A Review of Religion, Politics & Culture

Commonweal

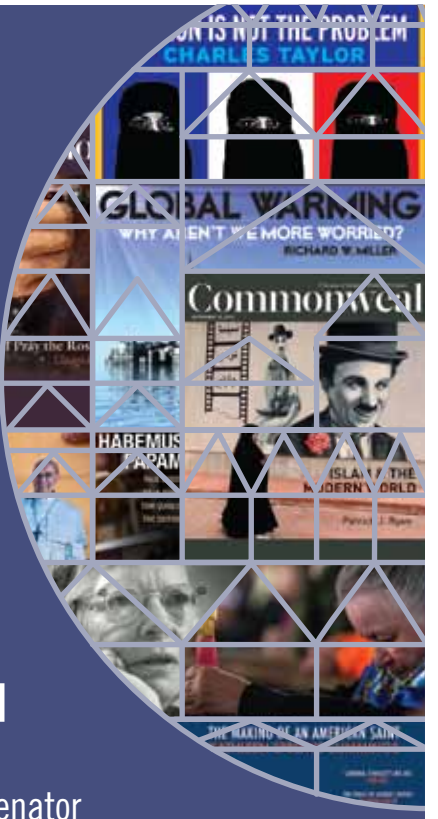
AUGUST 15, 2014

THE FRANCIS EFFECT

JAMES FREDERICKS
MASSIMO FAGGIOLI

$3.95 US/$4.50 CAN
www.commonwealmagazine.org

Commonweal
CONVERSATIONS
90th Anniversary



Monday, October 27, 2014

Pier Sixty at Chelsea Piers, New York City

6:30pm | **RECEPTION WITH TABLE HOSTS**

7:30pm | **DINNER AND AWARD PRESENTATION**

with invocation by **TIMOTHY CARDINAL DOLAN**, Archbishop of New York

Catholic in the Public Square Award

◂ **Honoree**

GEORGE J. MITCHELL | Former United States Senator

and

◂ **Presenter**

ANNE ANDERSON | Irish Ambassador to the United States

Tables $5,000 to $50,000 | **Tickets** $600 to $2,500

Your Table Hosts *(partial list)* | Table reservations of $5,000 and above may request a host

Andrew Bacevich
Dan Barry
Nick Baumann
Paul Baumann
Matthew Boudway
Daniel Callahan
Sidney Callahan
Simone Campbell, SSS
Rand Richards Cooper
Anthony Domestico
Paul Elie
Rita Ferrone
Grant Gallicho
David Gibson
Rosanne Haggerty
Patricia Hampl
Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ
Patrick Jordan
Cathleen Kaveny
Paul Lakeland
James Martin, SJ
James P. McCartin
Alice McDermott
Charles R. Morris
Paul Moses
Dennis O'Brien
Mollie Wilson O'Reilly
Michael Peppard
Dominic Preziosi
Peter Quinn
Valerie Sayers
Tim Shriver
Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Peter Steinfels
Celia Wren

Dinner Committee *(in formation)*

Mike Barnicle
Robert L. Berner, Jr.
John Borst
Margaret Martin
Francis C. Oakley
Brien O'Brien
Jane B. O'Connell
Leo J. O'Donovan, SJ
Barbara Mullin Rosiello
Paul C. Saunders
Allan H. "Bud" Selig
Timothy P. Shriver
Robert Shrum
Mark H. Tuohey
Agnes Williams

To RSVP

VISIT | commonwealconversations.org
EMAIL | conversations@commonwealmagazine.org
CALL | 212.662.4200 press 5

Commonweal

AUGUST 15, 2014 • VOLUME 141 • NUMBER 13

ARTICLES

SHORT TAKES

UPFRONT

TELEVISION

BOOKS

POETRY

LAST WORD

Founded in 1924
Commonweal

Editor
Paul Baumann

Associate Editors
Grant Gallicho, Matthew Boudway, Mollie Wilson O'Reilly

Production
Tiina Aleman

Digital Editor
Dominic Preziosi

Copy Editor
Susanne Washburn

Tablet Edition
KeriLee Horan

Editorial Assistant
Ellen B. Koneck

Intern
James Woodall

Marketing Coordinator
Kaitlin Campbell

Business Manager
James Hannan

Development
Christa A. Kerber

Poetry
Rosemary Deen

Film
Richard Alleva, Rand Richards Cooper

Stage / Media / Television
Celia Wren

Columnists
E. J. Dionne Jr., Anthony Domestico, John Garvey, Cathleen Kaveny, Jo McGowan, Charles R. Morris, Mollie Wilson O'Reilly, William Pfaff, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

Subscription Information
855-713-1792
subscriptions@commonwealmagazine.org

Advertising Manager
Regan Pickett
commonwealads@gmail.com
540-349-5736

Publisher
Thomas Baker

Commonweal [ISSN 0010-3330], a review of public affairs, religion, literature, and the arts, is published biweekly, except in April, July, August, and November, when it is published monthly, by Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. E-mail: editors@commonwealmagazine.org. Fax: (212) 662-4183. POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Commonweal*, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834-9982.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. *Commonweal* articles are available at many libraries and research facilities via ProQuest and OpinionArchives. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional offices. Single Copy, $3.95. Yearly print subscriptions, U.S., $65; Canada, $70; other parts of the world, $75. Special two-year rate: U.S. $98; Canada, $108; other parts of the world, $118. Add $45 for airmail. For digital and online subscription options visit www.commonwealmagazine.org/digital.

Cover design: Cecilia Guerrero Rezes
Cover image: Drawing of Pope Francis on a wall near the Vatican (CNS photo / Robert Duncan)

LETTERS

Dead language, gender handicaps

BAD LANGUAGE

Rita Ferrone's excellent column on "cup" vs. "chalice" ("Take This Chalice—Please," July 11) will make little impression on the tin-eared members of the Vox Clara commission, largely responsible for the new translation of the Roman Missal. They "have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps." The problem is Latin. Everything must sound like Latin. English must be "pinched in, and swelled out, and got up, and strapped down" like Dickens's Mr. Turveydrop, who "had everything but any touch of nature." The church adopted Rome's imperialism, its legalism, and its language. Latin eventually ossified into a tradition and has now mutated into a fetish. Whether they understand it or not, some people really believe that Latin is the language of God, that it alone can express the deepest mysteries of liturgy and theology. Maybe it makes them feel more learned as well as pious. "Consubstantial" (actually a Latin word) sounds more impressive than "one in being" (mere English). Maybe it's nostalgia, even for a past they never had. I fear it is futile to expect to break the stranglehold that Latin has on the Roman church, but stranger things have happened. I did not expect Pope Francis.

PETER FARLEY
Brooklyn, N.Y.

PRECIOUS TO WHOM?

Regarding "Take This Chalice—Please": My family was once invited to the home of Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher for the celebration of Mass. The monsignor used an earthenware cup, and I recall thinking that it was probably very like the cup Jesus used.

CONCHITA RYAN COLLINS
Teaneck, N.J.

GENDER NEUTRAL?

Kudos to *Commonweal* for the impressive June 13 issue, filled as it was with Derek Jeffreys's excellent article on solitary confinement ("Cruel but Not Unusual"), plus a number of equally good shorter items on topics as disparate as the U.S. women religious and the Vatican, "Tea Party Catholics," and the fallout in the U.S. church from anti-Modernism. But it's something from the interview with Cardinal Walter Kasper ("Merciful God, Merciful Church") that moves me to send you more than simply a laudatory comment.

In what I think is one of the most revealing passages from the interview, Kasper says: "I'm not in favor of women's ordination," an unsurprising admission that he immediately follows by noting—perhaps for the sake of disheartened females—that "there are offices in the Vatican that do not require ordination."

It's what Kasper says in the succeeding paragraph, however, that is especially delectable. Citing his episcopal experience of having "appointed one woman to the bishop's advisory council," he reports: "From that day on the whole atmosphere changed in our dialogue." "Women," the cardinal adds, "bring a richness of vision and experience that men lack."

On reading that pronouncement, I couldn't help thinking of the observation Virginia Woolf made concerning a 1936 Anglican commission's rationale for not ordaining women. Christian men, the commissioners decided, would be "unduly conscious of [a woman minister's] sex" because they were less spiritually minded than Christian women.

It was an idea (about women's spiritual disposition) to which Woolf responded: "a remarkable, but no doubt, adequate, reason for excluding them from the priesthood."

BARBARA PARSONS
Platteville, Wis.

From the Editors

Borderline

Across the globe, hundreds of thousands of civilians, many of them innocent women and children, are being killed in what seems like an endless cycle of political, ethnic, and religious violence. The continuing slaughter in Syria and across Africa, renewed butchery in Iraq, the seemingly inevitable return of war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, and the wanton downing of the Malaysian passenger jet in the Ukraine have shaken, if hardly shocked, the world in just the past month. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is as intractable as ever, while the Shiite-Sunni rivalry in Iraq promises to drag that already devastated country back into the most brutal of civil wars and send its remaining Christian population into permanent exile. Despite the efforts of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to get the Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate, there seems little the United States or the international community can do to bring such implacable enemies together. Stopping the violence in Syria, Ukraine, Iraq, and Afghanistan is equally unlikely. One result of these failures is a refugee crisis of almost unprecedented proportions, with millions desperately seeking sanctuary.

For the most part, the United States has been spared both the violence and the social and economic upheaval of the refugee crisis engulfing so much of the world. The most notable exception to that benign state of affairs is this year's influx of more than fifty thousand children across the Texas border—most of them from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Advocates for these children claim they are seeking refuge from gang violence and deserve to be given political asylum. Those who oppose granting them asylum argue that the children have been "lured" to the United States by the false promise that if they manage to cross the border and are reunited with family members already here, they will eventually be granted a path to citizenship.

Predictably enough, the question of what to do with the children has turned into a bitter partisan fight. Republicans charge President Barack Obama with being soft on border security and encouraging illegal Latino immigration for domestic political gain. Obama scoffs at such accusations, pointing out that the border with Mexico has never been more secure and that he has in fact deported more illegal immigrants than any other president. Whether these children have a right to asylum under U.S. law is to be determined by a well-established judicial procedure, and Obama has requested $3.7 billion from Congress both to accelerate these legal proceedings and to provide humanitarian assistance to the children. House Republicans have balked at Obama's proposal. The flood of immigrants can be stopped, they insist, by revising a 2008 law that prohibits the deportation of minors who can credibly claim to be victims of human trafficking. Democrats say that this would endanger too many children.

Despite the harsh rhetoric of some Republicans and the ugly protests of some right-wing groups, the U.S. religious community, and especially the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has been a staunch supporter of the displaced children. "It was un-American; it was unbiblical; it was inhumane," New York's Cardinal Timothy Dolan said of demonstrators who surrounded buses filled with immigrant children, shouting for them to be immediately sent back to their native countries. Dolan compared such incidents to the Nativist anti-Catholic riots of the 1840s.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that Congress and the president will agree on how to handle the border crisis. Anti-immigrant sentiment among Republicans makes compromise on the issue almost impossible, as the refusal of the House this summer to take up last year's Senate immigration bill demonstrated. In the meantime, President Obama has hosted the presidents of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala at the White House, hoping to collaborate on various strategies for discouraging parents from sending their children on the perilous journey to the United States. The White House, for example, has tentatively floated a proposal to examine claims for asylum at U.S. embassies in Central America. The Honduran president noted that the gang violence convulsing his country and propelling the exodus of children is largely the result of the demand for illegal drugs in the United States. Many in the United States think the refugee crisis is a problem foisted on them by unlawful immigrants, but it is a calamity for which America itself also bears responsibility.

This "children's crusade" is not an answer to the violence that plagues Central America. Instead, the United States must do much more to encourage political stability and economic development across the region. Our so-called border crisis is not fundamentally a question of security, but one of poverty, injustice, and disorder. If the United States takes effective steps to improve conditions in Central America, our border will secure itself. Doing so won't be easy, of course, but it will likely be much less difficult than resolving the conflicts that are displacing civilians in so many other parts of the world. ■

July 29, 2014

Cathleen Kaveny

'A Minefield'

THE TROUBLING IMPLICATIONS OF THE HOBBY LOBBY DECISION

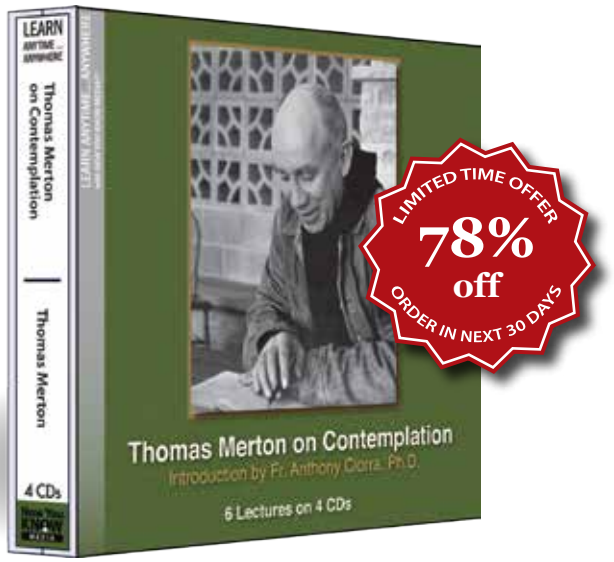
The Supreme Court's 5-4 decision in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*, where religious exemptions to the contraception mandate in the Affordable Care Act were extended to a private for-profit company, has produced jubilation among those who regarded the mandate as a grave threat to religious liberty and consternation among those who think access to no-cost contraception should be a fundamental component of health care for women. Critics complain that in extending the accommodation to Hobby Lobby, the court has misinterpreted the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 in order to take the unprecedented step of recognizing the religious rights of certain for-profit corporations. The likely result will be an endless stream of similar religious claims from other businesses. Anticipating that criticism, the majority opinion, written by Justice Samuel Alito, asserts that the case was decided on narrow grounds, and argues that worries about exemptions being granted to religious groups opposed to vaccinations, for example, are unfounded. Writing for the four dissenting justices, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg questioned such assurances, arguing that the Court "has ventured into a minefield." "Approving some religious claims while deeming others unworthy of accommodation could be 'perceived as favoring one religion over another,' the very 'risk the [Constitution's] Establishment Clause was designed to preclude.'"

In granting the accommodation to Hobby Lobby, the majority ruling also contends that the administrative mechanism used to accommodate religious entities could easily be extended to commercial enterprises. Three days after issuing the Hobby Lobby ruling, however, the Court granted an emergency injunction to Wheaton College, temporarily allowing the Evangelical institution to avoid complying with even the minimal administrative paperwork required by the government in order to receive an accommodation. Wheaton, like some Catholic groups, maintains that filling out the form that notifies the government and its insurer that it desires an accommodation will still facilitate access to contraceptive methods it opposes on religious grounds. All three of the Court's women justices vociferously objected. "Those who are bound by our decisions usually believe they can take us at our word," wrote Justice Sonia Sotomayor. "Not so today. After expressly relying on the availability of the religious-nonprofit accommodation to hold that the contraceptive-coverage requirement violates RFRA as applied to closely held for-profit corporations, the Court now, as the dissent in *Hobby Lobby* feared it might…retreats from that position."

So at this early date, it very much remains to be seen whether the Court has issued a narrow or sweeping decision with regard to the scope of religious exemptions from laws such as the Affordable Care Act. Supreme Court cases, however, are not only or primarily about the named plaintiffs. Their purpose is to set the normative framework that governs the decisions of countless other unnamed persons (both natural and corporate), who may never have the opportunity to see the inside of the courtroom. It is the future course of cases that makes me worry about the majority opinion—not the outcome in this particular case. For what the Court has done in the Hobby Lobby case is transform the Religious Freedom and Restoration Act—a statute enacted by Congress to counteract a bad Supreme Court decision that harmed powerless religious minorities—into a tool for powerful minorities to resist what they believe to be dangerous social and political change. For example, it is not hard to see how the religious exemptions justified in the Hobby Lobby decision could also be applied to businesses that object to dealing with same-sex couples.

The Original Purpose of RFRA

As "the findings and purposes" of the law itself make clear, Congress enacted RFRA for a very specific reason. In *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990), the Supreme Court had significantly relaxed the test used to evaluate the government's claims in religious-liberty cases. In short, religious exemptions from otherwise generally applicable laws became much harder to come by. In response to protests from both sides of the political aisle, Congress passed RFRA, which was intended "to restore the compelling-interest test as set forth in *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963) and *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972)." The government, in other words, had to demonstrate a compelling state interest—such as maintaining a system of taxation or protecting public health against infectious disease—if it wanted to burden religious exercise. Moreover, the government needed to show that it promoted that interest by a law tailored to impinge as little as possible on religious exercise. In practice, the government has nearly always won such cases. While RFRA clearly came down on the side of religious expression, it did not appreciably expand the religious-liberty protections available to claimants before the *Smith* decision. Very few cases have appeared under federal RFRA in the past twenty years; most have involved members of small religions claiming an exemption from general laws that burden them without conferring any discernible benefit on third parties. A good example is *Gonzales v.*



Hear Thomas Merton's Lost Lectures

You are invited to learn from one of the twentieth century's leading lights on social justice, authentic spirituality, and contemplative living.

Hear bestselling author and renowned mystic Thomas Merton express some of his deepest thoughts on prayer, meditation, silence, contemplation, and life as a spiritual journey. In these timeless recordings, you will be transported into a classroom in the monastery where Merton taught his students with love, humor, and respect. These five remarkable lectures, originally recorded by Merton in 1963-64, have been remastered and made available to the public through Now You Know Media's exclusive partnership with the Thomas Merton Center and the Thomas Merton Legacy Trust.

Throughout this series, Merton offers profound reflections on prayer and mediation, the monastic life as a journey and religious silence. His use of poetic images, scripture and theology makes these conferences a treasure that you will want to listen to again and again. You may have read Merton's writings, but hearing his voice and manner of expression brings out another side of Merton that you haven't experienced before. Discover how time spent with Merton can be transformative.

Offer expires 30 days from issue date

1-800-955-3904

https://www.NowYouKnowMedia.com/merton2

Now You Know Media, Inc. • 12115 Parklawn Dr., Unit B
Rockville, MD 20852

Thomas Merton on Contemplation

4-CD Set

Presented by **Thomas Merton**

Introduction by Rev. Anthony Ciorra, Ph.D.

Lecture Titles

Introduction by Fr. Anthony Ciorra,

1. The Spiritual Journey (1/16/1963)
2. Cassian on Prayer (5/19/1963)
3. Benefits of Religious Silence (12/14/1963)
4. Prayer and Meditation (1/28/1964)
5. Dealing with Distractions in Prayer (6/14/1964)
6. Solitary Life: A Life Without Care (8/20/1965)

Thomas Merton on Contemplation

SAVE $94

4 CD Set ~~$119.95~~ **SALE $25.95**

+ $3.95 Shipping & Handling
100% Satisfaction Guarantee

Coupon Code: A1777

These special recordings are part of Thomas Merton's spoken word legacy. They are actual recordings of Merton and are part of the archives of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University in Louisville, KY. Photograph by John Howard Griffin.

Now You Know Media's mission is to bring you the best Catholic professors and retreat leaders in America. Carefully selected for their scholarship, faithful insight and teaching excellence, our speakers will touch your heart and engage your intellect. Visit our website www.NowYouKnowMedia.com to browse our growing catalog of over 250 courses and retreats available in CD, DVD, and MP3 formats.

Justice Samuel Alito

O Centro Espirita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal (2006), in which the Supreme Court held that RFRA protected the right of a tiny New Mexican sect of a Brazilian church to import a particular type of tea for sacramental use, despite its hallucinogenic properties, which put it in the cross hairs of federal drug laws.

RFRA's Mutation

Justice Alito's opinion in *Hobby Lobby*, however, has worked a powerful mutation on the statute. Ignoring the purposes of the legislation, not to mention its legislative history and subsequent application, Alito argued that "nothing in the text of RFRA...was meant to be tied to this Court's pre-*Smith* interpretation of the Amendment." That is a highly selective, if not deceptive, interpretation of the statute. Alito virtually ignores the Court's own earlier interpretation of RFRA in *Boerne v. Flores*, which recognized that the law "purported to codify" the pre-*Smith* religious freedom jurisprudence. He further claims that the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) of 2000 requires that the Court interpret RFRA in such a way as to protect "religious exercise to the maximum extent."

The land-use act did amend RFRA's definition of religious exercise to clarify that it included noncentral as well as central practices of faith. But this amendment did not widen RFRA's purpose beyond restoring pre-*Smith* jurisprudence. Nor did it require a "broad interpretation" of the earlier statute. And the land-use act, which is focused narrowly on the use of land by religious entities and the free exercise of rights of institutionalized persons, says nothing whatsoever about how to interpret RFRA. In short, Alito wants it both ways. Looking at the text of RFRA, he focuses only on the letter of the statutory mandate, ignoring even the congressional purpose. Looking at the text of RLUIPA, he expansively interprets its spirit, extending it so far as to reframe the scope and reach of RFRA in ways that are beyond both the provisions and congressional intent of either law.

What groups should be exempt from the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive mandate is a difficult issue. On the one hand, from the perspective of many religions, political questions are also moral questions—on every level. And for most people, moral questions invariably have a religious dimension. On the other hand, living in a pluralistic representative democracy, we are inevitably subject to laws and policies that we believe to be unjust. Except in the most extreme cases, we cannot expect to be exempted from laws that otherwise apply to everyone else. Here, of course, facts matter. If the contraception methods Hobby Lobby claims act as abortifacients do not in fact cause abortion, the case for exemption is seriously weakened.

In a pluralistic society, the religious freedom of one party needs to be balanced against the rights and the legitimate expectations of others. In this case, the consciences of some religious people must be weighed against the health-care concerns of women more generally, as judged by the people's legitimately elected representatives. Yet as Ginsburg emphasizes in her dissent, Alito's opinion gives us precious little guidance on what principles of law we should use when balancing those conflicting concerns. For example, while the ruling recognizes that corporations have free-exercise rights, it identifies those rights solely with the owners of the corporation. The legitimate interests of other corporate stakeholders, particularly the employees, who may not share their employer's religious views, evidently have no standing. In this instance, it seems that more money buys you more religious freedom—and more freedom to infringe on the choices of others.

Second, the opinion provides virtually no way to evaluate the strength of a plaintiff's religious-liberty claim. Although RFRA's text speaks of "substantial" burdens on a claimant's exercise of religious liberty, the ruling pulls the teeth of this requirement. According to Alito and the majority, a burden is "substantial" as long as a claimant sincerely says it is. But as Ginsburg noted, this is an invitation to run through a minefield, not a way out of one.

The injunction granted to Wheaton College reveals the problem. If it is a substantial burden for a religious institution merely to sign a paper notifying the insurance company of its objections to contraception, then why isn't it a substantial burden for a pacifist to sign a similar paper for the government conscientiously objecting to military service? But if we go down that road, how will we tell the difference between a conscientious objector and a deserter or draft dodger?

At a minimum, we can assess the substantiality of a burden by looking at whether it requires direct participation in an activity or merely indirect facilitation. We need to acknowledge the difference between, for example, fight-

CNS PHOTO / BOB ROLLER

ing in an unjust war and paying taxes that help support an unjust war. The former is a substantial burden; the latter is not. We need to acknowledge, as well, that it cannot be a substantial burden on one's free exercise merely to inform the government of one's objection to a law. So too, it is one thing to be asked to provide contraception oneself, another to contribute to a benefit plan that covers contraception, and still another to be asked to inform an insurance company of one's religious and moral objections to contraception. The first is a substantial burden, in my view. The second and third are not.

Becoming What They Hate

Jurists like Justice Alito (and the Republican politicians who appointed them) have long crusaded against "judicial activism," especially "legislating from the bench." Their main object of ire, of course, is *Roe v. Wade* (1973), which not only found a right to abortion in the penumbras of the Constitution, but also required the Court to delve into the messy business of evaluating various schemes for regulating abortion.

In what may be the chief irony of *Hobby Lobby*, the majority opinion puts the Court in much the same position with respect to religious liberty. Alito accepted without scrutiny the plaintiff's claim that the contraception mandate substantially burdened its exercise of religion. For the purposes of this decision, he assumed (albeit grudgingly) that the government had a compelling interest in making no-cost contraception available. In the end, the case turned on the third prong of the RFRA test: Did the government adopt the least restrictive means to achieve its end? He pointedly did not rule out the possibility that accommodating religious objections could require the government to adopt new programs—which would be supervised and second-guessed by the Court. That outcome now seems more likely after the injunction granted to Wheaton College. How is this not legislating from the bench? The conservative majority has, I would argue, become what it has so long hated.

The test proffered in the majority opinion in *Hobby Lobby* amounts to little more than judicial intuitionism. Does the government have a compelling state interest in, say, combatting racism? In the majority opinion, Alito suggests the answer is yes—but we're not sure on what grounds. What about combatting discrimination on the grounds of gender or sexual orientation? My guess is that he would say no, but there's no way to know. The logic of the Hobby Lobby decision is, I fear, as arbitrary as it is partisan. ■

Cathleen Kaveny *teaches law and theology at Boston College.*

Brian Davies

Doubting Thomas?

A RESPONSE TO GARY GUTTING'S CRITIQUE OF AQUINAS

In his review of Denys Turner's *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* ("Doubting Thomas," May 16), Gary Gutting calls the book an "impressive achievement." He describes it as "stimulating," "ingenious," "excellent," and "brilliant." But he is much less enthusiastic about Aquinas's thought than he is about Turner's account of it.

Gutting criticizes four features of Aquinas's thought. First, he claims Aquinas's notion of human beings and the human soul makes it "extremely difficult to understand" how we can be raised from the dead, as Christian orthodoxy says that we shall be. Second, Aquinas's view of God as Creator leaves us unable to appeal to "the free-will defense" when talking about the problem of evil. It also leaves us unable to think of ourselves as freely acting agents. Third, Aquinas's claim that God is not a member of a kind "is a major obstacle to any real understanding of God" and leaves us "fundamentally unclear what our talk about God means," since, if Aquinas is right, words like "wise," "good," or "loves" as applied to God cannot mean "what we mean by them." Finally, Aquinas's discussions of the doctrine of the Trinity leave it "with no meaning at all" and provide "no meaning that removes the apparent contradiction of the doctrine." Let's take these points in order.

St. Thomas Aquinas *by Adam Elsheimer, 1605*

According to Aquinas, people are essentially material things. Some philosophers have held that people are essentially incorporeal. Such thinkers have taken human beings to be souls or selves or minds or persons, able to survive death precisely because they are incorporeal by nature. You can find this view in the work of Plato and Descartes. Following Aristotle, however, Aquinas thinks that we are physical animals, albeit animals with the ability to gain knowledge, which Aquinas does not think of as something physical. Instead of supposing that my nonmaterial soul is the "real" me, Aquinas ends up saying that it is by virtue of my immaterial soul that I exist and operate as the physical thing that I am (i.e., a human being). On this account, my soul is only a part of me—the part that makes it possible for me to think, will, and choose. Aquinas thinks this part of me is able to survive my bodily perishing, and that it can be reunited with my body after I am resurrected. I stress the word "part" here because Aquinas is clear that my soul is not me because it is not, by itself, a human being. It is, he says, something "subsisting immaterially" and therefore not subject to physical decay. But it is always only a part of me—the whole of me being constituted by a union of soul and body—and this is why Aquinas rejoices in the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body, when soul and body will be rejoined.

Aquinas can make no sense of the idea that people are really, so to speak, ghosts connected to bodily bits. So, he does not believe in human survival after death as the continued existence of an essentially nonmaterial thing. He does not believe in human survival as deriving from "the immortality of the soul." Rather, he thinks that if I am to survive my death intact, then I have to be there as something with both a soul and a body—with my soul informing my body. And Aquinas thinks that this is what Christians have traditionally meant when they claim that the dead shall be raised.

Now, Gutting says that Aquinas's conclusion that the soul is immortal depends on a questionable assimilation of intellectual knowing with sense perception. Yet Aquinas frequently distinguishes between sensation and understanding. He takes sensations to be physical processes (changes in a body). And he does not claim to prove that the soul is immortal, only that it is not subject to physical corruption because it is immaterial. Gutting then tells us that, for Aquinas, the human soul depends on a body, which suggests that "it will not be able to exist without a body." But Aquinas does not say that my soul depends on my body. Indeed, he explicitly denies this. He argues that the human soul is, in principle, able to exist without a human body since it is not subject to physical decay.

Gutting goes on to say that Aquinas has a problem even if we grant "that the soul is immortal." For what, asks Gutting, really remains of us after "the strange process of res-

urrection"? He notes that philosophers working on the question "What constitutes personal identity for people?" have sometimes stressed physical continuity and sometimes psychological continuity. According to Gutting, Aquinas holds that our resurrection involves neither kind of continuity. But here Gutting's account of Aquinas appears to be false. Aquinas thinks that there is indeed psychological continuity after our resurrection because he believes that our souls continue to have the knowledge we acquired before death, not to mention the knowledge Aquinas thinks God can impart to us after death. But Aquinas argues in several places that there also has to be material continuity between my living body now and my resurrected body.

Gutting suggests that "the Platonic view" (the idea that each of us is an essentially immaterial thing that can survive the death of our bodies) "makes the doctrine of immortality relatively easy to understand." I suspect most contemporary philosophers would disagree with this conclusion, but I agree with Gutting that the Platonic view appears to be at odds with what human beings actually seem to be (i.e., parts of the spatio-temporal world). In any case, there is no "Christian doctrine of immortality." There is the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which would be quite redundant on the Platonic view: Why worry about our bodies if we are essentially nonmaterial things? Why rejoice that Jesus left his grave to be with his disciples again as one whom they could recognize materially, as the New Testament claims that they did? On the Platonic view, his physical presence would be a matter of little or no importance.

This brings us to Gutting's second point. He is right to say that Aquinas thought all creatures exist only insofar as God causes them to exist. Gutting takes this conclusion to conflict with belief in free will. According to Gutting's understanding of free will, God sometimes stands back to let us "do our own thing," and then our free actions are caused only by us and not by Him. The assumption here, of course, is that our free actions cannot derive both from us and from God.

It is true that some who believe in free will say that if God were the cause of my free actions, then I would never really act freely, and Gutting seems to agree with them. But Aquinas disagrees. This is because he thinks, on philosophical and biblical grounds, that absolutely everything that is not divine—everything but God himself—has to receive its existence from God for as long as it exists. But Aquinas does not say, as Gutting claims he does, that "God is the total and direct cause of my free action." Aquinas does not deny that "an action directly and entirely caused by another agent is by definition not my action." On the contrary, Aquinas says that the things God creates, which could not continue to exist without him, have genuine causal powers.

He clearly rejects the view that I can be free if something in the world acts on me from outside so as to have its way with me. But he does not think of God as something in the world acting on me from outside; he thinks of God as creating me to be the freely acting creature that I am. For Aquinas, God's creating something does not consist in his tinkering or interfering with it somehow. Aquinas explicitly denies that "God is creating *x*" means that God is bringing about a change in *x*. God creates by sustaining the things he creates, not by forcing them. He makes it possible for them to exist in the first place—and to continue to exist. For Aquinas, the best answer to the question "What is God?" is "He who is," meaning that it is God's very nature to exist, while everything else receives its existence from God.

Aquinas is not alone in thinking along these lines. What he says squares with much of what we find in the Bible, as well as in patristic literature. It also squares with Catholic conciliar texts and with the writings of classical Protestant reformers such as Calvin and the compilers of the Westminster Confession, which says that "God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." Is a text like this just talking nonsense, as Gutting suggests? I am not at all sure that it is. Anyway, I do not see that Gutting has shown that it is.

On to Gutting's third point. According to Gutting, when we say that God is *x, y*, or *z,* we cannot mean that God is *x, y*, or *z* in the same sense that we are. Yet Aquinas does not want to say that God is *x, y*, or *z* in the same sense that we are. And, along with many theologians before and after his time, Aquinas would think it odd that anyone should want to say this. Because Aquinas takes God to be the Creator of all things, he thinks it obvious that God has to be radically different from us.

Still, Aquinas thinks we have reason to say things like "There is knowledge in God," "There is goodness in God," and "There is love in God." Why? Because, Aquinas argues, God could not give what God does not have. The perfections to be found in certain creatures, therefore, can be taken to reflect what God is as their Creator. This is what Aquinas has in mind when he says that, when we talk about God and creatures, we can use certain words or "names" analogically. Gutting seems to think that Aquinas is thinking here in terms of metaphor or simile, which he most definitely is not. As an instance of analogy, Gutting cites "My love is a rose." Aquinas, though, would take "My love is a rose" to be figurative talk, unlike "God is good" or "God is wise," which Aquinas takes to be literally true. (See his arguments in *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, 13.)

Gutting is right to say that, for Aquinas, our talk about God always fails to grasp what God really is. Aquinas takes the words we use to talk about God as being like second-hand clothes that do not quite fit the person who inherits them. But this does not make the clothes worthless. According to Gutting, what Aquinas says about God entails that all our talk about God is fundamentally unclear. This might be true if the statements "God is *x*" and "I am *x*" had to be understood as using *x* in exactly the same way or not at all. But Aquinas takes pains to explain why talk of God and creatures cannot be construed "univocally," and he gives arguments for saying that, for example, "good" can be literally predicated both of God and of a human being, though in different ways. Hence his appeal to analogical predication. In his review of Turner's book, Gutting does not pay sufficient attention to what Aquinas says about this. For Aquinas, our words for describing God always have to "signify imperfectly" because God is the Creator and not an item in the world or the biggest thing around.

And so to Gutting's last criticism. Gutting quotes Turner as saying that, for Aquinas, the Trinity is "utterly unknowable." Gutting finds this conclusion unsatisfactory, a surrender to unreason. Yet Turner is surely right that we can hardly expect to understand what the Trinity is in the same way we might understand, say, what three cats in a basket are. Gutting claims that Aquinas fails to show that the doctrine of the Trinity is even intelligible, much less true, and hides behind a mystical description of God as "utterly unknowable." Yet, in spite of what Aquinas says about what we do not—and cannot—know about God, he also has plenty to say, with various qualifications and distinctions, about what we can truthfully and meaningfully assert concerning God. And Aquinas's writings on the Trinity are frequently concerned to deny that there are logical objections to belief in God as somehow three in one.

Aquinas does not believe that there are demonstrative arguments for the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity, which he takes to be an "article of faith." But he is aware of a series of possible objections to the doctrine that challenge its logical consistency, and he deals with them at length in texts like *Summa Theologiae* 1a, 27–43. In such texts, he does not use words that migrate "off the semantic map," as Gutting puts it. Aquinas argues that, though we cannot comprehend what the Trinity is (as we can comprehend, to some extent, what various things in the world are), we can talk sense about the Trinity using words that are already available to us. Indeed, that is Aquinas's line when it comes to the divine nature in general.

How successful is he in defending this line? That is a different question. A serious answer to it would depend on a careful reading of his many writings. ■

Brian Davies, OP, *a professor of philosophy at Fordham University, has written many books on the philosophy of religion. His lastest book,* Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*: A Guide & Commentary, *has just been published by Oxford University Press.*

Francis's Interreligious Friendships

Soccer & Lunch, Followed by Dialogue

James L. Fredericks

In the search for clues about Pope Francis's commitment to interreligious dialogue, much has been made about Jorge Mario Bergoglio's friendship with Rabbi Abraham Skorka, the rector of the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires. Less well known, but in some respects equally revealing, is Bergoglio's response to Pope Benedict's infamous lecture at Regensburg University in 2006. Benedict's remarks, which included a gratuitous and unflattering reference to Muhammad by a Byzantine emperor, led to widespread protests, riots, even deaths. Benedict quickly apologized, but seemed somewhat bemused that these obscure observations by a former university professor could cause such an uproar. There were protests in places as far apart as London and Jakarta. Muslims protested in Buenos Aires as well.

Bergoglio's response was not bemusement. He gave a surprisingly strong statement to *Newsweek Argentina* through his press secretary, Fr. Guillermo Marcó, declaring his "unhappiness" with the pope's address. Then Marcó, speaking for the archbishop, said, "These statements will serve to destroy in twenty seconds the careful construction of a relationship with Islam that Pope John Paul II built over the past twenty years." Bergoglio even asked other bishops to offer criticisms of their own. There are reports that high officials in the curia were intent on having him sacked for this insolence. As a shot across his bow, a suffragan bishop, who had also criticized Benedict's lecture, got the axe. Bergoglio handled the situation by begging off from the upcoming meeting of the synod in Rome and inviting local Muslim leaders to gather with him in Buenos Aires. Although he had called the meeting, he insisted on not presiding. The archbishop thought it was time for the church to listen.

And then, of course, there is fútbol. I am weary of the endless—and in my view pointless—discussions of the "foundations" of interreligious dialogue. I refer to the metaphysical positions we are told we have to embrace or the doctrines we must jettison (usually about the centrality of Christ) before Christians can be "ready" for dialogue with our neighbors who follow other religious paths. In Los Angeles, where I work, the basis for our dialogue with Buddhists is just cheese enchiladas. The monks love them. And the Mexican ladies in the kitchen are delighted to cook them for *nuestros monjitos* ("our dear little monks") when they come to visit. I look forward to the pad thai when I visit them. In Buenos Aires, the basis of Bergoglio's dialogue with his friend Rabbi Skorka was lunch as well, but it began with a discussion of soccer, not theology. Their long and intimate friendship began more than two decades ago when, as archbishop, Bergoglio chatted with Skorka at the annual *Te Deum* liturgy for commemorating Argentina's May Revolution. The archbishop made a joke about the dismal record of the Rabbi's favorite soccer team. The Rabbi countered with a joke about Bergoglio's team and was rewarded with an invitation to lunch. One lunch led to another as they realized they had much more to talk about than soccer teams. Then came visits to synagogues and joint prayer services in parish churches. Eventually, the two friends started a television talk show, producing some thirty episodes on a wide range of subjects. These conversations became the basis of their book *On Heaven and Earth*, now available in English. Through Skorka, the archbishop developed close ties with the Jewish community. In 2007, he attended a Rosh Hashanah service, telling the congregation that he had come to examine his heart, "like a pilgrim, together with you, my elder brothers." Bergoglio built a shrine to the victims of the Holocaust in the Metropolitan Cathe-

CNS PHOTO / PAUL HARING

Pope Francis embraces Argentine Rabbi Abraham Skorka and Sheikh Omar Abboud.

James L. Fredericks *teaches in the theology department at Loyola Marymount University.*

dral and opened its doors to the Jewish community for an annual commemoration of Kristallnacht. The archdiocese and various Jewish organizations joined in sponsoring a program for assisting the poor called Tzedaka, a Hebrew word that means both justice and charity. After the horrendous bombing of a Jewish community center in 1994, Bergoglio was quick to stand with his Jewish friends as the first public figure demanding a thorough investigation of the bombing by the government.

Bergoglio's concern for his "elder brothers" has continued now that he has become pope. Two days after his election, Francis sent a personal invitation to attend his installation to Dr. Riccardo Di Segni, Rome's chief rabbi. He also ordered that no public funeral would be countenanced for Erik Priebke, a Nazi war criminal who had been on the lam for fifty years in Argentina. To thwart the pope's directive, the Society of St. Pius X planned to give the mass murderer a funeral in Italy. An outraged crowd blocked the church. This is not the first time that Francis has had a run-in with Marcel Lefebvre's brood. The SSPX, locally and internationally, had collaborated with the military junta during Argentina's "dirty war" (1976–83). Last November, Lefebvrists disrupted the Kristallnacht service in the cathedral by shouting the rosary. Francis has also asked the Polish hierarchy to go to the aid of the Jewish community there by lobbying against a law that would prohibit the kosher slaughter of meat.

On the day after his installation as bishop of Rome, Francis gathered with the diplomatic corps accredited with the Holy See. In the course of his address, he made an important statement that reveals much about his hopes for dialogue with Muslims. After noting that one of his titles as bishop of Rome is "pontiff" or "bridge-builder," he expressed his desire that dialogue would be an effective means to bring people closer together. He went on to say that the role of religion is fundamental in this regard. "It is not possible to build bridges between people while forgetting God." But Francis believes the converse of this statement is also true. It is not possible to establish true links with God while ignoring other people. Therefore, he told the diplomats, "it is important to intensify dialogue among the various religions, and I am thinking particularly of dialogue with Islam."

Given this track record, what does Francis think about interreligious dialogue as such? My view of the matter is this: The pope thinks of dialogue with other religious believers more in terms of friendships than formal meetings. This does not mean that he has little interest in theological exchanges. In fact, Skorka has said recently that their conversations will move toward more theological issues in the future. My point is that, for Francis, interreligious friendships are more the basis for dialogue than its by-product. Remember, for Bergoglio and Skorka, soccer jokes and lunches came first. Chicago's Cardinal Francis George captured Francis's view succinctly in an interview with the *Chicago Tribune*: "Once you have the relationship, then the ideas make sense. Otherwise, it's a debating society. So you don't start with the idea. You start with a person and relationship. The pope is reminding us of this."

This means that Francis approaches dialogue in way that differs significantly from that of John Paul II. In a series of encyclicals, John Paul developed a sophisticated theological understanding of religious diversity based on his belief in the universal presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is active, the pope taught, not only in the hearts of individuals, but tangibly in their religions as well. John Paul also made clear that all salvation is founded in the one great mediation of grace that is Christ, witnessed to by the church. The Second Vatican Council documents are clear that all are offered the gift of redemption by the Holy Spirit. The council fathers did not specify what role the religions might play in the offering of this gift. John Paul took the next step. The Spirit works not only interiorly in the hearts of human beings, but also tangibly in their religions. Thus the universal working of the Holy Spirit compels the church to enter into dialogue with those who follow other religious paths. Based on these theological considerations, John Paul called together leaders of many religions for prayer at Assisi in 1986. For him, theory led to practice.

Francis seems to be largely in agreement with John Paul's theology of religions, although perhaps it can be said that he is more cautious. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, for example, Francis teaches that "God's working" in non-Christians "tends to produce signs, rites, and expressions." But then he notes that, even though these have been "raised up" by the Holy Spirit, they lack "the meaning and efficacy of the sacraments instituted by Christ." This qualification is reminiscent of language found in *Dominus Iesus*, a document issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2000. I doubt that Francis will try to develop John Paul's thought in any fundamental way or that he will try to reconcile the theological disagreements that separate John Paul and Joseph Ratzinger on other matters. Francis will leave theory alone and focus more on the practical aspects of dialogue. For example, Francis believes that the motivation for interreligious dialogue should be the mutual commitment to peace and justice. Therefore, peace and justice "should become a basic principle of all our exchanges." He does not justify dialogue by appealing to John Paul's theology of religions. Dialogue comes from friendship, not theory.

Rooting dialogue in friendship brings with it an important advantage over more theoretical approaches. Friendships provide an environment that allows for the recognition and honoring of religious differences. Speaking to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Francis warned against any "false fraternity" in our dialogues. He takes up this theme in *Evangelii Gaudium* as well when he warns against "facile syncretism." Dialogue does not mean compromising the basic affirmations of Christian faith in the hope of arriving at some abstract common denominator. For Francis,

the alternative to such pretense is a dialogue that is "friendly and sincere." Rabbi Skorka is in agreement. The rabbi has said that "God has something to do with our friendship." Based on this affirmation of faith, the rabbi believes that their friendship allows them "to come together without burying our identities."

Francis's turn to friendship as a model for interreligious dialogue is yet another example of what he calls the "culture of encounter." This expression has quickly become a catchphrase that sums up his hopes for the church's future. In general, Francis uses the notion of encounter to emphasize the church's need to get over the self-absorption that is making it "sick" and to reach out to the world with humility. The culture of encounter, therefore, is all about the church's need to respond to the immense diversity of the world today. Of course, this includes religious diversity as well. The encounter with those who follow other religious paths needs to be "open and fruitful." In his message for World Communications Day, Francis noted that the culture of encounter demands that we be ready not only to speak, but to listen as well. In keeping with this view, the pope warns in *Evangelii Gaudium* that "fundamentalism" on either side of interreligious dialogue makes true encounter impossible.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is certainly playing a more prominent role in this pontificate than in any other in history. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew invited Francis to go to Jerusalem with him to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the meeting between Paul VI and Athenagoras at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Francis visited Amman, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem in May, meeting Bartholomew at the Holy Sepulchre. The stated goal of the trip was ecumenical, but even the meeting with the patriarch had an interfaith dimension. The Middle East is being wiped clean of its ancient Christian population, largely because of the predations of Muslim and, increasingly, Jewish religious extremists. Therefore, the joint communiqué of the two patriarchs included a call for continued dialogue with Jews and Muslims and their concern for Christians of the Middle East, especially in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

True to his instincts for relying on friendships, Francis brought Rabbi Skorka along with him on the trip. For added effect, the rabbi and the pope were accompanied by Sheikh Omar Abboud, the director of the Islamic Center of Buenos Aries. Abboud is also a longtime friend and collaborator of Bergoglio's, although perhaps not as intimate a friend as Skorka. There is an affecting photo of the pope, the rabbi, and the sheikh embracing at the Wailing Wall, before ascending the Temple Mount to visit the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem together (see page 13). With the Grand Mufti, Francis gave a reflection on the practical implications of our common Abrahamic roots.

The Wailing Wall was not the only wall visited by Francis. The day before, while in Bethlehem, he spent a moment in silent prayer leaning his head against the security wall the Israeli government has built through Palestine. Many Palestinians took the pope's gesture as a sign of support for their plight as an occupied and increasingly colonized people. Some Jews saw it that way too. Rabbi Riccardo de Segni bristled that he would listen to the pope's criticism of Israel's barrier when the Vatican tears down the walls that surround its own territory.

Soon after his election, both Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas were eager to invite Francis for official visits to Israel and Palestine. They were equally eager when Francis reciprocated by inviting them to visit him in the Vatican. This took place on June 8, Pentecost Sunday in the Latin liturgical calendar. Both presidents arrived in Rome and met with Francis separately. In the evening, Peres, Abbas and the pope were joined by Bartholomew for prayers in Hebrew, English, Arabic, and Italian. The leaders praised the God of creation, asked pardon for sins, and begged God for the gift of peace. After their prayers, the two presidents gathered the two patriarchs for private discussions.

In Israel, Francis said this event would be "an encounter in prayer," which suggests that he was thinking, once again, in terms of the "culture of encounter." There is a dimension of this phrase that does not come through well in English translation. Much more than an "encounter," an *encuentro* connotes a search that is both deeply personal and transformative. It is useful to remember that, in Spanish, *encontrar* means "to find." A culture of encounter, therefore, strongly suggests a mindset in which we are searching for something important to us and that we are living in the "joyful hope" that what we seek is being fulfilled even as we seek it. Despite what some in the secular press have said, the meeting of Peres and Abbas on Pentecost Sunday was intended to be an *encuentro*, not a photo-op.

This helps us to recognize one more important point regarding how Francis understands interreligious dialogue. Dialogue is an integral expression of the ministry of the church. By inviting Peres and Abbas to his home for prayer, Francis was not behaving like a head of state. He was making the church happen. Obviously, in this case, "making the church happen" does not mean using interreligious dialogue as a covert method to convert a Jew and a Muslim to Christianity in an unguarded moment. Interreligious dialogue goes to the heart of the church's mission to serve the world as a kind of "field hospital," as Francis has famously observed on several occasions.

More broadly, I hope that Francis uses dialogue with Jews as a way to challenge the church to develop its theological understanding of Judaism. John Paul II famously said to Jews that the Mosaic covenant has "never been revoked." Similarly, Cardinal Walter Kasper has said that the church has "no mission to the Jews." Francis has taken a similar position. In a letter to the journalist Eugenio Scalfari of *La Repubblica*, Francis reflected on the Mosaic covenant in terms of the Holocaust. Even when confronted by this

atrocity, he wrote, Christians must say, along with Paul in Romans, that the covenant with Israel has "never failed." Such statements are easy to make. They certainly ring sweetly in Jewish ears. Their theological implications for Christians, however, are another matter. Is it the case that Jews have no need for the "new and eternal covenant" that has been established in Christ? Are the covenants in Moses and in Christ independently valid and self-sufficient paths to salvation? Are Jews exempted from the missionary mandate in Matthew 28:19, where we are instructed to "go out and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them"?

Benedict brought this issue into the open in 2008 with his revision of the Good Friday prayer for Jews in the restored Tridentine rite. The original prayer was a prayer for conversion. It evoked the "faithlessness" of the Jews and their need to acknowledge Christ. The 1970 version for the reformed liturgy does not speak of conversion. Rather, the church prays that the Jews might continue to grow in faithfulness to God's covenant and arrive at the fullness of redemption. By rehabilitating the Tridentine rite, Benedict also brought back the problem of the old Good Friday prayer. At the request of Jewish groups, Benedict revised the prayer. But his revised prayer is still a prayer for conversion. Today, Tridentine worshipers ask God to illumine the hearts of the Jews "that they acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Savior of all men." Jewish organizations have continued to protest. The prayer in the Roman rite, of course, remains unchanged. The theological question remains. Is it the case that the church has no mission to the Jews? In Cardinal Kasper's view, this point is factually resolved, but the church's theological thinking about Israel needs to develop. Where is Francis going to take this?

Of course, Francis will have to deal with Muslims as well as Jews. There is a pressing matter that has already landed on his desk. In the past, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue had a regular program of consultations with scholars from al-Azhar University in Cairo, the greatest center of learning in the Muslim world. In January 2011, Benedict condemned the bombing of a Coptic church in Alexandria that left twenty-one dead and more than ninety wounded. He called for government protection of Christians in Muslim countries and the guarantee of religious freedom for religious minorities. In response, Sheik Ahmed al-Tayyib, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, froze relations with the Vatican, citing interference with Egypt's internal affairs. He may have been under pressure from the Mubarak government, which had recalled its ambassador to the Vatican because of those comments. A little over a year later, the sheik extended his congratulations to Francis soon after his election. A spokesman for al-Azhar expressed a hope to see "signs that productive dialogue might resume." Francis himself responded to this opening, apparently at the insistence of the sheik, with a proposal that there be a meeting on "promoting mutual respect through education" so that "sincere and lasting friendships can grow."

There is also the difficult problem in Muslim-Christian relations that is often referred to as "reciprocity." On more than one occasion, Benedict criticized certain Muslim governments for the relative lack of religious freedom afforded to Christians compared with the freedoms enjoyed by Muslims in Europe. Muslims are free to build mosques in European countries, but it is impossible for Christians to build churches in Saudi Arabia and difficult to do so in many other Muslim countries. By raising this issue in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis is following in the footsteps of his predecessor. Francis notes that, in Europe, Muslims have become a significant presence and are "free to worship and become fully a part of society." Moreover, Christians should embrace Muslim immigrants with "affection and respect." Francis is also quite explicit in contrasting the freedoms enjoyed by Muslims in Europe with the curtailment of religious freedom by some Muslim governments. Christians should have the "freedom to worship and to practice their faith, in light of the freedom which followers of Islam enjoy in Western countries!" Reciprocity may be an issue for the Vatican's diplomatic relations with Muslim countries, but Francis should never allow "reciprocity" to become a requirement for Christian-Muslim dialogue itself. Interreligious dialogue is an integral part of the work of the church, whether or not certain governments afford Christians religious freedom.

Benedict's Christmas address to the curia in 2012 is a remarkable document that has gone largely unnoticed. His words reveal a great deal about this complicated man. They suggest to me that he already had decided that a long and difficult labor had to come to an end and that he would retire a few months later. They are the words of a man who had spent a lifetime in conflict with the secularism and relativism of the modern world. They are also the words of a man who had claimed, not too many months earlier, that interreligious dialogue, in the strict sense, was not possible. In the latter half of his address, Benedict reiterated what he has said in the past about dialogue. There can be no dialogue about the church's fundamental teachings. Dialogue must never be allowed to blur the distinct identity of the Christian believer. But then, Benedict said something surprising. In the attempt to preserve Christian identity, he said, we must never assert ourselves in a way that "blocks the path to truth." Moreover, Christians can afford to be "supremely confident" that dialogue will not rob them of their identity, because "we do not possess the truth, the truth possesses us." And the truth, of course, is Christ who takes us by the hand, makes us free and keeps us safe as we venture into dialogues with those who follow other religious paths. Christ will not let go of us, Benedict told the curia. This is an astonishing expression of trust from a man who was so deeply suspicious of interreligious dialogue. I take these words of Benedict as a kind of passing of the baton. Benedict's endpoint has become the starting point for Francis. ■

The Italian Job

Can Pope Francis Manage His Local Opposition?

Massimo Faggioli

A few weeks after Benedict XVI announced his resignation, the political philosopher Giorgio Agamben published a short book called *The Mystery of Evil: Benedict XVI and the End of Times*. In that volume, Agamben calls the pope's resignation a prophetic moment, and argues that it highlights the crisis of institutional legitimacy. His conclusions may be farfetched—an eschatological showdown between church and political power probably isn't in the offing—but he does bring into focus the sense of crisis that shook the Vatican in the months leading to Benedict's departure. A series of scandals—from Vatileaks to the Vatican bank—raised questions about Benedict's administrative capacities, questions he himself seemed to answer when he chose to resign in February 2013. As the cardinals assembled in Rome to elect a new pope, curial reform became the conclave's watchword. That is Francis's mandate. It is also one of his greatest challenges. Whether he is able to rouse the church from its institutional coma depends entirely on his ability to manage his opposition.

Francis's first year has been characterized by a carefully coded fight for the ground between the old guard and the new. An abstract debate about the continuity or discontinuity of Vatican II has been replaced by a conversation about concrete issues such as poverty and inequality. Francis has shown a willingness to discontinue old practices—for example, the Vatican officially prohibits priests from washing women's feet on Holy Thursday, but that's exactly what he did just weeks after his election. Francis's new language and style have not been universally welcomed by the bishops, especially those in his backyard. Some of them silently resist these changes.

In Italy, for example, the old guard seems especially recalcitrant. The most prominent Italian bishops—the cardinals of Venice, Milan, Turin, Genoa, Florence, Naples, and Palermo—were all appointed by John Paul II or Benedict XVI. Now it seems that many of the most powerful and visible Italian bishops have little to say about Francis's agenda. Only Cardinal Carlo Caffarra of Bologna—a drafter of *Evangelium Vitae,* John Paul's most important document on life issues—has been willing to publicly comment, if only to oppose Cardinal Walter Kasper's proposal to allow some divorced and remarried Catholics to receive the Eucharist. The rest of the Italian bishops have been more or less absent from the public debate about family and marriage in advance of October's episcopal synod.

The German bishops are another matter. They've long engaged the question about sacramental practices for remarried Catholics. In the early 1990s, the German bishops proposed pastoral practices that would admit some divorced Catholics to Communion. But the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—under then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger—forced them to drop that proposal.

As a whole, the German bishops conference has taken seriously Francis's call for a "poor church that is for the poor." When it came time to elect a new conference president, the German bishops chose a scholar of Catholic social teaching

Pope Francis washes the foot of a prisoner at Casal del Marmo youth prison in Rome.

CNS PHOTO / L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO VIA REUTERS

Massimo Faggioli *is an assistant professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. His most recent book is* John XXIII: The Medicine of Mercy *(Liturgical Press). His next book,* Pope Francis and the World Church, *will be published early next year.*

named Cardinal Reinhard Marx. Francis had already appointed him to his Council of Cardinals, which is advising him on curial reform. The German bishops also investigated the "bishop of bling," Franz-Peter Tebartz-van Elst, for spending lavishly on a new residence. The pope recently accepted his resignation.

But Francis seems to sense that he has his work cut out for him in Italy. He has begun by naming several bishops who are quite different from those appointed by John Paul and Benedict. For example, he appointed three auxiliary bishops with strong ties to the late Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini of Milan, a sometime critic of the past two pontificates. Martini, who served as archbishop of Milan from 1980 to 2002, was the most influential Italian bishop of the post–Vatican II era. When Martini's successor, Cardinal Luigi Tettamanzi, took over, he "exiled" priests who were closest to Martini. Francis's decision to make a few of them bishops sends an unmistakable message to the conference.

Francis has also tried to change the structure of the Italian bishops conference itself. This body did not include *all* the Italian bishops until 1964—during, and as a result of, Vatican II. But ever since it has served as a kind of satellite office of the Vatican. It is the only bishops conference whose president is appointed by the pope. Cardinal Camillo Ruini, appointed by John Paul II in 1985, served as conference president for more than two decades. He made sure the Italian bishops' agenda was in keeping with John Paul's. Francis has changed all that by inviting the Italian bishops to elect their own conference president. But not all of them welcomed that offer. Instead, the Italian bishops struck a compromise: they will vote for a "terna" of three names from which the pope will select the conference president. That isn't exactly what Francis wanted, but perhaps this compromise will save him the headache of facing a conference president who works against him.

On a few occasions, Pope Francis has acknowledged resistance to his program. Church historians are reminded of the start of John XXIII's pontificate, especially the months leading to the Second Vatican Council. But Francis's pontificate features something different: a "pope emeritus" and his entourage.

A group of Italian publications give voice to the resistance, such as the neoconservative paper *Il Foglio* and the more populist outlets *Libero* and *Il Giornale* (all have close ties to the Berlusconi media empire). And some political pundits at the Milan-based *Corriere della Sera*, the newspaper of the capitalist establishment in Italy, also seem worried about Francis. They often warn readers about Francis's populist streak, especially on questions of immigration and economic justice.

In addition, there are Italian bloggers and journalists who remain close to some Vatican officials (especially Sandro Magister at *L'Espresso*). They remind readers that there are "two popes." *Il Foglio* is republishing in installments the teachings of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI (including his much-criticized speech at Regensburg), which looks to some like an attempt to undermine the new papacy. For these Italian commentators, the key issues are Francis's liturgical preferences (especially his lack of passion for the preconciliar rite revived by Benedict XVI in 2007) and his alleged lack of theological clarity, as compared with his predecessor. They rely on sources inside the Vatican. Bear in mind that Pope Francis's famous line "Who am I to judge?" was a direct response to an accusation against a priest published a few days earlier by Sandro Magister.

Arguments against Kasper's proposal that some divorced and remarried Catholics be admitted to Communion appear in Italian publications with ties to bishops who consider it "doctrinal change." They worry it would amount to a betrayal of the Wojtyla-Ratzinger legacy in sexual ethics. After Kasper delivered his proposal to the consistory in February—at the pope's behest—Cardinal Gerhard Müller, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Cardinal Caffarra of Bologna were repeatedly interviewed by *Il Foglio*. They presented Kasper's argument as a disavowal of centuries of moral theology on family and marriage. They failed to mention that rethinking those pastoral practices would also mean rethinking language they (Caffarra specifically) drafted for John Paul II. They're not just fighting for John Paul's legacy. They're fighting for their own.

In May, Pope Francis delivered a speech to open the general assembly of the Italian episcopate (no pope has ever done that before). His tone was brotherly, but he pressed the bishops to change the agenda of the Italian church. Under Cardinal Ruini, the Italian bishops focused on the "anthropological challenge" of secular modernity. But Francis highlighted social issues (family, work, immigration) and urged the bishops to live simply. He asked them to "follow Peter" and to update their pastoral plans. In this respect, he sounded a lot like Paul VI. In a 1964 speech to the Italian bishops, Paul VI encouraged them to grow up and be pastors of their flock.

Why is Francis being so bold with Italy's bishops? First, few of them openly support him. And, second, Francis was elected in part to clean up after the scandals that plagued Benedict's and John Paul's administrations, and most of the curia remains Italian.

Tensions between Francis and the old guard will linger because the bureaucratic culture of the Catholic Church is resistant to change. Bishops don't have much experience with demotions—other than the old *promoveatur ut amoveatur* (promote in order to remove). But they've seen Francis move against the "bishop of bling," along with bishops who have been tainted by financial scandal. The pope has even said he's weighing the "punishment" for a bishop who was found guilty in a case related to sexual abuse. That hardly eases the anxiety of bishops who are wary of Francis.

A new book provides a window on these tensions. *Il progetto*

di Francesco. Dove vuole portare la chiesa ("Francis's Project") consists of an interview with Víctor Manuel Fernández, rector of the Catholic University of Argentina, who was appointed a bishop by Pope Francis in May 2013. Fernández is one of the pope's closest advisers. In the interview, conducted by Paolo Rodari, Vatican correspondent for *La Repubblica*, Fernández expands on the theological intuitions of Francis, which have been expressed in a way that avoids direct confrontation with his predecessors. The book serves as a guide to the theological insights of Francis's pontificate, especially with respect to his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Fernández was one of the theologians who helped then-Archbishop Bergoglio draft the final document of the Fifth Assembly of the Latin American Episcopate at Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007. So he is a key witness to the paradigm shift embodied by the Argentine Jesuit. In the book's conclusion, Fernández reveals that a few years before the 2013 conclave, he was anonymously reported to the CDF for doctrinal shortcomings. He replied to the CDF, but that didn't satisfy his critics. At that point, Fernández explains, Bergoglio "insisted that I keep my head up and…not let them [the CDF] take my dignity from me."

According to Fernández, Bergoglio has little patience with any "ideological obsession"—not even when it takes the form of debates on the interpretation of Vatican II. Fernández insists that Bergoglio wants to "apply Vatican II in its entirety…without backtracking, with the intention of leading the church out of itself, in order to get to everyone." For example, "this also applies to many paths of reform that were opened by Vatican II but were stopped halfway—such as the importance the council gave to collegiality and episcopal conferences."

Francis's anti-ideological approach "can be annoying to some who are a minority and not representative of the entire church," according to Fernández. He connects this with a central idea of Francis's pontificate: the hierarchy of truths. "If we had a missionary style truly able to get at everyone, [we would] focus on what is essential, which is simultaneously what is more attractive, because it responds to the deepest needs of the human heart." By focusing on essentials, Fernández continues, "the pope has taken up a forceful teaching of Vatican II: the 'hierarchy of truths' (see *Unitatis Redintegratio*)," which applies "as much to the dogmas of the faith as to the whole teaching of the church, including the moral teachings." In Francis's view, when one disconnects doctrine from its context—the kerygma—it becomes "ideological."

When it comes to church politics, Fernández is quite blunt. He candidly acknowledges the pope's opposition, exploring the problem of "conservative dissent" in a church where conservatives are unaccustomed to disagreeing with a pope. "Until two years ago," he explains, some people would never question what a pope said. But "now they…disseminate all kinds of criticism of Pope Francis." Those whose projects differed "even slightly" from that of past popes, Fernández says, "were very respectful of [those popes'] choices, or at least accepted them in silence." But now he sees "some in the church who feel threatened by the speeches and the style of Francis, and they seem to have suddenly lost all their affection for the figure of the pope."

According to Bishop Fernández, Francis believes in the participation of the people of God (bishops, priests, and laity) in the church's decision-making processes. The pope is interested in reforming more than the curia. Curial reform is important, but it won't solve all the church's structural problems. The church needs more "synodality." That is, the church must develop processes through which all Catholics "can feel represented and listened to…giving more autonomy to the local churches." In this sense, it is time for "more listening to the people of God."

But listening entails risk. If the pope really does want to allow all Catholics a place at the table, then he'll have to listen to a lot of people who aren't especially pleased with his leadership so far. Not all of these critics work in the curia. There are the orphans of Joseph Ratzinger who see the conservative theological pushback against modernity as the only chance to save the West. For example, the philosopher Marcello Pera (former president of the Italian Senate), who—with Ratzinger—co-authored a 2004 pamphlet connecting moral relativism,

Muslim immigration, and the decadence of Europe, has disappeared from the public scene. But he and his confreres are still active in think tanks and doctoral programs; their influence is difficult to measure.

Some members of the new Catholic movements—long favored by John Paul II—have been challenged by Francis. He asked the Neocatechumenates to rebuild unity where they have created division. Other movements and orders, such as the Legionaries of Christ, are just fighting for survival. They, too, are the orphans of previous pontificates.

Francis also faces criticism from those who seek to restore nineteenth-century European Catholicism, like the historian Roberto de Mattei. His Lepanto Foundation holds that Vatican II was a radical break with tradition, as do the online magazines he oversees: *Corrispondenza Romana* and *Radici Cristiane*. The neo-medievalists resist Francis because they oppose Vatican II on liturgical issues. The widely read blog *Rorate Caeli* falls into this camp, as does Vittorio Messori, who co-authored the famous *Ratzinger Report* (1985). As recently as May 28, he wrote about the church's diarchical papacy—two popes, Benedict and Francis—in Italy's most important newspaper, *Il Corriere della Sera*.

And on the other side, there are those who think Francis has not gone far enough. The monthly journal *Micromega*, for example, provides a venue for some of the theologians exiled under John Paul and Benedict to push for radical revolution within the church. Italian Catholics who write for *Micromega*, like Fr. Paolo Farinella and Fr. Franco Barbero, tend to see Francis as little more than a wider smile painted on the same old patriarchal, repressive church.

In other words, Francis has no shortage of opponents. The size and shape of the resistance are products of church leadership over the past few decades—problems left festering by John Paul II and made worse by his successor. Say what you will about the pontificates of John Paul and Benedict; they did little to heal the growing rifts within the church they led.

The transition from Benedict XVI is still unfolding, and the next year will bring critical moments in Francis's pontificate: the Synods of 2014 and 2015. The situation is comparable to the one John XXIII faced after he became pope. In 1959 he announced that he would convene an "ecumenical" council. He started speaking with new words and teaching with new gestures. The pope encountered strong resistance from bishops committed to maintaining the status quo. And as preparation for Vatican II continued, most external observers began to doubt the chances of its success. After all, was a seventy-seven-year-old pope strong enough to steer the bark of Peter in a new direction? Would a Vatican outsider even know where to find the wheel?

For all the differences between the church of the late 1950s and that of 2013, the "institutional loneliness" of John XXIII is similar to the loneliness of Pope Francis today. Francis's promises do not depend on Francis alone, but largely on the rest of the church—and in particular bishops and cardinals. Like John XXIII, he is not young enough to carry out his own reforms. It will be up to the bishops and the faithful to reconstruct Catholicism's credibility. Of course, the paradox is that a pope constantly in the media spotlight is trying to save the church from a "papolatry" partly created by that spotlight.

After Pope Urban VIII died (1623–44), the Barberini family, along with the servants, allies, and clients of the deceased, had to flee Rome overnight to save their lives. *Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini*—"what barbarians did not do, the Barberini family did." Retribution for having served a pope was not only political. Times have changed since the papal court of seventeenth-century Rome. A kind of "spoils system" still exists, and transitions from one pontificate to another have always been complicated. But Francis has a pope emeritus who still wears white and lives in the Vatican (unlike other popes who resigned), along with all those bishops appointed by him and by his just-canonized predecessor, whose pontificate was the second longest in modern history. This time, however, the papal transition could hardly be more complicated. ■

THE MIGRATORY BIRDS

Fearless and warm, we stayed until
A new time swept around the hill.

The sky, so turbulent, so squalid,
Might just as well be frozen solid.

One hour, to fill all hours with pain:
Whirlpools of sleet, breakers of rain.

My head is bent in unbelief:
Nothing will come to my relief

To brood a numb and stuttering heart,
As if God set my life apart.

The tucked-up leg, the wing unfurled
Are broken on the wheel of the world.

—Sarah Ruden

Sarah Ruden's most recent book is Paul Among the People *(Image Books). She has translated four books of classical literature (among them the* Aeneid*) and is the author of* Other Places, *a book of poetry.*

‘When a Deeper Need Enters’

Politics in the Poetry of Yeats & Heaney

Patrick J. Ryan

There are no political neutrals—not even among churchmen or poets. Two Irish poets help to illustrate my point: William Butler Yeats, who died in 1939, and Seamus Heaney, who died last year on August 30.

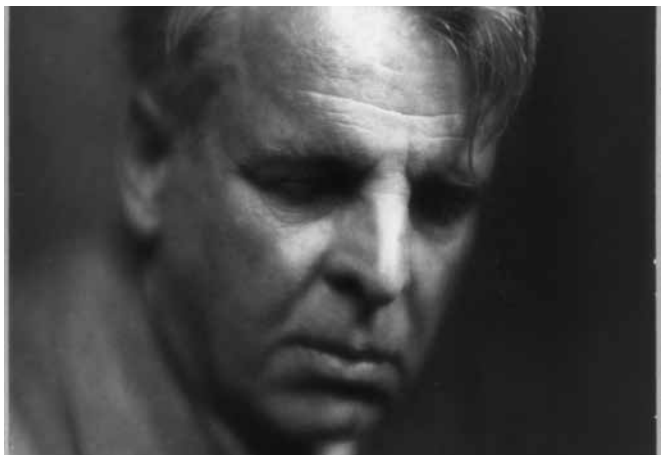
William Butler Yeats, every English major’s idea of an Irish poet, spent much of his life engaged (seldom successfully) in politics. But the sort of politics in which he was engaged changed a good deal as the years passed. Like many of the Anglo-Irish, Yeats had fallen head over heels in love with the earlier strains of Irish nationalism, much of it arising among the Irish Protestant elite with their romantic cult of the so-called Celtic Twilight. Furthermore, what love Yeats had for Irish nationalism was intimately tied up with his love for Maud Gonne, the woman he imagined to be the reincarnation of Helen of Troy. Her persistent refusal of his several marriage proposals had much to do with the changes in his politics.

Toward the end of his life, Yeats wrote a poem that eventually appeared in his *Last Poems 1936–1939*. Titled “Politics,” it begins with a quotation from Thomas Mann: “In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms.” Yeats disagreed:

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics?
Yet here’s a travelled man that knows
What he talks about,
And there’s a politician
That has read and thought,
And maybe what they say is true
Of war and war’s alarms,
But O that I were young again
And held her in my arms!

In the preface to the written version of his 1923 Nobel Prize lecture, Yeats claimed that he had expected Mann to win the Nobel Prize for literature that year. Yeats spoke extemporaneously at the awards ceremony in Sweden, but later wrote down what he remembered of that address, publishing it as a tiny book under the title *The Bounty of Sweden*. There Yeats called Mann a “distinguished novelist” but also hinted that he disliked the political themes of Mann’s work: “Herr Mann has many readers, is a famous Novelist with his fixed place in the world & said I to myself, well fitted for such an honor; whereas I am but a writer of plays which are acted by players with a literary mind.” Later in the same slim volume, Yeats writes of the playwright John Millington Synge that “he was the man we needed because he was the only man I have ever known incapable of a political thought or of a humanitarian purpose.” For Yeats, such a characterization was high praise, and especially in the aftermath of the Irish Civil War of 1922–23. Yeats thought of “the work of my generation in Ireland” as “the creation of a literature to express national character and feeling but with no deliberate political aim.”

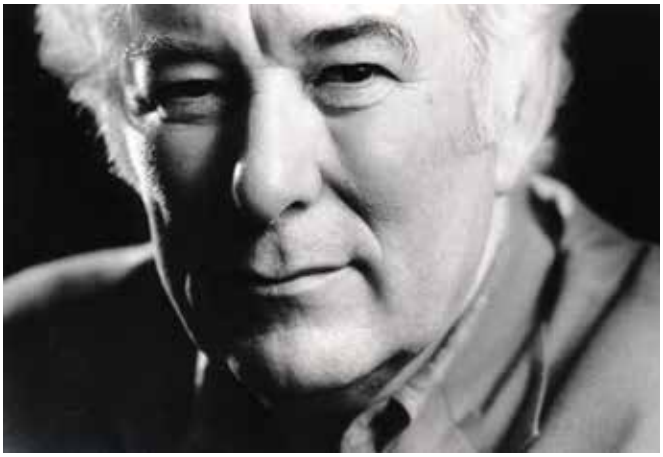
In contrast to the later Yeats’s fastidious avoidance of political questions, some of his earlier work addresses those questions directly. Take, for example, “Easter 1916,” his famous paean to the Irish nationalists who announced the birth of the Irish Republic on April 24, 1916. By that time, Yeats himself had largely withdrawn from the nationalist movement, but he could not help admiring the men who took over the General Post Office in Dublin. In the presence of a small and not very enthusiastic crowd, Padraig Pearse read out just after noon that day the Proclamation of the



William Butler Yeats

PHOTO: PIRIE MACDONALD

Patrick J. Ryan, SJ, *is the Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University.*



Seamus Heaney

Irish Republic. Within a few weeks the British military, sent in to quell the Easter Rising, had made martyrs of the signatories of that proclamation, including John MacBride, the man who had finally married Maud Gonne.

Was it needless death after all?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.
We know their dream; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead;
And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
I write it out in verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

But by the time he received the Nobel Prize, Yeats's work had taken an introspective, apolitical turn. His short but eloquent "On Being Asked for a War Poem," published in 1919, could have been addressed either to Anglo-Irish loyalists to the Empire, who were concerned with Britain's fate in World War I, or to Irish nationalists who had begun the Irish War of Independence:

I think it best that in times like these
A poet's mouth be silent, for in truth
We have no gift to set a statesman right;
He has had enough of meddling who can please
A young girl in the indolence of her youth,
Or an old man upon a winter's night.

Yeats's reluctance as a poet to meddle with the affairs of statesmen did not, however, prevent him from taking a seat in the largely consultative Irish Senate in the Irish Free State in the 1920s. Alienated from the more Republican strains in Irish politics even before the abortive civil war of 1922–23, Yeats drifted further and further to the right. He even allied himself briefly with the fascistic Blueshirts, an ultra-Catholic party headed by General Eoin O'Duffy. Yeats's prose was often a bit turgid, but never more so than when he was discussing fascism and its aesthetics. In a 1933 letter to Olivia Shakespear, he wrote:

A fascistic opposition is forming behind the scenes to be ready should some tragic situation develop. I find myself constantly urging the despotic rule of the educated classes as the only end to our troubles.... Our chosen color is blue, and blue shirts are marching about all over the country, and their organizer tells me that it was my suggestion—a suggestion I have entirely forgotten—that made them select for their flag a red St Patrick's cross on a blue ground—all I can remember is that I have always denounced green and commended blue (the color of my early book covers). The chance of being shot is raising everybody's spirits enormously.

By then, Yeats seemed to have forgotten what he had written seventeen years earlier: "wherever green is worn...a terrible beauty is born."

Today, Yeats is mainly remembered for his lyrical works. Outside the academy, few now read his verse dramas or his prose. We have collectively forgiven him his political folly. As W. H. Auden put it in his elegy to Yeats: "You were silly like us; your gift survived it all." But Auden also famously wrote that "poetry makes nothing happen," a judgment that would appear to be in keeping with the apolitical tone of Yeats's late work. Was Auden right?

I think Seamus Heaney, who was born the year that Yeats died, felt quite differently. Raised on a farm in County Derry, Heaney mined his Northern Irish Catholic origins and the events of the recent Irish past in his poetry and prose. Without descending into pamphleteering, Heaney was not afraid to comment on politics in his poems. He disagreed with Archibald MacLeish's dictum that "a poem should be equal to: / Not true." In his own Nobel lecture (1995), Heaney says that "poetry can be equal to and true at the same time." In the same lecture, he had some generous things to say about Yeats, but he also noted that Yeats's Nobel lecture "barely alluded to the civil war or the war of independence," even though Yeats was receiving the Nobel Prize only seven months after the surcease of open conflict in the civil war. Heaney describes the civil war as "bloody, savage, and intimate, and for generations to come it would dictate the terms of politics within the twenty-six independent counties of the island known first as the Irish Free State and then subsequently as the Republic of Ireland." Yeats, Heaney says, "chose to talk instead about the Irish Dramatic Movement" in his Nobel lecture. Yeats "came to Sweden to tell the world that the local work of poets and dramatists had been as important to the transformation of his native place and times as the ambushes of guerrilla armies."

Heaney hints that Yeats was a bit of an ostrich, burying his head in the Anglo-Irish literature of two generations before in order to avoid the political reality of his own time. Yeats had witnessed some of the violence of the civil war

HEANEY PHOTO: GIOVANNI GIOVANNETTI

from the vantage point of his restored Norman keep, Thoor Ballylee, located near Gort in County Galway. Both IRA "Irregulars" and Free State soldiers arrived at his door, as Yeats recalls in his poem sequence "Meditation in a Time of Civil War":

An affable Irregular,
A heavily-built Falstaffian man,
Comes cracking jokes of civil war
As though to die by gunshot were
The finest play under the sun.

Heaney greatly admired the next section of this sequence, "The Stare's Nest by My Window." Yeats maintained that in the West of Ireland "stare" was a name for a starling, but it might also suggest the relentless gaze of the natural world at the horrors human animals were perpetrating against their fellow humans in 1922–23. The poem opens with a description of how honey bees are building a hive in a crevice of the crumbling exterior masonry at Thoor Ballylee, a crevice where starlings had once built their nest. Yeats sees in this something like his own nesting with his wife, George, at Thoor Ballylee.

We are closed in, and the key is turned
On our uncertainty: somewhere
A man is killed, or a house burned,
Yet no clear fact is to be discerned:
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

A barricade of stone and wood:
Some fourteen days of civil war;
Last night they trundled down the road
That dead young soldier in his blood:
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

We had fed the heart on fantasies,
The heart's grown brutal from the fare:
More substance in our enmities
Than in our love; O honey-bees,
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

Heaney mentions in his Nobel lecture how during the "Troubles" in Ireland of the late 1960s and '70s, "I have heard this poem repeated often, in whole or in part."

But Heaney was more consistent than Yeats in facing up to the political realities around him, even if he lived outside Northern Ireland after 1972. Like many voluntary exiles, Heaney admitted to feeling a certain guilt about the distance he kept from his native soil. He spent the summer of 1969 in Madrid at a time of great distress in the Irish North. In "Summer 1969," a poem in a sequence titled "Singing School," Heaney reflects on the harsh Northern Irish realities of that period:

When the Constabulary covered the mob
Firing into the Falls, I was suffering
Only the bullying sun of Madrid.
Each afternoon, in the casserole heat
Of the flat, as I sweated my way through
The life of Joyce, stinks from the fishmarket
Rose like reek off a flax-dam.
At night on the balcony, gules of wine,
A sense of children in their dark corners,
Old women in black shawls near open windows
The air a canyon rivering in Spanish.
We talked our way home over starlit plains
Where patent leather of the Guardia Civil
Gleamed like fish-bellies in flax-poisoned waters.

Heaney's Spanish literary friends urged him to imitate Federico Garcia Lorca, the Spanish writer who engaged with the realities of Spain's civil war and lost his life in the process. But, of course, such advice is always much easier to give than to follow.

"Go back," one said, "try to touch the people."
Another conjured Lorca from his hill.
We sat through death-counts and bullfight reports
On the television, celebrities
Arrived from where the real thing still happened.

The real thing kept happening in Northern Ireland long after the summer of '69. In fact, the violence would last until the Good Friday Agreement was brokered in 1998. Heaney encountered more than once the brutal edges of the Protestant-Catholic divide in Northern Ireland during the 1970s. A twenty-two-year-old cousin of his, Colum McCartney, was shot dead in 1975 by Protestant Loyalists on a lonely road in Northern Ireland. Heaney, mesmerized by the horror of the event, tried to reconstruct what might have happened that night in "The Strand at Lough Beg" (1979):

What blazed ahead of you? A faked roadblock?
The red lamp swung, the sudden brakes and stalling
Engine, voices, heads hooded and the cold-nosed gun?
Or in your driving mirror, tailing headlights
That pulled out suddenly and flagged you down
Where you weren't known and far from what you knew:
The lowland clays and waters of Lough Beg,
Church Island's spire, its soft treeline of yew.

The beauty of his cousin's native place on Lough Beg, where "across that strand of yours the cattle graze / Up to their bellies in an early mist," reminds Heaney of the setting of the first Canto of Dante's *Purgatorio*. In Heaney's poem, this comparison clashes suddenly with his imaginative reconstruction of the circumstances that led to the discovery of his cousin lying on the road, still in the process of dying:

I turn because the sweeping of your feet
Has stopped behind me, to find you on your knees
With blood and roadside muck in your hair and eyes,
Then kneel in front of you in brimming grass
And gather up cold handfuls of the dew
To wash you, cousin. I dab you clean with moss
Fine as the drizzle out of a low cloud.

I lift you under the arms and lay you flat.
With rushes that shoot green again, I plait
Green scapulars to wear over your shroud.

In the eighth section of Heaney's 1984 poetic sequence "Station Island"—named after the site of the famous pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg, County Donegal—the poet meets the same dead cousin. Here Colum McCartney proves to be a most unsettled ghost, angry at his murderer and angry as well at his poet cousin who is walking barefoot on the island's stony penitential "beds."

You saw that, and you wrote that—not the fact.
You confused evasion and artistic tact.
The Protestant who shot me through the head
I accuse directly, but indirectly, you
who now atone, perhaps, upon this bed
for the way you whitewashed ugliness and drew
the lovely blinds of the *Purgatorio*
and saccharined my death with morning dew.

Heaney does not spare himself, either here or in his Nobel lecture in 1995. Northern Irish out of Northern Ireland, he saw that "pride in the ethnic and religious heritage can quickly degenerate into the fascistic," and yet "our vigilance on that score should not displace our love and trust in the good of the indigenous per se." He found some hope, at least in 1995, in "the huge acts of faith that have marked the new relations between Palestinians and Israelis, Africans and Afrikaaners, and the way in which walls have come down in Europe and iron curtains have opened." (At least on the first-mentioned of those acts of faith—between Palestinians and Israelis—the past eighteen years have shaken the foundations of Heaney's hope.)

In a lecture he gave before the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland on November 5, 2001, "The Whole Thing: On the Good of Poetry," Heaney addressed the importance of poetry for understanding the deepest reality of any human disaster, and especially of the human and political disaster that unfolded in New York and Washington on September 11 of that year. Heaney reworks one of Horace's odes (I.34), abridging and expanding it, describing how a disaster, natural or human in its origins, can refocus the mind on realities long ignored.

Anything can happen. You know how Jupiter
Will mostly wait for clouds to gather head
Before he hurls the lightning? Well, just now,
He galloped his thunder-cart and horses

Across a blue sky. It shook the earth
And clogged underneath, the River Styx,
The winding streams, the Atlantic shore itself.
Anything can happen, the tallest things

Be overturned, those in high places daunted
And the ignored regarded. Fortune wheels
And swoops, making the air gasp, tearing off
Crests for sport, letting them drop wherever.

In his prose commentary on this poem, Heaney suggests that the horrific clouds of the collapsing World Trade Center Towers not only caused "the irruption of death into the Manhattan morning" and "grief for the multitudes of victims' families and friends"; it also "had the intended effect of bringing to new prominence the plight of the Palestinians." This is a debatable point. The Muslim suicide bombers sought to avenge not just the grievances of the Palestinians but many other historical sorrows of Muslims. When I quoted these words of Heaney's in a talk I gave at a gathering of alumni of my high school in the spring of 2002, I thought one red-faced member of the audience was going to attack me physically. It's just as well Heaney wasn't there himself to deliver his thoughts on the topic.

The poet's task, according to Heaney in his Nobel lecture, is to speak words "true to the external reality and…sensitive to the inner laws of the poet's being." If the poet's words are true only to the external reality, the poet is no poet at all but instead a pamphleteer. Even if he's a good pamphleteer, his relevance lasts only as long as his particular topic remains relevant. But if truth to the external reality isn't sufficient for the poet, it may sometimes be necessary. In his Nobel lecture, Heaney suggests that the poet needs a theme larger than his own immortal longings:

There are times when a deeper need enters, when we want the poem to be not only pleasurably right but compellingly wise, not only a surprising variation played upon the world, but a returning of the world to itself. We want the surprise to be transitive, like the impatient thump which unexpectedly restores the picture to the television set, or the electric shock which sets the fibrillating heart back to its proper rhythm.

How then, can we—poets no less than non-poets—*not* fix our attention "on Roman or on Russian or on Spanish politics?" The poet and the playwright, the novelist and the painter, if they wish to go beyond merely entertaining, must engage their imaginations with the concrete situations in which they happen to find themselves living. Some of these are political. Not all, of course. Other dimensions of our experience demand and deserve our attention: the smell of coffee on a cool, clear morning, the permutations of trees as they bud and blossom in spring. Poets need not always pull out all the stops on the organ. But they can't resign from the human race and busy themselves only with the bric-a-brac on the mantelpiece. Ultimately, Thomas Mann was right and Yeats wrong. To his credit, Heaney realized the importance of the political more and more clearly as his career developed. Alas, that wise voice will speak no more. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam*—may his soul be at the right hand of God. ■

Off the Grid

Life in a Colonia

Joseph Sorrentino

"When you look at the area along the border," says Rose Garcia, "what you see is a third-world country." Nowhere is this truer than in the areas designated by the U.S. government as "colonias." The Spanish word for neighborhood, "colonia" is used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to define specific regions along the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. In 1990, the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act defined a colonia as any "identifiable community" within 150 miles of the border that lacks potable water, sewage systems, and decent housing.

There are 141 colonias in just the state of New Mexico and, as Garcia points out, each is unique. Some date back to the 1800s and began as camps for Mexican workers; others began much more recently. New Mexico's colonias also range in size: Beaverhead has seven residents, while, according to the 2010 Census, Chaparral has a population of 14,500. More than half of those who live in colonias in New Mexico are of Mexican ancestry and the language spoken in most of the homes in these communities is Spanish. Most older adults speak little English. Garcia, who is director of the Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation, an organization that builds housing for low-income people in Las Cruces, says that despite the differences among colonias there are "basic components that are similar." Those include high levels of poverty and unemployment and substandard housing stock that typically consists of well-worn trailers or small houses.

The National Affordable Housing Act provided funds for improving conditions in the colonias. "We can't deny that

Joseph Sorrentino *is a freelance writer and photographer living in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This article was reported in partnership with the Fund for Investigative Journalism.*

IMAGES BY JOSEPH SORRENTINO

Gabriel Olacio

there are improvements," said Diana Bustamante, director of the Colonias Development Council in Las Cruces. "You can't imagine what colonias looked like a few years ago. The housing is still pretty bad, but they've got centralized water. The roads are paved. There's a lot more that needs to be done but just to see communities improve, it's mind-boggling. Of course, it's only a tenth of where we need to be." Funding for projects to improve the infrastructure of colonias has come in from HUD, the North Atlantic Development Bank, and the Border Environmental Cooperation Commission, as well as from New Mexico's state government. Some colonias, like Anthony, have incorporated; a few have some of the infrastructure that most Americans take for granted. But progress has been slow and uneven, and many colonias still lack the basics.

There's not much to see as you head east on I-10 from Las Cruces, in the southern part of New Mexico. It's mostly flat, undeveloped land with little vegetation. Closer to the city, a few buildings dot the sides of the highway, as do a couple of trailers and one trailer park. As you head further east, the buildings thin out even more until they give way to pecan orchards that line both sides of the road, stretching for over a mile. Drive a few more miles and the dairy farms begin—depending on the wind, you may smell them before you see them. The farms line the south side of the highway, one after the other, their herds numbering in the hundreds or thousands.

About fifteen miles east of Las Cruces is the exit for Vado, a colonia with fewer than two thousand residents. Two gas stations and two restaurants—one of them closed—occupy the corners of the intersection. A bit farther on is a Dollar General, a car wash, and a closed mechanic's shop. Drive another mile or so, make a couple of turns, and you find yourself on McCrimon Road. This is where the pavement ends. It's also where twenty-first-century America seems to end.

There are only three paved roads in Vado. Most roads are simply rutted, hard-packed sand. Others are covered with softer sand—tricky to drive on when they're dry, often impossible when they're wet. The residents of Vado live in old, rundown trailers. The median income is $20,333, well below the rest of New Mexico, and the poverty rate is nearly 40 percent. About a quarter of those over sixteen years of age are unemployed. "Because there isn't enough work, people eat more beans and drink more water," said Rosa Olacio, who has lived on McCrimon Road for about twenty-five years. Olacio is a short, stocky woman. She speaks in staccato sentences punctuated with darting hand gestures. She seems to have an almost inexhaustible supply of energy. Her husband, Gabriel, is tall, wiry, and perpetually tired-looking. Unlike his wife, he speaks English, but he is more comfortable speaking Spanish—or not speaking at all.

Rosa and Gabriel both worked on farms when they first arrived in the United States. Gabriel entered the country in 1975 with his godfather and three relatives. They walked seven days through the Guadalupe Mountains in Texas. Gabriel quickly found work in the fields, following the harvests from state to state. Rosa arrived in 1976 with three cousins and has worked only in and around Las Cruces. "If you wanted to go farther in New Mexico or into Texas," she said, "you needed money to pay the coyote." ("Coyote" is the word for someone who smuggles illegal immigrants across the border.) Rosa and Gabriel received their residency papers during the amnesty in 1986. Three years later, they decided to build a home and raise a family. They settled in Vado, purchasing two acres of land. "We live here because when we arrived, it was hard to find land," Rosa said. "The man selling [the land], we paid him directly. We did not have credit."

Like most colonia residents, the Olacios have what is known as a "real-estate contract" or "contract for deed." According to Craig Acorn, an Albuquerque attorney who

has done a lot of legal work for people living in colonias, a real-estate contract allows people who can't get a bank loan to buy land. "If you're poor and you don't have resources for a down payment, no credit history, you're not going to get a loan from a bank," he says. The interest rates for money borrowed with a real-estate contract are exorbitant—typically between 10 and 15 percent. The contract is often an informal agreement, and there's apparently no standard form. Acorn has seen everything from multipage contracts to a single handwritten page.

Noeme Moreno and her daughter, Alondra, in front of their trailer

This informality doesn't strike colonia residents as unusual. It's the way land is sold in many developing countries—the way it's sold in rural Mexico. The land the Olacios purchased was entirely off the grid. "When we moved in, there was no electricity, no water, no nothing," said Rosa. There were also no roads. Before 1996, New Mexico law allowed landowners to subdivide their property into four parcels without providing any kind of infrastructure. According to Acorn, sellers often made vague promises that infrastructure was sure to come. Sometimes, after many years, it did. Often it didn't.

After the Olacios bought their two acres, Gabriel towed a small trailer onto the land. For twelve years that trailer, designed for four or five people, housed between eight and fifteen. "We either paid rent or ate, so we decided to all live together," Rosa told me. Two months after they moved in, they got electricity and water. It took them two years to get permission for a house and six years for Gabriel to build it.

When the county began to install a sewer system in Vado in 2003, the informality of land sales there proved to be a major hindrance. "When we started working on sewers, we found out how messed up it was," said Dora Dorado, Tierra del Sol's Outreach Coordinator. "Addresses didn't exist, we couldn't tell who the owners were, the numbers on the properties didn't match the numbers at the county." Partly because of these challenges, the work still isn't complete. Residents without access to sewer lines either have a septic tank or just run a pipe to a hole in the ground.

Confusion about who owns which property has been an obstacle to other infrastructure projects. The county can't build a paved road without first getting homeowners to surrender twenty-five feet of their property (an easement). That means the county has to ascertain who actually owns the property, do title searches, make sure there are no liens—a process that can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Over the past decade, three streets have been paved in Vado. The other twenty-six remain unpaved. "You can't drive out when it rains," said Nicolasa de la Rosa. "Sometimes it's impossible to walk because of the mud. The county says it can't pave the roads because it's private property, but we pay taxes."

When the Olacios bought their land in Vado, they didn't know that the colonia is located in a flood plain. Since then their property, along with most of Vado, has flooded several times. In 2009, flooding led to a tragedy. Two young children, a brother and sister, drowned in a large hole that had filled with water. At the time, there were no storm drains in Vado. "Something drastic has to happen for them to pay attention to what we're asking," said Noeme Moreno Capistan. Some storm drains were finally installed in 2010, but not on every street.

Although some people live in colonias because they *want* to be off the grid, the overwhelming majority of residents live there because they can't afford to live elsewhere. There are few well-paying jobs around Vado. Gabriel still works in a pecan orchard. For two weeks a month, from February through September, he works twenty-four-hour shifts doing irrigation work and earns $400 a week. He can nap in his truck and maybe go home for an hour for a quick meal and shower but he has to be at the orchard for almost all of the twenty-four hours. He gets one day off between those long shifts. During harvest season, he works sixteen hours a day, seven

days a week, but he also takes home more money: $700 a week. Rosa worked in the fields for eighteen years and sometimes still works during the pecan harvest, but those years of labor have done permanent physical damage. "My hands are now so bad that I cannot work in the fields," she said, holding her hands out to show me. "They hurt…the skin splits and I have to wear gloves." She now works part time helping elderly people.

Nearly all the residents and community advocates I spoke with told me there are very few good jobs in the area, especially for people with only a high-school diploma. "Here, the only jobs are really dairy or the fields," said Juan de la Rosa, a twenty-four-year-old who has bounced between dairies for a few years. "Maybe Family Dollar or the gas station." Ana Maria Avalos, a teacher who grew up near Vado, told me that young people in the area don't expect much. For them, success means becoming a manager at McDonald's or Burger King. "Not working in the fields but getting a job indoors with air conditioning is a big improvement."

Despite Vado's many material disadvantages, a strong sense of community exists. Most properties house extended families. Rosa's mother, sister, and a couple of other relatives live with her. When there's a party in the colonia, it's assumed that everyone's invited. It's also assumed that if anyone needs help, he'll get it. "There are rats, snakes and mosquitoes, but it's nice here," said Noeme Moreno Capistan. "I like it. You know the community. Here everybody knows everybody. I think this is where I'm going to stay."

Most Americans wouldn't want to live in Vado—or in any other colonia. These are communities that resemble rural Mexico more than they do any other part of the United States. But Vado residents have settled in. They know what they lack, but they take pride in what they have. "I know it's ugly where we live but we live comfortable," said Gabriela Olacio, Rosa and Gabriel's twenty-one-year-old daughter. "It's like, we live in *New* Mexico: it's Mexico, but a little better looking." ■

Two Poems by Christian Wiman

PRAYER

For all
the pain

passed down
the genes

or latent
in the very grain

of being;
for the lordless

mornings,
the smear

of spirit
words intuit

and inter;
for all

the nightfall
neverness

inking
into me

even now,
my prayer

is that a mind
blurred

by anxiety
or despair

might find
here

a trace
of peace.

MEMORY'S MERCIES

Memory's mercies
mostly aren't

but there were
I swear
days
veined with grace

like a lucky
rock
ripping
electrically over

whatever water
there was—

ten skips
twenty
in the telling:

all the day's aches
eclipsed

and a late sun
belling

even Leroy
back
into his body
to smile
at some spirit-lit

tank-rock
skimming the real

so belongingly
no longing
clung to it
when it plunged

bright as a firefly
into nowhere,

I swear.

Christian Wiman is the former editor of Poetry *magazine and a current faculty member at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music. His new collection of poems,* Once in the West, *will be published in September by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.*

Celia Wren

Poof

HBO'S 'THE LEFTOVERS'

Christopher Eccleston as Rev. Matt Jamison

A terrible mystery has shattered assumptions, and the world will never be the same. That's the reality confronted by the characters in *The Leftovers*, HBO's brooding alternate-reality fable. Based on the best-selling novel by Tom Perrotta, who co-created the show with Damon Lindelof (*Lost*), this intriguing, powerfully acted and gloomy new series imagines the aftermath of a devastatingly cryptic development: 2 percent of the world's population has abruptly vanished, and no one knows why or how.

The first episode, written by Lindelof and Perrotta, picks up the story three years after the "Sudden Departure," as the occurrence has been nicknamed. Kevin Garvey (Justin Theroux), the chief of police in the suburban town of Mapleton, New York, is still struggling to come to terms with its ramifications. So are Mapleton's other residents, including Kevin's resentful teenage daughter Jill (Margaret Qualley) and the Rev. Matt Jamison (Christopher Eccleston), the local Episcopal priest. Some of the community's concerns are practical: Should people dispose of the belongings of family members who have disappeared? And what to do about all the pet dogs who have, unnervingly, gone feral since the momentous day?

Broader existential and spiritual concerns abound, too. The Sudden Departure resembles the Rapture—except that the people who have vanished do not seem to have been, in most cases, the spiritual elite. Innocent babies have gone missing, as has Pope Benedict XVI; but murderers, rapists, corrupt officials, and other seemingly sinful types have too. So, in addition to mourning lost loved ones and striving for closure, the people who remain on earth after the Departure—the "leftovers"—have to decide whether traditional beliefs, and perhaps even conventional categories of good and evil, can still stand.

Somber in tone and threaded with eeriness, *The Leftovers* thoughtfully and ingeniously speculates on the sociological fallout of a single, mind-bending improbability. Significant portions of the pre-Departure status quo remain intact in the *Leftovers* world. Pundits are still yakking on cable news. Eligible singles like Meg (Liv Tyler) continue to plan for their wedding day. There is as much bureaucracy as ever: an administrative entity has begun paying Departure benefits to survivors who can bear to answer a list of one hundred fifty questions about their vanished family members.

On the other hand, the religious landscape has altered significantly. The enigma of the Departure has prompted the birth of numerous cults, including the creepy Guilty Remnant—a group of Mapleton residents (such as the haunted-looking Laurie, played by Amy Brenneman) who wear white, chain smoke, refuse to speak, and stalk vulnerable locals they think they can recruit. Another weird faction has sprung up around a figure known as Holy Wayne (Paterson Joseph), who claims to be able to hug the pain out of people.

Traditional religions, by contrast, do not seem to be doing so well. Attendance has plummeted at Rev. Jamison's church—at one point we see him preaching to a congregation of about seven—and in the resultant financial crisis, the church building has gone into foreclosure. Of course, it hasn't helped that Jamison has become obsessed with uncovering the misdeeds of departed individuals—a mania that infuriates many Mapleton residents. Visiting the hospital after yet another outraged survivor has assaulted the priest, Police Chief Garvey suggests that it might be better to stop tracking the crimes of the vanished. But Rev. Jamison insists that people "need to hear the truth," because if definitions of good and evil become blurred, then "all of our suffering is meaningless."

But if the minister is convinced that the Sudden Departure was not the Rapture, he doesn't seem sure what it was. "Do you know where my family went?" demands Nora Durst (Carrie Coon), whose husband and children evaporated on the fateful day. "It was a test," the priest replies—seeming to imply a mysterious divine plan. But his voice sounds uncertain.

The Leftovers dwells unflinchingly on the anguish of Durst, Garvey, Jamison, and other survivors, with the result that the show can be something of a downer. But it is undeniably profound. It certainly earns its resonant credit sequence, which pans over a painting depicting myriad people being torn away from their loved ones and swept into the sky. In style and color, the imagery seems to deliberately evoke the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. ■

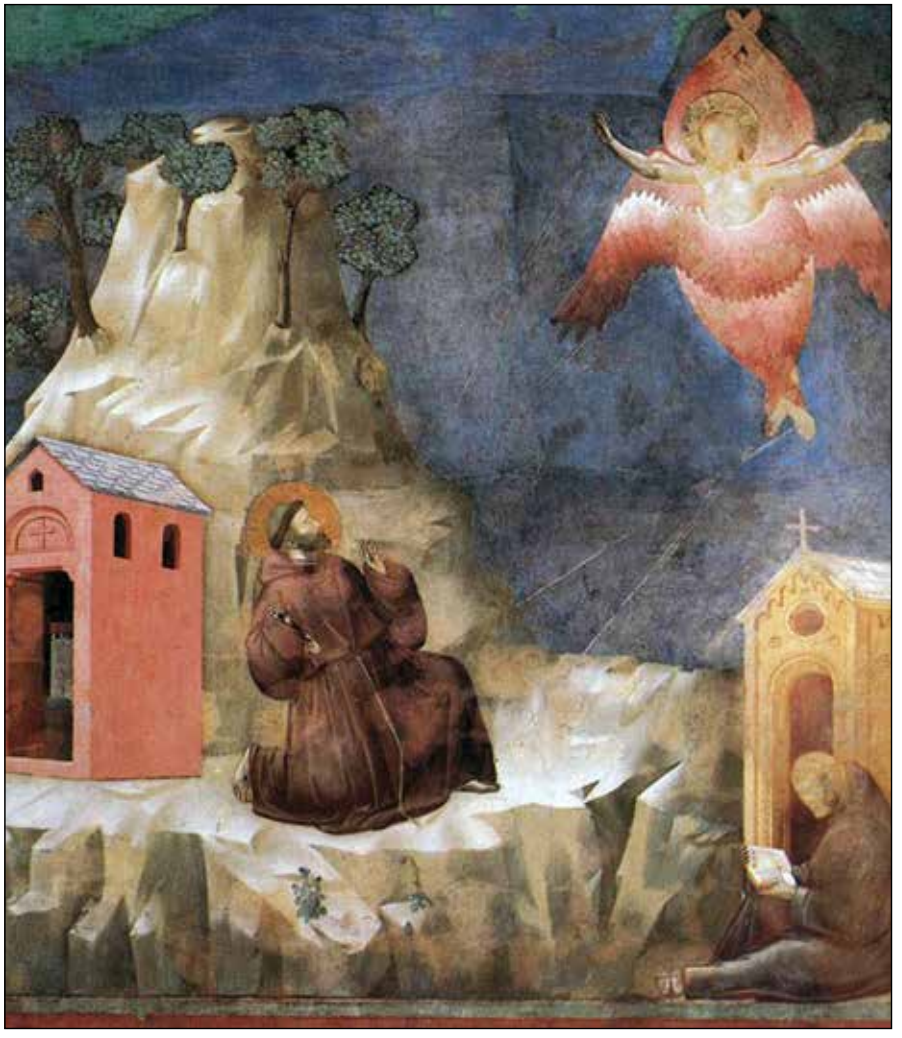
PHOTO: PAUL SCHIRALDI

Ingrid D. Rowland

A Shrine to Humility

The Making of Assisi
The Pope, the Franciscans, and the Painting of the Basilica
Donal Cooper and Janet Robson
Yale University Press, $75, 296 pp.

From its dominant position on a ridge of the Apennine peak known as Mount Subasio, the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi is as large and impressive as Francis himself was apparently small and unprepossessing. Graceful, majestic, gorgeously decorated by some of the greatest artists in medieval Italy, it may seem to contradict the devotion to poverty that drove Francis to create a new way of religious life for the Friars Minor, his "little brothers" in faith, and his female followers, the Poor Clares. And yet, as Donal Cooper and Janet Robson show in their fascinating study, *The Making of Assisi*, the basilica played its own crucial part in promoting Francis and his mission, conveying the "Little Poor Man's" novel view of right living to a larger public through a brilliant interweaving of art, architecture, and liturgy.



Stigmatization of St. Francis, *scene 19 of the St. Francis cycle in the Upper Church of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi*

The basilica as we have it was the creation of the first Franciscan pope, Nicholas IV, elected in 1288. Francis himself had been a saint for exactly sixty years, canonized in an extraordinarily rapid procedure just two years after his death in 1226. Pope Nicholas, the former Girolamo Masci, was born in 1227, a child of the same rugged Apennine region as Francis, a region that felt the impact of the saint's recent presence with particular intensity. Nicholas emerged victorious from the conclave on February 22, 1288. By mid-May, he had posted letters to the head of the Franciscan province of Umbria and the custodian of the basilica at Assisi granting them explicit permission to use the alms they collected to ensure that the Basilica and its associated churches and convents were "maintained, repaired, built, modified, enlarged, finished, and decorated."

Clearly, reinforcing the Franciscan order and the principles of its founder ranked high among the new pope's priorities. He was only the first in a long, distinguished series of Franciscan popes who used art, architecture, and urban planning to transmit spiritual ideas: the great Renaissance popes, Sixtus IV (who built the Sistine Chapel), Julius II (who asked Michelangelo to decorate it), and Sixtus V (who moved four of Rome's obelisks to their present location) were also Franciscans. St. Francis had restored dilapidated churches and chapels with his own hands, beginning with the little parish church of San Damiano on the slope below Assisi. His successors felt that, in es-

sence, they were simply performing the same action.

Pope Gregory IX laid the cornerstone for Assisi's basilica in 1228, shortly after Francis was canonized. Work proceeded rapidly thereafter. By 1253, the basic structure of San Francesco seems to have been largely complete, a two-level plan that took advantage of the steep slopes of Mount Subasio to provide two separate entrances to two different spaces for worship of two distinctive kinds. On a lower level, entered from a spacious courtyard, the Romanesque crypt of the lower church centered on the saint's tomb. Directly above, in ultra-modern Gothic style, the lofty nave of the upper church, with its own separate entrance, focused on a ceremonial bishop's throne.

With his letters of 1288, Pope Nicholas gave the Franciscan province of Umbria and the friars of Assisi permission to think about their mother church in a whole new way. He elevated the basilica's status to that of a pontifical church, so that its bishop's throne became a seat reserved exclusively for the Bishop of Rome—but this transformation meant that little Assisi was a place where popes might want to travel. In the next twenty years, the Friars Minor of Assisi would transform their basilica into a masterpiece of Franciscan storytelling, covering the vaults and walls of the upper basilica with large-as-life frescoes of episodes from the saint's biography, carefully chosen to present Francis in a light that reflected the enthusiastic concerns of Nicholas, the Franciscan pope.

As Cooper and Robson reveal, Assisi was not the only place where Pope Nicholas commissioned a monumental pictorial tribute to Saint Francis and his brethren. The new pope also ordered a thorough remodeling of the ancient basilica of St. John Lateran, Rome's (and Catholicism's) official mother church, consecrated in the year 324. To decorate an entirely new apse, set farther back than its predecessor, Nicholas ordered a mosaic showing Christ in glory above a row of titanic saints: Paul, Peter, the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Andrew. In among

St. Francis Renounces His Father, *scene 5 of the St. Francis cycle*

these towering figures, at a little over half size, stand two Franciscan saints: Francis and Anthony of Padua, who had died in 1232 and was canonized less than a year later, even more quickly than Francis himself. In no uncertain terms, the Franciscan pope proclaimed the arrival of the Friars Minor in heaven as well as on earth.

Sadly, a well-meaning pope, Leo XIII, tore down the original apse of St. John Lateran in the 1880s and replaced its glorious mosaics with modern copies. Medieval mosaics were set unevenly, to reflect tiny, scintillating points of light, but nineteenth-century mosaicists, like the ancient Romans, preferred a flat, smooth surface. As a result, the current apse of St. John Lateran is a flatter, duller work of art than its thirteenth-century predecessor, and so is the frescoed upper church of Assisi, its painted plaster hopelessly faded after so many centuries of exposure. They are dazzling nonetheless, and one of the many virtues of *The Making of Assisi* is a generous complement of color plates to give readers a sense of how glorious the vision of Pope Nicholas must have been.

The artists who executed these mosaics and frescoes were the best that Nicholas could find: Italians, trained from childhood in a master's workshop and carefully guided by master and guild through the various levels of professional competence. The thirteenth century was a time of inspired artistic experimentation in Central Italy, where painters, sculptors, architects, and mosaicists could, and did, draw on a variety of sources: the ancient Romans, the Etruscans, the Greeks, Byzantium, the Arabs, as well as idiosyncratic local traditions. Payments were carefully recorded in ledgers of paper or parchment, but Napoleon Bonaparte carted off the documents for the upper church when he invaded Italy, and most of them were destroyed somewhere between Assisi and Paris. We know that Cimabue, the crusty Florentine painter, worked on the vaults of the upper church (his nickname referred to his temper, aggressive enough to "decapitate an ox"); we do not know for certain whether he brought along his most brilliant pupil, Giotto di Bondone, the man his contemporaries hailed as the inventor of modern painting. There are some strong similarities between the Assisi cycle and a similar Franciscan cycle in Florence that is definitely by Giotto (the Bardi Chapel in the Church of Santa Croce), but there are also significant differences.

No matter who created them, the figures in the paintings have a wonderful, regal presence; in their day, they must have seemed almost like tableaux of living figures mysteriously carrying out their activities in three dimensions on the flat surface of the wall. The stylized backgrounds showing cityscape and countryside may be inspired by the stage sets of contemporary miracle plays; in any case they are sophisticated, carefully conceived designs. In between the vari-

ous scenes from the life of St. Francis, painted architectural frames boast fanciful Gothic versions of Classical columns. The ancient classical world is not so far away from the upper church of Assisi; neither is the impending Renaissance.

Because the question of Giotto's participation at Assisi is as insoluble as it is hotly debated, Cooper and Robson have decided to dodge the question entirely and concentrate instead on what the paintings of the upper church might have meant to Nicholas and to contemporary viewers. (Their general inclination is to think that the frescoes are not the work of Giotto, which means in turn that we should expand the number of first-class artists active in thirteenth-century Italy to include this unknown master.)

What we certainly see is a Francis who is more self-assured and more consistent in his actions than the Francis who emerges from his medieval biographies—a troubled, driven soul who felt an irresistible call from God but spent much of his life as a "poor man" trying to discern just how he and his followers could best answer that call. Saints' lives, like classical myths, could be shaped to tell truths higher than the plain recitation of fact. Francis probably never stripped naked before his father in the main piazza of Assisi, declaring that he had another father in heaven; the break was more private than that. But the scene on the upper church of Assisi makes the basic, valid point that Francis rebelled against his father's capitalist view of the world by presenting a scene of searing power: the young convert has taken off all his clothes as his father, the prosperous merchant Bernardone, clenches a fist in rage. As Bernardone's friends restrain him, the bishop of Assisi, Guido, wraps a handsome blond Francis in his cloak (the real Francis was short and dark) and spirits him away toward the cathedral, with its distinctive ancient façade (it had begun its existence as a temple of Minerva). Bernardone, a prosperous man who had drastically improved his own social standing by hard work and consistent behavior, would never understand his son's rejection on any level. The fresco in the upper church brings that bewilderment home as if it were happening now, before our eyes; Francis, in the meantime, looks beatifically upward, rapt in another world while confusion roils around him.

Cooper and Robson show how each scene on the wall of the upper church forges a bond with each of the scenes around it, but also the scenes on the opposite wall, over the doors, in the vaults, in the apse. This complicated web of references provides countless occasions to ponder the meaning of each episode in the saint's life on its own merits, but also in relation to his other actions, and finally for its significance in the life of the institutional church. A social rebel, Francis always professed obedience to the pope; the decorative schemes commissioned by the Franciscan Pope Nicholas in the Lateran and Assisi emphasize that loyalty, daring to rank the achievement of Francis and the Friars Minor alongside the work of the Apostles.

Like all charmed moments here on earth, the Franciscan honeymoon brought on by the election of Pope Nicholas IV could never last. Nicholas died in 1292, four years after issuing his letters to the friars of Assisi. His successor was Pope Celestine V, who served for five months, the last pope to resign his office before Benedict XVI in 2013, and under radically different circumstances. Work continued at Assisi under Celestine's successor, Boniface VIII, but the spirit of that worldly-wise, political pontiff led elsewhere and meant other things. The making of Assisi was a brief flash of inspiration that we are fortunate to have largely preserved (despite the terrible earthquake damage in 1997), and beautifully detailed in this superb book. ■

Ingrid D. Rowland *is a professor, based in Rome, at the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture. Her latest book,* From Pompeii: The Afterlife of a Roman Town, *was published this spring by Belknap Press.*

Bernard P. Prusak

First Things

Rekindling the Christic Imagination

Theological Meditations for the New Evangelization

Robert P. Imbelli

Liturgical Press, $19.95, 122 pp.

The Second Vatican Council isn't over yet, in the view of Robert P. Imbelli, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, a systematic theologian recently retired from Boston College, and a longtime contributor to *Commonweal*. In the preface to this short but valuable and handsomely produced book, Imbelli looks back to the *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* that characterized the efforts of the council, which returned to the early sources of the faith in order to rediscover a deeper sense of tradition, intending to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in a way that addressed the aspirations and concerns of contemporary women and men. Imbelli believes that the council "was able to hold these two movements of rediscovery and renewal in creative tension, channeling the centrifugal forces that could pull them apart." He notes that the "reception," and thus the event of the council, is continuing today.

In Imbelli's view, however, the creative tension that the council embodied has often slackened. *Ressourcement* thus risks becoming antiquarianism, and *aggiornamento* can slip into cultural accommodation. Partial and partisan readings of the council's documents have given rise to fragmentation and polarization. He sees these temptations as symptoms of a more severe crisis: "an eclipse of the enlivening and unifying center of the faith. That center is Jesus Christ himself."

In making his case, Imbelli notes that attendance at Mass has precipitously declined since the council. Of even more concern, "in some theological circles, an odd aversion to affirmations of the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ has taken hold." He also joins Benedict XVI in decrying trends in biblical scholarship that question or even deny that we possess solid knowledge of Jesus. Pandering to the secular media, some Catholic scholars seem intent on reducing Jesus to a merely human prophet, Imbelli complains. Fair enough. But Imbelli might also have acknowledged that postconciliar Catholic biblical scholarship has provided the faithful with a richer and fuller portrait of Jesus, one entirely consonant with the council's Constitution on Revelation.

Icon of the Holy Trinity, by Andrei Rublev

In framing his argument, Imbelli invokes the prophetic words of Karl Rahner: "The devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic,' one who has 'experienced' something, or he will cease to be anything at all." He uses the Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* to help bring into focus the contemporary challenges facing the church. However, Taylor's more positive view of modernity is not really engaged. Rather, Imbelli finds the philosopher's concerns and views remarkably consonant with those in Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. Christian existence is not an ethical decision but an encounter with a person who gives life a new goal and sure growth, Imbelli reminds us. Or as Taylor puts it, "God establishes the new relationship with us by loving us, in a way we cannot unaided love each other." That relationship involves conversion, transformation, and communion—with God as well as other humans.

Rekindling the Christic Imagination is intended to be a "mystagogical" meditation. It seeks to engender an aesthetic theology, a praying theology that arises from and leads to prayer, and from prayer to a deeper understanding of the Trinity, the Eucharist, and the church. Imbelli proposes that a theology in service to the New Evangelization must be one in which the uniqueness and originality of Jesus is probed with creativity and imagination. To this end, each chapter begins with a discussion of a venerable work of Christian art. In the book's first chapter, the figure of the risen Christ radiating the Holy Spirit, above the main door of the twelfth-century Romanesque church of St. Mary Magdalene in Vézelay, France, is used to explore the "the originality and uniqueness" of Jesus Christ, as the new Adam, the beginning of God's new creation. Jesus is presented as one who has imagined—and realized in himself—a world redeemed.

Chapter 2 begins with a reflection on Rublev's fifteenth-century *Icon of the Holy Trinity*. "The 'Three' of the Godhead are not separate beings, but are constituted by their very relationships of generous giving, truthful expressing, and joyful sharing," Imbelli writes. If humanity is indeed created in the likeness of the Trinity, we are called to a life of dialogue and communion. A chapter on the Eucharist begins with a consideration of Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus*. Attending Mass, Imbelli writes, cannot be understood as a

compulsory duty or merely as a ritualized social gathering. Our celebration of the Lord's Day, the Eighth Day of the new creation, must manifest a burning desire to meet the Lord who comes that we and all the world may have life and have it to the full. Recovering this eschatological dimension to the liturgy is essential.

Pope Benedict has expressed reservations about the decision made in the wake of Vatican II to have the presider at Mass face the assembly. His underlying concern was that the new orientation could breed a "horizontalism" in our spiritual attitude, obscuring the centrality of Christ. To avoid these temptations, he advocated having the presider and assembly face east. In facing east, the gathered church invokes the rising Sun and thus symbolically the return of Christ in glory.

Imbelli appears sympathetic to Benedict's perspective on this issue, but he does not note that Benedict routinely celebrated the Eucharist in St. Peter's Basilica facing the people! As it happens, in order to face east, a presider at the main altar of St. Peter's has to face the people and the front door of St. Peter's. That is likewise the case in the Basilica of St. Mary Major and the Lateran Basilica of St. John. In fact, historically many churches were built without concern for their compass orientation. Contrary to Benedict, the *ekklesia,* or assembly, gathered around the altar table is not horizontally focused on the presider or themselves, but on what lies on the altar—the eucharistic presence of Christ.

Imbelli goes on to use the twelfth-century mosaic of *The Cross at the Tree of Life* in the apse of the Basilica of San Clemente in Rome to explicate Vatican II's universal call to holiness. He notes that even though the church always entails institutional structures, it is most fundamentally the bearer of a transcendent treasure: the divine life made possible by Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. As the council proclaimed, the church is indeed "a people;" but most distinctively, "the people of God." "Christians are called not merely to the imitation of Christ but to participation in his own life," Imbelli says, "gradually becoming transformed from their old self to the new self, recreated according to the image and likeness of their Savior, who loves them and, in the Eucharist, continues to give himself for them. The New Evangelization is not about a program, but about a Person and about participation in the new life he enables."

The "newness," the "originality," and the "uniqueness" of Jesus Christ are front and center for Imbelli. "The joy of the Gospel, the joy who is Jesus, enraptures our imagination and transfigures our desire," he writes. That joy is seen as a unique antidote to the "relentless sameness and superficiality of a consumer society." One must ask, however, if joy is what most people experience in the liturgy. Although Vatican II called the laity to full and active participation in the Eucharist, passivity seems to remain the norm in most Catholic parishes. Why?

For me, *Rekindling the Christic Imagination* inevitably raised questions that go beyond the author's heartfelt meditations. I suspect that finding the right language and tone to encourage reception of the New Evangelization is a much broader and more challenging task than Imbelli allows. It is true, for instance, that Rahner sought to revitalize our sense of the mystical. At the same time, he was a sharp critic of the church's hierarchical structure. In *The Shape of the Church to Come*, he suggested that one measure of church leadership might be an ability to get a hearing from nonbelievers, even if that meant acting "scandalously" by traditional Christian standards. Rahner, in fact, was convinced that the church needed to be declericalized in some fundamental way. Traditional decision-making structures no longer have credibility, he argued. In the contemporary world, the church must win "genuine assent on the part of those affected by [its] decision."

Imbelli seems to regard structural reform as peripheral to the church's essential mission. But in a hierarchical and sacramental tradition like Catholicism, form is substance. Pope Francis, like Rahner, insists that "we must be a church with open doors." Opening those doors will require making some hard institutional decisions. A rekindled Christic imagination is a necessary, but not sufficient, step in that direction. ■

Bernard P. Prusak *teaches theology at Villanova University.*

Paul J. Griffiths

No, Thank *Him*

Gratitude
An Intellectual History
Peter J. Leithart
Baylor University Press, $49.95, 340 pp.

Gratitude is difficult to practice, and even more difficult to think about well. If, because I've given you a gift or done you a favor, you feel bound to thank me for it, is what you're expressing really gratitude? Isn't it more like acknowledging an obligation? If I must thank you because you've given me something and return the favor when I can, and if you've given it to me just so that I'd be bound to you in these ways, then are "gift" and "gratitude" the right concepts? Aren't gifts supposed to be freely given, without expectation of return? Isn't the ideal gift non-economic, in the sense that it lifts both giver and receiver out of the circle of obligation and into that of mutual delight?

But perhaps non-economic gratitude is an oxymoron, like academic clarity or American irony. Perhaps we need to acknowledge that there aren't any gifts without expectation of return and therefore none that avoid obligation. Even if the free gift—the one we didn't expect, don't deserve, and don't have to repay—is what we yearn for, perhaps we should give up on that ideal and realize that, really, we need to look every gift horse in the mouth.

These questions are of pressing concern to everyone. Speakers of English use stereotyped verbal expressions of gratitude dozens, perhaps hundreds, of times every day, and no familial, social, or political order can survive without establishing conventions about gifts and gratitude. For Christians, the matter is even more central: the name of our essential liturgical act—Eucharist—just means "thanks," and it is arguably the case that all Christian theology and all Christian life is constituted by the reception and return of God's gifts.

Gratitude: An Intellectual History addresses all this and more. In much of this fine book, Peter J. Leithart writes as a historian of ideas, relating how gratitude was understood and practiced by pagans and Jews and Christians in the long history of the West, from Homeric Greece to our own century. But really Leithart is a Christian theologian, as he acknowledges, and the heart of the book is his treatment of the Christian disruption of settled ideas about gift-giving and gratitude. Central to his telling of this story is a distinction between lines and circles—between, that is, linear understandings of gratitude and circular ones.

Linear gifts are those given without intent or expectation that gratitude, or any other return, will circle back to the giver. Rather, the gift moves outward from the giver and has its effects in distant places and times. There aren't many such gifts in the human sphere. Perhaps the gift of blood is like this, especially when it's anonymous. Gratitude in that case can't be received by the giver, and if the recipient feels it, she can express it only by giving what she's been given to someone else. That's about as close as we can get to the linear gift, the one that prevents any explicit bond of gratitude between giver and recipient.

The circular gift is everything that this is not. It's a gift intended to bind giver and recipient together, and so it's essential that the giver's name and identity be known. And it's a gift for which return is expected—an expression of gratitude now and a reciprocal favor later. In Leithart's telling, the gift-circles of pre-Christian Greece and Rome are all more or less like this. The munificence of the patron, whether the local godfather or the Caesar in Rome, bound patron and clients together. At the very least it created loyalty, but it could also involve the expectation that clients would fight and die for the patron if circumstance required. According to this model of gift and gratitude, there's no anonymous giving, but of course it's not essential, and usually not possible, that the patron know the names of all his clients. Whether local (village, town, province) or almost universal (empire), the structure of reciprocal circular giving and gratitude is always essentially the same, though there have been philosophical attempts to remove from it what might seem to be crass self-interest. Seneca, for example, in his first-century treatise *On Benefits*, defends gifts and gratitude as the principal conditions necessary for the flourishing of a polity. As Leithart puts it, Seneca believed that ingratitude was "*the* great obstacle to social cohesion."

It's against this background that Leithart depicts the Christian disruption of gratitude. Jesus (and later Paul) recommended giving without expectation of return—and even without per-

VALERRY

mitting it to be known that you are the giver. This is not, however, simply to replace the circular gift with the linear one. Reward is still promised, but now it doesn't come from a human client, but from God. This meant that, for Christians, the poor were the ideal recipients of gifts exactly because they could not repay. Since God would repay, the recipient does not need to be able to do so. In this way the Christian community, drawing here upon its Jewish inheritance, was able to regard anonymous or collective gifts to the poor as the ideal way to express gratitude to God for his gifts. As Leithart puts it, the circle of gratitude was made boundaryless: any and every human creature could now be a proper object of generosity, and God would show his gratitude for all such gifts. It isn't that Seneca was wrong, exactly; it's just that he drew his circle too narrowly.

In Leithart's view, this distinctively Christian understanding of gratitude, fundamentally theological in its commitments and deeply transformative of the socio-political sphere in its effects, is the right way to think about gifts and gratitude. He also thinks that this position was partly obscured during the medieval period, largely recovered during the Reformation, and corrupted in the Enlightenment, when it lost its underlying theology. It is now ripe for recovery. Leithart is here offering a high-gloss Protestant-triumphalist narrative, one that is more sanguine about modernity than typical Catholic (and Jewish) narratives of the same matter.

One reason for the difference—and perhaps the deepest—is that Leithart is excessively fond of the either/or, the dialectical opposition. For him, either we are grateful *to* others for the gifts they give us, and thereby locked into an endless chain of reciprocal obligation, or we are grateful only *to* God *for* others because of what they do for us. Certainly, this kind of distinction has deep roots in Christianity. Something like it can be found in Paul, as well as in Augustine's distinction between our use of creatures and our enjoyment of God. But Leithart states it too sharply and deploys it too dialectically. Surely we must be grateful to other people as well as to God, though not in the same way or to the same degree. Such gratitude does proper honor to our status as creatures. Leithart, in spite of his emphasis on the importance of community and church, does not give sufficient weight to local and particular gifts and gratitudes—the gift of this spouse, these children, these colleagues, these fellow citizens. They are all God's beloved creatures, of course, and I am grateful to God *for* them. But I am grateful (I hope) not only *for* them but also *to* them—face to face and by name. It isn't clear that Leithart's position allows this kind of gratitude sufficient Christian weight. On this point, Seneca remains with us, and it's good that he does.

Nevertheless, this book is a considerable achievement. Leithart surveys and comments on an enormous range of literature, writes with great lucidity, and provides one of the few recent detailed treatments of a topic of fundamental importance to us all. I'm grateful to him for this book (the fact that he hasn't published it anonymously suggests that I ought show him exactly that kind of gratitude), as well as to God for creating someone capable of writing it. *Gratitude* deserves wide and careful reading. ■

Paul J. Griffiths *holds the Warren Chair of Catholic Theology at Duke University.*

Bergman Meets Bresson

Robert E. Lauder

As the technological revolution transforms cinema, and computer-generated images proliferate, movies seem dumber and dumber: more epic battles, explosions, and car crashes, but less meaning and certainly less mystery. So I am relieved to have my faith in film renewed by the recently released Polish masterpiece, *Ida*, written and directed by Pawel Pawlikowski.

In his classic 1917 book *The Idea of the Holy*, theologian Rudolf Otto reported that wherever the sacred is found, it is *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*—mysterious, even frightening, but also fascinating and seductive. The medium of film has the potential not only to depict the sacred but to invite us into its mystery. If the Risen Christ and His Spirit are present everywhere, then the sacred surrounds us, and an encounter with God can happen anywhere—even in a movie theater.

I can think of five films during the past decade that offered a profound experience of the sacred. The first was Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. I have misgivings about the scourging scene in that film, yet clearly something special happened to many members of the audience at the film's first public screening, on Ash Wednesday 2004. People left the theatre in deep silence, as if after a profound religious experience. A couple of years later, watching *Into Great Silence* at an art house in Manhattan, I felt a similar kind of reverent attention pervading an audience held rapt by the documentary's portrayal of the lives of Carthusian monks in an alpine monastery in France. Like the success of Gibson's *Passion*, which went on to earn almost $400 million in domestic box-office returns alone, the acclaim won by *Into Great Silence* showed just how hungry religious believers in secular cultures are for portrayals of the sacred.

A sense of the sacred is also served up, more obliquely, in *Sophie Scholl* (2007)—a moving indictment of Nazism, but also a deeply religious film that challenges us to evaluate our lives, turning the tragedy of Sophie's martyrdom into an inspiring appeal to deepen our religious commitment. Xavier Beauvois' *Of Gods and Men*, chronicling a group of Trappist monks caught up in the political turmoil of 1990s Algeria, deeply touched believers and nonbelievers alike. And Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* (2011), a visually gorgeous, Teilhardian presentation of evolution from the Big Bang to resurrection, depicts creation's beauty with a powerful sense of mystery, both human and divine, creating a cinematic echo of Gerard Manley Hopkins's claim that "the world is charged with the grandeur of God."

None of these films proselytizes. Rather, their creators study reality through the lens of faith—and the films, through their beauty and truth, invite viewers to do the same. And so it is with *Ida*. Pawlikowski's film charts the journey, both physical and spiritual, of a young nun and her atheistic, promiscuous, and alcoholic aunt, as they search for the burial site of Jewish relatives killed during the Holocaust (see Rand Richards Cooper's review, "Out of Great Silence," July 11). I can't recall a film that can be approached from as many angles as *Ida*; it is at once a post-Holocaust film, a feminist film, a psychological exploration, a road movie, and a detective story. But perhaps the most radical approach is traced by its metaphysical and religious themes. Critics point out that Pawlikowski has been influenced by two cinematic giants, Ingmar Bergman and Robert Bresson. In *Ida* Pawlikowski presents Bergman's questions and Bresson's answers; Bergman's atheism and Bresson's emphasis on the presence of grace. The plot centers on a kind of Kierkegaardian either/or: either opt for absurdity, or make a leap of faith to Christ.

The camera work, done in a gravely beautiful black and white by Lukasz Zal and Ryszard Lenczewski, contributes significantly to the film's brilliance. Close-ups emphasize the spiritual condition of the two protagonists, while distant shots make them seem small against a vast background, suggesting how insignificant we are in an indifferent environment—and reminding us that we, finite as we are, are called toward the Infinite.

Agata Kulesza and Agata Trzebuchowska in Ida

MUSIC BOX FILMS

I think about the silence that ripples through an audience after such films and wonder, is the awe—is the experience itself—purely and merely aesthetic? If the philosophers are correct about the transcendentals, if all created beings are true, good, and beautiful because this is what their Creator is, then is any such experience merely aesthetic? Isn't every experience of beauty an experience, however vague and limited, of the Divine?

Ida is an exceptional example of cinema at its best. It is also a deeply religious film, and I'm going to regard my next viewing of it as a religious activity. ■

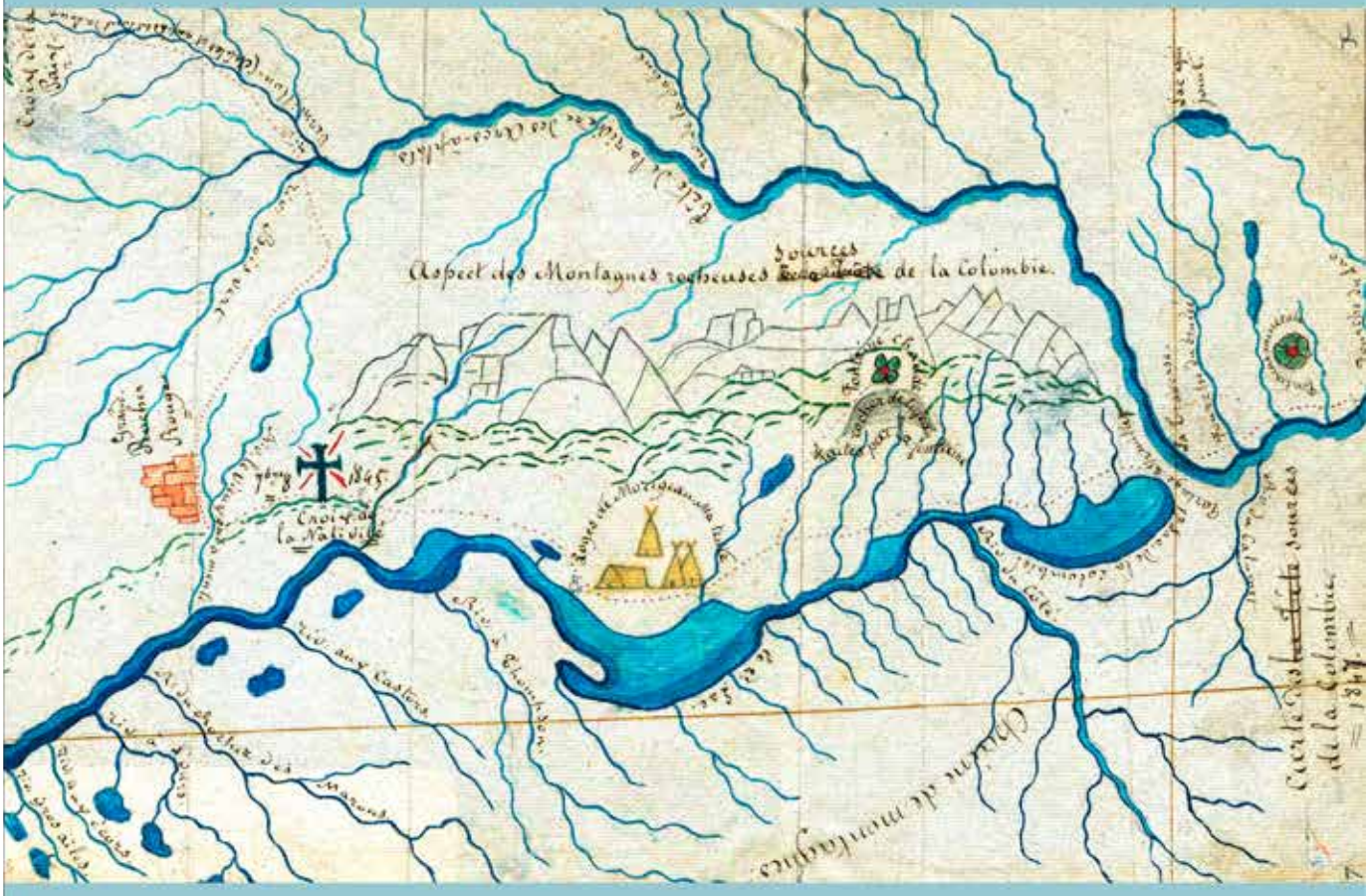
Rev. Robert E. Lauder, *a professor of philosophy at St. John's University in New York City, is the author of the recently published* Pope Francis' Spirituality and Our Story.

Loyola University Chicago

COMMEMORATES THE BICENTENNIAL OF

THE RESTORATION OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

7 AUGUST 1814 ~ 7 AUGUST 2014



luc.edu/crossings

Pierre Jean De Smet, S.J.
"Map of the sources of the Columbia River" (1847)
Courtesy of Midwest Jesuit Archives, Saint Louis, Missouri

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
1870
AD · MAJOREM · DEI · GLORIAM