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FEBRUARY 21, 2014

‘WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?’

Why Jewish-Catholic dialogue can’t avoid the question

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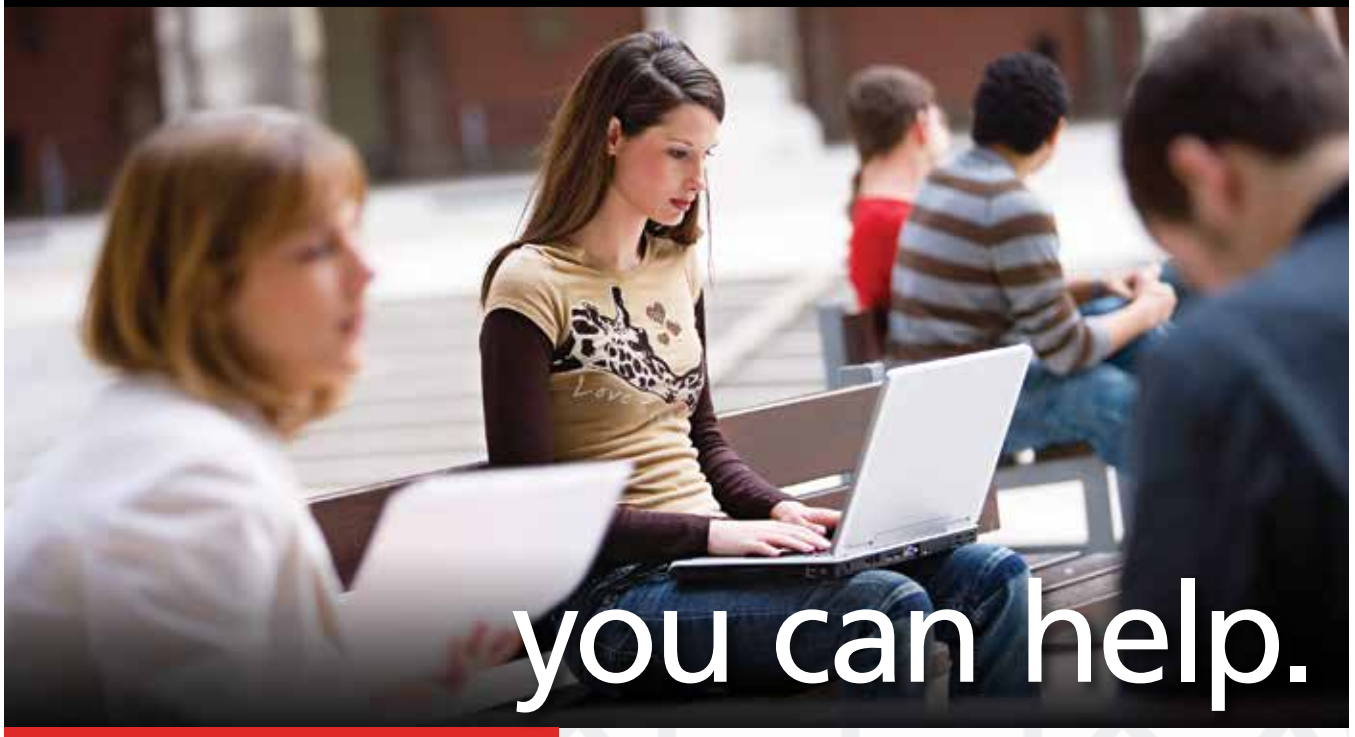

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LETTERS

Darwin, Israel & 'Mary Poppins'

IN PLAIN SIGHT

Elizabeth A. Johnson's article "Darwin's Tree of Life" (January 24, 2014) is excellent. It's amazing how something as revolutionary as the theory of evolution can seem almost obvious once it is presented. Thomas Huxley said, "How stupid of me not to have thought of that." It was lying there in broad daylight for centuries, and no one could see it, though human breeders had been modifying animal and plant species for a long time. (I suppose they didn't publish their results in journals or at meetings of learned societies.) And even when the insight came, it took half a lifetime of exploration and study for Darwin (and Wallace) to build a case for it, and another half a century or more for it to gain wide acceptance.

Conventional models of thought don't easily release their hold on us. We still say "sunrise" and "sunset." And we keep on calling it a fallen world, though all around us it is burgeoning and teeming with "endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful."

JOHN PRIOR
Sunnyvale, Calif.

GIVE DIPLOMACY A CHANCE

Please mass-produce and send Margaret O'Brien Steinfels's column "Blank Checks" (January 24, 2014) to each U.S. senator. The seeming recklessness of many senators with regard to Middle East policy, especially when it comes to Iran, has the look of a deliberate flirtation with war. It's worth a try if this essay could prompt just enough of a pause to permit an attempt at diplomacy before guns are unholstered again.

R. K. HESSLEY
Cincinnati, Ohio

ELEMENTS OF FUN

If you really enjoyed *Mary Poppins*—I mean, really enjoyed it—not just for the catchy music, fine acting, and great whimsy, but for the challenges it posed, you may, like me, take issue with Richard Alleva's good, yet incomplete review of *Saving Mr. Banks* ("Odd Couples," January 24, 2014). Alleva is correct about the great acting of Emma Thompson, Tom Hanks, and even Paul Giamatti, but he shortchanges the redemption story of Mr. Banks. In *Mary Poppins,* it wasn't just the Sherman brothers' great tunes and lyrics, the daffy dialogue, or the talented David Tomlinson's portrayal of Mr. Banks that captured the metanoia required for Mary Poppins's redemptive intervention to be realized. No, it was seeing what this new film portrayed—memory itself redeemed. Even through a gossamer lens, I loved the scenes of her Australian childhood. Mr. Banks—and through him Mrs. Banks, their children, the greedy old banker, his sons, and all of class-conscious pre–Great War Great Britain—was redeemed. Would that it were so!

This time I saw the "prequel" with my own teenagers, who, for all their sophistication, loved it as much as I loved *Mary Poppins* when I was their age. After viewing the film, we just wanted—symbolically at least—to go fly a kite.

DAVID E. PASINSKI
Fayetteville, N.Y.

CORRECTION

A small point on the Niebuhr conversation between Bacevich and Fredericks in "American Innocence" (January 24, 2014): Reinhold Niebuhr was not a Lutheran. He was ordained in the Evangelical Church, a German low-church denomination of the Reformed tradition. The Evangelical Church was a sort of cousin to what is now the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church, but it went on to become part of the United Church of Christ.

DANIEL SCHULTZ
Fond du Lac, Wis.

From the Editors

Botched Arguments

In one of its first items of business this year, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives passed the "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act." The bill would prevent federal subsidies in the Affordable Care Act from going to any insurance plan that covers abortion or to providers and facilities that perform them. (The Affordable Care Act already keeps federal subsidies from being spent on abortion coverage itself.) With Democrats in control of the Senate and a prochoice president in the White House, this was essentially a symbolic gesture pandering to the prolife movement and opponents of Obamacare. It was never going to have any practical effect.

Do such political gestures hurt or help the prolife cause? The vast majority of Americans have serious moral reservations about abortion, and doubtless welcome recent reports that abortion rates are at a forty-year low. At the same time, voters have made it clear that, given the unique vulnerability of the women involved, they do not think the procedure should be recriminalized. Punitive and narrow legal strategies that would effectively ban all or most abortions have repeatedly been rejected by voters even in conservative states such as South Dakota and Mississippi. In championing such extreme proposals, the prolife movement appears to be alienating the broader public and strengthening its opponents' hand.

Abortion-rights groups claim that the new state laws Republicans have passed have had grave consequences for the health of women, especially poor women. In addition, late-term abortions have become increasingly rare, as fewer and fewer doctors are willing to do them for both moral and medical reasons. Making sure such procedures are done only in order to save the life of the mother—and only under the safest medical conditions possible—should be something prochoice and prolife advocates can agree on. Yet neither side seems willing to budge.

Illustrative of this impasse is a recent article in the *New Yorker*, "A Botched Operation" (February 3), about the alleged crimes and medical errors of a doctor who specializes in "advanced-gestation" abortions. Eyal Press, the author, writes from a prochoice position; indeed, his own father was an abortion provider. In many ways, Press's abortion-rights views make the case he presents about the dubious medical and business practices of Dr. Steven Brigham all the more damning. Brigham has been forced to relinquish his medical license in Pennsylvania, and his clinic operations in New Jersey and elsewhere are under constant scrutiny. Although Brigham thinks of himself as a champion of women's rights, the results of the doctor's "care" are a moral abomination. In a raid on one of Brigham's facilities in Maryland, authorities discovered a "freezer filled with red biohazard bags that contained thirty-five advanced-gestation fetuses." Brigham was subsequently charged with ten counts of murder, but the charges were dropped because the state could not determine where the abortions had taken place.

Press contends that violence and harassment by antiabortion protesters have scared doctors away from providing safe and legal abortion services, especially late-term procedures. "Rogue" operators like Brigham, and the notorious Dr. Kermit B. Gosnell, are now the only option available to many women. In its nuanced and sympathetic treatment of women seeking abortion, and in its rehearsal of the often shocking history of violence perpetrated by prolife renegades, "A Botched Operation" is a sober reminder of why most Americans are reluctant to embrace the prolife cause. Despite its vivid descriptions of the pain and trauma inflicted on Brigham's patients, Press makes the case that desperate women will seek abortions regardless of the dangers, and that restricting access to the procedure only guarantees their further victimization.

This has long been the argument for keeping abortion "safe, legal, and rare." If the prolife movement is going to respond to it persuasively, it will have to convince Americans that its concern for the women involved in abortion is as great as its compassion for the unborn. As Peter Steinfels wrote in these pages ("Beyond the Stalemate," June 14, 2013), the movement needs to shift more of its energies from partisan gestures and all-or-nothing legal gambits to the tasks of persuasion and witness. Gestures like the "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act" will change no one's mind—and are not intended to. Neither do they protect the unborn—and they are not expected to.

Galvanized by the aggressive legislative strategy of the Republicans, prochoice advocates like Press are making their case in a variety of venues and with renewed vigor. Yet no one who reads the *New Yorker* article can avoid being impressed by the ugliness of abortion, for women and especially for the unborn. A freezer full of "advanced-gestation fetuses"—tellingly described by Press as "medical remains"—damns us all. Pregnant women and the unborn both deserve better. ■

Charles R. Morris

Top Heavy

THE PARADOXES OF INCOME INEQUALITY

Two important new papers by a team of leading scholars have upended some of the standard assumptions about American equality and economic mobility. Conventional wisdom holds that greater equality means higher economic mobility and, therefore, that rising *inequality* will impair mobility. That has not held true in America, at least not since the 1980s. Despite large increases in inequality, economic mobility has been quite stable. Poorer kids have been about as mobile as richer kids, and there has been little change in mobility over the sixteen birth cohorts old enough to show adult income data.

Looking more closely at the data, however, leads to a more nuanced understanding of recent changes in American income distributions.

The papers measure mobility by comparing the income rank of children with that of their parents. For each set of parents and children, therefore, there are two rank numbers—the rank of the children's income at ages twenty-six and thirty and the rank of their parents' income when the children were in their late teens. The measurement the scholars were interested in is called "elasticity." If sales boom after a store owner lowers his prices by a few percent, then sales are highly *elastic* with respect to price changes. Likewise, if the incomes of children are highly elastic with respect to the incomes of their parents, then a difference in the latter will have a big effect on the former. In that case, there will be lower income mobility. (Perfect income mobility would show a random relationship between generational incomes.)

In the United States, since the 1980s, a 10-percent increase in the income of parents has been associated, on average, with a 3.4 percent increase in the income of their children. In other words, elasticity was about a third. Compared to other developed countries, the United States has high income elasticity and low mobility. In Denmark, a country with a high degree of income and educational equality, cross-generational elasticity of income is only about half as high as in the United States, which means that Denmark has about twice as much income mobility.

The studies also point to two features of American mobility and inequality that could have important policy implications. The first is the geographic distribution of mobility. *Within* regions, mobility has been as stable over the past thirty years as it has been in the nation overall. But *between* regions, the levels of mobility vary by as much as three times—a huge difference. Some regions have income mobility comparable with Denmark's, while others have less mobility than almost any country in the developed world. The lowest mobility was in the Southeast; the highest, in the West and the Midwest. These studies don't attempt to explain the differences, but the results warrant considerable attention.

The second important finding relates to the paradox of stable mobility during a period of growing inequality. That odd result stems from the extraordinary concentration of income gains among the very richest people. From 1993 to 2011, when top-tier income growth was soaring, the top 1 percent took 62 percent of all income growth. During the post-crash expansion (2009–11) the top 1 percent took *more than all* personal income growth—a whopping 121 percent—while the entire bottom 99 percent of earners lost ground. Since inequality growth was so concentrated within a few rungs at the very top of the income ladder, it had little statistical impact on movement between the other rungs. So mobility has stayed roughly constant, even as the very rich have grown much richer.

It's worth focusing on how radically income distribution has changed. Between 1975 and 2012, the top 1 percent increased their share of taxable personal income from 8.9 percent to 22.5 percent—an increase of 13.6 percent. Last quarter, annualized personal income for the whole country—not counting government transfers—was $11.8 trillion; 13.6 percent of that is $1.6 trillion.

Conservatives, like most defenders of nobilities, insist that higher incomes at the very top fuel investment and growth, create jobs, and improve living standards up and down the income scale. Real-world outcomes in the decades during which the elite have been piling up their pelf make a nonsense of these claims. The past quarter-century has been plagued by financial crises and scandals, declining living standards for the great majority of families, the massive export of manufacturing jobs to sweatshops overseas, and pervasive worries among top economists about long-term stagnation.

If the government could divert half the income now flowing to the top 1 percent and channel it either to public purposes, like infrastructure and education and health care, or directly to the middle classes as added income, America might once again start to live up to its historic promise. ■

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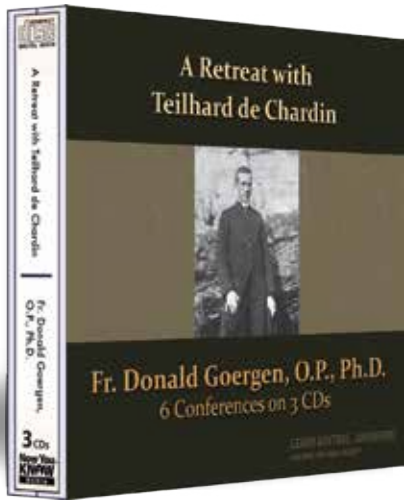

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Albert Wu

Secularists for Christmas!

CAN FRANCE MAKE ROOM FOR ISLAM?

Inscribed on all public buildings in France is the motto of the French Revolution: Liberté. Egalité. Fraternité. A group called the "Republican Resistance" (Résistance Républicaine) would like to add a fourth value: laïcité. Their logo consists of a giant letter R, with *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité* shooting up from the base, and the word *laïcité* prominently featured at the center. Loosely translated as "secularism," the principle of *laïcité* dates to the French Revolution, and to a 1905 law mandating a strict separation of church and state.

The resistors see *laïcité* as a principle under siege. In December they organized a demonstration that drew a crowd of perhaps a thousand supporters. They marched through the streets of Paris, hoisting banners with the slogan "Hands off the law of 1905!" One would expect that the demonstrators were avowed atheists, seeking to root out recalcitrant remnants of religion. Yet as the protesters marched, they chanted, "France equals Christmas, France is Easter," and waved signs that said "Don't Touch Our Christian Holidays!"

Why are these self-styled champions of *laïcité* parading in favor of the state's official observation of Christmas and Easter? The protesters' immediate target is Dounia Bouzar, an anthropologist of religion who was appointed in September as a special counsel on *laïcité* to the prime minister. In an interview with the magazine *Challenges*, Bouzar suggested that France should consider replacing two of its national Christian holidays with one Jewish (Yom Kippur) and one Muslim (Eid al-Fitr). Her comments immediately inspired petitions and protests. In a poll on the *Challenges* website, to which almost sixty-seven thousand people responded, 12 percent were in favor of replacing the two Christian holidays, while 88 percent opposed. Bouzar later retracted her statement, saying that she had offered a "thought, rather than a proposal."

To militant groups such as the Résistance Républicaine, Bouzar's comments point to a more insidious influence threatening France's heritage: what they consider the "Islamization" of France. (They ignore the fact that Bouzar also mentioned adding a Jewish holiday.) What they envision as the culmination of *laïcité* is not the eventual construction of a neutral public sphere that embraces diverse religious expression. Rather, these groups employ the term as a form of aggressive anti-Islamic politics. They take pride in their contempt: the Résistance Républicaine website proclaims, "Islamophobia is not a crime…. It's legitimate defiance," and, "I'm an Islamophobe and I'm proud." At the December demonstration, marchers switched seamlessly from chanting "Hands off Christmas" to "Islamists, fascists, killers."

It might be easy to dismiss this hyperbolic rhetoric as limited to fringe groups. A routine demonstration against unemployment and inequality earlier in December attracted four thousand (about four times as many people as the Résistance Républicaine rally drew). An antigay marriage protest in May brought out nearly a hundred fifty thousand.

But defining *laïcité* in a way that preserves France's Christian identity is far from a marginal idea. It is also taught to new immigrants at a "day of civic formation," a full-day class on French law, history, culture, and "Republican values." Attendance is mandatory for all who wish to obtain a long-stay visa. Truancy can result in the rejection of future visa applications.

After I applied for my visa, I attended my appointment for civic formation in a crowded basement room last November with about thirty other people. The majority were Sri Lankans, but many other countries were represented, including Algeria, Nigeria, and Russia. I was the sole American; I found myself seated next to a jovial Australian (is there any other kind?).

The teacher called herself the *formatrice*, which translates as "trainer." An imposing figure, she had a booming voice, which she used to reprimand, and then turn away, somebody who was fifteen minutes late. She began the eight-hour session by speaking about republican values. Her pedagogical style was didactic rather than dialogic: when she extolled the virtues of French democracy, someone asked whether democracy actually works in France, but she shut down the discussion by responding, "I am the *formatrice* here."

After glossing over *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, she turned to discuss what she called a fourth republican value, *laïcité*. French law, she explained, forbids overt signs of religious expression in public schools, such as face-covering veils, as well as large Christian crosses and kippahs. On the other hand, she noted, the law does permit small Christian crosses, Stars of David, or Fatima's hand charms. The apparent contradiction did not appear to faze her.

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The confusing relationship between Christianity and the purportedly secular nature of the French state deepened further when she began to lecture on French history. She told us that the French nation began with Clovis, the first king to unite all the Frankish tribes and convert to Christianity. We cannot deny, she continued, that France has a Christian heritage. All newcomers to the country must respect it.

The invocation of Clovis echoes a speech that the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy gave in Rome in 2007, when he referenced Clovis and extolled the "essentially Christian" roots of French culture. Sarkozy proposed the idea of "positive *laïcité*"—a "healthy *laïcité*" that "does not consider religion a danger." (See Steven Englund, "How Catholic Is France?" November 3, 2008.) Sarkozy argued that, instead of shoving religion into the closet, French citizens should display their religious faith with pride. "In this paradoxical world," Sarkozy said, "France needs convinced Catholics who aren't afraid to affirm who they are and what they believe in." He advocated more religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims in the public sphere.

Yet Sarkozy put limits on how much "positive *laïcité*" Muslims could enjoy. In 2009, he argued that the burqa "will not be welcome on French soil," because it is "not a sign of religion, it is a sign of subservience." In 2010, the French parliament passed a law banning face-covering masks or veils from public spaces; Sarkozy had been one of the most vocal proponents of the law.

Sarkozy's attempt to redefine *laïcité* sparked widespread controversy and discussion over the meaning of the term. Left-wing critics saw Sarkozy's support for public displays of religious faith as a threat to the secular public sphere. One columnist wrote, "Sarkozy twists words in order to give laïcité a bad name." Criticism also came from those on the extreme right, who saw Sarkozy's desire to hold discussions with French Muslims as a form of "Islamophilia." Sarkozy's supporters applauded him for openly recognizing France's Christian roots. As you might imagine, all sides claimed that they were the true defenders of *laïcité*.

At the "day of civic formation," my *formatrice* did not acknowledge the different political interests that undergird the definition of *laïcité*. But she also did not disguise her political inclinations. She expressed admiration for Sarkozy throughout the day: Sarkozy was a strong leader, she commented at one point. (She made a snide comment about the current president, François Hollande, whom she described as weak and ineffective.) For her, Sarkozy had upheld the rule of law and order, and France, she intoned repeatedly, is a country of laws. As newcomers to the land, we had to recognize and respect France's law-abiding nature: we could not import our own customs and laws to the country.

The emphasis on observing French law stems from the genesis of the "day of civic formation." In 2005, a series of urban riots rocked France. A police chase led to the deaths of two teenagers who lived in the predominantly North African immigrant community of Clichy-sous-Bois, one of the least integrated and poorest suburbs of Paris. Rioting spread quickly, engulfing other urban areas across the country. A state of emergency was declared. The day of civic formation was instituted and made obligatory in 2007 with the goal of relieving tensions between the French state and the North African, predominantly Muslim, community. Besides offering lessons in French civic responsibility, the French government also offers hundreds of hours of free French lessons for new immigrants, as well as help in finding employment.

While the day of civic formation is not openly anti-Muslim like Résistance Républicaine, it does encourage Muslim immigrants to remove overt symbols of their faith and respect France's identity as a Christian nation. Needless to say, the state has far more impact in promulgating these ideas: it has a captive audience that it can threaten with expulsion. Yet both the Résistance Républicaine demonstrators and my formatrice conveniently ignored the complicated and violent history of the relationship between religion and republicanism. Many of France's eighteenth-century revolutionaries wanted to sever permanently the link between a secular French state and its Catholic past. In the early years of the revolution, church property was confiscated, statues and religious iconography destroyed, and laws passed requiring clergy to declare loyalty to the state.

One of the complaints of Résistance Républicaine is that vandalism against the church buildings has been on the rise, for which they blame Muslims. Yet they might do well to remember that historically the vandals were their fellow republicans. And they should be careful what they wish for: their demand for an aggressive application of the principle of *laïcité* could backfire. In a multiethnic, multireligious society, the removal of Christian holidays would be a logical extension of the law of 1905, rather than its betrayal.

Through their militant Islamophobia, groups like the Résistance Républicaine reproduce a troubling strain of intolerance that characterizes the conflict between church and state in France. Too often, the term *laïcité* has been used—by secularists and religious believers alike—as a way to suppress religious diversity and silence religious expression. Such exclusionary definitions of *laïcité* will serve only to heighten tensions with an already discontented French Muslim population and other religious minorities.

The day of civic formation, meanwhile, is a feeble response to the socioeconomic crisis that has accompanied the tidal wave of immigration to France. New immigrants make up about 35 percent of the population of Greater Paris. Even the *formatrice* herself could not ignore this fact: on a day that was intended to welcome us to France, the French state treated us all to lunch at a Chinese restaurant. ■

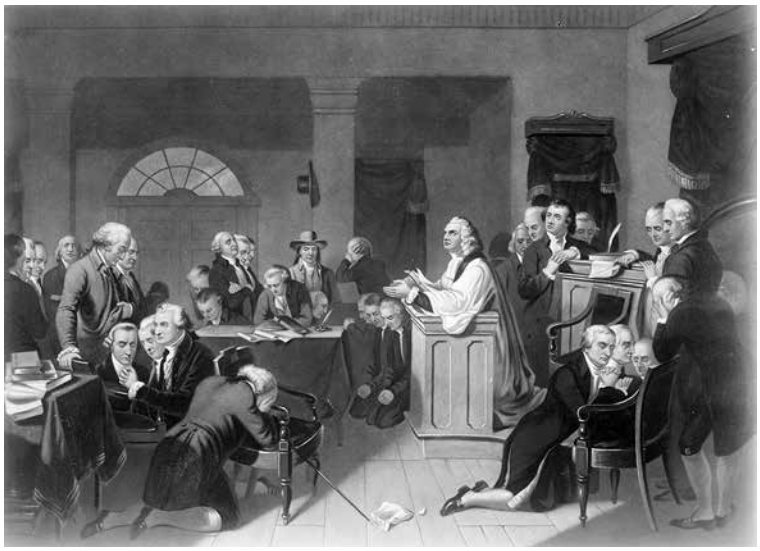
Albert Wu *teaches history at the American University in Paris.*

Marc O. DeGirolami

Seeking Guidance?

NEW CHALLENGES TO 'LEGISLATIVE PRAYER'

It has long been the tradition of American citizens to pray for divine blessing and guidance in their civic business. This tradition, which predates the founding of the American Republic, finds expression at all levels of government, federal, state, and local. It was embraced by the First Continental Congress, the same congress that both employed a paid chaplain and later drafted the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; it was maintained during the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment; and it persists in various guises to this day.



First Prayer in Congress, September 1774, in Carpenters Hall, Philadelphia

By and large, the language of American civic benedictions—monotheist, biblically inflected, vaguely Protestant—reflects the country's Christian history and the religious convictions of a large, albeit diminishing, segment of its population. The ritual generally consists of a prayer or petition for the blessings of God—or the Almighty, or Providence, or the Heavenly Father—in discharging the deliberative functions of government. Sometimes the prayers are distinctly Christian, invoking Jesus Christ; at other times they are vaguely Christian; and sometimes they are not Christian at all. These petitions, which commonly include acknowledgments of fallibility accompanied by supplications for the wisdom to do justice and the protection of the citizenry, have been assigned the label "legislative prayer." But the civic invocation of divine benediction is a much broader American phenomenon, encompassing Thanksgiving proclamations, presidential addresses, religious displays on government land, national days of prayer and fasting, and so on.

Legislative prayer is the subject of the latest religion-clause challenge to reach the U.S. Supreme Court: *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, a case brought by two plaintiffs, one atheist and one Jewish, who claim that the legislative prayer practices of a small enclave in upstate New York are unconstitutional. The prayers selected by the municipality have been nearly uniformly Christian, and a lower court judged both the town's selection practices and the content of the prayers too consistently Christian to pass muster under the Establishment Clause, which proscribes laws "respecting an establishment of religion."

Evaluated by the conventional materials of constitutional adjudication—constitutional text, historical practice, and legal precedent—*Town of Greece* might seem a relatively easy case. Going back to the first Congress that drafted the Establishment Clause, the practices comprising legislative prayer were never thought to constitute laws respecting an establishment of religion. Thirty years ago, in *Marsh v. Chambers*, the Court ruled that the legislative prayer practice of Nebraska's state legislature—in which for sixteen years a publicly funded Presbyterian chaplain delivered prayers containing, as Justice William Brennan put it, "Christological references"—was constitutional in light of the "unambiguous and unbroken history" of the tradition of legislative prayer dating from our nation's founding. Marsh held that as long as the government is not "proselytizing" or "advancing" religion—that is, attempting to convert citizens or putting its coercive authority behind a particular faith—legislative prayer is constitutionally permissible.

Resolution of the case has been complicated, however, by a well-meaning but errant doctrinal byway that the Court has fitfully pursued since the mid-1980s. In response to complaints about the display of religious symbols on government property, several justices began to inquire whether the government had "endorsed" religion in such a way as to cause political offense or estrangement. Yet, since the government makes something of a habit of saying offensive things, the Court needed a limiting principle—and so it decided to consider only the ostracized sentiments of a hypothetical "reasonable observer." That approach—in which the Court purports to distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable offense—has generated considerable consternation, a point Justice Elena Kagan acknowledged at oral argument. The lower court in the case seemingly extended the endorsement test to the issue of legislative prayer, but it does not appear likely that the Supreme Court will follow suit. Instead,

oral argument zeroed in on other possible standards—the distinction between "sectarian" and "nonsectarian" prayer, for instance, or the question of legal coercion.

The best argument for the unconstitutionality of this particular legislative prayer practice concerns the issue of coercion. The plaintiffs' lawyer, Douglas Laycock, argued effectively that the Greece town council—unlike the Nebraska legislature in Marsh—is not a purely legislative body, since it exercises various administrative and other functions. Citizens who appear before it are seeking specific outcomes—zoning variances, changes in school policies, and the like—and may be placed in the awkward position of showing the prayer practice an unwanted respect, or perhaps even of participating in it, in order not to prejudice their claims before the council. A core function of the Establishment Clause is to prohibit government from imposing religious doctrine on the unwilling. Citizens should not be coerced by the state to act in ways they find religiously objectionable.

Yet this argument faces several obstacles. First, though in *Lee v. Weisman* (1992) the Court recognized psychological coercion as constitutionally problematic in the context of a middle-school graduation prayer, it would need to extend the concept considerably. Adult citizens with business before the town council, unlike middle-schoolers, are not required to attend the legislative prayer, which, moreover, occurs some time before the council considers the matters before it. Second, if the Court were to extend the psychological-coercion approach to this context, it is difficult to see why various court practices—in which attendees are instructed to rise as a marshal announces, "God save the United States and this honorable Court"—are not similarly coercive to those with business before the court. Third, hybrid governmental bodies are quite common, and a standard that required judges to discern between purely legislative and quasi-legislative bodies would be difficult to administer and might appear arbitrary. Finally, local legislative bodies have been seeking divine benediction for centuries. For all these reasons the nonfunded, volunteer prayers in Greece, New York, seem to fall within *Marsh*'s general rule.

The likelihood that the Court will reaffirm *Marsh* wholesale is uncertain, however, in part because the Court—and Justice Anthony Kennedy in particular—seemed frustrated by *Marsh*'s historical approach. How, Kennedy inquired, can the mere existence of a tradition be its own justification? What if the tradition turns out to have been a "historical aberration," one lacking a "rational explanation"? Whatever its status as a moral justification, pastness alone may well be a constitutional justification. Evidence of past practice and understanding is relevant to the meaning of the Establishment Clause and legislative prayer's consistency with it. Furthermore, characterizing the justification for the tradition of legislative prayer as a historical accident, or as a brute assertion that "we've always done it this way," implies that the many generations of Americans who engaged in the practice for centuries had no reason at all to do so—or that their reason must have been the impermissible one of declaring the superiority of Christianity above all other religions.

In fact they had other reasons. Civic benediction is an acknowledgement of the limits of government and of its perpetual capacity to do wrong. To seek divine guidance and protection in the civic context is to recognize that government is imperfect and fragile, and that human power—even when exercised thoughtfully and with beneficent intentions— can fail to do justice. At one point in the oral argument, Justice Kagan rightly observed that "when we relate to our government, we all do so as Americans," not as religious or non-religious individuals. That is true, and legislative prayer is part of that American heritage. It is a mechanism for citizens to acknowledge these limitations—personal and systemic—before they make law and set policy.

Admittedly, these are not beliefs everyone shares; atheists no less than religious persons may be confident that the government can provide, and ought to provide, perfect justice. But they are beliefs that lie embedded in American constitutional governance. When the Preamble of the Constitution sets out the People's aspiration to form a "more perfect Union," that is a tacit civic affirmation that the Constitution is not perfect now and can never be made so. As the work of human hands, it is inherently imperfect, for if it were perfect, neither it nor the Union itself would ever change. But they do change, by the illumination of resources outside themselves. A primary function of legislative prayer has always been to express humility about government's powers—uncertainty about its judgments—and to affirm the separation of the realm of politics and law from whatever realms lie beyond it. The reasons for exploring the long, unbroken historical tradition of legislative prayer recognized in *Marsh* relate not to the might of religion, but to the tragic weakness of government. Legislative prayer thus reflects an understanding of the separation of church and state—an acknowledgment of distinct jurisdictions of authority and truth. And this is the sense in which history can be a guide to the future.

It may be that Americans today no longer perceive legislative prayer in these terms—perhaps due to increased religious pluralism, or to the attenuation of compatriotism and civic fellowship, or to the growing sense that government is indeed the sole available source of justice and ought to achieve nothing less than perfect law. And so we should be cautious about the uses of legislative prayer, and ready to question its political wisdom. But recognizing the independent spheres of government and of what lies outside it reflects an ancient yet supple reason—one rooted in American legal tradition—for upholding the constitutionality of this practice. ■

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Getting Past Supersessionism

An Exchange on Catholic-Jewish Dialogue

Steven Englund, John D. Levenson, Donald Senior, John Connelly

Steven Englund

I recall an evening I once spent in the company of Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, the late archbishop of Paris. A convert from Judaism (he was born Aaron Lustiger), the cardinal took his original faith as seriously as he took his acquired one. That evening, exiting an exhausting discussion with a group of rabbis in New York City, he told me with a sigh that one had half-jokingly expressed the hope that one day he, Lustiger, would re-convert to Judaism. In response I suggested that Lustiger in turn probably hoped *they* would one day become Christian.

"It's not the same thing," the prelate replied. "His was a personal wish for me—not a doctrine inscribed in his religion."

Like other *Commonweal* readers, I was absorbed with the excerpt from John Connelly's *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–65,* published in these pages some months ago ("Nazi Racism and the Church: How Converts Showed the Way to Resist," February 24, 2012), and I subsequently read the book with admiration. *From Enemy to Brother* is a fine and critical piece of scholarship. Yet while I agree that astonishment is in order at the blows *Nostra Aetate* delivered to two millennia of the Catholic "teaching of contempt" for the Jews and Judaism, Connelly himself notes that the encyclical arrived "too soon for Catholic theology, and to this day has not been fully digested." It is with a wish to speed up this metabolic process that I offer the following thoughts about the church and the Jews.

Nostra Aetate, Connelly correctly writes, gave a new answer to the old question "Who are the Jews?" and in doing so helped the church find its way "across previously insurmountable boundaries to tolerance, to recognizing that God extends grace to all humans." And indeed, progress in Catholic-Jewish relations since Vatican II has been dramatic. But there have been setbacks, including the failure of the American bishops to condemn Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (see Irving Greenberg, *Commonweal*, May 7, 2004), and, more important, Pope Benedict XVI's personal amendment to the Good Friday prayer for the Jews in the Roman missal: "Let us also pray for the Jews, that God our Lord should illuminate their hearts, so that they will recognize Jesus Christ, the savior of men." As Connelly notes, "This revised prayer seemed out of touch with the sentiments of the council, reflected in the 1970 edition of the Missal," which prayed only for the Jews' "fullness of redemption."

I believe that to foster a more productive Catholic-Jewish dialogue we need to pose two further questions, one backward-looking and one forward-looking. The first is "What harm have we done to the Jews?" and in addressing it I shall take a longer view than the three admittedly crucial decades covered by Connelly in his book. My reflections will present us with a contemporary situation rather more problematic than we tend to acknowledge—one that calls for stronger medicine as we answer the second question: "What more can we do to undo that harm?"

To begin with: How do we portray the ur-conflict, the "impossible relationship" between an old immovable object and a new irresistible force as they collided in antiquity? What shockwaves still reverberate from that Big Bang that was, for so long, an intra-Jewish religious schism, turning on the refusal of most Jews to adopt their neighbors' view of the messiahship of Jesus? At the start we should observe that while Christians were wrong to see the Jews as "willfully blind"—the refusal to accept a contested claim is not willful blindness—it was nonetheless true that most Jews did not acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

It would be hard to exaggerate the shock and distress this turn of events produced in the first Jesus-followers, as gradually but inevitably there developed a widening separation and deepening conflict between them and their fellow Jews. From the outset, the Jesus movement included talented apologists and evangelists who created a corpus of oral and written stories and myths about Jesus Christ—the basis of future dogma and doctrine—that inscribed the rejection of Christ as foreshadowed in the Jews' earlier rejection of their covenant with God. In time the refusal to acknowledge the Messiah became equated with an outright denial of God and the forfeiture of all claims to address God as father. The viewpoint dispossessed the Jews as sole interpreters and guardians of their own sacred writings. Thus, Justin Martyr: "These words were laid up in your scriptures, or rather not in yours but in ours for we obey them, but you,

> The Jews have had to live in a world that tells them that they are wrong about one of theirs (Jesus) and that they wrongly interpret their own sacred Scriptures, even as they have had to watch an oppressive rival religion batten on those Scriptures. No other religion in the world has had to do that.

when you read them, do not understand their sense." Or as a modern Jewish theologian, Ben Zion Bokser, summed up the charge: "Authentic Judaism is really Christianity."

In short, the Jewish God was retained at the cost of reportraying him as anti-Israel, while the abrogation of the Mosaic law was justified in terms of the "sinfulness" of the Jewish people, as expressed in the supremely negative epithet of "Pharisees," a slur whose vehemence belies the fact that the men so denominated—as Biblical scholars of every stripe know full well—were by and large learned, courageous, and admirable. The New Testament representations that arose out of this internal religious conflict propagated further fundamental distortions, about the Jews as a people and about their religion, which would endure in Christianty. As the historian Ralph Keen wrote in a recent essay, "Jews were generally seen as repudiators of Christianity rather than as outsiders adhering to a positive religious choice regarding redemption."

None of this—neither the original schism within Judaism nor the deep-seated anti-Judaic subjectivity encoded in the New Testament—would have mattered if the church had subsequently opted to sever her ties to Judaism—as in fact she was beseeched to do by a second-century bishop, Marcion of Pontus. But in declaring Marcionism a heresy, the church fathers resolutely accepted the ineradicability of their religion's ties to Judaism. In electing to cling to her roots, the church condemned herself to an ongoing, conflicted internal dialogue with "Judaism," whose fundamental purpose was to defend and illustrate the Christian appropriation not only of Hebrew texts (Torah and the prophets) but also of many central Jewish theological concepts: "God," "Israel," "messiah," the end of days, and on and on. Indeed, it became standard Christian procedure to state the *invalidity* of these concepts in the forms they took in Judaism.

But even this might not have mattered, world-historically speaking, if Christianity had not survived so brilliantly—that is, if the conversion of Rome had not taken place, with the corresponding translation of the obscure problem of Christians and Jews onto the world stage. Simply put, the means were now at hand to reify, magnify, and eternalize a spark of contention that otherwise might have lain smoldering for centuries. By the fifth century, with near-total power in its hands, the church had reconfronted its secret little Jewish problem—its theological dependence, its morally dubious appropriation of concepts, and the structural anxiety it suffered in the face of stubborn Jewish disbelief—and soon it was no longer either secret or little. The church's discomfiture with its dependence, its problematic ingratitude, and its ambivalence became highly visible to Christian, Jew, and pagan alike. Now, finally, it was necessary to devise an official stance and policy toward Judaism. And it was possible to "act out"—to inflict punishment and persecution on the frustrating Jews.

Thus came to be set firmly into place a social grammar of thought—anti-Judaism—that had been in the making for four centuries, and that would endure to our time. David Nirenberg's magisterial *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* confirms decades of scholarship whose analyses of Patristic and later Christian texts lay bare the embedding of layer after layer of anti-Jewish myths as part of the church's vision—motifs developed and perpetuated over centuries, communicated as historically transmitted symbols. As Nirenberg writes, "Christians resorted ever more systematically to a logic that treated the relative 'Jewishness' of a teaching as the best test of its truth or falsity. 'Jews' multiplied as negative types in Christian writing, and the living Jew (as opposed to the prophets of the past) became in the Christian theological imagination the enemy of the Christian." Such a "logic" would loom large in the world precisely because the religion that generated it had come to dominate the thought of much of mankind. This state of affairs endured throughout antiquity and long after, amounting to a permanent dislocation, a kind of congenital syndrome—"the new Jerusalem that would not pass away," to put it provocatively. As the Notre Dame literary scholar Gerald Bruns so aptly puts it, Judaism was Christianity's "own other," which the church could "neither exclude nor contain, the conflict of interpretation in which [she] lives and...cannot transcend."

The church's discomfiture, both conscious and unconscious, with its simultaneous dependence and ingratitude vis-à-vis Judaism and the Jews resulted in a permanent social psychology of what Freud called *Schuldabwehr*—the defense against a guilty conscience. A chief rabbi of Vienna summed it up nicely when he wrote: "The Christian kneels before the image of a Jew, wrings his hands before the image of a Jewess; his Apostles, Festivals and Psalms are Jewish. Only a few are able to come to terms with this contradiction—most free themselves by anti-Semitism. Obliged to revere a Jew as God, they wreak vengeance upon the rest of the Jews by treating them as devils." In sum, the church owes too much to Judaism. And no good deed goes unpunished.

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger in front of Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral in 1988

The depth of Christianity's dependence on Judaism is easily illustrated. Take the greatest of all Marian prayers, the Magnificat. Mary's humility, her praise of God ("He hath exalted the humble and meek… filled the hungry… and the rich he hath sent empty away") would be as familiar to a Jew of the first century reading the Septuagint as it is to the modern Christian poring over his Book of Common Prayer. The same may be said of the prayer's closing laud: "He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel: as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever." The rub comes with the unstated answer to the question: How, exactly, "hath God holpen Israel?" The entire point of the Magnificat is for the Christian to join Mary in thanking God for "His inestimable gift in Christ Jesus, our Lord." *This* is how God "hath holpen Israel"—and indeed fulfilled her for all time.

But this "truth" is not obvious; the Christian meaning of the key phrase "helped Israel" has become common knowledge over centuries only because, as Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his gloss of the Sacred Scripture of Holy Week, it was "clear" that "the Bible—the Old Testament—had to be read anew." In his book the former pontiff is anything but anti-Jewish, yet he employs some curious reasoning when seeking to put Christianity and Judaism on the same footing. Noting that original (Second Temple) Judaism was destroyed in 70 AD, replaced by the Rabbinic Judaism that is still with us, he concludes that Rabbinic Judaism is therefore coeval with—indeed, slightly *younger* than—Christianity; the two religions in his view are equally fresh and innocent, two equally deserving babes suckling at the originary Hebrew breast. What Christianity "reads anew" is not the rabbinic Talmud, but Torah and the prophets, and thus its claim to the original deposit itself is as strong as Rabbinic Judaism's.

This is arguable, to say the least. Rabbinic Judaism, however changed in organizational and geographic ways from the older Hebrew religion (e.g. the cessation of animal sacrifice and the priesthood that went with it), was still far more closely related to the originary Hebrew deposit than Christianity was. The two traditions are not equal brothers; rather, one is the son who stayed ("*you are always with me* and everything that is mine is yours"); the other is, at best, the prodigal who left, as Connelly several times remarks in his book. The debts may be parallel, but they are not equal; Rabbinic Judaism is not a "new" religion vis-à-vis the Hebrew deposit in the way Christianity is; on the contrary, it is a direct descendant and continuation of the old, while Christianity is a complete rereading and repossession. Seen in this light, the Benedict's statement is misleading. Though kinder and gentler-seeming than other models of supercessionism (the doctrine that Christianity supercedes Judaism), like them it seeks to delegitimize Rabbinic Judaism's claim to ownership of its patrimony by ignoring the differences between Christianity's relationship to that past and Rabbinic Judaism's.

There is something else Benedict does not mention: the asymmetry of Christianity's and Judaism's mutual dependence. In fact, nothing in Christianity is necessary to Judaism; but the church, for its part, desperately needs its precursor faith. As A. Roy Eckardt unflinchingly put it in *Elder and Younger Brothers: Encounter of Jews and Christians* (1967), the church "has a dogmatic, vested interest in Israel. Without the divine mystery of Israel, there is neither Christian faith nor Christian hope.... The church understands itself only insofar as it understands original Israel. And here is why there is such poignancy in the church's condition vis-à-vis Israel."

The "poignancy of the church's condition vis-à-vis Israel" has loomed over the church both historically and recently, as she has sought to resolve the perpetual problem of her faith's tense occupation of the same religious "space" as Judaism. The challenge back in 1965 was the ascription to Judaism of the same parity accorded other religions. *Nostra Aetate* details the "divine mystery" at work in Hinduism and in Buddhism; and where Islam is concerned, it positively bends over backwards to do its beliefs justice. Turning to Judaism, the encyclical expends more breath than on all the other religions combined, but from a decidedly more self-centered point of view. True, the message rings out clear as a bell that Catholicism shares with Judaism something she shares with no other creed; Connelly's excellent discussion of *Nostra Aetate* highlights such crucial features as the encyclical's reflections on "the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock" and its admission that "the Apostles, the church's mainstay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people."

PHOTO: CLAUDE TRUONG-NGOC

Yet beneath such genuine recognitions lies a steady theme: Christianity's de facto supersession of Judaism. It is attested to in a host of phrases, from "Christ-Abraham's sons" and "the salvation of the church is mysteriously foreshadowed by [Exodus]" to "The church believes that by his cross, Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in himself." In short, one understands how Rabbi David Polish can speak of the document as "a unilateral pronouncement by one party which presumes to redress on its own terms a wrong that it does not admit," or how Irving Greenberg, writing in *Commonweal*, can perceive that in the encyclical the "door was left open" for traditional *Adversus Judaeos* views such as were portrayed in Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*.

On a related theme, Luke Timothy Johnson notes the loud silence in *Nostra Aetate* concerning the Catholic faith tradition as itself a source of anti-Judaism ("Christians and Jews: Starting Over," *Commonweal,* January 31, 2003). Even in the official 1998 Vatican document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, we encounter—beneath the expressions of regret at the church's historic antipathy toward Judaism and its passivity in failing to protect Jews during the war—the same steely refusal to acknowledge Christian responsibility in the formation not merely of "eternal" anti-Judaism, but also of racist Nazi anti-Semitism. Yet historical research has for some time now abjured any neat separation between Christian anti-Judaism and racist anti-Semitism, and no serious scholar today fails to note the theological sanctions supporting even the most "neo-pagan" (i.e., anti-clerical) anti-Semitism. In my view, anti-Semitism is related to anti-Judaism as the large flat surface of a water-lily is anchored in place by its hidden, long root. While a great deal of varied life transpires on the surface—new social, economic, political, and cultural factors—anti-Jewish appeals depend for their reception and dissemination on precisely the religious past and ongoing tradition that the Jew-haters, be they Christian anti-Judaists or "pagan" anticlerical anti-semites like the Nazis, consciously and unconsciously share. Less subtly, *We Remember* conveys an implication of moral equivalency between historic Christian persecutions of Jews and the anti-Christian behavior of some Jews. Need we invoke scholarly opinion to ascertain the ludicrousness of any such equivalency?

As for *Nostra Aetate*, it is an epochal text, and my intention is not to cavil over any alleged insufficiency, but only to recommend how the encyclical's stated wish to foster "mutual understanding and respect" might be carried forward. I believe that further reflection, further risk-taking, and greater love will lead Catholics to understand that *Nostra Aetate* and *We Remember* do not even fully acknowledge, let alone make up for, what our church has inflicted on Judaism over the centuries. Due to Christianity's overwhelming force majeure, the Jews have had to live in a world that tells them that they are wrong about one of theirs (Jesus) and that they wrongly interpret their own sacred Scriptures,

Two Poems by Jack Lindeman

TRAVELER

I go by myself
to where I am supposed to be
without ever being sure
I have arrived

IN TRUTH

How long to be endured
no one can say
being a small discomfort
to others

Jack Lindeman has published two books of poetry, Twenty-One Poems *and* As If, *which was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.*

even as they have had to watch an oppressive rival religion batten on those Scriptures. No other religion in the world has had to do that.

The Catholic-Jewish dialogue currently finds itself in an ambiguous place; John Paul II's affirmation that the Jewish Covenant suffices for Jewish salvation, and need not be understood by Jews in a Christian sense, was undercut by his successor's reinstatement of the Good Friday prayer for the Jews. It would seem that for every Cardinal Walter Kaspar or Professor Didier Pollefeyt, men who echo John Paul's words, a Cardinal Avery Dulles arises to argue for supersessionism. The result has been a slackened pace of progress. As Alan Berger and David Patterson note in their well-named book on the Jewish-Christian dialogue *Drawing Honey from the Rock* (2008), the current "vast array of proclamations, pulpit exchanges, and fraternal faith gatherings" has created "the illusion of relation," but little by way of hard discussion of the most sensitive and divisive issues. Berger and Patterson cite Rabbi Leon Klenicki's pithy observation that "dialogue requires more than tea and sympathy." As John Connelly writes in his recent review of Nirenberg's *Anti-Judaism* ("Through a Glass Darkly," *Commonweal*, September 16, 2013), "nineteen centuries of supersessionism were not simply a 'misunderstanding' that can now be comfortably forgotten." Amen.

It remains to be seen what Pope Francis will undertake in this area, though we already have some auspicious signs. His first published book is a 2010 dialogue, *On Heaven and Earth*, co-authored with the Argentinian rabbi, Abraham Skorka in which, as Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Francis spoke openly with the rabbi about many issues, and in the process said something striking about his capacity for humility and self-scrutiny: "When I have a problem with someone, it helps me to have the same attitude that the Egyptian monks had at the beginning of Christianity. They accused themselves so they could find a solution; they put themselves in the defendant's seat to see what things were not working well inside of themselves."

A striking display of candor in the conversation between the faiths is available in a 2008 dialogue, *Le rabbin et le cardinal*, carried on between the archbishop of Lyon, Philippe Barbarin, and the then chief rabbi of France, Gilles Bernheim. In the exchange, Barbarin, a friend and protégé of the late Cardinal Lustiger, calls himself "a twenty-first century priest who considers the presence of the Jews as a grace," and states that "I have yet to read a Jewish prayer… that would be impossible for me to utter." Bernheim, while admiring of his interlocutor, is less warm and generous in his attitude toward Christianity. "When I read the Gospels," he offers, "I find myself disoriented; I have the impression that I'm home but without feeling at home. It's almost the same décor, but the living going on here is radically different." Speaking about the supersessionist Christian view of Jews, he asserts that "from the moment that I, as a Jew, am viewed as a prefiguration of something I never imagined, and in which I do not recognize myself, then I find myself despoiled of my identity."

More recently, in an interview in *Le Monde*, Bernheim was asked what gestures and words the Jewish community hoped to receive from the new pope. The rabbi replied that the Catholic Church could "teach in a positive way the full respect and full legitimacy of a religion and a faith in which she herself finds her roots: Judaism." Doing so, he continued, would entail "witnessing to the value and singularity of the Jewish people, who, of course, do not recognize Jesus.... To better understand the 'no' spoken by Jews to Jesus would be to better respect them, as Jews." Nothing less, Bernheim insisted, could reroute the church from its "ancient Christian anti-Judaism." He added, with a smile, "What a challenge [*quel défi*]!"

In fact, Bernheim had already raised this *défi* with Barbarin, and had heard the cardinal's answer: "The Jewish 'no' to Jesus as Messiah is a suffering for us, yet even so, that 'no' is a grace, in my opinion. It is as if one said to the church, 'Wake up! Have you somehow forgotten Jesus is Jewish [not 'was a Jew']? Indeed, it is perhaps because of this 'no' that I discover so many marvels of Jesus' word as I read it in the practices of the Jewish people. What else could have called my attention to these [Jewish] roots? What else could have awakened me from my slumber?"

But though the cardinal's humility is disarming, he has

not given a full answer to Bernheim's crucial question: How can Christians say "yes" to the Jewish people without looking searchingly at their "no" to Jesus? The Jewish scholar, Kenneth Stow, of Haifa University, asks the same thing differently. "Jews have been forced for centuries to watch Christianity compete with Judaism on Judaism's own scriptural terms," Stow writes, "so why can't we ask Christianity to admit into open debate Judaism's conclusions about Jesus?" As the late German Lutheran theologian Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt once stated, "Christian anti-Judaism cannot be overcome until we Christians come to perceive the positive significance of the Jewish 'no' to Jesus." Given that the Jews have tacitly had to live with the constant accusation that they willfully fail to understand their own Scriptures, should not Christians have to concede that their bid to "read anew" the Old Testament might be invalid—despite the fervor with which they do it—and that the Jewish "take" on Jesus might be correct?

On a first reading, Bernheim's *défi* may seem impertinent, even ludicrous. Would the good rabbi be prepared to support its logical converse—to wit, that Jews who do not publicly acknowledge that Jesus *might* be the Messiah should be declared anti-Christian? But that is precisely the point. Jews have indeed been declared "anti-Christian"—and have had to endure being persecuted for it. Things have not gone both ways; the French rabbi isn't making his appeal to an equal, in Barbarin, but rather beseeching an infinitely stronger opponent whose dominance has been made manifest over two millennia of often brutal anti-Judaism. If there were no such history, Bernheim's suggestion would hold only theoretical interest. But alas, there is. Christianity bears a far greater heritage of guilt for physical and material atrocities against the Jews than vice versa. The church is asked to do more because she has sinned more.

An immodest proposal: What if Pope Francis were to hold another dialogue with his friend, Rabbi Skorka, or with another equally faithful and learned Jewish theologian committed to Jewish-Christian relations—and this time focus the discussion on the Jewish "no" to Jesus? A precondition would be not only mutual trust but also, to quote Berger and Patterson, "a certain level of understanding, which requires...knowing how the other thinks." A true dialogue, in other words; one which, to cite the great Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner, requires that "each party remains open to the possibility of conceding the legitimacy of the other's viewpoint."

One could foresee a far-ranging set of discussions organized, perhaps, on a kind of day-trip basis, with each "journey" departing from familiar turf to move into new territory. Thus, for example, while it would not be hard for the pontiff to reconfirm the end to supersessionism as a central presupposition of the Good News, it might take some serious and original thought to sketch out a Christianity that does not fundamentally hinge on the concept. Useful to such an effort would be theologian Mary Boys's profound reflections, in *Redeeming Our Story*, on cleansing the Passion and Crucifixion narratives of their traditional, sacrilegious animus to the Jews as Christ-killers.

Another "day trip" could depart from the now-familiar terrain of the Jewishness of Jesus, a much-discussed recent theme in Christianity and Judaism. The Jewish perspective, in the words of a nineteenth-century rabbi, is that the Christian divinizing of Jesus resulted in the emergence of a religion that "no longer promised justice, equality, or freedom on earth, but rather individual salvation in a future world outside of history." A thoroughgoing dialogue would explore the gains and losses to both sides of such an otherworldly conception of messiahship. Exploring the Jewishness of Jesus might further lead to seeing the truth in Luke Timothy Johnson's argument that Judaism, in any case, "cannot be reduced to messianism," and that "doing so is a Christian perspective."

If the foregoing seems to load the dice against the pope, then consider a challenge to Judaism that is unexpectedly implicit in Rabbi Bernheim's *défi*: What if an honest and searching probe by both sides were to uncover that the Jewish "no" to Jesus is less based on traditional Jewish messianic expectations, freely and creatively arrived at over time, than on the Jews' profound resentment of Christian mistreatment of them? It is of course *historically* understandable that the Jewish rejection of the Christian "tender of an offer of meaning" (to use the late Edward Schillebeeckx's wonderful phrase) would become virtually the central plank of the identity of the mass of secularized Jewry, but that does not make it an intellectually or spiritually defensible position, in the long run. So while a deep fathoming of the Jewish "no" will inevitably carry the interlocutors back to the awful costs of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, that is not all it will do. If the "no" is seen to be primarily a sociological and socio-psychological defense, then a Christian offer, stripped of supersessionism and focused on a Jewish Jesus, may deserve another look.

The late Cardinal Lustiger often said that *the* essential distinctions where Jews and Christians were concerned did not lie between Judaism and Christianity, per se, but rather on the one hand between those Jews who do and don't recognize Jesus as Messiah, and on the other between those Christians who do and don't recognize the Jewish roots of their faith. If Christians were to understand the meaning and accept the implication of their Lord's anchorage in his Jewish identity, and were thus to celebrate their religion's debt to Judaism, might not Jews, over time, come to evaluate differently the Christian "take" on the Jewish Jesus?

Lustiger was a man who wore his sufferings heavily, and during the thirty years I was privileged to be his friend, I asked him, several times, what it was that weighed most on his obviously aching heart. He never failed to reply with some variation on one galling and sorrowful fact: that the church, over her two thousand years, had treated the Jews in such

a way—including praying for their conversion—as to make Jesus's message all but unhearable by his own people, and virtually guarantee that they would stay insulated against it, and against him.

In his 1955 story "The Star," the great science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke tells of a Jesuit priest, an astrophysicist, returning to Earth by spaceship from an interstellar mission on which he and a team of other scientists have investigated a planet, much like our own, in a distant galaxy. Life on the planet is extinct because its sun imploded centuries before. But the team discovers many traces of the world that once blossomed there—a race of sentient, reasoning beings who created a civilization far superior to our own. The Jesuit is wrestling with a terrible truth that has emerged from his calculations and which is crushing his heart and his faith: the death-explosion of the star, which illuminated the sky for distances of many light-years, was visible on the Earth—most strikingly in the eastern Mediterranean—on the twenty-fifth of December of the year 3, Anno Domini. He exclaims aloud, "My God, was *this* the price that an entire race had to pay for You to announce the Joyous News of the birth of a savior?"

Steven Englund, *a longtime* Commonweal *contributor, is writing a study,* From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism, and Back Again. *This article and the three responses that follow have been funded by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation.*

Jon D. Levenson

We should all feel a debt to Steven Englund for his profound, searching, and brutally honest reflection on the current state of the Catholic-Jewish dialogue. He is especially to be commended for showing the deficiencies of the various strategies of evasion and deflection to which many, including some in high ecclesiastical offices, have resorted in recent years.

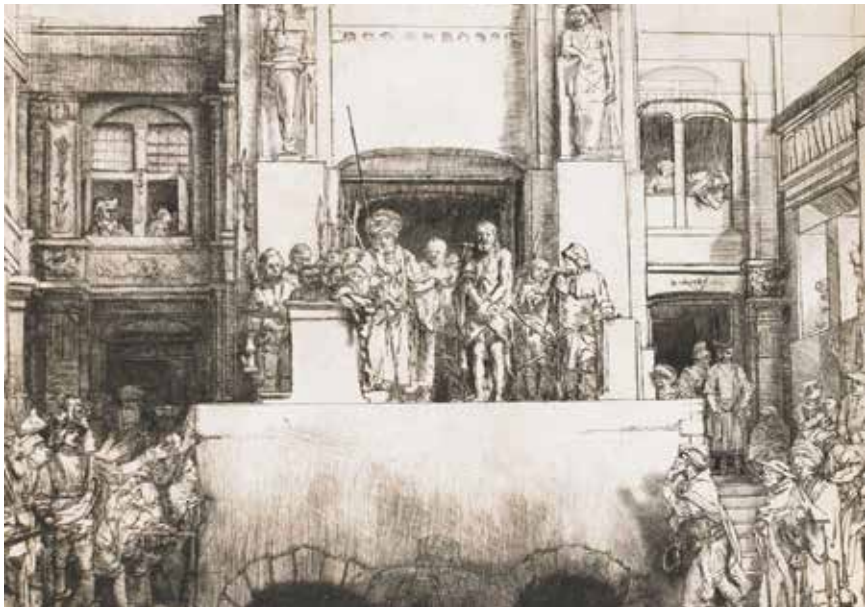
Instead, Englund proposes that the Roman Catholic Church supersede its traditional supersessionism, putting Catholic-Jewish relations on a more secure footing than *Nostra Aetate* and kindred Vatican documents have provided. Theoretically, he might, of course, have gone in the opposite direction and affirmed that the traditional supersessionist theology remains valid but should not be interpreted to authorize any social or other prejudice against the Jews. That is, he might have said that gospel and church fulfill and thus replace Torah and the people Israel, but without implying that the failure of the Jews to see the matter this way is culpable in the least. Likewise, he might have argued that Judaism may be a manifestation of God's grace, as all religions may be, even though it is not the ultimate manifestation of it. Against the likelihood that such a logical option could work (in the sense of removing the traditional Christian contempt for Jews and Judaism) stands the long Christian tradition, beginning in the New Testament itself, of faulting the Jews for their failure to credit the claims made for Jesus by his Christian followers. Efforts, however well intentioned, to claim that the Jews of the past were bad but those of today are not are just too forced to succeed. That the New Testament texts in question meant to address more than just the immediate situations they describe—which were already in the past when the texts were written—is quite clear.

If I understand correctly the new footing that Englund proposes, it is one that goes in the opposite direction and wishes each community to see the other, or at least Catholicism to see Judaism, in the other's own terms. It would thus be characterized by full equality, for each community would treat the other as equally legitimate. This would entail, in the words of the former chief rabbi of France, that the Catholic Church "teach in a positive way the full respect and full legitimacy of a religion and a faith in which she herself finds her roots: Judaism."

Such an approach sounds very attractive, since it seems to clear away all the old baggage, but I suspect it is vulnerable to the same weakness as the alternative I mentioned above. If Judaism is fully legitimate—indeed as legitimate as Christianity itself—why did the authors of the New Testament and virtually all authoritative Catholic literature until recent decades not see that? The rabbi's appeal to the church's own "roots" misses the key fact that early Christian writers, partaking of the apocalyptic thinking prominent (but not universal) among the Jews of the time, relegated Judaism to a past dispensation. (Englund seriously underestimates this point when he writes, "But in declaring Marcionism a heresy, the Church Fathers resolutely accepted the ineradicability of their religion's ties to Judaism.") Englund critiques Pope Benedict XVI's claim that the origins of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism are nearly coeval by correctly noting that "Christianity is a complete re-reading and repossession" rather than "a direct descendant and continuation" of Second Temple Judaism (515 BCE–70 CE) and, more distantly, the Hebrew Bible. But that very point militates against efforts to interpret the church's Jewish roots as speaking only for a positive view of Judaism and invalidating any Christian critique of the parent religion or of the latter's Rabbinic successor.

What exactly would be discussed in a dialogue for which the former French chief rabbi's advice serves as the framework? Would the Catholics speak as Catholics or simply channel the views the Jews have of themselves and their own tradition? An interreligious dialogue in which the parties ignore, water down, or explain away their distinctive truth claims can help to improve the relations among the participants as individuals, but it does so at a great cost: it requires them to ignore the theological core of their own tradition or to take so critical a view of it that it is no longer a meaningful and productive aspect of their identities. In my experience, that cost usually does not seem very great

to my fellow Jews. They tend to go into Jewish-Christian dialogue out of a concern to correct prejudices and prevent persecutions—both without question worthy and necessary goals. But such a dialogue, while it is intercommunal, is not truly interreligious so long as it brackets the distinctive truth claims of each tradition or imagines that those truths speak to no reality outside the respective communities themselves. When the pursuit of good human relations and social justice is the controlling factor in the dialogue, mutual affirmation becomes the goal, and religious relativism soon takes over. The future of any religious community that accepts such a model is not bright.



Rembrandt, Christ Presented to the People (Ecce Homo)*, 1655*

I do not want to be misunderstood here. There is much that Catholics (and everybody else) can learn about Jesus and about the New Testament and other early Christian literature by studying the Jewish background and parallels, and the perspectives that emerge will surely change Catholic thinking for the better, as they already have. The same inquiry will also change the thinking of Jews about early Christianity, especially if they take into account, as indeed they must, Second Temple (and later) Jewish literature that the rabbis of the Talmud did not know or rejected. One key effect of so doing is to make basic christological assertions in the New Testament sound strikingly less foreign to Jewish ears. The imperative to come to terms with the other and to divest oneself of one's prejudices applies to both communities, not just to Christians.

My doubts, rather, center on the implication that Catholics can authentically view Judaism as fully legitimate if that means as legitimate as Catholicism itself. It is one thing to affirm, with Pope John Paul II, "that the Jewish Covenant suffices for Jewish salvation, and need not be understood by Jews in a Christian sense" (Englund's words). It is quite another thing to affirm that Judaism is as true a religion as Christianity. Were the latter the case, then the traditional Jewish critique of Christian worship of Jesus as God ("true God from true God," in the words of the Nicene Creed) would have to be as valid as the theology it critiques—a complete contradiction in terms. It is one thing for Christians to move towards a dual-covenant theology, as the late pope seems to have been doing with that claim. It is very different matter to propound a dual-truth theory. In the case at hand, such a move can only descend into incoherence.

For Englund, "a true dialogue" must be one in which, as Jacob Neusner puts it, "each party remains open to the possibility of conceding the legitimacy of the other's viewpoint." If the alternative is one in which the parties simply preach at each other or are otherwise deaf to the other party's point of view, he is surely right. But I wonder what the framework for such an open-ended dialogue would be: Against what standard would one be able to pronounce "the other's viewpoint" legitimate? In the Jewish-Christian dialogue, the standard surely cannot be the plain sense of the Hebrew Bible. For both Judaism and Christianity have historically based themselves on readings that violate the plain sense. The common view that the Jews read their Bible literally and contextually is quite false and fails to reckon with the key rabbinic mode of reading known as "midrash." In a sense, both early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism—and here Pope Benedict XVI was on to something important—were midrashic systems that emerged in the Roman Empire; neither interpreted the Old Testament/Tanakh according to the mode of plain-sense exegesis that flowered in the Middle Ages in both traditions or according to the canons of historical criticism that have emerged over the past three centuries or so. Each system makes sense in terms of its own assumptions. How either could ever pronounce the other's specific claims to be equally legitimate is a very large question indeed.

If so, then there are problems with Englund's rhetorical question, "Should not Christians have to concede that their bid to 'read anew' the so-called Old Testament might be invalid—despite the fervor with which they do it—and that the Jewish 'take' on Jesus might be correct?" Rabbinic midrash also reads the Jewish Bible anew, though, again like early Christian interpretation, it also has ancient Jewish antecedents. And according to what standard could Christians assert that the Jewish view of Jesus might be correct? For one thing, most and perhaps all of the Rabbinic texts about Jesus come from long after he had died, and most of them are in the genre of anti-Christian polemic, not objective historical reportage or dispassionate analysis. If, to

An interreligious dialogue in which the parties ignore, water down, or explain away their distinctive truth claims can help improve relations among the participants, but at great cost: it requires them to ignore the theological core of their own tradition or to take so critical a view of it that it is no longer a meaningful aspect of their identities.

give another possibility, appeal be made to modern critical efforts to reconstruct the historical Jesus, the results now usually yield a figure very different from, and much more Jewish than, the Christ of Christian faith. But just how Jewish and nonsupersessionist can Jesus become before the christological construals of him collapse under their own weight? How much control can the historical Jesus exert on the Christ of faith before the latter vanishes altogether? Not surprisingly, what Christians should do with the historical Jesus is a point that has bedeviled their theologians from the onset of historical criticism to this very day.

Significantly, an analogous problem affects Judaism, for historical critical investigation has cast into substantial doubt such foundational events as the Exodus, the revelation at Sinai, and the conquest of Canaan. For both religions, it is the midrashic system itself rather than the putative underlying history that carries the theological message. The faithful must not shrink from exposure to rigorous historical inquiry and the chastening that the latter administers, but the historical inquiry alone does not authorize them to say that either midrashic system might or might not be "correct." There is good reason to doubt that tradition-neutral criteria for making that judgment exist.

One point that Englund makes surprised me. "What if an honest and searching probe by both sides," he asks, "were to uncover that the Jewish 'no' to Jesus is less based on traditional Jewish messianic expectations, freely and creatively arrived at over time, than on the Jews' profound resentment of Christian mistreatment of them?" At least for the ancient period, this is extremely unlikely. Remember, for the first three centuries of the common era, the Christians were not in much of a position to mistreat Jews, except verbally (which they did, over and over again). The Romans viciously persecuted the church almost until Constantine's conversion early in the fourth century. Here Englund may be forgetting Ralph Keen's point about Judaism as "a positive religious choice regarding redemption." If Judaism is a positive religion in its own right, then to ask why more Jews haven't converted to Christianity makes no more sense than asking why more Christians haven't converted to Buddhism or Islam.

If, instead, Englund is referring only to contemporary secular Jews, then his question is somewhat more to the point. But even so, it presupposes more of a gap between ethnic and religious identity than I think is warranted in the Jewish case. In any event, the answer to Englund's question surely lies at least as much in the secularity of those Jews as in their resentment of Christian mistreatment over the centuries. As for Jews who are indeed stirred to make "a positive religious choice," Christianity, even one shorn of its anti-Semitism and its supersessionism, need not be the first option to come to their minds. Buddhism, Islam, and a host of other spiritual orientations on offer in contemporary America have their own appeal for people who have no familial roots in Christianity and for disaffected Christians as well. But, most of all, for Jews seeking a religious identity, Judaism itself is still very much available. The once secular Jew who now strives to live a life of Torah is no longer an oddity.

Finally, I must mention one key contemporary manifestation of traditional Christian anti-Semitism that is altogether missing in Englund's sensitive and learned essay—the transposition of anti-Semitism into anti-Zionism. Here, I am referring not to those who disagree, even strongly, with this or that Israeli policy, as many Christians and Jews (including Israeli Jews) do. Such dissent is not ipso facto anti-Semitic. I am referring, rather, to the demonization of the State of Israel, the presentation of it as a moral malefactor *tout court* and the subjection of it to standards and expectations that are not applied, or applied to the same degree, to any other country. As others have pointed out, this demonization draws heavily on the historical teaching of contempt that the Roman Catholic and other churches have bravely sought to correct over the past half-century. Unfortunately, many of those who resort to the latest version of the teaching of contempt are unaware of the pernicious template into which they so instinctively and uncritically place Israel. That this demonization has emerged only a generation or so after the Holocaust is shocking; that it is now sweeping through the liberal Protestant churches (and making itself felt in some Catholic circles as well) is even more so. No discussion of Christian supersessionism in the contemporary world can be complete without reckoning with this troubling development and holding it to account. ■

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Donald Senior

Steven Englund's essay on Catholic anti-Judaism is as passionate and eloquent as it is challenging. He writes with respect and honesty about a complex and painful subject, and as one who shares his desire to decry any form of anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism, and to advance relations between the church and Judaism, I am grateful for his work.

Englund details the history of the church's "physical and material atrocities against the Jews," arguing that the primary reason for the church's antipathy to Judaism is its underlying "supersessionist" conviction. That conviction is paradoxical: the church depends on Judaism as the root of its own religious tradition, yet claims that Christianity is Judaism's God-ordained successor and replacement; it has appropriated Jewish Scriptures, practices and dogmas, while delegitimizing Judaism itself for failing to recognize its own longed-for Messiah. Fundamentally, Englund argues, quoting the words of the Jewish theologian Ben Zion Bokser, supersessionism entails the bludgeoning conviction that "authentic Judaism is really Christianity."

Historically this has been the case, but things have changed. Official Catholic teaching, as Englund gladly relates, now renounces the crude claim that the advent of Jesus as Messiah and the emergence of the church—along with its rejection by Jews—invalidated Judaism as a religion and an authentic path to God. Recent papal teaching, particularly since John Paul II, portrays God's covenant with the Jews as valid and irrevocable. Paul's reflections on this issue in Romans 9–11 have become a key biblical warrant for this perspective: "God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew…for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:2, 29). The Pontifical Biblical Commission's 2002 text, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, went a step further, asserting that because Judaism is a valid and enduring religion, its reading of its own sacred texts cannot be condemned simply because it differs from the Christian reading. The commission's text is far more emphatic about God's ongoing relationship to the Jews than either Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate* or *We Remember*, John Paul II's apologetic statement on the church and the Holocaust.

One aspect of Englund's analysis makes me uneasy. He depicts the early Christian relationship to Judaism as a kind of rip-off—Christianity carrying out a "morally dubious" appropriation of the Jewish Scriptures, Jewish practice, and Jewish beliefs. In this view, the church was a playground bully snatching the ball from a weaker opponent. Englund seems to suggest that it would have been better—certainly for Jews but also for Christians—if the church had accepted the stance of Marcion and renounced all ties with Judaism. Such a move might have preempted this sad history of strife and oppression.

But does this portrayal really describe what happened? Is it the full picture? Look at the Gospel of Matthew, a gospel often used to justify the supersessionist theology Englund rightly condemns. Traditionally, many Christian interpreters saw in Matthew—with its sharp critique of Jewish leaders, its favorable view of Gentiles, and the chilling words of the crowds in the Passion narrative ("Let his blood be on us and our children")—a repudiation of Judaism. Indeed, the gospel seems to end with Jesus abandoning the mission to Israel and turning instead to the Gentiles. For centuries Matthew was used to justify the condemnation of the Jews as a people.

Yet in the wake of Vatican II, Matthew has been un-

CNS PHOTO / MENAHEM KAHANA, REUTERS

Pope Benedict XVI at the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem, 2009

derstood in a very different way. The gospel is now seen to underscore Jesus' Jewish roots and sensitivities. It begins by tracing the "Son of David's" genealogy back to the origins of Israel. In the infancy narrative, the travails that afflict Jesus and his family evoke the sufferings of Israel; at the Jordan, God's own voice in the words of Psalm 2:7 declares Jesus to be his beloved son; in the desert, Jesus cites the words of Deuteronomy and the Jewish *Shema* to affirm his obedience to God's word (a supreme Jewish virtue); and in the Sermon on the Mount, he declares that he has come "not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them." Throughout his ministry, as Matthew chronicles it, Jesus draws Jewish crowds and heals them; he defends the unique privilege of Israel as the object of God's care; he does not despise the law but interprets it with his messianic authority; and he dies on the cross with the words of Psalm 22:1 on his lips.

There remains, of course, the gospel's sharp critique of Jewish leaders. Modern biblical scholarship, however, sees this addressing not a conflict between Christians and Jews but rather an intra-Jewish one. Matthew's community truly believed themselves to be faithful Jews; Jesus' mission to the Gentiles, which comes into full bloom in the final scene of the gospel, is not a rejection of his prior mission to his own people Israel, but rather a fulfillment of God's plan for the salvation of the world—a plan that developed organically in the history of Israel itself and in Jesus, Israel's messiah. The object of Matthew's critique is not Judaism itself but some Jewish religious leaders who opposed the Christian view of Jesus. This point, as Englund illustrates, while tragically lost in later Christian interpretation, was firmly in place in the New Testament.

So all in all, is it accurate to call this "supersessionism"? Or are we dealing with something else? Key to Matthew's understanding of the relationship between Jesus and his Jewish heritage is not the conflict with the Jewish leaders, but rather the profound Christology of the Christian community that underlay that conflict. It is Matthew's conviction—and that of the Christian community of which he was a part—about the identity of Jesus that is the real issue. Long ago, the Jewish theologian Eugene Borowitz insisted that however difficult and tortured the history of Christian anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, the real problem is the question of Christian claims about Jesus. That conviction about the unique identity and religious authority of Jesus the Christ led those Jews who became Christians—Matthew and Paul among them—to change their understanding of God and of Israel's vocation in history.

The reading of Matthew I have outlined—one embraced today by many Catholic and other Christian exegetes—became possible only once the eyes of the modern church were opened to its sinful past, and a new willingness to take Judaism on its own terms developed. The shock of the Shoah helped make this happen; but so, too, did innumerable subsequent dialogues between Jews and Christians all over the world. Though Englund applauds these efforts, he worries that many of them avoid "the sensitive and divisive issues" and settle instead for "tea and sympathy." This is not my experience. Very often it is in precisely such tea-and-sympathy sessions that bonds of friendship are forged; only then—among friends—can the deeper issues be discussed and concerted action for the common good planned.

Furthermore—to respond to a more profound point Englund makes—is such dialogue really valid only when, as Englund quotes the eminent Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner, "each party remains open to the possibility of conceding the legitimacy of the other's viewpoint"? I think not. One should enter dialogue ready to learn from the other, to develop deeper understanding and respect for the other's deepest convictions, even to forge friendship with the other. But must a Christian enter such a dialogue with a readiness to concede that Jesus was not the Son of God? And must a Jew be willing to renounce the moral authority of the Torah and the status of Israel as God's people? I hope not. The purpose of authentic interreligious dialogue, in my view, is not persuasion and conversion, but rather communion of mind, spirit, and heart, even amid profound differences.

Christianity cannot undo, and should not forget, those aspects of its history that have been so harmful to Jews. Thanks to courageous writers such as Steven Englund, the church will not be allowed to forget. Jewish unease about Christian appropriation of Jewish Scriptures and symbols and teachings will continue, and self-aware Christians will still discover in themselves hidden prejudices and false assumptions about Judaism. The only way forward is to continue the relationship between our two traditions, fostered through mutually respectful and honest dialogue. Englund worries that Roman Catholic commitment to this dialogue is wavering, but I am more optimistic. Too much has been accomplished; too many friendships around the world have been forged; exceptionally strong if still imperfect statements have been made at the highest levels of the church's teaching authority. Paul's conviction, too long forgotten, still holds: "God's gifts and God's promises are irrevocable."

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John Connelly

Steven Englund reminds us that no single event signals the end of a story. The Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* seemed to conclude decades of struggle over a new Catholic position on non-Christian religions and on Jews in particular. Yet the story is far from over, Englund warns; indeed, as he demonstrates, anti-Judaism

continues a robust life. It was one thing for the church to condemn anti-Semitism in 1965; but it is a very different thing for it to step back and rethink all the writings, prayers, and hymns from many centuries that portrayed Judaism as a dead religion and Jews as a cursed people.

The issue may seem esoteric to Catholics who listen to Scripture readings Sunday after Sunday and may hardly notice any anti-Judaism. To get an inkling of the power of this anti-Judaic legacy, I recommend reading a gospel in one sitting. Or better yet, watch the 2003 film *The Gospel of John* with a Jewish friend. At times, you will both cringe as Jesus denigrates Jewish authorities and outdoes—indeed, seems to supersede—their teaching.

For my part, I sensed the depth of the problem only after chancing to read John P. Meier's 1978 gospel commentary *The Vision of Matthew*. Meier is a Catholic priest and highly regarded New Testament scholar; his book comes "warmly recommended" by Raymond Brown, perhaps our time's most respected Catholic Scripture scholar, and bears an imprimatur and nihil obstat. So what is its message concerning the Jews? Where *Nostra Aetate* describes the Jews as "most dear to God," in Meier's Matthew, "the Kingdom of God is taken from this people and given to another people, the church, which will bear its fruits (21:43)." "A fundamental choice," Meier writes, "involving the confession or the denial of Jesus as Messiah, leads to a fundamental change in the identity of the people of God. The fatal decision is made by the whole Jewish people in 27:25." Meier describes a second coming of Jesus in which "Jerusalem and the Jews will be forced to acknowledge and hail the coming one. But on that day he will come as judge.... On that day it will be too late." According to Meier's Matthew, the Jewish people therefore live without hope.

Meier would surely argue that he was producing theological scholarship and bound to represent what the author of Matthew meant. But this is a book for a general audience. Shouldn't there at least be a caveat? Did he not see the poison emanating from these lines? If he did, why then did he reprint the 1978 edition without changes in 1991?

It may be unfair to single out Meier, since one can find similar interpretations of Matthew 21:43 (the story of the evil vintners) in postconciliar works of such renowned Catholic theologians as Joachim Gnilka or Wolfgang Trilling. Indeed, as far as I can tell, prior to 1965 no Christian scholar held these passages from Matthew to mean anything other than that the church had superseded the Jewish people. Yet in recent years many theologians have come to regard this and other anti-Judaic texts as interpretations dependent on context. For centuries, that context was hostile to Jews. Today, however, scholars such as Daniel Harrington of Boston

Far more than putting up with Judaism, *Nostra Aetate* celebrates the church's origins in Judaism, and asserts that God holds the Jews 'most dear.' The church says such a thing about no other religion or people.

College hold that Christ's words in Matthew 21:43—"the kingdom of God will be taken from you"—address not the people of Israel, but its leaders.

And yet I look at my copy of Meier's *The Vision of Matthew* and find on the back cover an endorsement by none other than...Daniel Harrington. So what is the average Catholic to make of all this? The church's teaching authority on this topic is all but inaudible. In 1974 a Commission on Religious Relations with Jews was set up in the Roman Curia to promote "effective and just realization of the orientations given by the Second Vatican Council"—yet in four decades it has issued just three statements, one of which devotes but three pages to "Jews in the New Testament." This is not much to weigh against the mountain of anti-Judaism in church tradition. (There are also statements of national bishops conferences, helpfully collected at Boston College's website on Christian-Jewish Relations.) If the Holy See cares about this tragic legacy, it should issue a guide for Catholics hoping to read the New Testament in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*.

Yet perhaps even today's church leadership is unaware of the depth of the problem. Last October Fordham Scripture scholar Michael Peppard wrote enthusiastically (on *dotCommonweal*) about the new pope's "total commitment to the Jews." Just the previous day, however, Boston College's Robert Imbelli posted a statement by Francis on the Communion of Saints. This Communion, the pope wrote, goes "beyond earthly life, beyond death and endures for ever.... It is a spiritual communion born in baptism and not broken by death…" What about the non-baptized? According to Cardinal Walter Kasper (president emeritus of the Commission on Religious Relations with Jews), Judaism is "salvific" for Jews, because—quoting *Nostra Aetate*—"God is faithful to his promises." Why then does Francis exclude Jews from the Communion of Saints?

These matters will doubtless strike most Catholics as esoteric. Why care whether leaders of the church have absorbed the teaching of *Nostra Aetate*? Most of us, after all, have learned about religious tolerance from other sources—films on the Holocaust, for example, or history lessons in school. We don't need the church to tell us about the costs of religious hatred; for that we have the liberal principles of our secular order, a marketplace of ideas (and religions) where everyone may speak and no one imposes his or her views upon anyone else. Who needs *Nostra Aetate*?

While this liberal consensus has undoubted virtues, it may serve to reinforce Catholics' insensitivity to anti-Judaism, whose embers continue to smolder—and occasionally blaze up. Last year a book appeared in Poland by a prominent Catholic priest claiming the Jews were collectively responsible for killing Christ. No one in the Polish episcopate rose to warn Catholics that this book, with abundant citations from works of Catholic theology, contradicts church teaching. Presumably, they had not taken the time to work out the implications of *Nostra Aetate* for themselves.

Perhaps even Steven Englund does not fully appreciate the revolution unleashed by *Nostra Aetate*. Its section on the Jews is not about "parity" and not even about tolerance; to tolerate, after all, means to endure, to "put up with." Far more than putting up with Judaism, *Nostra Aetate* celebrates the church's origins in Judaism, and asserts that God holds the Jews "most dear." The church says such a thing about no other religion or people. *Nostra Aetate* does not preach supersessionism. Yes, it does say the exodus of the Jewish people "foreshadows" the salvation of the church. But keep in mind that where a "shadow" falls depends upon who is viewing it. Americans might say that the Magna Carta foreshadows the Constitution, yet we would not expect the British to share this perspective. Pluralism means understanding and respecting the other's viewpoint, not sharing it.

More important, *Nostra Aetate* recognizes Jewish holiness as existing in its own right, not merely as part of a Christian script. It speaks of the church as the "new people of God," but also says that God does "not repent of the gifts he makes or of the calls he issues." These lines are taken to mean (in several statements of John Paul II) that God's covenant with the Jews remains in full force. Mysteriously, the old and the new people of God coexist.

And finally, what about the Jewish "no" to Jesus? No one anguished over this more than St. Paul; but he also knew that without it, the Good News would not have spread beyond Israel to the world. And so he concluded these reflections with an apt and humbling question: "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" ■

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Rand Richards Cooper

A Soulless Soul Mate

'HER'

Joaquin Phoenix in Her

WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Her is a movie I've been waiting for. Portraying the curious romance that develops between a man and, well, a digital operating system, it crystallizes the worries and complaints of anyone who—like your reviewer—laments our culture of digital distraction. We're awash these days in articles and books about the dying art of conversation, and for good reason. Frequently, as I sit with someone whose attention is divided between me and his smartphone, I have the feeling, part droll and part resentful, that I am being…replaced.

Spike Jonze is the perfect director to take this theme and run with it. His films—a mere four in fifteen years—quirkily amalgamate the cerebral, the heartfelt, and the surreal. Who can forget the scene in *Being John Malkovich* (1999) in which Jonze's exploration of the actor's self-obsession yields multiple Malkoviches, replicating as if in some funhouse mirror? And *Adaptation* (2002), the story of twin screenwriter brothers given to impersonating each other, so wholly defies summary that I won't even try.

Her takes place in the not too distant future, in a Los Angeles replete with fantastical skyscrapers, gleaming public transit, and awesome 3-D video games. Digital organizers keep users updated and entertained via an earbud. Riding the subway home from work, our milquetoast protagonist, Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix), instructs his cyber-concierge to read him his emails, remind him of meetings, or serve up some mood music. "Play a melancholy song," he commands, and then: "Play a different melancholy song."

It is a world in which basic human functions are outsourced to corporate services. Theo works for BeautifulHandwrittenLetters.com, creating "personal" letters for lovers, friends, and family members to send one another. The letters are not meant to deceive; they merely represent the norms of a future in which people no longer possess the wherewithal to express themselves, and regard the ghostwritten letter as an authentic expression of regard. Jonze makes this conceit the object of mirthful, rueful satire. The film's opening sequence captures Theo looking directly at us and crooning romantically, "I've been thinking of telling you how much you mean to me"—the view then switching to his computer screen, where his dictation instantaneously takes shape in digitally generated handwriting. Such missives have won Theo a reputation at his company as a ghostwriter of unusual eloquence.

In his own life, however, not so much. Suffering a powerful case of the lonelies following his separation from his wife (Rooney Mara), Theo stumbles catatonically through his days, meekly submitting to cursory conversations with colleagues, dodging the gentle questions of his old college pal Amy (Amy Adams), enduring awful blind dates, and slouching home to sink into video games. Then one day he happens across an ad for a new computer operating system—one that promises not only to manage his daily information stream, but to be personable as well. Advances in artificial intelligence, the ad boasts, have engendered a brand-new kind of operating system, "an intuitive entity that listens to you and understands you and knows you." A friend, in other words. Meet OS1, a.k.a. "Samantha."

Theo takes the plunge, and quickly gets used to the new setup. His new OS *sounds* so real, after all. Soon "Samantha" (the disembodied, girl-next-door voice is supplied by Scarlett Johansson) has become Theo's constant companion, not only managing his messaging and bill-paying, but sounding him out on what it's like to be alive in the world, consoling him on the ragged hurts of his impending divorce, caressing his ego, teasing him—and eventually becoming, via a steamy middle-of-the-night erotic chat session, his virtual lover. Thus unfolds one of the stranger romantic comedies of recent years, or ever.

In a wholly contemporary way, *Her* reiterates a time-honored motif of modernism: the replacement of man by machine. (Perhaps not coincidentally, Phoenix's Theo, with his bushy brows and moustache, resembles the Charlie Chaplin of *Modern Times*). While treatments of this theme a century ago reflected the economic anxieties of workers in a rapidly evolving machine culture, *Her* focuses on emotional anxieties, asking what happens when companionship —when intimacy itself—is outsourced to a rapidly evolving machine. What happens to society? What happens to us?

The answers prove intermittently hilarious. Perhaps my favorite scene shows Theo chatting with Samantha as he plays his favorite 3-D interactive video game; the game icon, a foulmouthed avatar who resembles a tiny Pillsbury doughboy, begins interacting with Samantha as well, slandering her with raucous invective as she laughs in scorn

and Theo tries to mediate. O brave new world! In another memorable sequence, Theo and a colleague undertake a double-dating picnic on lovely Catalina Island —the colleague with his girlfriend and Theo with Samantha, participating through his hand-held device, propped up on the picnic blanket.

Such moments are funny but also dismaying, and it is to Jonze's credit that we are laughing hardest when his film is loneliest. Shrewdly he locates *Her* at the precise moment when companionate operating systems have just begun to compete with human friendship. People have qualms…but they overcome them. "Do you think it's crazy?" Theo asks Amy, who has been consorting with her own OS. She answers: "We're only here briefly. And while we're here, I want to allow myself joy."

Joaquin Phoenix is quietly spectacular as the awkward nebbish Theo, stricken by ambivalence, displaying sweetness and self-pity in equal measure. At first I was annoyed by Phoenix's mumbling, hesitant delivery; bit by bit, however, one begins to see how his wan indefiniteness fits Jonze's dim prediction of a future in which our personal capacity wanes as our digital power waxes. Aloof and constrained with fellow humans, Theo opens up with his OS. Of course, as an interactively evolving artificial intelligence, Samantha plastically shapes herself to Theo's needs, and so represents a kind of technological accommodation, even an extension, of his narcissism. Today everything online—your Google searches, your purchases, your news and literary recommendations—is tailored to your preferences. Why not your soulmate? Samantha "knows" Theo better than any mere mortal ever could; she is programmed to do so, after all.

As for Samantha, well, I have to confess: if I could spend time with an OS, a hologram, or any other technological reproduction of Scarlett Johansson, I'd renounce my neo–Luddite principles and embrace this runaway technology wholeheartedly. Actually, the casting of Johansson as a disembodied voice seems problematic. Samantha's forlorn refrain of "I wish I had a body!" would ring quite differently were it voiced by an unknown actress, and not the highly pneumatic Johansson, whose very particular embodiment all viewers, especially male ones, are likely to have securely fixed in their visual imagination.

For the characters in the film, though, she's just a voice emanating from a glass-and-metal case. Yet Theo weeps real tears. Attaching familiar emotions to inappropriate objects, *Her* succeeds in making a viewer uncomfortable; I recalled the unnervingly heartwrenching moment in Robert Zemeckis's *Cast Away* when Tom Hanks' shipwrecked survivor loses his only friend, Wilson the volleyball. Jonze's film bears obvious relation to Steven Spielberg's *AI* (2001), in which a company called Cybertronics markets "a robot that can love…with a subconscious, an inner world of metaphor, of dreams." But *Her* possesses nothing of Spielberg's ominous, somber gravity. Though formally it qualifies as dystopian sci-fi, tonally it is closer to screwball comedy. It closely resembles Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), in which a mysterious clinical outfit called Lacuna provides neurological treatments that enable patients to expunge painful memories, indeed entire relationships; the film's whimsical futurism shaped a melancholy meditation on love, loss, and memory.

Her shares a similarly wacked-out premise, and a structural hilarity turned to wistfulness about where we're headed. For a while Theo succeeds in believing that he has found his soul mate in a soulless machine. Yet a fundamental selling point of the OS1 is its ability to evolve, cognitively, intellectually, experientially, and emotionally—"just like you," Samantha says to Theo. Oops! The film's denouement, in which man fails to match machine for personal growth, adds to the several layers of irony in Jonze's vision. His smart, provocative film charts simultaneous explosions in our digital connectedness and our personal loneliness—our inability to connect—and asks: Which is the chicken and which is the egg? ■

George M. Marsden

Various but Coherent

Apostles of Reason
The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism
Molly Worthen
Oxford University Press, $27.95, 352 pp.

Ever since Luther's Reformation almost immediately led to Anabaptist spinoffs, Catholic observers have been pointing out that Protestants have an authority problem. "The Bible alone" inevitably leads to many conflicting interpretations of the Bible and to seemingly endless organizational fragmentation. The magisterial Reformation managed to limit Protestant diversity for a time by using state authority to impose regional uniformity. But after the era of religious wars and then the Enlightenment, ideals of religious tolerance eventually prevailed, especially in Protestant lands. In that new setting, of which the United States was a prototype, voluntary religion flourished. Evangelicalism, emphasizing "the Bible alone" and the conversion experience, became the most characteristic religion in young America. Evangelicalism also came in bewildering varieties that seemed to fulfill Catholic predictions of ever-increasing Christian fragmentation and the anarchy of competing claims to stand solely on the authority of the Bible.

Evangelicalism is still very much around in America (something like 80 million people, or 26 percent of the population, can be identified as evangelical), and understanding such a diverse movement is a formidable challenge. Molly Worthen is to be commended for helping to meet that challenge. She takes on the daunting task of providing an overview of major evangelical developments from the era of Billy Graham just after World War II until the present. She does not claim to offer a complete history, but only to look at the sprawling movement through one of its dimensions: the book "traces the past seventy years of evangelical intellectual life," defining "intellectual" somewhat broadly.

An intellectual history of recent evangelicalism is no easy task. Not only is the movement bewilderingly diverse; it is also notable for the gap between its scholars and the anti-intellectualism of its popular constituencies. Theologians and intellectuals may attempt to guide evangelicals, but more often the people in the pews turn to popularizing gurus. These preachers offer simplistic, quasi-intellectual answers, as for instance in young-earth "creation science." Worthen helpfully points out that evangelicals as a whole are not any more intellectually shallow than most Americans. But because evangelical groups are market-driven, simple answers are going to sell better, or preach better, than complex, nuanced ones.

Part of the challenge in approaching this multidimensional history is making it into a somewhat coherent narrative. Worthen follows the most typical storyline, which starts after World War II with efforts by intellectually oriented friends of Billy Graham to rehabilitate evangelical intellectual life. The fundamentalist-modernist debates among American Protestants in the 1920s had left fundamentalists with few respectable educational institutions and with constricted intellectual resources. Some of the heirs to funda-

Staff at the Wheaton College Record *in the 1940s*

WHEATON COLLEGE SPECIAL COLLECTION / OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

mentalism, who began to call themselves "neo-evangelical" or just "evangelical," hoped to resuscitate a more substantial Protestant theological heritage. Billy Graham's immense popularity enhanced their hopes of providing leadership for a national evangelical coalition. In the years after the war, they founded new institutions, such as Fuller Theological Seminary (1947) and *Christianity Today* (1956), which play prominent roles in Worthen's narrative.

Worthen correctly points out that, despite their rhetoric and hopes, these neo-evangelicals did not speak for the whole of the movement. They represented mainly the Reformed side of evangelicalism, which tended to be more intellectualistic than was popular revivalism, and which was especially concerned to offer rationally grounded defenses of biblicist faith. Typically they still argued for an "inerrant" Bible as the bedrock source on which they could build their belief system. Such views had wide influence that touched many evangelical subgroups. But, as Worthen shows, many in these subgroups also resisted such emphases. Worthen documents resistance from within diverse denominations such as Nazarenes, who placed more emphasis on dramatic spiritual experience and the holy life, or from Mennonites, whose tradition emphasized the ethical dimensions of Jesus' teachings. Even within the Reformed side of evangelicalism, neo-evangelical emphasis on an inerrant Bible led to sharp debates and struggles for institutional control. Fuller Seminary, for instance, was taken over in the 1960s by those who rejected biblical inerrancy. During the '70s many evangelical groups experienced controversies over "the battle for the Bible." By the '90s, strict conservatives who insisted on inerrancy took over the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest evangelical denomination. Meanwhile, in many other evangelical groups biblical inerrancy receded as a test of the faith.

Worthen's impressively wide-ranging account touches on many other innovations and divisive issues, and she is helpful in pointing out that recent evangelicalism is about a lot more than just politics. There has always been something of a political dimension to this strain of Protestanism, but it was greatly enlarged after the late '70s with the rise of the Moral Majority, the religious right, and the culture wars. Nor were all evangelicals politically conservative. In fact, the rise of the religious right was preceded in the '70s by a smaller, progressive, social-reform-oriented "evangelical left" that never entirely disappeared. Worthen notes also that the religious right to some extent grew out of debates within evangelicalism over issues such as biblical inerrancy. Those who insisted on inerrancy were more likely to be conservative political activists. Other evangelicals, including most of a rising evangelical intellectual community, tended to be political moderates who resisted simplistic either-or solutions to social problems.

Because of its complexity, evangelical history can be difficult to follow as a story, even when one looks at it just through the lens of its most characteristic ideas. Every trend has a counter-trend, and there are many subthemes that must be touched on. Worthen recounts, for instance, the revolution in relations between evangelicals and Catholics over the past few decades, especially as conservatives in each camp found kindred spirits in the other. Some highbrow evangelicals were attracted by Catholic worship and a few prominent figures converted to Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy. Meanwhile, considerable numbers of cradle Catholics turned to evangelicalism. Worthen notes these and other complexities, but readers may sometimes wonder what is tying the whole narrative together. The title *Apostles of Reason* does not help much. It is true, as Worthen emphasizes, that the neo-evangelical rebuilders of evangelical intellectual life were especially concerned to show that biblicist Christianity was rationally defensible, as have been some others since. Yet as Worthen's own account makes clear, many other sorts of evangelicals emphasized other authenticating dimensions of the faith and could hardly be characterized as putting a disproportionate emphasis on reason.

Worthen might have tied things together with a more explicit interpretive point of view. Her characterizations of individuals and movements reveal that she prefers some approaches to others, but she does not explicitly state what her standards of evaluation are or provide analysis of the intellectual strengths or weaknesses of the various outlooks. So her accounts, although consistently informative, sometimes get lost in evaluative generalities. The evangelical views she finds less attractive, for instance, are to be explained as reflecting their proponents' "anxieties" regarding the relation of their faith to modern intellectual life. But positing anxieties does not tell us much as an analytic tool. All sorts of religious believers have anxieties regarding the intellectual viability of their faith in the diverse modern world, and there is no way to document that those on one side of a contested issue had more anxieties than those on the other side.

Worthen is on more solid ground in pointing out that evangelicals routinely have to cope with problems of authority, which often leads to superficial panaceas. She also recognizes well that such problems are not new. So, even though evangelical history of recent times can be properly said to involve a "crisis of authority," such crises do not seem to undercut the vitality of the movement. Rather, as Worthen briefly notes, evangelicalism seems to flourish on competition, simplistic formulations, controversy, and division. And whatever its intellectual struggles and weaknesses, evangelicalism has a flexibility and resilience that has proved effective in winning converts in all sorts of cultural settings in America and around the world. Of course, world Catholicism is also flourishing through very different approaches, so there is no one road to evangelical success.

It is also worth noting that evangelicalism, for all its many faults and weaknesses, is not anarchical and incoherent. Just looking at the United States, it is

remarkable that for all the differences, divisions, subdivisions, and conflicts, there is still a discernible entity that can be plausibly identified as a single religious tradition. Given the many local pontificators on what the Bible says, one might have expected such revival-oriented, market-driven religion to disintegrate into an overwhelming number of heresies. Certainly it does generate its share of heresies, as the popularity of the "health and wealth" gospel illustrates. Yet probably most evangelical preaching still presents a version of a core Gospel message that the eighteenth-century Great Awakener George Whitefield would recognize.

Moreover, five hundred mostly acrimonious years after the Reformation, these seemingly free-floating Protestants are not as far away from core Catholicism as one might assume. By far the most popular intellectual among American evangelicals is C. S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity* has sold more than 3 million copies in English alone since 2001. Many Catholics also like Lewis, but among evangelicals he has been virtually canonized. One of Lewis's most prominent characteristics is that he emphasized the core historical teachings of the church on which Protestants and Catholics can agree. So, whatever the centrifugal forces that would drive evangelicalism toward total fragmentation, they seem to be countered in part by some centripetal forces that allow a core Christianity to survive and flourish as well. Worthen does not say much about that degree of coherence, but it is also part of this puzzling story. Fragmented, contentious, institutionally divided, and often intellectually shallow evangelicalism may not be the ideal for the church, but despite its perennial crises in authority, it is not nearly as incoherent as one might expect. ■

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William L. Portier

Hauerwas on Hauerwas

Approaching the End
Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics, and Life
Stanley Hauerwas
Eerdmans, $24, 269 pp.

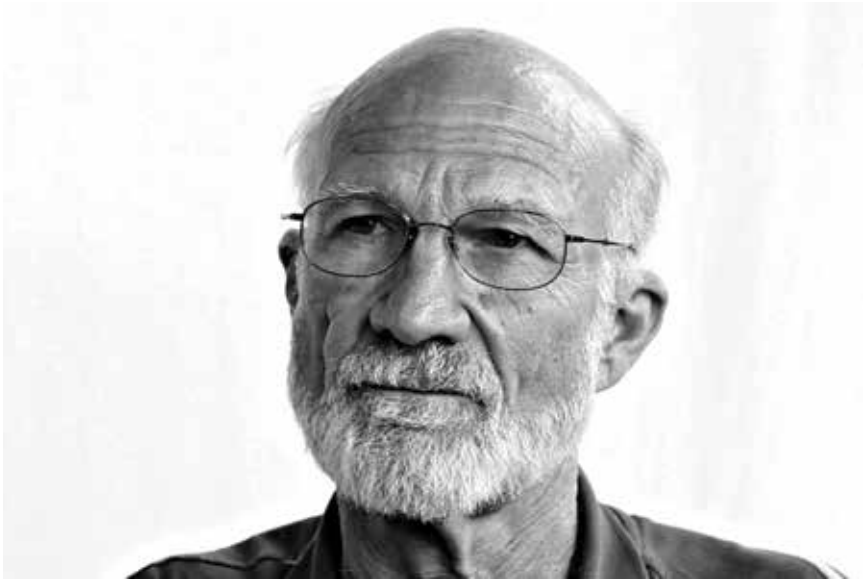
Stanley Hauerwas has achieved singular preeminence among theologians in the United States as a public intellectual. Writing on subjects from Christian ethics to law, pacifism, bioethics, and political philosophy, he has provided bountiful fodder for academics while managing to leave footprints in the general culture—he is surely one of very few theologians ever to appear on *Oprah*. Any new book bearing Hauerwas's name is noteworthy, and the latest one doesn't disappoint. In *Approaching the End*, the theologian revisits his earlier works, responding to critics while trying to write "in a different voice" and encouraging readers to "think twice about how they learned to think about how I think." Such convoluted reflexivity signals the self-referential character of this book.

Hauerwas divides *Approaching the End* into three parts dealing respectively with eschatology, the church, and what he calls "the difficulty of reality." The voice of the late Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, Hauerwas's colleague at Notre Dame, haunts these pages. From Yoder Hauerwas learned that the establishment of Christianity as a dominant religion, beginning with Constantine, turned Christians complacent, making them forgetful of eschatology, and inclining them to feel too much at home in the world. They lost their sense of living "between the times" of the revelation of the Lordship of Christ and his final manifestation. The coercion and killing for the Kingdom involved in Christendom and subsequent confessional states led eventually to an almost complete "fusion of Christianity and nationalism"—a fusion that denied the lordship of Christ, whose own death established his dominion as "the Lamb who was slain" (Rev 5).

When Hauerwas talks about Constantine and Christendom, he isn't really talking about the fourth century and the Middle Ages, but rather about America, "the great experiment in Protestant cultural formation." He inhabits a historical-theological narrative that begins proximately with the Niebuhr brothers. This tradition addresses the task of responding theologically to "the end of Christendom"—that is, to the dwindling of the social and cultural hegemony of "nonsectarian" Protestant Christianity in the United States. Catholics have a serious stake in this project, since from the beginning they sought admission to Protestant America. Now that they're in, the end of Christendom is their problem too.

Of two prevailing theological approaches to the loss of Christendom, one—Hauerwas's—focuses on the life of the church and its witness in society, the other on Christianity's public role in shaping opinion and influencing political policy. Many maintain that the first alternative withdraws into the church and fails to engage America. But this is a mistake. Like his antitype, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hauerwas is a theologian to America. His America, however, has suffered the loss of Christendom, and in assessing this loss Hauerwas draws favorably and often on Brad Gregory's *The Unintended Reformation*, which examined the ways in which the Protestant Reformation undermined religious belief and shaped the contours of modern secular individualism. While Hauerwas fears that "Catholicism in America may now be a form of Protestantism," a matter of denominational choice, he asserts that Christendom's end means at least "that the church is finally free to be a politics." What Hauerwas means by "church" here is not so easily explained. In fact, his language about the church tends to make Catholics crazy. Which church, they ask, where is it?

Part II's chapter on Christian unity takes up these questions. In it Hauerwas responds to Lutheran theologian George Lindbeck's query: Why, given his concern with the unity of the church, has Hauerwas not participated in formal ecumenism? His response provides the most comprehensive account of his own "ambiguous ecclesial status" and "promiscuous" ecclesial practice. A review cannot do justice to this extraordinarily honest account of Christian unity from the perspective of a self-described "high



Stanley Hauerwas

church Mennonite" and "congregationalist with Catholic sensibilities." It ends with Yoder's account of the church's unity and catholicity as "necessarily local," and a close-to-bizarre yet plausible attempt to relate this to Anglican polity.

Such is Hauerwas's church. But what is the world? Hauerwas takes questions Catholic theologians treat under the rubric of nature and grace and subsumes them into the contrasting alternatives of church and world, with world essentially identified with the modern liberal state. Rejecting as insufficiently eschatological Jean Porter's arguments on the necessity of the doctrine of creation for natural law, he remains an admitted theocrat who has nevertheless renounced coercion in the name of Jesus. This seeming denial of any rightful created autonomy to the worldly realms of culture and politics makes it easy for Catholic thinkers to dismiss, in the name of the goodness of creation or the graced character of our world, Hauerwas's powerful case against liberal states. Why, he asks, don't parents who want their children to make up their minds about "religion" let them make up their minds about America?

What if Hauerwas is right—and right as a matter of fact, rather than on theological grounds Catholic thinkers might reject? What if it is through historical contingency, rather than theological necessity, that modern states demand the human sacrifice of war as the price of their legitimacy? He would agree with the American Catholic bishops that the state cannot define the mission of the church, but its attempt to do so would not surprise him. He might argue that the bishops' focus on matters of sexuality and the family fulfills an unspoken concordat with liberal states, one that domesticates faith and makes it private. To be sure, the impetus for public political protest has shriveled. Philip Berrigan expressed his conscientious objection to war by pouring blood on draft-board records, hammering warhead nose cones, and submitting to imprisonment. Today's American Catholic bishops protest the state's attempts to define the missions of the church's hospitals and schools with lawsuits and fortnights for freedom. If Hauerwas had a fortnight for freedom, its agenda would include conscientious objection to war. Alas, he doesn't mention abortion.

Hauerwas recognizes the powerful instinct of the state to swallow churches whole, and appeals to the resources that the faithful have to resist being swallowed. When Hitler sought to create a German Christian Church, Karl Barth's Barmen Declaration helped midwife the Confessing Church, with its commitment to the Lordship of Christ alone. In an earlier century, when Napoleon wanted to make the church a department of the French state, Catholics turned to the pope as embodying the transnational unity of Christ's church. A Protestant, Hauerwas appreciates the "political importance of the papacy," but he worries that American Catholics do not. Along with Mennonites, Catholics have transnational resources, unavailable to other Christians, for resisting omnivorous states. Hauerwas challenges Catholics in the United States to ask if they have become just another liberal Protestant denomination in thrall to American nationalism. Do they really get the catholicity of their own church? Hauerwas wants Catholics to be Catholic.

The stumbling block that often keeps Catholics from taking this challenge seriously is Hauerwas's stark church-world dichotomizing. He tackles this difficulty at the beginning of Part III in "Bearing Reality," a powerful reflection on J. M. Coetzee's novel *Elizabeth Costello*. Comparing himself to Coetzee's character—"Like Costello, I am old and trapped by a track record whose defense can stop thought from meeting the demands to say as best one can what is true"—Hauerwas acknowledges that his emphasis on the centrality of Christ has identified him as "one whose strong theological voice tends to overwhelm an appropriate acknowledgment of what it means to be human." This essay raises

questions Catholics might view in terms of nature and grace. "How," Hauerwas asks himself, "can I think consistently with theologians like John Howard Yoder and Karl Barth and at the same time learn from philosophers like Ludwig Wittgenstein, Iris Murdoch, and Cora Diamond?"

He approaches the question of what it means to be human via analytic philosopher and Wittgenstein interpreter Cora Diamond's notion of the "difficulty of reality" in naming aspects of life that defy explanation but with which, whether in pain or astonishment, we must nevertheless live. For Hauerwas, the intractability of another's pain, as set forth in Coetzee's novel, exemplifies the "difficulty of reality." To this perspective he brings Yoder's account, in a 1988 address to the Society of Christian Ethics, of the difficulty of being a Christian. (Hauerwas misses an opportunity to treat, in Yoder's own terms, the pain and division caused among Mennonites by continuing allegations of sexual misconduct on the part of Yoder—a disappointing omission, given his book's determined honesty.) Part III's remaining essays, on habit and on questions of theology and medicine, deepen Hauerwas's answer to the question of what it means to be human.

In writing *Approaching the End*, Hauerwas tells us that he set out to surprise us with the "tone if not the substance" of his reflections. Readers may judge whether he has turned into "an old lion who has learned to eat straw," or has simply continued to ask hard questions and offer surprising answers. Either way, such an engaging intellectual retrospective by a world-class theologian deserves wide readership, both among those committed to the Lordship of Christ and the continuing life of the church, and among those simply interested in what it means to be human. ■

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Paul K. Johnston

Romance & Resurrection

The Gospel According to Shakespeare

Piero Boitani

Translated by Vittorio Montemaggi and Rachel Jacoff

University of Notre Dame Press, $27, 168 pp.

In recent years some Catholic scholars have revived the claim that Shakespeare was a crypto-Catholic—and was so at a time when being Catholic in Anglican England was against the law. In its milder form, this claim offers little more than an opportunity for Catholics to take pride in the great bard as one of our own. In its more extreme form, though, it is used to argue that Shakespeare's plays are full of coded messages to his fellow recusants. Such arguments reinforce the unfortunate impression that Shakespeare's plays are accessible only to a select few.

I am happy to report that Piero Boitani's *The Gospel According to Shakespeare* takes no part in this trend. It addresses not the question of whether Shakespeare was Catholic, but a more basic one: Was he in any important sense a Christian poet? Boitani's viewpoint as a Catholic European gives him insight into Shakespeare's Christian art that a British or American critic might not possess—not because of any secret Catholic code at work in the plays, but because the English Puritanism that came after Shakespeare and was transplanted to the colonies so suppressed significant elements of Christian sensibility that Anglo-American readers may not recognize them when they encounter them in his plays.

Boitani's focus is on Shakespeare's last four plays—plays he sees as so strongly Christian, they constitute a sort of fifth gospel. Conventionally referred to as the romances, these works differ significantly from the great tragedies that preceded them not only because they end happily—so do Shakespeare's comedies—but rather because of how they achieve their happy endings: not via the triumph of romantic love, as in the comedies, but rather through repentance, forgiveness, and faith. Other elements are interwoven with these familiar Christian themes in the romances, and it is through its reading of these other themes—music, beauty, the feminine, even the syncretic

Act I, Scene 1 of The Tempest *in a 1797 engraving by Benjamin Smith based on a painting by George Romney*

blending of paganism with Christianity—that *The Gospel According to Shakespeare* enables American readers to see both Shakespeare's romances and the Christian tradition itself with new eyes.

The book devotes a chapter to each of the four romances: *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. Boitani also includes chapters on two tragedies—*Hamlet* and *King Lear*—that point toward Shakespeare's turn from a tragic view of life to the Christian view of the last plays. Shakespeare's focus throughout the tragedies is on the inevitability of death. "All that lives must die," Gertrude reminds her son in the opening scene of Hamlet, and indeed the play ends with the stage littered with bodies—Gertrude, Claudius, Hamlet himself, and Laertes, who has followed in death his father Polonius and sister Ophelia. Similarly, King Lear dies with his dead daughter in his arms as reports of the deaths of his other two daughters and their shared adulterous lover are received and Lear's most faithful servant announces his own willing death. All in all, there is scant good news to be had; nevertheless, Boitani finds the promise of hope, if not hope itself, in Hamlet's declaration that "there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow," and in Lear's longing for a time when Cordelia will again seek his blessing and when he will ask her forgiveness.

Lear's longing becomes reality in the romances. As a literary term, romance does not refer to stories of romantic love, but rather to stories characterized by the improbable, the magical or supernatural, even the miraculous. And improbable Shakespeare's romances are. For example, *Pericles* begins with the young prince traveling to a foreign land to win the hand of its king's daughter; in short order he discovers incest, flees an assassin, hands over the rule of his city to another, saves yet another city, suffers shipwreck, becomes a beggar, wins a jousting tournament, marries the daughter of another king, loses her in another storm at sea, and abandons an infant daughter. And all of this before the play really gets down to business!

Such a fantastical plot would seem to bear little resemblance to the Gospels. But the Gospels are all about the unlikely (a fish with a coin in its mouth, just when a coin is needed), the supernatural (a multitude of thousands fed with five loaves and two fish), and the miraculous. Chief among the miracles, of course, is Christ's Resurrection; and resurrection is the most distinctive recurrent motif of Shakespeare's

romances. Boitani calls attention to the many symbolic resurrections in *Pericles* and *Cymbeline* before arriving at the resurrection that transforms *The Winter's Tale*: the moment when the statue of the long-dead Hermione comes to life and steps down from its pedestal.

But does the motif of resurrection make these plays Christian? Just as prevalent in the romances, after all, is the motif of the seasons, with the resurrection of spring following the death of winter. This natural cycle underlies much myth, including the classical myths against which Christianity emerged. And the world of classical myth is present throughout the romances. The goddess Diana appears in *Pericles* and Jupiter in *Cymbeline*. These ever-present pagan deities don't rule out a Christian reading, however. Syncretism, the blending of Christian and pagan elements, is common in Renaissance poetry. But the Puritan movement, which helped bring the English Renaissance to an end and has had such a permanent influence on American culture, rejected such syncretism. Thus the Pilgrims who settled in Massachusetts—only a few years after Shakespeare's late romances were first staged—refused to celebrate or even acknowledge Christmas, seeing it as a pagan borrowing blasphemously undertaken by both the Catholic and Anglican churches.

This Puritanism notwithstanding, Christianity has in fact been a syncretic religion from the beginning, blending Greek and Judaic thought, including all the earlier absorption by Judaism of the many Middle Eastern mythic traditions that surrounded it. Continental Europe today, not influenced by Anglo-American Puritanism, remains open to syncretism, as does the Catholic Church. Thus Boitani may be better equipped to understand Shakespeare's Christianity than are Shakespeare's English-speaking Protestant descendants. Boitani can write of Prospero both as "the God of the Bible" and as "Neptune and Jupiter." He can write of Jupiter in *Cymbeline* as speaking a "theophany when he descends from heaven, riding his eagle amid thunder and lightning (the pagan equivalent of the whirlwind out which God speaks to Job)." He finds no contradiction when, in this theophany, Jupiter employs the imagery of Christ's crucifixion. Throughout *The Gospel According to Shakespeare*, Boitani uses the vocabulary of Greek philosophy to explain this blending of pagan, Jewish, and Christian traditions, just as Paul brought Greek philosophy to Christian thought.

So are the resurrections found in Shakespeare's romances Christian, or merely pagan? For Boitani they are unquestionably Christian. Resurrection in pagan myth is the result of natural processes, just as the gods of myth are representations of natural processes; no human contribution is required for the resurrection of the vegetable world to take place, for winter to yield to spring. For Christians to participate in Christ's Resurrection, however, much is asked of them: repentance, forgiveness, faith. And these motifs are the keys to Shakespeare's romances. Fathers repent and ask daughters for forgiveness. Villains are forgiven by those they've injured. Before the statue of the dead Hermione steps down from its pedestal, Paulina tells the repentant Leontes, "It is required / You do awake your faith." Only then, with music, does Hermione step down to embrace her guilty husband. Only when the lost Perdita kneels and prays does her mother speak and bless with grace her restored daughter.

In Shakespeare's comedies female characters are central, and the continuity of life, embodied in Hermia and Rosalind and Viola, prevails. In the tragedies—the world of death, of Macbeth and Othello and Hamlet and Lear—the masculine supercedes, and female characters remain secondary. In the world of the romances, with its restoration of life, the feminine returns—not as sexual lover and wife and future mother, but as Christ. In Shakespeare's gospel the dead Cordelia precedes the resurrections of the romances, the dead Christ of Michelangelo's Pietà in the arms not of a grieving mother but of the severe father who begat her. In *Pericles*, in contrast, Marina "embodies the infinite capacity of suffering and forbearance" that Christ embodied on the cross. Hermione, Paulina, Perdita, Thaisa, Marina, Imogen: with the exception of *The Tempest*, the romances all have feminine figures as their heroes.

Boitani, coming from Catholic Europe, where the image of Mary is ubiquitous, is entirely at home with feminine embodiments of the Christian divine in a way that Anglo-American scholars are not. So too is he entirely receptive to the Christian significance of music and art throughout the romances, as Christian art and music are so much a part of the landscape of Catholic Europe. As was announced by Isaiah and affirmed by Paul in his Letter to the Romans, the good news is brought by beautiful messengers—*pace* the Puritans who closed the theaters where Shakespeare's plays were first presented. ■

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Eve Tushnet

Making Do

Doing the Best I Can

Fatherhood in the Inner City

Kathryn Edin and Timothy J. Nelson

University of California Press, $29.95, 294 pp.

Painfully conscientious, rule-bound, and motivated more by spiritual longings than by practical material concerns—these aren't the terms in which most Americans think of low-income unmarried fathers. The men who tell their stories in *Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City* know that they don't look much like Ward Cleaver or Cliff Huxtable. They're candid about the drug and alcohol abuse that has wreaked havoc in their lives, the bad behavior and bad choices that make them hard to employ and, for many women, hard to love. Kathryn Edin and Timothy J. Nelson try hard to be empathetic, but they can't help but point out the ways in which the men they study fail, again and again, to be the responsible partners and fathers they aspire to become.

Doing the Best I Can is essentially a sequel to 2005's groundbreaking *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. For that book, Edin and coauthor Maria Kefalas lived in rough Philadelphia-area neighborhoods, alongside the single mothers they interviewed. By allowing mothers in this stigmatized community to speak in their own words, Edin and Kefalas uncovered the women's intense mistrust of men, the exalted status they assigned to marriage (exalted beyond their own reach), and the moral judgments and existential longings that shaped the women's desire to have children.

The new book tells the other side of the story. Staying in the same neighborhoods, interviewing the same mix of white and black parents, Edin and Nelson find heartbreaking stories of childbearing and parenthood as a kind of cry of protest against violence, hopelessness, and self-destruction. Pregnancies are unintended but typically welcomed by men who view fatherhood as a chance to prove their own ability to act rightly in their own eyes and those of their peers.

The story of unwed fatherhood be-

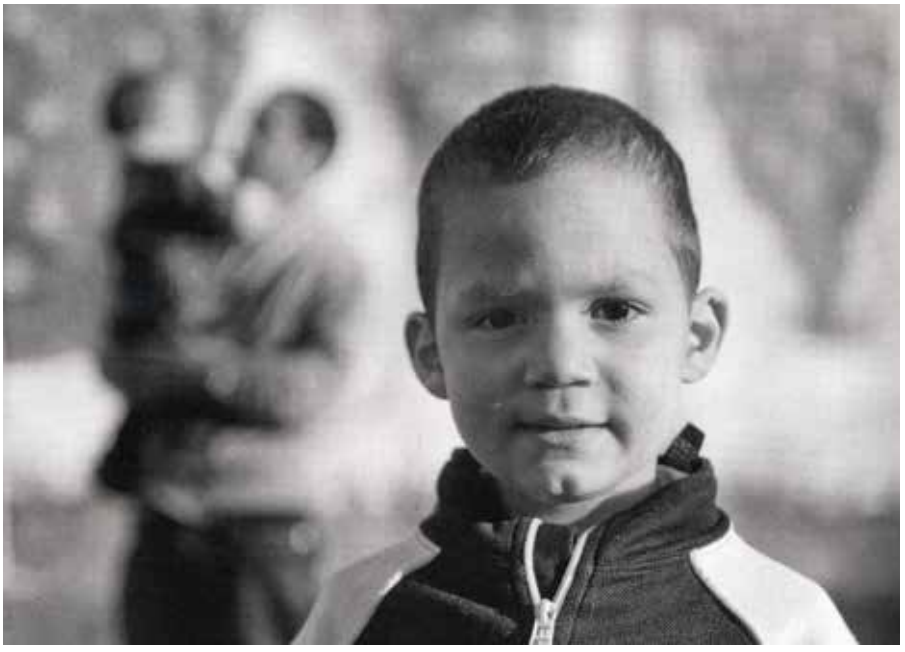

Photo by Drew Hood, from Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City

gins when the future fathers are children. Their feelings about having been abandoned by their own fathers come through clearly in *Doing the Best I Can*. They're determined not to be like their dads: not to be drug addicts, not to be absent from their kids' lives, and also not to be the stonily silent or abusive fathers many men remember. These memories shape a new ideal of fatherhood, one defined in emotional rather than material terms: a good father is warm and available; a good father offers moral guidance—even when it consists of the humbling admission that he doesn't want his own children to be too much like him.

As these unfathered or badly fathered boys reach adolescence they're initiated into a world of chaotic sexual relationships. Not all of these scattershot relationships result in a pregnancy, but many do. The statistics here are startling: among young unmarried inner-city parents, the average gap between the beginning of their relationship and the conception of their first child is just six or seven months. "Mothers are more likely to view these relationships as serious than fathers are," note the authors dispassionately. But once those two lines appear on the plastic pregnancy test, most men don't flee. Even teens in high school often responded to news of a girlfriend's pregnancy with joy and a grateful sense that at last a chance for something real, true, and pure had come into their lives. Nobody else in their lives reacts this way except, sometimes, the girlfriend. Both her parents and his usually act as if the pregnancy is a catastrophe, but to the young parents, it's often understood as a moment of hope for the relationship. The young man cleans up his act, at least for a while. He and his girlfriend pledge to stay together and begin to talk about marriage. Sometimes they actually do get married. This method of forming relationships, including marriages, minimizes the element of choice, which many young adults find paralyzing. Getting married because of a pregnancy seems to offer a paradoxical kind of reassurance. If you choose whom you marry and the marriage doesn't work out, then you will feel responsible for having made the wrong choice. But if a young man gets married because his girlfriend got pregnant, then even if the marriage goes wrong later, he can at least tell himself that he tried to do the right thing.

But staying committed to a spouse one barely knows is as hard as it sounds. Once their children are born, women express "a sharp sudden rise in expectations" for the men, who begin to feel "bewildered, aggrieved, and enraged," fearing betrayal and abandonment. These shotgun relationships typically fall apart, leaving both the man and the woman embittered and mistrustful.

Men and women face sharply different risks with these relationships. Men face a painful blow to their sense of self and a return to the anchorless life of the young man with nobody to care for and not much to hope for. The men believe that they have a relationship with their children that "is pure and unassailable and should have nothing to do with their relationship to the mother of that child...[but] the dramatic falloff in father involvement in the aftermath of breakup should warn that this belief is a profound form of self-deception." And women face the inescapable financial, emotional, and physical challenges of childcare. For the mother "a baby is instant maturity—if she doesn't get her life together and figure out a way to support the child, she could lose custody to the state. Plus, she, he, and the community at large assign her—not them—ultimate parental responsibility."

And so men, yearning for a fresh start with a woman who isn't disappointed in them yet, start new families. Giving the new family all of one's attention necessarily means shortchanging the first set of kids. They may take on a father's responsibilities for a girlfriend's child by another man: this not only gives them the joy of being loved by a small child, but the self-respect and praise from others that comes from going above and beyond mere duty. There's a perverse incentive structure in which caring for one's own biological children is just doing what's expected; one gets more praise and more sense of self-worth from caring for another man's children. Nonetheless, these men have a real desire to parent at least one child well—better than they were parented themselves.

Marriage still plays a major role in shaping inner-city parents' expectations. Unfortunately, the ideal of marriage they share with richer Americans requires them to attain economic security before they wed. Edin and Nelson note that as the reward for work has fallen, the financial expectations couples are expected to meet before they can "responsibly" marry have soared.

Doing the Best I Can sometimes conveys exasperation at the way the men it profiles stumble into parenthood and sacrifice their first-chance family for the sake of second chances elsewhere, but it's impossible to finish the book without feeling love, sympathy, and admiration for many of these men. In context, the title is harsher than it may appear: "Doing the best I can" means helping out the woman, who remains the primary financial provider, the parent of first response and last resort. But the men interviewed here are struggling, with virtually no models and little support, to do better than they did before—and better than their own fathers.

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Friend of Justice

Tom Quigley

He bore one of the most storied names in Cuban history. The *Padre de la Patria*, Father of the Nation, who freed his slaves and issued the first declaration of independence in 1868 was his great-great-grandfather, also Carlos Manuel de Céspedes. Two other grandparents, one a Céspedes, the other a García-Menocal, served as presidents of Cuba. Msgr. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes y García-Menocal, the faithful priest, seminary rector, spokesperson for the bishops' conference, and prolific writer who died January 3 in Havana, was also a great Cuban patriot.

Céspedes was born in Havana in 1936 and ordained in Rome in 1961, just before the Second Vatican Council. He returned to Cuba in 1963, in the midst of the harshest church-state conflict the country had known. Recognizing that irreversible change had come to both his church and his country, he set about doing what was possible to preserve the integrity of the Cuban church even as its educational institutions were shut down and many of its clergy and religious expelled.

Early on, Fidel Castro's regime determined that no other institutions would be allowed to challenge the Marxist government's total control of the lives of its citizens. The Protestant churches, largely dependent on U.S.-based denominations, offered no threat, and so some of them were cosseted by Castro as exemplars of his policy of religious freedom. The Catholic Church, however, represented a challenge. With so many priests and religious expelled, and with atheistic indoctrination imposed in the country's schools, maintaining a national seminary was crucial for the future of the Cuban church. Céspedes, who had been a brilliant student (and who undoubtedly benefitted from bearing such a well-known and respected name), devoted himself fully to that task from his first years back in Cuba, teaching at the national seminary and soon becoming its rector. Havana's Cardinal Jaime Ortega later credited him with "saving" the Cuban seminary at that critical time.

From 1970 to 1991, Céspedes served as director of the general secretariat of the bishops' conference. He was the public face of much of the church's activities in those days, the *vocero* or spokesman for the bishops. It was he who orchestrated the first visit of a group of U.S. bishops to Cuba in 1985. On arrival, the visitors were invited to meet with Castro, to which they agreed—provided that the Cuban bishops could also be present. To that point Castro had had virtually no contact with his country's bishops, dealing with church matters solely through the Vatican's chargé d'affaires, Bishop Cesare Zacchi, and the Cuban bishops' key representative, Céspedes. The meeting finally took place in the apostolic nunciature, the same venue where the aging Castro met Pope Benedict in March 2012 (see "Benedict Goes to Cuba," *Commonweal*, August 17, 2012).

I first met Carlos in 1974, when, as a member of the U.S. bishops conference staff, I managed to get on a Potemkin-village tour run by the government's Institute for Friendship among Peoples (ICAP). I had brought with me a draft document on U.S.-Cuba relations, prepared by what was then known as the World Justice and Peace office under Marvin Bordelon. Carlos took the document, and the next day we walked and walked in the seminary garden while he explained carefully what he found praiseworthy and what was lacking in it. He finally concluded that the timing was "not opportune" for the U.S. bishops to issue it. "Not opportune" was a frequent verdict of the Cuban bishops as their U.S. counterparts proposed outreach projects in the coming years. The 1985 visit, and a visit to the United States by the Cuban conference leadership in November of that year, was the beginning of a very close relationship between the two conferences that lasts to this day. I have just pulled out my Cuban correspondence files to read, with increasing admiration, and now with sorrow, some eighty lengthy letters to and from Carlos.

Msgr. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes y García-Menocal

In parts of the Cuban diaspora today, Zacchi, Ortega, and Céspedes are reviled as traitors to the *patria*. They were the architects of a policy of *acercamiento*, of building ties with the all-powerful government, which they deemed preferable to flailing impotently and having no impact. Céspedes has been described as a "friend of justice and enemy of extremism," virtues in short supply among some in the exile community. When the full story of the church in Cuba under the Castros is finally written, there will be few brighter chapters than that on Carlos Manuel de Céspedes y García-Menocal. *Que en paz descanse*. ■

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Daniel K. Finn holds the William E. and Virginia Clemens Chair in Economics and the Liberal Arts at the University of Saint John's, Collegeville, Minn. An internationally respected economic ethicist, his authored and edited books include *Christian Economic Ethics: History and Implications* (2013), *The True Wealth of Nations: Catholic Social Thought and Economic Life* (ed., 2010), and *The Moral Ecology of Markets: Assessing Claims about Markets and Justice* (2006).