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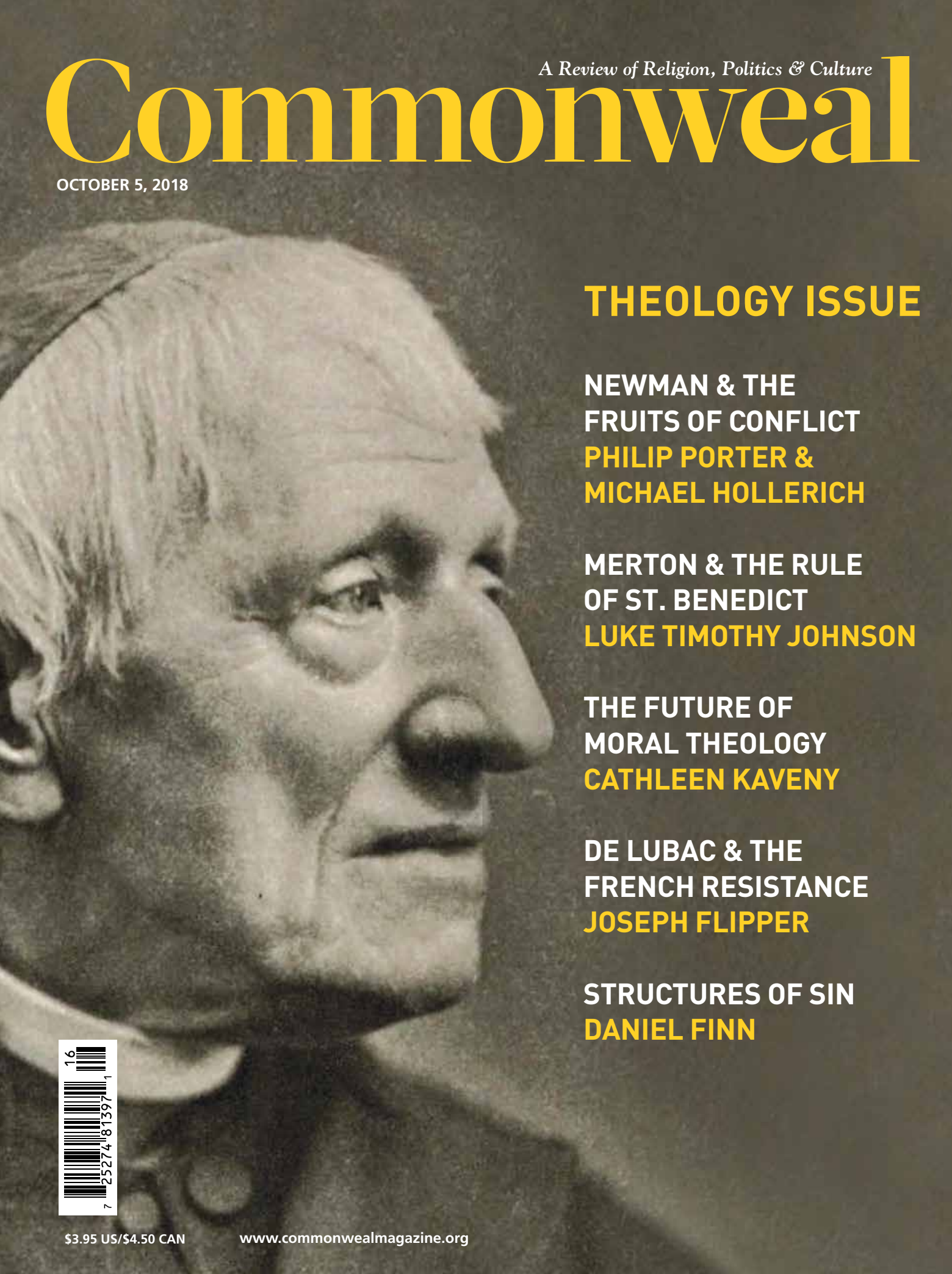

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LETTERS

Sex abuse & clericalism

Having grown up Catholic in the 1950s I was encouraged as we all were to go to confession regularly, even weekly. It was all right until I reached my teen years when, being a healthy young boy, I started to have somewhat embarrassing things to confess on Saturday afternoon. It was uncomfortable to make a "thorough examination of conscience," and more uncomfortable to have to enter that darkened little room, get on my knees, and share it all with a priest. I tried very hard to have "perfect contrition"—that is, to be sorry for my sins because they offended God, not because I was afraid of hell's eternal flames. I tried, and I failed: I was afraid of going to hell, there was no getting around that. Still, with all of its inherent difficulties, I always felt better after confession and absolution. I walked home a little lighter having been forgiven for my sins.

The recent news out of Pennsylvania has been unsettling for the church once again. As a compensated victim of priestly sex abuse I've had to relive the day I was harmed when I was an eleven-year-old altar boy. Every time I think I'm over it, I'm reminded that I will never be over it. I've learned to live with it better over the years, but the memory lingers on even as I approach my seventy-first birthday. Thinking about it now brings me back to confession, which we call reconciliation now. Even though I believe the Holy Spirit to be the head of our church, the fact remains that the institutional Catholic Church is run by our clergy. Among the clergy are some of the most holy men I have ever met, and I thank God for them. But I also feel that as a church it's past time for our clergy as a group to seek reconciliation. I'm not talking about the sin of sex abuse, for not all priests have committed that sin. No, I wish for all clergy to make a thorough examination of conscience with regard to another issue. I ask all priests, monsignors, bishops, cardinals, and the pope himself to ask themselves to what extent they feel they are different from or above the rest of us.

Jesus had a lot to say about such things, and he didn't mince words. He finally brought a little child into the midst of the disciples and told them that this was what they should strive to be. It's time for reconciliation. It's time we were a church again instead of *The* Church. It's time we talked to each other—clerical and lay—as coequal, fellow children of God. It's time to start over, to get on our knees and wash each other's feet. We'll feel lighter on the way home.

PAUL TAPOGNA
East Islip, N.Y.

From the Editors

A Crisis Gone to Waste

Ten years ago this fall, the global economy was on the brink of collapse. The failure of the investment bank Lehman Brothers set off a credit crisis that led to the longest and deepest recession since the 1930s. Before it was over, 9 million Americans had lost their jobs, and about as many had lost their homes. Technically, the U.S. economy began to recover the following year, but it would take most of the next decade for it to make up all the ground it lost in eighteen months.

One would like to believe all that is behind us now and Wall Street has learned its lesson. The headline numbers all indicate that the economy is thriving. The Gross Domestic Product is growing at an annual rate of more than 4 percent; unemployment is down to 3.9 percent, the lowest it's been since the 1960s; the stock market and corporate profits continue to soar. Meanwhile, the biggest banks—those judged too big to fail—hold twice as much capital as they did before the financial crisis. They must now undergo regular stress tests to prove that they can weather another crisis. In case they can't, they must also have "living wills"—plans for an orderly bankruptcy that will (in theory) keep their failure from destabilizing the whole financial system.

Nevertheless, there are good reasons to worry. As David Leonhardt of the *New York Times* has pointed out, those headline numbers don't tell the whole story. Yes, the unemployment rate is low, but only because it doesn't count all those who might want a full-time job but have given up looking for one. Today, nearly 15 percent of men between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-four, including those who have dropped out of the labor market, are not working—a number far more important than the official unemployment rate. Yes, the stock market has gone from strength to strength, but the richest 10 percent of Americans own 84 percent of all stock, and half of American households own none. More important, the median household's net worth is still about $40,000 lower than it was when the housing bubble burst. Yes, the economy is growing at an impressive rate, but the fruits of that growth have all gone to the top earners. The real median earnings of full-time workers went down last year by 1.1 percent. In short, our standard indicators of prosperity have allowed the staggering wealth of a few to obscure the fact that too many Americans are still struggling.

Some economists believe that growing inequality was among the causes of the financial crisis, as consumers made up for their stagnant wages by borrowing more and saving less, thus creating a credit bubble. What's certain is that, ten years after the crisis, inequality remains a serious problem. The Treasury Department's $700 billion bank bailout may have saved the system, but it also saved financiers and investors from suffering the consequences of their collective folly. Less mercy was shown to those on the other side of the reckless lending, the millions of low- and middle-income Americans who could no longer keep up with their mortgage payments. Quantitative easing—the Federal Reserve's technique of creating money to buy back government bonds—may have kept the recession from becoming a full-blown depression, but it also had the predictable effect of inflating the prices of financial assets owned mainly by the wealthy.

For its part, Wall Street is doing its best to forget whatever lesson it learned. Banking lobbyists are working to scuttle key provisions of the Dodd Frank Act, which was designed to curb the riskiest kinds of financial speculation and to protect consumers from predatory lending. In May a bill that relaxes regulation for twenty-five of the nation's thirty-eight largest banks passed Congress with bipartisan support. Worse, the Trump administration is quietly using its regulatory agencies to ease capital requirements for the very largest banks and to hollow out the Volcker Rule, which prohibits banks from speculating with their depositors' money. On the campaign trail, Trump ran against Wall Street, bragging he was rich enough not to need its support, but since taking office he has consistently done its bidding.

Sooner or later there will be another crisis and, once again, those hit hardest won't be bank executives, but working-class Americans who struggle to get by even when markets are roaring. We can also be fairly certain that if bank failure should ever again threaten to sink the entire economy, there will another round of emergency bailouts: *duresse oblige*. In the meantime, however, we should not be hastening the next crisis with deregulation, or cutting taxes for financiers and investors while everyone else falls further behind. Any politician who believes that Washington has been too hard on Wall Street is mistaken, and should be firmly corrected by voters this November. ■

Mollie Wilson O'Reilly

Her, Too

STOP MAKING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE INTO MARTYRS FOR VIRGINITY

When I read the news about the sixteen-year-old murder victim who was beatified as a "martyr to purity," I had to check the date on the paper. Had I somehow picked up a sixty-year-old edition of *Catholic New York*? Alas, no. This girl, killed by a would-be rapist, was beatified on September 1, 2018, and it was Pope Francis who approved her classification as a martyr *in defensum castitatis*—in defense of her virginity. We are, it seems, still doing this.

Anna Kolesárová was a Slovak girl who was shot to death in her own home, in front of her family, by a soldier from the occupying Red Army in 1944. Her courage and her suffering are undeniable. She is the first Slovak layperson to be beatified. Her death at the hands of a Russian soldier makes her a symbol of the struggle against totalitarianism, and her cult represents a renewal of religion after Communism, especially among the young. The trouble is not in her biography, but in the outdated and harmful ideas about sex and purity the church applies to her death. A recent account from the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life says that Anna "repeatedly rejected the young man's advances, preferring to die rather than give herself to him." A church that continues to talk this way about rape, murder, and chastity is a church that cannot credibly face its own crisis of sexual abuse or repair its damaged moral authority.

In August, the Slovak bishops conference circulated a pastoral letter that describes Anna as having been "fully aware, despite her young age" of the consequences of the soldier's advances, and praises her for having "followed the voice of conscience" without deliberation. The letter explains her story's relevance for modern youth: "Today, the temptations against purity are much greater than before—they weigh on the young soul from every direction, via the internet and media." It does not seem possible that now, today, we should need to ask this question: Was Anna murdered because she heroically resisted "temptation"? Or was she murdered by a man who tried to rape her at gunpoint? It can't be both. Anna's death is both tragic and galvanizing. But, as B. D. McClay wrote about Maria Goretti in a recent essay for this magazine, "The trouble is that she didn't choose to die. Someone chose to kill her."

Anna Kolesárová

Maria and Anna are both classified as having died in defense of their "chastity," "purity," or "virginity"—translations vary. But those concepts are not interchangeable. For too long the church has been fixated on women's virginity as an end in itself, as if chastity were a possession a girl can lose for good, rather than a virtue to be cultivated. This view reduces women to objects that men can possess or spoil, and makes men—all men—a threat to be deflected. It is warped, toxic, and totally at odds with everything else the church has taught me about love and relationships, and so, like many Catholic women, I've spent a lifetime shrugging it off. I've rolled my eyes at Augustine and Aquinas arguing about the Blessed Mother's hymen, and I cringed and said nothing to the homilist who kept referring to Mary's perpetual virginity at my sons' elementary school Mass. Even so, I cannot fathom how the church, in 2018, can talk about a murdered girl as if she were holier, by virtue of her death, than one who was raped and survived.

Can Anna Kolesárová inspire young people to embrace chastity, as Slovak bishops suggest? Young women know the difference between assault and seduction, even if their bishops do not. Anna was attacked by a violent stranger. It was not up to her, in that moment, to avoid the sin of sexual impurity. And if her story is told in a way that conflates the impulse to rape and murder with ordinary male desire, what meaning does it hold for young men?

The church, meanwhile, could learn a lot from victims of sexual violence—but only if we recognize that their stories tell us little about how women and men should think about sin and purity in the context of healthy, consensual sexual relationships. A church that badly needs to offer healing to survivors of sexual assault must stop suggesting that those victims would be better examples of holiness if they'd fought harder. Young people (and all people) need guidance to make moral choices about sex and love. But they won't get it from a church that's still telling girls they're better off dead than raped. ■

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Jo McGowan

Sharks & Minnows

HOW USURERS PREY ON IGNORANCE & DESPERATION

A few weeks ago, I learned that a senior staff member at the foundation I run—I'll call her Mira—had borrowed money from a number of colleagues to buy a house. She had promised to repay them all by a mutually agreed-upon date, but nearly a year later, she still hadn't. Patience had already worn thin when we learned that Mira had also bought herself a new car. There was so much tension in the office at this point that I had to speak with her. She was baffled by my concern. "No, no," she said, reassuringly. "You don't understand. I didn't have to pay *anything* for the car. I traded in my old one and they just gave me the new one."

I tried to explain to her that no one gives cars away for free, that people who are owed money expect to be paid before the person they lent to makes another major purchase. She tried to defend herself, but the more she argued her case, the more confused she became. Simple questions baffled her and she was astonished by the most obvious conclusions. By the end of our conversation, this college-educated woman was in tears, suddenly aware of how many ways she had been deluded and the extent of her predicament. In addition to the colleagues who had loaned her money, there was also a professional loan shark in the mix. The 100,000 rupees he had loaned her had now become a 450,000-rupee debt, despite the fact that she had already repaid 60,000 rupees. Mira had stepped into the dark world of usury in India—an unforgiving place that thrives on ignorance and desperation and that often ends in threats, cruelty, violence, even suicide. It is run by a mafia and depends upon the cooperation of the police.

While interest on loans is now an accepted part of business, at one time most religions forbade it, or at least regulated it strictly. The earliest recorded condemnation of usury is in the Vedas—ancient Hindu scriptures dating back to 1700 BCE and crucial to Hindu revivalists in India today. The Manusmriti, another ancient Hindu text, does not condemn usury absolutely, but clearly specifies which rates of interest are morally acceptable and which aren't. According to Wendy Doniger, a scholar of Hinduism at the University of Chicago, the Law of Manu allowed different rates of interest for different castes, with the lowest rate reserved for high-status Brahmins—who also wrote the law. The Hebrew Bible

allowed interest on a loan to a Gentile, but not among Jews. The Christian Church was for centuries unequivocal in its condemnation of the practice. In 1311, Pope Clement V declared acceptance of usury to be a heresy, while Pope Sixtus V said it was "detestable to God and man, damned by the sacred canons, and contrary to Christian charity." Strong words for a practice we now view as perfectly normal and even unavoidable.

The man from whom Mira borrowed money pretended he was just trying to help someone in a difficult situation. When he told her that his rate of interest for the loan would be 15 percent, compounded monthly, she agreed, certain that she would be able to pay him back by the very next month. It does not seem to have occurred to her that by the end of the year, the rate on her loan would reach 180 percent. But how this is really calculated is anyone's guess; nothing was written down. It is hard to imagine how a loan of 100,000 rupees, of which 60,000 has been repaid, can possibly increase to 450,000 in thirteen months. But that's what happened. And the loan shark, who came by our office several times to loom and glower, looked menacing enough to frighten anyone.

Unlike my colleague, the vast majority of those who rely on usurious lenders in India are forced to do so by grinding poverty and the lack of any kind of social safety net. They are farmers who toil year round and never see cash until the harvest comes in, tailors who live from one wedding season to the next, daily-wage laborers who get injured on the job and can't work. They borrow from the local loan shark only in the direst emergencies: a parent with a life-threatening illness, a house that has collapsed in the monsoons, a job lost and a child's education in jeopardy. In their desperation, they have no choice but to clutch at whatever lifeline is thrown their way. For some, usury becomes an endless downward spiral they can't escape. They take a second loan to fend off the first shark and then a third to shake the second. Some steal out of town at night and try to start again in place where nobody knows them. Some, realizing the futility of the struggle, just kill themselves and their children.

In a People's Tribunal in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, sixty victims of usury came forward to tell their stories. What is most striking is how similar they are both to each other and to the hundreds of thousands who take "pay-day loans" in low-income neighborhoods throughout the world. The working poor have been the favorite targets of usurers since at least 1700 BCE. ■

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Cathleen Kaveny

Not Just Sin-Spotters

THE CHANGING ROLE OF CATHOLIC MORAL THEOLOGIANS

Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church (CTEWC), a network of over 1,400 moral theologians from around the world, held its third global conference in Sarajevo in late July. The brainchild of my Boston College colleague James Keenan, SJ, CTEWC has also organized numerous regional conferences in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America since its inception in 2002. Its mission includes helping Catholic ethicists "to appreciate the challenge of pluralism; to dialogue from and beyond local culture; and, to interconnect within a world church not dominated solely by a northern paradigm." It certainly succeeded in doing that.

But it also provided an apt occasion to reflect on the changing vocation of a Catholic moralist, at least for me. I thought it significant that the fiftieth anniversary of *Humanae vitae* passed without much explicit attention during the conference. Nonetheless the milestone was tacitly signaled by the presence of Charles Curran. Having organized the resistance to the encyclical as a young professor, Curran took the stage in Sarajevo a half century later as an elder statesman to give his keynote. He seemed to be passing the torch.

I listened with great interest as Curran and other senior figures reminisced about the developments that have occurred in the field over the past few decades. As the days passed, it became clearer to me that many of those are irreversible. This claim is not progressive wishful thinking; many of them are taken for granted across the theological spectrum, among those who support as well as those who oppose *Humanae vitae*. Yet these changes bring a new set of challenges for the emerging generation of Catholic moralists, many of whom were present in Sarajevo. In fact, almost a third of the participants in the conference were junior scholars or doctoral students from around the world.

Immediately after the Second Vatican Council, Catholic moral theology was a very specialized and closed discipline. It was a subject taught by priests to future priests in seminary to prepare them to hear confessions. For that reason, the idea of women, or lay people more generally, engaging in the discipline would have seemed preposterous. Why train people to do what is canonically impossible for them to do? And if they can't do it, they certainly shouldn't be teaching it.

Fifty years later, lay men and women work collaboratively with priests and religious in the field. One third of the 421 participants in Sarajevo were women; of these, about 80 percent were lay women. The split was fifty-fifty among the male participants—half lay men and half ordained priests.

Personification of the Faculty of Theology, Křižovnické Square, Prague

In other words, most of the moralists attending CTEWC were lay people.

But what, exactly, is the role of lay moralists? While many of us are professors, not everyone teaches seminarians; instead, many of us teach undergraduates, including those who are not even Catholic. A few of us work in institutions that are not Catholic. We are not training our students to be good confessors, but instead teaching them to be good and well-informed people.

Furthermore, we don't fit neatly within the structure and style of magisterial authority that supported and sorted older forms of Catholic moral theology. Fifty years ago, priests and seminarians consulted a tight band of "approved authors" who offered reliable answers to disputed questions. While they might differ on particulars, Dominicans, Jesuits, and Redemptorists all operated within the same basic neo-Thomistic framework.

That unity of topic and method doesn't hold today. The conference featured two fascinating "poster sessions," where ethicists from around the world exhibited their approaches. Some worked out of a feminist framework; Dr. Nontando Hadebe (Zimbabwe/South Africa) offered a poster titled "Women Rising Up for Justice." Others operated from a more traditional virtue-theory approach, albeit one inculturated in a particular social context; Kochuthresia Puliappallil, OSS, (India) posted a display with the title "Virtues: The Bridge Builder." Some drew mainly on Catholic sources,

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while others took a broader approach. For example, Egypt's Nader Michael, SJ, presented a poster whose topic was "Anthropology as a Forum for Interreligious Dialogue: A Study of Some Bioethical Topics in Islam and Catholicism."

Whereas the role of moralists on the eve of *Humanae vitae* was to provide authoritative answers, now their task seems to be to raise new and compelling questions. Presenters at CTEWC not only examined enduring problems (such as the meaning of death and dying) through new lenses; they also highlighted moral challenges that never appeared in the manuals, such as human trafficking, immigration justice, and climate change.

This emphasis on global questions and particular perspectives is a healthy corrective to the constraints of the manualist framework. As Pope Francis recently (and controversially) remarked: "I don't have all the answers. I don't even have all the questions. I always think of new questions, and there are always new questions coming forward." At the same time, it is not yet clear how our field will organize and prioritize these diverse methods, perspectives, and questions so that they do not devolve into a cacophony. It is no longer possible to identify any one "method" or school in Catholic ethical thought. How, then, will we speak with one another, rather than past one another?

For a while, this question troubled me greatly. I finally realized, however, that while there was no overarching conceptual structure, there was a notable overlap in concern. Three commitments ran through the presentations, as diverse as they were: (1) the goodness of God's creation, and our responsibility to care for it; (2) the dignity of every human being, especially the vulnerable and the marginalized; and (3) the demands of solidarity within and across various human communities. These commitments will be the touchstone of the conversation. We have disputes, of course, about what these commitments mean in particular cases. Nonetheless, they point to the possibility of developing a truly common theological conversation.

Classes in moral theology fifty years ago were essentially classes in "sin-spotting." Commonly written in Latin to convey the purported timelessness of their analysis, they trained seminarians to identify, classify, and evaluate the wide range of actions that could conceivably be committed and confessed by an individual penitent. More timely questions of social justice and solidarity were raised, if at all, in entirely different classes on Catholic social teaching. In other words, personal ethics and social ethics proceeded down parallel tracks. After Vatican II, however, the two lines slowly began to converge. John Paul II, for example, broadened his moral analysis of the acts of abortion and euthanasia to examine their social context in the 1995 encyclical *Evangelium vitae.*

It became clear in Sarajevo that many Catholic ethicists have taken things a step further. One might say that they have "flipped" the ethical classroom. Social and cultural analyses have now become the focus of attention, rather than constituting the background that contextualizes particular actions. Moreover, individual actions themselves are increasingly evaluated by the degree to which they participate in or resist structures of sin or oppression.

Some readers might object that this evolution in method is confined to progressives. Yet is it really? I was struck by the number of conservative moralists and pundits who celebrated the anniversary of *Humanae vitae* by emphasizing the prophetic nature of Pope Paul VI's cultural critique of societies dominated by a contraceptive mentality. Many touched only lightly, if at all, on the encyclical's neo-Scholastic analysis of the sexual act or even Pope John Paul II's "theology of the body." Moreover, both progressives and conservatives have approached the latest waves of church scandals not by focusing on the individual perpetrators of sexual abuse, but instead by asking hard (and despairing) questions about the clerical culture that enabled and protected them.

Yet individual people do still have to make particular moral decisions. While they may have overemphasized questions of sexual morality, the manuals took seriously the ethics of ordinary life—and the ordinary burdens of moral discernment. One challenge facing contemporary Catholic ethics, in my view, is to find a way to incorporate this tradition of casuistry into a more complex map of the moral universe. There are some helpful starting points. In the past few decades, many Catholic moralists have turned their attention to virtue theory, which is interested in the way in which performing particular acts can build up or erode an individual's moral character. Attending to the relationship between individual actions and structures of social sin is also important. Nonetheless, we need to guard against restricting our interest in the morality of individual actions to questions of complicity in those structures. That would be to indulge in another type of unhelpful reductionism.

The word "Catholic" means universal. Fifty years ago, the "universality" in Catholic ethics meant absorption into the Roman way of viewing things. Promising seminarians or young priests from around the globe would be brought to Rome to study, where they would be immersed in the manualist tradition so that they could apply its framework to problems they encountered back home. Catholicity—universality—moved deductively; it meant applying a general Roman framework to particular cases and cultures.

The CTEWC conference, however, modeled a very different and more inductive understanding of universality. The organizers worked hard to solicit contributions from a wide variety of particular Catholic communities. In his introductory remarks, Andrea Vicini, SJ, an incoming co-chair of CTEWC, recounted some powerful statistics. Over 60 percent of the participants were from the Global South. Fifty-two participants (fifteen women) came from Africa, representing sixteen countries. Seventy-nine participants (sixteen women) were from sixteen countries in Asia. Central America, the Caribbean, and South America sent

seventy-three participants from seventeen countries. North Americans constituted less than a quarter of the participants.

In the context of CTEWC, universality becomes a goal, rather than an artificial presupposition of the discussion. Many of the papers focused on climate change, drawing normative insights from ethical analysis of particular situations. For example, Scaria Kanniyakonil gave a paper that was equal parts ethnography, liturgy, and ethics: "The Climate Change and the People in Kuttanad, India: An Eco-theological Response from the Syro-Malabar Church in India." Annah Theresa Nyadombo, HOLMC (Zimbabwe) reflected on "The Climate Crisis and Its Impact on the Marginalized."

The risk of this understanding of universality, of course, is that it becomes a permanently elusive dream rather than an engaging work-in-progress. To put the question bluntly: How do we ensure that papers at future conferences of CTEWC have more in common than those delivered at the famously fissiparous meetings of the American Academy of Religion?

The conference itself suggests one important response: focus on inputs rather than outputs—on what future scholars *read*, rather than what and how they *write*. While coming from very different cultural contexts, the participants deployed a common frame of reference born of deep familiarity with the magisterial documents of Catholic social teaching, particularly *Laudato si'*. What about common secondary sources? An ongoing task of CTEWC has been to support a book series in which specific topics are examined by Catholic scholars from around the globe. Recent titles include *Feminist Catholic Theological Ethics*, edited by Linda Hogan and A. E. Orobator, SJ; *Just Sustainability*, edited by Christiana Zenner (Peppard) and Andrea Vicini, SJ; and *Living With(out) Borders*, edited by Agnes M. Brazal and María Teresa Dávila.

Pope Francis wrote a letter to the conference participants that was read in the opening session. Noting that Sarajevo is a "city of bridges," he urged the conference participants "to build bridges, not walls" with each other—and by implication, with both the past and the future of Catholic moral thought. Traversing these bridges, of course, is not an end in itself. In faithfulness to the "God who acts in history," the pope maintained that our task as moralists is "not to judge but rather to offer new paths, accompany journeys, bind hurts and shore up weakness." The great moral theologians of the past might quibble a bit about what Francis meant by "judging." But I think they would readily accept the goal of bringing weak and sinful human beings to embrace both God's justice and God's mercy. ■

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Joseph S. Flipper

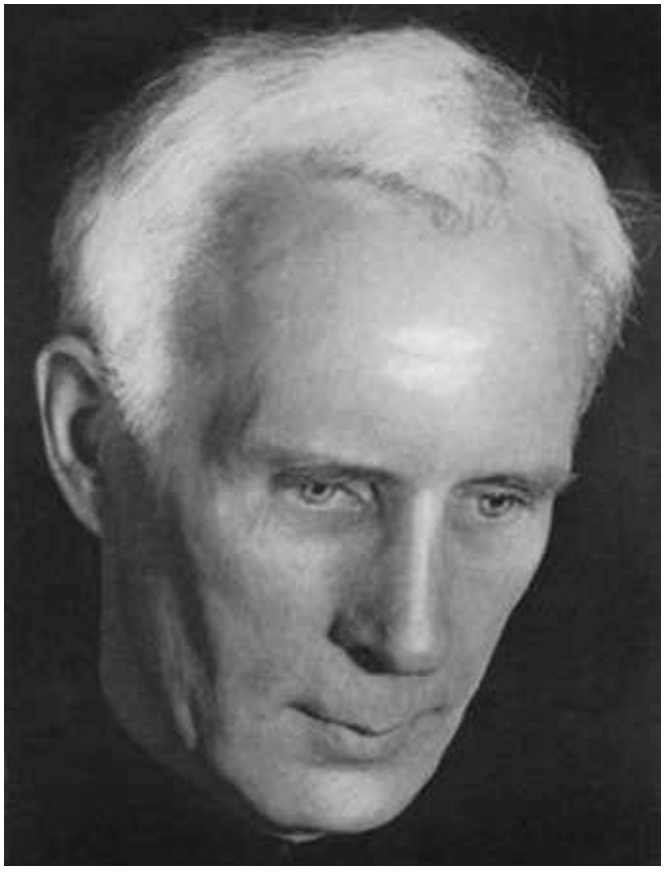
The Gods of Nation & Blood

HENRI DE LUBAC AND THE HERESY OF RACISM

About a year ago, a man from San Antonio sent me a short letter. "Back in the summer of 1982, I was sent to Lyon, France, as punishment for what had been a tumultuous freshman year at a Jesuit high school, after which I was asked not to return (incidentally, not because of grades)," he wrote. "I was to spend thirty-five days doing the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola with a family friend, Fr. Henri de Lubac. 'Fr. Henri' and I had a wonderful time and he helped me out a lot. We talked about his time in the French resistance in WWII, among other things." What a punishment! "Fr. Henri," or Henri de Lubac, SJ (1896–1991), was one of the preeminent Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. In 1983, one year after my correspondent's encounter with de Lubac, Pope John Paul II would make him a cardinal deacon, a largely honorary position, recognizing his vast theological contributions and holiness of life. It is fitting that de Lubac guided this man to discover God's will during his difficult youth. Spiritual discernment and spiritual resistance were characteristic of de Lubac's Jesuit vocation and personal mission.

Four decades earlier, de Lubac was involved in the effort to guide the church's response to anti-Semitic racism in German-controlled France. In 1940 Germany invaded the north of France and exercised de facto authority over the Vichy government in southern France. De Lubac had been assigned to Lyon, a center of the French resistance against Nazism in the Vichy-controlled *zone libre*. It became a refuge for exiles from German-occupied Paris—artists, Communists, intellectuals, and everyday people caught up in the war—who from there fought back against Nazism. From 1940 to 1944, the dark years of German occupation, de Lubac became a figure in the "spiritual resistance." He was part of a loose network of Catholic lay people, bishops, and priests who risked everything to guide the church during this crisis. Spiritual resistance was the name given to these unarmed efforts—prayer, preaching, organizing, and writing—to resist Nazi ideology, but spiritual did not mean it was passive. De Lubac did not think of resistance as primarily a political activity extraneous to Christian identity. Instead, he saw it as a spiritual activity coextensive with the vocation of the Christian Church and inextricable from what it means to be a Christian.

The theological foundations for de Lubac's anti-racism were outlined in his 1938 book *Catholicism*. There he argued that God sought to heal the divisions among the human race caused by sin and to regather human beings into a true unity. The church is the *communio sanctorum*, both the means to the unity of the human race and the visible sign of that unity, albeit incomplete this side of eternity. Racism, therefore, is not merely a moral failure. It strikes at the foundation of Christian doctrine.



Henri de Lubac, SJ

Early on in the German occupation, de Lubac spoke out openly against Nazism. A series of lectures at the Catholic University of Lyon in 1940 gave de Lubac "an opportunity to attack racism," drawing from the Christian notion of a common human origin and a common human destiny. In these lectures, de Lubac interpreted Nazism religiously and theologically *as anti-Christian at its very root*. For de Lubac, anti-Semitism is fundamentally theological, for its chief characteristic is the rejection of the God of the Jews and of the Bible. The hatred toward Judaism found in atheist humanism—Auguste Comte, Action Française, Louis Ménard, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Alfred Rosenberg—is principally an attack on the idea of God: "What it blames [Judaism] for, then, is what is most incontestable as well as most spiritual in the Bible"—that, is for "its very transcendence." European anti-Semites did not reject God's

favor toward a particular people, the Jews. They rejected a God who dispelled the ancient myths and who transcends the universe. They desired a return to the gods of nation and blood. "When we speak of 'neopaganism,' that is not a polemical expression," he explained: "In a renewed form, it is indeed the ancient pagan ideal that is waking to reject Christ." This amounted to "nothing less than the definitive apostasy of Europe." Reflecting on those lectures, he wrote, "In my naïveté, I still believed at that time that I was expressing the common sentiment of a very large part, if not all, of French Catholicism. I will also admit that if I had been able to foresee in concrete terms what was going to take place in the course of the following four years, I too would have undoubtedly been afraid and 'given way by a timid flight.'"

When de Lubac's open opposition to anti-Semitism became more dangerous, he turned to publishing underground journals, including *Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien*. The clandestine literature published during the occupation was referred to as *témoignage* (witness). *Témoignage* was not seen as merely an account of events but as an intentional, active participation in the events described, as a testimony to the truth silenced by the Vichy and German authorities.

De Lubac knew that being a witness to the truth was dangerous and could lead to martyrdom. One day, returning to Lyon on a trip, de Lubac was informed by an anonymous source that there were orders from the Gestapo for his arrest. "I was able to leave again in time," he wrote, "without even passing through the house, thereby just barely escaping the net that shortly after picked up Louis Richard [a Sulpician priest and theologian] at the university seminary in order to deport him." Under threat of arrest, de Lubac stayed in various religious houses, carrying in a satchel stacks of notecards that would later be organized into books.

The church's response to racism and anti-Semitism during those dark years was tepid. The Catholic clergy had been initially passive in response to the denaturalization law of 1940, which revoked the French citizenship of Jews, and the anti-Semitic statutes of October 1940, which mobilized Vichy-controlled France to find and expel foreign-born Jews. In a letter dated April 25, 1941, de Lubac wrote to his superiors in the Jesuit order to convince them to act. He claimed that Hitler's war was first of all an "anti-Christian revolution" and the "brutal return" to neopaganism. In addition to underscoring this unfolding human calamity and the appearance of concentration camps in France, he described a slow imposition of the "cult of the state" leading to a "collective apostasy."

The occupiers were waging an anti-Semitic propaganda campaign aimed at influencing lay Catholics, while also attempting to dissuade religious superiors and bishops from speaking out. Religious leaders were pressured to avoid "political Catholicism"—that is, inserting the church into the political sphere. De Lubac accused the French church, particularly the clergy, of passively accepting the anti-Semitism of the Vichy government. This is why de Lubac presented anti-Semitism as an essentially religious problem. "The anti-Semitism of today was unknown to our fathers; besides its degrading effect on those who abandon themselves to it, it is anti-Christian," he wrote. "It is against the Bible, against the Gospel as well as the Old Testament." De Lubac firmly set his plea to resist anti-Semitism within the Christian's baptismal call to resist the "tricks of the adversary." For de Lubac, the war was not merely political; it was a war for the soul of the French church.

On June 2, 1941, the Vichy government passed a new series of anti-Semitic statutes that restricted the number of Jews in certain professions and prohibited their employment in public service. In addition, it expanded the racial definition of Jew, making a greater number of people subject to the statutes. De Lubac drafted the Chaine Declaration with Abbé Joseph Chaine, Louis Richard, and Joseph Bonsirven, SJ, openly opposing the statutes on legal and theological grounds. First, they argued, the statutes overturned the legal precedent in France to avoid discrimination on the basis of religion. Second, the statutes embodied a denial of God's calling of the Jewish people and God's blessing of them. For the writers of the Chaine Declaration, the integrity of the church was at stake: "the blessing promised to Abraham's descendants is still upon them." They disseminated the Declaration on June 16. The force of their arguments prompted the French Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops to issue their own declaration of opposition to the statutes on July 24. The statements were clear and public warnings by the French clergy prohibiting the use of baptismal and marriage records in the identification of Jews.

De Lubac had a vivid sense that this political struggle was part of the struggle between good and evil. In 1941, he audaciously gave a lecture at the École des cadres d'Uriage, a school near Grenoble founded by the Vichy government. De Lubac interpreted the occupation as a spiritual crisis:

> Man is isolated, uprooted, 'disconcerted.' He is asphyxiated: it is as if emptiness had been formed in him by an air pump…. There is, at the innermost part of his consciousness, a metaphysical despair. It was of this hunger and this thirst that the prophet Amos once spoke: absolute hunger and thirst. Hunger and thirst that, in many cases, do not even know themselves to be such but that leave on the deepest palate a taste of death…. [S]ubstitute faiths fill this tragic void…. Inevitably something like a great call for air is produced in his inner void, which opens him to the invasion of new positive forces, whatever they might be.

The moral and spiritual void in France left the French susceptible to the invasion of dangerous new faiths—and active collaboration with Hitler after his invasion of their country. For decades prior to the rise of Nazism, French Catholicism had been co-opted by a nationalist ideology. Action Française, a nationalist party that repudiated the French revolutionary legacy and sought a return to monarchy

and social hierarchy, leveraged popular resentment toward French *laïcité* and captured the allegiance of the majority of French Catholics from 1910 to 1920. Charles Maurras, a principal figure in Action Française, though he was agnostic, sought the restoration of the monarchy and of Catholicism as a state religion. Maurras was for most of his life an agnostic who believed that Catholicism was necessary for social order in a unity of state, culture, and race—a unity that he called *intégrisme*. In 1926 Pope Pius XI condemned Action Française for making religion merely a means to political ends. But by then the hearts of many French Catholics had already been prepared for ethno-nationalism.

Passivity in the face of ethno-nationalism is a danger for today's church as it was for the French church of the 1940s. Though in immensely different circumstances, we live under a campaign of dehumanization and are caught up in the political mechanisms of imprisonment and death. Like Charles Maurras, former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon (who happens to be Catholic) has become the spokesman for a religious nationalism that preserves a shared culture, religion, and race. In his 2014 remarks to the Human Dignity Institute's conference at the Vatican, Bannon explained that the West must recover its religious vision to overcome its present and future challenges. With regard to Islam, he explained, "our forefathers…did the right thing. I think they kept it out of the world, whether it was at Vienna, or Tours, or other places.... It bequeathed to us the great institution that is the church of the West." However, when Bannon speaks of saving the religious vision of the Christian West, he is not speaking of God or of personal conversion, but instead of the recovery of an *ethnos*, a people, and its Christian religious heritage. His is a vision that borrows from the Christian faith while falsifying it. Despite Bannon's departure from the White House, his ethno-nationalist vision has been preserved in ideology and policy.

The ascendency of this vision, along with concurrent growth of white supremacist groups in the United States, requires discernment and action from the church. But racism has often been subject to misdiagnosis among Catholics. In response to last summer's "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, at which one person was killed and nineteen injured, some bishops initially framed the problem as a political one, over which there may be many opinions. As the facts in Charlottesville became better understood, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston rightly named the problem—"the evil of racism, white supremacy and neo-Nazism"—and called the church to "stand against every form of oppression." Archbishop Chaput of Philadelphia, however, provided the better diagnosis: "Racism is a poison of the soul. It's the ugly, original sin of our country, an illness that has never fully healed." He ended on a pessimistic, though perhaps more realistic, note: "We need to start today with a conversion in our own hearts, and an insistence on the same in others. That may sound simple. But the history of our nation and its tortured attitudes toward race proves exactly the opposite." In the wake of Charlottesville, the USCCB formed an ad hoc committee against racism that is working to discern a response to racism in the American context.

Theologically understood, racism is more than a sin. It constitutes a heresy that undermines the very identity of the church. Taking form in ideology and systemic exclusion, racism threatens to co-opt Christianity because it offers a powerful anti-Christian narrative about who we are as human beings while invoking Europe's "Christian heritage." We should be alarmed not only at the physical violence racism provokes, but also at the signs of the re-animated gods of nation and blood. As de Lubac recognized in the 1940s, unless the church embodies visibly what its doctrine proclaims it to be—the visible site of the reunification of a humanity divided by sin—it fails to be authentically catholic. ■

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Daniel K. Finn

'What Can You Do?'

UNDERSTANDING SINFUL SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Several years ago, I was leaving Guatemala on a Sunday morning when the newspaper ran a front-page story about a wealthy landowner who had been kidnapped a few days before. Such kidnappings for ransom occur there often enough that no one was surprised by the news, but this time things were different. The victim was forty-one years old and was somehow able to escape his captors after a few hours. He returned to his home and reported the crime to the police, who sent to investigate the incident the same three men who had kidnapped him that morning, now in their police uniforms.

The man had connections, he knew the head of the nation's Supreme Court, and the story made it onto the front page. I asked several locals what they thought of these events and they all responded the same way—with a shrug of the shoulders and some version of "What can you do?"

Corruption plagues every nation to one degree or another, but this kidnapping case manifests a criminal-justice system so pervasively corrupt that, in the parlance of Catholic social thought, one would surely call it a sinful social structure. For decades now, popes have spoken out against sinful social structures, a concept that has arisen from the work of liberation theologians. But neither papal teaching nor liberation theology has explained what a social structure is or how one can be sinful.

Critical realist sociology provides a perceptive analysis to answer the first question. A social structure is a system of relations among pre-existing social positions into which persons enter. A social structure has causal impact on the people within it by presenting them with restrictions and opportunities that frequently alter the decisions they would otherwise make. Structure affects moral agency.

Consider your local parish as a social structure. It is a complex system of relations among positions: parishioner and pastor, parishioner and fellow parishioner, pastor and parish secretary, pastor and chair of the pastoral council, etc. These positions existed long before you or your pastor or the secretary entered into them. One of the critical insights into structures is that they predate the people within them. Critical realist sociologist Margaret Archer reminds us that "the majority of actors are the dead." Consider the social position you entered into last Sunday, that of a parishioner, during your pastor's sermon. The social structure we call a parish generates restrictions against your standing during the homily to object or even raising your hand to ask for a clarification, actions you might well take in other settings. There doesn't have to be an *explicit* rule against such behavior in church, and the preacher doesn't have to enforce this implicit restriction on your decisions. The strange looks of disapproval you would receive from your fellow parishioners are penalty enough to prevent such actions.

It is important to notice that social structures restrict your decisions but do not remove your freedom. Any one of us *could* stand up during the homily to object. The fact that almost no one ever does means that our decision to live within restrictions tends to "reproduce" the structure itself. Most of us, most of the time, agree with the prohibitions implicit in the restrictions that social structures present to us, whether at church, at work, or on the road.

Structures don't only restrict. If you're fortunate enough to have a pastor who preaches well, then the structure of the parish also provides you with the opportunity to hear an insightful reflection on the readings and their implications for daily life. Here too there is no determinism. Each of us has the option to ignore the opportunity and daydream during the homily.

We live our lives within social structures, and make decisions in the face of their restrictions and opportunities, whether we enter the position of rider on a city bus, customer at Macy's, pedestrian on the crosswalk, or bridge player at the Monday night game. At our place of work, restrictions (conditional penalties) may lead us to submit those forms in duplicate even though we think the practice foolish. Opportunities (conditional rewards) also alter work behavior. Time-and-a-half for overtime has led many a factory worker to Saturday labor, and that bonus for meeting a monthly goal leads the salesperson to extra effort. And, of course, we've all bought something "because it was on sale." The opportunity of the lower price wasn't the only cause but it did alter our decision.

Much more could be said about the critical realist understanding of social structures, such as how they "emerge" from the actions of individuals, how they exist at a "higher" level than persons, how they are ontologically real things in the world, and how people can transform them. Still, we have enough so far to proceed to the second question: How can a social structure be sinful?

Only a person can "commit a sin." This fundamental insight of Catholic moral theology makes notions such as "social sin" difficult to define precisely, as demonstrated by the debates around social sin in the theological literature. Things can be clearer with the notion of a sinful social structure. Social structures themselves do not sin in the literal sense, but we can reasonably use the adjective "sinful"

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Tower of Babel*, ca. 1563–1565*

here in the same way that we can speak of an "evil" plan.

A fundamental intuition into the sinfulness of structures was presented by Pope Benedict XVI in one sentence of *Caritas in veritate*: "The Church's wisdom has always pointed to the presence of original sin in social conditions and in the structure of society." This insight is extended here in the claim that sinful social structures are sinful in the same way that original sin is sinful. Both influence our moral agency, and they do so in similar ways. No one is morally responsible for sins committed by an ancestor. The principal insight of the doctrine of original sin is that, whatever our efforts at virtue, we are sinners. There are eight things we might note about original sin, presented here with little defense due to the constraints of space. All are analogously true of sinful social structures.

First, original sin has its effect through both one's environment and one's personal disposition, as Pope Benedict indicated. Describing the views of Karl Rahner, Kevin A. McMahon has said that "the freedom and integrity of our decisions, already restricted by our individual sinfulness, is further compromised by the decision of others, at times in ways that make their influence, for all practical purposes, inescapable."

Second, when we reach an age of moral responsibility for our actions, we are already disordered due to original sin. As Jesse Couenhoven has expressed it, "disordered beliefs and loves" have shaped our "most basic cognitive, affective, and volitional powers."

Third, original sin is an inclination to evil, a reality that makes sinful choices more likely. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "human nature…is wounded in the natural powers proper to it; subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death; and inclined to sin."

Fourth, original sin's influence on our choices occurs *through* our freedom and not in violation of it. As Karl Rahner describes it, "we are a people who must inevitably exercise our own freedom subjectively in a situation which is co-determined by the objective occasions of guilt...permanently and inescapably."

Fifth, under the influence of original sin, our sinful choices occur with the psychological sense that only a part of our self is engaged. Describing Rahner's views, McMahon cites our "inability...to act with one's entire self in a given decision."

Sixth, each sinful choice made under the influence of original sin shapes who we are. Rahner explains that sin "is certainly not like breaking a window which falls into a thousand pieces, but afterwards I remained personally unaffected by it. Sin determines the human being in a definite way: he has not only sinned, but he himself is a sinner."

Seventh, formation in virtue by one's parents reduces the influence of original sin. Moral character is pivotal.

Eighth and finally, given the interplay of environment and personal disposition in original sin, it is impossible to draw a bright line between our freedom in choosing and the influence of that environment.

When social structures are sinful, they are sinful in a similar way. They do not force individuals to be sinful, but they make it more likely. (1) Sinful structures generate restrictions and opportunities that encourage sinful decisions by persons within them. (2) Sinful structures appeal to our disordered beliefs and loves. (3) Sinful structures incline those within them toward sinful choices. (4) Sinful structures have their influence by leading us to choose differently, but not in a deterministic way. (5) When we make a sinful choice reluctantly in the face of the influence of a sinful social structure, we have the sense that our "true" self has not made this decision. (6) If week after week we make the same sinful choices encouraged by the restrictions we face within a sinful social structure, we slowly become the *kind* of person who makes such sinful choices. (7) A virtuous person is more likely to be willing to "pay the price" required when violating restrictions presented within a sinful social structure. (8) When both structural restriction and a failure of virtue play a part in a sinful decision, it is not

possible to demarcate precisely how much each contributed to the decision.

Returning to the example I began with, we should understand the actions of the kidnapping police officers within the context of a sinful criminal-justice system. In nations where government corruption is taken for granted, officeholders find opportunities to accept bribes or extort payments and face few restrictions in doing so. In U.S. police departments where an unspoken racism prevails, officers stop and harass people of color with disproportionate frequency, as there are few restrictions on these unjust actions. In firms where profit is assumed to be the only goal of the organization, decisions ranging from plant closings to work rules on the shop floor are made with no more respect for the human dignity of employees than the law requires. In a church where the pastor has nearly unlimited authority over parish matters, an autocratic priest can arrive on the scene and undo in a month pastoral policies and practices that had taken decades to develop. In a university department aiming to improve its national status, decisions by senior faculty that leave too many untenured colleagues vying for too few tenured positions can tempt the untenured to destructively competitive choices. Many are the varieties of sinful social structures.

So, are there criteria to distinguish a sinful social structure from a virtuous one? First, just as there are no persons who are *only* sinful or *only* virtuous, the same is true for social structures. It seems likely that no social structure is only virtuous. Because a social structure is a system of relations among social positions, different positions face different restrictions and opportunities. Inevitably, persons in some positions are privileged in some way, and others are at a disadvantage. There can be morally defensible reasons for privilege but, even among virtuous persons, privileges are too often excessive and disadvantages too often unjust. At the same time, no social structure is only sinful. A police force that allows kidnapping may still enforce basic traffic laws.

Second, both restrictions and opportunities can be sinful. We are most aware of sinful restrictions because we face a painful decision. Do I act as I know I should (and undergo the penalty this will entail) or do I compromise my principles and do as "the system" expects? But opportunities can also lead us astray. These range from the obviously immoral (e.g., being offered a bribe) to the routinely difficult (e.g., deciding whether to take up the opportunity of a career-enhancing business trip or stay home with the family). Sometimes the combination of opportunity and restriction presents the most heartrending decisions. An Argentine colleague of mine knows a small city mayor there who was offered a $50,000 bribe from a drug cartel, accompanied by the threat to kidnap his son if he did not accept it.

Third, when we judge a restriction or opportunity as sinful, we are making an assumption about how it leads persons to alter their choices toward evil. That is, we are assessing the consequences. This presents a problem for Catholic moral theology, which has traditionally rejected consequentialist ethical theories. Such theories (e.g., utilitarianism) assert that the only things that matter in a moral judgment are the consequences of the action. In institutional life, consequences are not the only things that matter, but they are morally crucial. Traditionally, prudence has been introduced at this point in the analysis, but prudence has to include a moral assessment of competing causal frameworks. The morally optimal driver-safety program for employees of your local electric company isn't the one that eventuates in no accidents. That would be too expensive and probably impossible anyway. There will have to be a trade-off between more employee hours spent in safety training and a reduction in accidents. The same is true for diversity training in your local police department or public school.

So if we're going to label an institution as sinful, we need to estimate and evaluate the consequences of any effort to alter existing restrictions and opportunities. This insight goes a long way toward explaining why a liberationist may judge capitalism immoral while a neoconservative thinks otherwise. They *might* disagree morally, but they *certainly* differ on the effects that the restrictions and opportunities generated by capitalism have on the people acting within it. Any moral assessment of a social structure—whether your parish, your workplace, or the national immigration system—entails a set of causal assumptions, too often made without thought.

Finally, because what would be sinfully evil in a criminal-justice system is different from what would be sinfully evil in a business, a parish, a city-planning commission, Congress, or the local Little League, there can be no single set of criteria to delineate a sinful social structure. Critical realist sociology offers Christians profound insight into how moral agency is affected by social structures, but a specific moral analysis will be required for each type of structure.

All this may at first sound quite abstract, but it does suggest an important local strategy. If you want to increase justice in any group, bring everyone (or, where that isn't possible, people representing everyone) to the table and start by identifying the differing restrictions and opportunities faced by different subgroups. It takes moral conviction for leaders to undertake this effort, because it identifies privilege and disadvantage. Each of these may be morally justifiable, but taken-for-granted moral warrants of the privileged often appear thin when exposed to even the most respectful scrutiny. This process cannot, of course, guarantee justice, but it's a good start. ■

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Benedictine monks working in the cloister of the monastery of Samos, Lugo, Spain

ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

How a Monk Learns Mercy

Thomas Merton & the Rule of St. Benedict

Luke Timothy Johnson

I have read Thomas Merton off and on since I was thirteen, and over those sixty years have gone through stages of admiration, emulation, disenchantment, and rediscovery. Like many other readers, I have been impressed by the importance of mercy in his writings. Where did this emphasis come from? I think some part must have been played by Merton's experience as a monk living under the Rule of Benedict. Merton's emphasis on the practice of mercy had important roots in his monastic formation. The Rule of Benedict created a Scripture-shaped world suffused with reminders of God's mercy, and the experience of life together made monks aware of their need for mercy, even as it gave them the means of exercising it toward each other.

The School of the Lord's Service

When Benedict declared in the prologue to the Rule that he was establishing a "school of the Lord's service," he was tapping into an already ancient tradition with roots in Greco-Roman culture, in Scripture, and in the Gospel portrayal of Jesus as a teacher with disciples. In this tradition, a school was not a place for the transmission of abstract information, but rather for the cultivation of personal transformation. Such transformation took place when disciples who were committed to the common life engaged in practices—Benedict calls them the "tools of good works"—that embodied the monastic ideal of humility and obedience.

The "strictness of discipline" in monastic life was no mere matter of regulations and punishments. It was above all a matter of progressively actualizing the character of Christ through *bodily practice*. In his simple "rule for beginners," Benedict provided the framework within which such transformation could take place. All ancient education took for granted that character derived from habitual virtuous action, and the formation of habits was basic to all philosophical training. Benedict spends the bulk of the Rule talking about what monks should do with their bodies, the where, when, and how of life together. Readers who find pedestrian the prescriptions concerning the measure of food and drink, clothing, sleeping arrangements, modes of procession, service at table, and the special concern for the young, elderly, and guests, miss the point: namely, that habits of virtue are formed by all these bodily practices.

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Repetition is the key mechanism of habit formation, and the distinctive Benedictine vow of stability ensured that monks would stay long enough to gain the full benefit of such repetition. As Benedicta Ward has observed, the Benedictine practice of reading Scripture was less a search for answers than a savoring of the divine word; the same passage could be read again and again. The Rule also was read aloud, not only when someone entered the community, but also daily at meals through the year. The round of the liturgical year and the pattern of the monastic life alike provided the structure for learning through embodied repetition.

The supreme instrument shaping the disposition of monks was the *Opus Dei*, the "work of God." The importance Benedict attached to the *Opus Dei* is indicated by the amount of legislation he devotes to it. All of chapters 8–20 are given to the *Opus Dei*, and fourteen other chapters touch on it. The monastic day was punctuated by times of prayer in common: Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. Benedict justified the eight times of prayer using Psalm 118:164, "Seven times a day have I given praise to you," and Psalm 119:62, "At midnight I rose to give praise to thee." The complete psalter was chanted together each week.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the formative role played by the repetitive chanting of the psalms. This practice, above all, enabled the monks to imagine the world that Scripture envisions, and to live within that imagined world as though it was real—and then, by their practices, to *make* it real. In the *Opus Dei* the psalms were not studied at a distance, as the prayers of ancient people. They were actualized, appropriated, performed, and personalized. The psalms enabled first-person, first-order speech to the Living God in praise, thanksgiving, complaint, and petition. And bit by bit, the world of the psalms, a world created at every moment by God, a world in which God hears the prayers of the faithful and comes to their assistance, became their world as well. As Merton noted in his conferences to the novices at Gethsemane, "The office is not the whole prayer life of the monk. It is only a part of that prayer life. But it is the great school of monastic prayer."

Mercy in Scripture

What is the meaning of the term "mercy" in Scripture? The Greek and Latin versions of the Bible used by the Catholic tradition—the Septuagint and the Vulgate—employ the terms *eleos* and *misericordia* in the manner of Greek and Roman culture. Both terms point to what can be called a transactional disposition. In common usage, mercy is not egalitarian; it denotes the stance of a superior to an inferior, that is, from one blessed to one miserable. The terms for mercy embrace practical assistance, rescue, forgiveness of debts; thus, *eleos* is extended by *eleemosyne*, or the sharing of possessions with those without.

The scriptural use of these terms is enriched, however, by the fact that they are used to translate *chesed*, one of the most theologically fraught terms in the Hebrew Bible, used for one of the two fundamental covenantal qualities—modern English translations render it as "loving kindness." In the covenant between God and Israel, *chesed* and *emeth* (fidelity) are qualities that God ascribes to himself, as he reveals himself to Moses on the mountain (Exodus 34:6–7). Thus, Scripture adds to the Greek and Latin understandings of mercy the element of a covenantal relationship, and makes bold to imagine the creator of all that exists as entering into such a covenant with humans.

If we think about the elements in human mercy—that we see or hear the other as other; recognize the other as being in need; respond with a disposition of fellow feeling or compassion; and act to relieve the other of the condition of misery—we realize that Scripture ascribes these elements in a preeminent degree *to God* and his essential character. The Living God who brings all that into existence at every moment has a personal relationship to creation, and above all to those bearing his image, and shows his fidelity and mercy to them forever.

Nowhere is this truth about God more extravagantly displayed than in the psalms chanted by monks every day, week, month, and year of their lives. More than half the occurrences of *misericordia* in the Vulgate are in the psalms. God's mercy is extended to Israel as a nation and to every individual: "The earth is filled with the mercy of the Lord" (Psalm 118:64); "In the morning let me hear of your mercy, for in you I trust." (Psalm 143:8). Such is the character of the God that monks found in the *Opus Dei*, and by their constant chanting of the psalms, they were able to imagine their own world as one saturated with divine mercy.

The Canticles

The Rule of Benedict pays particular attention to the two main daytime hours of prayer. At both Lauds and Vespers, the Rule directs "the canticle from the Gospel Book" to be sung in addition to the assigned psalms. Benedict refers to the Benedictus and the Magnificat from the Gospel of Luke (1:46–59 and 1:68–79). For the monks who chanted these canticles together with the other psalms of Lauds and Vespers, they were experienced as New Testament psalms, which carried into the story of John, Jesus, and Mary the same powerful emphasis on God's mercy. Merton tells his novices that the canticles are "the bridges between the Old and New and contain in themselves all the riches of divine revelation in Scripture." The term "mercy" occurs twice in each canticle, and a comment on each of these songs in turn enables us to appreciate how they might have enhanced an appreciation of the monastic life as one steeped in mercy.

The Benedictus speaks of God's visitation of his people and the raising of a horn of salvation as a fulfillment of the prophets and as a remembrance of the covenant God made with Abraham—this present action is "to perform the mercy promised to our fathers"; it is a "redemption" and "horn of

salvation" that "saves us from our enemies and from the hands of all who hate us." Monks chanting this canticle at the break of their day would need no elaborate scheme of allegory to understand themselves as having escaped the clutches of their enemies (the vices from which they had turned) and as living in the way of peace according to the rule, so that, as the canticle says, they might "serve [God] without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

At the late-afternoon hour of Vespers, Mary's Canticle again follows the regular assigned psalms every day; thus, the Magnificat and the Benedictus are the "psalms" most frequently chanted by monks. In the Magnificat the theme of mercy is again sounded twice. Mary states that God has done great things for her, "and his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation." Like Zechariah, she connects God's present mercy with his promises to the patriarchs: "He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his posterity forever."

Two particular features, though, distinguish her song from that of Zechariah. First, the display of God's mercy on those who fear him comes together with judgment on those who do not: even as God exalts those of low degree and fills the hungry with good things, he scatters the proud, casts the mighty from their thrones, and sends the rich away empty. Luke has Mary anticipate the prophetic message of her son (Luke 4:16–21; 6:20–26): good news to the poor means also bad news to the rich. The monks who chanted these words, however, could take comfort from knowing they had chosen to be among the humble, while at the same time remembering that they must fight always to scatter the arrogance that could so easily enter their hearts.

Second, monks could also identify particularly with Mary herself, whose "low estate" corresponded to their own humility, just as her words to Gabriel—"Let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)—provide an exemplar for their own commitment to obedience. Indeed, the Magnificat reveals Mary as the model for the monk, and a conduit for God's mercy. At least since the eleventh century, the final song of the monastic day was the *Salve Regina*, sung every night at the end of Compline. It begins, "Hail, our Queen, the mother of mercy, hail, our life, sweetness and hope," and the monks, identifying themselves as the exiled children of Eve, cry out in song, "Therefore, our advocate, turn your merciful eyes toward us," begging, "and after our exile, show us Jesus the blessed fruit of your womb."

Merton comments on these canticles of Lauds and Vespers, "How tragic to sing these words every day, and not know what they mean, to go on acting as though we had not received the mercy of God, as if we were abandoned, as if we still needed something, struggling to 'save ourselves' as if He could not save us."

Thus, God's mercy toward monks; what about monks showing mercy to each other?

Mercy Toward Each Other

Both at Opus Dei and in the daily round of activities, monks are especially prone to pass negative judgment on each other. A clash of personalities is inevitable, a natural if unfortunate consequence of the common life. When almost all activities are done in common—working together, eating together, singing and sleeping together—the smallest differences can quickly become major irritants. This monk cannot keep the pitch; this one snuffles; that one stinks; this one eats more than his share or is chronically late for everything; that one is, well, lazy. The common life leaves few things secret and no faults unexposed. Thomas Merton became aware of this early on at Gethsemane, and thereby became aware of his own need for mercy, and his need to show mercy to his fellow monks. Perhaps his quest for a hermitage, for a "room of his own," owed more than a little to the constant grind that the common life had on a spirit as naturally sensitive—and critical—as his.

> The most destructive forms of speech in community, Benedict understood, are those that involve judgments against the other. When I was a monk, I thought that the rule of silence was mainly in service of contemplation. Now, I have come to understand that silence was mainly about charity.

Two elements of the Rule provide guidance to help monks avoid the judgment and contempt found in communal life, and learn instead to practice mercy. The first is taciturnity. Benedict places his chapter on silence, not accidentally, between the chapters on obedience and humility. Benedict stresses the power and danger of speech; quoting the proverbs, he warns that "In much speaking thou shalt not escape sin" (Proverbs 10:19), and "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). In this way, he echoes ancient wisdom traditions, which regarded loose speech as the mark of the fool and careless speech as the greatest of social dangers. Monks are therefore to speak seldom, even for "good, holy, and edifying conversations"—a practice that Merton's Trappists took to a level far beyond my comparatively garrulous Benedictines. Benedict reminds

his monks that they are in a school of the Lord's service, where "it becometh the master to speak and to teach, but it befits the disciple to be silent and to listen." And if taciturnity even in good speech is the ideal, evil speech is utterly banished: "But as for buffoonery and talk that is vain and stirs laughter, we condemn such things everywhere with a perpetual ban, and forbid the disciple to open his mouth for such conversation."

The most destructive forms of speech in community, Benedict understood, are those that involve judgments against the other. Benedict calls this form of speech "murmuring," included all forms of griping, gossiping, and nagging. He forbids it absolutely. When I was a monk, I thought that the rule of silence was mainly in service of contemplation. Now, after many years of suffering poisoned discourse in the halls of academe, I have come to understand that silence was mainly about charity. As we learn every day in our new world of constant chatter, savage judgment, and long-distance shaming via (anti)social media, when speech is totally without restraint, mercilessness is an almost inevitable consequence.

The second means provided by the Rule is prayer and the mutual confession of faults. Benedict prescribed that Lauds and Vespers should be concluded with the communal recitation of the Lord's Prayer. The purpose of this was the removal of those thorns of scandal, or mutual offense, which inevitably arise in communities: "For, being warned by the covenant which they make in that prayer, when they say 'Forgive us as we forgive,' the brethren will cleanse their souls of such faults" (Chapter 13). Note here that it is not the ones giving scandal or offense whose souls are cleansed by the words of forgiveness, but those who are called to *forgive* scandal or offense. This is the practice of mercy on the ground.

An even more embodied expression of mercy is the chapter of faults. Benedict did not establish the formal chapter of faults, or *culpa*, but once in place, it served for centuries as an important mode of mutual forgiveness within monastic communities. The chapter provided a way to repent of precisely those faults that would most irritate others—tardiness, slovenliness, carelessness, noisiness, failure to carry out assigned chores—and to ask for forgiveness from those so affected or offended. As I experienced it as a Benedictine, the chapter of faults cultivated the virtue of mercy in two ways. Most obviously, for each monk present it evoked mercy and forgiveness toward others, whose faults are so openly disclosed before me. But as I also confess the things I have done that have disturbed the common life, I become sharply aware of my own need of mercy, first of all from God, but also from my fellow disciples in the school of the Lord's service. Merton's Trappist tradition included the declarations of faults by monks against each other, a practice notoriously capable of abuse—and in his conferences with novices, Merton struggled mightily against the negative aspects of this inherited tradition. In his lengthy and subtle discussion of the practice (since then abandoned by the monks of Gethsemane), Merton emphasized the need for empathy toward the other when making such declarations, stressing the spirit of charity over the zeal for God and mercy over judgment (*Observances* 215–239).

The term mercy occurs a final time in the Rule, in the splendid chapter on the reception of guests (Chapter 53), which opens with the striking statement, "Let all guests that come be received like Christ, for he will say, 'I was a stranger and you took me in' (Matthew 25:35)." The reception of guests is to begin with prayer and the kiss of peace, the greeting done with "the greatest humility," with the head bowed and the whole body prostrate, "and so let Christ be worshipped in them, for indeed he is received in their persons." After Scripture is read with the guest, the monks are to say, "We have received, O Lord, your mercy in the midst of your temple" (Psalm 47:10). It would be difficult to find a more profound appreciation for the presence of the Risen Christ among humans than in these directions for monastic hospitality. But we see here as well how the world imagined by the Psalms is made real by embodied practice: receiving guests is the experience of God's mercy.

It would be foolish to suggest that the distinctive role played by mercy in Thomas Merton owed everything to his monastic formation. But I hope I have shown how the singing of psalms and canticles in the Opus Dei cultivated an appreciation for God's creation as one drenched in mercy, and how the practices of silence, the mutual confession of faults, and the reception of guests provided opportunities for the expression of mercy within the monastic community—all of it putting the monastic formation of Thomas Merton very much in harmony with his devotion to mercy. When Merton made his turn to the world through a more explicitly prophetic stance, his voice had substance and credibility because it came from his deep grounding in the monastic life.

The practices that helped form Merton no longer exist in the same way they once did, even in monasteries. Whether the changes to monastic life are all for the better is not clear. What is clear is that if Merton—indeed, if monasticism itself is to continue to have a prophetic role in our own very different world—then the values espoused and lived by Merton the monk must be translated by those who are not monks into the changed circumstances of an increasingly secular society. How to form disciples with minds and hearts of mercy when the embodied practices of the monastic life—when even the intentional gathering of disciples into community—are not readily available? The way forward is uncertain. But if Christians are to cogently and consistently represent the face of mercy—which is the face of Christ—in this valley of tears, then in some fashion, I think, they must find ways to gather together for prayer, to sing the psalms and canticles, to practice silence in the name of charity, to readily confess their faults to each other, and to receive strangers as Christ. ■

Newman & Theological Conflict

An Exchange

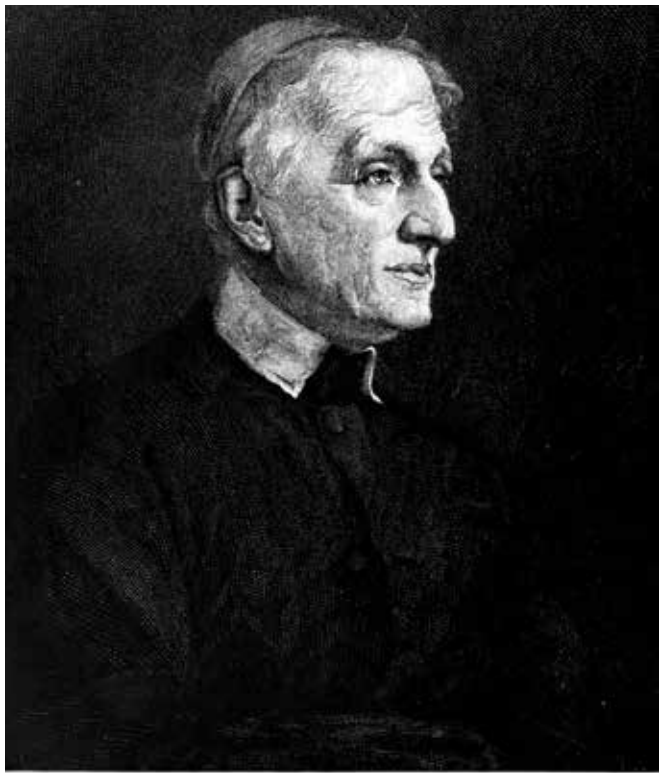
Philip Porter

It's been a tough few years for those who've had to learn from Pope Francis that they're not the ultramontanists they thought they were. Those who could, from 1978 to 2013, point to papal teachings as non-negotiable supports for what they knew to be core doctrines of the faith now often can't. Their habit of pointing to Rome, as if to say, "Look, if you disagree with me, you disagree with the rock upon which Christ himself built the Church," is now fraught with cognitive dissonance. Now, as often as not, the people pointing to Rome are on the other side—people who, in the eyes of yesterday's ultramontanists, have no business defending the doctrine of the church.

I'd like to suggest that this new tension with the institutional church is—or has the potential to be—a healthy one. We need only look to Blessed John Henry Newman for a good account of the theological fruit that can ripen in conditions of conflict. It's a uniquely Catholic gift, according to Newman, to have the capacity for such conflict. And it's precisely this gift that allows the real idea of Christianity to take root and develop organically in history.

Newman often speaks of real ideas as living things that grip both the intellect and the imagination. Sometimes they may also give rise to conflicts between the work of theologians and the teaching authority of the Catholic Church. It's fitting that "life" is Newman's term of art for what causes a real idea to seize those who encounter it. This vital principle is at the heart of his thinking on the creative theological impulse. The active mind cannot help being changed by the ideas that take root in it. Far from stifling this natural tendency toward development, the church's authority encourages it. More importantly, it creates a space for it to flourish.

But encouraging its growth also involves pruning. Left without care, shoot after shoot of new green stems appear until nothing but a tangled mess remains. To use another analogy, the church's authority acts like the boundaries and rules of fair play for a game of baseball. Without rules or boundaries, there is no game. Without any boundaries, it's not clear what would count as a correct solution to a theological problem, just as it's not clear what would count as "safe" if one couldn't find the bases or home plate of a baseball diamond.



Engraved portrait, with autograph, of John Henry Newman, published in Century Magazine*, 1882*

For this reason, Newman writes in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* that the church must "denounce rebellion as of all possible evils the greatest" while at the same time affirming that "the energy of the human intellect 'does from opposition grow'; it thrives and is joyous, with a tough elastic strength, under the terrible blows of the divinely fashioned weapon, and is never so much itself as when it has lately been overthrown." Here Newman is sketching a grammar of theological conflict. To be authentically Catholic, that conflict cannot involve rebelling against the church's proper authority. The word "rebellion" suggests a rejection, an active attempt at overthrow, subversion, or destruction. On

the other hand, "opposition" need not mean anything so pernicious. While it's possible to oppose an enemy, it's also possible to be on opposing sides in a game of chess, or to find oneself opposing a friend in a debate. Such opposition implies no enmity, but it does involve confrontation—and we are better for it. Our games, our arguments, are never as finely honed as they are in the face of opposition. Being beaten back and defeated in a game or an argument is often as invigorating as victory. The pronouncements of a pope should be received even if—perhaps especially if—they knock us back. It's no test of fidelity to the church if you find yourself continuosly in agreement with it. It's in those moments when a person finds her judgment to be opposed to church teaching that we can take the measure of her fidelity.

Newman writes, "It is the vast Catholic body itself, and it only, which affords an arena for both combatants in that awful, never-dying duel." And why is it that this can only take place within the bounds of the Catholic Church? Mainly because within its bounds it isn't necessary to always begin at the beginning. The authority of the church itself is the guarantor of our starting point in theology, which for Catholics begins in medias res. The case for the Protestant theologian is quite different, and Newman believed it is ultimately unsustainable. The key distinction comes early in his *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, when he begins building the case for the antecedent probability of an infallible authority. There he says: "The absolute need of a spiritual supremacy is at present the strongest of arguments in favor of the fact of its supply. Surely, either an objective revelation has not been given, or it has been provided with means of impressing its objectiveness on the world." In short, the church must be capable of saying what is and is not revelatory. A foundational claim of Christianity is that the Triune Lord has revealed himself to us, and that this is an objective state of affairs. The church's authority serves an adjudicating role that guarantees the objective content of this revelation.

The question of objective revelation is critical. Revealed doctrines serve as first principles for all subsequent theological reasoning. It is the mistake of "liberalism," as Newman defines it, to subject "to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it." Taken to its logical conclusion, this kind of theological liberalism arrives in the same place as "natural religion." Both rely on the subjective authority of private judgment. The principle of private judgment is one Newman develops more fully in a sermon titled "Faith and Private Judgment," in which he argues that the infallible authority of the church has an apostolic origin.

> Either the Apostles were from God, or they were not; if they were, everything that they preached was to be believed by their hearers; if they were not, there was nothing for their hearers to believe.... The world had either to become Christian, or to let it alone; there was no room for private tastes and fancies, no room for private judgment.

The appropriate Christian response to this revelation is submission, not judgment. Without submission, there is no faith. To judge for oneself what constitutes revelation is not faith, according to Newman.

Understanding Newman's distinction between faith—a submissive response to an objective reality transmitted by a living authority—and private judgment returns us to the question of creative opposition within the Catholic Church. If we take the classic definition of theology as *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding), then a necessary precursor to anything we might call theology is the presence of a living authority capable of handing on the faith. With that authority established, the work of theology can begin. Because of the revelation's objectivity, its reality, theology must continually develop. As Newman writes in *Development of Doctrine*, "There is no one aspect deep enough to exhaust the contents of a real idea." The reality of an idea, its life, is inexhaustible. The authority of the church imposed upon theologians does not inhibit rational inquiry into the truths of Christianity. It makes such an inquiry possible precisely by presenting the theologian with something real upon which she can work.

But it's also true that "theology is the fundamental and regulating principle of the whole Church system," as Newman puts it in his Preface to the *Via Media*. Theologians have the responsibility of working out what's meant by the church's doctrinal teachings. This is what Newman means when he says that the church has "originated nothing" in the way of doctrinal developments. Its authority acts instead "as a sort of *remora* or break in the development of doctrine." Theologians take their starting point from the church's doctrines as they receive them and then exercise their reason upon them. History shows, Newman argues, that the church encourages this independence of mind. This independence is instrumental in the way the church goes about defining doctrine, gradually making more explicit what had been implicit in revelation. The church allows theological disagreements to smolder, to be passed around and reflected on by theological faculties and then judged by lesser authorities. Only then does Rome weigh in. "Meanwhile, the question has been ventilated and turned over and over again, and viewed on every side of it, and authority is called in to pronounce a decision, which has already been arrived at by reason."

This motion—the back and forth of theological extension and magisterial definition—is what gives the church its distinctive dynamism without undermining its original identity. Theologians receive the deposit of faith from the church as an objective reality. They then reason from it, developing and clarifying the Catholic tradition as they go. The church then beats the bounds, so to speak, of this reasoning from faith, discriminating between what is a genuine development of that faith and what is a departure from it. The living authority guarantees that what it will

then pass on remains the objective Christian revelation. Authentic Christian theological development—faith seeking understanding—requires both an authoritative body and a freedom of rational inquiry.

For this very reason, the formerly ultramontane should take heart while also being prepared to have their judgments overthrown. Even if no longer prepared to invoke the pope in defense of their own doctrinal purity, they should be prepared to give what *Lumen gentium* §25 calls *religiosum voluntatis et intellectus obsequium* to his teaching. It seems a minimum requirement of the church's doctrine of religious submission to papal teachings is the presumption of their truth. To say doctrine demands the presumption of truth is not to say we must end there, but that is where we should begin. Theologians have a responsibility to reflect on papal teachings and to explore their implications. One can't do this in good faith if one begins with the assumption that the teachings are false. If theological reflection is unable to reconcile the meaning of a papal teaching with a truth of the faith, the next step is to submit relevant *dubia* to Rome. In this case, however, it's the theologian asking to be taught by the church how to read its teachings, not the other way around. This standard—presuming the pope is teaching the truth in both his formal and informal teachings until proven otherwise—may seem exacting, but it's far better than the alternative. By adhering to it, Catholics safeguard their ability to continue in the dynamic, never-ending struggle to understand the implications of the Gospel.

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Michael Hollerich

When I was asked to respond to Philip Porter's essay on Newman and the development of doctrine, I hesitated because it didn't seem that he and I were playing the same game, to use one of his metaphors. My response can't be on the terms that he has set, given his understanding of what a theologian's proper work is and my own self-understanding as a scholar. When he writes that theologians have "a special responsibility to reflect on papal teachings and to explore their implications," I must say in response that I never imagined that as my special duty. I owe my general theological formation to the work of Bernard Lonergan, who devoted his life to establishing a cognitional theory and a corresponding map of theological research adequate to the demands of an ever-expanding intellectual horizon—to remedy a situation in which, as he once said, "believers were always arriving on the scene a little breathless and a little late." (As it happens, the brilliant work of Newman on judgment and personal knowing had a profound influence on Lonergan, who is said to have read Newman's *Grammar of Assent* six times when writing *Insight*.) By training and habit, I think, teach, and write primarily as a historian, taking my cue from the role that historical research plays in Lonergan's scheme of functional specialties. My particular interests lie in the intersection of religion and politics, the history of exegesis, and historiography. I am currently working on a book on the reception of the first history of the church, written by Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 264–339). It deals centrally with how Christians have remembered, and constructed, their history—I should say "histories," because they are indeed plural.

Porter's account of the development of doctrine sent me back to my marked-up copy of Newman's *Apologia*, a book I once read with fascination and still find a stunning literary performance. I remember being especially struck with the fifth and concluding chapter containing Newman's defense of papal infallibility, which has important and enduring insights. I don't blame Porter for being drawn to Newman's beguiling rhetoric. But it is rhetoric. Porter quotes it selectively. When he endorses Newman's statement that the church "must denounce rebellion as of all possible evils the greatest," one demurs and thinks of how Romans 13 has reconciled the church to all manner of brutal modern regimes, for the pragmatic sake of its own survival. Porter passes over the infamous passage that immediately follows, in which Newman goes on to say that the Catholic Church teaches that it were better for the world to end "and for all the many millions of human beings on it to die of starvation in extremest agony…than that one soul, I will not say should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one willful untruth, or should steal one poor farthing without excuse." You don't have to be a Benthamite utilitarian to find this objectionable.

Newman's penchant for such antitheses reflects his vertigo in the face of modern atheism and unbelief. It turns parts of the *Apologia* into a drumbeat of either/ors growing out of his dispiriting discovery that his idealized Anglican *Via Media* between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism was only a paper church, and that really-existing Anglicanism was being drained of vitality and substance. (Some of his modern readers worry that the same thing is now happening to Catholicism.) Yet his eloquent defense of the living process by which doctrine has been debated and defined in Catholicism still has plausibility. He is certainly right that we have to accept the "givenness" of tradition, be it the facticity of the biblical canon, or the unfolding of the ecumenical councils, or even the emergence of an ultimate court of appeal in the primacy of the pope. I don't see how Catholic theology can exist without proceeding from this accumulation of tradition, always reviewing and reinterpreting it, sometimes selectively forgetting it (what else are we

to do with Boniface VIII and *Unam sanctam*?), but never cutting off the branches on which we all sit. We're stuck, for instance, with Vatican I, though the full story of its reception is hardly over. I recommend Francis Oakley's account of the suppression and re-emergence of the conciliarist tradition: rather than shelved and forgotten once and for all at Vatican I, as its enemies thought, it was available to be brought out of cold storage a century later at Vatican II.

I see two main problems with Newman's account. One is the severity of the rhetoric. Newman himself was, to my limited knowledge, no apocalypticist but a thoroughly English conservative in politics. Nevertheless, his anxiety about revolution and the collapse of authority can feed an apocalyptic hysteria in Catholic thought that stems from the French Revolution and that has taken on fresh life in sectors of contemporary American Catholicism. Some of Newman's language, echoed by Porter, about an "awful duel" sounds rather sententious today. When Newman writes of the church's infallibility as "a supereminent prodigious power sent upon earth to encounter and master a giant evil," I think of the papacy of Pius IX and the papal abduction of Edgardo Mortara, and thank God for the disarming of the papal state. (Go read Balthasar in *The Office of Peter* and his rueful gratitude for the loss of the Temporal Power.) When the Vatican was confronted with a truly gigantic evil in Hitler's Third Reich, something far worse than rationalist Liberalism, it did not act like a supereminent prodigious power.

The other problem is that even Newman's admirable effort to describe the slow-sifting process of development doesn't do justice to the complexity and contingency that have marked doctrinal change. His theory may have sounded dangerous in the years after his death in 1890, when anything smacking of change and development was targeted by the anti-Modernist repression under Pius X. Today it has been so thoroughly assimilated that it seems almost tame and conventional. Catholic Modernist George Tyrrell read Newman eagerly but doubted whether his theory could account for genuine novelty in development, which for Newman seemed to consist of the gradual making explicit of what had previously been only implicit or unacknowledged. Jaroslav Pelikan made a similar point decades ago when he began work on his five-volume study *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*.

How would Newman have evaluated the two most hotly contested documents at Vatican II, *Dignitatis humanae* (the Declaration on Religious Freedom) and *Nostra aetate* (the Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions)? Opposition to both came in part from awareness of how much they departed from long-accepted teaching. *Nostra aetate* denied that all the Jews of Jesus' time or the Jews of today were guilty for the death of Jesus. But inherited Jewish guilt had been a universal belief among Protestants and Orthodox as well as Catholics. The doctrine certainly fit the storied Vincentian canon of what was believed "everywhere, always, and by all." Until it wasn't—not once the full context of the Holocaust had been grasped. Nineteenth-century popes' rejection of religious freedom because it fostered "indifferentism" (relativism) dovetailed with Newman's hostility to private judgment in religion. The popes feared that legal religious equality could not help but relativize belief, and in democracies most of all.

Does Newman's theory tell us how, in fact, "the church" learns? The teaching church is also necessarily the learning church. Newman knew that this process was back-and-forth and he gave an eloquent account of it—as far as he went. But can he really account concretely for how teaching changes? How, exactly, did it happen that we gave up torture? Abandoned the defense of slavery? Ceased to demand state support as the one true church of Jesus Christ? Why did it take two hundred years for the Vatican to decide after all that "the Chinese rites" were civil and not religious? Anyone who thinks the process of development is linear should read Marcia Colish's account of the patristic and medieval debates over baptism and the tortuous efforts to define what was and what was not a "forced" baptism, an unedifying business that should make us less censorious when condemning coercive measures against apostasy from Islam. Readers of the books of the late Judge John T. Noonan can find model studies in doctrinal change that may not fit well with Newman's scheme, such as his classic study *Contraception* (1965).

Newman credited the papacy with typically being a reluctant umpire and adjudicator. If, he says, in another famous passage, the theologian were to write with the constant fear that ultimate authority was watching his every move, he would be incapacitated with anxiety, and "then indeed he would be fighting, as the Persian soldiers, under the lash, and the freedom of his intellect might truly be said to be beaten out of him." It did not take long for that hypothetical to be realized in fact. Newman wrote under a pope who is credibly reputed to have declared shortly afterwards at Vatican I, "I am the tradition." The powerfully centralizing impetus of the modern papacy since Pius IX, fostered both bureaucratically and by the intense focus on the personal stature of the pope, only slowed down temporarily at Vatican II. Under John Paul II and Benedict XVI, it recovered its élan and has continued to reduce the mediating buffers between the individual Catholic and Rome. Whether Pope Francis's efforts to reverse the process will succeed or, paradoxically, strengthen it because of his own charismatic stature, remains to be seen. Regardless, there is no doubt that the many delays and detours on an errant theologian's road to Roman review have been dramatically reduced since Newman wrote those words. ■

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Rand Richards Cooper

The Sublimity of the Super-Brat

'JOHN MCENROE: IN THE REALM OF PERFECTION'

Manners. Ah, manners. Where did they go?

Our American purchase on this inflamed topic is currently shaped by such discouraging realities as online trolling, rampant partisan political bitterness, and the advent of a presidential bellicosity wantonly laying waste to long-established behavioral norms. When exactly did we all start being so rude?

For many a tennis fan looking back, John McEnroe looms as the canary in the coal mine of manners. In his incessant ranting, his brazen self-absorption, and his furious insistence on turning everyone around him (opponents, spectators, line judges, the press) into enemies, he was a proto-Trump of the tennis court. His rise capped the Americanization of the twentieth century, and of an oh-so-very British sport, that left the gentleman's code in ruins.

Earlier this year saw Janus Metz's *Borg vs. McEnroe*, a biopic that used the epic 1980 Wimbledon final as a means for exploring its antagonists' diametrically opposed personalities: the brooding, stoical Swede versus the profane and volcanic American. But parlaying a tennis match into a feature film proved difficult, and the movie's attempts to arrogate drama were laughable—including tense scenes of Borg being shuttled about in automobiles by grim handlers, as if in a spy exchange at Checkpoint Charlie. Such struggles raised the question: How much meaning can you wring from a tennis match?

A lot, it turns out. *John McEnroe: In the Realm of Perfection* solves the problem in ways that reflect its unusual pedigree. The film traces to the work of Gil de Kermadec, who decades ago shot thousands of hours of matches at Paris's famed Roland Garros stadium for a national sports institute that produced instructional films. French documentarian Julien Faraut, happening upon this vast archive of 16-mm recordings, became fascinated, and chose McEnroe as the subject of a documentary that sets out to explore any number of abstruse perspectives on sport and photography in general, and McEnroe in particular. Faraut is interested in McEnroe not merely as a tennis phenomenon, but as a phenomenon, period.

The focus is on 1984, a year in which McEnroe amazingly won eighty-two matches and lost just three. The film opens with a mesmerizing series of super-slo-mo shots of the star serving—lining up along the baseline in that hunched, coiled posture of his, cocking his deliberate, long-armed windup, then launching himself up and forward. This dreamy sequence announces that we are being taken out of the realm of routine sports spectatorship and into a dimension of pure form. Faraut's rapt fascination with motion, and with the

mechanics of photographically capturing it, recalls Eadweard Muybridge's pioneering studies with high-speed photography almost a century and a half ago.

And so from the start the movie is not what you expect—not really a documentary, but an extended meditation on the poetics of tennis, informed by any number of idiosyncratic perspectives on the athlete-as-genius. Along the way, Faraut also produces an inadvertent meditation on Frenchness, with its rampant philosophizing, an insistence on foisting as much elevated conceptual talk upon the subject as an American viewer—and *especially* an American sports viewer—can bear.

Throughout, the visual focus on McEnroe remains claustrophobically close (only in the last twenty minutes or so does Faraut pull back and allow us to follow an actual match, McEnroe's thrilling 1984 French Open final against a young Ivan Lendl.) This MO follows the lead of other sports documentaries, notably German filmmaker Hellmuth Costard's 1971 work *Football as Never Before*, which deployed eight cameras to follow British footballer George Best through a single game, or a similar 2006 French film that turned seventeen cameras on soccer star Zinedine Zidane. The visual isolation created by Gil de Kermadec's camera reflects his project's original instructional focus, and has the interesting effect of divorcing the tennis player from the tennis match, all but eliminating his opponents—whom we see, only fleetingly, in the background. It's as if the opponent is an interchangeable part; the real action lies within the man.

This focus delivers the core of the film's insights into McEnroe's notorious behavior. We've come to view that behavior as part and parcel of the replacement of team athletics, with all the attendant ethics of self-sacrifice, by individual sports—and also perhaps as a reflection of the modern American upper-middle-class's fixation on its children winning at all costs, spurring a new brat-hood of which McEnroe served as an ugly avatar. And indeed, the McEnroe portrayed by Shia LeBeouf in the earlier biopic is in fact a brat, a spoiled and loudmouthed man-child.

In the Realm of Perfection dismisses this conventional wisdom and insists that we engage McEnroe on another plane altogether. The inquiry begins in our bemusement at the man-child. When McEnroe interrupts a match to vent, when he spits profane and acid mockery at line judges and referees, when he taunts fans or takes a swat at a photographer with his racquet—the crowd booing lustily—his matches approach the spectacle of professional wrestling, with its travesty of villainy. Why would a player aspire to that?

Faraut quotes a sports psychologist noting that such tantrums are counterproductive for most players. For them, anger of the kind McEnroe displays—tear-your-hair-out anger; threaten-bystanders anger—saps concentration and compromises performance. But not McEnroe. He wasn't risking his game (nor, as many suspected, was he out to disarm his opponent); he was stoking his game by feeding on bad feelings. One is struck by how continuously and complicatedly unhappy he appears to be in this film. In ninety minutes, we see nary a smile, only a hundred varieties of annoyance, sarcasm, uneasiness, and anger. Faraut quotes the late French film critic and tennis fan, Serge Daney, who in writing about McEnroe cited "the eternal injustice that afflicts him, and him alone." Just so. The player we see is a highly tuned winning machine whose fuel is bitterness and rage, and who requires the lurking presence of enemies on all sides in order to prevail.

As a tennis competitor McEnroe was "a man who played at the edge of his senses," Faraut comments insightfully. At times this edgy sensitivity seems to approach a kind of sensory-processing disorder. Something always has to be bothering him. If not the perfidy of a line judge or fan, then a rough spot in the clay at his feet, or a fugitive wrinkle in the shoulder of his tennis shirt, which he picks at, adjusting and readjusting, frowning darkly.

Much is omitted from *In the Realm of Perfection*. One longs for perspective from other players, from sports journalists, and most of all from McEnroe himself. How did he view his own behavior at the time? How does he see it now? But Faraut refuses to indulge these conventional expectations. Meanwhile, there's a good deal of commentary one wishes *had* been left out—like the endlessly elaborated conceit of McEnroe as auteur, a director orchestrating a movie in which he himself is the hero. Yes, it is interesting along these lines to learn that actor Tom Hulce modeled his portrayal of Mozart in *Amadeus* on his perceptions of McEnroe. But do we need the tough-guy profanities piped in from Robert DeNiro's performance in *Raging Bull*? Or the barrages of heavy-metal music accompanying McEnroe's on-court histrionics? Or the insistently metaphysical quotations from French film critics? "When you watch a tennis match, you don't ever really know what you're watching," offers one. That's often the case in this film, anyway.

Yet tennis fans will find a lot to marvel at, especially in the highly granular study of McEnroe's unmistakable, sublimely fidgety form on the court. Surveyed up close, his body makes all sorts of unexpected motions, little leaps and jerks of his torso, which work together with the extreme looseness of his grip on the racquet and his unparalleled wristiness—a complex orchestration of body mechanics designed to direct all forces to the racquet head and create a power of touch unequalled by any other tennis player before or since.

A nimble physical genius between the lines, McEnroe was also a connoisseur of rage, even (the French might say) a gourmand of it. That such rage can function as an adjunct to competition, and not an abiding fundament of character, has been borne out by McEnroe's subsequent transformation from *enfant terrible* into the resourceful and even genial tennis commentator he is today. The star's fury proved a strictly situational thing: a means of prevailing; of being a tennis god. Once he stopped feeding the terrible need to win, and got up from the table, he could be as human as any of us. ■

B. D. McClay

An Unenclosed Mind

A BENEDICTINE NUN'S FRIENDSHIP WITH GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

The most interesting moment in Hugh Whitemore's *The Best of Friends*—a 1987 play about the friendship between George Bernard Shaw and Dame Laurentia McLachlan, a cloistered Benedictine at Stanbrook Abbey—comes about a third of the way through. Shaw, returning to England after a visit to the Holy Land, has gifted Laurentia a small stone from Bethlehem. He picked the stone himself; before he gave it to Laurentia, he also placed it in a small, specially commissioned silver reliquary.

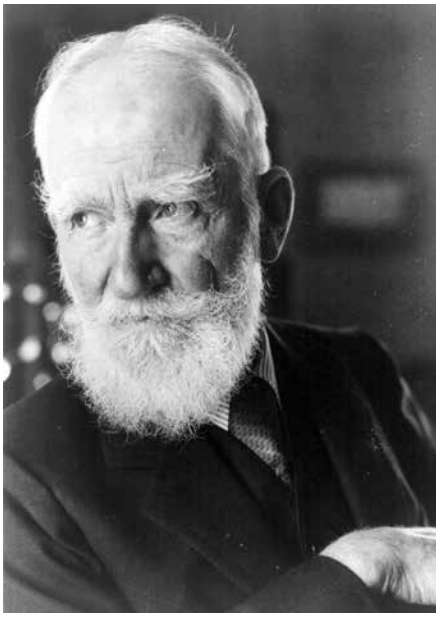
Shouldn't the reliquary, a mutual friend inquires, be given "a brief inscription explaining its purpose and saying who it's from"? At this suggestion, Shaw explodes:

> What the devil—saving your cloth—could we put on it? We couldn't put our names on it—could we? That seems to me perfectly awful. "An inscription explaining its purpose"! If we could explain its purpose, we could explain the universe. I couldn't. Could you?… Dear Sister: our fingerprints are on it, and Heaven knows whose footprints may be on the stone. Isn't that enough?

Shaw angrily resists the idea that the reliquary he's given his friend is *only* an object like any other—at the same time, he doesn't really want to ascribe to it any particular meaning. Why, then, does it matter quite so much? He doesn't know; in a real sense, he doesn't want to.

The Best of Friends is drama, but Shaw's words are drawn almost verbatim from his correspondence with the real Dame Laurentia, as is almost all of the play's dialogue. You can read it, along with other letters they exchanged and accounts of visits Shaw paid to Stanbrook Abbey, in *The Nun, the Infidel, and the Superman*, a book about Laurentia's friendships written by a fellow nun there. Or you can pick up, if you are lucky enough to find it, the Masterpiece Theatre production of *The Best of Friends* starring Patrick McGoohan as Shaw, Dame Wendy Hiller as Laurentia, and Sir John Gielgud as Sydney Cockerell, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum and the "mutual friend" who elicits Shaw's scorn for asking about the reliquary.

Dame Laurentia McLachlan, OSB



George Bernard Shaw

Though hardly a household name, Laurentia maintained an active correspondence with many of her secular contemporaries in the world of letters. Her research played an important role in the restoration of Gregorian chant, and she even received a commendation from Pius X for it in 1904. (It was this work that led her to become friends with Sydney Cockerell, and subsequently with Shaw.) She was, as Shaw said, "the enclosed nun with an unenclosed mind."

It's her friendships, however—not her scholarship—that have received the most sustained attention since her death. This isn't too surprising; we are, after all, interested in the ability to maintain friendships across sharp differences and other obstacles (such as cloister grilles). Many of us disagree with people very dear to us on issues of the greatest importance; that Cockerell and Shaw, two atheists, could plausibly be described as "the best of friends" with a cloistered nun gives us hope.

But that friendship was more complicated—and for that reason more instructive—than any simple feel-good story. Shaw's description of his friend as having an "unenclosed mind," for example, is an interesting turn of phrase—clearly affectionate, but just as clearly backhanded. On what kind of terms, one wonders, did this friendship really exist?

Indeed, the further one reads about their friendship, the more one is not just impressed by the real depth of mutual affection that existed between them, but frustrated by Shaw's refusal to respect Laurentia's choice of life. His friendship with her was marked from the beginning by a kind of surprise that such a

creature existed. After their first meeting, he was uninterested in seeing her again until he discovered that she had been in the convent for fifty years—as Laurentia admitted, "When he found that whatever I am is the result of my life here he was impressed."

But why did he assume that a woman who had recently entered a cloister could only become less interesting, or somehow diminished? At times he felt openly sorry for her—wishing, for instance, that he could persuade her to take a leave of absence, slip into a short skirt, and set off with him to Damascus. They had one serious quarrel over a satire Shaw had written of the search for God; it was, Shaw claimed to her, a "purification of religion from horrible old Jewish superstitions." When Laurentia was unimpressed by this defense, he wrote to her: "I know much better than you what you really believe. You think you believe the eighth chapter of Genesis; and I know you don't: if you did I would never speak to you again." But it would be a curious sort of a nun who read the Bible like Thomas Jefferson.

In her letters and in the play, Laurentia comes off as happy with her life and untroubled by doubt; no wonder her biographers and dramatizers alike find more to think about in the lives of her famous friends. She entered Stanbrook Abbey at the age of eighteen because she recognized that she could be happy there; as far as one can gather, she was. Shaw's self-dramatizations (he claims to Laurentia his satire was divinely inspired), his flirtations with religion on one level and contempt for it on another—these are, from one point of view, *more interesting* than Laurentia's steady faith.

But it's precisely the commitment Laurentia maintains to her difference, to her own community and her own standards, that allows their friendship to exist at all. In the context of the cloister, Shaw's pirouetting around the really difficult questions, his conviction that God will reward him more for refusing to believe than believing, comes off not as interesting, but as exhausting, even a bit sad. Why respond to putting your name on a reliquary as if it was sacrilege if you don't think the object contained is sacred?

Laurentia can like Shaw, respect his work, and yet be unimpressed by him for a number of reasons, surely one of which is having firmly rooted herself in a life where Shaw can only matter as a *person*, not a *personage*. In the cloister, Shaw is just one visitor among many, and one more confused than most. Her special affection for him doesn't change the way her life is built around an entirely different center from his. In *The Best of Friends*, the world that matters is Shaw's world, not hers. She's the one whose mind is always in danger as being perceived as *enclosed*.

That's a regrettable error. "Oh, wasn't this nun remarkable, since these very smart men were her friends" is the message, both in the play and in the book on which it's based. But Laurentia's real life, and thus any real sense of whether she was remarkable or not, exists quite outside their scope.

If there's a lesson to be drawn here about how to cultivate a friendship over stark differences—and, given that we are dealing with two fairly odd individuals at some distance from us in time, there might not be—it probably starts there. We have to love each other, no matter how much we might hurt or mystify one another. In the eyes of God, no one matters more than anybody else, and for Christians—whether cloistered or not—keeping our distinctive love for even the best of our friends in line with this principle is necessary to love them at all. How lucky, after all, Shaw was to discover a friend for whom he was not especially intimidating, for whom he was not lovable because he was useful or intelligent or famous, but because he was an irascible soul in need of someone who could see through him. ■

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Gabriel Said Reynolds

Theirs Is the Kingdom

Under Caesar's Sword
How Christians Respond to Persecution
Edited by Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah
Cambridge University Press, $140, 534 pp.

Under Caesar's Sword is the fruit of a collaborative research project on the response of Christians around the globe to religious persecution. A number of the essays forcefully argue that there can be no "special pleading" on this matter. The right of religious freedom must be defended universally, and not only in cases where Christians are victims. This concern is not new. Already in the 1990s, when attention to the persecution of Christians was increasing, an initial proposal to pass a resolution in the U.S. Congress against "Christian persecution" was enlarged to cover religious persecution generally. The result was the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (which created an "Ambassador at Large" for religious freedom). Nevertheless, Christians continue to suffer disproportionately from religious persecution. By one 2009 estimate, Christians are the victims of 80 percent of all acts of religious discrimination around the globe.

Attention to the global persecution of Christians has indeed increased in recent years. John Allen (*The Global War on Christians*) and Rupert Shortt (*Christianophobia*) have written on this topic, as have Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert, and Nina Shea in their book *Persecuted: The Global Assault on Christians*. *Under Caesar's Sword*, edited by Daniel Philpott of Notre Dame and Timothy Shah of Baylor and Georgetown, is different in part because of its focus on Christian responses to persecution. Their findings suggest that Christians respond differently based on their political, social, and cultural context. What is possible in India, for example, may not be possible in Saudi Arabia. Their findings also highlight the need for policymakers, church leaders, and Christian activists in the West to be attentive to the lessons and experiences of Christians who have variously endured, fought against, or fled from persecution.

The breadth of coverage of *Under Caesar's Sword* helps dispel the "myth" (as John Allen has put it) that the persecution of Christians is "all about Islam." A detailed chapter by Karrie Koesel and Jekatyerina Dunajeva highlights the struggles and harassment of non-Russian Orthodox churches in contemporary Russia. Reginald Reimer's chapter on Vietnam and Laos addresses the terrible and ongoing suffering of Christians in those two countries (offering vivid and

FRIEDRICH STARK / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Catholic pilgrims march during the Palm Sunday procession through the Christian quarter of Youhanabad in Lahore, Pakistan.

heartrending details on the imprisonment and even torture of new converts to Evangelical churches). Chad Bauman and James Ponniah describe the situation of Christians in India and Sri Lanka, where Hindu and Buddhist majorities (respectively) have restricted the freedom of Christians. The current dominance of the Bharatiya Janata Party in India has allowed right-wing Hindu groups to harass Christians, or lead campaigns to return Christian converts to Hinduism. In both India and Sri Lanka, Muslims and Christians have sometimes found common cause and worked together. Fenggang Yang addresses the well-known restrictions on religious freedom for Christians (and Muslims) in China, although in this case Christianity has survived, or indeed thrived, under persecution. (Yang compares the situation in China to the growth of Christianity in the Roman Empire after the persecution of Diocletian.) Finally, Paul Freston notes how in certain Latin American countries—especially in Columbia and Cuba—the church has been seen as an enemy of the state, and Christian activists and community organizers have been victims of violence.

Still, readers of *Under Caesar's Sword* will note that persecution of Christians is particularly widespread in the Islamic world, and that Christian victims of persecution in the Islamic world often find themselves with few options. In a chapter rich in historical detail, Robert Hefner notes that Indonesia was (and, to a certain extent, still is) distinguished by a commitment to a pluralist ethic enshrined by the country's "official political ideology"—known as the "Five Principles" (*Pancasila*)—and official recognition of six religions (Catholicism and Protestantism are counted separately). This ethic is increasingly threatened by the rise of Islamist political parties and militias, whose members have often studied in Saudi Arabia. The spread of Salafi Islam has had dire effects for Christians, who suffered violence from jihadis in the 1990s and 2000s and are now targeted by various fatwas and movements to prevent the construction of churches. Muslim converts to Christianity are especially at risk, but Muslim minorities, like the Shia and Ahmadi communities, have also suffered.

Nowhere is the situation of Christians more desperate than in Pakistan, which has largely abandoned the founding vision of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who famously declared in 1947: "You are free, you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan." As Sara Singha shows in her chapter on Christians in Pakistan (and Afghanistan), the spread of Salafi Islam in the country began quite early and has only increased in subsequent years, especially under the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq. In the 1980s blasphemy laws were passed that made insulting the Qur'an or the Prophet Muhammad punishable by death. These laws have only occasionally led to executions, but vigilantes have killed at least twenty-five people accused of blasphemy. One of the most startling responses to persecution documented in *Under Caesar's Sword* is that of Bishop John Joseph, who in 1998 killed himself on the steps of a courthouse to protest the abuse of the blasphemy laws, and the conviction of one of his flock under those laws.

The dynamics of Salafi Islam have established a social context in Pakistan where the defense and spread of Islam is highly cherished and the rights of non-Muslims are not. One tragic consequence is a pandemic of religiously motivated kidnappings. The Catholic Church estimates that approximately seven hundred Christian girls in Pakistan—most of them from poor families—are kidnapped each year, forced to convert to Islam, and made to marry their captors. Yet even in Pakistan, where Christians are few (perhaps 2 percent of the population), they have found strategies to protect their freedoms. Remarkably, Christians in Pakistan are politically engaged, working with organizations such as the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance—which includes not only Christians but also Baha'is, Hindus, Sikhs, and others—and the Pakistan Christian Congress.

In Nigeria, too, attacks on Christians have advanced ecumenism. Robert Dowd writes, "The attacks waged by Boko Haram gradually have driven ordinary Christians into each other's arms." Yet while Christians support each other by hosting internally displaced persons in their churches and schools, they are not entirely in agreement about how to respond to the threat of Boko Haram, which has killed more Christians than ISIS. As Dowd notes, Catholics and certain Protestants have reached out to moderate Muslims to form a common front against the militant group. But some Evangelical Protestants are skeptical of interreligious dialogue, partly because they doubt whether they can find any effective Muslim dialogue partners, but also because they believe Christians are called above all not to dialogue but to evangelism. A second question that divides Christians is the use of force. Nigeria is one of the few places where certain Christians, in the absence of effective intervention by the state, have taken up arms to defend their community. Others are committed to pacifism. Some hold that their suffering is what God wills and is therefore to be endured. One Protestant leader tells Dowd, "This is a terrible trial, but this is the Lord's will for us at this time."

The situation in northeastern Nigeria has some parallels with those in the areas of Syria and Iraq where ISIS spread between 2014 and 2018. There, too, Christians sought to defend themselves, in those cases by organizing regular militias that often cooperated with Kurdish forces. In Syria and Iraq, however, the onslaught of ISIS overwhelmed the Christian communities; it was so brutal and systematic that Obama's State Department declared Christians and others victims of a genocide. In theory, Christians in Syria and Iraq were to be spared by ISIS fighters if they agreed to pay a special tax; in reality, Christian men were often massacred or forced to convert to Islam at gunpoint, and Christian women were taken as sex slaves—a practice ISIS bragged about

in its magazine *Dabiq*. As Kent Hill explains in the opening chapter of *Under Caesar's Sword*, ISIS's attacks accelerated a decline of Christianity in Iraq and Syria that had been underway for years. The Iraqi Christian community, which numbered well over a million in the 1990s, has declined to well below three hundred thousand. While a tenuous stability has returned to Iraq and Syria, Christians understandably feel anxious about the future and continue to leave. It is now uncertain whether Christianity has a future in these two countries with ancient Christian traditions.

Thus while John Allen is certainly correct that Christian persecution is not "all about Islam," *Under Caesar's Sword* makes it clear that Salafi Islam is a problem for Christians wherever it spreads. One of the fundamental principles of Salafi Islam is *hakamiyya*, the notion that God has sovereignty and societies and individuals should be obedient to Islamic law. (This is often accompanied by other notions, such as *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf*, the right of all Muslims to exhort or discipline those who neglect Islamic law, and a high concern to proselytize non-Muslims.) The very principle of *hakamiyya* is contrary to individual liberties and minority rights.

Under Caesar's Sword also raises the problem of how Christians *ought* to respond to persecution. Is it permissible to forswear one's faith under the threat of persecution? We learn that some Christians in Iran and Saudi Arabia have chosen to profess Islam publicly, while privately maintaining their faith in Jesus Christ. Certain Christians in northeastern Kenya learn Islamic prayers and wear Muslim clothing so that, should they be attacked by al-Shabaab, they can pose as Muslims and save their lives. Then there is the related question of whether Christians should give up on evangelism in contexts where preaching the gospel to Muslims can provoke threats against those who convert and reprisals against Christians communities. Islamic law, at least in principle, makes apostasy from Islam punishable by death.

Today concern for religious freedom can no longer be taken for granted. As Paul Marshall notes in his chapter on denials of religious freedom, certain scholars in recent years—notably the late Saba Mahmood of the University of California Berkeley—have questioned whether the "rhetoric" of religious freedom is a tool of the West and its imperialism. For the contributors to *Under Caesar's Sword*, however, advocacy for religious freedom is above all a response to human suffering. If we are called to be merciful to the "least of these brothers and sisters," then we cannot forget those who suffer because of their faith. ■

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Jill Wharton

Narrative Shreds

Last Stories

William Trevor
Viking, $26, 224 pp.

I was a very greedy reader. I read an enormous amount. Mainly thrillers and detective stories, and later on a lot of middle-brow stuff.... It's the business of not knowing the answers that gets fiction written. One's imagination streaks into other people's lives.
—William Trevor

In a career encompassing fourteen novels and thirteen collections of short fiction now culminating in the posthumously published *Last Stories*, William Trevor's critical reputation has, to a remarkable degree, been considered in light of his sustained interest in depicting Irish feminine consciousness. His most popular and widely acclaimed novels—from *Fools of Fortune* (1983), to *Felicia's Journey* (1994), and *The Story of Lucy Gault* (2002)—are linked in their careful interrogation, conducted from wide-ranging vantages, of feminine reality under the often oppressive agendas of the Irish state. While his long-form work has frequently hosted more sophisticated and affluent protagonists, Trevor's short fiction has, since the late 1960s, been staffed by a gallery of petty criminals, confidence men, and above all, actors and *artistes* who habitually prey on the resources of the courteous and the genuinely kind. In this regard, Trevor's work exemplifies the contention of Frank O'Connor, who argued in *The Lonely Voice* (1962) that the short story was a form built for "submerged population groups…tramps, artists, lonely idealists, dreamers, and spoiled priests," all those who remained "by their very nature remote from the community." *Last Stories* once again demonstrates an insurgent sense of how apt the short-story form is for expressing minority points of view.

The magnificent "Giotto's Angels" traces the perambulations of Constantine Naylor, a peaceable but psychologically disturbed art restorer. Naylor wakes up one "bright May morning in 2001" on a bench in central Dublin with no memory of the recent past. His diagnosis of "amnesiac abnormality" almost certainly stems, the narrator implies, from a traumatic criminal or abusive episode in his adolescence in the provincial town of Knockmell. Naylor, who has many times forgotten his own name, now wanders the streets of the capital city taking signs for wonders: "When privately he considered his life—as much of it as he knew—it seemed to be a thing of unrelated shreds and blurs, something not unlike the damaged canvases that were brought to him for attention." This image links, and even takes solace in, the equation of a damaged aesthetic object with a tattered social consciousness. Here, Trevor illustrates Chesterton's insight that our "modern attraction" to the short story is

William Trevor

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no mere literary fad, but rather expresses the recognition that life's fleetingness and fragility are best evoked by single, sharp impressions.

Last Stories as a whole exhibits the sweep of Trevor's wide reading and his skill in drawing from different literary genres. Several of the stories ("Taking Mr. Ravenswood," "Mrs. Crasthorpe," "The Unknown Girl") bring the operations of the police procedural to bear on the conventions of the melodrama. Nowhere is this more apparent than in "The Unknown Girl," which is placed midway in the collection. The story opens on a scene of abrupt and tragic violence: in three short paragraphs, the titular figure appears, plunging, either accidentally or suicidally, into oncoming traffic as bystanders "gathered on the tarmacked surface exchange their versions of how the occurrence might have come about." The "uninvolved" at the scene perpetuate misinformation and casual conjecture while the unknown victim is described clinically by an omniscient narrator as an abject "burden," a "lolling head," a "body whose life was over." Eventually identified as Emily Vance, piecemeal knowledge and recollection of this lonely girl is collected by an impoverished cleric. Soon the traces of her shadowy history are shown to permeate the lives of half-a-dozen auxiliary characters. Emily's death, and more generally, the quiet violence that marks her solitude and thwarted search for love, are submerged in the story's opening, allowing Trevor to reveal how Emily's suffering troubles the realities of all those who might have shown her compassion.

Three of the collection's stories, along with "Mrs. Crasthorpe," emphasize Trevor's late return to the conventions of mystery and crime fiction. They particularly suggest how the limitations of a bleak environment actively shape his protagonists' lives. In "Mrs. Crasthorpe," the seemingly shallow and "overly lively" widow frets in quiet desperation that her disabled son's deviance will destroy what remains of a life distinguished only by its hard-won material comforts. And her fears prove well grounded. Mrs. Crasthorpe, now unable to command the attractions of men—an enterprise once idealized as lending definite meaning to her life—meets an end pointedly recalling that of Emily Sinico in Joyce's "A Painful Case." Much like Mr. Duffy in *Dubliners*, who can only fully comprehend the spurned Emily's loneliness after her death, those who trivialized and rejected Mrs. Crasthorpe are left to wonder at their own callousness.

The story "The Crippled Man" is set in the environs of a remote cottage in Co. Kildare, and quietly retails the many failures of Irish rural life that have culminated in poverty and isolation, especially among the elderly. Trevor, picking up a common concern in contemporary Irish fiction, examines how economic migrants, here the "stateless survivors of what had once been Carinthia…now often regarded as gypsies," are, like the country's Travellers, shunned and disavowed by the local people. Yet these migrants are allowed to drift in and out of low-paying odd jobs and are tolerated in the community as drifters because they are (perhaps willfully) mistaken as Polish, and consequently assumed to be Catholic. Trevor shrewdly depicts the clannishness that remains widespread outside of Ireland's urban centers.

Perhaps the greatest single pleasure of *Last Stories* is the careful display it makes of Trevor's sustained engagement with the national literary tradition. As the literary critic Declan Kiberd has noted of Trevor's early fiction, typically set in England, the author's forte was occupying an "outsider's imagining, the view taken by someone who stands on the edge of a society…who recognises that its misfits are usually the key to its meaning." Trevor's longtime readers, along with those new to his talent, will indeed be enriched by the way he adroitly stages, from a historically rich minority perspective, the peripheries of Irish life. ■

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Casting Stones

Nancy Fitzgerald

Across the Burren I climbed, through the morning's gray west-of-Ireland drizzle. With half-a-dozen fellow pilgrims and a guide named Pius, I was making my way toward the holy well of a sixth-century saint called Colman mac Duagh. In my pocket was a jagged little stone I'd picked up by the gate, but I'm pretty sure I'd been carrying it with me for a long time.

"Choose a rock with sharp edges," Pius said. That was easy: everything in the Burren is craggy and sharp. Before the Celts, before the Druids, before Patrick, people lived in this godforsaken place and, somehow, eked out a life. They dwelt in caves that are still there—we crouched into one known as St. Colman's Bed, wondering at the loneliness and peace and terrible beauty he must have known.

St. Colman's Well, County Clare, ca. 1880–1900

I think it may have been the place I was looking for, too, or at least the place I needed to be. As we trudged across slabs of limestone and shale, Pius told us, "Slide your hand in your pocket; finger your jagged stone while you think about the jagged stone in your life. Consider the thing that irritates you, confounds you, frustrates you, holds you back. And while you're doing that, as you walk across the Burren, pay attention to everything. Watch and listen."

Easy, I thought. There's nothing much to notice. There were only rocks, and crevices, and, inside those crevices, dry dirt. No animals scurrying by, except for the snails. Snails were everywhere. Birds, too, flitting in the quiet, from rock to rock. And flowers: Pius told us that in the spring, this barren moonscape is awash with wildflowers, gentians and marsh orchids and mountain avens and a thousand others. Even now, at the beginning of October, there were weedy, scrappy plants popping out from the grikes, the crevices that split this giant expanse of rock into pieces. It was so quiet, I think I heard my heart beating, my pulse throbbing, slow and steady. I noticed and watched and listened, and thumbed the jagged stone in my pocket.

That stone was my daughter-in-law, once beloved, now caught up in a swirling maelstrom of a marriage that ended but still seems to linger on. It was the years of misunderstandings, and the tears shed for Katy, the little girl the marriage had produced. It was fear and dread over what would become of the child, and frustration over my inability to do anything about it. It was long nights of anxiety. It was sorrow for my first-born son; my heart was aching for his broken heart.

My fellow pilgrims in the Burren had stones in their pockets, too, and heartaches of their own. So on we all trudged. Far off in the distance there were sheep grazing, like there are everywhere in the west of Ireland, and even a scattering of feral goats. But here, at our destination, there was a quiet little copse, with some shrubby trees and bushes. There was the dank, wet cave that Saint Colman lived in for seven years, and the altar, in the open air, where he said Mass. The ground was slippery now; there were fewer rocks, more vegetation, more mud. Climbing the final steps took utter concentration, and everyone's shoes and clothes were caked in black Irish soil. Hanging on to branches and sliding precariously on rocks, Pius took us back to the holy well where St. Colman drank and bathed and baptized the pilgrims who came up here into the wilderness to seek the same thing all of us were seeking.

Gathered around the well, a gurgling pool of cold, clear water streaming down the mountain to this secluded place, we stood quietly and listened. "Take your stone," said Pius. "Take your worries and your fears and your anxieties, and cast them into the well." So in they plopped, one by one. We scooped up handfuls of water, each of us, and blessed one another with it.

Long before Patrick ever set foot in Ireland, the pagan Celts believed their island was a thin place, a holy place, where the veil between heaven and earth, time and eternity, disappears. It seemed to disappear that gray morning as we headed back, silent and unburdened. My pocket was empty. The stone was gone, and my worries disappeared, too, at least for a while. I prayed prayers of gratitude. I prayed for my ex-daughter-in-law, and for my son, and for their child. I prayed for healing. I think all of us prayed for healing—washed in the waters of Colman mac Duagh's holy well. ■

Nancy Fitzgerald, a recent graduate of Lancaster Theological Seminary, is a freelance journalist who writes about spirituality, health, and wellness. She is completing a book, *Brigit's Mantle,* about the role of women in the early Irish church.

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