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Commonweal

OCTOBER 9, 2015

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Women and Cultural Conflicts in U.S. Catholicism

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This lecture will examine recent cultural conflicts involving women in American Catholicism from two perspectives: from the viewpoint of millennial Catholic women, and through the sensibilities and concerns of women in the Global South, since the church is increasingly shaped by Catholicism's growth in this part of the world. Konieczny will consider how these perspectives might influence women's contributions to the church in the coming decade.

Konieczny is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Notre Dame. Her research interests revolve around religion and conflict, the family, and public politics. She is the author of *The Spirit's Tether: Family, Work, and Religion among American Catholics* (Oxford University Press 2013) and numerous articles. She is currently working on her second book project, *Service before Self: Organization, Cultural Conflict, and Religion at the U.S. Air Force Academy.*

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LETTERS

Women, Merton, Presumption

GENDER TROUBLE

I just received the September 11 issue. Your editorial on Donald Trump is spot on, as is Cathleen Kaveny's column on the death penalty. I can't wait to read the articles on Junípero Serra and Thomas Merton. I have been reading *Commonweal* since the mid-1960s and have been proud over the years to call myself a Commonweal Catholic. I'm also a Commonweal Associate.

Recently, however, I've been disturbed by the gender discrepancies that mark many issues of *Commonweal*. Take the September 11 issue, for example. On the cover are listed three articles, all written by men, and a fourth by the editors, all of whom appear to be male. Then inside there are sixteen articles, columns, short takes, reviews and poems—fifteen of them by men. The only piece by a woman is one page long—out of thirty-two pages of copy. That works out to 3 percent of the publication. Men are likewise the authors of all five of the letters to the editor. And all five of the books that are reviewed have male authors. (At least they aren't all white.)

I understand that when the moment comes to go to press, you need to publish the best material that's available, whatever the gender of the writers. There are, however, ways to increase the likelihood that a higher number of those available articles are by women. You might consider, for example, what you would do if I offered to give *Commonweal* $100,000 if your issues averaged 50 percent male and 50 percent female authors by the end of 2016.

There are many things I love about being a Catholic. The invisibility of women across the institution is not one of them. And having *Commonweal* replicate that invisibility is pretty discouraging as well.

MARIAN RONAN
New York, N.Y.

THE EDITORS REPLY

One issue of a magazine is hardly representative of the range of its commitments, but Marian Ronan is right. There should be more women writing for *Commonweal*.

We must do better. A gift of $100,000 would be most welcome, but not nearly as welcome as finding more women writers for the magazine.

THE MERTON MODEL

Many thanks for Luke Timothy Johnson's fine essay on Thomas Merton ("The Myth, The Monk, The Man," September 11). Merton's plunge into monasticism and his eventual rise to a thoroughly engaged life recall the piercing words of French poet Charles Péguy: "Everything begins in mysticism and ends in politics." That pithy truth—and Merton's life and work—have helped me in my lifelong struggle to be reflective and active at the same time.

PHILIP B. TAFT JR.
Hopewell, N.J.

CLOSER TO HOME

Am I alone in finding Andrew Bacevich's article "Under God: Same-Sex Marriage & Foreign Policy" (August 14) a mix of insight and presumption? His comments on the ways in which we make our own ethical positions the standard for the rest of the world are surely on the mark. But what makes him imagine that those of us who support same-sex marriage have abandoned Catholic principles? There are perfectly good arguments for civic equality for same-sex couples and, if we do not find it possible to extend sacramental marriage to such people, that does not mean that being moved by compassion to favor support for loving relationships should be accounted the abandonment

continued on page 45

From the Editors

Walker, Work & Dignity

The departure of Gov. Scott Walker from the Republican race for president should come as a relief to American working people. His campaign against public-employee unions in his home state of Wisconsin, underwritten by billionaire businessmen Charles and David Koch, proved devastatingly effective, and his goal was to take it nationwide. Not that he was the only Republican candidate to take aim at what is, by general agreement, a fading target—organized labor as both a political force and an advocate for workers is perhaps weaker now than it's ever been. But Walker, even more than fellow Republican Chris Christie, had been especially vocal in demonizing unions. That put him at odds with many of his fellow citizens: support for unions has been rising since 2008, according to an August Gallup survey, with 58 percent of Americans—and 42 percent of Republican voters—now viewing them favorably.

A plan Walker issued days before stepping down, costumed in the rhetoric of freedom, flexibility, and expanded opportunity, was essentially a proposal for finishing off organized labor once and for all. Its title was "Power to the People, Not the Union Bosses," as if Walter Reuther and Albert Shanker still strode the land, legions of auto-workers and schoolteachers massed behind them. Empowering people, in Walker's view, would mean abolishing the National Labor Relations Board, rewriting federal law to make Right to Work "the default position for all private, state, and public-sector workers," replacing overtime pay with unpaid time off, and stripping employees of their ability to bargain collectively. The plan appears to have died with Walker's candidacy. But its spirit is very much alive among many in the GOP—those who recall Ronald Reagan's decision in 1981 to fire eleven thousand employees in the air-traffic controllers union the way some remember, say, the establishment of Social Security. That they speak so cynically about labor is not surprising. That Democrats seem to speak so little of it is not reassuring.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, since the beginning of the "Reagan Revolution" in 1980, American workers have seen their hourly wages stagnate or decline, while real gross domestic product has grown by nearly 150 percent and net productivity by 64 percent in this period. More and more of the jobs Americans hold today come without reliable, living wages or benefits like health insurance, retirement plans, training, and job security. Measures like Walker's aren't meant to improve things, but rather accelerate what began some time ago. According to the EPI, the decoupling of wages and benefits from productivity has been evident over the past two decades, a period that has "coincided with the passage of many policies that *explicitly* aimed to erode the bargaining power of low- and moderate-wage workers in the labor market."

It was in 1984 that Harvard economists Richard B. Freedman and James L. Medoff wrote *What Do Unions Do?*, a detailed analysis of how organized labor had served as a positive force in the American economy in the twentieth century. Their data showed unions to have been "historically egalitarian," with rising union wages helping to lift nonunion wages and bridge the gap between low-wage service jobs and higher-paying professional positions. They also found strong unions to be "positively associated with managerial innovation and technological improvement," and union workers to be more motivated and "less resistant to innovation in the workplace, for they had less to fear than nonunion workers that change would eliminate their jobs." Thus, they argued, "a society genuinely concerned about increasing productivity would encourage, not disparage, a strong labor movement."

In other words, productivity and the dignity of workers can and often do go hand in hand. Given what has transpired in the past thirty years, those genuinely concerned about the nation's economic health would now seem *obligated* to encourage a strong labor movement. Support for such a position is grounded in Catholic social teaching beginning with *Rerum novarum* (1891), in which Pope Leo XIII both declared the moral necessity of doing one's job responsibly with an eye toward the common good, and insisted on the right of workers to form unions to protect their interests. These principles have been expanded in the encyclicals of Leo's successors. For his part, Pope Francis set aside time in New York to meet with newly unionized car-washers, thus emphasizing the church's commitment to economic democracy. "The power of the employer to withhold bread is a vastly greater advantage than the power of the individual employee to refuse to labor," Bishop Edwin V. O'Hara observed in *Commonweal* more than eighty years ago. That we should need such a reminder in 2015 demonstrates the fragility of the labor movement's achievements and the importance of the political effort to preserve them. Seeking to further disempower workers is not just shortsighted, but wrong. ■

September 22, 2015

Charles R. Morris

Stuck in the Mire

WHY SOME 'EMERGING MARKETS' STILL HAVEN'T EMERGED

One of the most hopeful signs in the world economy over the past few decades has been the rapid growth in emerging markets—countries like China, Brazil, India, Indonesia, and miracle of miracles, even countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Blindsided by a Great Recession created by reckless rich-country banks, they mostly did very well in the recovery, becoming favored destinations for Western fund managers.

Much of the impetus for emerging-markets growth came from China, as it spread its vast dollar holdings around the world, hoovering up ores, fuels, food, and other commodities to feed its expanding worldwide manufacturing presence. The Chinese engine is faltering now, strangling on its own pollution and dragged down by the pervasive corruption of its kleptocratic elite. The Chinese strongman Xi Jinping understands that for China to become a truly modern country, he has to break up the old Soviet-style state-owned enterprises, empower the private sector, and move into high-end services and R&D-intensive manufacturing. Whether he can pull that off is an open question. Even if he succeeds, it will be a perilous and drawn-out process, fraught with conflict.

Where does that leave the rest of the emerging-market economies? Unfortunately, there are grounds for pessimism. Dani Rodrik, a Turkish development economist at Harvard, points out that over the past century, many countries have achieved longish periods of rapid growth, but very few have actually made the jump into permanent middle-class developed-country status.

The original developed country was the United Kingdom, which was surpassed by the United States in the decade before the First World War. Core European countries, like Germany, Switzerland, and France, followed; after World War II, most of the rest of Europe joined them. Asian manufacturing and trading powers, Japan, Singapore, and later South Korea, added their weight, although a number of other Asian countries—mainland China, India, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand—clearly did not. Both Argentina and Venezuela enjoyed very rapid growth over considerable stretches, but never achieved permanent status as developed countries. Mexico is still on the edge, even decades after NAFTA. Brazil looked like it was finally on its way, but that is now in doubt. A surprisingly large number of African and Middle Eastern countries had prolonged growth spurts in the middle of the last century, but remain stuck in the "emerging market" mire. Russia and all the countries still within its sphere of influence may be hopeless, although Poland and the Baltic states seem to have broken Putin's grip—permanently, one hopes.

The common factor for success, Rodrik's research suggests, is the strength of the formal manufacturing sector—as opposed to traditional cottage-industry manufacturing. Formal manufacturing, even as a supplier of low-end hand-made components, requires linkages to modernity, ambitious proprietors, at least minimal capital, rationalized processes, accounting, and billing. Almost all countries have formal manufacturing sectors; the critical questions are how extensive they are and how much value they added.

Rodrik tracks two variables for national manufacturing sectors: the percentage of total employment it accounts for, and the level of worker income when that percentage is at its highest. The United States manufacturing sector paid $11,000 per employee in 1953 (in 1990 dollars) when its peak employment share reached about 27 percent. That was surpassed only by Germany when its manufacturing sector reached its peak employment share in 1970. At those levels of income, the manufacturing sector can throw off enough money to fund high-end services like accounting and law; make higher education and modern health care widely available; invest in R&D; and offer a broad range of advanced consumer products—in short, all the accoutrements one would expect of a "developed country."

What worries Rodrik is that the current emerging-market countries are reaching their peak of manufacturing employment at lower incomes and lower levels of employment. The share of China's work force in formal manufacturing peaked in 1996, at only about 17 percent, and the average income is only about $3,000 (1990 dollars). India is even more poorly positioned; its peak manufacturing-employment share came in 2002, at only about 12.5 percent, and its employees earn on average only about $2,000. For both China and India, those are precarious platforms for making the leap to true developed-country status. Mexico's manufacturing peak, at 20 percent of total employment and about $6,000 average income, may be enough to achieve permanent middle-class status, although the country's deeply entrenched criminal gangs are a formidable obstacle. Brazil teeters at a precarious 16 percent peak-employment share at about $5,500 average income, and may be backsliding rapidly.

There is some good news. Rodrik estimates that once a formal manufacturing sector takes hold in a developing country, the sector tends to converge with those of more advanced countries at a rate of about 2 percent a year. So they will catch up. The bad news is that it may take as much as half a century to do it, which portends a very bleak future for almost half the world's population. ■

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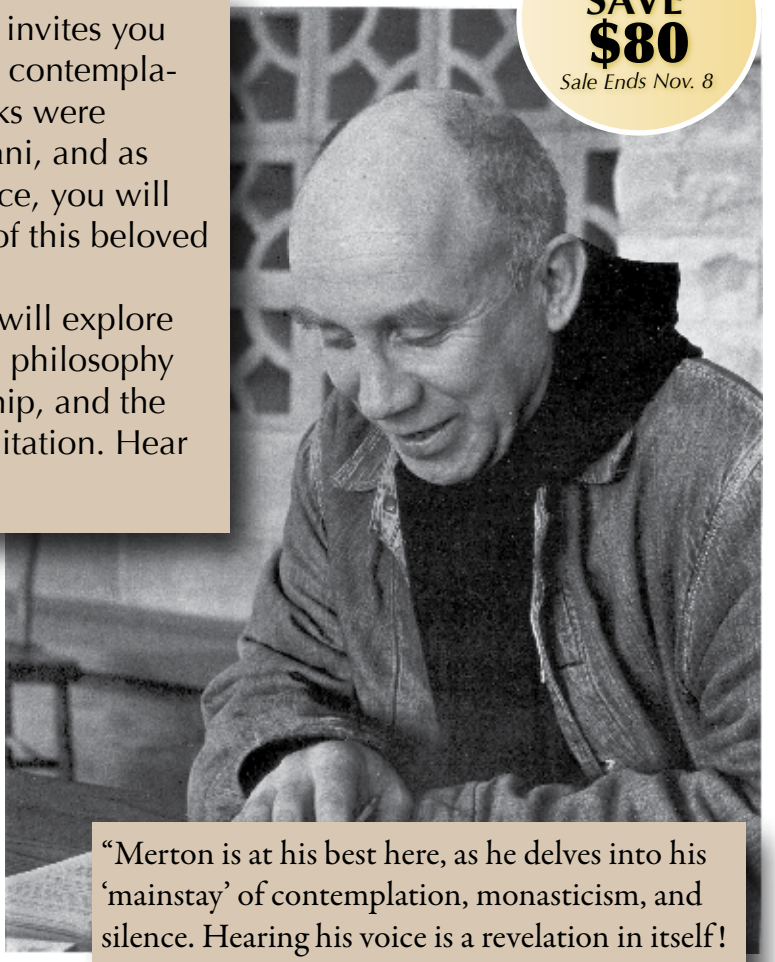

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Donald Cozzens

Sins, Mortal & Otherwise

As an earnest young Catholic boy thinking seriously about the priesthood, I was surprised to find myself wishing I were Protestant. I told no one of my secret dallying with apostasy, which, I feared, might have been a mortal sin. My adolescent Catholic world of the 1950s was simple: avoid committing a mortal sin at all costs. And my world was loaded with land mines that my high-school religion teachers assured me were mortal sins. Step on one and be instantly separated from the state of grace and plunged into the horror of being separated from God. And worse, should I die without confessing a mortal sin to a priest, I would be condemned to hell for eternity.

While I was seriously thinking about the priesthood, I was at the same time seriously thinking about girls. But just thinking about girls could be trouble. For that could lead to impure thoughts. And these desires, if for an instant deliberate and with full consent of my will, would make me guilty of mortal sin. To my consternation, I learned that everything sexual outside of marriage—not only actions, but even thoughts and desires—were mortally sinful. Moreover, even "going steady," that is, exclusive dating, was itself mortally sinful because it was a near occasion of mortal sin. Talk about adolescent angst!

Steal a candy bar from the neighborhood drugstore and you commit a venial sin. Steal a person's life savings and you commit a mortal sin. I got that. It made sense. In most areas of the moral code, offenses were judged by the church as venial or mortal depending on whether they constituted "grave matter." In criminal terms, when it came to sex, there were no misdemeanors, only felonies.

That approach to sexual morality made me look with envy on what I imagined to be a more benign Protestant approach. To this day, official Catholic teaching holds there is no "poverty of matter" when it comes to deliberate sexual behavior undertaken with full consent of the will. When it comes to sex outside of marriage—and often within marriage—we're talking mortal sin.

My memories of moral adolescent turmoil were awakened reading Peter Steinfels's important *Commonweal* essay, "Contraception & Honesty: A Proposal for the Next Synod" (June 1). From an existential perspective, the artificial birth-control controversy following Pope Paul's *Humanae vitae* can be linked directly to the church's teaching that the issue is grave matter—practicing artificial birth control is a mortal sin. As a young priest in the late 1960s and early '70s, I saw firsthand the moral anguish of married couples wrestling with this teaching. I believe their acute pain was intimately tied to their fear of committing mortal sin. We might have had a very different moral discussion following the birth-control encyclical if the church had not insisted that *all* forms of artificial birth control were intrinsically evil and therefore mortal sins. Labeling human moral acts and omissions that miss the mark as mortal sin always ups the ante—and threatens the credibility of the church's teaching authority itself.

Confessionals at Jasna Góra Monastery

The church's readiness to call certain behaviors or admissions mortal sins grew out of a pastoral concern to motivate the faithful to do what was thought essential or at least important for the salvation of their souls. I'm old enough to remember when it was a mortal sin to eat meat on Fridays. Fasting and abstinence had long been held to be important aids to maintaining the discipline required for living in what was called a state of grace. So, the faithful were instructed, under pain of mortal sin, to abstain from meat on Friday, the day of Our Lord's passion and death. Shortly after the Second Vatican Council, eating meat on Fridays was no longer considered a mortal sin, although fasting and abstinence remained honored practices.

Older priests like myself remember when our obligation to pray the Divine Office, the breviary, was an obligation carried out "under pain of mortal sin." So came the familiar anecdotes of priests praying their breviary by the light of their car's headlights as midnight approached. Priests do indeed have an obligation to be men of prayer, and the psalms and prayers of the breviary can hold us secure in the grace that comes over believers who live in the presence of God. The "under pain of mortal sin" motivator no longer works for most priests, and it clearly doesn't work for most Catholics.

At the heart of Catholic faith, of course, is the Eucharist. Celebrating Mass regularly remains the primary measure of whether or not one is a practicing Catholic. Vatican II made it clear, however, that Mass attendance is much more than a measure of one's Catholicity. Eucharist is at the very center of our personal and communal lives as God's holy people. This theological truth, known long before the council, led to the teaching that celebrating Mass on Sunday was so essential to life in Christ that to miss Mass deliberately was to commit a mortal sin. It did not matter whether a Catholic attended Mass on most Sundays; missing Mass on even one Sunday was a mortal sin.

I understand the church's teaching that Catholics have a moral obligation to celebrate Mass regularly, even weekly. But I don't understand why the obligation to attend Mass on any given Sunday is burdened with the penalty of mortal sin. A friend of mine rises early every morning for Mass at a Carmelite monastery. He's at Mass every day of the week—except Sunday. Why my friend doesn't celebrate Mass on Sunday isn't clear to me, but I don't believe for a minute that he commits a mortal sin by missing Mass on the Lord's Day. But the law remains the law. The 1983 Code of Canon Law upholds the faithful's obligation to celebrate Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation but doesn't apply the "under pain of mortal sin" tag. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, however, declares that "those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin" (2181). It's time to review the practice of attaching grave sin to missing Mass.

Many Catholics, perhaps most, simply do not take seriously the church's teaching that some of its rules and obligations are binding under pain of mortal sin. Researchers report that in Europe and North America, weekly Mass attendance is well under 30 percent. Survey after survey indicates that the vast majority of Catholic married couples aren't following the church's prohibition against artificial birth control. Church authorities can no longer expect the penalty of mortal sin to compel the faithful to comply with official church teaching. Yet, for some bishops and Catholic leaders, mortal sin remains the trump card they're ready to play when laying down the law of the church.

Catholic moral tradition, especially in the arena of sexuality, remains married to a calculus of sin. Confessors, at least from the time of the Council of Trent, were trained to distinguish between venial matter and grave matter in hearing confessions. That led in turn to an emphasis on the "act committed" rather than on the penitent's encounter with the healing mercy of Jesus Christ and his or her overall moral orientation. Pope Francis, in harmony with the work of contemporary theologians like Bernard Häring, Charles Curran, Margaret Farley and others, is showing us how to move beyond the narrow legalisms of act-centered morality.

But it seems that many Catholics have already managed to climb out of the dark hole of an act-centered, sin-focused morality all by themselves. They have not lost a healthy sense of sin, but they don't think a second glance at their neighbor's spouse or missing Mass on Sunday separates them from God's grace. Nor do they believe that doing what is necessary to determine the size of their family is always mortally sinful.

Almost a half-century ago, Andrew Greeley, the Chicago priest-sociologist and storyteller, tried to tell us that *Humane vitae*'s teaching against artificial birth control leveled a near fatal blow to the church's credibility, especially when it comes to its teaching on human sexual behavior. He was right then, and Peter Stienfels is right now to remind us that, as the next Synod unfolds, the church's "under pain of mortal sin" teaching on artificial contraception remains the "elephant in the room." ■

Donald Cozzens *is writer in residence at John Carroll University. His most recent book is* Master of Ceremonies, *a novel.*

THREE POEMS BY JEAN GALLAGHER

A LOT OF WAYS

There are a lot of ways to love the world,
be loved by it. Start with the sounds
of it: cello suite, hum of sander.
There are a lot of ways to love you, just
as so many trees make my seeing. I, you:
the glitter of the signal breaking up.
The 10k things coming into
going out: that's what makes the shine.

SECOND LETTER TO NOAH

I'd thought the floating house was what I was
waiting for to run aground into
our real life. But don't you find this crowded,
barking *x + more x because*
we may need some later, rickety thing
on vast, is home—the going, not somewhere, just
going. Don't you find the boat after
all made of water.

THE TWO BIRDS

One comes back: *no place to land.*
The other doesn't, and we think it means
something solid, somewhere.

Jean Gallagher is the author of three collections of poems. She is a professor of English at New York University.

Massimo Faggioli

Off Script

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM SYNOD 2015

Down the decades of the post–Vatican II church, a bishops synod has meant a boring showpiece gathering in Rome, where everybody knew the script and all agreed that nothing was going to happen. But not anymore—not with Pope Francis. With the synod of October 4–25, 2015, the second leg of a new synodal journey is about to begin. Of course, a synod is not an ecumenical council, yet it does promise something not very different from what happened at Vatican II. The bishops and the church as a whole are about to take an honest look at the gap between the *status ecclesiae*—what the church is called to be, which cannot be changed—and the *statuta ecclesiae*, the laws and practices of the church, which can and sometimes ought to be changed. In this sense, Francis's pontificate has already moved the goalposts of the Catholic debate significantly. What we have witnessed since his election, and in particular since his decision to hold two synods in twelve months on the subject of marriage and family, is a renewed climate of debate in a church unused to the ethos of ecclesial discernment.

Last fall's synod displayed a remarkable degree of sincerity in engaging the issue of the modern family vis-à-vis Catholic doctrine and pastoral praxis. Also remarkable was how the first session unfolded in successive phases: the first week of debate, followed by the *relatio post disceptationem*—a kind of midterm report—containing significant openings (on homosexuality, premarital cohabitation, other kinds of marital unions); then the pushback of the second week and the narrowing of those openings in the final *relatio synodi*. Francis's decision to publish the *relatio*, including the votes that every paragraph received, bespoke his intention to show the degree of the consensus reached at the synod. The move clearly was also intended to keep debate open during the period between synod meetings, echoing the key role played by the informal debates held between each of the four fall sessions of Vatican II. The papal *motu proprio* of September 2015, which reformed the annulment process, is more evidence of a very interesting dynamic between papal initiative and the bishops' inertia in shaping the agenda of the meeting. (And no, *pace* Vaticanista John Allen, the reform does not mean that the question of Communion for the remarried if off the table.)

Of course, it would be a mistake to expect radical changes during this time between synod meetings. The ecclesial debate so far has not lived up to the expectations of many Catholics who saw the December questionnaires as a sign that major changes were coming soon. In very few dioceses has there been any real exchange between the laity and the clergy. But the *instrumentum laboris* for the 2015 synod, published by the Vatican in June, is a step forward. It shows that there is broad agreement on several issues, especially when it comes to Cardinal Walter Kasper's proposal: "a great

CNS PHOTO / PAUL HARING

number agree that a journey of reconciliation or penance, under the auspices of the local bishop, might be undertaken by those who are divorced and civilly remarried, who find themselves in irreversible situations."

The *lineamenta* of December 2014 called for wide input in the preparation of the 2015 synod and asked episcopal conferences to involve all groups within the church. Yet only a few bishops' conferences worked systematically to prepare for the synod, and even fewer mobilized lay associations and academic institutions. The state of the presynod debate across the global church says something about the relative readiness of bishops, theologians, and laypeople to engage these issues. While the Italian and U.S. bishops conferences, for instance, have not organized activities related to the synod, theologians and bishops from Germany, France, and Switzerland met on May 25 at the Gregorian University in Rome for a day of study. The papers, published on the website of the German bishops conference, present a position close to Kasper's, advocating an honest understanding of what "marriage" now means. "Christian ethics today is about rediscovering marriage and family in their actual form as a form of life in the faith, without being discriminant of other forms of life," the conclusion reads. "It is clear that the next synod cannot limit itself to repeat the previous teachings and what has been said already."

That was far from the only initiative. A group of twenty-six theologians from France, Belgium, and Switzerland published a call for significant changes in the theological understanding and the pastoral practices on issues touching on the family. In May, a daylong conference at the Theological Faculty of Milan brought in some of the best Italian theologians, who presented a position that didn't quite line up with Kasper's proposal, but they did point out the inconsistencies of the traditional understanding of the indissolubility of marriage in light of the contemporary value placed on conscience. In August, a group of twenty prominent Spanish Catholic theologians took a stand, asserting that "pastoral prudence today not only permits, but also requires a change of posture." Just last month the ecumenical monastic community of Bose near Turin—the intellectual elite of Italian Catholicism—held an international ecumenical conference on mercy and forgiveness, with the opening lecture given by Cardinal Kasper. And the forum known as Catholic Women Speak Network has produced a rich book (with articles by Tina Beattie, Elizabeth Johnson, Lisa Cahill, and Margaret Farley, among others) that will be presented publicly in Rome a few days before the synod.

Because of Francis's style of governance, which relies on his council of nine cardinals that meets every two months, the Roman Curia has taken a back seat during this debate between synods. Not surprisingly, much of the Curia does not support the direction in which Francis is taking the church, especially when it comes to the theology of the family and marriage. The pope was rumored to have been irked

by an Ignatius Press book published last fall, *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church*, in which several bishops—including five cardinals—criticized Kasper's position on Communion for the divorced and remarried. Ignatius is about to publish another book in the same vein, with essays by seventeen cardinals, including four who now serve in the Curia. Cardinal Gerhard Müller, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who contributed an essay to last year's book, has expressed in many interviews his opposition to Kasper's proposal. Even Benedict XVI intervened after the synod. In his recently published complete works, he edited a 1972 article on indissolubility, changing his position to make it less open to a proposal like Kasper's.

Others in Rome are much closer to Francis. Even though the Jesuits keep some distance from this Jesuit pope (who notably has not yet visited the Jesuit-run Gregorian University), the Society of Jesus represents the theological temperament closest to Francis's thinking. The Gregorian University hosted a conference on Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, featuring intellectuals from all over the world, including Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi. Even more important is the position of the semi-official voice of the Vatican, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, under the editorship of Antonio Spadaro, SJ, whose role under Francis is strikingly similar to that of Roberto Tucci, SJ (who died last April as a cardinal), under John XXIII during Vatican II. Over the past year, *La Civiltà Cattolica* published a series of articles on marriage and family that featured bold contributions to the pastoral, theological, and biblical debate. The articles have been republished as a book, in Italian, *Famiglia, un ospedale da campo* ("The Family, a Field Hospital") with an introduction by Spadaro.)

Francis has invited the team behind the 2014 synod to run this year's gathering, implicitly rejecting the conspiracy theories propagated by some conservative critics, such as Edward Pentin, who has just released a book called *The Rigging of a Vatican Synod?* The positioning of important players has not changed significantly: there has been no prominent "synodal conversion" of church leaders, and no visible attempt to bridge the gap between advocates of the reformist and traditionalist positions. If anything, positions have solidified, with reformers calling attention to the different versions of biblical and Christian families evident in history and in Catholic doctrine, while their opponents defend a theology of marriage that they believe was conclusively defined by John Paul II. The sobering fact is that the synod is the first collegial debate in the Catholic Church on marriage since the Council of Trent, when the decree *Tametsi* of 1563 "created" modern marriage as a contract under the authority of the church (and later also of the state).

Francis has already written the first page of post-synodal history with his decision to inaugurate an "Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy" a few weeks after the synod closes. Fifty years after Vatican II, and fifteen years after the explosion of the sexual-abuse crisis, what is at stake is not only Francis's pontificate but the very idea of a church that can handle change without the threat of schism. The success of the synod will not be measured by any overnight revisions of official doctrine, but rather by the ability of the church to proceed on the basis of a consensus, without obsessing over unanimity. Because if reform requires unanimity, no reform will pass. In this sense the agenda of these synods is part of the unfinished business of Vatican II, and the result of a stubbornly delayed reckoning with the issues of sexuality and the "vocation" of marriage. As Stephen Schloesser, SJ, has recently noted, Vatican II declared "an armistice with modernity." Catholic "culture warriors" declared the end of the armistice immediately after Vatican II. But Francis is no culture warrior, and he wants the armistice of Vatican II renewed.

Exactly fifty years ago, at the beginning of the final session of Vatican II, the theologian Yves Congar, OP, faulted Paul VI for not having an articulated theology for his path-breaking ecumenical gestures. The great ecumenist Fr. Pierre Duprey offered an insightful and wise reply: "The pope must be left to make gestures and send messages," Duprey said. "If one were to formulate today the implications of these gestures and messages it is likely that Rome would retreat from such a formulation of ideas." He concluded, "The gestures will create a familiarity and when that has been done, one day, the formulas will be able to be accepted."

The present moment is not entirely different. Francis's pontificate is largely an attempt to bring about ecumenism within the church, effecting mercy between Catholics of different sensibilities and philosophies. It is about formulating an approach to theological ideas keyed to the reality of modern marital and family life. The gestures of acceptance and welcome foreshadowing that eventual theological formulation come today not only from the pope, but from Catholic parents, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters—and, not infrequently, from the priests and nuns who know and live among them.

In this particular moment the pope relies on the people of God as much as on his bishops. The synod is Francis's way to compel bishops to listen to one another—and to those who are married and have families. In this sense, it can perhaps mark the beginning of a more embracing church, one more collegial and synodal than any work of ecclesiological engineering could design. This may explain why, in undertaking a true reform of the church, the pope decided to start with the family—and set the table for the most important moment of ecclesial discernment since Vatican II. ■

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Embracing Our Limits

The Lessons of Laudato Si'

Rowan Willliams

Perhaps the first thing that needs to be said about Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment is that it is an entirely natural development not only of the theology of *Evangelii gaudium* but also—as the extensive citations show—of the theology of Pope Benedict, especially as found in *Caritas in veritate*. Both the pope's critics and his supporters have often missed the point: Benedict's Christian humanism, his consistent theology of the dignity of the human person, his concern for a culture in which there is no longer a viable understanding of any given order independent of human will—all this is reiterated with force and clarity by Pope Francis. This encyclical is emphatically not charting a new course in papal theology, and those who speak as if this were the case have not been reading either pope with attention. What is uncomfortable for some is that a number of points clearly but briefly made by the previous pontiff have been drawn out in unmistakeable terms. The fact that we live in a culture tone-deaf to any sense of natural law is here starkly illustrated by the persistent tendency of modern human agents to act as though the naked fact of personal desire for unlimited acquisition were the only "given" in the universe, so that ordinary calculations of prudence must be ignored. Measureless acquisition, consumption, or economic growth in a finite environment is a literally nonsensical idea; yet the imperative of growth remains unassailable, as though we did not really inhabit a material world.

It is this fantasy of living in an endlessly adjustable world, in which every physical boundary can be renegotiated, that shapes the opening reflections of the encyclical and pervades a great deal of its argument. The paradox, noted by a good many other commentators, is that our supposed "materialism" is actually a deeply anti-material thing. The plain thereness of the physical world we inhabit tells us from our first emergence into consciousness that our will is not the foundation of everything—and so its proper working is essentially about creative adjustment to an agenda set not by our fantasy but by the qualities and complexities of what we

Children paddle in water in Navotas City, Philippines.

encounter. The material world tells us that to be human is to be in dialogue with what is other: what is physically other, what is humanly other in the solid three-dimensionality of other persons, ultimately what is divinely other. And in a world created by the God Christians believe in, this otherness is always communicating: meaning arises in this encounter, it is not devised by our ingenuity. Hence the pope's significant and powerful appeal to be aware of the incalculable impact of the loss of biodiversity: it is not only a loss of resource but a diminution of meaning. "Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us" (33).

The argument of these opening sections of *Laudato si'* repeatedly points us back to a fundamental lesson: We as human beings are not the source of meaning or value; if we believe we are, we exchange the real world for a virtual one, a world in which—to echo Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty—the only question is who is to be master. A culture in which managing limits is an embarrassing and unwelcome imperative is a culture that has lost touch with the very idea of a world, let alone a created world (i.e., one in which a creative intelligence communicates with us and leads us into meanings and visions we could not have generated ourselves). The discussion in Chapter III of the obsessive pursuit of novelty in our lives draws out very effectively how the multiplication of pure consumer choice produces not greater diversity or liberty but a sense of endless repetition of the same and a

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CNS PHOTO / RITCHIE B. TONGO, EPA

lack of hope in the future. Once again, the underlying issue is the loss of meaning. It is fully in keeping with this general perspective that what Pope Francis has to say about the rights and dignities of the unborn (120) is seamlessly connected with the dangers of a culture of "disposability" in which the solid presence of those others who do not instantly appear to contribute to our narrowly conceived well-being can so readily be forgotten. Ultimately, as the pope lucidly puts it, "when the culture itself is corrupt and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided" (123). Battling about legal controls is pointless unless we are able to persuade people of the human richness of a culture informed by that radical openness to meaning that is ready to leave behind the calculations of profit and public utility as the only tests of success and political viability. The encyclical makes various points in its later sections about the need for a robust international legal framework for addressing our environmental crisis, but its focal concern is that we should face the need for "a bold cultural revolution" (114).

Because of the eagerness of some commentators to stir the pot of controversy over the causes of climate change, this appeal for cultural revolution has been pushed to one side in a predictable flurry of what it's tempting to call counter-pontification. Some have said indignantly that the pope has no charism of authoritative teaching on scientific matters, and so have excused themselves from thinking about the underlying theological point (rooted, as I have already said, in the same theology as Pope Benedict's, a theology of human vocation in a limited material world and the decadence of a human culture incapable of facing non-negotiable truth). In fact, of course, no one, least of all the pope, has claimed or would claim such a magisterium; but what the pope actually says on this subject is grounded, entirely justifiably, in two things—first, a massive professional consensus on the rate of climate modification; and second, the direct experience of those living in the world's most vulnerable environments, who will bear witness to the measurable effect of desertification or rising sea levels. In such a situation, if it is rationally arguable (as it unquestionably is) that certain modifications in human behavior can alter the situation, even marginally, for the better, and if it is theologically arguable (as it unquestionably is) that our habits of consumption reveal a spiritually disastrous condition, then it is frankly a diversionary tactic to make debating points about the pope's non-infallibility on scientific affairs.

Change involves valuing the local, and so valuing the apparently modest gesture, the symbolically weighty but practically limited action that simply declares what might be done differently.

Also striking is the encyclical's consistent emphasis on solidarity as a rule-of-thumb test for the moral defensibility of this or that policy. In Chapter IV especially, the pope reflects on the inseparability of social health and cohesion on the one hand and harmony with the environment on the other (yet again, there is conspicuous reference to Pope Benedict's thought, as in 142). Pope Francis comes back here to the question of law: in many settings, the rule of law is a sorry fiction, with an administrative elite exploiting public process to advance private interest; and even in less corrupt environments, the law loses credibility when the social order manifestly fails to protect the poorest.

In a passage clearly marked by Pope Francis's experience as a pastor in Latin America, he lays out the connections between a lawlessly drug-abusing culture in a wealthy society, the toxic social and political distortions imposed by this on poorer societies, the economic and environmental degradation produced by the requirements of drug supply, and the resultant decay of the rule of law all round (142). The pope's vision—crucially—holds together what the rule of law is about (the security of persons from harm and the possibility of equal access to redress for all) with the acceptance of a world of mutual respect and the understanding of limits. Here, as at several points, Pope Francis makes it clear that his commitment to environmental justice is not in the least an advocacy of political primitivism or benign anarchy. Indeed, you could fairly say that he is suggesting that only when his "cultural revolution" is in hand can we properly understand politics itself. If our thinking and sensibilities are wedded to the will and its dramas, politics slips toward that marketized condition that increasingly dominates electoral campaigns—tell us (aspirant politicians) what you want and we shall argue about which of us can give it to you most effectively; never mind what our social life might be for. Solidarity with the world we're part of and solidarity among us as its inhabitants belong together; environmental justice (justice for the poor, justice for the next generation, as spelled out in 159–60) teaches us about ordinary justice and lawfulness between citizens—and vice versa.

So it is no surprise that the argument returns more than once to the question of how local cultures are to be heard, respected, and given real agency (144); how we escape from the assumption that the discourse of the "developed" world is the only unchallengeable orthodoxy around the globe today. Change involves valuing the local, and so valuing the apparently modest gesture, the symbolically weighty but practically limited action that simply declares what might be done differently. St. Thérèse of Lisieux is invoked to

good effect here (230), and this is a very significant issue if we are to avoid giving the impression of a crisis so intense that no small gesture is worthwhile. And it is with this in mind that the encyclical in its final pages (233–7) sets out a strong theology of the sacramental life, underlining not only the way in which the Eucharist reveals the inner energy of all material creation by the grace of the Incarnate Word but also the "sabbatical" vision of time made spacious in the celebration of God's gifts. "We are called to include in our work a dimension of receptivity and gratuity" (237); and, strikingly, St. John of the Cross is cited (234) as establishing the continuity in absolute difference that is God's presence in the created order. Ignoring or distorting our responsibility in the material world is ultimately a denial of that eternal relatedness that is God's own trinitarian life: we need to discover a spirituality rooted in "that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity" (240).

In short, this is more than an encyclical on the environment: it has clear and provocative things to say about our environmental responsibility and our current cultural malaise in this regard, but, by grounding its environmental critique in a critique of the soul of the contemporary developed world, it presents a genuinely theological vision with implications in several distinct areas. It was, for example, good to read (149 ff.) a brief but penetrating reflection on the actual geography of our urban environments, on how we display what we think matters in the way we design our civic spaces. These paragraphs should be a powerful diagnostic tool for understanding better what has to be done to rescue urban society—not only what support services should be available but what absolutely practical considerations should enter into the design of shared space, even the materials used in building. And, again echoing things that have been said from the Vatican often enough in the past decade, the issues around environmental risk prompt some hard questions about how a world still passionately committed to a model of absolute state sovereignty (except where globalized finance is concerned, of course) devises effective instruments for international monitoring and sanctioning of ecological threats.

This is one area in which the encyclical—like earlier papal pronouncements on the subject—will inevitably feel overidealistic: we are not going to have a world government any time soon, and the problems in creating any such entity are pretty well insurmountable. The truth is that we are pretty much condemned to an endless and generally frustrating series of arguments over where any authority might lie for the monitoring of the environmental record of sovereign states—looking ultimately, perhaps, to a regime like the UN nuclear inspectorate. There could be more about the UN in these pages, though it is true that this is not a period where high expectations of that body are easy to sustain. And there is one other area where I feel more nuance could be added, though I mention it in full awareness of its delicacy, and of the fact that, as a non–Roman Catholic, I do not have exactly the same specific commitments about the ethics of birth control. I entirely agree that identifying a rising birth rate as the root of the problem or suggesting that ecological crisis is best resolved in terms of population limitation is often another displacement activity on the part of developed cultures unwilling to adjust their behavior (50): the burden on the planet represented by large poor families is incomparably less than the burden of the lifestyles of "developed" economies, and we need to be reminded unsparingly of this bald fact. But is there a question, in the longest view, about what population the earth can sustain? All the arguments about living in a limited environment (which make it clear that unlimited economic growth is nonsense) bear eventually on the issue of unlimited population growth. The pope has given indications that he is not insensitive to this question, but there is more to do here, I suspect, in clarifying what a response that was grounded in Catholic theology but clear-eyed about the challenge might look like.

A final point: If I had a single reservation about the theology of *Evangelii gaudium*, it would have been that an understandable desire to avoid any churchy preciousness about liturgy made the brief remarks about the sacramental life in that document feel just a little perfunctory. This encyclical more than makes up for that in the eloquent reflections on the sacraments in its concluding pages. It is interesting that the theologian most often quoted in the document, apart from previous pontiffs, is Romano Guardini—not only a writer admired by Pope Benedict, but one who represents just that ecclesially and liturgically informed theology which came to fruition in Europe on the eve of Vatican II, presenting a coherent, imaginatively vivid, socially and politically critical worldview profoundly rooted in a highly traditional dogmatics, looking back to those patristic and monastic sources in which ethics, liturgy, spirituality, and doctrine were not separated. It is this hinterland that makes Pope Francis so hard to categorize in the eyes of those who think only in terms of left and right as conventionally imagined. And that is, I believe, a very healthy place for a theologian, a pope, or indeed a church, to be. If we can lift our heads from the trenches of contemporary media-driven controversy, what we are being offered in this encyclical is, in the very fullest sense, a theology of liberation, drawing our minds and hearts toward a converted culture that is neither what T. S. Eliot called "ringing the bell backwards," pining for a lost social order and a lost form or style of authority, nor a religiously inflected liberalism, but a genuinely ecclesial vision. The pope's cultural revolution is about restored relationship with the creation we belong with and the creator who made us to share his bliss in communion; it is about the unbreakable links between contemplation, eucharist, justice, and social transformation. It constitutes a major contribution to the ongoing unfolding of a body of coherent social teaching, and a worthy expansion and application of the deeply impressive doctrinal syntheses of Pope Benedict's major encyclicals. ■

From Silkworms to Songbirds

Why We No Longer Preach Like Jonathan Edwards

Ted A. Smith

Flannery O'Connor understood the challenge of telling stories in a modern world. The task of the Catholic fiction writer, O'Connor argued in her book *Mystery and Manners*, was to describe "the presence of grace as it appears in nature." But the prevalence of a worldview that separated grace from nature made what O'Connor called the "average Catholic reader" into "something of a Manichean." "By separating grace and nature as much as possible," O'Connor wrote, "he has reduced his conception of the supernatural to pious cliché and has become able to recognize nature in literature in only two forms, the sentimental and the obscene."

Obscene stories, in O'Connor's view, described nature without grace. Sentimental stories, on the other hand, described a perfected grace that did not include the slow, difficult process of participation in Christ's death. Only through that participation, O'Connor argued, was the "concrete reality" of a fallen nature redeemed. The endpoint of sentimental fiction was not redemption, O'Connor wrote, but "a mock state of innocence, which strongly suggests its opposite." Seemingly pious, sentimental stories were all the more obscene.

The Catholic fiction writer had to leave such pious, sentimental obscenities behind, in O'Connor's view. Instead she should work within the conventions of fiction as a form, trusting that the will of God might be realized there. That meant attending first of all to the specific details of the world as it actually existed. The Catholic writer would discern an "added dimension" to this world. But the test of that dimension would be its fidelity to "the truthfulness and wholeness of the literal level of the natural events presented." The Catholic writer had to discern the work of a grace that did not occlude or supersede nature but rather illumined and redeemed it.

O'Connor was writing about the particular challenges faced by a Catholic author trying to write fiction in the United States in the middle of the twentieth century. But her call to tell stories of grace at work in nature has a perennial quality for Christians of many traditions. And her analysis of the Manichean forces that distort modern attempts to tell such stories extends far beyond the writing of fiction. The same forces shape conventions for the stories told by journalists, historians, scientists, and other writers of nonfiction. They even shape the stories told by preachers.

Christian preachers have told stories in a huge variety of ways over the centuries. They have told narratives of signs and wonders, tales from antiquity, lives of the saints, testimonies of the work of grace in their lives, fables, and more. This pluralism of storytelling styles is an enduring fact of Christian proclamation that is all the more pronounced in the United States. Generalizations about sermon stories, then, are always risky. They are perhaps more illuminating in their failures than in their success. But I would argue that preaching in the United States has seen a significant shift from *typology* to *illustration* as the prevailing mode in which preachers tell stories. The shift from typology to illustration has been especially pronounced among white Protestants. But it was present in many traditions, and O'Connor was discerning related effects in what she called the average Catholic reader in 1957. Remembering the story of this shift from typology to illustration can help bring into sharper focus the modern Manicheanism that O'Connor described.

Of course remembering this shift is itself a kind of storytelling. And I would not want to reproduce the modern Manichean worldview in telling the story of its emergence. That is, I would not want to tell the story of the shift from typology to illustration as a sentimental narrative of progress or an obscene narrative of decline. Instead I hope (in O'Connor's words) to describe the presence of grace as it appears in nature.

Typological stories have been told by Jews and Christians for centuries. Preachers working in this mode pair a "type"—some thing, person, or event—with an "antitype" that represents its fulfillment. In his letter to the church in Rome, for example, the Apostle Paul called Adam a "type" of Christ (5:14). Adam the type prefigures Christ the antitype. Later

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generations of Christian interpreters seized on the Gospels' talk of a "sign of Jonah" to read Jonah as another type of Christ: Jonah's three days in the belly of the whale anticipated Jesus' own three-day journey through death to new life. Still other interpreters expanded typology beyond Scripture to all history. Persons or events in this age could be read as types that would be fulfilled in the age to come.

Typological stories have flourished in multiple preaching traditions in North America. Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Protestant preachers have all made use of typology. Typological narratives have played an especially important role in African-American preaching. And it is impossible to imagine Puritan preaching without them.

Typological ways of seeing the world had already lost their luster for many Puritan preachers when Jonathan Edwards was born in 1703. But Edwards displayed a typological vision as rich as any that we know. For much of his life he kept a volume he called "Images of Divine Things" in which he recorded observations of a natural world full of types that pointed to the sovereign grace of God. Theology *had* to work in this way, Edwards thought, because of the nature of language. Edwards believed that the origin of every word was in the experience of some sensible quality. I touch an ice cube; I have an experience; I need a word for what I experience; and so I say "cold." But if words came from empirical experience, how could we ever talk about things that we did not touch, taste, see, hear, or feel—things like theology, or morality? We could talk about morality and theology, Edwards wrote, only because God had created analogies that allowed things we *could* see, touch, taste, hear, and feel to "shadow forth, picture or image" things beyond our senses. "The works of God are but a kind of voice or language of God," Edwards wrote, "to instruct intelligent beings in things pertaining to himself." The very possibility of talking about God or goodness depended upon this typological connection between sensible events and theological truths.

This mode of revelation was not a grudging accommodation of human frailty, in Edwards's eyes. On the contrary, it was, he wrote, "very fit and becoming of God." For God established typological connections—God made the things of this age an alphabet of glory—not just because fallen humans needed them, but because it delighted God to work in this way.

With this vision, the whole world came alive to Edwards as shadows of divine love. Natural phenomena did not serve, he wrote, "merely...as illustrations of [God's] meaning, but as illustrations and evidences of the truth of what he says." They functioned not as illustrative examples of general truths but as typological images of particular promises. Edwards saw these typological connections everywhere. He saw shadows of divine things in the way a snake caught its prey, what it is like to climb a hill, the waves of a stormy sea, flaxen clothing, cornmeal, the stench of a corpse, milk, and the habit of taking off one's clothes before sleeping. Even the silkworm, in Edwards's eyes, was "a remarkable type of Christ." It spends its life weaving something beautiful in which we can clothe ourselves. It dies as a worm, as Christ died in the state of his humiliation, but then rises to new life as a more glorious creature in the butterfly. And it leaves behind a web that becomes for us beautiful clothing, just as Christ's death weaves for us the glorious clothing in which we stand justified before God. Edwards's silkworm did not merely illustrate an abstract claim about imputed grace. It revealed the nature of grace in the way that it pleased God to make God's ways known. And because God chose to communicate in this way, even the smallest empirical details of the story mattered.

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Edwards the preacher and mystic saw the world typologically, but Edwards the pastor and college president knew that few people in his day would agree with him. If typology was shaky in the parish in Northampton it was practically impossible on the campus in Princeton. Anticipating the skeptical reactions of the people around him, Edwards wrote that he expected "by very ridicule and contempt to be called a man of a very fruitful brain and copious fancy." He kept his typological thoughts to himself. The notebooks were not published until they became interesting as historical artifacts more than two hundred years after he wrote them.

As Edwards anticipated, typological thinking became less and less plausible over the course of the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, some white Protestant preachers and politicians still told typological jeremiads about church or national identity. A few virtuosi like Herman Melville gathered the embers of typological consciousness to light new kinds of fires. Most Catholic and African-American preachers continued to use at least some typology. In the early twentieth century Pentecostals would revive it again. But for most of the people and institutions who were Edwards's most immediate descendents, typology stopped making sense.

Preachers in the revivals that rolled across the country in the first decades of the nineteenth century found that typological stories did not move their listeners to conversion. Revival preachers often turned instead to stories *illustrating* theological propositions that were the real point and purpose of the stories. And they met with great success. Illustrations rang true for listeners in an increasingly modern world. Over time the practice of telling stories to illustrate points expanded, sprawling across lines of race, class, and tradition. Today almost every handbook for preachers includes some discussion of the form. Books and websites collect stories that can be used to illustrate a whole catalogue of theological points. The illustration has become one of the signature practices of preaching in our time.

At first glance the illustration seems to replicate the Manichean structure that O'Connor denounced. The illustration positions grace somewhere above the narrative in a theological proposition that never quite enters the story. And nature has no meaning apart from its ability to add a little rhetorical punch to some theological point. The story need not be accurate in its description of concrete reality; it need not even be true.

Consider, for example, a story told about a hundred years ago by Warren Akin Candler, the Methodist bishop for whom the school where I teach is named. Candler was one of the most influential preachers of his time. But the story he told matters not because it was uniquely excellent, but because it was utterly typical. "Do you remember the story of Columbus starting out to discover a new world in little frail Spanish caravels?" Candler began.

> Without a chart he sailed the seas, as thoroughly derided as skeptical men deride the future life. On and on and on he sailed until the sailors with him grew doubtful and mutinous and were ready to throw him overboard and retrace their way back to Spain. But as the old mariner walked the deck in anxiety, the land birds came soaring about the sails, and the fruits of the land were floating on the waters while yet the shore line could not be discerned; and he raised the jubilant cry, "This is land ahead!" And every sailor was out of his hammock, and joyous chorus broke over those silent seas, "land ahead!" And there was land ahead! So our mutinous souls, often despondent and anxious for the Church, are sailing over uncharted waters through months and days and years. And we grow fearful and disquieted. But betimes the fruits of the Spirit come floating on the bosom of the deep, and the great birds of the kingdom come singing in the sails, and we begin to cry out, "Land ahead!" And, blessed be God, there is land ahead! "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Candler used the story of the land birds to illustrate the point that God sends signs of hope when we need them. Truth resided in this point, which took the form of a general claim that stood above history and applied equally to every moment in history: God sends signs of hope. The story of the birds illustrated this proposition. And it illustrated the proposition because Candler decided to use it in this way. There was nothing in the story itself that was integrally connected to this claim before Candler made the connection for his hearers. Because all the theological significance resided in the point, and because the story connected to the point only as Candler made the connection, Candler preached as if the events of the story had no theological significance in themselves.

Because the events did not carry theological significance in themselves, Candler did not attend to what O'Connor called the "concrete reality" of the situation. It did not matter to Candler if things happened exactly the way he said they did on the decks of the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María*. Candler could feel free—even obliged—to make up the details that made the story come to life: Columbus pacing the deck, the sailors in their hammocks, the scraps of dialogue. Within the conventions of this kind of sermon story, Candler did nothing wrong in presenting these inventions as if they described the way things actually happened. For the truth of the story depended not on the details of the narrative, but on the proposition which it illustrated. It did not matter if there were no hammocks on the Santa María (and, in fact, there weren't—Columbus and his crew "discovered" hammocks when they saw them being used by the people they called Indians). The empirical accuracy of such details is irrelevant in this kind of story. The story could be fiction, or even fiction presented as if it were fact, as these stories often were and are. For the measure that this kind of sermon story sets for itself is not its *correspondence* to what happened in 1492, but its *effectiveness* in illustrating a theological claim that applies equally to every time and place.

This practice of telling stories as illustrations reflected and contributed to a worldview in which a kind of secularity flourished. Whatever the conscious intentions of the

preacher—and Candler certainly did not intend to advance any kind of secularity—the practice of telling stories as illustrations projected a world in which theological truths existed on a different order from historical narratives. The truth of God was not in the story, not in history. Any connections between nature and grace were created, not found, by the preacher. If the sensible world acquired theological significance, it was because of the actions of an individual person. And the chief criterion for evaluating a person's work in making that connection was its usefulness for persuading other people of a truth above history.

The assumptions embedded in this practice are shared by the modern Manicheanism Flannery O'Connor attributed to twentieth-century readers. They fit closely with what Charles Taylor has called the "background beliefs" of a secular age. They reinforce a way of seeing in which individual subjects make whatever meaning there is in the world. They also fit with a centuries-long expansion of instrumental reason that values usefulness more than qualities like beauty or accuracy. They reflect a vision in which knowledge is divided between an idealist theology that never quite touches the ground and an empiricist account of the world that operates entirely within an immanent network of causes and effects. The story of the journey from Edwards's typological silkworm to Candler's illustrative birds is the story of a kind of disenchantment.

It is tempting for those of us who care about the church to tell this story of disenchantment as a narrative of decline. American churches are full of such stories today. I want to resist that temptation, though, and for three reasons. First, it suggests a remedy that does not take seriously our lives as finite creatues in time. A narrative of decline can stir in us the desire to restore what we think we have lost, to spin again stories in which the world just comes to us full of signs and wonders. But we cannot restore that kind of imagination by fiat, rhetorical excellence, or social reform, even if we want to. We cannot undo the deep shifts of many centuries simply by changing the way we tell sermon stories. There is something self-defeating in the effort. For if the problem is our knowledge of our role in making meaning, we cannot solve that problem through our efforts to make the world a more meaningful sort of place. We can't pull ourselves to a fully theological vision by our own bootstraps. A truthful theological vision depends on the grace of givenness.

Second, a simple narrative of decline would leave out the real gains that came with the rise of sermon illustrations. These include not just the fruits of a scientific worldview, which are real enough, however mixed the uses to which we turn them, but also an ethos of equality that arose hand-in-hand with the prevalence of illustrative narratives in sermons. In my book *The New Measures,* I argued that Alexis de

Tocqueville saw this connection clearly. Tocqueville visited the United States just at the time when revival preachers were casting off typological stories for illustrations of general points. He saw the fit between an emphasis on equality and the tendency to reason with general principles. People who live in aristocratic societies, Tocqueville wrote, tend to avoid general categories for interpreting the world and the place of people in it. A category like "citizen" has little purchase. The world is understood instead through particular names, like Louis XIV. But the person who lives in a democracy "cannot consider any part whatsoever of the human species without having his thought enlarge and dilate to embrace the sun. All truths applicable to himself appear to him to apply equally and in the same manner to each of his fellow citizens and to those like him." Typological stories fit with an old world in which some were elect and others were not and in which some were noble and others were not. But stories that illustrated general truths fit with a church that offered salvation to whosoever would accept it and with a polity that promised equal rights to every citizen. If the promises of American democracy have not been perfectly kept, the vision of universal rights applying to every individual person has still done much to create greater equality. The logic of the illustrative story grows out of and helps create the worldview in which this expansion of equality makes sense. It is no coincidence that the same early national revival preachers who led the way from types to illustrations were also in the vanguard of movements for the abolition of slavery, the equal rights of women, and a Gospel that offered salvation to all on equal terms. A simple narrative of decline would miss the ways that the rise of the illustrative story fit with those reforms in the name of equality for all.

A third reason to resist telling the story of the rise of illustrations as a narrative of decline is that it would miss the goodness of the critical consciousness that recognizes a human role in crafting stories about the work of God in the world. While we humans do not establish the ties between nature and grace, we do help make the connections in the stories we tell about those ties. Telling the truth about our role in this process breaks with past generations of Christians in some ways. But in others ways it carries forward one of the most important strands that runs through both the Old and New Testaments—and right into Flannery O'Connor's wondrous, critical combinations of the sacramental and the grotesque. That strand of faithful iconoclasm refuses to conflate our work with God's work. It refuses to treat our ideas about God as if they were identical to God. And so this kind of consciousness opens our theological understandings of the world to new kinds of critique. Those openings to critique have had great political significance, but they are not merely useful. They also carry forward the long tradition of refusing to worship idols. Their iconoclasm embodies a severe piety that is needed now every bit as much as it was needed in centuries past. A simple narrative of decline would miss the goodness of this ability to acknowledge the works of our hands for what they are.

Our trust in the theological significance of this world should lead us to tell stories that cling to the world all the more tightly. Our trust that God delights in speaking through the world gives us reason to believe that the diameter of the silkworm's thread matters, and matters theologically. What the sailors said on the deck of the *Santa María* matters. The wingspan of the land birds in the sails matters. It all matters, for the world lives as the language of God.

The complexities I have tried to sketch here would seem to suggest a trade-off: we might have gained goods like a stronger ethos of equality and a sharper critical consciousness, but they have cost us the gift of a meaningful world. The price of enlightenment is disenchantment. The terms of this bargain structure many accounts of the rise of modernity.

There is one level at which these accounts are true. The rise of the practice of telling stories to illustrate theological claims does come with a greater awareness of our role in making meaning. It arises with a loss of confidence in the givenness of the meanings we experience. But to take the loss of the *experience* of givenness as a sign that there *is no* givenness is to engage in exactly the idealism that this perspective criticizes in mythological thinking. Such a conflation confuses our experience of the world with the world itself. O'Connor's near contemporary Saul Bellow named this dynamic precisely. "The educated speak of the disenchanted (a boring) world," he wrote. "But it is not the world, it is my own head that is disenchanted. The world cannot be disenchanted."

The world cannot be disenchanted. Christians affirm that because of God's gracious choice, the world was, is, and will yet be the theater of the glory of God. If we live by this basic trust, then we have reason to believe that God just might find ways to speak through secularized sermon illustrations like the one that Candler used and like the ones we can't

help telling today. For if we trust that the world cannot be disenchanted, then we can trust that stories about this world have meaning not because we tell them in a particular way, but because the world itself—which includes those who tell stories about it—is part of a much larger story, one that we do not write and that gives meaning and direction to history even when we do not recognize it. We can trust that the stones themselves will cry out, not only when we are silent, but in and in spite of the stories that we tell about them.

As Flannery O'Connor saw, that kind of trust gives us new reasons to pay attention to concrete reality. Our trust in the theological significance of this world should lead us to tell stories that cling to the world all the more tightly. Our trust that God delights in speaking through the world gives us reason to believe that the diameter of the silkworm's thread matters, and matters theologically. The presence or absence of hammocks matters. What the sailors said on the deck of the *Santa María* matters. The wingspan of the land birds in the sails matters. It all matters, for the world lives as the language of God. That we cannot always be certain of our understandings of that language does not change this reality. Nor does our awareness of our role in making the meaning that we attribute to these things. On the contrary, that awareness gives us even more reason to attend to the things of this world, for it is the world itself—not our thoughts about it—that cannot be disenchanted.

The great danger of trusting in the revelatory quality of the world is that we will mistake the way things are for the way things are supposed to be. In assuming the theological significance of the world we can slip into what what Theodor Adorno called "magical positivism." This "wide-eyed presentation of mere facts" can only be performed if we suspend the critical consciousness that we have gained at such cost. Even more, it mistakes the ways things end in this age for their final endings, and so gives those who have the power to shape those earthly endings the power to define the meaning of history. It gives death the last word.

Insisting on the theological significance of the empirical world while refusing to let the powers of this age define that significance commits us to proposing different endings for the stories we tell about the world. One way to do this is to tell stories that illustrate theological claims, just like Warren Candler did. The first significance of these claims is negative. Proposing a point as the real meaning of a story refuses the natural and final qualities of the meanings offered by the powers and principalities of this age. Points of stories, even if we make them, declare our hope for something more. They declare our trust in a deeper story with a better ending. They pledge our resolve to live in the shape of that story.

The declaration of such hope can survive the realization that we have had a hand in making the meanings that we propose. Because we fashion these theological claims, they are fallible. They remain open to revision. But they are no less hopeful for that. For we fashion these meanings to refuse the closure whereby the way the story ends in this age defines its ultimate meaning. We fashion these meanings to serve as signs that we and all that we perceive are part of a larger story than we can tell. Our consciousness that we have a hand in making the meaning that we experience does not rob the world of meaning. The negation of the ending supplied by this age, coupled with a recognition of the made quality of the ending we supply, reveals the world to be yearning for a meaning to the story that is better than any we could make. When we perceive the world yearning in this way, we find ourselves yearning with it. For we are reminded that we do not know how to pray as we ought, and so we find ourselves groaning with the Holy Spirit, and with all creation, in sighs too deep for words. Those sighs are the most truthful testimony we have to offer. It is the great hymn of the church that waits: *Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!* In and in spite of our intentions, that faithful hymn sings through the stories preachers tell to illustrate their points.

Heard in this way, Warren Candler's story about the land birds comes to us as good news. Like every preacher, Candler proclaimed a Gospel that outran his intentions. His story did more than illustrate a general point about doctrine. It declared that the birds were a sign of something greater than the fact that Columbus and his crew were drawing near to land. The sermon therefore suggested that the real meaning of the story of the landing of those ships was not any of the empirical endpoints that we already know for this story. The real meaning of this event—the point of this story—was not the founding of colonies in North America. It was not the enrichment of the nations of Europe. It was not the enslavement and death of the people who greeted Columbus and his crew and taught them how to make hammocks. Candler's story about the birds insisted that none of these moments was the real end of the story.

The real end of the story, as Candler told it, was the arrival of the Reign of God. He described the birds singing in the sails as heralds of this Reign. Thus Candler's story refused the power of anything less than this Reign to define the meaning of that moment in 1492. Even if Candler fashioned the ending himself, it could still break the hold of the powers of this age to define the meaning of this age. And it could reveal this age to be a time of yearning for a fulfillment so lovely that we desire it even when we do not have words to describe it. The fragile, fallible point of the story reveals that moment in 1492 to be groaning for a time when—just as Candler said, even as he said more than he could intend—"the fruits of the Spirit come floating on the bosom of the deep, and the great birds of the kingdom come singing in the sails, and we begin to cry out, 'Land ahead!' And, blessed be God, there is land ahead! 'Christ in you the hope of glory.'" ■

Late to the Font

Whatever Happened to Adult Baptism?

Rita Ferrone

Discussions of the state of U.S. Catholicism today often fail to note a worrisome trend: a steep recent drop in the number of adults being initiated into the faith. In fact, adult baptism in the United States fell by a startling 43 percent between 2005 and 2013. And while I think I know the reasons for the decline, I am frankly even more concerned about a certain stagnation of our collective imagination concerning the rite of baptism itself—a sclerosis in our ability to consolidate and implement the important liturgical reforms of Vatican II.

The reformed rites of adult initiation appeared in 1972, and the first English edition two years later; in 1988 a new edition was released with American adaptations, mandated for use in U.S. dioceses, and for the church in the United States there followed a period of impressive expansion and growth, lasting nearly two decades. (To give you an idea of how remarkable this period was, the U.S. bishops' study of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults published in 2000 was initially titled "Amazing Growth.") Then the bottom dropped out.

What happened? Two forces have worked against this postconciliar reform. The first is simply a reaction against the council itself. We see the backlash in seminaries, on blogs, and in diverse actions of the hierarchy and lay groups dissatisfied with Vatican II. The backlash gained intensity under Pope Benedict, who favored a "reform of the reform"; his leadership gave the green light to many who wished to undermine or redirect the reforms. Return to preconciliar liturgical practices; hostility and suspicion toward liturgical changes rampant on the web; fervent attempts by the Vatican itself to reconcile the Society of Pius X despite its rejection of Vatican II; a chilling of ecumenism; and finally the attempt to "set the clock back" on inculturating the liturgy by tying all the rites tightly to the original Latin texts and reducing or removing local adaptations: the backlash against the council has truly been sweeping.

The second factor is the flourishing of a problematic narrative about religious education, one which amounts to a backlash against postconciliar catechetics. You've heard this narrative many times: Everything was in disarray after the council; catechesis lost its content; the 1970s sacrificed sound doctrine for butterflies and pop songs, leading a whole generation to drift away, while those who remained became "cafeteria Catholics" enervated by secular culture's "dictatorship of relativism."

It's an easy hit, of course, because the targets are mostly women, as Cathleen Kaveny pointed out in these pages ("That '70s Church," October 24, 2014). Women carried the burden of catechesis throughout the period in question. Women wrote those "problem" textbooks. Women were the ones deemed "soft on doctrine," too "creative" in their approaches, too "understanding" toward deviant ideas and behaviors, and so on. And the remedy? Too often it has been unyielding answers to messy and controversial questions. Proponents of such firmness fantasize that a more forceful teaching style will restore the Catholic community's nerve—and return it to the glories of 1950s postwar expansion. For the Christian Initiation of Adults, this means content-heavy instruction in lecture format, usually by male authority figures such as priests or deacons, conducted at a regional level. Parish community involvement and an integrated practice of liturgical celebration are regarded as inessential, as extras. It's frankly a return to the kind of "convert instruction" practiced before the reform. We can see already how well this is going!

So where does this leave us? On the positive side, I believe that the backlash against the council and its reforms is finally waning. We have a new generation coming up, many of them eager to move beyond the impasses of the reaction against the reform. We have a new pope, Francis, who, whatever else he may be, has certainly been formed by the council and is not disillusioned with its vision. The situation is ripe for revisiting the reform of baptism and allowing it to reawaken our passion for the church. The connectedness of faith to life—ritualized and celebrated within a believing community—holds an incomparable power. Once experienced, it changes us.

I do not expect our bishops to lead us in this effort. Their minds are on canon law, or consolidating parishes, or handling

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sexual-abuse cases, or evangelizing the already-Catholic or, God help us, on what to wear; but not on this. And, truth to tell, they have rarely led in this realm. It's up to the laity to pay attention and look at initiation afresh—not merely as a program or a tool in the kit of parish life, but as a profound expression of the values that make the Christian community what it most essentially is. The dynamics of Christian life itself are what shape our rites of initiation: opening up the Scriptures; walking the way of faith with companions on the journey; discovering Christ in our midst; recognizing him in the breaking of the bread; going forth to announce the good news that "he is alive." It's up to those for whom this baptismal "stuff" of conversion not only makes sense, but also makes a difference, to consider more deeply what it actually means—and to live according to that meaning. But in order to implement these reforms, we first have to understand them.

The Baptism of Christ *by Rimini, c. 1335*

Understanding the postconciliar view of baptism begins with embracing a larger horizon of meaning. We need to break out of the facile assumption that the reform of baptism was about minor improvements in how we "do things to infants," and begin instead to see it —through the lens of the new rites—both as a communal, ecclesial event, and as a paschal celebration of glory. The reformers knew well that baptism is the foundation of Christian life, and in their commitment to bolstering this foundation they built a new context for baptism, primarily through the restoration of the catechumenate and its rites. This context not only provides a model for adults, but also imparts renewed vigor to the celebration of infant baptism.

The renewal of adult initiation teaches us, for example, that private baptismal celebrations are not the norm, that the "family" involved is not only the biological family but also the parish. It teaches us that baptism is not about avoiding the threat of limbo—or wearing a nice dress for a day—but rather about crossing the Red Sea, and the promise of Christ that "I will be with you always." A robust baptismal polity for adults helps to heighten our sense of the numinous quality of each ritual gesture for infants, and also to see the role of parents and godparents anew, for they too minister. They are partners in the action as it unfolds, not merely honorary figures or witnesses to what the priest or deacon is doing.

I'm going to focus on the RCIA, rather than on the baptism of infants, because the most significant and far-reaching aspects of the reform are seen most clearly in the rites of the RCIA. There's a wonderful ritual in the first liturgy of the catechumenate, in which the candidate, standing at the doors of the church, is marked by the sign of the cross on the forehead, ears, eyes, lips, heart, shoulders, hands, and feet. The etching of the sign of the cross on the body constitutes a "first consecration" of the candidate, and marks the change of status that the rite effects as candidates become catechumens. Signing catechumens with the cross is very ancient; Augustine remarks on it. Yet it would never have come to us in its modern form except for Vatican II's reform of the liturgy.

These renewed ancient rituals were the work not only of a council or a pope, but also of scholars who researched them, missionaries who called for a restored catechumenate, and pioneers around the world who conducted catechumenal experiments in the years prior to the council. Catechumenal centers began in France during the postwar period, when de-Christianization propelled a search for intentional rites and communal support that might form adults for discipleship in a secular world. Equally important were the labors of Coetus XXIII, the council's subcommittee that drafted the new ritual texts, opening them to adaptation and foreseeing the immense importance of participation by the entire Christian community at every phase of the initiatory process.

Here in the United States, we owe much to the efforts of imaginative liturgical scholars like Aidan Kavanagh, OSB, and to the Belgian religious educator and influential teacher Christiane Brusselmans, who crisscrossed the country persuading catechetical leaders to buy into the "new thing" that the restoration of the catechumenate represented for parish life. Christiane's protégé, Jim Dunning, founded the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, helping to shape thousands of pastors, parish volunteers, and church professionals. And as already noted, a special debt is owed to lay women in parishes—for the great majority of people leading and promoting RCIA processes, during the period of their greatest flourishing, were women.

DADEROT

TWO POEMS BY JACK LINDEMAN

BELIEVE

Yes, I can be there
enclosed in my dark skin
wanting everything
my eyes can reach
not always available
to the length of my arms.

It's a kind of greed,
but a man is naturally carnivorous
with his big teeth in a wide mouth
able to enclose
a hunger for words
as well as a slice of steak

while those places
I would like
to go to
all by myself
keep their lights on
under a dark sky.

PLACE

This was not there
and only some other place
differently spelled
and therefore not remembered
as ever having been
what I supposed

Jack Lindeman's new chapbook, Measuring Dorcas, *is being published by Finishing Line Press. New poems have recently appeared in* Abbey, California Quarterly, The Cape Rock, Chiron Review, Confrontation *and* Poetry Now.

Some might wonder about using the word "consecration" to describe what happens in the catechumenate. Why do the praenotanda—the notes in the ritual text—speak this way? Aren't the people we meet in this rite simply joining the church, that great amorphous sociological hodgepodge? Why lavish so much attention on those who occupy the lowest rung on the ecclesiastical ladder? After all, they're not even baptized! Why interrupt Sunday Mass to go to the doors and sing to them and welcome them and applaud for them and trace crosses on their bodies? Is something actually happening here, to them and within this community of faith, by the grace of God, to which we must pay attention? We in the Catholic sacramental tradition do not throw around that word, "consecration," lightly. It signifies the awesome mystery whereby bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Do the real flesh and blood of catechumens become...bread and wine?

Perhaps this rhetorical play is not so far off the mark, if one considers what it means to be Christ's own in the world. For what is a Christian if not bread broken, life poured out, for others? Did not St. Augustine say, in a homily to the newly baptized, that "it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord's table: receive your mystery. Say Amen to what you are"? Yes, something is happening here before us—something so important, in fact, that the whole people of God needs to name, cherish, ritually own, and bless it.

The signing with the cross is the catechumen's first consecration. And other consecrations are coming, as each catechumenal rite furthers a progressive realization of the mystery of God calling, claiming, and forming this human person to live as Christ. The Rite of Election, the Rites of Scrutiny, the giving of the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer—all are moments in the crafting of an identity, a precious and authentic identity which is both given and discovered under grace. "I have called you by name; you are mine." Indeed, baptism itself is a consecration, of the pilgrim on her sacred journey home to God.

Liturgy is a system of signs, and therefore any liturgical reform must be understood in its organic and systemic dimensions. The reform of initiation syncs the public and communal rites of the catechumenate with the structure of the whole liturgical year, giving these rites maximum visible presence and allowing them to influence and inform our vision of church. Initiation is an entry point for the faithful into the central mystery the church celebrates: the Paschal Mystery. It provides a paschal narrative throughout the year, helping catechumens experience the Christian way of death to sin and life for God, setting the pace for the Sunday celebration throughout Lent and culminating at the high point of the liturgical year, the Easter Vigil.

The reform of initiation also brings to light rich resources that occur nowhere else in our ritual system. A whole collection of images and symbolism in the Easter Vigil, for example, affirm and even celebrate women as bearers of salvation. These were formerly hidden behind the veil of Latin, which few people understood. Now they are more accessible, but do we even notice them?

To offer just a few examples: In the *Exsultet* the scriptural image of Christ the Morning Star is a feminine one (the Morning Star is Venus). The words "rejoice O mother church in shining splendor" envision the church as a radiant, shining woman. The praise of the bees in the *Exsultet* includes a paean to "*apis mater*," the mother bee who produces wax for the candle. And birth imagery has long graced the text of the blessing of water. Though some of these references

were dropped in reforms that sought to sharpen the focus on Exodus, another vitally important element was restored: immersion. The liturgical action of immersing in water, which plays upon symbolism of birth and death, womb and tomb, speaks louder than words. What is it saying? Well, consider baptismal fonts. Although the womb image is not the only one used in the design of fonts, it has been an important theological topos, suggesting the fertile church, the life-giving church. Most commenters also interpret the dipping of the candle in the water during the blessing of the font—an option in the modern rite—as a reference to sexual procreation. The font is a locus of fertility, a living stream that "swallows up age and spits out youth"; "this spring is life that floods the earth."

Finally, the importance of baptism for ecclesiology cannot be overestimated. Via the reforms of Vatican II, baptism provides a foundation for the ministry of the laity in the world—both women and men—as well as sacred ecclesial actions of various kinds. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that sacramentals flow from the baptismal priesthood. The Christian is called to bless and to be a blessing; thus parents bless their children and catechists bless the catechumens in their care. And while the special role of the ordained is maintained in the liturgical reform, the council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* affirmed in a fundamental shift that lay persons do in fact carry out genuine liturgical functions (as readers, etc.) that are not delegated functions of the priest. Their role, right, and duty to participate in the liturgy arises from their baptism. Baptism's inclusiveness is comprehensive and empowering.

Does giving baptism ritual and ecclesiological prominence make sense? I think it does. There is nothing quite like the rites of Christian initiation, which are properly considered "baptism in its fullness." The sacraments all use the vocabulary and syntax of the ritual language first established in Christian initiation. Initiation introduces ritual elements that will appear again and again in our liturgical rites, such as laying-on of hands, anointing, vows, clothing, the kiss of peace. Indeed initiation is foundational for everything that follows, up through the final gestures of the funeral liturgy, when a pall is placed on the coffin in remembrance of the baptismal garment, and water sprinkled over the body of the deceased one last time. Baptism likewise establishes the necessary context for a right understanding and pastoral praxis of Eucharist—the sole repeatable sacrament of initiation. Viewing Eucharist as the culmination of an initiation into discipleship and community gives us a far more vigorous understanding of Eucharist than does the privatized, sentimentalized, me-and-Jesus version of Eucharist so common in the past.

It is no secret that the absence of a robust initiatory polity over long spans of our history has contributed to ecclesiological distortions, such as an overemphasis on Holy Orders and a shriveled concept of the laity (a shriveling that Vatican II's emphasis on the universal call to holiness sought to change). The growth of religious orders, while a salutary development, nonetheless illustrates how key elements of baptismal piety— such as community involvement, discernment of a divine call, and empowerment for ministry and mission—were transferred to special cadres in the church. These gifts and responsibilities once belonged to all the faithful, through baptism, and required no "special" religious vocation. Over time, however, elaborate staged procedures arose to accompany Orders and religious profession, while baptism was narrowed by the minimalizing ideas of cleansing infants from Original Sin and formalizing their adoption into the culture of Christendom ("christening"). The shrinking of baptism to a few minimal rites represented a decline.

In seeking to return baptism to its proper role, the efforts of Vatican II represent nothing less than an attempt to reform the church at its roots, and from the bottom up. The council's documents, *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes*, repeatedly point out the great dignity and calling of all the baptized, not just the ordained. The universal call to holiness, as well as the solidarity and witness that the faithful give to the world, are the birthright of the baptized; we are not merely "poor banished children of Eve." In the council's liturgy constitution, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the call for active participation rests on baptism. It is the proper calling of the baptized to share in offering the eucharistic sacrifice and also to offer their lives. This is a strong endorsement from the constitution—for those who have ears to hear, anyway. But if it is not to be "just talk," it must be accompanied by a changed conception and attitude toward what it means to be church.

Postconciliar liturgical reform gave the principles enunciated at Vatican II actuality in reformulated ritual gestures, texts, and actions. What was articulated in words (about God, church, and salvation) in the council documents becomes flesh in the celebration of rites. This is true not only for the catechumens, but for the assembly as a whole. We all become more truly who we are.

That's the theory, anyway. And when it's done right, it works, splendidly. The trouble is, it's done right far too infrequently these days.

How should we move forward? I would suggest that we need more grassroots leadership. We need the Christiane Brusselmans of today to propose in fresh and persuasive language what this reform is about, lest we see it dwindle, along with other postconciliar initiatives, such as general absolution or parish celebration of the hours, that flourished for a time and then faded. We need leaders among us to remind us just what there is to value in this reform, and just how important the challenge to realize it is for all of us. We have the resources to meet this challenge, I believe, but we need to see it clearly as it is and marshal our resources to meet it. The prospect of doing just that continues to inspire me with hope for the church of the future. ■

Rand Richards Cooper

Atrocity's Daily M.O.

'PHOENIX'

Ronald Zehrfeld & Nina-Hoss

There can be no poetry after Auschwitz, philosopher and social theorist Theodor Adorno famously asserted. Yet there are movies, and plenty of them. Cinematic approaches to the Holocaust have ranged from documentaries, beginning with the concentration-camp footage shot by Allied troops and continuing through Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, to action films such as *Escape from Sobibor*, the terse courtroom drama of *Judgment at Nuremberg*, domestic dramas like Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker* or Costa-Gavras' *Music Box*, Roberto Benigni's whimsical tragicomedy *Life Is Beautiful*, and much more in between. Now, in *Phoenix*, director Christian Petzold applies the chiaroscuro of film noir to the moral abyss of German anti-Semitism. There may be no poetry after Auschwitz, but there is melodrama.

Phoenix explores questions of complicity and reckoning in the daily workings of the Holocaust. Who was guilty, and of what; who will be called to account—and how? Such questions invoke two whopping terms Germans used in addressing their own burden of guilt in the decades since the war: *Wiedergutmachung* (reparations) and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The former comprised mainly government payouts, while the latter, meaning literally "the overcoming of the past," has denoted the ongoing efforts of professors, writers, and other public intellectuals to probe the sins of Nazism—and to atone for them. Yet these were collective political efforts, mediated by large government institutions and articulated by elites, and not a matter of individual reckoning. Public penance, private silence: postwar Germany proceeded by an unspoken bargain that let the man in the street off the hook—much to his relief. *Phoenix* takes us to *Stunde Null*, the zero hour at war's end, to investigate individual guilt and put that man back on the hook.

It does so via a novel conceit. The film (co-written by Petzold and the late Harun Farocki, from a novel by Hubert Monteilhet) takes place mere months after war's end in the bombed-out Berlin of 1945, where laughing American GIs roam the streets as German civilians flit like ghosts amid the ruins. One ghost is Nelly Lenz (Nina Hoss), a former cabaret singer who is also a Jew and Auschwitz survivor. Having been shot in the face in the closing days of the war, she is under the care of her best friend and fellow Jew, Lene (Nina Kunzendorf), and of a surgeon who undertakes her facial reconstruction. Following surgery, Lene plans for both women to emigrate to Palestine, but Nelly demurs. Her non-Jewish husband, a jazz pianist named Johannes—Johnny, she calls him—is out there somewhere, and she intends to find him. Lene tries to deter her, informing Nelly bitterly that Johnny is the one who betrayed her to the Nazis. Refusing to believe it, Nelly tracks him down to a club where he is working as a busboy.

But there's a problem. After the surgery, Nelly looks different—and Johnny, believing his wife dead, doesn't recognize her. He does, however, note a strong resemblance; and in a scheming attempt to pry his wife's estate from the Allied military bureaucracy, he asks her to imitate his wife, stage a dramatic return, claim the inheritance, and split it with him. This will mean reuniting the faux Nelly (really a faux-faux Nelly) with their old friends—a task he undertakes to prep her for. And so Johnny begins a Pygmalion-like makeover, teaching Nelly to dress, use makeup, walk and talk like herself, while filling her in on biographical information she'll need in order to pass muster with friends.

The basics of this plot conceit don't withstand a lot of scrutiny, and if you're the kind of moviegoer who asks, "Would she really _____?" or "Wouldn't he notice _____?", you're liable to experience scratchy annoyance at Phoenix's implausibility. But Petzold is after truths beyond realism. The ironies of his film start with its title, which signals a Germany rising from the ashes even as its Jewish protagonist does likewise: perpetrator nation and individual victim, conjoined in assaying new identities. But how, exactly, does one become a new person? Before performing her facial reconstruction, the surgeon shows Nelly various facial features modeled on movie stars, telling her that "a new face is an advantage." When Nelly responds that she only wants to be her old self, he warns her that that's not going to be possible. His comment hints at a break from the past so traumatic—at one point Nelly speaks about her prewar self in the third person—that it borders on mental illness. Then there's the question of the moral identity of Johnny. Who was he, who is he, in relation to Nelly?

Phoenix is both engaging and taxing; the structural dramatic irony Petzold sets in place make you double-track your way through, assessing how Nelly understands what is going

CHRISTIAN SCHULZ CSCHRAMM

on versus how Johnny does, even as you try to take in still other, larger levels of meaning. In one scene, as Johnny rehearses Nelly for her encounter with their friends, she insists that they'll ask her about the camps, and that she should be ready—and recounts to him a heart-rending story about a child clinging to its mother's dress. While we register the beating heart of Nelly's suffering, at the same time we're busy gauging both Johnny's quizzical reception of the story and Nelly's tactical motives in offering it up in the first place—even as we register the penetrating judgment Petzold delivers via Johnny's reassurance that "nobody will ask you about the camps," cueing up the historical theme of postwar German silence about genocide.

Such complications sink us deep in the interpretive weeds, and at times I wasn't sure whether the film's structural irony bolstered its impact or vitiated it, keeping us at a distance from emotions pooling beneath the surface of its dramatic confrontations. And yet I found the closing scene entirely shattering. Petzold keeps the film's impact dammed up and then, once the dam is breached via the inevitable moment of unveiling and comeuppance, lets it come pouring forth in a cascade of anguished recrimination and guilt.

In determining where *Phoenix* takes aim, it helps that Johnny is essentially likable, a handsome, fun-loving musician (the actor, Ronald Zehrfeld, resembles the young Ernest Hemingway) who mixes easygoing amiability, romantic flair, and casual opportunism. He's no better or worse than the next person, in other words—which is very much the point. This is expressly not a film about Nazis. In German terms, *Phoenix* addresses not the culpability of the Täter, the chief perpetrators of evil, but rather the Mitläufer, those who went along with it; not the symphonic villainy of a Himmler or Goebbels, but the situational venality of a neighbor, say, who denounces a Jew because he wants his apartment. It is significant that Johnny is still scheming; his plot to secure his wife's inheritance mirrors the casual opportunism that was atrocity's daily m.o. all across the Nazi realm. Is Johnny an evil person? Disguised as a simulacrum of herself, Nelly is able to probe her husband's actions, intentions, and sympathies; in doing so, she acts on behalf of all of us, and of history itself, spying into the one place where Nuremberg and other tribunals could not go—the heart of the average German.

Petzold gives *Phoenix* the form of a mystery, deploying elements of noir—mistaken identity, a woman in pumps and bright red lipstick, a haunting cabaret ballad, a train platform at night—in a radically different context, with horror substituting for dark glamour. The noirish touches jive grotesquely with Holocaust tropes, so that a locomotive billowing steam on a dimly lit platform at night, and the piercing shrill of a train whistle, at once evokes such films as *Brief Encounter*—and also the cattle cars bearing their awful cargo to Auschwitz. And in Nelly we have a femme fatale who is not so much fatale as half-dead, traumatized beyond measure and perhaps beyond healing.

What is the function of a film exploring Holocaust guilt at this late date? Like the recent spate of Nazi-related trials in Germany—trials of senescent nonagenarians who were very minor players in genocide—*Phoenix* reflects broad awareness, and perhaps anxiety, that the last eyewitnesses are dying out, cueing up the moment in which knowledge of the Holocaust passes from lived experience into the more abstract orderings of history. All Germans now benefit from what Helmut Kohl indelibly called "the mercy of the late birth," and one senses that Petzold wants to leaven this mercy with hard truth-telling. According to Holocaust legal scholar Lawrence Douglas, postwar Germany has been "the poster boy for national self-reckoning, the rare instance of a land willing to face down its monstrous history." *Phoenix* revisits that monstrousness while it was still fresh, reminding us that atrocity was not simply enforced from afar, by the fiat of a madman, but enacted through intimate betrayals carried out by one's friend, one's neighbor, or even one's husband. ■

Leslie Woodcock Tentler

A Revolt, Not a Conspiracy

The Coup at Catholic University

The 1968 Revolution in American Catholic Education

Peter M. Mitchell

Ignatius Press, $19.95, 320 pp.

The Coup at Catholic University opens on an irenic note. Priest-author Peter M. Mitchell acknowledges that older Catholics in the United States have been shaped by experiences about which his generation—Mitchell was ordained in 1999—is almost entirely ignorant. Generational divisions in today's church, he suggests, would be more readily bridged if his own cohort knew more about the world in which their elders came of age. "We are too young to remember the supposedly good old days before the council. The fact that those who do remember them personally often respond so emotionally and negatively when those days are recalled should give my generation pause." All he asks in return—and this seems eminently reasonable—is that older Catholics "will at least respect that my generation's experiences and insights are no less valid than theirs."

Whatever his intentions, however, Mitchell has produced a narrative that can only exacerbate the polarization he laments. His ostensible subject—the "coup" of the book's title—has to do with events at the Catholic University of America that unfolded between the spring of 1967 and the fall of 1969. In April 1967 the university's Board of Trustees, a substantial majority of whom were bishops, voted against renewing the contract of moral theologian Father Charles Curran, despite his having been unanimously endorsed by his colleagues in the School of Theology for promotion to its tenured ranks. Curran received no explanation from the board for its wholly unexpected decision, although his prominence as a critic of the church's teaching on contraception was widely assumed to be at issue. Once the board's action became public knowledge, faculty and students at CUA responded by going on strike—an action unprecedented in the university's history and difficult indeed to imagine happening today. At the end of a tumultuous week, the board reversed itself and Curran was awarded tenure.

Curran and his colleagues in the School of Theology were once again in the public eye in the immediate wake of *Humanae vitae.* Although more than six hundred theologians from around the country signed a "Statement of Dissent" that was critical of the encyclical's principal conclusion, Curran was prominent as an organizer of the protest and—given that Washington, D.C., is a prime media market—a spokesman. Certain powerful members of the Board of Trustees, notably Cardinals O'Boyle (Washington, D.C.), Krol (Philadelphia), and McIntyre (Los Angeles), tried once again to fire Curran and any of his eight co-signer colleagues who refused to repudiate the "Statement." And once again they failed, not because of a strike this time but because their episcopal confreres both on and off the board were strongly opposed. Such an action was too extreme, in their view, and risked serious damage to the university's academic reputation.

In fairness to Mitchell, he relates these events with an obvious effort at even-handedness. The strike at CUA, he acknowledges, was fueled in part by faculty frustration at its often-repressive intellectual atmosphere and the university's dismal record as an employer. If the "dissenting theologians"—his term—were sometimes arrogant, Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle, CUA's chancellor and the dominant figure on the Board of Trustees, "left the impression of having many holes in his knowledge of theology and of academic matters..." Mitchell's interpretive stance, however, is anything but balanced. By wresting from the nation's bishops their right to control what was taught at an allegedly Catholic university, as Mitchell sees it,

CNS FILE PHOTO

Archbishop Karol Wojtyla receives the cardinal's red biretta from Pope Paul VI in 1967.

the "dissenting theologians" at CUA set in motion a disastrous chain of events. "It would not be long before dissent and the rejection of dogma would come to be par for the course at many of the nation's Catholic secondary and parochial schools.... The takeover of CUA in 1967 was the single most significant cause of the widespread dissent from church teaching among the Catholic laity in the United States after the Second Vatican Council."

That Catholic University, relatively small and not generally ranked in the first tier of Catholic universities nationally, could play so pivotal a role in post-conciliar change seems implausible on the face of it, even to one—here I speak of myself—who was happily employed at that institution for a number of years. James Hennesey's magisterial survey of American Catholic history (1981) fails even to mention the CUA strike when it deals with Catholic higher education in the post-council years. He focuses instead on the Land O'Lakes Statement issued in July 1967 by a number of prominent Catholic educators, which asserted as essential to a Catholic university both autonomous governance and complete academic freedom. The presidents of Notre Dame and Boston College were among its many signatories.

Mitchell's causal claims do possess what I'd call an emotional logic. They permit a before-and-after—an Eden and a Fall. Mitchell seems to believe that sexual license and religious doubt were sudden products of the mid-1960s, with no historical antecedents. His strategy also means that his players are either villains or heroes—though heroes manqué, for the most part, and villains who did not fully grasp that their actions would lead to a sexual dystopia. That Mitchell interviewed Curran does not mean that Curran's voice or thinking do much to shape the narrative. An ignorant reader would not know that, in the context of the times, Curran was actually quite moderate. In the words of his distinguished contemporary Richard McCormick, SJ, "His theological orientations are what I would call 'middle

of the road'.... I have always felt that his recent troubles with the Catholic University Board of Trustees was a case of 'getting the wrong heretic.'"

Good historians invariably possess a tolerance for ambiguity. No golden ages for them—this side of paradise, our lives are complicated and so is the record of our life together. Mitchell might have mentioned, for example, that by the time of the CUA strike in 1967, a substantial majority of Catholic wives in their childbearing years were already making use of forbidden modes of contraception. In the United States it was lay authors rather than priest-theologians who first went public with doubts about church teaching on birth control. Rather than trying to overthrow the Magisterium in favor of secular American values, which is how Mitchell sees it, Charles Curran was addressing a very real problem suddenly confronting a good many very real confessors.

The pastoral crisis generated by the issue of contraception and especially the issuance of *Humanae vitae* also explains why Mitchell's account has so few heroes. A host of impeccably conservative churchmen refused to support the board's efforts to fire Curran or his "dissenting" colleagues, thereby—in Mitchell's telling—embracing the "creed" of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in lieu of the creed of the Catholic Church. Somewhat in the spirit of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy, Mitchell's narrative ultimately rests on a conspiracy so immense as to be quite literally incredible. Rather than history in the usual sense, the book is really a *cri de coeur*: "Having grown up in post-*Roe v. Wade* America, my generation has personally experienced the destructive effects of the moral permissiveness heralded in the 1960s as the way of freedom and love." If I find Mitchell's notion of causality to be seriously deficient, I am more than sympathetic to his evident moral anguish. ■

Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *professor emeritus of history at the Catholic University of America, is the author of* Catholics and Contraception *(Cornell).*

Nancy A. Dallavalle

Backhanded Complementarity

Promise and Challenge

Catholic Women Reflect on Feminism, Complementarity, and the Church

edited by Mary Rice Hasson
foreword by Mary Ann Glendon
Our Sunday Visitor, $19.95, 272 pp.

The refutation of feminist theology, with its troubling interrogation of traditional gender norms, has been building in both the scholarly and popular worlds of traditional Catholicism for several decades. Featuring the work of both academics and think-tank attorneys, *Promise and Challenge* continues that effort, taking aim at a broad audience and seeking to articulate a fresh appropriation of the Catholic tradition on the significance of the creation of humanity as male and female. The goal of these authors is thoroughly pragmatic: To present the Catholic Church as a place where women's leadership can flourish, while ruling out any sense that female leadership is compromised by its lack of inclusion in a church thoroughly shaped by a hierarchical clergy. Thus their immediate task is to defend recent papal statements about gender complementarity, the "genius of women and men," and the rejection of women's ordination—and to do so by presenting these statements as definitive, rooted in the tradition, and appealing. This is a tall order.

Promise and Challenge draws repeatedly on the "Theology of the Body," a system of interlaced devotional reflections about maleness and femaleness that emerged from catechetical talks on Genesis given by Pope John Paul II. Animated by the philosopher-pope's embrace of personalism, as well as his reflections on "male" and "female" in the creation accounts, these authors argue that human sexual differences give rise to a rich dynamism of complementary gifts—the "genius," respectively, of being male or being female. Such a project finds ample justification in even a cursory survey of the social turmoil all around us today, in which genuine advances in recognizing the complexity of human sexuality are intertwined with a callous disregard for human dignity, the celebration of depravity, and a consumerist approach to primary human relationships.

The results are mixed. The essays in this collection tend to ignore the good that came from the opportunities for women that emerged from the social revolutions of the past half-century, while blaming women's enfranchisement—rather than the overwhelming economic changes in technology, manufacturing, and the service industries—for the social dislocation that has also marked these

The Creation of Eve, *from the Sistine Chapel ceiling by Michelangelo*

decades. Nevertheless, these writers are correct in claiming that the contemporary sundering of the sexual body from gender identity, a claim that some feminists deem necessary for women's full equality, has led to a worrisome cultural inability to assert anything normative about the human person.

By way of rectifying this situation, Sara Butler, MSBT, the most theologically articulate expositor of the church's ban on ordaining women, examines the intersection of "equality" and "vocation," and in the process correctly notes the need for a more nuanced understanding of the notion of difference and the telos of the human person. Another promising line of thought is articulated by Elizabeth R. Schiltz, who draws on the work of Prudence Allen, RSM. Schiltz presents a persuasive case for an "integral complementarity" that does not merely present women and men as parts of a single whole, but rather as full human beings, "complete in themselves," whose relational unity, with each person's gifts fully deployed, is a "third" anthropological moment, one which reveals, precisely in their relationship, the integrity of each of the two persons. Both essays deftly display the potential contribution of a theologically informed notion of complementarity to our understanding of the human person as male and female.

The problems emerge with those essays that proceed to detail the contours of the "genius" proper to women and men. How are men and women different, and do these differences lead to norms by which both can flourish? Addressing this question, *Promise and Challenge* illustrates the difficulties facing those who would write on gender (indeed, these difficulties are amply on display in the feminist theology these writers have in their sights), in that their claims tend to be ideological—in this case, offering a rational for reserving priestly ordination to males—as well as blind to the shaping force of culture (Margaret Harper McCarthy's essay, with its strong critique of the public/private split in the assignment of gender, is an exception). Most importantly, these authors have an overly partial reading of the tradition, in this case, limiting themselves to a devotional reading of Scripture through contemporary eyes as their guiding resource.

The limitations of this approach are most evident in the essays that explore the "genius of men." Adam is treated as the prototype for the male. "He is the first to know God," writes Deborah Savage, adding that "man's prior relationship with God prepares him in a special way to introduce the woman to God and to the things of creation." This ordered relationship, Savage suggests, even governs the Fall, which is caused when the man fails to exercise his proper dominion over the woman's relationship to the "things of creation." Although the Fall affects both male and female, Savage finds that women "do owe men a debt of gratitude"—for "without the

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specific genius of man, the human species would not have survived." Really? One wonders if claims such as these, which are clearly intended to "correct" the imagined agenda of "feminism," would be made without that foil.

A similar treatment of Joseph is problematic as well. The Catholic tradition has a long history of reflection on Mary as a model mother and an exemplar of discipleship. Joseph, too, has been venerated for his role as the "foster father" of Jesus—a phrase parochial education firmly impressed on my youthful imagination. In this role, Joseph is seen as heroic in his assumption of the roles of husband and father, given the mysterious origins of Mary's pregnancy. There is, however, little scriptural evidence for much else: Joseph is not even mentioned in Mark, after all, and confined to a few appearances in the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke. For devotional use, to leap from this most slender of accounts to an imagined profile of the "silent, faithful carpenter" in a crèche scenario is perfectly appropriate. But Theresa Farnan's normative claim that "the male genius" is "exemplified" by Saint Joseph's life of "justice, magnanimity, generosity, courtesy, courage, industry, [and] perseverance" imposes a set of modern moral virtues on a cipher. A further claim that Joseph's "fatherhood" was formative for Jesus is similarly speculative, since the internal dynamics of the Holy Family are lost to us.

In these essays, the stories of Adam and Joseph are manipulated to promote the notion that maleness is necessary to sacramentally mediate the divine—a contortion that seems designed solely to defend the church's ban on ordaining women, and one that forecloses the fullness of these narratives as they are received by the Catholic imagination. These authors might also want to ask themselves if taking that ban as a starting point is costing them too much intellectually—and unnecessarily so, for shoring up that position is not necessary for this project's important goal of articulating a "more incisive female presence in the church."

Such criticisms notwithstanding, *Promise and Challenge* offers many fruitful lines of inquiry and fresh observations. Economist Catherine Ruth Pakaluk reframes the roots of Catholic social teaching in the work of Leo XIII and Pius XII by reading relevant texts alongside their writings on the family and education. Erika Bachiochi urges dueling accounts of feminism to find common ground in their shared focus on the body and a concern for the poor. Mary Hallan-FioRito draws on her long experience in church administration to detail how women's leadership has been exercised, and how it might be more fully utilized in the future. And Mary Eberstadt explicitly calls Catholic women to engage in the male-dominated public conversation about social norms and the common good

Overall, these essays would be stronger if they drew from a broader range of resources. Imitating Pope Francis's approach in *Laudato si'*, for example, would allow the theological question of what is essential to "male" and "female" to be informed by the social and natural sciences. And what about the work of established Catholic feminist scholars? From this volume one would never guess that theologians such as Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, and Lisa Cahill have produced decades of academic work on Catholicism and gender. That work should be part of this conversation.

Women are crucial to the future of the church, and a critical re-examination of the dynamism of gender in Catholic life is arguably the question of our day, one that requires, in Mary Rice Hasson's evocative phrase, the evangelizing voice of "the public Catholic woman." We should all hope this well-edited volume will lead to a broader effort, in which Catholic women from across the spectrum will join in a critical conversation, with the common goal of realizing both the challenge and the promise of our creation in God's own image. ■

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Brian Stiltner

Accountability, Anyone?

University Ethics

How Colleges Can Build and Benefit from a Culture of Ethics

James F. Keenan

Rowman & Littlefield, $34, 281 pp.

Since the 1960s, when the fields of professional ethics began to take shape, there has been a growing interest in the broader field of ethics. Yes, there was a time before hospitals regularly consulted ethicists (as for large corporations, well, don't hold your breath). Curiously absent is any substantive treatment of the ethics of the academy. The prolific moral theologian James Keenan, SJ, says that his is the first book on "university ethics," by which he means the study of the ethical standards that apply across an entire institution.

To be sure, there have been forerunners of this field, such as the philosopher Steven Cahn, who in the 1980s and '90s proposed academic ethics as a topic for serious inquiry. But the general lack of attention to university ethics as such is indicative of a wider problem. Keenan writes:

> Simply put, the American university does not hold its employees to professional ethical standards because it has not created a culture of ethical consciousness and accountability at the university, and this is in part both because of the nature of the contemporary university and because it does not believe that it *needs* ethics.

Keenan draws an intriguing comparison between universities and churches—in particular, the Catholic Church—rocked by sex-abuse scandals. Both institutions presumed that if they could teach ethics, they did not need ethics themselves. But that is self-delusion. No complex institution can hope to act ethically unless it continually and honestly assesses its culture, establishes strong standards for behavior, trains its members to follow those standards, and holds those members accountable.

Of course, there are thousands of people who behave ethically throughout academia. Keenan's complaint, however, is that ethical standards are not articulated, faculty and administrators receive no ethical training, and systems of accountability are extremely weak. These deficits enable a host of violations, with each academic year bringing another batch of disturbing news stories. The book covers a number of issues, including gender inequity, sexual assault, racial discrimination, financial mismanagement, lack of access to college for poor students, and the skewing of priorities toward too-powerful sports programs. Keenan places a discussion of student behavior—drinking, harassing, and cheating—in the middle of the book. These are not simply problems for the students. They are problems for their universities. If ethics is not "constitutive of the university in the first place," writes Keenan, "and I don't think it is, we cannot possibly ask our students to see why our teaching ethics for their personal appropriation and development is a credible act."

Healy Hall, Georgetown University

Keenan gets at the wider problem by looking at how a university treats adjunct professors—those poor part-time professors who try to cobble together a living without benefits or job security. For Keenan, the problem of adjuncts crystalizes much of what's wrong with university life: a culture that is separated into "fiefdoms," stratified into a "caste system," and comparable to a "drug gang"; the misplaced priorities of institutions (many mission-oriented and liberal-arts courses are heavily staffed by adjuncts); and hypocrisy (Catholic universities, for instance, have generally been just as indifferent to the plight of adjuncts as other institutions, despite the church's strong teachings about justice for workers).

Keenan's hopeful message is that something can be done, despite the powerful culture of commodification in the United States and the long history of fiefdoms within universities. His touchstone is a statement by New Testament scholar Wayne Meeks: "Making morals means making community." When institutions explicitly work on developing and implementing moral standards, they improve the quality of their communal life. Reciprocally, genuine communal relationships will strengthen and protect moral standards. It is entirely possible to improve both ethics and community at universities. Those striving to do so should look to two parts of their community for inspiration, says Keenan: first, women faculty, who pioneered attention to structural justice within universities by advocating for equal pay, full respect, and family-friendly policies; and second, development (fund-raising) departments, which tend to embody solid ethical standards owing to their training and structures of oversight.

Keenan concludes his book with a four-page playbook titled, "If I Were a University President." He recommends that a president appoint a high-level ethics committee with broad representation. The committee should learn everything it can about the university's ethical culture and then come up with

plans for breaking down divisions between university fiefdoms, developing accountability, ferreting out violations, and rewarding ethical behavior. A president should use his or her bully pulpit to support the committee's mandate, so that the question "But is it ethical?" becomes a standard part of all decision-making at the university.

Creating an ethical culture at the uppermost levels of a university is ideal, but members of a university need not wait on the president. Change can come from many quarters. Students and their parents can ask whether the university truly has the students' education as its overriding goal. As a professor himself, Keenan calls on tenured faculty members to exercise their right and responsibility to speak out. "We see a good deal, but comment little…. We have plenty of opportunities to raise the right questions at the right time…[and] that right time is now." All members of a university can start by learning more about their own institution's policies and practices. "The first step is assuredly to move beyond our own fiefdoms and castes so as to learn about how others are faring in our so-called university community and to work in solidarity with them for greater equity and true community." And then, "we must take aim at our overall structures."

Keenan has provided a roadmap for the challenging but necessary work of making a moral community. This matters for everyone who studies or works at a university. It matters for the 65 percent of U.S. students who just graduated from high school and have enrolled in college this fall. It matters for the half a million part-time faculty earning, on average, less than $3,000 per course. The work of making a moral community also matters for American society because, like churches, universities could reclaim their role as moral exemplars. All they have to do is practice what they preach. ■

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Tzvi Novick

More Than a Feeling

The Love of God
Divine Gift, Human Gratitude, and Mutual Faithfulness in Judaism
Jon D. Levenson
Princeton University Press, $29.95, 226 pp.

"I love thee," wrote Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her most famous sonnet, "with the passion put to use in my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith. I love thee with a love I seemed to lose with my lost saints." To which Jon Levenson, the author of a new book about the love of God in Judaism, might reply: Your faith was childish, your saints lost, because you conceived of your love as passion. And because you continue to do so, your present love is probably also doomed. "Where love is understood primarily as a sentiment," he avers, it is "eviscerated"; "its days become numbered"; it is "a treacly thing for the emotionally weak." Levenson is not a romantic.

For Levenson, the main form that the love of God in Judaism takes—and by extension, the form that mature, adult love ought in general to take—is covenantal love, a love nurtured, structured, even defined, by service and obligation. It is no coincidence that one of the great love commandments—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might"—occurs in the book of Deuteronomy. This book is preoccupied with God's covenantal relationship with Israel, which it patterns after the ancient Near Eastern treaty form in which a vassal king pledges his love, i.e., his exclusive loyalty, to a great king, who in turn commits (at least implicitly) to protecting the vassal. The notion of a commandment to love God is unintelligible if this love is constitutively emotional, for emotions cannot be evoked on demand. The obligation makes sense only in a covenantal framework, wherein love constitutes, in the first instance, a duty of exclusive loyalty.

Levenson does not deny that there is what he calls an "affective" element in covenantal love. God does "fall in love" with Israel, or with its father, Abraham. He loves gratuitously, and the gratuitous kindnesses that he bestows, along with the love with which Israel, in gratitude, responds to God, undergird the covenant at Sinai. The affective element also ensures the survival of the covenant in the face of Israel's repeated violation of its terms, as God recalls his original love, and gratuitously forgives. Even as it motivates and preserves the covenant, the affective element undercuts the aspect of choice that we ordinarily associate with the notion of covenant, because God's gratuitous love makes the option of rejecting or violating the covenant an immoral one. "The gifts that helped establish the relationship in the first place...make a claim of their own; there is no way of sending them back." The most instructive parallel for the love of God in Judaism is not, then, lovers' love, at least not as we moderns ordinarily conceive of such love, through the categories of inner experience and choice. The better parallel is the love between parent and child. Levenson reflects movingly on the ways in which we, or the more fortunate among us, are born into gifts that, when we are mature enough to recognize them as gifts, bind us in turn to those who have bestowed them.

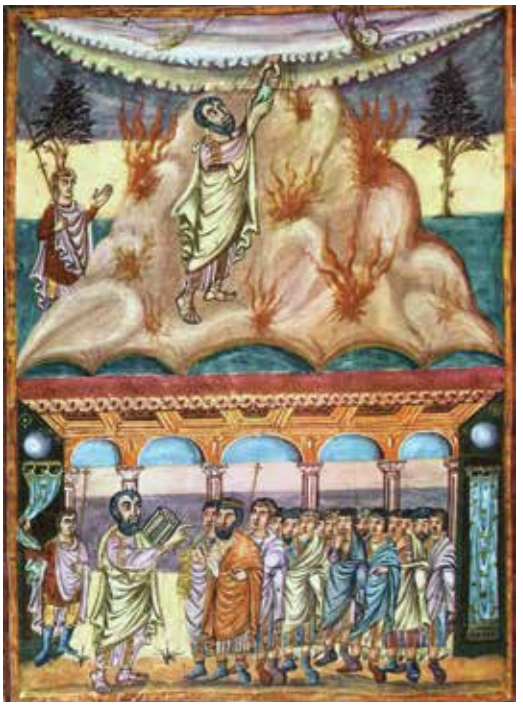
In contrast with the ancient Near Eastern vassal treaty, the biblical covenant also includes a law code, which the rabbis will expound upon and expand, and call the *mitzvot*. We are most familiar, in the Western context, with positive law, i.e., the law of the state, which has the preservation of the social order as its chief aim, and natural law, which is bound up with the good as such. But Jewish law, because it is enfolded into

the covenant, represents a third thing: "an expression of personal faithfulness and loyalty in covenant." It is a way of loving God. Levenson does not explain why Deuteronomy (and other biblical authors) introduced a law code into the covenant, but this momentous innovation may be connected with another difference between the ancient Near Eastern vassal treaty and the biblical covenant. In the latter, the vassal king is not an individual, but a people. A people is a construct, a product of imagination and institutions. Perhaps, then, the covenant must include a law code because it is in its observance of a common code that Israel becomes present as a people.

The covenantal love that Levenson explicates in the first chapter becomes in subsequent chapters the standard by which he measures other conceptions of the love of God—by which Levenson means both one's love for God, and God's love for others—in Jewish thought. The second and third chapters address biblical and rabbinic texts that appear to eroticize the love of God, but Levenson persuasively argues that these texts are more or less entirely compatible with the framework of covenantal love. In the fourth and fifth chapters, Levenson turns to thinkers medieval (Bahya ibn Paquda and Maimonides) and modern (Buber and Rosenzweig). The philosophical commitments of the former, which elevate contemplation over action, and the political context of the latter, which relegates religion to the private sphere, open considerable gaps between their conceptions of the love of God and traditional covenantal love, but Levenson identifies some points of continuity, especially in the case of Rosenzweig.

Levenson's topic is enormous, and he disavows comprehensiveness from the outset: "I have tried to write a book that is representative and illuminating rather than comprehensive and exhaustive." Illuminating it undoubtedly is, and profoundly relevant. I am less certain that it is altogether representative. Levenson is not a romantic, but more fundamentally, he distances himself from some of the commitments associated with the modern condition—to the sovereign self, for example, and to the importance of personal experience—that make Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnet possible. And this perspective colors Levenson's choices and analysis.

Thus Levenson refers at one point to certain unnamed moderns—think Abraham Joshua Heschel—who, addressing a Jewish public that did not, in the main, take the covenant as binding, "often found themselves cajoling and wooing their readers with visions of a self-revealing and loving God—a God in search of a renewed and deeper relationship with *them*." Levenson has nothing more to say about this position, and his silence, coupled with the connotation of bad faith evoked by the verbs "cajoling" and "wooing," conveys a distaste for it. But Heschel's image of God emerges organically from the tradition, and indeed, from the very notion of gratuitous divine love that Levenson enfolds into his covenantal model. Likewise, Levenson has nothing to say about the love that binds God to the just. The notion that God loves justice, that human beings ought likewise to love justice, and that those who do justice find themselves beloved of God, has deep biblical roots, and resonates powerfully among many moderns. Such love is not in the first instance covenantal.



The Baptism of Christ *by Rimini, c. 1335*

A theologian more enthusiastic about the novel emphases of modernity might also be drawn to some of the corners of covenantal love that Levenson leaves unexplored. For example, could the fact that God, unlike the great king of the typical ancient Near Eastern treaty, appears to make something like an exclusive commitment to his "vassal," Israel—to implicitly agree, as it were, to marry no others, or at least, to take no coequal wives, or put differently, to make Israel not only his son, but his firstborn son—suggest that the affective element is even more prominent in covenantal love than Levenson would have it? Likewise, as noted, Israel, in contrast to the vassal king of the ancient Near Eastern treaty, is a collective. How is the individual within the collective to perceive and respond to God's love? Levenson austerely insists that we "can hardly luxuriate in the comforting thought, 'God loves me,' so familiar from certain strains of American Christianity.... [T]hat 'me' is too individualistic: it is the nation as a whole that is addressed, not atomized, disconnected individuals within it rehearsing their personal experience." Perhaps Levenson is right that "God loves me" is too easy an inference within a covenantal framework. But what then? Does the affective element of covenantal love trickle down at all to the individual Jew, and if so, in what form? Is "I (affectively) love God" also out of bounds? The Bible is not preoccupied by such questions—it is not a modern text—but the Bible, and still more the post-biblical Jewish canon, do offer resources to address them. ■

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Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY

Julia Young

Frenemies

The Catholic Church and Argentina's Dirty War

Gustavo Morello
Oxford University Press, $74, 240 pp.

From 1976 to 1983, during a brutal campaign by the ruling military junta to "purify" society by eradicating leftist dissidents, security forces in Argentina snatched tens of thousands of civilians from their homes or the streets, smuggling them to prisons and detention centers to be interrogated, tortured, and sometimes raped. Most of these victims—between fifteen and thirty thousand people—were eventually executed. Many were women, and those who gave birth in prison had their newborn babies taken from them and given to new families. Many of the relatives of the victims never found out what happened to their loved ones, who became known as *los desaparecidos*, or the disappeared.

These dire events, at the time subsumed under the official rubric of the Process of National Reorganization (PNR), are popularly known as the Dirty War. In the decades since the country's return to democracy in 1983, Argentines have struggled to come to terms with this legacy of violence. Successive political administrations have vacillated between granting full amnesty to the perpetrators and calling for investigations—in the process eventually bringing some of them to trial and sentencing.

A similar struggle for reconciliation is happening within the Argentine Catholic Church. In the 1960s, the vast majority of Argentines—some 90 percent—were Catholic. Church and state were closely linked, and the Catholic hierarchy enjoyed a privileged position; many members of the military government considered themselves Catholics and counted numerous clergy and Catholic civilians among their supporters. At the same time, hundreds of priests, clergy members, and laypeople became targets of the military regime. Influenced by liberation theology, Vatican II, and the Medellín conference of 1968, these Catholics felt called to transform the world by working for social justice, particularly by ministering to the poor. Their actions were viewed with increasing suspicion by the junta. The Dirty War, then, was a conflict between Catholic victims, Catholic perpetrators, and Catholic witnesses.

The Catholic Church and Argentina's Dirty War, by the Boston College sociologist Gustavo Morello, SJ, offers an incisive and balanced assessment of these disparate Catholics and the roles they played in Argentina's nightmare. Using in-depth interviews, memoirs, and government documents, Morello tells the disturbing story of six members of the La Salette religious order who were kidnapped, tortured, and imprisoned in the city of Córdoba in August and September 1976. His major contribution is to argue that in countries like Argentina, where the majority of the population is Catholic, terms like "Catholic" or "the church" must be broken down and categorized. "Often we think of Catholicism as a unitary faith, with an official doctrine, a hierarchy, and teachings that all members of the institution follow," he explains. "But in fact Catholicism is multifaceted and diverse."

Morello argues that Catholics in Argentina during the Dirty War should be categorized in three groups. First are the antisecular, conservative reactionaries who "wanted to rebuild a Catholic fortress to be defended against the world," and who worked within the military dictatorship, or collaborated with it, to purify Argentina by "disappearing" the people they perceived as subversives—including those Catholics who worked with the poor. The second group, institutional Catholics, including many within the Catholic hierarchy, sought primarily to preserve the church's privileged position vis-à-vis the state; as a result, they generally supported the military regime, avoiding public condemnations of human-rights violations—though, as Morello points out, many worked behind the scenes to come to the aid of persecuted citizens. The third group, committed Catholics, sought to confront poverty and inequity in society. This group was

Gustavo Morello

COURTESY BOSTON COLLEGE

the one targeted for state repression, and it included the La Salettes, a missionary order working in Argentina's poorest neighborhoods to educate and advocate for residents.

The ideological divides between Catholic groups arose within the context of a repressive turn within Argentina's politics. For several years before the military dictatorship, Argentine society had been plagued by violence: guerilla uprisings by radical leftists, and subsequent reprisals by the weakened Peronist state and its paramilitary gangs. As a result, wide swaths of society—including the church, businessmen, union leaders, the media, members of the middle class, and intellectuals—supported the military takeover, seeing it as the only way to bring peace to the country, and never imagining the bloodshed that would result.

Argentine Catholics were further divided by the geopolitics of the Cold War. Throughout Latin America during the 1960s and '70s, military dictatorships waged counterinsurgent warfare against "enemies of the state" (leftists or those accused of being leftist), with substantial financial and logistical support from the U.S. government. These dictatorships justified extralegal measures such as torture, interrogation, detention, and execution in the name of the anticommunist campaign. In Argentina, President Jorge Videla and other state leaders, paranoid about Marxist infiltration of the church, branded Catholics who worked with the poor as communists—"enemies who misinterpreted Catholic doctrine"—and trumpeted the state's "divine mission" to purify Argentine Catholicism by ridding the country of "compromised" Catholics. By the mid-1970s, raids, attacks, and assassinations of Catholic clergy had become almost commonplace.

The La Salettes of Córdoba, who focused their pastoral work on the poor and working-class, knew that local intelligence officials had targeted them as potential subversives. On August 3, 1976, police burst through the door of their modest living quarters, ransacked the house, and captured five seminarians and Father James Weeks, a North American priest. (An American nun was released the same day.) In short order, the La Salettes were blindfolded, bundled into a car, and taken away, first to Córdoba's Encausados prison, and later to La Perla prison, one of the Videla regime's numerous clandestine detention centers. During their imprisonment, they suffered violent interrogations, horrific sanitary conditions, lack of food, and separation from friends, family, and one another.

Yet the La Salettes were luckier than most. James Weeks, the U.S. priest, had a brother in politics, and he raised an outcry at home in Massachusetts. Eventually, the United States successfully pressured the Argentine government to release Weeks, which it did on August 17. Freed and returned to the United States, he joined a number of other human-rights advocates to help secure the release of the other seminarians on October 9. They promptly went into exile in the United States, returning to Argentina only after the military dictatorship was toppled.

According to Morello, the story of the La Salettes, and of many other Catholic victims of the Dirty War, reflects a breakdown in cohesiveness within the Argentine Catholic sphere that was not merely political, but theological. Antisecular Catholics held power, and they defined the Catholicism that was acceptable to the state, with tragic consequences. When the La Salette missionaries were imprisoned, Morello notes, they were not permitted to attend Mass or receive Communion from prison chaplains—a "*de facto* excommunication" effected through the complicity of institutional Catholics, who during the Dirty War let state authorities decide "who was or wasn't Catholic." Those authorities held a notably reactionary vision of Catholicism. In Videla's Argentina, Morello writes, antisecular Catholics "sought a return to a mythologized past when all Argentineans were Catholic, in a church where there was no discord. Latin was taught, priests wore cassocks and lived in garrison-like big buildings, and the government took care of temporal matters as directed by the religious authorities." Seeing themselves as "inquisitors" in a "holy war" whose goal was to root out "inauthentic" Catholics, they condemned the post-Vatican II church as an aberration, and committed Catholics—those who demanded justice for the poor—as subversives.

One of the most tragic elements of this story is the failure of institutional Catholics to stand with those committed Catholics who became victims of state persecution; indeed, this group's fecklessness is the reason that many people view the Catholic Church in Argentina as having been an "accomplice" in state terrorism. Too many leaders within the Argentine church were cautious, overly respectful of authority, and, in some cases, "frightened to death" of the military. When they did help, it was generally behind the scenes, and on a case-by-case basis. And in some instances, they blamed the victims, as when the archbishop of Córdoba, Raúl Primatesta, scolded one of the released seminarians, insisting that "they didn't take you for nothing, they took you because you did something."

Such attitudes prevented many Argentine Catholics from viewing their coreligionists as truly Catholic, and from perceiving the necessity of defending them from the depravities of the military regime. It is notable that three of the six freed La Salettes ultimately left the order. Perhaps they were disillusioned by the fact that the church, to which they had been devoted, had abandoned them in their hour of need. By the time the Dirty War ended, Morello reports, well over a hundred Catholic religious workers had been killed. His book offers a compelling look into a tragedy that still resonates in Argentine society, taking us back to a time and place where competing definitions of what makes for a "good Catholic" could be deadly, and far too often were. ■

Julia Young *teaches Latin American history at the Catholic University of America.*

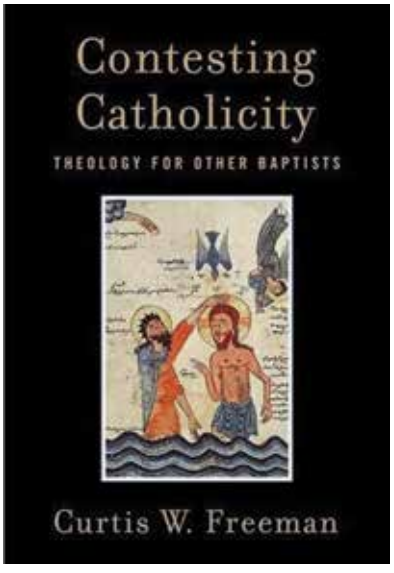
RELIGION BOOKNOTES

Luke Timothy Johnson

Contesting Catholicity
Theology for Other Baptists

Curtis W. Freeman
Baylor University Press,
$49.95, 477 pp.

The strangeness of Curtis Freeman's title commands attention. Who are "other Baptists," anyway, and what does it mean for Baptists to "contest catholicity"? Freeman is director of the Baptist House of Studies at Duke Divinity School, and seeks to tell the story of Baptists "as a community of contested convictions within the church catholic, as a spiritual movement within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church," rather than as a new and independent



church. He sees such a retelling as critical because the Baptist tradition, at least in the United States, has been pulled between the opposing theological forces of liberalism and fundamentalism, and the opposing sociological tendencies of radical sectarianism and "mystic individualism," to the point that it threatens to lose ecclesial coherence altogether. Freeman argues that by breaking contact with "catholicity" Baptists also break contact with the richness and diversity of their own theological tradition.

"Other Baptists," then, are those who, like Freeman, seek an authentic Baptist identity that moves beyond the polarizing options of liberalism and fundamentalism. In doing so, these thinkers re-examine some of the defining elements in the distinctive Baptist witness, such as believers' baptism, "soul competency," and the primacy of Scripture. This is done in the context both of the contemporary ecumenical movement and the longer history of theology, including patristic writers as well as earlier Baptists. Both the sort of *ressourcement* that characterized theological renewal in Roman Catholicism before Vatican II, and the postliberal theological framework developed by Protestant theologians at Yale (Robert Calhoun, Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, David Kelsey), are put to good use. The Methodist Stanley Hauerwas and the Mennonite John Howard Yoder are also inspirations.

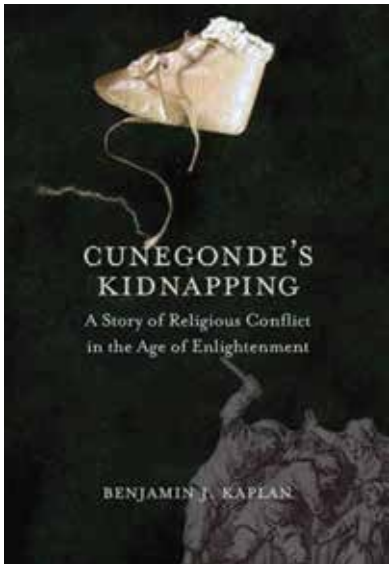
In the book's early chapters Freeman carries out the diagnostic task of assessing the present condition of Baptists in the United States and how they got this way. Here he provides a detailed historical account of internal Baptist struggles, and in the process introduces readers to some extraordinary Baptist theologians (above all, James William McClendon) and pastors (especially Carlyle Marney and Warren Carr) who have pointed the way toward a more inclusive vision of Baptist identity. With his detailed accounts of the pastoral struggles and theological progression of Marney and Carr in particular, Freeman shatters the stereotypical image of Baptists in the South.

Freeman then begins the process of therapy by introducing substantive discussions of theological topics which recent Baptists have tended to avoid or minimize but which the longer Baptist tradition has vigorously engaged: the Trinity, ministry, church, Scripture, Eucharist, and the sectarian or ecumenical understandings of baptism. Freeman ends with a vision of the Baptist tradition "in which Baptists are connected with all Christians in a quantitative sense of ecumenical relations and in a qualitative sense of a common faith enacted in Word and sacrament." Reading this generous and open invitation to Freeman's fellow Baptists to think and act in terms of their catholicity, I appreciated learning at such depth about a theological tradition of which I was largely ignorant, and thought more than once about ways in which "other Catholics" might benefit from the profound values this tradition embodies.

Cunegonde's Kidnapping
A Story of Religious Conflict in the Age of Enlightenment

Benjamin J. Kaplan
Yale University Press, $30, 290 pp.

In the Spring of 1762, a young Catholic woman named Cunegonde tried to kidnap her brother's infant child as it was undergoing baptism in the Reformed Church in the town of Vaals in the Dutch Republic. The woman was arrested, but a mob of her fellow Catholics violently rescued her from detention. Local, and then national authorities, sought to restore order and bring to justice those responsible for such sacrilege and lawlessness. The Catholic parish priest of Vaals, the authorities became convinced, had spurred the simple-minded girl to her reckless act.



The dramatic event and its long legal aftermath does not appear in the standard histories of Europe or the Dutch Republic. It only came to light through the adventitious discovery of a misfiled but highly detailed dossier recounting the legal process. This dossier drew the interest of Benjamin Kaplan precisely because, according to those standard histories, such an event ought not to have happened. It was, after all, the era conventionally defined as "the Age of Enlightenment," and therefore ought to have been as well an age of religious toleration. That the trail did happen, and that it left such a substantial—if misfiled—documentary trail, stimulated this author of earlier books on tolerance and religious conflict to construct this marvelous exercise in microhistory.

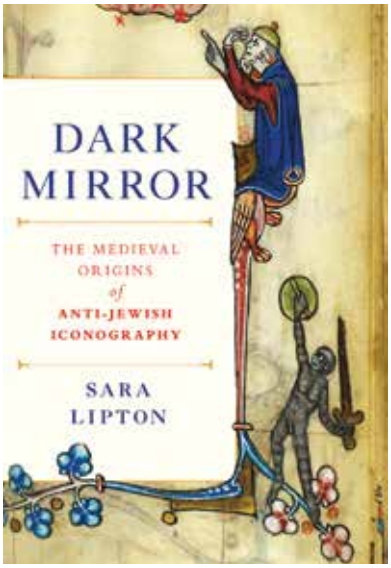
In order to comprehend Cunegonde's act and its consequences, Kaplan is required to examine not only the theory but the practice of mixed marriages and the confusing customs concerning the baptism of infants born of mixed marriages in an officially Protestant territory set down in the middle of a Catholic district. To fully grasp those dynamics, in turn, he must meticulously show how maps showing the borders of the Dutch Republic or the Hapsburg Empire did not correspond precisely with complex patterns of interaction "on the ground" between persons of different faiths living under different jurisdictions after the Peace of Westphalia (1648).

Especially those on the borders found a variety of ways to intermingle and interact: commercially, romantically (thus mixed marriages), and religiously. The possibilities of conflict as well as cooperation were intensely local and had little to do with the ideals of Enlightenment, as the tangled tale of conflicts between the Protestant city of Vaals and the Catholic city of Aachen in the decades before Cunegonde's kidnapping shows.

Kaplan is careful not to claim too much for this incident; he does not seek to overturn entirely the standard narrative concerning the growth toward Enlightenment and toleration in Europe, not least in the Dutch Republic. But he reminds us of the special strength of detailed and specific microhistories when we are fortunate enough to have them: they caution against the easy assumption that the grand story of the triumph of toleration corresponds at every point to the experience of real people. The ideas of Hume and Voltaire had little impact on the passions and prejudices of the burghers of Vaals and Aachen. Alfred Korzybski's famous dictum, "The map is not the territory," is here usefully applied: the larger history of ideas and social change does not always or necessarily correspond to what is happening in our neighborhood.

Dark Mirror
The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography
Sara Lipton
Henry Holt and Company, $37, 411 pp.

In this thoughtful, learned, and carefully argued study, Sara Lipton seeks to find satisfactory answers to this well-established fact: for the first thousand years of Christianity, "there were no visible Jews in Western art," yet "by the close of the Middle Ages, the Jew had become one of the most powerful and poisonous symbols in all of Christian art." She rejects the common explanation that such artistic renderings simply expressed the steadily



growing animus, also found in medieval literature and politics, toward Jews that began with the First Crusade. Indeed, she argues that the representation of Jews in medieval art has much less to do with Christian attitudes toward their Jewish neighbors than it does with struggles within Christian culture. Medieval representations of Jews were based not on observation of real Jews, but on the symbolic development of tropes found in Scripture and Christian theology. "Simply labeling artists or patrons, or the general culture, as anti-Semitic tells us little about why these images were made or what they meant to the people who made and viewed them," she writes.

Lipton begins with the premise that Jews were first important to medieval Christians not because of the way they appeared but because of the way Christians imagined Jews to see, or not see. Paul had located the unbelief of Jews in their spiritual blindness, while Augustine spoke of the continuing existence of the Jews as constituting a form of witness. The earliest representations of Jews in medieval art play on these biblical and patristic themes, not in order to caricature contemporary Jews, but as a way of instructing Christians in proper modes of attentiveness and vision.

Subsequent elements in the portrayal of Jews likewise gave visible form to Christian anxieties concerning bodies, wealth, the growth of cities, taxation, legal forms, and the opulence of art itself. Artistic representations of Jews for most of the medieval period, in short, used the otherness of the Jews for internal Christian instruction. In the process, however, the ever-more-elaborate ways of marking that otherness both fed and fed off of the increasingly virulent portrayals of ancient and contemporary Jews in literature.

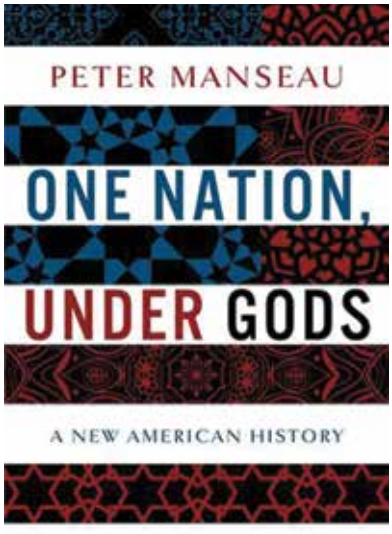
To make her complex and well-balanced argument, Lipton must pay the closest attention to historiographic periodization—with attention to the literary and political contexts of each stage—and to differences in artistic genre, each with its function (illuminated manuscripts, portable altars, stained glass windows, patron-sponsored frescoes). She must also lead the reader persuasively through the close examination of specific examples. The book contains one hundred eleven black-and-white and fourteen colored illustrations. Each of them, as well as many other carefully documented artifacts, is discussed at considerable length.

Readers who are neither medievalists nor art critics are, by means of such precise exegesis, also instructed in what and how to see. I found two chapters especially informative. "Where Are the Jewish Women?" makes a subtle but convincing argument concerning gender in the Middle Ages. "The Jew in the Crowd: Surveillance and Civic Vision" nicely pulls together Lipton's themes concerning seeing and being seen, and the functions of medieval art in identity formation. Lipton notes the double-edged character of visual representation: "Whenever we create images of a stranger, alien, foreigner, or even the unknown person across the street, we should bear in mind that we are also creating an image of ourselves."

Because she refuses to engage in easy praise or blame, but insists on a dispassionate consideration of the evidence, Lipton's work is demanding but also rewarding. Readers come to appreciate the full humanity of the Christian creators of the art depicting Jews, and to grieve over representations that distorted the humanity of the Jews themselves.

One Nation, Under Gods
A New American History
Peter Manseau
Little, Brown and Company, $28,
469 pp.

The story of America as a Christian nation, shaped by John Winthrop's vision of a "City on a Hill," is fundamentally wrong, Manseau argues. Why? Because it leaves out of account the many examples of religious (and anti-religious) diversity that have been present from the beginning. He seeks to correct the story by telling it, not from the middle, but from the margins. Beginning with the encounter between Columbus and the Taino, Manseau provides example after example of how religious outliers have engaged, challenged, and sometimes influenced a dominant (and always aggressively exclusive) Christian tradition. Religious diversity, he says,



has been thoroughly American from the start, even if the Christian majority has seldom wanted to acknowledge it.

In each chapter, a single individual or incident leads to a consideration of the broader historical context and the ways in which the challenge posed by religious difference led either to violent suppression at the hands of the Christian authorities, or to the subtle and positive influence on (more or less) Christian leaders. In the first category we find the cases of Anne Hutchinson, the witches of Salem, Afri-

can Muslim slaves, the Sikhs of Bellingham, and the Japanese Buddhists. In the second, the Iroquois and Ben Franklin, the Upanishads and Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Iroquois and Joseph Smith.

Manseau's writing is lively, the citation from primary sources instructive, and—apart from an almost inevitable animus toward most things Christian—the tone is equable. He finds a place for the religiously disaffected, for atheists like William Livingston, and for the seriously addled hucksters who sponsored cosmic awareness and "Be-Ins" in the sixties. One is not surprised to find the attitude of the Deist Thomas Jefferson recommended in the book's epigraph: "It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no god." An entire chapter is devoted to Jefferson's gift of his library to the nation in 1814 and the congressional battles it generated—a foretaste of present-day culture wars.

Manseau's avowed purpose is to show how faith conflicts "somehow arrived, again and again, not merely at peaceful coexistence but at striking moments of inter-influence," and he envisages a nation of persons "bound together by something more significant than their own individual beliefs." Despite the appeal and sometimes the pathos of his individual accounts, however, Manseau does not at all make clear what that "something more significant" might be. In his conclusion, he proposes replacing the image of the city on the hill—because cities have walls that keep people out—with an image drawn from the sacred hole in the ground located within the Catholic Church, El Santuario de Chimayo, in New Mexico. Pilgrims of many faiths come to scoop dirt from the hole, eat it to heal their ills, and then return home. Perhaps the understanding of religion as exclusively a matter of individual needs without any demand to build a coherent community is appealing to contemporary tastes. But the image of the city—which not only has walls but also gates and streets and intense human interaction—is the more profound religious symbol. Cities are about building something greater than the individual and celebrating something more fundamental than individual needs. Winthrop's image of the city on a hill really does summon humans to "something more significant." It summons us to our responsibility to God. ■

Luke Timothy Johnson *is the R. W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University. His* Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity *(Yale University Press) received the Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Religion in 2011.*

LETTERS continued from page 4

of trusting in God. In any case, "In God We Trust" has only been the motto of the United States since 1956, perhaps the high-water mark of our sense of manifest destiny. For the best part of two centuries, our motto was "e pluribus unum," a healthier recognition of the variety of lives, and perhaps loves, that distinguishes our republic.

PAUL LAKELAND
Fairfield, Conn.

LEARNING FOR LIFE

Joshua Hochschild's review of two books on liberal education ("Out of Their League," September 11) demonstrates how important it is to keep alive the conversation about education. But discussions and debates often fail to bear fruit because people have different goals in mind. There are at least four different but overlapping educational goals:

1. To become immersed in the great ideas and intellectual achievements of the ages. In this immersion one enters into the tradition, acquiring an appreciation of what it means to be human, and perhaps to gain wisdom. I think that is what Hochschild sees as the purpose of liberal education.

2. To discover one's particular interests and abilities, what you can do well and really like to do. Much has been made about discovering one's "passion."

3. To discover your life's work, and strive to do it well. The first two goals will contribute to that. But from another perspective, the German apprenticeship system shows that competence is important and rewarding.

4. To develop the knowledge and abilities needed to contribute to our democratic society. We vote; we serve on boards; and we should have reasoned opinions about issues of the day. We have a lot to learn in this area.

LEO GAFNEY
Lakeville, Conn.

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A Smiling Skeptic

Kaya Oakes

Montaigne was a skeptical writer who lived in a deeply religious time. For contemporary essayists, he is also the closest thing we have to a literary father. For Catholic essayists, that also means our literary father is a doubter, a seeker, a joker, a man whose favorite word was "perhaps" and whose favorite phrase was "Que sais-je?" ("What do I know?"). Writing in the first person, Montaigne tried to describe his own spiritual experience in his own language, French, at a time when almost everything was written in Latin. Montaigne remained Catholic even while three of his siblings converted to Protestantism and the land around him was torn apart by religious conflict. But questions of divinity and the validity of religion, so compelling to contemporary religious writers living in our mostly skeptical culture, were of little interest to Montaigne. He preferred the search for what later writers would call the "authentic self"—the person God made each of us to be.

Portrait of Michel de Montaigne by Daniel Dumonstier

In her book *How to Live: A Life of Montaigne*, Sarah Bakewell notes that "Montaigne shows no interest in Jesus Christ.... The sacred mystery of redemption leaves him cold. He cares much more about secular morality—about questions of mercy and cruelty." Nonetheless, being a man of his time, Montaigne also understood that the Catholic Church had supreme authority, and, as Bakewell notes, he "made it clear that he recognized the church's right to govern him in religious matters, even to the extent of policing his thoughts." When Montaigne writes about the Catholic Church in his "Apology for Raymond Sebond," he sounds like a man grateful that he hasn't been found guilty of heresy:

> Thus I have, by the grace of God, kept myself intact, without agitation or disturbance of my conscience, in the ancient beliefs of our religion, in the midst of so many sects and divisions that our century has produced.

He abhorred the violence religion had brought into his world and was wary of excessive zeal. Patricia Hampl, in her essay on Montaigne in Catherine Wolff's anthology *Not Less Than Everything*, writes that what Montaigne "seeks—and comes to embody—is freedom from the blinders of orthodoxy while sustaining fealty to the tender beauty of a home tradition."

So if he was a skeptic and a critic of religion, does Montaigne resemble the contemporary essayist who writes about faith? The short answer is that he does not—at least not in easily recognizable ways. There is not much mention of the transcendent experience of God in his work. And yet, in his embrace of the first-person voice, in his choice of the self and the world as subject, and in choosing French instead of Latin—a decision that, as Hampl reminds us, would have been heretical just a few years earlier—Montaigne embodies the very contemporary kind of restlessness that we associate with the spiritual seeker.

Montaigne once came very close to death when he was knocked off his horse. In his recovery, his earlier fear of death began to be replaced by something else—an acceptance, as Bakewell puts it, that "nature takes care of everything. Human nature, that is." Hampl describes this as Montaigne's spiritual transformation—his Road to Damascus moment. The essentially spiritual experience of being knocked out by a new awareness of yourself, she says, is "impossible to corral in language. But once felt, there is nothing—not even love—to compare." In his essay "Of Experience," Montaigne writes:

> It is an absolute perfection and virtually divine to know how to enjoy our being rightfully. We seek other conditions because we do not understand the use of our own.... Yet there is no use our mounting on stilts, for on stilts we must still walk on our own legs. And on the loftiest throne in the world we are still sitting only on our own rump.

Montaigne drew important spiritual lessons from unexpected sources. Upon seeing a "monstrous child"—a conjoined twin displayed for money—he reminds us, "Those that we call monsters are not so to God, who sees in the immensity of His work the infinite forms that He has comprehended therein." His essays are often based on personal, sometimes very private experiences, but Montaigne, in his utter lack of embarrassment and shame, is happy to share these with us.

Writers today live in a culture where religion is suspect. Skepticism has lost Montaigne's cheerfulness and become rote. When we address the spiritual experience, we risk being targets of ridicule. Perhaps those are risks Montaigne asks us to take. Over the distance of 423 years, he reminds us to listen to others. To observe. To ask questions. To make jokes. To be open about our doubts. To say "What do I know?" To question orthodoxy. To revel in a joyful indifference to authority, and at the same time, to feel a deep and abiding faith. ■

Kaya Oakes *is the author of four books, including* The Nones Are Alright, *which Orbis Books will publish in October. She teaches writing at the University of California, Berkeley. This essay was adapted from a talk given at the Future of the Catholic Literary Imagination conference.*

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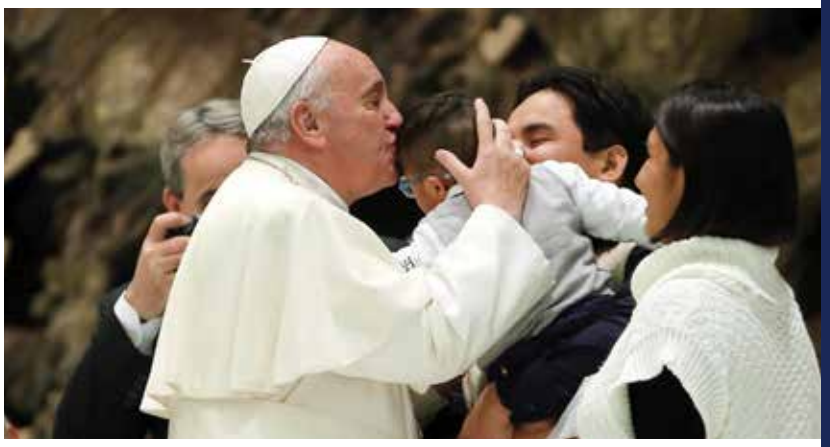

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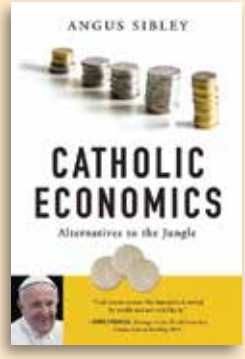

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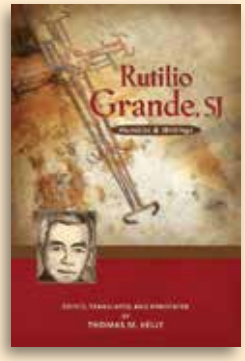

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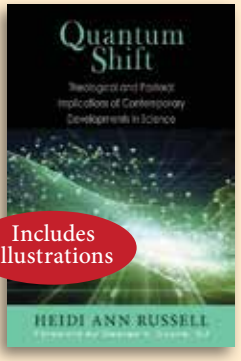

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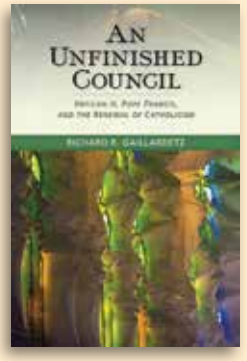

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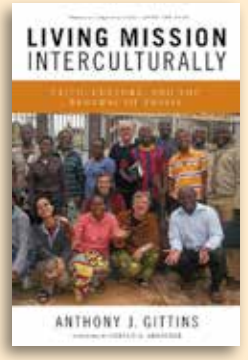

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