confession—are the words "Lord Have" spelled out in nails pointed upward. And on the kneeler below, the nails read, "Mercy."

Jellel Gasteli's 2013 *Tunisia*, a series of photographs, is subtler. We see abandoned desert scenes: water flowing through a metal trough, spilling into the sand; a battered, broken oil drum and an illegible sign; another sign with an arrow and the promise, "Café" (with no café in sight). These are images of time's corrosive effect and the struggle to lead human lives of work and joy in a hostile environment. There's a close-up of a single footprint in sand—we won't pass this way again.

Other works resonate with Dante's own symbolism. Pascale Marthine Tayou's *Circle of Life* is a vast array of draped red silk, forming a ring, with a crystal hanging over it. It suggests the circles through which Dante passes and the upward trajectory of his journey. Maurice Pefura's 2013 sculpture *The Silent Way Beatrice* is a gray wide-hipped figure, its arms extended as if to embrace the viewer, and stuck all over with nails.

But after the intense horrors of Hell, the later two sections can feel scattershot. Hassan Musa's 2010 *The Keys of Paradise*, a cloth hanging that shows a shirtless man pushing a catawampus companion in a shopping cart, is a striking composition whose title and border of national flags suggest the supplicant posture and incomplete journey of the immigrant. Kiluanji Kia Henda's photo series *Othello's Fate* follows a naked black man through a theatrical setting filled with traditional European art. Both works explore outsider status, which is a kind of "in between" state. But we get only intermittent hints of penance and change, the themes that one might expect to infuse purgatorial artwork.

Heaven is white-walled and well lit. The introductory caption asks, "What does paradise mean to you? A perfect vacation location? A divine light?" The choice of art for display is equally uncertain about the nature of Heaven. Ghada Amer's 2012 *The Blue Bra Girls* is a giant egg-shaped sculpture, made out of the outlines of naked women. Flowing hair, bedroom eyes, bare breasts: this is probably somebody's idea of paradise, if not Heaven.

Even powerful artworks like Christine Dixie's 2009 *The Binding*—a series of portraits inspired by the binding of Isaac, showing a sleeping boy covered by a blanket—seem more menacing than heavenly. The outline of a gun pointing at the child is visible under the blankets, and in one of them he's posed like a mummy. Similarly, many of the photographs in Andrew Tshabangu's series *On Sacred Ground*, which depict Christian prayer and worship (a dramatic Midnight Mass, prayer in fog before a crucifix), have strong themes of penance and endurance. These are startling, spiritually rich portraits...but why are they here?

One of the few things Scripture tells us about Heaven is that it's full of song. Abdoulaye Konaté's 2008 quilt-like wall hangings *Dance of Kayes* depict gloriously colorful silhouettes of dancing women. Youssef Nabil's 2008 photo series *I Will Go to Paradise* has a more meditative aura. Hand-colored silver gelatin prints show a man rising up out of the sea. The unearthly colors lend the scene an ethereal hush. And then there's Zoulikha Bouabdellah's *Silence*. Prayer mats are laid out in a large rectangle, with identical pairs of glittering white stiletto heels in the center of each mat. It's cheeky and open to interpretation. One could see it as satire on the religious devotions of the rich. I chose to see it as an image of equality and beauty: in Heaven even the poorest women will have perfect sequined shoes.

This is a complex show, with new perspectives not only on Dante but on divinity. Unfortunately, it also reminds the viewer that it's easier to find a common language for misery than for redemptive suffering or beatific joy. ■

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Bernard G. Prusak

The Wrong Description

Beyond the Abortion Wars
A Way Forward for a New Generation
Charles C. Camosy
Eerdmans, $22, 224 pp.

The University of Scranton recently made national news by deciding to eliminate coverage for abortion from the health-insurance plans available to its employees. In order to comply with Pennsylvania law, the University's plans had previously covered abortion in cases of rape, incest, and threat to the mother's life. Now that the university is self-insured, however, its insurance plans must comply only with federal law, which does not mandate any coverage for abortions. In explaining the university's decision to faculty and staff, Scranton President Kevin Quinn, SJ, quoted Pope John Paul II's *Evangelium vitae*: "Circumstances, 'however serious or tragic, can never justify the deliberate killing of an innocent human being,' and 'no one more absolutely innocent could be imagined' than the unborn child."

Fordham University theologian Charles Camosy believes that we are "on the verge of a new moment in the abortion debate." According to him, it is but an "illusion that we have a hopeless stalemate in the abortion debate"; instead, "a fundamental change in our politics is right around the corner." Camosy cites lots of polling data in support of this view, and he seeks with this book not only to predict the coming change, but also to hasten and help shape it. Camosy even proposes model legislation. The change he expects to see is recognition of the full moral standing of the prenatal child (his language), coupled with provision for abortion in precisely the cases that will no longer be covered by health insurance at the University of Scranton. The legislation Camosy proposes, which he calls the Mother and Prenatal Child Protection Act, is, he claims, "consistent with both the currently settled doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church and the ongoing shift in U.S. constitutional law, especially with the evolving 'undue burden' standard."

There is much to admire about Camosy's project, which grows out of a 2010 conference he organized for the purpose of bringing together "the different sides of the abortion issue." As Camosy notes, there are currently around 1.2 million abortions per year in the United States; one in five pregnancies ends in abortion. Around 1 percent of abortions involve cases of rape. In another 1 percent the mother's life is in peril. So Camosy is predicting that it will soon be politically viable to reduce the number of (legal) abortions per year to roughly twenty-four thousand. I hope he's right.

Unfortunately, Camosy is wrong that Catholic teaching permits abortion in cases of rape, incest, and threats to the mother's life.

From the mid-fifteenth century to near the end of the nineteenth, Catholic moralists generally gave greater weight to the mother's interests in cases of "vital conflict"—sometimes on the basis of the lesser-evil argument that, if an abortion were not performed, both mother and child would die. As John Noonan has remarked, "As the balance was once struck in favor of the mother whenever her life was endangered, it could be so struck again." But the church's current teaching, spelled out in *Evangelium vitae*, holds that it is never permissible intentionally to kill the unborn.

Camosy's argument in defense of abortion when the mother's life is

CNS PHOTO / DANIEL SONE

threatened turns on the claim that, while formally innocent, the unborn child who threatens her mother's life "is materially a mortal threat," analogous to a six-year-old child soldier who goes on the attack. But a closer analogy is to an innocent bystander who, by happening to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, poses a threat to one's life for which he or she is entirely nonresponsible. Does this person forfeit her right to life? Would it be morally permissible to kill her in order to save oneself? The answer isn't at all clear. At the very least, Camosy's argument might need to be supplemented with the claim, found in the Jewish tradition, that a child owes its life to its mother and that the mother should therefore be given priority in cases of vital conflict.

Camosy's argument for the permissibility of abortion in cases of rape is much more novel. He begins by distinguishing so-called direct abortions, "where death is either the goal of the act or the means by which the goal is accomplished," from so-called indirect abortions, which "do not aim at the death of the child." One example he gives of an indirect abortion is a hysterectomy to save a woman from life-threatening uterine cancer despite the fact that she is pregnant. Camosy does not explain why we should call this action an abortion at all, but instead draws from it the conclusion that it is permissible "to refuse or cease to aid the prenatal child" as long as "the death of the child is 'foreseen but not intended'" and one has a proportionately serious reason.

Camosy then asks how we should evaluate drugs like Ella that prevent the embryo from implanting in the uterus and drugs like RU-486 that detach the fetus from the uterus. Here Camosy's terms "direct" and "indirect" confuse the argument. After observing that a surgical abortion "involves a direct attack on the body of the prenatal child," he notes that "the drugs present in RU-486, by contrast, do not…appear to attack the fetus." The upshot, for him, is that abortions caused by RU-486 and Ella may be considered indirect abortions. Camosy claims that a woman who uses these drugs "need not aim at the death of the prenatal child" and that what these drugs do "could, in fact, be better described as refusing to aid rather than killing." He also claims that a woman who has become pregnant from rape has a proportionately serious reason to refuse or withdraw her aid for the child she is carrying, and that this is consistent with "traditional Catholic moral theology."

There are a number of problems with this argument. First, whether an action attacks the body of an embryo or fetus is irrelevant to whether it is a direct or an indirect abortion, as Camosy's initial exposition of these terms correctly indicates. What distinguishes a direct abortion is that the death of the embryo or fetus is intended or sought as a goal. Now, does a woman who takes Ella or RU-486 not aim at the death of the embryo? Could one prevent it from implanting in the uterus or detach it from the uterus and not intend for it to die? Compare exposing a newborn on a mountain. It's nonsensical to hold one could expose a newborn without intending its death. It appears likewise nonsensical to hold one could aim at detaching the embryo or preventing it from implanting without thereby aiming at its death. As the British philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe once remarked, "Circumstances, and the immediate facts about the means you are choosing to your ends, dictate what descriptions of your intention you must admit."

Along these lines, consider whether the goal of the woman's action would be accomplished if the embryo did not die. In that case, wouldn't she, if she still had the same intention, be likely to try another drug or some other method? It's true that the story might be different if embryos could be developed ex utero, in a so-called artificial womb. Perhaps then a woman might take Ella or RU-486 not to kill the embryo, but in order to free herself from carrying and giving birth to it. With current technology, however, that's not an intention one can coherently have. Note too that, when Ella or RU-486 is used in our current state of technology, the embryo does not die from some pre-existing condition like kidney disease, but precisely from the refusal or withdrawal of aid. This fact makes it hard to claim that the refusal or withdrawal does not constitute killing.

A final problem is that refusal or withdrawal of aid may be just as objectionable as a "direct attack." Say I decide to stop feeding my dog and he starves to death. Have I killed him? As this is a case of wrongful death, we would rightly reject as sophistry the claim that, no, I only let my dog die. To the further plea that, after all, I didn't attack the dog but merely refused aid or withdrew it, the right response is: So what? Where's the difference that makes a difference morally?

None of these criticisms of Camosy's arguments implies that abortion in cases of rape, incest, or threat to the mother's life should be illegal. That would follow only if it were granted that current Catholic teaching on abortion should become the law of the land. Camosy seems to think it should, but he is wrong about current Catholic teaching. It may be, however, that what really needs reexamining in his project is the assumption that the law of the land with respect to abortion should exactly mirror the church's moral teaching. In this regard, it seems to me that a woman who bears the child of her rapist needs heroic virtue to do so. But no prudent law could demand this, and the American public would not accept it. If you doubt this, just consider how, according to the press, President Quinn's decision was greeted at the University of Scranton: with uproar. If faculty and staff at a Catholic university are up in arms over whether church teaching should determine the insurance coverage available to its employees, imagine the uproar were the stakes higher. ■

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Don Wycliff

Stuff White People Need

Blackballed

The Black Vote and U.S. Democracy

Darryl Pinckney

New York Review of Books, $16.95, 99 pp.

"It would seem," Darryl Pinckney writes in the second of the two essays in this volume, "that although black people are in the mainstream, black history still isn't, because certain basic things about the history of being black in America—American history—have to be explained again and again." That sentence—on page seventy-six of the ninety-nine-page text—appeared just as I found myself wondering impatiently: Why is this fellow taking up so much of my time telling me stuff I already know?

The reason is that these essays are aimed not at folks like me, a black man who has studied African-American history in some depth and, at age sixty-seven, has lived through a considerable part of it. Rather, they are aimed at white people, like those who attend lectures at the New York Public Library, where the talk on which the first essay is based was delivered in 2012, or those who read the *New York Review of Books*, where the second essay first appeared.

White people enjoy the luxury of caring—or not—about the history of being black in America. And because so many of them so often opt not to care, "certain basic things…have to be explained again and again." Things like Reconstruction, that all-too-brief flowering of black political freedom that followed the Civil War and was crushed through Ku Klux Klan terrorism; through crude political machinations like the Hayes-Tilden Compromise, grandfather clauses and white primaries; and, finally, through the benediction of the United States Supreme Court on the odious practice of "separate but equal" in its infamous decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

The first essay, from which the book's title is derived, is a meditation on how we got to where we are now, with a largely unified black vote constituting a key bloc of the Democratic coalition, but threatened by this era's equivalent of the Hayes-Tilden Compromise: the Supreme Court's 2012 ruling in *Shelby County v. Holder*, striking down the provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 requiring preclearance of local election-rule changes by the Justice Department.

Besides being a breathtaking act of judicial activism, Pinckney says, Chief Justice John Roberts's majority opinion in *Shelby County* was naïve and ahistorical. It disregarded the history of efforts in the South to diminish black voting power—efforts that continue to this day with devices such as voter identification laws—and so failed to appreciate the unregenerate nature of those who seek to perpetuate white political control and suppress black voting power. In Pinckney's view, the conditions that gave rise to the Voting Rights Act in 1965 still exist today in the form of what dissenting Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg called "second-generation barriers," and they still require a vigorous federal remedy.

The lynching of Henry Smith in Paris, Texas, February 1, 1893

It is difficult to discern what significance Pinckney attaches to the election—twice—of Barack Obama as president of the United States. Was it confirmation that blacks—like the Irish, the Mexicans, the Jews, the Italians, the Poles and others—had finally attained to the coveted American status of acceptance, of…whiteness? "There are," he says, "some white people who would rather see the country wrecked than have anything work under President Obama. It is a shock that racism in U.S. political life is so virulent that the heirs of white supremacy, unwilling to face the prophecy in the demographics, would rather destroy it all than hand it over." But those white people lost—at least in 2008 and 2012, although they seem to be winning now through their rearguard resistance. In the end, Pinckney seems to suggest, all that black people can do is keep on keeping on. Invoking the memory of his parents and other family members staffing voter-registration campaigns, he says, "I vow to keep alive in my heart their defiance and hope. It is the best way for me to honor their memory, their local, brave actions, that state of grace the committed can become acquainted with."

The second of Pinckney's essays, "What Black Means Now," is really only a piece of an essay that appeared in the May 24, 2012, issue of the *New York Review of Books*. It is not explained why the piece was truncated. What it mainly achieves is to introduce white readers to some of the new Obama-era generation of blacks writing on race—Zadie Smith, Eugene Robinson, and Touré. It is not at all clear what Pinckney intended to convey by the anecdote—an account of the lynching of a cousin in 1930—with which the essay abruptly and mysteriously ends. ■

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Jeffrey Meyers

An Ambiguous Legacy

The Young T. E. Lawrence

Anthony Sattin
Norton, $28.95, 316 pp.

As ISIS fanatics continue to destroy ancient monuments in Syria and Iraq, and the Taliban destroys art in Afghanistan, T. E. Lawrence's extensive archeological experience before the Great War is especially relevant. He mainly excavated Hittite ruins in Carchemish, about sixty miles northeast of Aleppo, in the Ottoman Empire. Lawrence and his colleagues, behaving as if they owned the site, took everything they wanted both for their sponsor, the British Museum, and for themselves. During the Balkan war of 1912 the local Arabs also took advantage of the power vacuum by plundering tombs and destroying buildings.

Lawrence and his four brothers were the illegitimate sons of the hard-drinking Irish baronet Sir Thomas Chapman, who scandalously ran off with the family governess. To avoid discovery the family moved frequently during Lawrence's childhood, from his birthplace in Wales to western Scotland, the island of Jersey, Dinard on the coast of Brittany, and the New Forest in Hampshire before finally settling in Oxford, where he read history and archeology at the university. Fearing exposure, he never saw his four Chapman half-sisters. But alluding to the Renaissance poet who first put the *Odyssey* into English, he slyly called his own translation of the epic "Chapman's Homer."

Lawrence's learned and brilliant undergraduate thesis on medieval military architecture in the Middle East, where he traveled (most unusually) on foot, was based on his personal inspection of the buildings. Opposing the prevailing view that the East influenced the West, he definitively concluded that "the early Crusader castles erected in Syria were of a purely western pattern." Lawrence then worked with the three greatest Middle Eastern archeologists of his time: his mentor David Hogarth, director of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, who taught him (he said) "a tremendous lot about everything from digging to Greek erotic verse"; Sir Flinders Petrie, a pioneering Egyptologist; and Sir Leonard Woolley, who later discovered the Sumerian city of Ur in Mesopotamia.

Lawrence found Carchemish, a huge mound on the banks of the Euphrates, exceptionally attractive: "It is very pleasant in the moonlight, to look down, on one side to the rushing Euphrates, & on the other over the great plain of Carchemish, to the hills of the Salt Desert on the South." He swam in the river, shot birds on a nearby island, and built an elaborately decorated house with precious carpets and mosaics (quite different from his Spartan postwar quarters at Clouds Hill, Dorset). Though he made no great discoveries, he told Hogarth, "it is exciting digging" and described his break-and-grab tactics: "a plunge down a shaft at night, the smashing of a stone door, and the hasty shoveling of all objects into a bag by lamp-light." He also had to fend off the German construction of the Berlin-to-Baghdad railway that ran perilously close to his own excavations.

During this time Lawrence began to wear Arab dress. At first he wore a Magdalen College blazer and shorts, with a tasseled Kurdish sash around his waist, then took to Arab costume with puffed trousers, embroidered jacket, and full headdress. Later, when he rode camels and led the Arab revolt, he changed to billowing white robes and a golden head-rope. His vast knowledge as traveler, linguist, and archeologist perfectly prepared him, when the war broke out, to become an intelligence officer, diplomat, and spy.

C. Leonard Woolley (left) and T. E. Lawrence at the archaeological excavations at Carchemish, Syria, circa 1912–14

In *The Young T. E. Lawrence*, Anthony Sattin repeats received ideas rather than questioning them. He states that the Arabs were "the people [Lawrence] loved," but Lawrence's attitude was ambivalent and complex. The character of the Arabs, so baffling to the West and now so frightening, was both attractive and repellent to him. Their colorful embroidered garments satisfied his theatrical narcissism; their inhuman endurance matched his own need for self-punishment. But he wanted the tribesmen to remain primitive and colorful, like the murderous and heroic Auda in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and he despised the westernized, citified Arabs as degenerate and spineless: "The perfectly hopeless vulgarity of the half-Europeanised Arab is appalling. Better a thousand times the Arab untouched." Surprisingly, and against the prevailing English view, he was also pro-Jewish. He wrote that in Roman times "Palestine was a decent country and could easily be made so again.... The sooner the Jews farm it the better: their colonies are bright spots in a desert."

Sattin, well acquainted with the Arab world, takes a "closer look" at the five prewar years Lawrence spent working in the Middle East. But his familiar story has been told many times in scores of books on Lawrence, most recently in Ronald Florence's *Lawrence and Aaronsohn* (2007) and Michael Korda's *Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* (2010). Despite the grandiose claims on the dust jacket, Lawrence's illegitimate birth has been known since Richard Aldington's biography of 1955. His "tortuous relationship with a dominant mother" in this book amounts to little more than Lawrence's desire to protect his privacy and reassure her, while he was traveling, that he was not in danger. In fact his mother—a strait-laced, shame-filled woman—was remarkably tolerant. She and his father built a special bungalow behind the main house for Lawrence's use, helped support him during his long years abroad, agreed to his rejection of an academic career, and allowed him to defy convention by bringing two gaud-

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ily dressed Arab workers home for the summer.

Sattin ignores a lot of persuasive evidence about Lawrence's sexuality. In the very first chapter of *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence boldly challenged conventional morality by celebrating "friends quivering together in the yielding sand with intimate hot limbs in supreme embrace." Though usually sensitive to Arab customs, Lawrence scandalized the local people by sculpting an Arab youth named Dahoum in the nude. Leonard Woolley declared, "To make an image was bad enough, but to portray a naked figure was proof to them of an evil of another sort." Nevertheless, Sattin claims that Lawrence's relations with Dahoum were entirely innocent.

Sattin also accepts Lawrence's dubious statement that his most pressing motive for leading the Arab Revolt was his love for Dahoum: "I liked a particular Arab very much, and I thought that freedom for the race would be an acceptable present." But Dahoum, a barely literate boy who knew nothing beyond his narrowly confined life, could not have understood Lawrence's gift. In any case, he died of typhus in 1916. In his inconclusive conclusion, Sattin quotes all twenty lines of Lawrence's fulsome dedicatory poem to Dahoum in *Seven Pillars*.

After the war, Lawrence clear-sightedly told his biographer Basil Liddell-Hart that "Arab unity is a madman's notion—for this century or next." To fulfill his promises to the Arabs and assuage his tender conscience, he helped establish Arab kings in Arabia, Iraq, and Transjordan. But these rulers, though pro-British, were unable to govern. By fulfilling their dynastic ambitions, he created a time bomb in the Middle East. His political legacy, sustained by the brilliantly effective propaganda in *Seven Pillars*, has been catastrophic. ■

Jeffrey Meyers, *a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, has published* The Wounded Spirit: T. E. Lawrence's Seven Pillars of Wisdom *(1973),* T. E. Lawrence: A Bibliography *(1974), and* T. E. Lawrence: Soldier, Writer, Legend *(1989).*

Gordon Marino

Tough Questions

Life After Faith

The Case for Secular Humanism

Philip Kitcher

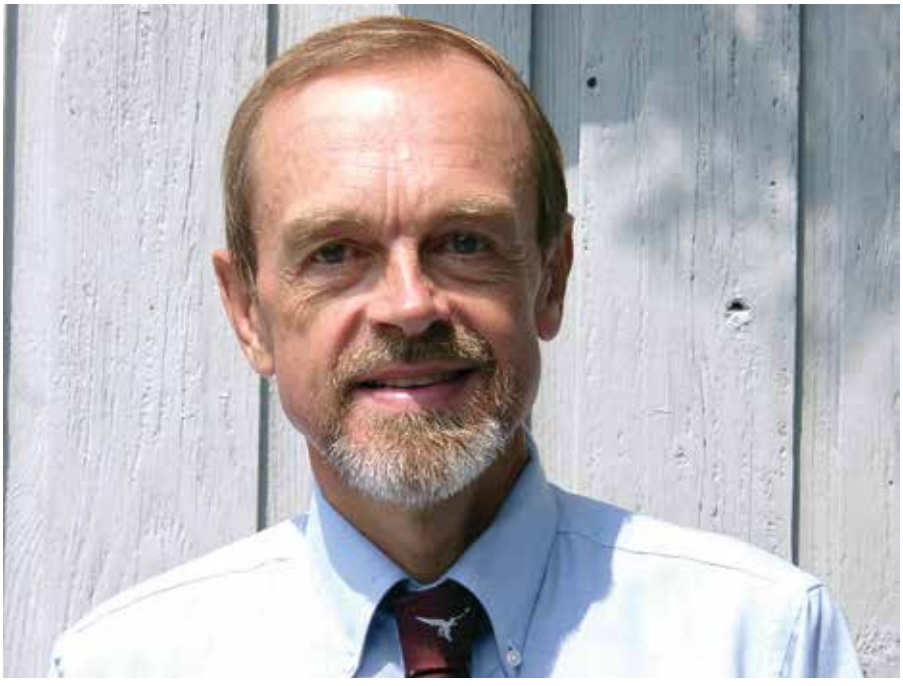
Yale University Press, $25, 175pp.

Though the prose is calm and pacific, this is a cannonball of a book. Philip Kitcher, the John Dewey Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, argues that there is no rational warrant for religious belief and that "a thoroughly secular perspective can fulfill many of the important functions religion, at its best, has discharged."

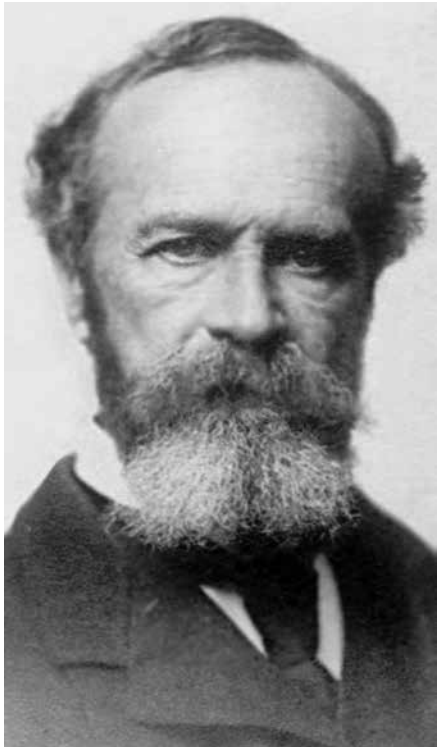
Kitcher observes that over the millennia thousands of religions have swept the globe and vanished like smoke over the trees. There are, he says, no neutral resources for deciding between the truth claims of different faiths. As philosopher Alvin Plantinga has complained, Kitcher seems to take the diversity of religious beliefs as evidence of the unreliability of the cognitive sources of religious beliefs. Of course, just because everyone in a room holds a different position on an issue, it does not follow that no one is right.

William James, one of the inspirations for this book and the foil to some of Kicher's arguments, maintained that when you are trying to escape an avalanche and need to leap a chasm it is best to repress worries about the probability of success and to have faith. James believed that the same holds for much of life. By contrast, W. K. Clifford insisted that it is irresponsible to base our decisions on beliefs for which we have no evidence. Kitcher, who maintains "there is no present evidence for the transcendent," agrees with Clifford, writing, "Only if the tie between belief and action were completely cut, or if conduct were under the firm control of an internal censor, dedicated to ensuring that only ethically permissible actions are performed, could the adoption of specific doctrine on the basis of faith be legitimate."

I am not sure what Kitcher would accept as evidence of a personal God.



Philip Kitcher



William James, 1906

And yet, I suppose that he is right to shrug that there is not much objective reason for believing that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father or that one glorious day billions of us will rise up from our graves and ascend into heaven. Of course, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Contra the intelligent-design brigade, faith is not a matter of choosing the best explanation for the data. To the extent that Kitcher demands empirical evidence for the transcendent, for something that is by definition beyond nature, he seems to be presupposing the falsity of the view that he is attempting to prove false.

There are other grounds for trusting in God. Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov famously insisted that if there is no God, everything is permissible. In other words: no faith, no ethics. Responding to this gambit, Kitcher reaches back to Plato's "Euthyphro problem" and the question "Is an action good because God loves it, or does God love it because it is good?" Even if you believe in God, you still have to ask whether there *is* a moral standard independent of God. If there isn't, does that mean that in God's case might makes right? According to Kitcher, religion provides a poor basis for morals. We can do better, he thinks. Taking Charles Darwin as his moralist of choice, he reasons that humans are neurologically programmed to live in groups. Communal life requires responsiveness to others and self-restraint, which for Kitcher means a naturally evolving ethics.

Kitcher acknowledges that religion is often invoked to help us cope with discomfiting questions about moral depravity, the meaning of life, and our own mortality. In his post-Christian phase, Bob Dylan sang, "What looks large from a distance, close up ain't never that big." Kitcher concurs, contending that, if we reflect on it, heaven as traditionally conceived would be a bore, death is not that bad, and religious responses to the existential issues of life are generally overrated.

Time will tell, or mumble, whether humanity is better or worse off without a belief in the sacred. Much of Western Europe is secularized, and people there seem to be getting on well enough. But then again, some of the greatest butchers in history—Hitler, Stalin, and Mao—were atheists who made god-terms of their own ideology.

A former true believer who used to sing in his church's choir, Kitcher is sympathetic to the nostalgia for religion. More than that, he believes that the fictions of faith, no less than literary fictions, can deepen our relationship to higher values. And so there is no need to stop taking Communion as long as we do so with the understanding that the sacrament is the embodiment of what amounts to an enabling myth—that is, a belief that does not describe the world but moves life along in a positive way: to uses Plato's term, a "noble lie." I think Kitcher is fooling himself if he thinks we can have the rituals of faith without the rub of faith. As traditional religious belief has been receding in much of the West, the obsession with autonomy has triumphed and our ritual structures have been in decay. Today people want to design their own weddings and funerals; this is not just a coincidence.

There are adept Christian philosophers of religion who will have replies and sneers for all the doubts articulated in the pages of this book. After all, it is not as though Kitcher has provided new reasons for declaring the death of God. And yet, I have to confess that the sheer clarity and compactness of this philosophical version of Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" has made it harder for me to sink to my knees in prayer without feeling foolish. Still, like every nervous Nicodemus, I understand that Jesus has promised a peace that "transcends all understanding" (Phillippians 4:7). We either accept that promise or we don't. ■

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Senioritis

Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill

Last fall, I toured high schools with my fourteen-year-old, whose current gig ends after eighth grade. At two quite different schools, one public and one private, we heard about the school-sponsored theme nights that enliven football or basketball games. "We had 'Senior Night,'" the tour guide at the private school told us, "and all the members of the senior class came with walkers and canes, bent over like this" (she demonstrated, giggling) "with their socks covering their trouser cuffs—it was hilarious!" We heard a similar account at the public school.

I get the joke: the contrast between the fresh-faced high-school seniors and the octogenarians they emulate, the incongruity of teenagers robed in the clothes of the elderly, the playful adolescent humor of it all. And perhaps it should not be surprising that in a culture where pretty much every segment of society is fair game for taunting and mocking, "senior citizens" would be ridiculed by their grandchildren's generation. But it still saddens me. For as Alison Gopnik observed in a column in the *Wall Street Journal* on the challenges of aging, "It's hard to avoid feeling that there is something deeply and particularly wrong about the way we treat old age in American culture right now."

When my children were younger, they accompanied me every Sunday to take Communion to a group of older people in an assisted-living residence near our church in Connecticut. We visited with Camille, who always cried, and with Frances, almost one hundred years old, who dispensed lavish handfuls of candy from her larder (thus becoming a particular favorite of my kids). There was Rudy, a veteran of World War II, usually a bit grim-faced, but grateful for our knock on the door nonetheless. He took a particular shine to my youngest child and once gave him a huge stuffed dog from a carnival that was twice as big as he was. We called him Spike and he took up residence in our basement playroom until one day when a seam ripped and reams of bead stuffing spilled out onto the carpet. There was the other Frances, who organized everyone for Communion, and Marie, and Florence, and Mildred, gentle soul and avid reader, who loved to tell us about her latest large-print find from the library's bookmobile.

Yes, many of the residents of The Mews used walkers, or suffered from incontinence, or didn't hear as well as they used to. But as the years went by, each one of them became a friend, lighting up when they saw my children walk through the door, eager to share a moment of conversation or a memory, grateful for the gift of the Eucharist as I pressed the thin wafer into their hands. We have moved away, now, but I think of them often, particularly every Sunday morning. And it is on their behalf that I bristle a bit when I see schools condoning a theme night that is premised upon making fun of an entire class of people, the elderly.

Every life is a "strange eventful history," to quote Jaques' famous speech in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Over the course of a lifetime, each human person constructs a chain of identities, a concatenation of his or her experiences and relationships in love, work, and play. When we take these precious and unique individuals and lump them all into a category based on only one aspect of their identity, in this case their age, we do them a real injustice. This is true, of course, of any such reductive view of the human person, whether the reduction is taken according to gender, or disability, or sexuality, or color.

People aren't one thing; they are many. That white-haired woman who is a little unsteady on her feet now—maybe she used to love to bake, and spent decades working for a law firm, and cared for her sister until her death. The grizzled old man in the chair by the window? Perhaps he worked as a pharmacist, stayed with a difficult wife for fifty years, had an amazing garden and sixteen grandchildren who adored him. Whatever their strange eventful histories, they are not just "old people."

Sr. Camille Rose and a resident in the café of the Little Sisters of the Poor Jeanne Jugan Residence

CNS PHOTO / NANCY WIECHEC

In his poem *After Long Silence*, W. B. Yeats wrote, "Bodily decrepitude is wisdom." Instead of looking at older persons and seeing the stooped shoulders, the halting gait, and the white socks, perhaps we can instead pay attention to what they have still to give: the special wisdom that radiates through and from the wrinkled countenances, and the fullness of personhood that accompanies the accumulation of years. ■

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