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Editorial

by Dianne Bergant

Recently, the entertainment industry became the arena for publicizing the movement known as “#MeToo,” which spotlights sexual harassment of various forms and advocates gender equality. This is a very complicated issue, because it includes various forms and levels of disdain for women. In many cases there is a very thin line between flirting, harassment, and just plain adolescent behavior. However, at this point in history, the woman or man to whom the behavior is directed is the one who identifies the character of the behavior. In all cases there is a lack of respect for the fundamental dignity of the victim. While behavior must be corrected, it is really on this latter level that real change must take place.

In any liberation movement, and this is certainly a liberation movement, there are at least two major steps. The first is the recognition and critique of perceived discrimination; the second is the reform or reconstruction of the social group. The #MeToo movement is certainly a form of critique. Time will tell whether there will be social reform here, either on the level of behavior or on the deeper level of respect for human dignity.

The #MeToo movement is certainly a feminist movement. Though it might be the most obvious one today, it is not the first one that many of our readers observed or were participants in. In 1963 Betty Friedan published a groundbreaking book entitled *The Feminine Mystique*. Many such books by various authors followed. In the United States women theologians carried many of the same feminist principles into their study and teaching. Chief among them were Mary Daly with her pioneering book *Beyond God the Father* (1973); Rosemary Radford Ruether with *Sexism and God Talk* (1983), and Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza with *In Memory of Her* (1983). It was Daly who coined the provocative statement: “If God is male, then the male is God.” She argues that such thinking is precisely the heart of the problem. The earliest work of feminist scholars was primarily critical, pointing out gender bias in many biblical stories and also in doctrinal statements. Gradually, such authors developed new ways of expressing the fundamental theological concepts in language and imagery that were gender neutral or alternating language specific to both genders.

Gender respect is not a trivial issue. Nor is it merely a social /political issue. It is also a profound theological issue, one to which this journal has been committed from its inception. In this issue, we have two columns that address this theme, as well as an article on the political theology of Dorothy Sölle.

Thanks to Anne for finding the cover image, one which is so expressive of women’s solidarity. The image, “Sunset United Women’s Rights,” is courtesy of [John Voo \(2015\) on Flickr](#).

Dianne Bergant

NTR Editor

Do It from the Inside: Inculturation in the West

by Jonny Baker

Reading stories of missionaries who went to other cultures to share Christ inspired me as a young adult.¹ The particular kinds of stories were those of missionaries like Vincent Donovan² or Bruce Olsen³ who were seeking to share the gospel in the soil of the local cultures and grow communities of disciples who remained in their own cultures rather than having to Westernise in order to follow Christ. When I was working with young people outside the church I realised that we had similar challenges around mission and culture and began to explore what it would look like to have our imagination shaped by that cross-cultural set of instincts to share Christ within youth cultures rather than extracting young people and expecting them to join our churches with their associated cultures (which wasn't working).

Several things came together at that time. One was a growing realisation that Western approaches to mission had been too colonial or imperial. Another was what felt like significant changes in Western contexts, the shift to post-modern times. The mainline denominations were also declining and so feeling under pressure.

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Pretty quickly the discussion moved on from just being about young people to being about whole groups of people outside the church who, however well church was done, were simply not going to come. And a number of movements and networks began that sought to inculturate the gospel with those groups. Because of the advent of the Internet it was a conversation that was being shared between Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand online, with a few from the majority world joining in too. Several writers at the time had a narrative about cultural change, a gap between church and culture and the need for inculturation in the West building on the likes of Lesslie Newbigin. Michael Riddell summarises the changes well in *Threshold of the Future* where he says:

Enculturation, people movements, development, syncretism, contextualisation; all these have become familiar subjects of theological investigation in relation to foreign mission. Unfortunately, few of the resulting insights have made much impact on home base. The one massive gap in the church's expertise is how to do mission in the post Christian West.⁴

1 This essay is based on a presentation given at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago in October 2017 as the annual Louis J. Luzbetak Lecture on Mission and Culture.

2 Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (London: SCM Press, 1982).

3 Bruce Olsen, *For This Cross I'll Kill You* (London: Lakeland, 1973).

4 Michael Riddell, *Threshold of The Future: Reforming the Church in Post-Christian West* (London: SPCK, 1998), 12.

Perhaps a simple way of summarising the realisation would be in David Bosch's words: "The gospel always comes to us culturally robed."⁵ A pure gospel outside of culture and language is simply not available, and that is as true in the West as anywhere else. This was not news for missiologists who had been talking about these things for years because of the cross-cultural and intercultural experience of missiologies.

I joined the Church Mission Society (CMS) sixteen years ago to help encourage mission in the UK in the emerging culture(s). CMS had focused on foreign mission for 200 years but had felt God's call to mission in the West in a fresh way. I found a gold mine of treasure on culture and mission. One of those bits of gold was a series of books published from 1958 through 1963 called *Christian Presence* which included considerations of Christian presence amid Islam (*Sandals at the Mosque*), amid Buddhism (*On The Eightfold Path*), amid faiths old and new (*Japan's Religious Ferment*), and amid African religion (*The Primal Vision*). The editor for the series was Max Warren, the then- General Secretary of the CMS.

This Luzbetak paper is a reflection on inculturation in Western contexts using *The Primal Vision* by John Taylor as a conversation partner. I have used direct quotations from the book, and the language is of its era and not inclusive. It did not seem to work trying to change the language—I hope the reader understands. Also, I say Western contexts as though that is meaningful—there are multiple contexts, but I think there has been an exchange of conversation and learning between a number of those contexts so am persuaded that the conversation is relevant across national boundaries, though my examples are from the UK.

Adventure of the Imagination

Taylor wonders if we took contextualisation seriously whether we would even recognise the results!

"If Christ came into the world of African cosmology to redeem man as Africans understand him would he be recognizable to the rest of the church universal?" He describes this process of looking at the world through African eyes as "an adventure of the imagination."⁶ It's a creative way of thinking about mission. At CMS we train pioneers or pioneer ministers, which is the name in the UK we give to people starting new projects in mission with communities outside of the church.⁷ That might be in a new housing area, in an economically poorer community, with spiritual seekers, or with a sub-cultural group like steam punks, or in one of the diasporas. They are going on an adventure of the imagination. That adventure involves leaving and letting go of what is known and familiar and presencing themselves in the midst of that new community. It is long term—getting to know people, sharing in things with others to make that community a better place on God's good earth, building friendships, doing life, and naturally talking about their faith alongside others. God is already there so it is prayerfully paying attention to that and seeking to join with God's Spirit who is at work in peoples' lives.

This imaginative endeavour is not just about communication—this is a common reduction in mission. In youth ministry in the UK lots of effort went into relevant communication of the gospel but it often stopped there. When someone expressed interest in following Christ they would then join a bible study group and worship and church where nothing much had changed. But this adventure must address everything, letting go of preconceived notions to find imaginative other ones with those on the inside—what language is used to speak about God, how to open up prayer in and out of the experience of peoples' ordinary spirituality, what the gospel is, what church is, how life and faith would make sense in that community in ways that seem natural to the rhythms and forms of local culture, what materials from the store cupboard of the tradition might be drawn on and remixed. In the same

5 David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 297.

6 John Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence amid African Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 24.

7 See Pioneer Mission Leadership Training at <http://pioneer.churchmissionsociety.org>.

way that Taylor wonders whether the church universal would recognise inculturated forms in Africa if they were really done from the inside of African imagination and worldview, can we conceive of inculturated forms in the West that are also unrecognisable because they are so on the inside of the imagination and worldview of groups of people outside of the church?

The danger when this adventure is partial rather than addressing everything is that it almost inevitably leads to a dualism where the gospel only affects part of life. Taylor puts it this way: “This might well be a terrible failure of the whole church in Africa that it meets people only in their best clothes... Such Christianity becomes something to put on at certain times and in particular circumstance and has nothing to do with other areas of life.”⁸

Holy Ground of Another Culture

In the background of quite a number of Western Christian traditions and churches are some interesting postures in relation to culture, many of which are suspicious if not overtly critical of other cultures. At the same time there is a blindness to the embrace of particular taste cultures in our churches which might prefer classical art, poetry, and music whilst being suspicious of or dismissing another taste culture which mixes tattoos, hip hop, and graffiti. Max Warren, in the introduction to all the books in the Presence series, speaks of the holy ground of other cultures.

When we approach the man of another faith than our own it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him and what new understandings of the grace and love of God we may ourselves discover in this encounter. Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men’s dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival. We have, then, to ask what is the authentic religious content in the experience of the Muslim, the Hindu, the Buddhist, or whoever he may be.⁹

I first read this when I was joining with some other pioneers to take part at a mind/body/spirit fair in London. My background by way of faith tradition would have led me to avoid or even pray against such practice. But to think that God might be present there and that in running a stand there I might conceivably be on holy ground seeking where God was present was quite a switch in my mind. Indeed, what I found in practice was a lot of people seeking and open to prayer for healing, in many ways more open than those I encountered in church. Of course this is not to sacralise all that was taking place there, and discernment is much needed, but a shift of posture towards love, presence, and listening away from judgment and anxiety was and is so helpful.

Taylor has some lovely ideas about this posture in relation to our tendency towards judgment rather than embrace. He suggests for a start that judgment is something that comes last rather than being the front foot. “The evangelism that proceeds by listening and learning, entering into another man’s vision in order to see Christ in it, does not start with assertions about sin but waits to be told about it. And usually the truth about sin is almost the last truth to be told.”¹⁰

For Taylor, if you are not tempted to join another religion (or culture) then you haven’t been listening carefully enough, because there is clearly something about it that has drawn others into it. So never call “another’s light darkness.” For me I had unwittingly picked up that sin is usually the first truth to be told. My experience since in mission with groups and individuals has found the wisdom of Taylor’s advice. He also suggests that some of our

⁸ Taylor, *Primal Vision*, 20.

⁹ Taylor, *Primal Vision*, 10.

¹⁰ Taylor, *Primal Vision*, 172.

ways of speaking are extremely unhelpful in relation to other cultures. It sounds an old-fashioned way of saying it, but he suggests we should eschew the foreigner's language. "Recognising that we have to do with a spiritual religion we shall eschew much of the foreigner's terminology—'evil spirits', 'witch doctor', 'devil possession'—and be constantly careful never to call another's light darkness."¹¹

This is a practice of deliberately letting go both of judgment and also particular ways of making the world, which is what language does, in order that we might find new ways of speech and of making the world that are in the vernacular. In particular, I suggest gritty or angular local forms of speech and using the texts and artefacts of culture as the building blocks of construction. In particular, it's worth noticing, looking out for, encouraging, and celebrating artists who speak in that way from the ground, from the inside—the poets and local prophets. Art and prophecy are close friends, and this connection with artists will likely open up a prophetic kind of imagining and speech. "More and more necessary to Africa are the spokesmen be they poets, prophets or statesmen who can articulate this hidden rejection of the West and more positively give voice to the passionate affirmations which Africa needs to make."¹²

Every culture has a redemptive gift. We know the face of Christ more fully as we see the many faces of Christ represented in cultures around the world. So in the same way that "the world church is impoverished and incomplete without the insights that the logos has been preparing for it in Africa,"¹³ we are impoverished without the redemptive gifts that might come from subcultures in the West.

Examples of Practice

There are a growing number of communities meeting outdoors in what has become known as Forest Church.¹⁴ This connects with peoples' common experience of feeling spiritual or close to God in the natural world. This is an example of a redemptive gift from pagans and others reminding us of the beauty of the natural world which is shining with glory. The Forest Church are a mix of communities. None of them are simply taking the church chairs outside and doing what they do on Sunday. It's a much more creative adventure. At one end of the practice is a set who are using familiar Christian forms drawing old things out of the cupboard and mixing them with new in creative ways. At the other is a much more intentional inculturation with pagan cultures. In those cases, they might well use the eightfold wheel of the year and have druids and wiccans participating in rituals that are Christ-centred, but the language for God and prayer has been carefully considered in ways that are open and connect rather than alienate. This is a prophetic dialogue. Paul Cudby describes his sense of this as a movement of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

In the book *Here Be Dragons*, which takes as a metaphor old maps that had dragons on the edges to warn of the dangers beyond the edge of the known world, Richard and Lorimer Passmore suggest the adventure is to sail off the edge of the known world and participate in mission with young people in their cultures and communities.¹⁶ There is now a network of youth ministers seeking to do this coordinated by Frontier Youth Trust. Working with a group of young people on the streets, Richard Passmore discerned that they used the word "flow" to speak of spiritual experience—when they skated and felt at one with the world they experienced "Flow." As a result of this they developed local theology using Flow as the name of God, the church of Flow, which met relationally on the

11 Taylor, *Primal Vision*, 41.

12 Taylor, *Primal Vision*, 29.

13 Taylor, *Primal Vision*, 33.

14 See http://www.mysticchrist.co.uk/forest_church and Bruce Stanley, *Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals* (Llangurig, UK: Mystic Christ Press, 2013).

15 Paul Cudby, *The Shaken Path* (UK: Christian Alternative, 2017).

16 Richard Passmore, Lorimer Passmore, and James Ballantyne, *Here Be Dragons: Youth Work and Mission off the Maps* (Chard, UK: Porthouse, 2013).

streets and in a curry house. They wrote some fascinating parables of flow and reworking of bible passages such as, “In the beginning there was Flow and the Flow was God and God created the heavens and the earth...”

An assignment we set pioneer students encourages this playful use of language. They are asked to identify a culture or community that is unfamiliar and to go and be present and observe and notice what it is like, ideally getting to know people. They then reflect on a passage of scripture that might resonate with that community and rework or improvise the language in it so that it would connect. Here is a short piece from a student reworking John 1 as a passage that might connect with Sikh friends:

Always! Forever! The Word was.

The Word was with the Guru.

The Word was the Guru.

He sang the divine Music with the Formless One, before the universes, worlds and continents were made.

World and Form were created by him, All species and colours, Iron and fire. No speck of dust exists except for him.

Where should men look for True Light?

In him who is True Life that is light for all. Darkness and evil tries to extinguish the True Light, Millions of times a day;

But the light beams out unfettered.

The Guru sent John. A holy saint.

He testifies about the True Light, ignoring caste. He knew and saw and touched the True Light. John was pure and devoted to God,

As a guru he brought light to men.

But he was not the True Light,

He pointed to the True One.

The True Light that enlightens all men and all women,

Ignoring all caste and race,

Was entering into our existence.

He lived as the True Humble one.

The Maker of universes was universally unseen,

By the very eyes he had gifted sight to.

How could his own world never welcome him in? ¹⁷

Another movement in the UK is church leavers. The church often assumes that people who leave do so because they have abandoned faith, but that is often not true. A recent piece of research in Scotland¹⁸ shows that significant numbers of church leavers are participating in mission. They give mission as a reason for leaving and find they are freer to participate in mission by leaving church as they have known it. Christ is central to their life as they seek to follow him in the midst of the communities they are in. This could be conceived of as an insider movement. The same sort of movement is happening in the US.

We have some African pioneer students whose question in mission is how to share Christ in ways that don't replicate the culture of Ghana or Nigeria or Malawi. They are part of church planting movements that have grown

¹⁷ Kevin Colyer. Used with permission.

¹⁸ Steve Aisthorpe, *The Invisible Church: Learning from the Experiences of Churchless Christians* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2016).

quickly in Britain. A big part of their story of migration is that God is sending them in mission but they find themselves with a culture of church that is disconnected from their non-African neighbours. So inculturation for them is finding holy ground in the homes of their neighbours and wondering what it might mean to go on an adventure in that form.¹⁹ It too requires an eschewing of foreign language, letting go of judgment of Western cultures, and a discernment of holy ground and finding a new vernacular on the inside.

There is a growing set of practices around mission and transformation in local communities that involves joining in with others in being good news and helping that part of God's good earth experience some healing. This is often with people at the margins and/or in places that are wasteland. A local vicar and pioneer in London reflected together on the way that migrant workers were being treated poorly—in answer to their question of what good news would look like for them, they came up with the answer of a cleaning company. Through participating on a missional entrepreneurship course with other pioneers and a lot of hard work and investment, three years on that dream has been realised. Clean for Good was launched paying the London living wage and developing cleaning contracts with companies that want better ethical practice.²⁰ I heard testimonies of cleaners who had worked seventy-two-hour weeks now beaming as they had found dignity and a better life. This kind of mission will also shine a light on an area of injustice for a fairer world we hope. To see a church catalysing such a project was wonderful, and I was proud when I heard the church telling its story—such good news. Another environmental example—Clay Community Church in Glasgow is restoring unproductive land.²¹ What I particularly love about this project as well as the gathering of a community around the task of renewing a piece of forgotten land is the re-theologising that undergirds the mission—they explore images of the tree of life, Jesus as the destroyer of the destroyers of the earth, and as the healer of the land, as the new gardener. At the heart of their liturgy on Easter day on the land is a tree-planting eucharist.

Pioneers are doing all sorts of other things—we had a piece of research done into our training at CMS and I laughed out loud when I saw the range of projects and communities that they are engaging in—it's truly delightful how imaginative the projects and communities are and how ordinary at the same time.²² Thank God for these dreamers.

Making...

In anthropology and cultural studies there has been a lot of criticism of ways of conceiving of culture as fixed, bounded wholes with a unified set of beliefs and values and worldview, a modern understanding, if you will. Culture has come to be seen as something dynamic, where meaning is contested and negotiated and its boundaries are porous. Culture is made and remade through the use of material stuff and social forms, through creative consumption, poaching and borrowing and repurposing as themes of identity and representation are negotiated and struggled with. Those who resist dominant ways of life do so not by leaving a (fixed) culture to create another one but by making do with a series of ruses and tactics that subvert or change the meanings of signs and symbols within that fluid culture by their creative use.²³ At times what they do seems to almost reclaim the culture over and against itself. An example of making of culture in this way would be the kneeling at American football games. Theology and missiology often imagine "culture" in its fixed way when they hear the word. This tends to close down

19 Harvey Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in The West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014) has pioneered thinking and practice in this area.

20 See Clean for Good, A Different Kind of Cleaning Company at www.cleanforgood.co.uk.

21 Paul Ede and Sam Ewell, "Understanding the Environmental Realm," in *Mission in Marginal Places: The Praxis*, eds. Michael Cloke and Paul Pears (Bletchley, UK: Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2016), 13-16.

22 See Pioneer Mission Leadership Training: 5 Years On—An Evaluation for CMS (2015). Download the report here: <https://pioneer.churchmissionso-cty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/PMLT-Report.pdf>.

23 Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

rather than open up possibilities for conversation as it is bounded and therefore defended. In contrast, Kathryn Tanner suggests that the more postmodern notions of culture hold great promise for theological (and I would add missiological) study.²⁴ Pete Ward similarly draws on the fluid (postmodern) nature of culture in his recent *Liquid Ecclesiology*, which is influenced very much by British cultural studies and inculturation in mission.²⁵

Both Tanner and Ward argue that theology, church, and tradition are all culturally made and remade in different generations and contexts. Construction is essential through the use of material and social forms; further, there are bound to be contested notions of what all of those things are and might be. It's a creative making;

... the creativity of a postmodern bricoleur, the creativity that is of someone who works with an always potentially disordered heap of already existing materials, pulling them apart and putting them back together again, tinkering with their shapes, twisting them this way and that. It is a creativity expressed through the modification and extension of materials already on the ground... This sort of tinkering can be genuinely revolutionary.²⁶

The cultural mandate in Genesis which is perhaps the first missional command offers this possibility to creatively make and remake life in response to the gift of God and the gifts we are given. It's our human task. The task in the West (in its particular and local places) is mission as making, making a way where there is no way, making do, making it up, making a world, making church, making communion, making a new society, terra forming, creatively, improvisationally, in an adventure of the imagination, animated by the Spirit sharing in the love of God both inside and outside the church.

Freedom

After five years of training pioneers I went on a retreat, and one of the things I was reflecting on was the amazing gift that pioneers bring and are. I was trying to distill what I sensed the charism of pioneers is and wrote nine aspects of that charism around the metaphor of true north, an overarching pull, or orientation towards God's mission in the world. One of those aspects that has lingered with me the most is freedom—because I think what I have seen is that as pioneers find out who it is they are called to be and are encouraged to be, they find a freedom in themselves, in Christ, and in imagination of what it means to join in the healing of all things, God's mission. The mission communities and orders of the churches at their best are purveyors of imagination and freedom in a church that come across rather too often as overanxious and fearful.

Risk Letting Go Control

This tension between freedom and law is nothing new. The book of Galatians is a tussle for freedom from the Gentile church on an adventure of the imagination and the Jerusalem church and her "right" traditions and practices in the face of those new Gentile practices. Taylor's book is pretty blunt about the challenge in missions between the culture of the sending Western church into new cultural contexts. He says that Western culture and the gospel are often confused as the same gift. So if you are interested in the gospel, you get the other thrown into the bargain, which will require some unbundling. "It has to be admitted quite frankly that during these centuries the missionaries of the Christian Church have commonly assumed that Western civilisation and Christianity were two aspects of the same gift which they were commissioned to offer to the rest of mankind."²⁷ Will we risk letting go of control

24 Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

25 Pete Ward, *Liquid Ecclesiology: The Gospel and the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

26 Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 166.

27 Taylor, *Primal Vision*, 5.

and trust God, trust the Spirit, trust the people in their own cultures, trusting those improvising in mission as they seek to inculturate the gospel? “Are we of the West prepared to trust the Holy Spirit to lead the Christians of Asia and Africa or must the controlling Western hand be permanently resting on the ark of God?”²⁸

It’s a great question and it’s taken and is taking a very long time to answer in global contexts. But I don’t think we’re anywhere near answering it in our own backyards. Taking the UK as an example, the Church of England is looser around the edges than it has been for a very long time. Fresh expressions of church have been documented and show significant growth in the church as a whole.²⁹ But it is still difficult for the structures and imagination of the church to accept pioneering mission that is in any shape or form doing something imaginatively different in spite of all the rhetoric in church reports. There is an openness to forms that look like what we have already—for example, a church plant in a new housing area, or the addition of something that looks like a new congregation. But even then the levels of control over issues like inculturated liturgy, licensing of lay pioneers and so on, let alone local theology, make good mission practice very difficult. This isn’t a great surprise. In every culture newness is resisted. Donovan, in his amazing work with the Masai, runs into challenges over the mass, ordination, the liturgy, and so on.³⁰ In his less well-known second book, he seeks to apply the mission learning from Africa to America and suggests that, like the Jerusalem church, the church in the West is “blinded to the fact they have trapped Christ in their own culture,”³¹ and that we need to free doctrine and sacraments from standardisation, and develop a very different kind of formation or imagination for ministry—much akin to what Taylor is articulating. There have been some suggestions in the Church of England for a move towards a centralised pool of resources that ministers might draw on faithfully which would open up a very different set of possibilities of making but that has not got much traction with the liturgical committees.³² It’s ironic because at gatherings of bishops in the Anglican communion imagination and inculturation are two ever-present discussions. But even then they are being considered at the provincial level so that a statement from the bishops in 1998 can say, “... True inculturation implies a willingness in worship to listen to culture.... it has to make contact with the deep feelings of people. It can only be achieved through an openness to innovation and experimentation, an encouragement of local creativity, and a readiness to reflect critically at every stage of the process, a process which in principle is never ending,”³³ whilst at the same time not dealing with this exact issue in Western contexts or at least only imagining it at the centrally controlled provincial level rather than where freedom is needed locally for pioneers involved in mission on the ground. Discussion about inculturation in the Roman Catholic Church tends to have the same provincial nature.

I don’t want to labour this point—I think the challenge is clear but what I do want to reflect on in mission in the West is that we need more than ever the mission communities of the church, the sodalities, the spread out mission orders, the refounding of religious life around the *missio dei*. There is plenty of research around this: that the energy of the church in mission is best carried when there are two structures of the church in mission.³⁴ The first is the local (modal) structure which is the one that is best known. But the second (sodal) is the structures of the church that are gathered around a charism with a focus on mission and have a second-order commitment to that charism—the mission communities. So in our context CMS is a mission community of the church and we seek to nurture this charism and support those pioneers inculturating the gospel in the West (as well as in other contexts).

28 Taylor, *Primal Vision*, 9.

29 Church Army, *The Day of Small Changes*. See https://www.churcharmy.org/Groups/286719/Church_Army/Church_Army/Our_work/Research/The_Day_of/The_Day_of.aspx.

30 Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*.

31 Vincent Donovan, *The Church in the Midst of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 19.

32 Mark Earey, *Beyond Common Worship: Anglican Identity and Liturgical Diversity* (London: SCM Press, 2013), is one example.

33 “The Down to Earth Worship, York Statement,” in *Liturgical Inculturation in the Anglican Communion*, ed. David R. Holeton (Bramcote, Nottingham, UK: Grove Books, 1990).

34 Ralph Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission,” *Missiology: An International Review* 2, no. 1 (January 1974): 121-39.

Embedding mission in other diocesan structures is fine as far as it goes but the gravity pulls in a different direction. Missiology or mission education, rather than having done its work because mission is so much more talked about in churches and other seminaries, is as much needed as ever. Dana Robert concluded in her review of forty years of American missiology, “the church will not move ahead in mission unless the missiologist sounds a prophetic call,”³⁵ and I would add unless her mission communities nurture that prophetic mission and ministry as a distinctive charism.³⁶

Do It from the Inside

Taylor’s radical view of mission in relation to culture could be summarised as “do it from the inside.”

Either we must think of Christian mission in terms of bringing the Muslim, Hindu, the Animist into Christendom or we must go with Christ as he stands in the midst of Islam, of Hinduism, of the primal worldview, and watch with him fearfully and wonderingly as he becomes dare we say it? Muslim, or Hindu, or Animist, as once he became man and a Jew...Once, led by the Spirit, the Church made its choice in this matter at the council of Jerusalem and dared to win Gentiles by becoming Gentile.... Christ answered the call of the Greeks—he came where they were and became what they were. From within their own culture he challenged..., judged..., turned world upside down just as he had turned Judaism upside down—just as indeed if he enters our churches today he turns our Christianity upside down. So would he challenge and judge and revolutionise the African worldview but he must do it from the inside.”³⁷

Jesus’s incarnation was done on the inside. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We see the value Jesus placed on this in Samaria in John 4 where he remained with Samaritans for a couple of days after his encounter with the woman at the well. Rather than inviting them to become Jewish and learn at Jerusalem he encouraged them to remain inside Samaritan religion and culture. He did the same with the man in the tombs at Gerasa who wanted to go back across the lake with Jesus. Jesus insisted he remain in his own culture and community so that something could grow on the inside rather than have its imagination colonised by the Jewish way of doing things, and perhaps the Syrian church was birthed right there? There is a growing body of writing in mission on what some call insider movements which is primarily written to consider mission and Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism as followers of Jesus remain, say, Buddhist with Jesus at the centre of their life.³⁸ There is some controversy around this in certain circles but Taylor was writing about this fifty years ago! Of course it’s done from the inside—when did we think doing it from the outside, or excarnation, was a good idea? I hope there will be a growing body of practice and thinking as people make the connection between that and following Christ in the West, not just in other religions and lands.³⁹

35 Dana L. Robert, “Forty Years of American Missiology: A Brief Review,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 38, no. 1 (January 2014): 6.

36 Gerald Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993) and *From Chaos to Mission: Refounding Religious Life Formation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996) are insightful in the importance of the spread out religious communities.

37 Taylor, *Primal Vision*, 113.

38 Harley Talman and John Jay Travis, eds., *Understanding Insider Movement: Disciples of Jesus within Diverse Religious Communities* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015).

39 Michael Moynagh, *Church in Life: Innovation, Mission and Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 2017), does exactly that where he talks about insider communities. See chapter 10.

Christian Humanism, Anthropocentrism, and the Contemporary Ecological Crisis

by Anthony Le Duc

Environmental degradation and the impending ecological crisis is one of the greatest concerns of the Catholic Church. Nowadays, speaking out about and acting to raise environmental awareness, promote ecological sustainability, and advocate species conservation are no longer considered activities belonging to the so-called “hippy tree-hugging vegetarian liberal” but the preoccupation of modern society in general as well as all parts of the Catholic Church in particular. Church leaders and theologians over the decades have tried hard to put forth an environmentalism solidly based on Biblical scholarship and Church teachings, especially ever since Lynn White Jr. described in his seminal essay five decades ago that the Judeo-Christian tradition was the most anthropocentric religion that ever existed and blamed it for the ecological crisis.¹ This charge, whether reasonable or not, was a blow for Christianity because White’s position was readily accepted by many environmental ethicists and repeated by generations of activists. Even now it is still difficult for Christianity to completely shake off this characterization. Misperceptions of the Catholic Church’s teachings on the ecology persist in part due to widespread actions

of Catholics themselves that go against these very teachings. However, there is also a fundamental problem of misunderstanding the Catholic ecological stance that bases itself on the tradition of Christian humanism, which recent generations of popes have continually reiterated in various Church documents that refer to social concerns, ecology being one of them. The purpose of this essay is to shed light on Catholic environmentalism in context of the Catholic humanistic outlook. It will demonstrate that Catholic environmentalism based on Christian humanism neither fits the characterization of anthropocentrism as understood by White nor agrees with the positions that call for non-anthropocentric environmentalisms such as Deep Ecology and biocentrism. Rather, Catholic environmentalism is derived from a humanism that highlights the noble calling of the human person to strive towards a life of virtue and to be agents who not only live in but work towards achieving

harmony within humanity and with the entire cosmos.

The Nature of Christian Humanism

The second-century writer Irenaeus of Lyons said, “The glory of God is a human being fully alive.” The basis for Irenaeus’s sentiment can be found in the Gospel, for it was Jesus himself who declared that his purpose for coming into the world was so that humanity “may have life, and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10). These statements highlight

¹ Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1205.

the aim of Christian humanism, which is to make God's glory seen and felt by humanity being fully and truly itself as intended by its Creator. What needs to be explicated is what does it mean for human beings to be truly and fully themselves? How is it manifested in human attitudes, and with behavior and relationship with God, with fellow human beings, and with all of creation? In order to answer these questions, it is important to briefly explain the difference between the term humanism as understood by Catholic thinkers over the centuries and that as appropriated by the Enlightenment project. What came to be called humanism is a notion that long precedes the free thought ideology which interprets the human condition through a rationalist, secularist, and naturalist worldview. This restrictive use of the term humanism is in fact a rather recent development, and certainly not an invention of the secular humanist movement, as accurately observed by the humanist Nicolas Walter:

The facts are that, while *humanism* happens to be the word we now use, it isn't "our own"; that it has been, is being, and will be used by many other people in many other ways; that most of its senses have actually involved religion; that many of its nonreligious senses are unclear without qualification; that all viable senses of a word are equally valid; that semantic dogmatism and verbal authoritarianism are quite alien to what most of us understand by being humanist or supporting humanism; that words can't be "stolen"; and that neither we nor anyone else could control the words even if we wished to.²

The term humanism has its roots in the Latin term *humanitas*, which designates human nature as something civilized and cultivated as opposed to being barbaric.³ A humanist, as it was used in the Middle Ages in Europe when the term came into existence, was someone who benefitted from an education comprising of language and literature, and who continued to work in these areas as a scholar and teacher.⁴ Such a person would be characterized by moral and social integrity manifesting the fullness of what it meant to be human.⁵ When the word humanist appeared in English in the sixteenth century, it was still employed to refer to someone who was a practiced grammarian or rhetorician, or someone who was devoted to studying human affairs. Though humanism had a pedagogical emphasis, it was always developed within a greater Christian context which presumed faith in God. It was not until the late nineteenth century that humanism began to take on an anti-religious connotation depicting human beings as rational creatures independent of theological considerations.⁶ This modification is judged by Walter, however, to be "applied retrospectively and indeed anachronistically and unhistorically."⁷ In the years after, philosophers such as Ludwig Feuerbach and Arnold Ruge continued the process of expunging Christian elements out of humanism so that humanism itself became its own religion—a religious alternative to Christianity. Despite the movement to replace faith in God with faith in humanity as inspired by Auguste Comte's anti-theistic positivism, humanism continued to be referred to in religious overtones. It was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that humanism made a divorce from religion all together as reflected in educationalist Harold Blackham's declaration that humanism is an "alternative to religion." Humanism, asserted Blackham, proceeds "from the assumptions that man is on his own and this life is all and as assumption of responsibility for one's life and for the life of mankind."⁸ While this understanding of humanism gained popularity in a particular circle of thinkers, the term continued to be connected to all sorts of disciplines: religious, scientific, secular, ethical, rationalist, spiritual, civic, etc. Catholic thinkers throughout history and up until the modern age continued to insist on a humanism rooted

2 Nicolas Walter, *Humanism: Finding Meaning in the Word* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), Kindle edition.

3 Angus Ritchie and Nick Spencer, *The Case for Christian Humanism: Why Christians Should Believe in Humanism, and Humanists in Christianity* (London: Theos, 2014), 15.

4 Walter, *Humanism*.

5 John W. O'Malley, "How Humanistic is the Jesuit Tradition? From the 1599 Ratio Studiorum to Now," in *Jesuit Education 21: Conference Proceedings on the Future of Jesuit Higher Education*, ed. Martin R. Tripole (Philadelphia: St. Joseph's University Press, 2000), 1.

6 Ritchie and Spencer, *Case for Christian Humanism*, 17.

7 Walter, *Humanism*.

8 Quoted in Ritchie and Spencer, *Case for Christian Humanism*, 20.

in religion and faith in God and modeled on the person of Jesus Christ. Christian humanism maintained its own place of importance as reflected in the vibrant teachings of the Church up until the present.

Humanism, despite the attempt by some to depict it as an ideology wholly and necessarily free of any spiritual or religious dimensions, in fact does not represent a vision of life that departs from that of Christianity. However, in the Catholic context, it bears little resemblance to the humanism that insists on putting faith in humanity rather than in God. Although modern humanism has its origins in the Renaissance Era, Christian humanism can be traced back to Christianity's early days with a legacy that is long and varied.⁹ Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, and Jerome represented some of the most learned men of their times, and their writings became resources for developing humanistic education. Augustine's *De Doctrina Catholica* as well as his rhetorical skills were of tremendous inspiration to the medieval education,¹⁰ which made part of its agenda the recovery of the ancient Christian tradition, both Greek and Latin.¹¹ Christian humanism continued to be advocated in modern times as represented by the philosophy of Jacques Maritain, who insisted that Christian humanism served to develop the complete human person by not rejecting the spiritual dimension of life and "sets no a priori limit to the descent of the divine into man."¹² This anthropological outlook where human beings avail themselves to the divine and the super-rational distinguishes Christian humanism from what Maritain labeled "anthropocentric humanism" where human beings become their "own centre, and therefore the centre of all things."¹³ In addition, it leads to the "discovery of a deeper and fuller sense of the dignity of the human person, so that man would re-find himself in God refound, and would direct social work toward an heroic ideal of brotherly love."¹⁴ Maritain's integral humanism finds continuity and resonance in the ethical personalism of Louis Janssens who declared that the person is a complex totality whose value as a person is realized in the very act of living life.¹⁵ Rather than being an individual whose existence is isolated from everything else in space and time, the person comprised of both physical and spiritual components is able to direct him/herself towards God and others in free, loving, co-operative and reciprocal relationships. Therefore, self-actualization or true personhood is achieved in the process of encountering with others in mutual dependency rather than domination or instrumentalization of the other.

The thoughts of Maritain and Janssens no doubt had their impact on the Catholic Church, whose vision of Christian humanism made its appearance in one of the most important documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*. In the Church's articulation, Christian humanism is integrally connected to the person of Christ who restored to humanity all that was lost through the sins of Adam.

Christ, the final Adam, reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. He who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) is himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam he restores the divine likeness that had been disfigured by sin. Human nature, assumed by him, was not annulled

9 William Schweiker, "Humanity Before God: Theological Humanism from a Catholic Perspective," Martin Marty Center Web Forum, 2003, accessed August 28, 2017, <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/imce/pdfs/webforum/102003/Schweiker%20essay.pdf>, 1.

10 Schweiker, "Humanity Before God," 2.

11 Alistair Hamilton, "Humanism and the Bible," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 101.

12 Jacques Maritain, "Integral Humanism and the Crisis of Modern Times," *The Review of Politics*, 1, no.1 (1939): 8. Maritain describes this Christian humanism as "integral humanism," which "considers man in the wholeness of his natural and supernatural being."

13 Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 19.

14 Maritain, "Integral Humanism," 7-8.

15 Louis Janssens, *Personne et Société: Théories actuelles et essai doctrinal* (Gembloux: Ducolot, 1939), 3.

but was raised to a divine dignity. The Son of God, by his Incarnation, was united to every man. Born of the Virgin, he was made one of us, like us in all things except sin.¹⁶

Therefore, human moral, social, and spiritual development must be measured against the person of Christ who represents perfection in all these respects. Through the status of the Incarnated Christ, human beings no longer need to focus on sinfulness or lament human brokenness but can look towards a higher destiny made possible through this extraordinary event in human history. Christ's incarnation also made possible for human beings to be united to God who created humanity and wills that all people constitute one family.¹⁷ If human beings are aware of the extraordinary gift to them in Jesus Christ, they will come to understand that a fully realized human destiny can only come from each person being "a sincere gift of himself."¹⁸ Therefore, Christian humanism is defined by "spiritual and moral maturity of the human race" and characterized "by responsibility to his brothers and to history."¹⁹ The Council Fathers insisted that Christ himself "can offer man the light and the strength to measure up to his supreme destiny."²⁰

The centrality of Christ in Christian humanism envisioned by the Second Vatican Council has further been affirmed by successive generations of popes up until the present. Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* declared that only when integral human development is directed to Christ can it "promote the good of every man and of the whole man."²¹ Paul VI wrote, "By reason of his union with Christ, the source of life, man attains to new fulfillment of himself, to a transcendent humanism which gives him his greatest possible perfection: this is the highest goal of personal development."²² Likewise, in the first encyclical of Pope John Paul II's pontificate, *Redemptor Hominis*, he also insisted that authentic humanism must be connected to Christ and the redemptive act accomplished in the cross, death, and resurrection of Christ.²³ When this link that Christ forged through the paschal mystery is broken, not only do human beings suffer, but so does the entire creation. Human progress disavowed of Christ, according to John Paul II, only leads to futility characterized by environmental destruction, armed conflicts, and utter disregard for life.²⁴ On the other hand, union with Christ the Redeemer helps human beings to overcome the effects of sin, imbue the heart with fullness of justice, and make manifest the noble dimensions of human nature.²⁵

Like *Gaudium et Spes*, John Paul II recognized and affirmed the ethical thrust contained in a Christ-centered humanism, which manifests itself in humble service. While the Christian vocation is described as "kingly" because it shares in Christ's own kingly mission, this kingly vocation does not support the exercise of arrogance and domination, but a sincere imitation of Christ who "came not to be served but to serve." For John Paul II, authentic kingship is derived from the self-mastery through personal development of virtue and spiritual maturity manifested in true servanthood. The combination of kingship and servanthood gives rise to the principle of "kingly service" which "imposes on each one of us, in imitation of Christ's example, the duty to demand of himself exactly what

16 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), no. 22, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, para. 22.

17 GS, no. 24.

18 GS, no. 24.

19 GS, no. 55.

20 GS, no. 10.

21 Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), no. 14, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.

22 PP, no. 16.

23 *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), no. 10, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html.

24 RH, no. 8.

25 RH, no. 9.

we have been called to do, what we have personally obliged ourselves to by God's grace, in order to respond to our vocation."²⁶ John Paul II's successor, Pope Benedict XVI, condemned any humanism that stripped off the God dimension as "inhuman." He wrote in the conclusion of the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*:

*A humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism. Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life—structures, institutions, culture and ethics—without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment.*²⁷

Christian Humanism and the Ecology

The teachings of Council Fathers and generations of popes as well as influential Catholic thinkers make it clear that Christian humanism aims at achieving integral human development and a life of virtue for the sake of service of others. The focus on the human person in Christian humanism does not represent self-centered preoccupation with one's own fate and perfection while being completely blinded to the well-being and flourishing of others. With regards to ecological concerns, Christian humanism strives for mental and spiritual transformation needed to counter tendencies towards exploitation and misusing of power that lead to ecological degradation. From the Catholic humanistic standpoint, the ecological crisis is as much a concern about humanity as it is a concern about the ecology. Pope Benedict XVI argued that the ecological crisis reflects a defect in the "human ecology." When the human ecology is in disarray with weakening virtues, disrespect for life, and loss of conscience, the environmental ecology also suffers.²⁸ John Paul II identified this weakening state of human ecology as the "culture of death"²⁹ that destroys human life on the social level and is also manifested in the "irrational destruction of the environment."³⁰ For John Paul II, the culture of death undergirded by a "veritable structure of sin" not only takes on the form of lack of respect for human life in all its stages but also the lack of respect for nature as reflected in the "technical and scientific way of thinking, prevalent in present-day culture [that] rejects the very idea that there is a truth of creation which must be acknowledged, or a plan of God for life which must be respected."³¹ The lack of peace, in addition to resulting from regional conflicts, abortion, poverty, and the like, also came about due to plundering nature's resources.³² Similar to other social problems, the ecological crisis is a moral issue reflecting a disharmonious relationship between humanity and God. In his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II diagnosed the root cause of the ecological crisis as a widespread "anthropological error" plaguing human society.

Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation,

26 *RH*, no. 21.

27 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), no. 78, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html.

28 *CV*, no. 51.

29 John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), no.12, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.pdf.

30 *EV*, no. 38.

31 *EV*, no. 22.

32 John Paul II, "World Day of Peace Message 1990," https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.pdf.

man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him.³³

Therefore, the effort to address the ecological crisis must proceed from the effort to “safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic ‘human ecology’” that enable human to “respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed” by God.³⁴ The principle of a sound human ecology that promotes human dignity was reaffirmed and extensively discussed by Pope Francis in his encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si*, demonstrating its inseparability from any discussion on the natural ecology. Francis wrote:

The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in ‘lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies.’ Authentic human development...presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and ‘take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system.’³⁵

What Christian humanism emphasizes as expressed by all the popes cited thus far is a need for approaching the development process in general and addressing the ecological crisis in particular with a more “integral and integrating vision,” taking into account both social and natural dimensions of reality.³⁶ A lack of “genuine and profound humanism” will ultimately render social, political, economic, and scientific mechanisms ineffective no matter how well thought out they may be.³⁷ It is not enough to coordinate and bring together various fields of knowledge without that effort being driven by a humanism that can grasp a more comprehensive vision of reality.

Catholic Humanistic Environmentalism and Anthropocentrism

Catholic environmentalism based on Christian humanism as presented here must not be confused with what environmental ethicists and activists often mischaracterize as anthropocentrism, especially the brand of anthropocentrism described as strong or tyrannical. The term anthropocentrism has been in existence for over 150 years since it was first coined in the 1860s in debates on Darwin’s theory of evolution to describe the prevailing historical assumption that human beings occupied the center of the universe.³⁸ Although the literal meaning of the term is “human-centeredness,” what this actually implies is vague and is left open to a variety of interpretation. The *Cambridge Online Dictionary* gives a single definition for “anthropocentric,” which is “considering humans and their existence as the most important and central fact in the universe.” The implication drawn from this definition is that human beings occupy ontological and moral priority over all other entities—both biotic and abiotic—in the universe. Anthropocentrism as an ontological view ensures that human beings, as the zenith of creation, are privileged when considerations are given to matters that affect their well-being and flourishing. Embracing this outlook is a small step away from the ethical view that human beings reserve the right to do with nature as they see fit, even if it means wanton exploitation, because only they are ascribed intrinsic value while all other entities possess only instrumental value. Values are accorded to the nonhuman world only when they directly or indirectly

33 John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), no. 37, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

34 *CA*, no. 38.

35 Francis, *Laudato Si*’ (2015), no.5, https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf.

36 *LS*, no. 141.

37 *LS*, no. 181.

38 Elisa K. Campbell, “Beyond Anthropocentrism,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 19 (1983): 54-67.

serve human interests in some ways.³⁹ Consequently, when human interests conflict with those of nonhuman entities, priority is inevitably given to the former at the cost of the latter.

In addition to the ontological and ethical views of anthropocentrism, there is also a third view, which is often ignored when one refers to it in the ecological discourse. According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, anthropocentrism is the epistemological reality of “interpreting or regarding the world in terms of human values and experiences.” This definition emphasizes not the attitude of human beings towards themselves or towards non-human entities, but the mere fact of human *locatedness* in the grand scheme of things. Eugene Hargrove remarked that epistemologically, anthropocentrism is unavoidable because the world can only be perceived through the human locatedness.⁴⁰ Frederic Ferré employed the term “perspectival anthropocentrism” to describe a reality in which humans “have no choice but to think as humans.”⁴¹ This is so “even while we try to transcend egoism by cultivating sympathy and concern for other centres of intrinsic value.”⁴² Indeed, human beings may try to imagine what it might be like to view the world through the eyes of a chimpanzee or a bird as a stimulating intellectual exercise or as a practice in enhancing human empathy towards non-human creatures, but ultimately, the only reference that human beings can be confident of is their own. Even with that there are plenty of disagreements because points of view among human beings often fail to coincide. Tim Hayward asserted that not only is anthropocentrism unavoidable and unobjectionable in certain respects, it is even desirable to “perform the critical function envisaged for it.”⁴³

The fact that there are multiple valences to anthropocentrism, both objectionable and unobjectionable, has led to alternative terminologies. Each tries to resolve the tension between a natural and inescapable reality of human beings as the subject of perceiving and valuing and the negative tendency of human beings to turn into despots ready to conquer, dominate, and subjugate nature at all costs. William Grey advocated an “enriched and enlightened” anthropocentrism in which a “short and narrow” conception of human interests and concerns ought not trump environmental balance. Grey claimed that “anthropocentrism is natural and inevitable, and when properly qualified turns out to be perfectly benign.”⁴⁴ The benign anthropocentrism advocated by Grey is similar to the concept of weak anthropocentrism proposed by Bryan Norton. For Norton, weak anthropocentrism entails that human beings attempt to control their decision-making process by carefully examining their felt and considered preferences, taking into account a world view derived from sound aesthetic and moral ideals, and sound scientific theories as well as a metaphysical framework that interprets these theories.⁴⁵ The implication in Norton’s use of the adjective “weak” is that there exists a strong anthropocentrism characterized by uncontrolled exploitation and destruction of nature to serve human interest, which is unacceptable and must be resisted.

Both the benign anthropocentrism of Grey and weak anthropocentrism of Norton serve to affirm the inevitability of human locatedness in the task of decision making in matters regarding the human future and the future of the ecology while rejecting potential abuse of powers when it comes to those futures. Scholars like Grey and Norton object to proponents of non-anthropocentric paradigms such as Deep Ecology that “often try to correct anthropocentric bias by developing and defending a conception of environmental value which downgrades or denies hu-

39 Katie McShane, “Anthropocentrism vs. Nonanthropocentrism: Why Should We Care?” *Environmental Values* 16 (2007): 170.

40 Eugene Hargrove, “Weak Anthropocentric Intrinsic Value,” in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Roston III (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 175.

41 Frederic Ferré, “Personalistic Organicism: Paradox or Paradigm?” in *Philosophy and the Natural Environment*, ed. Robin Attfield and Andrew Belsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 72.

42 Ferré, “Personalistic Organicism,” 72.

43 Tim Hayward, “Anthropocentrism: A Misunderstood Problem,” *Environmental Values* 6, no. 1 (1997), 51.

44 William Grey, “Anthropocentrism and Deep Ecology,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 71, no. 4 (1993): 470.

45 Bryan G. Norton, “Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism,” *Environmental Ethics* 6, no. 2 (1984): 134.

man values and concerns altogether, and in so doing renders them marginal or useless for decisions and action.”⁴⁶ According to Hayward, “If the ultimate point of an ethic is to yield a determinate guide to human action, then, the human reference is ineliminable even when extending moral concern to nonhumans.”⁴⁷ The agent can respond to the ethical obligation to make others’ ends his/her ends, but ultimately, asserts Hayward, “Values are always the values of the valuer.”⁴⁸

Hayward, Grey, and Norton all agree that the necessity of a human reference point makes it impossible to create a totally non-anthropocentric value system that has no basis in the human experience and existing human values. The notion that values can simply be recognized and selected without any need to refer to human interpretation is a delusion. Even the natural balance advocated by ecocentrism is a human perception of what balance ought to look like. One perspective of balance might be that human beings do not interfere in the workings of nature so that nothing is disturbed. Let whatever happen happens. If a virus invades a population of birds, the virus has as much right to flourish as the birds. The fact that the virus is winning the battle is simply part of the many dramas taking place in nature, which human beings can sit back and observe but have no role in determining the outcome. A second interpretation of balance might be that human beings use their intellectual ability and technological knowledge to “improve” the natural balance. For example, when a certain animal population is being invaded by a destructive pest, human beings should intervene to eliminate the culprit to restore the natural balance. A third interpretation of natural balance is that human beings, as natural entities in themselves, do what it is in their nature to do, and whatever results from that is considered entirely normal. If human beings end up destroying themselves along with present ecosystems, it would simply represent an event among the countless events in the ongoing life history of the planet. One billion years after human extinction, nature will still be nature, whatever that may look like. Depending on one’s perspective, any of these three and other possibilities can be argued as representing true natural balance. Nonetheless, the fact that one interpretation of “natural balance” will be preferred over the other signifies that there is a selection criterion of values that are meaningful to the human desire and experience. It is more reasonable and realistic to admit that what is deemed to be natural balance represents more of what human beings desire for themselves and for the world rather than to project human wishes onto nature and say that it is what nature “wants.” Mary Anne Warren commented:

We are not gods but human beings, reasoning about how we ought to think and act. Our moral theories can only be based upon what we know and what we care about, or ought to care about. If this makes our theories anthropocentric, then this much anthropocentrism is inevitable in any moral theory that is relevant to human actions.⁴⁹

The above discussion of Christian humanism and anthropocentrism demonstrates significant differences between Catholic humanistic environmentalism and anthropocentric environmentalism. It is clear that Catholic humanistic environmentalism resists the characterization as being anthropocentric in any strict sense of the word. First, it is not anthropocentric as an ontological view because while Catholic teaching affirms the nobleness of the human being in the order of creation, humanity is unceasingly reminded of how small a creature it is compared to God, the Creator. A person’s life is fragile like a flourishing flower that withers away under the scorching sun or falls away with the passing wind (Ps 103:15-16; Jb 14:2; 1 Pt. 1:24); that from dust he came, and to dust he will return (Gn 3:19; Eccl 3:20; Ps 103:14). With such merciless admonishments, anyone who stands before God and the world with a puffed-up chest is engaging in self-delusion and sooner or later will be destroyed by self implosion if he/she

46 William Grey, “Environmental Value and Anthropocentrism,” *Ethics and the Environment* 3, no. 1 (1998): 99.

47 Hayward, “Anthropocentrism,” 56.

48 Hayward, “Anthropocentrism,” 57.

49 Mary Anne Warren, *Moral Status: Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 43.

were not already taken down by those who are stronger. The preventative measure against self-aggrandizement also means taking steps to thwart the ethical view that perceives the value of nonhuman entities as purely instrumental, having value only in so far as they are perceived by human beings to have value or remain useful to them. Catholic environmentalism challenges this thinking by stating that human beings have not been entrusted with the primary task of ascribing values to creatures—themselves included—because that task is the prerogative of God. In fact, the goodness (value) of all creatures has already been determined by God since the very moment of creation. This inalienable value was affirmed by various Church Fathers in their numerous writings.⁵⁰ In *Nature of the Good*, Augustine of Hippo pointed out that there are “generic good things to be found in all that God has created, whether spirit or body.” Thomas Aquinas likewise argued for the goodness of creatures because they have God as their ultimate source of existence. John Chrysostom, reflecting on Genesis 1, asserted that since God has already deemed each type of creature to be good, no one had the audacity and the arrogance to pronounce otherwise.⁵¹ Pope Francis echoed this sentiment when he declared, “Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures.”⁵² Modern anthropocentrism represents a misunderstanding on the part of human beings regarding the value and dignity of the world and their rightful relationship towards it, thus causing them to misuse and abuse God’s gift of creation.⁵³ Christian humanism not only sees this kind of anthropocentrism as misusing God’s gift of creation but also misusing the gift of human beings to each other, causing degeneration in social bonds and a breakdown in social harmony. Therefore, Christian humanism offers a corrective to the anthropological error that construes human-human and human-nature relationships in antagonistic and dominative terms. Just as human individuals and groups prove their strength and worth by subjugating and dominating the weaker members of the human family, the entire human race tries to assert its superiority through exploiting creation rather than displaying caring and responsible stewardship. Social instability and ecological degradation result from actions inspired by antagonism rather than by good will and concern for the common good. “We cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships,” remarked Pope Francis.⁵⁴

Catholic humanistic environmentalism accepts the epistemological stance of anthropocentrism only partially because while Christian humanism calls for the rightful place of human beings in the order of creation as well as the role imposed upon human beings by virtue of assuming that very position, human knowledge is not purely a human construct but comes about also as a result of revelation from God. God is the true source of knowledge and origin of what is good. Therefore, human beings do not simply conjure things up based on their own intellectual capability but rely also on inspiration from God, who reveals to them how they ought to see and understand the world around them. While non-anthropocentric environmentalisms such as Deep Ecology and biocentrism degrade or marginalize human values and concerns, ultimately rendering human responsibility in the ecological crisis unnecessary, Christian humanism affirms both human role and responsibility in the ecological crisis with the understanding that “human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued.”⁵⁵ However, this is not the same as simply accepting anthropocentrism as an inevitable epistemological reality as a number of environmental ethicists have advocated because the Catholic outlook also takes into account divine inspiration that allows human beings to grasp things beyond philosophical reasoning.

50 J. Schaeffer, “Valuing Earth Intrinsically and Instrumentally: A Theological Framework for Environmental Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 66, no. 4 (2005): 783-814.

51 Schaeffer, “Valuing Earth Intrinsically,” 787.

52 *LS*, no. 68.

53 *LS*, no. 115.

54 *LS*, no. 119.

55 *LS*, no. 118.

Anthropocentric environmentalisms (as well as the non-anthropocentric anti-thesis) cannot be equated with Catholic humanistic environmentalism because they employ a two-term metaphysics that often pitch human beings and nature in antagonistic relationships. In this predicament, either human beings control nature and exercise the right to do with nature as they see fit, or human beings are subject to nature as a mere node on the gigantic tree of existence. Neither option seems enticing considering how human beings understand and perceive themselves as subjects of value and responsibility. Unlike anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric environmentalisms, Catholic humanistic environmentalism employs a three-term metaphysics that places both human beings and nature under the guidance of God, directing and enabling for mutual and reciprocal relationship between God's creatures as well as between God and God's own creation. In this manner, Catholic humanistic environmentalism calls for an ethics of ecological stewardship that rejects tendencies towards exploitation and wanton destruction of nature. Numerous Biblical scholars have declared that any attempt to resort to the Genesis command to subjugate and dominate (Gn 1:28) to justify absolute domination is a gross misinterpretation of the intent of the Biblical writer and the will of God. Both Pope Francis and the Patriarch Bartholemew have called on Catholics who treat creation in this manner to confess their environmental sins because these actions represent violation of God's laws. For Pope Francis sin is manifested not only in acts of wars, violence, and abuse and ill treatment of the weak, but also in the "attacks on nature."⁵⁶ Ultimately, what Christian humanism attempts to do is to help human beings develop a spirituality grounded in their relationship with Christ, the Redeemer of Humankind, the revealer of human potential, the measure of human perfection, which ultimately affects their relationship with God, with each other, and, in fact, with the whole of creation. The environmentalism inspired by the personalist ethics of prominent Catholic thinkers like Maritain and Janssens asserts that unconcern for the ecology betrays authentic personhood and is detrimental to one's aim towards achieving full humanity or sustaining its dignity and value. In other words, care for creation is part and parcel of an authentic humanistic outlook that recognizes the necessity of living out all the different relationships in one's life in mutual dependency and with genuine love. Catholic humanistic environmentalism is a natural expression of this all-encompassing approach towards relationship building that aims at achieving social harmony as well as personal and ecological well-being.

Conclusion

As the Catholic Church continues to join with other Christian denominations, religious traditions, and secular fields in the ongoing effort to address the ecological crisis, it needs to present profound insights found within the tradition of Christian humanism to enrich the dialogue and clarify persistent misunderstanding of the Church's ecological outlook. An important aim is to end the unjustified depiction of Christian environmentalism in general and Catholic environmentalism in particular as being anthropocentric. The above discussion demonstrates that Catholic humanistic environmentalism rejects any view that places human beings in the position of absolute domination over non-human entities, constructs human-nature relationship in antagonistic terms, or takes an epistemological stance devoid of divine inspiration. As such, Catholic humanistic environmentalism neither endorses strong or tyrannical anthropocentrism which is outright detrimental to the ecology nor simply accepts the inevitable reality of human-locatedness which is potentially environmentally destructive if considerations are not given to the transcendent source of knowledge that informs human perception. Catholic humanistic environmentalism calls for the continuing development of the human person to truly become himself or herself in such way that reflects Christ in how he/she relates to God and to others. In this manner, any humanistic environmentalism must affirm that care for creation, just as care for fellow human beings, is essential to the process of fulfilling the destiny of being truly human, to live not simply as individuals, but as persons in the world. A person fully alive is able to recognize God as the Creator and Christ as the Redeemer, is ready to address the sun as brother and moon as sister, and is joyful to join with all of creation in praise of God as Father and Mother.

⁵⁶ *LS*, no. 66.

“Hope Requires Participants”: Dorothee Sölle’s Warning and Task for Political Theology in the Trump Era

by Dannis M. Matteson

The aim of political theology, as Theodore Jennings succinctly defines it, is “to use theological resources to subvert existing political structures.”¹ Many Christians today who are concerned with the current US political structures are likely to agree that the 2016 election of billionaire and television celebrity Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States necessitates a robust political theology. Given the staggering number of white Christians who voted for Trump, Christianity cannot afford a political theology that proposes subversive ideas but remains confined by book covers and limits itself to intellectual discourse. The free-market logic and racist nationalism infiltrating America’s political atmosphere demand a dual approach for political theology: one that both fashions a critical analysis *and* delivers a constructive task.

Dorothee Sölle, a German political theologian of the twentieth century, offers a political theology that meets this demand. Her crystal-clear scrutiny of Christian blind obedience warns against its connection to “Christofascism,” the fusing of Christianity with extreme forms of capitalism and nationalism. Sölle’s constructive task for political theology dissembles “Christofascism” through imagination, which she defines as “liberated spontaneity.” We can glimpse the way in which Sölle uses her theology of imagination for praxic theology through her poetic process, which attends to political reality and inspires action, and through the public liturgies she organized that worked to build political consciousness among people of faith. I argue that Sölle’s dual approach of analysis followed by praxis outlines *the* decisive task for political theology today in light of an America under the Trump administration and a global community trending toward populist movements.

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Situating Sölle within Political Theology

Political Theology is a conceptual field comprising various strains. “Classical” political theology, as coined by Johann Baptist Metz,² was formulated by Carl Schmitt in 1922. Schmitt’s *Political Theology* is a reactionary work against parliamentary democracy, illustrated by his opposition to the Weimar Republic. Favoring decisionistic leadership over democratic process, Schmitt argues for a necessarily sovereign ruler who, out of national crisis, makes the exceptional decision while sustaining strict borders between friend and foe. Though many philosophers and theologians find Schmitt’s critique of liberalism accurate, his involvement in

1 Theodore Jennings, “Political Theology” (presentation, Political Theology Today, at Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL, April 20, 2017).

2 Johann Baptist Metz, “Two-Fold Political Theology,” in *Political Theology: Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions*, ed. Michael Welker et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 13.

National Socialism is indicative of a dangerous politic. Some “negative political theologians”³ read Schmitt against Schmitt, utilizing his critique of liberalism to then critique neoliberalism in order to imagine alternatives such as radical democracy.

“New Political Theology”⁴ arose in the late 1960s and 1970s alongside liberation theology, with a focus on justice in light of global suffering and the state’s role in that suffering. Reflecting on the Shoah, and with an eye to the liberationist movements in Latin America, political theologians within this strand shaped Christian theology as a critique of political systems that exploit, especially within the European context. New Political Theology further exposes moments when Christianity as an institution has perpetuated political injustice. New Political Theology is temporally and contextually sensitive, always asking questions such as: how do we speak about God today in light of a given political situation?⁵ How does speech about God connect to the “polis” as a political construct for the ultimate good of the people?⁶

These questions were especially relevant to German political theologians Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, and Dorothee Sölle. Each focused their life’s work on contending with the question of doing theology post-Auschwitz and criticizing an apathetic trait they noticed among Christians faced with mass suffering. Sölle’s political theology was heavily influenced by her contact with Moltmann and Metz, as she, in turn, influenced them.⁷

Moltmann’s theology meditates upon the suffering of Jesus on the cross, where the very center of God is located. For Moltmann, God is a crucified God who suffers *with* humanity. The lynchpin of Moltmann’s theology is God’s self-giving love in that the cross locates God among the suffering while the Spirit flows out into the world as an active healing force. Moltmann’s developments make evident the influence Dietrich Bonhoeffer had on him, particularly in the concept that “only a suffering God can help.”⁸

While Metz criticizes the idea of a suffering God, he fosters a theology of narrative memory. The thrust of this notion rests in the remembrance of Jesus’s death and resurrection and in its power to resurrect the memories of all those who have suffered. The memory becomes “dangerous” because it protests the unjust killing of suffering peoples. It empowers Christians to question the political forces that caused mass suffering rather than fall into acquiescence.⁹

Sölle grew up in Germany under the regime of National Socialism, and her family hid the mother of her classmate, who was Jewish, in their attic. As a young theologian she traveled to Auschwitz, and the result of this experience shifted her theology exponentially. Like the other German political theologians discussed above, the task for her political theology at that point became addressing the question of how to speak about God as “first-world” citizens in light of the realities of fascism and genocide.¹⁰

Political Theology, published in 1971, rails against Christian theology that accommodates unjust socio-political norms. Sölle condemns Christianity for sanctioning the status quo, and she exposes Christian interpretations of

3 Negative political theologians tend to work from a stance of criticizing liberalism and democracy as it appears today in its limited manifestation, opening a space for a more radical, inclusionary democracy.

4 Again as categorized by Metz, see “Two-Fold Political Theology,” 13.

5 Metz, “Two-Fold Political Theology,” 16.

6 Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 55.

7 Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 55.

8 See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

9 See Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1998).

10 For a short synopsis of Sölle’s life and theology, see Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 53. For a comprehensive biography, see Renata Wind, *Dorothee Soelle—Mystic and Rebel: The Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

scripture that reinforce violence and war at the expense of the masses. Her strongest critique questions exploitative and unjust political actions on the part of the state, which are then left unquestioned by Christian institutions.

Sölle expressly states that political theology in this sense is not merely a political theory; rather, it is concerned with influencing and forming the “political conscience.” Sölle wants to engage Christians in the public sphere as much as possible in questioning unjust political structures. As she defines it, “Political theology is rather a theological hermeneutic...in which Christian truth should become praxis.”¹¹

Praxis, and exposing Christian theology’s lack thereof, becomes Sölle’s main thrust in her conception of political theology. Establishing conversation between faith and politics, thereby dismissing “apolitical escapism,” presents political theology’s main criteria for Sölle.¹² But this can only happen after conversion of the individual *and* community. The process of conversion involves the realization that society can indeed be transformed and that sin is inherently social, not solely personal. She highlights the example of Jesus, who concerned himself with the struggles of those in his midst, and challenged sociopolitical structures that limited his marginalized contemporaries.¹³

Taking into account the political context of the United States today, as well as populist trends occurring internationally, I posit that Sölle provides a crucial framework for political theology. She criticizes Christian obedience and the role it has historically played in political movements—a critique that offers an analysis and warning for our current political situation. Sölle then provides a constructive task that she sets forth for political theology to continue to be relevant—a task that she actively performed herself by way of public poetry and prayer to inspire political action.

Christianity and Blind Obedience

Obedience is a primary tenet for many Christians in various traditions. However, after the Shoah, Sölle worries that when Christian obedience becomes *blind* obedience it then can function as a force for evil. Sölle prefaces her discussion about Christian obedience with a powerful autobiographical moment. She illustrates the linkage between her experiences of Christian obedience and the role it played in her own social, religious, and political worlds. With candidness, Sölle ventures into her critique of Christian obedience rooted in her context as a German Christian woman who grew up after Auschwitz plagued by the question, “How could it have happened?”¹⁴ As a theologian, she aims to do theology not with her back to Auschwitz,¹⁵ but by examining it head on.

Sölle’s main claim in her exposition of Christian obedience is that when obedience is upheld as Christianity’s primary virtue, it has historically held deadly implications. She maintains that obedience, when left unchecked by other religious practices and virtues, eclipses the conscience, whether operating among humans or between humans and God. For Sölle, the consequences resulting from Christian obedience expand beyond religion into the social and political spheres. She highlights the role obedience played in National Socialist Germany, providing a biographical account as an example. The author of the account narrates a portrayal of his childhood, which was embedded in relationships governed by obedience. Revealing the author to be Rudolf Höss, director of the Auschwitz concentration camp, Sölle sharpens her argument that the role obedience played in Christianity laid the foundation for fascism to germinate in twentieth-century Germany.¹⁶

11 Dorothee Sölle, *Political Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 36.

12 Sölle, *Political Theology*, 55, 60.

13 Sölle, *Political Theology*, 102.

14 Dorothee Sölle, *Creative Disobedience* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1995), ix.

15 See Metz’s approach in *A Passion for God*, 41.

16 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 9.

Sölle utilizes a definition of obedience synthesized by Alexander Mitscherlich, who has studied the relationship between childhood and learned obedience.¹⁷ Here, imbalance of power defines the relationship between two parties, which is perpetuated by fear of punishment. Because the inferior party is constantly anticipating intimidation, and, because the relationship is never reversible, obedience becomes habitual. In light of this definition of obedience as constructing a power-over dynamic, the problematic nature of Christian obedience becomes clear when it is taken as having intrinsic value in itself—and when it is applied to humanity’s relationship with God.

Valuing obedience without critiquing its goal typifies Sölle’s notion of blind obedience. Within this understanding, obedience becomes an end in itself, and the focus settles upon *how* obedient one is rather than on the aim of the obedient act. Submission to and fulfillment of an order is glorified in itself, while the actual end is rendered irrelevant. Unfortunately, according to Sölle, lack of criticism surrounding the purpose of obedience has become the standard for the Christian life in many cases. Christians are obedient to what they perceive as obligation and become blind to the world around them. The consequences of narrowly obeying commands can be severe. In the process of obeying, one’s self-gratification numbs one’s ability to feel guilt. In this way, one completes a task or fulfills an order out of obligation, without the need to be aware of the surrounding context or implication of one’s actions. Nothing matters but that one has been obedient. Critical methods for seeing reality, such as the liberationist “see, judge, act” process, for example, are evaded in this context.

In addition, Sölle proposes that Christian obedience has direct implications for our theologies of God. Authoritarian religiosity positions God as an all-powerful monarch.¹⁸ Relationship with God then reflects the same power imbalance in which Christians become minions of God’s demands, and calamities that befall humans are interpreted as God’s punishment. God’s characteristics of justice and love are subordinated by God’s omnipotence, and, because the symbol of God functions, as Elizabeth Johnson would say,¹⁹ human relational systems come to mirror this power-over formulation.

Sölle’s Warning: “Christofascism”

In light of her conceptualization of Christian obedience, Sölle asks the questions, “What does it mean when obedience is given the central position? What are the social implications of such a theology?”²⁰ The grave answer to these questions lies in her concept of “Christofascism.” Upon first glance, the language Sölle uses appears to be harsh and perhaps even overstated. However, when Sölle uses the term “Christofascism,” she was not necessarily intending to label a leader or state as fascist; rather, she uses the term as a warning against the destructive potential portrayed when religion, politics, and economics work together to support nationalism and extreme capitalism. Rather than thinking of her term as a descriptive label, think of it as a warning. The term “Christofascism” is a pointer. It gestures toward a grave reality that *could be*, if Christianity, capitalism, and nationalism continue to cohere more and more strongly.

A closer look at Sölle’s essay entitled “Christofascism” provides clarity about the way she uses the term in her critique. The essay was penned after some time she spent teaching in the United States and noticing the links between capitalism, nationalism, and Christian obedience. Within it, she laments that a large sector of Christianity has been molded into a “vehicle” driving extreme capitalist ideology, citing Jerry Falwell and the “Moral Majority” movement of the 1980s. Sölle criticizes Falwell and others for reaching out to economically disadvantaged Americans by promising to “make America number one again” and by glorifying the free market while simultaneously soliciting

17 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 11

18 Dorothee Sölle, “Fatherhood, Power, and Barbarism” in *The Window of Vulnerability: A Political Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 86.

19 See Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

20 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 6.

donations. Sölle captures Falwell's words that characterize the use of Christianity to bolster capitalistic ideology and ventures:

The system of free enterprise is clearly prescribed in the Bible, in the Proverbs of Solomon. Jesus Christ makes clear that the work ethic is part of his plan for mankind. Private property is biblical. Business competition is biblical. Ambitious and successful business practice is clearly prescribed as part of God's plan for his people.²¹

Sölle identifies three key elements underpinning her concept of "Christofascism": the cementing of Christian theology with capitalist ideology and nationalism (including moral superiority), a specific work ethic, and familial roles that police women in particular. Inherent to these elements are outpourings of nationalism, militarism, and racism on the part of both the governmental leadership and among Christian Americans. In this Christofascist system, the free press becomes eclipsed by censorship, and national security is upheld as sacred doctrine.²² Christian themes of justice and solidarity are neglected, and Sölle further laments that, "Jesus, who suffered hunger and poverty, who practiced solidarity with the oppressed, has nothing to do with this religion."²³

Sölle warns that Christians can become complacent in the midst of Christofascist culture especially when faced by the counterargument that a political leader cannot have fascist tendencies when he or she is elected by a voting public. However, Sölle maintains that Christofascism is dangerous precisely because it is not compulsory. Christian-capitalist ideology blankets the truth, seducing Christian voters by promising economic resurgence.²⁴

As we have seen, when Christians operate under the "virtue" of blind obedience, political leaders and also religious leaders rise up, like Jerry Falwell, who manipulate the masses to become supporters of this Christofascist enterprise. Extreme versions of capitalism and militarism reign while Christians blindly follow. Sölle is by no means the only theologian to expose the way extreme capitalism has often been supported by various Christian theologies. Pope Francis himself warns against this very notion in *The Joy of the Gospel* when he states bluntly that "we can no longer trust the unseen forces and the invisible hand of the market."²⁵ Sölle counts the cost of Christofascism in her essay "Security is Death." She critiques the complete system, exclaiming that as a result of capitalism reinforced by Christianity, "wealth functions like a wall...our wall is sound proof so we cannot hear the sounds of the poor and the oppressed."²⁶ Not only are the poor and oppressed walled off to the margins, the bomb replaces God, while national security and rampant free market practice become the primary forms of societal worship.²⁷

21 Dorothee Sölle, "Christofascism," in *The Window of Vulnerability: A Political Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 138.

22 For a similar discussion on the sacralization of American government, see Paul W. Kahn, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 9.

23 Sölle, "Christofascism," 140.

24 Sölle, "Christofascism," 138.

25 Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), no. 204, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

26 Dorothee Sölle, "Security is Death," in *The Window of Vulnerability*, 17.

27 Sölle, "Security is Death," 9. Jeffrey Robbins, who wants to read a "radical democratic theory into political theology" to "provide an alternative political theology," captures a similar picture of the intersection among US politics, capitalism, and the role Christianity has played to prop up both sectors. To his critique, the globalization of the free market system has been propelled by liberal democracy in such a way that it has damaged democracy itself. In the face of political theologies that support this wheelhouse of global capital, his book affirms a political theology that undergirds radical democracy. Jeffrey Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 9. Also see Clayton Crockett, *Radical Political Theology: Religion and Politics after Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 4-10, and Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017) for further discussion surrounding the use of Christian theology to bolster political ideology historically in the United States.

Reading Sölle in light of the contemporary US context, her foreshadowed warnings of walls, censorship of the press, and promises to make the nation “number one” ring in one’s ears. The wall is underway, the press has already been excluded, and Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign itself was based on the promise to “make America great again,” which some analysts interpret as a euphemism for “make America white again.”²⁸ The eerie resemblance begs the question: is Sölle’s warning against Christofascism an accurate paradigm for analyzing the political challenges faced by Christians today? The question at hand is not attempting to determine whether Trump is a fascist leader. Rather, it is asking if the extreme capitalist and nationalistic political swing in America, largely supported by Christians in the United States, meets the conditions of the warning Sölle flagged in her critique written decades ago. Are we really seeing the ramifications of Christofascism being played out on the political and economic stage? I would venture to argue that Sölle’s critique of Christofascism does stand as an apt warning when considering how the vast majority of Trump voters were white Christians and especially when placing it within the context of the rise of populism around the world.²⁹

Sölle’s Task: Imagination

If we are to take Sölle’s warning seriously in the face of the US political climate today, which is reminiscent of many populist movements occurring worldwide, we must not stop with critique. Considering her severe critical warning against Christofascism, Sölle provides a task for political theology that she calls “Phantasie,” or imagination. In her analysis, Sölle follows Rudolf Bultmann’s approach which involves the “interrelationship” of three factors: “will of God,” “decision,” and “situation,” each element correcting one another. Unlike the Schmittian model of sovereignty, the subject is allowed her autonomy, while being confronted with a situation that demands a decision—to choose the will of God or not, in the face of that situation. In this way, “blindness before a situation is corrected by the concreteness of the demand. The authoritarian blindness for the world is corrected by the necessity of making a decision (a reaction). Neither the traditional reflection on the how of obedience nor the direct relationship between the one who demands obedience and the one who obeys plays an immediate role.”³⁰

Here, Sölle is referring to Bultmann’s theology of the Kingdom of God and radical obedience. Bultmann develops an idea of obedience which, he argues, operates outside of an authoritarian relationship to God as described earlier. The Kingdom of God is a future reality that operates in the present, “compelling man to decision.”³¹ When faced with a concrete situation, the Kingdom of God compels one to decide one’s actions informed by, but not necessarily bound by, God’s will. The freedom to decide remains with the person, and she is not forced to act in any one particular way. God places trust in humanity to respond to the situation, giving them the opportunity to make a “positive” decision.³²

This alternative concept of obedience reverses the idea of blind Christian obedience that Sölle criticizes, because here the Christian is not bound by a law that she follows blindly and uncritically. Rather, when presented with a

28 Steve Phillips, “Trump Wants to Make America White Again” *New York Times*, February 18, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/opinion/trump-wants-to-make-america-white-again.html>.

29 Eighty-one percent of white evangelical Christians voted for Donald Trump, as did 60 percent of white Catholics and 58 percent of white Protestant Christians. Trump’s victory margin among white Christians matched and in many cases exceeded that of the last five elections. The statistics further reveal that 56 percent of weekly church-goers voted for Trump. Gregory A. Smith and Jessica Martínez, “How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis,” *Pew Research Center*, November 9, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/>.

30 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 23.

31 Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 52.

32 Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 55.

situation, the Christian is given the opportunity to act in alignment with the will of God (or not), and, when she does decide, she is deciding based on her autonomous subjectivity and intention.³³

However, Sölle takes Bultmann's conception of "radical obedience" a step further to develop her schema of "creative disobedience" which acts out of "liberated spontaneity." Sölle affirms that

it is not God in a general, timeless sense who demands obedience, but the situation which demands a response, and only therein does God require a person's response. Since the will of God cannot be determined in advance, nor the situation anticipated, the response the person makes can only be a decision in the now...What God wishes—and perhaps who God is—can only be determined in the situation.³⁴

This is a discerning obedience, an obedience that reacts with "eyes wide open" to the situation.³⁵ Obedience in an authoritarian vision of God advances the world's "created order" of society, sustaining the regime of socio-political norms. A "liberated understanding of obedience," on the other hand, is defined by the freedom surrounding the person when she encounters a situation. She is free to respond in the way that she chooses. Further, this freedom makes apparent that she is no longer bound to the limiting social norms that order her world. She realizes she is faced with the ultimate decision of whether or not she is going to take part in transforming the world around her or remain a slave to the order of the world.³⁶

As we have considered earlier in this discussion, Sölle laments that Christianity often reinforces the wider social "created order" by stressing blind obedience:

Obedience then was always the carrying out of commands intended to maintain this order. Since the order itself was never questioned as to whether it was good and for whom, it was easy for other masters to promote obedience for different, yet comparable natural orders: that of the state, that of a master race, or that of neocolonialism, and with equal validity. The one thing these various orders have in common is their presumed reality. The obedient person remains a *re-actor*; he or she only fulfills that which is assigned; he is required to sacrifice his spontaneity on the altar of obedience.³⁷

Blind obedience on the part of Christians translates into a pattern for acting blindly and obediently in society at large. In contrast, Sölle maintains that Jesus's message was one of transforming societal norms and that the locus for this transformation rests in the moment of decision on the part of the individual faced with a concrete situation of injustice. The decision becomes whether or not to act according to conformity or to "burst the boundary" of the created order and act in a way that transforms it: "[I]t is precisely this spontaneity for which Jesus sets us free. That which he requires does not presuppose the order of the world; that order has yet to be established in the future. Insofar as the human must first discover what God's will is, the future of the world remains open."³⁸

33 This combination of the demand of the situation and the choice of decision might be paralleled with Kahn's call for a "phenomenology of the political" which he describes as acknowledging both sides of the sovereignty-liberalism dichotomy. This is not trying to escape the reality that sovereignty exists; rather, it counterbalances one side with the other. Bultmann's approach to obedience is an example of locating oneself on the spectrum between God's "will" and human reason; both decisiveness and contingency are incorporated. "There is no single answer to the question of how political groups conceive of themselves and their members. The right question is not theoretical at all. Rather it is a question of how we place ourselves in relationship to these competing principles." Kahn, *Political Theology*, 3.

34 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 25.

35 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 25.

36 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 26.

37 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 27.

38 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 27.

Openness becomes the main characteristic of this liberated spontaneity Sölle envisions for the Christian life. In the political sphere, something similar is imagined by Jeffrey Robbins's conceptualization of radical democracy. Like Sölle, Robbins is fiercely critical of what he calls "corporatist governance"³⁹ which has been made possible by liberalism's cozy position beside free-market practice.⁴⁰ With "eyes wide open"⁴¹ to this reality, Robbins leans on the words of Antonio Negri to suggest that the decision does not lead to a closure, like it does in the sovereign's moment of exception. Rather, similar to Bultmann's "positive" decision, Negri calls the decision "the opening of a new horizon of common power."⁴² The decision becomes *decisions* (plural) produced by the multitude from below. Robbins leans into the idea of potentiality with this construction of the "generative power" and "productive capacity" that renders the created social order "immeasurable." Though today "the people have been rendered the object of market forces,"⁴³ there still exists a pre-history of democracy, which lies beneath the surface and within the potential power of the social body, waiting to be birthed into fullness.⁴⁴ "The decision is an opening, not a closure."⁴⁵

Transformation becomes the potential result of an openness created by the decision when it lies within the hands of an individual person "from below" rather than demanded from on high. This is where imagination comes into play for Sölle. Jesus's "Phantasie" provides the keenest example of imagining life in society unlimited by oppressive bounds. When met with a situation of injustice and faced with decision, Jesus not only reacted to the singular situation, but imagined a vastly different way of living, a complete transformation of the whole oppressive system. "He did not fulfill duties; instead he changed the situations of those whom he met. His *Phantasie* [imagination] began with the situations but always went far beyond them."⁴⁶

The Challenge of Practical Political Theology

But Sölle's task of *Phantasie*, which she suggests for Political Theology, does not stop here. In her strain of New Political Theology, Sölle wishes to launch into the void held open by negative political theology. In her work as a New Political Theologian, Sölle wants to do theology that is grounded in praxis. The concrete ways in which Sölle worked to make theology practical are manifested in the role poetry played in doing her theology as well as in events she organized for public prayer and action for political change.

Poetic Political Theology

Sölle's political theology of imagination is no doubt bolstered, or even possibly rooted in, her artistic life as a poet. In fact, in a 1982 television interview, Sölle describes her method of doing theology as one that consistently begins with poetry, because poetry enables her to discern the inner movements of the heart and mind. Sölle's poetry allows her to articulate with precision that which her own heart voices in reaction to encounters with injustice.⁴⁷ In this case, the poetic method provides a pattern for unveiling inner truth that otherwise lies dormant. Not only does the poetic process provide clarification for theology, it can also foster a poetic *way of being* in the world which responds to injustice. In this way, the poetic process can provide a formula for dislodging oneself from the grips of Christofascism's blind obedience.

39 Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*, 73.

40 Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*, 3.

41 Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*, 72.

42 Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*, 73.

43 Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*, 73.

44 Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*, 74.

45 Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*, 74.

46 Sölle, *Creative Disobedience*, 53.

47 Dorothee Sölle, "Das Christentum setzt voraus, dass all Menschen Dichter sind, nämlich beten können," in *Dorothee Sölle im Gespräch*, ed. Theo Christiansen and Johannes Thiele (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1988), 92. ("Christianity presupposes that all people are poets, namely, they can pray.")

In a poem titled “Meine Wünsche” (My Desires), Sölle demonstrates that paying attention to one’s desires can reveal one’s own daily acquiescence to the status quo.⁴⁸ As the poem suggests, once the poet taps into the desire to break free from the limits of the Christofascist anthropology, she is rarely left alone by it and begins to feel as though she is being constantly attacked by a pesky swarm of birds. Though sometimes she is tempted to shoot down her desires with rationalizations, the narrator is constantly revisited by relentless “pests.” Efforts to return to a trivial life are interrupted by constant nagging to break the mold of Christofascism.

Not only does a poetic way of being include paying attention to inner desire, it also extends an outward gaze toward political reality. The process of opening one’s eyes to reality requires an interpretation of sin not only as a private phenomenon, but also in the form of harmful social structures. As Sölle’s political theology forwards, the primary demand made by the gospel today is to *see* social sin as collaboration with the “Death Machine” and as apathy toward the suffering it causes.⁴⁹ A vantage point is cleared by situating oneself in the context of “collaboration with systems that operate our industrialized world” and by forging self- and social-criticism.⁵⁰ Interpreting sin in light of unjust and harmful social structures stands in direct opposition to Christofascism’s privatization of sin and the escape from reality it offers.

But how exactly does one sharpen the skill of attending to reality? Sölle’s poetic thrust suggests a process that allows for the development of sight. For Sölle, the poem serves as a space from which to reflect upon encounters with people and places that have made an impression upon her as a result of her extensive activism. Sölle’s first-hand encounters with families of the disappeared in Latin America, for example, made lasting impressions on her work as a theologian. To concretize these encounters, she wrote poetry about them, as exemplified by the poetry compiled in *Of War and Love*.⁵¹

The poetic process, in this sense, provides an opportunity to relive moments of witness to the unjust impacts of Christofascism. It functions as a repetitive memory that is not allowed to recede from one’s consciousness. Seen through this lens, the *poetic human being* witnesses social sin, takes stock of the ways in which she collaborates with it, and allows what she has witnessed to take up space in her consciousness and inform her actions in the world. The poetic process provides a formula to engage imagination as it leads one out from blind obedience, helps one to see reality for what it is, and propels one to act.

Public Political Theology

A prime example of Sölle’s venture to make political theology a public event that fosters practical implementation in society is the “Politisches Nachtgebet” (Political Night Prayer) which she founded in the 1960s alongside her husband, Fulbert Steffensky. Under the belief that Christian life and political engagement are inseparable, Sölle, along with Steffensky, Marie Viet, Heinrich Böll, Klaus Schmidt, and Egbert Höfflich gathered together an ecumenical group of lay people and clergy, including theologians and activists, for a meeting that incorporated information, meditation, discussion, and action.⁵² The first meeting took place in 1968 at St. Anthony Church in Cologne at 11 p.m.⁵³ Inspired by the Worker Priest Movement in France, which was comprised of a process of *lutte et contemplation* [struggle and contemplation], the Politische Nachtgebet provided a space for a teaching

48 Dorothee Sölle, *Of War and Love* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 28.

49 Sölle, *Political Theology*, 92.

50 Sölle, *Political Theology*, 92.

51 Sölle, “Das Christentum setzt voraus,” 92.

52 Wind, *Dorothee Soelle*, 59.

53 “Dorothee Sölle und das Politische Nachtgebet in der Antoniterkirche,” AntoniterCityKirche, Evangelische Gemeinde Köln, <http://www.antoniter-citykirche.de/dorothee-soelle.aspx>.

centered on a specific justice issue, meditation of some kind, discussion, and plans for action in response to the injustice.⁵⁴ Eventually, the group's members were no longer allowed to meet at St. Anthony because they were too radical for conventional Christianity. The institution labeled the group "blasphemers" and "degrading to the house of God."⁵⁵ So, despite thousands of people regularly filling the church, the group was forced to continue finding various spaces in which to meet. From 1968 to 1972, the group met monthly under the dictum that "Theologisches Nachdenken ohne politische Konsequenzen kommt einer Heuchelei gleich. Jeder theologische Satz muss auch ein politischer sein (Theological reflection without political consequences is hypocrisy. Every theological statement must also be a political statement)."⁵⁶ As a result of the Politisches Nachtgebet, action groups sprang up all around the Cologne area.

Sölle wrote a creed that became formative for the group and also characteristic of the public theology she aimed to do alongside her community. The first stanza provides insight into the theology underpinning the Politisches Nachtgebet as indicative of the task Sölle had in mind for Political Theology: "Ich glaube an Gott/der die welt nicht fertig geschaffen hat/wie ein ding das immer so bleiben muss/der nicht nach ewigen gesetzen regiert/die unabänderlich gelten/nicht nach natürlichen ordnungen/von armen und reichen/sachverständigen und uninformierten/herrschenden und ausgelieferten (I believe in God/who did not create the world into fullness/like something that must always remain as-is/not something that is ruled by everlasting laws/held as unchanging/not of the natural law/of poor and rich/lawful and uninformed/governing and extradited.)"⁵⁷

Indeed, the "Politisches Nachtgebet" exemplifies Sölle's theology of imagination. Take the first meeting as an example: the group was faced with the situation of the Vietnam War and, after teachings, meditation, prayer, and discussion, they located the "Crucified One" not within the church building, but suffering in war-torn Vietnam alongside the oppressed. Rather than remaining obediently blind to the situation, the group refused to acquiesce, igniting their imagination for a different way forward for international affairs. The situation led them to *decide* to act in the face of the given world order, which condones war, bringing their protest to the streets, waving banners proclaiming "Vietnam is Golgatha,"⁵⁸ and refusing to be a church that blindly followed destructive policy.⁵⁹

This theology of imagination, for Sölle, was meant to be a public theology that inspired Christians to participate in the re-envisioning of the Kingdom of God, not a theology that merely proposed radical ideas but remained bound by book covers. But taking her theology into the public sphere was costly for Sölle. Not only did she face condemnation by the church, the university system rejected her radical stances as well. In Germany, Sölle was never granted full professorship at any university. Theology departments perceived her as too radical. In one moment in time, she was able to work at a German university in the literature department, but she was not granted a position the following year. Finally, she found a home at Union Theological Seminary in New York where she taught from 1975 to 1987.⁶⁰ Though the risk was great and consequences were many, Sölle continued applying her public political theology in various other ways throughout her life.

Conclusion

A political theology for today, as constructed by Sölle, judges Christians' complicit, blind obedience to extreme capitalist and nationalistic ideology. It provides a fervent warning that is meant to shake Christians out of com-

54 Wind, *Dorothee Soelle*, 59.

55 Friedrich K. Kurylo, "Kirchliche Bedenken," *Zeit Online*, February 16, 1973, <http://www.zeit.de/1973/08/kirchliche-bedenken>.

56 Kurylo, "Kirchliche Bedenken."

57 Wind, *Dorothee Soelle*, 45.

58 Wind, *Dorothee Soelle*, 72.

59 Wind, *Dorothee Soelle*, 72.

60 Wind, *Dorothee Soelle*, 98.

plicity, setting forth a specific task. Instead of obedience, theology must incite Christians to act by engaging the imagination and proposing alternatives to harmful socio-political norms—and it must be concretely praxic. In an interview with Günther Gaus, which aired on German television in 1969, Sölle speaks to the aim of the *Politisches Nachtgebet* as an attempt to break out of theory bound by intellectual discussion by entering the realm of practical implementation. “To me,” she tells Gaus, “what lies deep within my heart, is that theology should reflect these kinds of Theory-Praxis models, which lead us down a new way, a way that is traveled by more and more people, eventually transforming society at large.”⁶¹

⁶¹ “Was mir am meisten am Herzen liegt und auch für die Theologie am wichtigsten zu sein scheint, sind solche Theorie-Praxis-Modelle, in denen Menschen wirklich auf einen neuen Weg gebracht werden, und zwar in einer grösseren Gruppierung.” Sölle, “Das Christentum muss kritischen Fragen standhalten, wenn es Zukunft haben will,” in *Dorothee Sölle im Gespräch*, 20.

Reading the Bible Through Stained Glass: Postliberal Resistance to the Historical-Critical Method

by Alan Bernard McGill

Although the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) in 1964 envisaged that modern biblical scholarship could contribute to the continuing development of doctrine, it is not apparent that this actually has occurred to any significant extent.¹ In 1993, the PBC specifically deemed the historical-critical method indispensable for the interpretation of scripture. However, insights derived through its application, even when they represent broad scholarly consensus, appear to have had little impact on the magisterium's presentation of doctrine as exemplified by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.²

This situation may be compounded by a postliberal hermeneutics that seeks to subordinate historical-critical concerns to a doctrinally conditioned interpretation of the Bible. Robert Barron, for example, while arguing for the epistemic priority of Christ, extends his argument to assert the epistemic priority of images, doctrines, and narratives regarding Christ as derived from the tradition. Barron argues that these doctrinally conditioned lenses should trump historical-critical considerations—as if they themselves transcend the need for historical-critical interpretation.

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This paper argues that a postliberal interpretation of scripture through the lens of traditional images and doctrines, invariably granting these facets of the tradition an epistemological priority over historical-critical considerations, would impede the development of doctrine. When the biblical text is read through the hermeneutical lens of traditional interpretations and imagery, that is, through stained glass, as it were, these components of the tradition are regarded as normative. Hence, the biblical text under consideration is not given an opportunity to speak on its own terms, standing in creative tension with the canon and the broader tradition of which it constitutes a part.

An Ecclesial Mandate for Historical-Critical Exegesis to Contribute to the Progress of Doctrine

Since Pope Pius XII promulgated his 1943 encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*, the Catholic Church has mandated its exegetes to use the best available methods to interpret scripture so as to determine “to what extent the manner

1 Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* [Instruction Concerning the Historical Truth of the Gospels] (1964), English translation by Joseph Fitzmyer, SJ in *Theological Studies* 25 (1964): 402-408, http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_HistTruthFitzmyer.htm.

2 Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992), http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM.

of expression or the literary mode adopted by the sacred writer may lead to a correct and genuine interpretation.”³ Pius XII presents this exhortation as a mandate rather than as merely extending permission or suggesting an option, exhorting the exegete, “Let him be convinced that this part of his office *cannot be neglected* without serious detriment to Catholic exegesis.”⁴

In 1964, the PBC reiterated the mandate for exegetes to deploy their expertise, this time explicitly recognizing their potential to contribute to the development of doctrine. “There are still many things, and of the greatest importance, in the discussion and explanation of which the Catholic exegete can and must freely exercise his skill and genius, so that each may contribute his part to the advantage of all, to the continued progress of sacred doctrine. . . .”⁵

Vatican II’s *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)* further reinforces the mandate for exegetes to work “toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred scripture, so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature.”⁶ The reference to a “better understanding” and to maturation in the Church’s judgment cannot simply amount to a deferential affirmation of the doctrinal status quo.

The Council majority had voiced resounding support for openness to the possibility of doctrinal development in light of exegetical insights, resisting the attempts of the Curia’s Preparatory Theological Commission to subjugate biblical interpretation to the prevailing interpretation of tradition. On November 14, 1962, the majority of Council Fathers rejected *De fontibus*, the draft schema on the sources of revelation as presented by Cardinal Ottaviani, head of the Preparatory Commission. The dispute was in large part concerned with the relationship between magisterial authority and the freedom of exegetes to utilize the best interpretive methods at their disposal in open, intellectual inquiry.⁷

. . . during the morning no fewer than twelve of the fifteen Council Fathers who spoke were against the draft. While Cardinal Ruffini of Palermo and Cardinal Siri of Genoa approved it and emphasised the need to draw up rules for Catholic biblical scholars, such opinions were not shared by Cardinals Frings of Cologne, Alfrink of Utrecht, Suenens of Malines-Brussels, and Cardinal Bea, head of the newly formed Secretariat for Christian Unity.⁸

Cardinal Bea had served as rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute for nineteen years and assisted in the preparation of *Divino afflante Spiritu* which, as noted above, sought to empower exegetes to use the best methods at their disposal.

The Preparatory Commission insisted that Scripture and Tradition were two sources of divine revelation (rather than two expressions of one deposit of divine revelation) and argued for the primacy of tradition over scripture. The draft schema stated that “Tradition and it alone is the way in which some revealed truths, particularly those

3 Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943), no. 37, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_30091943_divino-afflante-spiritu.html.

4 Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, no. 37, emphasis added.

5 PBC, *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*.

6 Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation) (1965), no. 3, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

7 Adrian Graffy, “The Story of *Dei Verbum* Part Two: Drama in the Council,” *The Pastoral Review* (March/April 2013), http://thepastoralreview.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=116:the-story-of-dei-verbum-part-two-drama-in-the-council&catid=42:marchapril-2013&Itemid=66.

8 Graffy, “Story of *Dei Verbum*.”

concerned with the inspiration, canonization and integrity of each and every sacred book, are clarified and become known to the Church.”⁹

Joseph Ratzinger, a *peritus* at the Council, rejected the Preparatory Commission’s argument for the primacy of tradition over scripture, recognizing that it would place a stranglehold on biblical scholarship.¹⁰ Tradition, notoriously difficult to pry apart from the magisterial pronouncements that mediate it, could then have been invoked to veto any new exegetical insight or clarification with regard to the significance of the biblical text. Ratzinger has subsequently, upon occasion, pointed to the limitations of the historical-critical method and to the importance of supplementing its use with recourse to other methods; this cautionary tone persists in some statements made in his papal role as Benedict XVI.¹¹ Nonetheless, he has continued to acknowledge the value of historical criticism and related methods in ecclesial life, insisting, “Before all else, we need to acknowledge the benefits that historical-critical exegesis and other recently-developed methods of textual analysis have brought to the life of the Church.”¹² Indeed Benedict proposes a Christological rather than simply pragmatic defense of the historical-critical method, relating it to the role of history in mediating the divine, as epitomized in the Incarnation.¹³

Concurring with Ratzinger’s misgivings regarding the Curia’s draft constitution on revelation, Cardinal Joseph Ritter also urged the Council Fathers to reject it.¹⁴ Cardinal Bea, for his part, suggested that the document represented a particular theological agenda—and one not associated with good theology—contending that “the schema represents the work of a theological school, and not what the better theologians think.”¹⁵ Greg Tobin notes that Cardinals Maximus IV Saïgh and Joseph De Smelt of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and Cardinal Lineart of France called for a more pastoral and less dogmatic tone.¹⁶ The bitter disappointment of the Curia and a minority of Council Fathers with regard to the majority position on revelation and scripture would continue to haunt the Church, arguably contributing to a disconnect between the insights of biblical scholarship and the presentation of doctrine.

While the Second Vatican Council does not explicitly name the historical-critical method, it mandates interpretive criteria that clearly correspond to its concerns. For instance, *Dei Verbum* recognizes the importance of ascertaining the intent of the human authors:

However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.¹⁷

9 The Preparatory Theological Commission, Draft of a Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*De fontibus*), (Vatican, 1962), 5, translation by Joseph Komonchak available at <https://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/de-fontibus-1-5.pdf>.

10 Jared Wicks, “Six Texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as *Peritus* before and during Vatican Council II,” *Gregorianum* 89 (2008): 233-311.

11 See, for example, Ratzinger’s remarks in “Relativism: The Central Problem for Faith Today,” an address given during the meeting of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with the presidents of the Doctrinal Commissions of the Bishops’ Conferences of Latin America, held in Guadalajara, Mexico, in May 1996, <https://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZRELA.HTM>.

12 Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* (2010), no. 32, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html.

13 Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 32.

14 Graffy, “Story of *Dei Verbum* Part Two.”

15 Graffy, “Story of *Dei Verbum* Part Two.”

16 Greg Tobin, *The Good Pope: The Making of a Saint and the Remaking of the Church—The Story of John XXIII and Vatican II* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 191.

17 Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, no. 12.

Dei Verbum insists that “the interpreter must” seek out the meaning intended by the human authors of scripture by investigating the matters of literary genre, historical context, and the cultural mores of the author’s milieu.¹⁸ These historical-critical considerations are not presented merely as an option but as essential to correct interpretation.

While *Dei Verbum* thus implicitly endorsed the historical-critical method, the PBC in a 1993 report entitled *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* explicitly mandated recourse to the historical-critical method. The report affirms that the historical-critical method is “the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts.”¹⁹ Despite this, there may be little evidence that historical-critical exegesis has been allowed to contribute significantly to the development of doctrine. Granted, this is a broad claim and an example may be in order.

Modern biblical scholarship’s prevalent *lack* of influence upon the development of doctrine is particularly clear in the Catechism’s interpretation of the Adamic narrative of Gn 2 and 3.²⁰ In 1950, Pope Pius XII, while interpreting the Adamic narrative as a form of ancient history rather than as myth, admitted that the matter should be explored further by the exegetes.

This letter, in fact, clearly points out that the first eleven chapters of Genesis, although properly speaking not conforming to the historical method used by the best Greek and Latin writers or by competent authors of our time, do nevertheless pertain to history in a true sense, which however must be further studied and determined by exegetes . . .²¹

However, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* published in 1992 shows little evidence that the magisterium had benefited from insights derived through modern exegesis. Despite a broad consensus to the contrary on the part of leading exegetes, the Catechism insists that the Adamic narrative recounts, albeit in figurative terms, a particular, historical “event” and “deed.”²² This stands in stark contrast with the findings of exegetes Eugene Maly, Richard Clifford, Roland Murphy, Pauline Viviano, and Michael Guinan as published in Catholic commentaries bearing the imprimatur and *nihil obstat*. These exegetes regard the Adamic narrative as bearing the literary hallmarks of myth that figuratively expresses ubiquitous truths concerning the human condition, free will, and humanity’s relationship with its Creator.²³

The Catechism’s account further contradicts widely held exegetical opinion by implying the agency of Satan within the narrative world of the Adamic myth, implicitly identifying the talking snake with Satan and offering no distinction between the intentions of the biblical authors and later reception history, in this case apparently relying (without further attribution) on an interpretation by St. Justin Martyr in the second century CE.²⁴

18 Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, no. 12.

19 PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, no. 1, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19930415_interpretazione_it.html; English translation by Felix Just available at http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp.htm.

20 Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, *Catechism of the Catholic Church with Modifications from the Editio Typica*, English 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1997), no. 390.

21 Pius XII, *Humani Generis* (1950), no. 38, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html.

22 CCC, no. 390.

23 Eugene Maly, “Genesis,” in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy, and Raymond Brown (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968), 40; Richard Clifford and Roland Murphy, “Genesis,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy, and Raymond Brown (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 8-43, here at 12; Pauline Viviano, “Genesis,” in *The Collegeville Bible Commentary*, ed. Dianne Bergant (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 43; Michael Guinan, “Adam, Eve and Original Sin,” *Catholic Update*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, <https://www.catholicfidelity.com/adam-eve-and-original-sin-by-michael-guinan/> See also Monika Hellwig, *What Are the Theologians Saying Now?* (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1992), 101; James Connor, “Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches,” *Theological Studies* 29 (1968): 215.

24 CCC no. 391. See Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3 and Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 27, 47, 227.

The disconnect between the Catechism's interpretation of the Adamic myth and the broad thrust of contemporary exegesis, including the work of Catholic scholars published in ecclesiastically approved commentaries, suggests that such historical-critical exegesis, which has been conducted in accordance with the magisterium's own teachings, has not, in this case, been allowed to significantly influence the progress of doctrine.²⁵ Granted, the historical-critical method is applied by a wide range of scholars with diverse emphases and agendas and has no central spokesperson. It is therefore worth considering the extent to which disputes concerning the method may reflect definitional issues.

Difficulties in Characterizing the Historical-Critical Method

As Luke Timothy Johnson observes, the term "historical-critical method" can carry a degree of ambiguity.²⁶ In particular, the prominence of the term "historical" in the name of the method may overshadow the "critical" dimension in the sense of literary criticism so that there appears to be divergence of opinion as to what extent the method takes literary considerations into account. Johnson laments, "In biblical scholarship, critical has come to be associated with historical."²⁷ At points, Johnson refers unfavorably to the "historical" method, perhaps intending to identify a skewed application of the historical-critical method.²⁸

In addition to its historical concerns, a concern for the implications of literary genre constitutes an integral dimension of the historical-critical method as described by the PBC. The Commission notes the importance of literary and linguistic as well as historical considerations, asserting that the historical-critical method "studies the biblical text in the same fashion as it would study any other ancient text and comments upon it as an expression of human discourse."²⁹ Joseph Fitzmyer affirms the integral role of literary analysis in the historical method, arguing that a biblical author writes in a given form so as to impart a corresponding form of truth, that is, form follows function. "Since the truth he has enshrined in his text is analogous to the form used, historical criticism teaches us that we cannot read an ancient text without the sophistication that the form calls for."³⁰

In *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, the PBC goes some way toward defining the method, albeit in broad terms. It posits that the approach is a historical method, both because it studies the significance of ancient texts "from a historical point of view" and also because "it seeks to shed light upon the historical processes which gave rise to biblical texts."³¹ The PBC asserts that it is a critical method because "it operates with the help of scientific criteria that seek to be as objective as possible."³² Hence, the historical-critical method may be defined as an approach to the interpretation of scripture that is informed by historical research, literary criticism, and the human sciences, so as to discover the theological, social, economic, political, and cultural context(s) and intention(s) of the author(s).

25 Viviano, "Genesis," 43; Clifford and Murphy, "Genesis," 12; Maly, "Genesis," 40.

26 Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 81-82; Richard Bauckham, "Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Bar Kochba War, with Special Reference to the Apocalypse of Peter," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, eds. G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 228-38.

27 Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 82.

28 Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 8-11.

29 PBC, *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1.A.2.

30 PBC, *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1.A.2. Cf. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 66.

31 PBC, *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1.A.2.

32 PBC, *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1.A.2.

Robert Barron's Critique of the Historical-Critical Method

Robert Barron recognizes a contemporary disconnect between Catholic theology and exegesis—though one might argue that the real disconnect exists in relation to the magisterium's presentation of doctrine rather than in the work of academic theologians. Barron calls for a reintegration of exegesis and theology, arguing that “theology is the proper interpretive lens of the bible.”³³ The author detects in Catholic biblical interpretation since the Council an inadequate, one-sided historical-critical approach, a strategy where historical considerations have been allowed to eclipse the full theological significance of the scriptures.³⁴

Barron remarks that “the early writings of Joseph Fitzmyer, Raymond E. Brown, Roland Murphy, John Kselman and others convinced Catholics that historical-critical analysis did not pose a threat to the integrity of the scripture as a revealed text.”³⁵ However, Barron raises reservations about uncritical reception of insights gained through the application of historical-critical techniques when he asserts “there remain, in my judgment, serious problems with the historical-critical method itself.”³⁶ Barron suggests that the historical-critical method frontloads the interpretative process with the assumptions of Enlightenment thought, focuses excessively upon the intentions of the human authors at the risk of neglecting God's intention, and can give the impression that the significance of the text is trapped in the past as opposed to a living Word of God applicable in the present.³⁷

Barron's first set of objections to the historical-critical method reflects his conviction that it is a product of Enlightenment thought, infused with the assumptions of rational skepticism. Barron cautions that “Christians ought to be, at the very least, wary of an approach with such questionable provenance.”³⁸ Granted, it might be argued that interpreters of scripture should exercise critical reflexivity regarding any interpretive method, always considering its potential biases and limitations. Barron's critique, however, is specific to the historical-critical method that has been clearly endorsed by the magisterium as an indispensable component of biblical interpretation.

Barron points to the hermeneutics of Raymond Brown, considering Brown to be broadly representative of the thrust of historical-critical biblical exegesis in the Catholic context. Barron offers a fair assessment of Brown's historical-critical agenda as “the attempt to discover, through the use of philology, literary analysis, historical investigation, redaction criticism, and so on, what precisely was the communicative intention of the author or redactor of a biblical text as he addressed his particular audience.”³⁹ Barron further acknowledges that Brown's seminal essay on hermeneutics in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, an ecclesiastically approved volume, does not regard the historical-critical method as the only valid method of interpretation or the final word on the text so much as an essential, initial step in the interpretive process, setting an accurate trajectory for subsequent literary analysis and theological reflection.⁴⁰ Barron rightly characterizes Brown as viewing the historical-critical method as a means to discover the literal sense of the text, serving as a reference point for further exegesis that might uncover the fuller sense, or “*sensus plenior*.”

33 Robert Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology: Essays on God, Liturgy and Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 109.

34 Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology*, 109.

35 Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Toward a Postliberal Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 42.

36 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 42.

37 Robert Barron, “Pope Benedict and How to Read the Bible,” Word on Fire, <https://www.wordonfire.org/resources/article/pope-benedict-and-how-to-read-the-bible/406/>. Cf. Ratzinger, “Relativism: The Central Problem for Faith Today” and Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008), xvi.

38 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 46.

39 Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology*, 120; Brown, “Hermeneutics,” *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 616.

40 Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology*, 121.

Through the application of canonical exegesis, interpreting a text in the context of the full canon of scripture and tradition, and in the context of the matrix of doctrines, the “fuller” sense or *sensus plenior* of the text may be discerned. Raymond Brown defines the *sensus plenior* or “fuller” sense of Scripture as “...the deeper meaning intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, that is seen to exist in the words of scripture when they are studied in the light of further revelation or of development in the understanding of revelation.”⁴¹ In time, Brown began to speak of the “more than literal” sense of the text so as to denote its interpretation in the context of the wider canon and tradition.⁴² The more than literal sense of the text relies upon and builds upon the literal sense, as canonical exegesis builds upon historical-critical exegesis. The more than literal sense cannot contradict the literal sense. Rather, it exceeds the scope of the literal sense as canonical exegesis exceeds the scope of historical-critical exegesis.

Brown notes the objection of J.M. Robinson that the *sensus plenior* could be abused to justify doctrines that have no basis in scripture. Brown responds that the magisterium is the medium, not the originator of divine revelation.⁴³ The author proposes that the *sensus plenior* is not a license by which the Church can justify claims that have no basis in the literal sense of the biblical text.⁴⁴ Rather, the *sensus plenior* must be “a development of what the human author wanted to say.”⁴⁵ Therefore, as taught in *Dei Verbum*, one cannot circumvent the task of ascertaining the intentions of the human authors and skip to the question of what God sought to reveal.

Barron frowns upon Brown’s functional separation of an initial historical-critical exegesis from subsequent canonical exegesis focused on discovering the *sensus plenior* and theological reflection.⁴⁶ Barron laments, “What concerns us in this program is, first, the exaggerated bifurcation between biblical exegesis and theology.”⁴⁷ While admitting that Brown acknowledged the importance of the *sensus plenior*, Barron complains that, unlike St. Thomas Aquinas, Brown largely left its pursuit to others, devoting himself to historical-critical exegesis so as to discover the intentions of the inspired human authors.⁴⁸

Barron regards Brown’s methodological separation of historical-critical exegesis and theological reflection as indicative of a rational-skeptical, that is, “Spinozan” perspective.⁴⁹ In Barron’s view, the attempt to interpret the text on its own terms leads ineluctably to an overemphasis on the intention of the human authors and an underemphasis on that which God wanted to reveal.

Barron turns to the work of Edward Schillebeeckx as an example of theology excessively influenced by a historical-critical hermeneutics and, in effect, by rational skepticism. “In Schillebeeckx (and to a lesser extent in [Hans] Küng), we find a skeptical rereading of most of the miracle stories and a largely subjectivistic interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus.”⁵⁰ The question arises, however, as to why Küng and Schillebeeckx’s readings of the miracle stories constitute “rereadings,” a term suggestive of revisionism.

41 Brown, “Hermeneutics,” *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 616.

42 See Raymond Brown and Sandra Schneiders, “Hermeneutics,” *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 1146-65, especially 1153.

43 Brown, “Hermeneutics,” 616.

44 Brown, “Hermeneutics,” 616.

45 Brown, “Hermeneutics,” 617.

46 Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology*, 121.

47 Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology*, 121.

48 Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology*, 121.

49 Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology*, 121.

50 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 46.

Daniel J. Harrington challenges the assumption that it is a revisionist move to interpret the miracle accounts as something other than a reconstruction of supernatural events, arguing that the sacred authors were not necessarily asserting the occurrence of what today's readers may regard as supernatural phenomena. (In contrast, Barron regards "the world opened up by the scriptural narratives" as characterized by "supernatural density."⁵¹) Harrington suggests that it is a largely modern assumption that the miracle narratives recount a suspension of the laws of nature and are hence supernatural. Barron, on the other hand, presents Küng and Schillebeeckx as influenced by "Spinozan assumptions and prejudices" when they resist such an interpretation.⁵² This gives rise to the question as to whether it would be fair to characterize Harrington's insight as imposing an Enlightenment position or whether it recovers an insight integral to ancient, biblical worldviews. It might be argued that the historical-critical method is a *necessary* tool to enable moderns to excavate, as it were, insights derived from a biblical worldview so that they may then be placed in dialogue with contemporary positions—including contemporary formulations of doctrine.

Contra Barron's appraisal of the historical-critical method as infused with the assumptions of liberal modernity, Fitzmyer asserts that the historical-critical method is theologically neutral.⁵³ When Barron associates the method both with the Jesus scholar John P. Meier and the sacramental and systematic theologian Schillebeeckx, the considerable contrast between these scholars' approaches illustrates the diversity of projects that can benefit from insights derived through the historical-critical method.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Fitzmyer acknowledges that the historical-critical method, like other methods, has at times been conscripted to further particular theological agendas such as those of Rudolf Bultmann and of some historical Jesus scholars who frontload the method with theological presuppositions.⁵⁵ Brown makes a helpful distinction in this regard between, on the one hand, the "philosophy of the method" and, on the other, "the philosophy of the practitioner of the method."⁵⁶ While Barron is suspicious of the historical-critical method for its Enlightenment provenance, Fitzmyer traces its roots among the scholiasts of ancient Alexandria.⁵⁷ Fitzmyer cites the example of Zenodotus of Ephesus who compiled a Homeric Glossary, exegeting difficult terms in Homer's work.⁵⁸

Barron's second set of objections to the historical-critical method reflect his diagnosis that "the historical-critical spirit is deeply Protestant in the measure that it seeks to uncover the 'real' and authentic Jesus who lies beneath a veil of theological and ecclesial distortions."⁵⁹ Here Barron associates the method with what amounts to primitivism, that is, an assumption that the most ancient manifestation of a tradition is inherently more authentic than later ones, and that development inevitably entails corruption and distortion. Primitivism, understood in this sense, is hostile to dynamic, evolving traditions.

While the present paper laments a lack of doctrinal development in light of the insights derived through the historical-critical method, Barron regards the historical-critical spirit as itself opposed to development beyond the intentions of the ancient authors. Barron rightly asserts that "The Catholic instinct is not so much to assess the development by the origin but to assess the development as the full flowering of the origin."⁶⁰ Barron's criticism would seem valid in response to a hermeneutic that is inherently opposed to the theological development, dismissing

51 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 46; cf. Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 187.

52 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 46.

53 Fitzmyer, *In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method*, 69.

54 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 43.

55 Fitzmyer, *In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method*, 68.

56 Brown and Schneiders, "Hermeneutics," 1149.

57 Fitzmyer, *In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method*, 61.

58 Fitzmyer, *In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method*, 61.

59 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 42.

60 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 42.

the reception-histories of biblical texts. The historical-critical method, however, appeals to the historical situation within which the text was authored so as ascertain the literal sense of the text that, through canonical exegesis, can be held in constructive dialogue with later developments in the tradition. As such, it is not necessarily opposed to such development.

When Barron describes the historical-critical spirit as “deeply Protestant,” it is difficult to see how this applies to Schillebeeckx’s use of the historical-critical method as a Catholic sacramental theologian. The sacramental vision of Catholicism, epitomized in Schillebeeckx, far from obsessed with peeling back the layers of tradition to uncover an original authenticity, is deeply attuned to the presence of grace in and through all things. Simply by its emphasis on the enduring sacramental presence of the Risen Christ, Schillebeeckx’s project could hardly be more removed from primitivism.

Barron characterizes Schillebeeckx’s Christology as a form of “historical Jesus Christology,” a remark that may have the insidious albeit unintended effect of associating Schillebeeckx’s position with those of historical Jesus scholars of a very different timbre whom Barron also critiques, including John Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg, and Burton Mac.⁶¹

Barron characterizes Schillebeeckx’s account of Jesus as claiming that he is “but the human with a particularly rich experience of childlike dependence upon God.”⁶² Schillebeeckx, however, writes, “The man Jesus is the presence of the redeeming God among us, though in the mode of a human presence, bodying that presence to us.”⁶³ Indeed, Schillebeeckx’s emphasis on the sacramental presence of the Risen Christ exceeds the scope of historical Jesus scholarship or even the historical-critical method, though it is by no means inherently opposed to the latter. This is evident when Schillebeeckx proposes, “Just as Christ in his risen body acts invisibly in the world, he acts visibly in and through his earthly body, the Church.”⁶⁴ Schillebeeckx’s acknowledgement of the Risen Christ active in history could hardly be further removed from what Barron regards as a Protestant suspicion of the evolving tradition.

Barron’s Postliberal Proposal for the Epistemic Priority of Narratives and Icons of Christ

Given his profound suspicion of the historical-critical method as deeply Protestant and infused with a Spinozan agenda, Barron proposes a postliberal hermeneutics. The author contends that “Jesus cannot be measured by a criterion outside of himself or viewed from a perspective higher than himself.”⁶⁵ While it follows that the divine reality of Christ cannot in itself be understood as one object among many, a phenomenon to be interpreted like any other, texts and narratives, on the other hand, *can* be regarded in such a manner.

Faith in the person of Christ constitutes a religious worldview rather than an exegetical method, and hence it cannot be a working substitute for historical-critical exegesis. Exegetes interpret the texts that mediate revelation rather than directly interrogating the person of Christ. Hence, in practice, Barron extends the epistemic priority of Christ to the epistemic priority of narratives, icons, and theological insights that seek to represent Christ through human imagery and the words of human authors.⁶⁶ Barron asserts, “I will argue that Christians know and seek knowledge in a distinctive way, precisely because they take the narratives concerning Christ as epistemically basic.”⁶⁷ Barron’s use of the phrase “epistemically basic” implies that the narratives in question instill a pre-critical

61 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 46.

62 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 47.

63 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 59.

64 Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 59.

65 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 135.

66 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 19.

67 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 134.

mode of knowing and transcend the need for historical-critical exegesis. Barron posits further, “It is my conviction that we don’t read Jesus through the lens of a predetermined epistemology, but rather that we come to understand the nature of knowledge in general through those narratives.”⁶⁸ Barron’s position in this regard is reminiscent of George Lindbeck’s intratextual approach to biblical narrative as a lens through which to interpret the world rather than as text to be interpreted in light of historical-critical exegesis.⁶⁹

Barron detects in St. Irenaeus a far older precedent for his interpretation of scripture through the lens of doctrinal commitments.⁷⁰ Barron remarks that, for Irenaeus, the Bible was the soul of theology, but also, one might say, the tradition was the lens through which to read the Bible. Irenaeus adopted as an interpretive lens a *regula* consisting of “a set of convictions, assumptions, and narrative content that grows out of the biblical witness itself.”⁷¹ Hence there is a circular situation whereby Irenaeus interprets the Bible through the lens of assumptions derived from traditional interpretation of the Bible. The act of interpretation is thus doctrinally conditioned from the outset. As Daniel Treier observes, Barron argues for “the epistemic primacy of believing, doctrinally traditioned engagement with the Jesus Christ of biblical narrative.”⁷² If, however, engagement with the narrative is from the start doctrinally conditioned, thus avoiding the bifurcation of historical-critical exegesis and theological reflection that Barron detects in Raymond Brown’s approach, then it is difficult to see how exegesis can contribute to the development of doctrine, challenging the very assumptions that for Barron may constitute the interpretive lens.

Barron adopts his own “regula,” as it were, as a doctrinal lens through which to interpret Scripture.⁷³ The author identifies four “doctrinal guides:” first, “the ‘two-natures’ doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon,” second, the Thomistic interpretation of Incarnation as the coinherence of divinity and humanity, third, “Jesus as ‘the icon of the Invisible God,’”⁷⁴ and, fourth, the particularity of Jesus of Nazareth.⁷⁵ These doctrinal guides seem more appropriate as theological hermeneutics than as exegetical devices that could help to determine the literal sense of a biblical text as the historical-critical method can do.

Having attributed the epistemic priority of Christ to doctrinal positions and narratives, Barron posits an oppositional relationship between these narratives and insights derived from the sciences. Paraphrasing Bruce Marshall, Barron argues, “...the narratives concerning Jesus must, for Christians, be an epistemic trump, that is to say, an articulation of reality that holds sway over and against all rival articulations, be they scientific, psychological, sociological, philosophical or religious.”⁷⁶

Barron proposes that “a mind conditioned radically by the narratives concerning Jesus Christ—gatherer, warrior, and Lord—actually grasps reality most richly and thus, paradoxically enough, makes possible the most creative conversation with the non-Christian culture.”⁷⁷ Here, Barron adopts the tone of the Radical Orthodoxy School, implying that a form of Christianity that has not accommodated itself to modernity possesses a more distinctive voice with which to address the modern world, making for a more constructive conversation.⁷⁸

68 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 133.

69 George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 118.

70 Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology*, 110.

71 Barron, *Exploring Catholic Theology*, 111.

72 Daniel Treier, review of Robert Barron’s *The Priority of Christ*, <https://www.amazon.com/Priority-Christ-Toward-Postliberal-Catholicism/dp/0801098203>.

73 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 54.

74 Derived from Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

75 Derived from James William McClendon, *Doctrine*, vol. 2 of *Systematic Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

76 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 133, 135; cf. Bruce Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40-47.

77 Barron, *Priority of Christ*, 134.

78 David Cheetham, *Ways of Meeting and the Theology of Religions* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 45-47.

The Christian mind is, in Barron's view, formed by the biblical narrative, not through approaching Scripture from an extra-biblical perspective. In effect, this can amount to an interpretation of Scripture in light of a reception history vested in tradition. If, as Barron advocates, the biblical text is to be interpreted through the lens of traditional icons and narratives, privileged over historical-critical considerations, the question arises as to why these icons and narratives themselves transcend the need for historical-critical interpretation. As Raymond Brown and Sandra Schneiders suggest, in the interpretation of ancient narratives and motifs, "attempts to minimize or avoid the necessary steps involved will produce fundamentalist confusion."⁷⁹ In a case in point, while not entirely invalid in its own right, the icon of Jesus as warrior is laden with potential for theological difficulties that could be alleviated through historical consciousness and attention to the significance of form in relation to the narratives that suggest this militaristic motif.

Supersessionism, anti-Semitism, an excessive focus on Jesus's maleness, apocalypticism, and a host of other assumptions embedded in traditional receptions of biblical texts can be constructively engaged and modified through historical-critical exegesis. Without a historical-critical phase in exegesis, seeking out the literal sense of the text on its own terms can perpetuate erroneous accounts of the literal sense of the text and even magnify them in subsequent canonical exegesis and theological reflection.

Instances in Which Historical-Critical Exegesis Has Informed the Tradition

For the most part, the documents of the Second Vatican Council reflect the findings of modern biblical scholarship to a far greater extent than postconciliar magisterial pronouncements tend to do. A case in point is the Council's stance in relation to Judaism. In its *Declaration on the Church's Relation with the Non-Christian Religions*, the Second Vatican Council recognizes the danger of interpreting the Passion Narratives as a basis for the historical assertion that Jesus's co-religionists gathered en masse to demand his execution.⁸⁰ In this matter, the Council reflects historical-critical insight regarding tensions between the gospel writers and those factions of Judaism that sought to exclude Jewish followers of Jesus from the synagogues.⁸¹ Though not an instance of doctrinal exposition per se, another area of ecclesial life in which insights derived from the application of historical-critical New Testament scholarship may be said to have had impact is the movement for greater collegiality in church governance.⁸²

Conclusion

While the magisterium exhorts exegetes to explore the Scriptures to yield insights that might contribute towards the development of doctrine, there is little evidence of any significant postconciliar doctrinal development in light of the explosion in modern biblical scholarship in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Although the magisterium teaches that the historical-critical method is indispensable for the interpretation of Scripture, its presentation of doctrine, as evidenced at points in the Catechism, seems impervious to compelling insights derived through the application of the method.

Dei Verbum insists that the interpreter of Scripture cannot circumvent the intentions of the human authors and skip directly to God's intended message. In keeping with this principle, exegetes such as Raymond Brown sought

79 Brown and Schneiders, "Hermeneutics," 1149.

80 Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Church's Relations with the Non-Christian Religions) (1965), no. 4, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

81 See, e.g., Raymond E. Brown, *A Crucified Christ in Holy Week: Essays on the Four Gospel Passion Narratives* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), 15-16, and Marianne Dacy, *The Separation of Early Christianity from Judaism* (New York: Cambria, 2010), 20-50.

82 See, e.g., John Wilkins, "Bishops or Branch Managers? Collegiality after the Council," *America* (October 12, 2012): 18; David Michael Stanley, "The New Testament Basis for the Concept of Collegiality," *Theological Studies* 25 (1964): 197-216.

to establish the literal sense of the text to set a trajectory for further theological reflection upon the significance of the text within the canon of Scripture and the broader tradition.

Robert Barron criticizes the historical-critical method, regarding it as too influenced by rational skepticism and as deeply Protestant, for attempting to seek out the intentions of the human authors through an investigation of their literary forms, historical contexts, theological agendas, and cultural mores, regarding this process as focusing excessive attention on human authorship as opposed to what God seeks to reveal through the text.

Barron appeals to the epistemological priority of Christ. While initially undertaking to adopt the reality of Christ as an interpretive lens, Barron by extension adopts doctrinally conditioned narratives, images, and theological insights as lenses through which to interpret Scripture. The doctrinal assumptions implicit in the lens are then in effect regarded as normative, forgone conclusions rather than as potential objects of scrutiny. When the Bible is read through a lens of stained glass, pious assumptions are superimposed upon the text. This impedes the emergence of exegetical insights that might challenge current doctrinal formulations and lead to a development of doctrine.

The Critics of Pope Francis and *Amoris Laetitia*

by Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler

The reaction to the publication of Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (henceforth *AL*) has been as contentious as the two Synods on Marriage and Family of 2014 and 2015 to which it is a papal response. We focus here on an "Open Letter to Pope Francis" from the Catholic philosophers John Finnis and Germain Grisez,¹ which was published on the website of *First Things* on December 9, 2016. That letter requested that the pope "condemn eight positions against the Catholic faith that are being supported, or likely will be, by the misuse of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*."² In an effort to initiate with Finnis and Grisez the kind of charitable dialogue so prized by Francis, a dialogue "of two different ways of thinking [that] can lead to a synthesis that enriches both" (*AL*, no. 139) we submitted our response to the editor of *First Things* who, regrettably, declined even to acknowledge its receipt let alone publish it. We publish it here, still in search of a charitable dialogue. To understand the terms of the dialogue, it is crucial for the reader to always be aware that each of the positions advanced by Finnis and Grisez are presumed by them to be contrary to the Catholic tradition and "are being supported, or likely will be, by the misuse of...*Amoris Laetitia*." We respond to these positions with both a "hard" critique, arguing that no specific position is contrary to Catholic doctrine, and a "soft" critique, arguing that *AL* cannot be used to defend the positions Finnis and Grisez condemn without distorting the text itself. Since *AL* is now part of magisterial teaching, it can and will be used in both hard and soft critiques.

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To Finnis and Grisez, our colleagues, we say: you have written to the Bishop of Rome concerning what you see as the actual or possible misuse of his recent Apostolic Exhortation *AL* and in it you set out positions you judge "contrary to Catholic faith, that is, to Scripture and teachings that definitively pertain to tradition, each interpreted in the other's light."³ We applaud that excellent Catholic principle for judging theological positions with one caveat. As is evident from your stated positions and other extensive writings, your

pertain to tradition, each interpreted in the other's light."³ We applaud that excellent Catholic principle for judging theological positions with one caveat. As is evident from your stated positions and other extensive writings, your

1 We acknowledge both Dr. Germain Grisez's death on February 1, 2018, and his extensive contributions to Catholic moral philosophy throughout his distinguished career.

2 John Finnis and Germain Grisez, "An Open Letter to Pope Francis," <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusive/2016/12/an-open-letter-to-pope-francis>, 1. Henceforth Letter.

3 Letter, 2.

use of “Tradition” is often defined narrowly in terms of magisterial teaching. We define tradition more broadly to include not only magisterial teaching but also the theological realities *sensus fidelium* and ecclesial synodality.⁴

Sensus fidelium is a theological concept that denotes “the instinctive capacity of the whole Church to recognize the infallibility of the Spirit’s truth.”⁵ It is a charism of discernment, possessed by the whole Church, which receives a Church teaching as apostolic and, therefore, to be held in both faith and *praxis*. One of the great debates during the birthing of the Second Vatican Council’s *Lumen Gentium* was over who should be consulted about Catholic doctrine. Vatican theologians argued Pius X’s position that it was only the Magisterium who determined doctrine, a claim that had become common since the definition of papal infallibility by the First Vatican Council in 1870. Conciliar bishops and theologians responded with the more historically accurate claim that the Church’s faith was preserved in the faith of *all* believers, lay and clerical together. They argued that, although the Magisterium spoke *for* the Church, it was also obliged to speak *from* the Church and that, when it ignored a clear *sensus fidelium* in the whole Church, it was being unfaithful to the Church’s rule of faith. *Lumen Gentium* is clear. “The body of the faithful *as a whole*, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cf. 1 Jn 2:20; 2:27), cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith (*sensus fidei*) which characterizes the people *as a whole*, it manifests this unerring quality when, ‘from the bishops to the last of the faithful,’⁶ it manifests universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.”⁷ In the Church now re-emerging from the Second Vatican Council, which is believed to be not Pius X’s unequal, hierarchical society but an equal ecclesial communion, any effort to evaluate a magisterial teaching will automatically include open dialogue, uncoerced judgment, and free consensus. That is the way genuine, authentic, and universal *sensus fidelium* is formed. Surveys leading up to the Synods and *AL*, which attempt to include the voices from those surveys, clearly reflect a useful process for discerning *sensus fidelium*.

The discernment of *sensus fidelium* is a complex process that takes time, patience, and a commitment to the kind of honest and charitable dialogue that Francis so appreciated at the two Synods and characterized as “a spirit of collegiality and synodality.”⁸ Some see, indeed, a defining characteristic of his papacy as seeking to realize synodality, the ecclesiology of Vatican II that focuses on journeying together and listening to input from all quarters of the Church, laity and clerics alike, to engage in charitable, honest, and constructive dialogue to discern God’s will and the path the Church must follow to live according to that will. This requires what both John Paul II and Francis frequently refer to as “dialogue in charity.” The two synods that laid the foundation for *AL* modeled this dialogue in a way that no synod in the past has done. Synodality is a central and defining dimension of Francis’s papacy and will open the door to further dialogue and development in the Church.⁹

In our broad definition of tradition, there can be, and today notably is, tension between magisterial teaching and the lived experiences of the Catholic faithful. This tension invites prayerful dialogue and reflection, or synodality, to discern its implications for magisterial teaching. We engage this broader definition of tradition when considering your positions.

4 The English word *synod* derives from the compound Greek word *sun*, meaning together, and *hodos*, meaning travelling or journeying, hence journeying together.

5 John E. Thiel, *Senses of Tradition: Continuity and Development in Catholic Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 47.

6 Augustine, *De praed. sanct.* 14, 27, *Patrologia Latina* 44, 980.

7 Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (1964), no. 12, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

8 Speech at the conclusion of the 2014 Synod on Marriage and the Family (October 18, 2014), https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141018_conclusione-sinodo-dei-vescovi.html.

9 See Vatican Radio, “Papal Election Anniversary: Synodality a Key Change Under Pope Francis” (December 3, 2017), http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/03/12/papal_election_anniv_synodality_a_key_change_under_francis/1297800.

Finnis and Grisez: Position A

A priest administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation may sometimes absolve a penitent who lacks a purpose of amendment with respect to a sin in grave matter that either pertains to his or her ongoing form of life or is habitually repetitive.¹⁰

We respond first to “Position A.” First, you seem to be concerned that *AL*’s consideration of “irregular situations” promotes a violation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation’s conditions for absolution, specifically the requirement for a purpose of amendment, by opening up the possibility for “fuller participation in the life of the Church” (*AL*, no. 300). This may include communion for a divorced and remarried couple who are not continent in their relationship. On the one hand, your concern that people may not show adequate repentance and, therefore, respect for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, is a legitimate concern. Pope Francis is not advocating that lack of respect in *AL*; rather, he is recognizing the complexity of human situations and the historical fact that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all moral assessment of people in irregular situations. *AL* notes that it can no longer be maintained that those living in irregular situations, such as the divorced and remarried, “are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace” (no. 301). Whereas Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris consortio* (no. 84) proposed that the only acceptable arrangement for such couples is to live as brother and sister, *AL*, following *Gaudium et spes*, recognizes that if sexual intimacy is lacking in such relationships, “faithfulness is endangered and the good of the children suffers” (*AL*, no. 298, footnote 329, citing *GS*, no. 51). Living celibate as brother and sister may deepen commitment and family life for some couples, but it may also damage commitment and family life for others. If a couple continues to have sexual relations, it does not necessarily indicate that they lack a purpose of amendment; rather, it may indicate that, through the process of internal forum, discernment, and pastoral guidance (no. 300), the couple does not consider sexual relations in their situation a sin in grave matter, or perhaps, any sin at all. If this is the case, it is not that the couple lacks a firm purpose of amendment but that there is no sin, or no grave sin, present.

Second, “Position A” invites a hard critique of your understanding of Church doctrine that is at the root of that Position and too easily elides *grave matter* into *grave sin*. We remind you of the teaching of the Catholic tradition that “mortal [or grave] sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge [of the wrongness of the grave act] and deliberate consent.”¹¹ That divorced Catholics remarry without canonical annulment, for instance, may constitute *grave matter* in the eyes of the Magisterium but it constitutes *grave sin* only when the participants have also the required full knowledge and deliberate consent. Since divorced Catholics who remarry without annulment do not all fit, Francis asserts correctly, “into overly rigid classifications leaving no room for personal and pastoral discernment” (*AL*, no. 298), they cannot all be accused of grave sin and be prohibited from receiving communion. Whether or not the conditions for grave sin have all been fulfilled will have to be decided on a case-by-case basis in a process of discernment guided by a counselor inside or outside the Sacrament of Reconciliation (*AL*, no. 291-312), and culminating in an internal forum practical judgment of conscience. Those who are not guilty of grave sin because the conditions for grave sin have not all been met *must* be admitted to communion according to Canon 912 of the law of the Catholic Church: “Any baptized person who is not prohibited by law can and *must* be admitted to Holy Communion.”

¹⁰ Letter, 2.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1857 (New York: Paulist Press, 1994).

Finnis and Grisez: Positions B and E

Some of the faithful are too weak to keep God's commandments; though resigned to committing ongoing and habitual sins in grave matter, they can live in grace.¹²

If one bears in mind one's concrete situation and personal limitations, one's conscience may at times discern that doing an act of a kind contrary to a divine commandment will be doing one's best to respond to God, which is all that he asks, and then one ought to choose to do that act but also be ready to conform fully to the divine commandment if and when one can do so.¹³

We consider "Positions B" and "E" to be so related that we will consider them together. With respect to "Position B," there is again a hard and a soft critique. First, we begin our hard critique with a fundamental distinction in Catholic ethics between the right and the good; this distinction has implications also for "Position A" above. According to that distinction, the ethical terms right and wrong pertain to acts and good and bad pertain to persons and their motives. A right or wrong act analyzes how that act impacts human beings and relationships; a good or bad person or motive analyzes the character of the person performing the act. Why this distinction? A person can perform a right act (giving alms to the poor) with a bad motive (for vainglory) or a person can perform a wrong act (stealing money) with a good motive (seeking justice by providing necessary needs for the poor). Morally evaluating the entire act requires that we consider both the motive and the act, including its morally relevant circumstances. The Magisterium often fails to recognize this distinction, as does Francis in his use of the phrases "objectively sinful" or "objective situation of sin" (*AL*, no. 305). Even if an act is objectively wrong, it may not be subjectively sinful.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* implicitly acknowledges this distinction when it teaches, for instance, that even though "masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely disordered *action*," "imputability and responsibility for an action can be *diminished and even nullified* by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear" and that "affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety, or other psychological or social factors...*lessen or even extenuate* moral culpability" and therefore grave sin.¹⁴ In other words, masturbation is a wrong act but, given personal psychological and social factors that influence the person, there may be little or no personal culpability in it and, therefore, no sin. Francis stands firmly in the long-established Catholic tradition that personal circumstances can nullify grave sin in grave matter and adds to it the extenuating circumstances of "dire poverty and great limitations" (*AL*, no. 50), drug use, and family and societal violence (*AL*, no. 51). We call to mind the consoling words of St. Paul in Romans: "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."¹⁵ The presence of God, grace, contra your position, is present even in sin where there is moral culpability and certainly abounds when wrong acts are chosen but moral culpability is diminished. By failing to distinguish between the rightness and wrongness of acts and the goodness and badness of persons, your blanket negation in "Position B" that people who are "resigned to committing ongoing and habitual sins in grave matter...can [still] live in grace" fails to make the distinction between acts and motives and ignores the traditional Catholic teaching that when moral culpability is nullified or extenuated people can and do still live in grace, even if they choose wrong acts.

Your focus on habitual sin, which too easily conflates the wrong and the bad, invites also a soft-critique of your interpretation of *AL*. Francis changes no doctrine in *AL*, but he does shift the focus from rules, laws, and norms that condemn wrong acts and places it on God's unconditional love of and mercy towards his human creatures.

¹² Letter, 3.

¹³ Letter, 3.

¹⁴ *Catechism*, no. 1735 and 2352, emphases added.

¹⁵ Rom 5:20; *Catechism*, no. 1848.

He complains, justly, of those who “feel that it is enough to apply moral laws to those living in ‘irregular situations’ as if they were *stones to throw at people’s lives*. This would bespeak the closed heart of one used to hiding behind the Church’s teachings.... ‘and judging at times with superiority and superficiality difficult cases and wounded families’” (*AL*, no. 305; emphasis added). At times, he continues, “we find it hard to make room for God’s unconditional love in our pastoral activity. We put so many conditions on mercy that we empty it of its concrete meaning and real significance. That is the worst way of watering down the Gospel.” He embraces the judgment of the International Theological Commission that all theologians, indeed all Catholics, should always heed: “we should always consider ‘inadequate any theological conception which in the end puts in doubt the omnipotence of God and, especially, his mercy’” (*AL*, no. 311).¹⁶

“Position E” explicitly introduces the idea of conscience, its role, function, and authority, which is foundational in the Catholic tradition and has been reinstated by Francis in *AL* to its preeminent place in the moral life. We begin with a hard critique of your position. The standard and long-traditional Catholic approach to making moral decisions in both grave and non-grave matters acknowledges the authority and inviolability of personal conscience. Already in the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas, that source and pillar of the Catholic tradition, established the authority and inviolability of conscience. “Anyone upon whom the ecclesiastical authorities, in ignorance of the true facts, impose a demand that offends against his clear conscience, should perish in excommunication rather than violate his conscience.”¹⁷ After the upheaval created by Martin Luther’s Reformation and the Council of Trent’s defensive response to it, and especially after Vatican I’s declaration of papal infallibility in 1870, this teaching became submerged in claims for the doctrinal authority of the pope and bishops. The way that Catholics were to make a moral decision was perhaps best articulated by Pius X: “The Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock.” The latter have “one duty...to allow themselves to be led and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors.”¹⁸ It could not be clearer: to make a moral judgment in this context all a Catholic need do is to follow the instructions of Pastors in hierarchical power. You seem to embrace this vision of conscience as is evidenced by your statement on the relationship between conscience and magisterial teaching: “For her members, the Catholic Church is the supreme moral authority under God. Catholics ought to *conform* their consciences to her teaching in every question, every detail, every respect. If they are faithful, they will.”¹⁹

Some sixty years after Pius X’s declaration, the Second Vatican Council subverted his assertion and followed Aquinas in decreeing the authority and inviolability of personal conscience. “In all his activity,” it decreed, “a man (sic) is bound to follow his conscience faithfully, in order that he may come to God...It follows that he is not to be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious.”²⁰ Again, it could not be clearer. An individual Catholic makes concrete moral judgments by following his/her personal conscience, a practical judgment that he/she should do or not do this particular action, to kill this person threatening the lives of his family members, for instance, or to receive communion when divorced and remarried without an annulment. Given universal human weakness and finitude, any such practical judgment of conscience can be in error. If the error cannot be ascribed to moral fault, failure to gather the necessary evidence, to engage in the necessary deliberation, to take the necessary counsel, for

16 See International Theological Commission, *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized* (2007), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070419_un-baptised-infants_en.html, 2.

17 Thomas Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 38, q. 2, art. 4.

18 Pius X, *Vehementer nos* (1906), no. 8, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos.html.

19 Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus. Volume One: Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 566. Emphasis added.

20 Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965), no. 3, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html; and Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), no. 16, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

example, the practical judgment of conscience not only *can* but also *must* be followed. When we have done all we can in our circumstances and within our limitations to gather information, to take appropriate counsel, to deliberate, to discern, we can and must fall back on the practical judgment of conscience, even if, as Aquinas argued, it is contrary to Church authority.

A soft critique of “Position E” is that Francis stands firmly within and articulates the substance of the Catholic tradition when he teaches that “individual conscience needs to be better incorporated into the Church’s praxis in certain situations which do not embody our understanding of marriage” and insists that we “find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations” (*AL*, no. 303). We all must heed his insightful comment that is grounded in, and faithful to, the established tradition: “we have been called to form consciences, not to replace them” (*AL*, no. 37). There can be no doubt that in *AL* Francis acts to “make room for the consciences of the faithful,” perhaps especially for the consciences of the weakest among them. That making room includes *accompaniment* by Church ministers of the faithful as they seek to faithfully discern moral issues and make conscientious moral judgments about them. Catholic freedom of conscience, we insist, however, never means ignoring Church doctrine but rather discerning it faithfully and being guided by it in the process of making conscientious moral judgments.

Finnis and Grisez: Positions C and D

No general moral rule is exceptionless. Even divine commandments forbidding specific kinds of actions are subject to exceptions in some situations.

While some of God’s commandments or precepts seem to require that one never choose an act of one of the kinds to which they refer, those commandments or precepts actually are rules that express ideals and identify goods that one should always serve and strive after as best one can, given one’s weaknesses and one’s complex, concrete situation, which may require one to choose an act at odds with the letter of the rule.²¹

Again, we consider these two Positions so related that we respond to them together. Both circle around exceptionless moral rules. Your implication that they include errors against the Catholic faith are so far removed from the Catholic tradition that you must have ignored your own biblical and traditional rule when you wrote them. There are two solemn biblical injunctions, for instance, two of the great Commandments: “You shall not kill” and “You shall not steal.” Each is accepted in Catholic faith as a “divine commandment,” yet the Catholic tradition has always taught that they can have exceptions. One may kill without moral fault in a *just* war and in legitimate defense of oneself or one’s family. The *Catechism* makes clear that legitimate defense against an unjust aggressor is even “a *grave duty* for whoever is responsible for the lives of others or the common good.”²² It also makes clear that stealing another’s property is perfectly moral “in obvious and urgent necessity when the only way to provide for immediate, essential needs (food, shelter, clothing) is to put at one’s disposal and use the property of others.”²³ “To put at one’s disposal and use” is, of course, a euphemism for “to steal the property of others.” Stealing when one lacks the basic needs of life might be judged to be illegal by society, but the Catholic Church never judges it immoral. If such solemn “divine commandments” have exceptions, it is difficult for us to imagine any non-divine commandment or rule that is exceptionless.

²¹ Letter, 3.

²² *Catechism*, no. 2321.

²³ *Catechism*, no. 2408.

Finnis and Grisez: Position F

Choosing to bring about one's own, another's, or others' sexual arousal and/or satisfaction is morally acceptable provided *only* that (1) no adult has bodily contact with a child; (2) no participant's body is contacted without his or her free and clear consent; (3) nothing done knowingly brings about or unduly risks physical harm, disease transmission, or unwanted pregnancy; and (4) no moral norm governing behavior in general is violated.²⁴

This Position conjures up for Catholics the subject of human sexuality. We have addressed the ethics of that subject extensively elsewhere;²⁵ we wish here only to consider briefly the traditional Catholic moral norms governing sexual behavior. Sexuality is a gift of God's creation and is, therefore, good, but moral sexual intercourse is still restricted in official Catholic teaching to spouses in marriage for procreation, which since Aquinas has been established in Catholic moral theology as the primary end of marriage. Following the announcement of an ecumenical council by Pope John XXIII, a Central Preparatory Commission was established to receive, edit, and distribute documents to be discussed by the Bishops in the plenary sessions of the Council. Early in 1962, that Central Commission received from the Theological Commission chaired by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, then Prefect of the Holy Office, a schema entitled "*De Castitate, Virginitate, Matrimonio, Famila*." It discussed that schema in May 1962 and rejected it as too negative and legalistic. A sampling from the schema will illustrate what led to its rejection and enable us to understand what was rejected, not only in the Central Commission but also in the Council itself.

Along with his schema, Cardinal Ottaviani had sent the Central Commission a note of explanation of the intent of the schema. "Before all else the Theological Commission has set out the objective order, that is, *that which God himself willed in instituting marriage and Christ the Lord willed in raising it to the dignity of a sacrament*. Only in this way can the modern errors that have spread everywhere be vanquished."²⁶ The most important among those errors are "those theories which subvert the right order of values and make the primary end of marriage inferior to the biological and personal values of the spouses, and proclaim that conjugal love itself is in the objective order the primary end."²⁷ The schema offers the traditional hierarchy of ends of marriage. "The one and only primary end is the procreation and nurture of children.... The other objective ends of marriage, rooted in the character of marriage but still secondary—such as the spouses' mutual love and the remedy of concupiscence" are subordinate ends.²⁸ The debate, both the preliminary one in the Central Commission and the decisive one in the Council itself, centered around the hierarchy of ends, specifically around the relative values of conjugal love and the procreation of children. The outcome of that debate entered the Catholic tradition in *GS*.

GS teaches that marriage is a "community of love" (no. 47), an "intimate partnership of conjugal life and love" (no. 48). In the face of strident demands from Cardinal Ottaviani and his supporters in the Theological Commission, who continued to champion their understanding of what God willed in instituting marriage, the Council declared conjugal love to be of the very essence of marriage. Conjugal love, in other words, is what God willed marriage to be. That love and the institution of marriage, it further declared, are both "ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown" (no. 48), but that "does not make the other purposes of marriage of less account"; marriage "is not instituted solely for procreation" (no. 50). When it submitted the finished schema of *GS* for discussion at the Council, the Central Preparatory Commission added a note of expla-

²⁴ Letter, 3-4.

²⁵ See Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007); Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, *Catholic Sexual Ethics: An Introduction* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012).

²⁶ *Acta et Documenta Concilio Vaticano II Apparando, Series II (Praeparatorio) II, III* (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1968), no. 937. Emphasis added.

²⁷ *Acta et Documenta Concilio*, no. 910 and 917 note 50.

²⁸ *Acta et Documenta Concilio*, no. 909.

nation that none of these texts was to be understood as suggesting the traditional hierarchy of ends “in any way.”²⁹ Conjugal love is an end of marriage; the procreation and education of children is an end of marriage; but the two ends are not ranked hierarchically. In the 1960s, the Catholic Church meeting in Council refused to rank them, leaving them doctrinally as co-equal ends.

Immediately following the Council, the co-equality as ends of marriage of conjugal love and the procreation and education of children provoked so much discussion about the morality of spouses’ use of artificial contraception that Paul VI continued and expanded John XXIII’s commission of Bishops, lay leaders, and theologians considering the morality of artificial contraception. A preliminary question put to the ethicists, “Is artificial contraception an intrinsically evil violation of the natural law?” resulted in fifteen “no” and four “yes” responses.³⁰ One of the “yes” responses was given by the Italian moral theologian Ermenegildo Lio, a close friend of Paul VI and the reputed main writer of *Humanae Vitae*. In response to a final question, “Is contraception, as defined by the Majority Report, in basic continuity with tradition and the declarations of the Magisterium?” nine bishops answered “yes,” five answered “no,” and one abstained.³¹ Both a Majority and a Minority Report were then submitted to Paul VI, the latter advocating the status quo, the former advocating a change in Catholic doctrine as monumental as the Council’s recent change from condemning to mandating religious freedom.³² Paul VI, sharing the minority’s concern that the Church could not repudiate its teaching on artificial contraception without undergoing a serious blow to its overall moral authority (completely ignoring its recent conciliar repudiation of its teaching on religious freedom with no loss of moral authority), approved the Minority Report in *Humanae Vitae*.³³ The differential between the two Reports is easily categorized.

The Minority Report, which became the controverted part of *Humanae Vitae* (1968), argued that “each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life.”³⁴ This was the first time that the Church’s teaching was articulated in this way. The tradition had always been that it is *marriage* itself and not each and every act of intercourse in marriage that is to be open to procreation, and that is what the Majority Report argued. It judged that “what had been condemned in the past and remains so today is the unjust refusal of life...in short, the rejection of procreation as a specific task of marriage.” It went on to assert that “human intervention in the process of the marriage act *for reasons drawn from the end of marriage itself* should not always be excluded, provided that the criteria of morality are always safeguarded.”³⁵ In spite of Paul VI’s injunction, that judgment continues to be, we believe, the judgment of the majority of contemporary Catholic theological ethicists and of the documented vast majority of Catholic spouses worldwide.³⁶ *HV* tried to change the terms of the debate over marriage and sexual intercourse within marriage by teaching for the first time in Catholic history that “each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life,” but that teaching has now been so controverted by a large majority of Catholic spouses that “in much of Catholic theology and ethics, the procreative norm as the sole or primary justification of sexual intercourse is gone.”³⁷

29 See Bernard Häring, “Fostering the Nobility of Marriage and the Family,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 5, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 234.

30 See Robert McClory, *Turning Point: The Inside Story of the Papal Birth Control Commission and How Humanae Vitae Changed the Life of Patty Crowley and the Future of the Church* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1995), 99.

31 McClory, *Turning Point*, 127.

32 See the Second Vatican Council’s “Declaration on Religious Liberty” (*Dignitatis Humanae*).

33 For detail on this, see Janet E. Smith, *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 11-33.

34 Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (1968), no. 11, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

35 Cited by Robert Blair Kaiser, *The Politics of Sex and Religion* (Kansas City, KS: Leaven Press, 1985), 260-61.

36 See William V. D’Antonio, et al., *Laity American and Catholic: Transforming the Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1996); Univision Communications, *Global Survey of Roman Catholics* (New York: Univision Communications, 2014).

37 Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 278.

With the reestablishment of the relational purpose for marriage and sexual intercourse, the judgment of the morality of sexual intercourse, within or without marriage, is now made by Catholic ethicists on the basis not of the biological *act of intercourse* but of its meanings for the couple within their *relational context*. There is newness here, as has been suggested by Francis's critics, but it is newness of "organic development,"³⁸ not of rupture, of doctrine. The focus of sexual ethics in *AL*, and indeed more generally in Catholic sexual ethics since Vatican II, is not on sexual *acts* but on the *relationships* in which those acts have meaning. Within a loving relationship, sexual intercourse is not just a naked physical act, it is also a way of making love to, affirming commitment to, and acceptance of another person. Francis teaches as much in his treatment of what he calls *de facto* unions, more commonly called cohabitation.

When the *Lineamenta* for the 2015 Synod was distributed, the group charged with the marriage preparation of those wishing to marry in the Church in England, Catholic Marriage Care, responded that nearly every couple attending their courses was already cohabiting. Couples seeking to be married in the Church and not already living together were a rarity, not only in England but throughout the world. The *Final Report* of the Synod condemned all cohabitation, correctly as they focused only on the Church prohibition of every act of sexual intercourse outside of marriage. By contrast, Francis makes a distinction between "cohabitation which totally excludes any intention to marry" (*AL*, no. 53) and cohabitation dictated by "cultural and contingent situations" (*AL*, no. 294) which demand a "constructive response." Among the widespread contingent situations is material poverty that yields the consideration that "celebrating a marriage is too expensive in the social circumstances...and drives people into *de facto* unions" (*AL*, no. 294) like cohabitation. Among the constructive responses Francis recommends is *accompaniment* by Church ministers of cohabiting partners that can *integrate* them into the Church community and eventually lead them to marriage. The Church must "never desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage, God's plan in all its grandeur" but neither must it ever desist from *accompanying* "with mercy and patience the eventual stages of personal growth as these progressively appear" (*AL*, no. 307). Neither must it desist, of course, from granting the authority and inviolability that Vatican II granted to an informed personal conscience, which we treated above. That teaching applies here in all its fullness. No cohabitor is to be forced to act contrary to his/her conscience, nor is he/she to be restrained from acting in accordance with his/her conscience, especially in matters religious and, we add, sexual. Paul VI's rule that each and every act of intercourse is to be open to the transmission of life is today no more an exceptionless norm than the divine commandments "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not steal."

Finnis and Grisez: Position G

A consummated, sacramental marriage is indissoluble in the sense that the spouses ought always to foster marital love and ought never to choose to dissolve their marriage. But by causes beyond the spouses' control and/or by grave faults by at least one of them, their human relationship as a married couple sometimes deteriorates until it ceases to exist. When a couple's marriage relationship no longer exists, their marriage has dissolved, and at least one of them may rightly obtain a divorce and remarry.³⁹

This position highlights the hot spot of the two recent Synods, namely, divorce and remarriage without annulment, and demands a consideration of official Catholic teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In 1994, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) sent a letter to the Bishops of the world claiming that Catholic doc-

38 See Gerard O'Connell, "'Amoris Laetitia' Represents an Organic Development of Doctrine, 'not a Rupture,'" *America* (April 8, 2016), <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2016/04/08/amoris-laetitia-represents-organic-development-doctrine-not-rupture>.

39 Letter, 4.

trine about divorce and remarriage is mandated by “fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ,”⁴⁰ citing Jesus’s words in Mk 10:11-12, and implying the doctrine is irreformable. That argument is disingenuous, perhaps even dishonest. It would be true and compelling if the words of Jesus cited from Mark were the only scriptural words on divorce and remarriage (remember your scriptural principle), but they are not. The New Testament has five reports about divorce and remarriage (Mk 10:11-12; Mt 5:32 and 19:9; Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-11), and they are not all in agreement and do not all prohibit divorce. Paul reports Jesus’s prohibition of divorce (1 Cor 7:10-11) and immediately nuances it in the contexts of his own churches (7:12-16); that nuance, permitting divorce and remarriage, passed into the tradition of the Catholic Church as the Pauline Privilege. “A marriage entered by two non-baptized persons is dissolved by means of the Pauline Privilege in favor of the faith of a party who has received baptism by the very fact that a new marriage is contracted by the party who has been baptized, provided the non-baptized party departs” (CIC, no. 1143). When one clears away the obfuscations, the Pauline Privilege permits divorce from a marriage considered to be *valid*, subsequent remarriage, and subsequent admission to communion. Matthew also nuances Jesus’s words with his own genuine exception (5:32; 19:9) to Jesus’s received words, though we agree with those biblical scholars who argue that the meaning of his exception, *epi tes porneia* (except for *porneia*, which is often translated as fornication) is not self-evident to contemporary readers.

There is veneration in the Catholic Church not only for biblical words but also for ecumenical councils, especially for the first of the great Councils, the Council of Nicea (325), whose Nicene Creed codified Christian belief. Nicea continued the nuancing of the words of Jesus based on contextual needs begun by Paul and Matthew, decreeing that those who belonged to the rigorous sect called the Novatians had to promise in writing to accept the teaching of the Catholic Church before they could be reconciled with it. Specifically, they had to accept its teaching concerning those who had been married twice (*digamoi*) and had to agree to live in communion with them after they had completed a period of penance and had been reconciled to the Church.⁴¹ That decree founds the practice of the Orthodox Churches known as *oikonomia* which the Council of Trent refused to condemn because it could not be shown to be contrary to the Gospel.⁴² That is laudable adherence to your biblical principle. The nuancing of the words of Jesus about divorce was continued in the sixteenth-century Church in the context of marital situations occasioned by the slave trade, and the decrees of Popes Paul III (1537), Pius V (1561), and Gregory XIII (1585) permitting divorce and remarriage passed into the Catholic tradition under the misleading heading of the Petrine Privilege.⁴³ This constant nuancing of the words of Jesus in the Church makes any argument about absolute indissolubility based exclusively on the Markan words of Jesus at best inaccurate and at worse dishonest. Because all the sources on divorce and remarriage, not only from Jesus but also from Paul, Matthew, the Council of Nicea, and the renaissance Church, are part of the overall word of God received in the Catholic Church, any effort to allow one instruction to override all the others as *the* word of God falsifies God’s word and should be discontinued.

The real doctrine and practice of the Catholic Church with respect to the indissolubility of marriage clearly demonstrates that fidelity to the biblical words of Jesus is far from the only criterion for its judgments about divorce and remarriage.⁴⁴ The actual teaching of the Church derives from yet another nuance, this time introduced by the canonist Gratian of Bologna and accepted in the twelfth-century Church, that only that marriage “which is ratified [as sacrament] *and* consummated cannot be dissolved by any human power other than death” (CIC, no. 1141).

40 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Concerning the Reception of Holy Communion by Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful” (1994), no. 4, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_14091994_rec-holy-comm-by-divorced_en.html.

41 See J. D. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova Collectio* (Paris: Welter, 1903-27), II:672.

42 Heinrich Denzinger and Adolf Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 32nd ed. (Barcelona: Herder, 1963), 1807, 1807n.

43 See Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Marriage* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 92-3.

44 See also Kenneth R. Himes and James A. Coriden, “The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reasons to Reconsider,” *Theological Studies* 65, no. 3 (2004): 453-99.

The two conditions that make a marriage absolutely indissoluble in the Catholic Church, that it be simultaneously sacramental *and* consummated, are nowhere mentioned or even insinuated by the Gospel Jesus. If what was established by God, namely, the marriage bond, has been nuanced by the Church in the first century, the fourth century, the twelfth century, and the sixteenth century, what is there to prevent the Church from nuancing it again in the twenty-first century in the face of massive contextual circumstances and relational need? This is a question many historically conscious Catholic theologians ask, both outside and inside the recent Synods. One frequently offered possibility is the embracing of the Orthodox practice of *oikonomia*. The 1980 Synod on Marriage and the Family asked John Paul II to consider this practice but as yet there has been no response from the hierarchical magisterium.⁴⁵

Much ink has been spilled over whether Francis allows or does not allow admission to the sacraments of reconciliation and communion of divorced and remarried individuals who, after guided discernment, seek them in conscience. What Francis says is clear and firmly rooted in the Catholic tradition. “It is possible that in an objective situation of sin [like divorce and remarriage without annulment]—which may not be subjectively culpable, or fully such—a person can be living in God’s grace, can love and can also grow in the life of grace and charity, while receiving the Church’s help to this end” (*AL*, no. 305). The footnote he adds to this statement, the much-controverted footnote 351, makes his intention crystal clear: “In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments.”

There is a clearly documented trail of Church development on the issue of divorced and remarried Catholics and the reception of the sacraments. Prior to 1977, Catholics who were divorced and remarried without an annulment were excommunicated and could not receive any sacrament. In 1977, Pope Paul VI lifted that excommunication, but divorced and remarried Catholics could receive sacraments only if their marriage was regularized by a canonical tribunal.⁴⁶ In 1981 John Paul II ruled that the divorced and remarried could be admitted to the sacraments “when, for serious reasons, such as for example the children’s upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate they take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples.”⁴⁷

The historical, doctrinal, and pastoral development is obvious. Obvious also is the further such development introduced by Francis in *AL* in the text we cited above. Several Bishops Conferences have offered interpretations of Francis’s teaching, the most interesting being that from the Bishops of Buenos Aires. They wrote a letter to their priests explaining how they are to interpret Chapter Eight of *AL*, including the part related to Catholics divorced and remarried without annulment. The Bishops acknowledge John Paul II’s ruling that they must observe continence to receive the sacraments, but they add that if that is not possible a path of discernment is still possible. “When there is acknowledgment in a concrete case,” they explain, “of the existence of limitations that diminish the degree of responsibility and culpability—particularly when a person believes they would commit another mistake that could harm any children born into the new union—*Amoris Laetitia* introduces the possibility of access to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.” The clincher is not the Bishops’ interpretation but Francis’s response to it. “The letter is very good,” he commented, “and fully captures the meaning of Chapter Eight of *Amoris Laetitia*. *There are no other interpretations.*”⁴⁸

45 See Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage in the Catholic Church: Disputed Questions* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 113.

46 See Marjorie Hyer, “Vatican Eases Excommunication Rule,” *Washington Post* (November 11, 1977), https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/11/11/vatican-eases-excommunication-rule/9b5ffdb9-8082-4dcf-97f3-87523973135b/?utm_term=.7282be4d832f.

47 John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), no. 84, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html.

48 See James F. Keenan, “Reading *Amoris Laetitia* in the New Light of Easter,” *Crux*, <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2017/04/21/reading-amoris-laetitia-new-light-easter>. Emphasis added.

Conclusion

There remains much work to be done, colleagues, to draw out the full anthropological, methodological, and normative implications of *AL* for Catholic sexual ethics, but it is already clear that it will stimulate debate about the moral issues involved in irregular situations that had appeared settled with the publication of John Paul II's *Veritatis splendor* in 1993. We are reminded of Jesus's response to his critics: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17). Francis could say the same thing: "I have come not to abolish any Catholic doctrine but to point the way to a renewed, pastoral, Gospel, and therefore Catholic, way to interpret and apply it." We are pleased we have had this opportunity to collegially dialogue with you, because we accept it as seeking to do the theologian's task, namely, the pursuance in the scientific manner proper to theology of a deeper understanding of the words of God and of the Church, and the communication of that understanding to our fellow faithful. We will be pleased to pursue the matter further with you, for we are in full agreement with the words of *Dignitatis Humanae*: "Truth can impose itself on the mind of man only in virtue of its own truth, which wins over the mind with gentleness and power" (no. 1).

Classroom Teaching Practices as Embodied, Contextual Liturgical Formation

by Eileen Maggiore

People act on their desires, and their actions, in turn, shape who they will become. This insight into the human condition has been recognized by many great catechists, beginning with Jesus: “Where your treasure is, there also your heart will be” (Mt 6:21). St. Augustine similarly stated, in a famous phrase from his *Confessions* directed to God, “Our hearts are restless, until they rest in You.” Consequently, catechesis, especially classroom-based catechesis, will miss the mark if it aims at informing the mind but forgets to attend to the desires of the heart—desires that are embodied in the formative rituals we engage on a regular basis.

In *Desiring the Kingdom*, the philosopher James K. A. Smith applies the term “liturgy” not just to the embodied, material practices of Christian worship but to a larger category of formative activities that influence our behavior by first drawing our desires toward some ultimate end. Understood in this way, the Christian liturgy “is a ‘hearts and minds’ strategy, a pedagogy that trains us as disciples precisely by putting our bodies through a regimen of repeated practices that get hold of our heart and ‘aim’ our love toward the kingdom of God.”¹ There is competition for the desire of human hearts, however, that is reinforced through what Smith calls cultural or secular liturgies—constellations of formative practices that train our desires toward goals that are *not* God. As they are repeated over time, our personal habits and communal liturgical practices ultimately mold us into a certain type of person, largely without our conscious realization that this is happening. “Our thickest practices—which are not necessarily linked to institutional religion—have a *liturgical* function insofar as they are a certain species of ritual practice that aim to do nothing less than shape our identity by shaping our desire for what we envision as the kingdom—the ideal of human flourishing.”² Thus the “liturgies” of consumerism teach us to find our fulfillment in endless consumption, the liturgies of some sporting events encourage us to “worship” sacrificial violence, and the liturgies of social media encourage us to privilege constant but disembodied connection, even to the detriment of building real relationships.³ The start of a school day is a thick practice that results in a liturgical shaping of students and teachers. The bell rings, students take their places, the Pledge of Allegiance is recited, and school announce-

1 James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, vol. 1 of Cultural Liturgies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 33.

2 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 87, emphasis his.

3 For a more extended analysis of some secular liturgies, see Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 89-129.

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ments follow. In Catholic or religious schools, prayer intervenes before the pledge, making an implicit claim that love and loyalty to God come before allegiance to one's country. This ritual promotes love for God and American patriotism, in that order, and is designed to promote positive social behavior during the school day and beyond it.

Viewed from this perspective, teaching Christianity is and even *must be* a liturgical practice because rituals of Christian education shape and form both the student and the teacher and offer a process of "counter-formation" to the influence of secular liturgies. I am a teacher with twenty-one years of experience catechizing children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and, currently, 14- to 15- year-olds in a Catholic high school. All these people naturally desire unconditional love and want to belong to a community of like believers. Traditionally, teens rely on family, school, and church communities to promote other-centered awareness and belonging. Although the factors contributing to the increase of non-traditional family structures and the decrease in attendance at Sunday worship are complex, according to Smith's cultural analysis the latter trend especially may also be a sign that peoples' desires have been filled with secular liturgies, leaving little room for the desire for God with which they were created. For example, perhaps on Sunday morning the whole family gathers for a large breakfast and afterwards takes a walk to the playground instead of worshipping at a Sunday morning liturgy. On the surface these family members are fulfilling love of family, self, and environment. However, they are placing the gifts of family and health ahead of worshipping the One who ultimately provided the family and health.

Within the Catholic Church, the New Evangelization calls us to look again at the kind of life the Gospel makes possible, reawakening the spiritual imagination through fuller use of the Church's established signs and symbols. I have introduced several "thick" liturgical practices to my classroom in recent years aimed to draw the hearts of my students toward God and counter the influence of secular liturgies in their lives. Lessons cannot be solely about completing book work or researching where in scripture each sign or symbol originated; there must be time to pray and spiritually experience scripture by engaging signs and symbols in an embodied and potentially formative way. I will describe here my practices of proclaiming the Sunday Gospel and praying the lesson.

Proclamation of the Word of God

A thick liturgical practice that I have introduced to the classroom is a *Monday Morning Gospel Quick Write*. Every Monday morning, the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday reading is explained and proclaimed. After hearing a brief reflection I prepare on what this Gospel reading means for us today, students have the opportunity to apply God's Word to their own lives by writing a short paragraph about how they can enact a message or insight arising from this Gospel passage.

Proclamation of the Gospel is not something I do without preparation and prayer. I pray that God will raise up for me what is most pressing for my listeners so that they might hear God's message in a way that they will best understand. The definition of *Kerygma* in the dictionary is "to proclaim, announce, preach," but that does not describe it adequately. *Kerygma* is a proclamation of the Gospel—but also the soul of the words. It is a dynamism that comes from being a preacher, whether ordained or not, who lives in Christ. It results when the Word of God comes alive through the preacher, as when Paul says, in Galatians 2:20, "It is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me." The preacher is the vessel for the Word of God to touch the hearts and lives of the hearers.

The way I teach students about the Kingdom of God is by inculcating the Gospel using dynamic language and imaginative signs and symbols. The Gospel has the power to change lives and form people into disciples. The Word of God is made to uplift all that is good and uncover all that needs to be purified. I am trying to follow the great commission: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15).

After the reflection, the students are given ten to fifteen minutes to write a paragraph based on a set of guidelines that include what they heard, what it means to them, and how they can live it. They are graded on listening and writing about three to five sentences. This activity has helped them process the Gospel message. The benefit for the students, many of whom do not regularly attend Sunday liturgy, is fulfilling a precept of the Catholic Church to hear the Sunday Gospel. Furthermore, students become aware of the Church's Liturgical Year by following along with the Sunday Gospels.

This practice is contextual because in the Gospel reflection I introduce a related scriptural theme or principle for the week that we continue to unpack in the coming days. The goal is to have the students dwell with God's Word and unite with the person of Jesus Christ who is its ultimate source; this classroom activity arouses their desire for God and proposes potential formative practices that could help them direct their hearts toward God. I cannot assess whether they are trying some of their written proposals about how to live the Gospel, but at least they have been given an opportunity to think about feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty, etc. and begun to imagine themselves as people who act in these ways. Previous years' students have mentioned that they miss hearing the Gospels each week; they don't miss the writing exercise, but they do miss the Word of God. (I have made suggestions for an app they can use on their smartphones.) This feedback suggests that the Gospel Quick Write exercise became a formative practice for at least some of my students.

Praying the Lesson

Another "liturgical" pedagogy I use is concluding each unit lesson with a prayer experience that will engage the imagination through signs and symbols, drawing on embodied techniques of centering prayer and guided meditation. Fred P. Edie recommends awakening liturgical practices to guide formation with some of the Church's central ritual symbols.⁴ In the classroom, I find that students' imaginations are stimulated with liturgical symbols that are used in worship.

After the lesson on Moses and the Israelite people, for example, the prayer experience features contemplation on Moses, applying water as the focal imagery. We spent time talking about water before we began the meditation. What is it used for? Students understood water to bring both life and death. As Moses and the Israelites crossed through the waters of the Red Sea, they died to their old way as slaves and received a new life as free people. Since the unit lesson included Moses receiving the Law, the last part of the prayer was an examination of conscience based on the Ten Commandments.

We began with Big Daddy Weave's "I Am Overwhelmed by You" on video. The lights were off, a candle was lit, and a large bowl of water was set in a prayer space. The first scripture was read: Moses is called by God (Ex 3:9-12). Silence filled the room, then a slow chant was played on the computer ("God Has Chosen You") for three minutes as the students rested comfortably. The second passage was read: Ex 14:29-15:19, the Song of Moses after the Israelites' triumphant crossing through the sea. Soft sounds of water running accompanied three minutes of quiet reflection. An examination of conscience for teens was slowly read for each Law with additional silence followed by an act of contrition.

The students seemed to enjoy the new ways to pray and reinforce the lesson while correlating it to their worship experience. Edie calls this "imaginative paradoxical juxtaposition for truth."⁵ The students remembered events of their life (in their subconscious), drew upon those in their imagination, and compared them to the symbols in

⁴ Fred P. Edie, "Liturgy and Faith Formation: Reimagining a Partnership for the Sake of Youth," *Liturgy*, 29.2 (2014), 34-44. See <https://doi.org/10.1080/0458063X.2014.846739>.

⁵ Edie, "Liturgy and Faith Formation," 41.

worship. As they heard the stories, they tried to make sense of them in light of their life experiences and thereby added personal value to the stories.

Teaching in the classroom can be “liturgical” because our practices shape who we become. Of all classroom subjects, Religion ought to direct the desire of students’ hearts and promote positive social behaviors. I have been doing these Gospel Quick Writes and lesson-based prayer experiences for high school students for several years. It is my well-founded hope that they will continue the practice of listening to the Gospel *of* the Sunday liturgy and perhaps do so more often *in* the Sunday liturgy. I likewise hope that the liturgical symbols they engage in the classroom might have an ongoing formative influence on their lives. It is a blessing for me as I meditate on the readings to contextualize the Gospel for them. I have grown in my understanding of my students and the Gospel each year. Clearly these teaching practices are also shaping me, leading me to a fuller understanding of Jesus and a stronger desire to worship and serve Him. This mode of classroom catechesis is bearing fruit for the students and the teacher as we all learn from Christ, our Good Teacher, our Savior and our God.

Feminicidio and the Image of God

by Adriana Calzada Vázquez Vela

On September 15th, 2017, the body of Mara (19), who had been kidnapped a week earlier by a taxi driver, was found. This case of *feminicidio* deeply impacted Mexican society. Protests, conversations, and indignation were all apparent. However, for many the question was, “What was she doing hanging out with her friends at 5 a.m.?” “Why did she go out with only male friends?” or “She must have been drunk.” While the call to take care of oneself and to act cautiously, especially when the country is experiencing so much violence, is valid, it is clear that these kinds of comments blame her for her murder. We need to understand that women who are killed solely because they are women are victims of the system that makes them vulnerable. On November 15th, Archbishop Emeritus Cardinal Juan Sandoval Iñiguez commented that women are responsible because “they hop in a car with whoever and that is why they are killed.”¹ In 2003 he commented, “Women should not be provoking, that is why so many of them are raped.” Later on, social pressure made him take his words back.

Violence towards women is an everyday issue all around the world. For the past decades the statistics in Latin America have increased alarmingly. In Mexico, the case of Ciudad Juarez was widely known, but this is only a piece of the puzzle. After the city captured the attention of many, they discovered that Ciudad Juarez was only in sixth place in the incidence of gender-based killings in the country. As a result, academics and activists began a serious investigation of this issue.

In academic feminist literature, “male advantage exercised as power over women and disadvantaged males, is called *patriarchy*.”² When discussing patriarchy, it is very important to understand it from a systemic consideration. It is found in legal, economic, and political relations. Under patriarchy, women and children are considered inferior, and domination is legitimized. As women, we experience disadvantaged treatment from men. It is important to clarify that patriarchy is not exclusively exercised by men, as women can also act with this dominant mindset.

The concept of *femicide* was used by Diana Russell and Jill Radford to refer to the “killing of females by males because they are female.”³ Building on that concept, and after taking a deep look into the experience in Ciudad

1 Sandoval Iñiguez dice que hay más feminicidios en México por la ‘imprudencia de las mujeres.’ *Redacción/Sin Embargo*, November 17, 2017, <http://www.sinembargo.mx/17-11-2017/3353001>. He said this as he commented on an experiment done in Cd. Juarez where a man wearing fine clothes and driving a fancy car would invite women to approach, and they would do so.

2 Anne Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 18.

3 Diana Russell, “The Origin & Importance of the Term Femicide,” December 8, 2021, video, 22:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk9VNHYMOrE>.

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Juarez and other states in Mexico, Marcela Lagarde⁴ came to the concept *feminicidio*, suggesting that the translation *femicide* was insufficient because it did not point to the systemic factor prevailing in women killed by men.⁵

Feminicidio is rooted in political, economic, cultural, and social inequalities, including the equally significant power relations based on class, race, and sexual and racial hierarchies. Gender violence in its most extreme way is likely to be found when these inequalities are a reality.

As women, we experience authority from men in diverse areas. Feminists have enough evidence to affirm that men retaliate violently because women have violated traditional gender roles. Patriarchy and misogyny support this system of violence and death because the social structures tolerate impunity.

We find gender violence everywhere: on the street, in public transportation, in institutions, in the workplace, at home, in intimate relationships, in church, etc. I feel depressed and enraged every time I read in my Facebook feed how my female friends who use public transportation do not feel safe in their daily commute. Even though this violence is suffered in diverse places, it is important to keep in mind that in the majority of cases, the perpetrator of a *feminicidio* has a direct relationship with the woman, whether through employment, family, or in a romantic relationship.

When writing from a theological point of view, there is abundant literature that addresses domestic violence and *feminicidio* in terms of the suffering of women. A recurrent discourse found that, from a religious point of view, women are encouraged to accept whatever they are given because they are bound by the sacrament of marriage. Women are expected to accept all kinds of sacrifices in order to protect the best interests of their families, especially that of their children. Women must be able to ensure that their children will be provided with economic safety and the necessary conditions for a minimum standard of quality of life. Women are willing to resist the pain inflicted on them because they do whatever it takes to secure a future for their children. Furthermore, there is a strong belief that any kind of suffering ought to be welcomed based on the idea that Jesus welcomed suffering. In doing it, women are more like Jesus who carried his cross and went through what he did accompanied by his loving father God. The research then focuses on the problem of theodicy and on a better understanding of human suffering. However, I do not feel satisfied with this approach, and I am very interested in looking at the possibility of religion being one more factor that contributes to the problem. The question becomes more significant as I look at the problem in the Mexican context where, whether practicing or not, 82 percent of the population is considered Catholic and around 95 percent is Christian. What do we have to say about it from a theological perspective? I believe that it is important to examine the idea of God that leads to the problem. This is not to say that a particular image of God is the cause of the *feminicidios*, as that would reach a very misguided extreme. However, it be one more factor in society that serves to legitimize and perpetuate a system that allows this to happen.

Being able to name the divine is a human need. However, our human limits make it very difficult to express our understanding of the concept of God. Different expressions of God have been used through time, and the predominant image in the Christian tradition is an omnipotent male who dominates and controls. This concept of God promotes domination and subordination. Men are more easily identified with God because they can relate with *Him* in a more obvious way than many women who have not been nourished by a loving male and therefore lack a healthy image of masculinity. This association entails the risk of men feeling empowered by God *Himself*, to act in *His* likeness, as those who rule. After all, “if God is male, then male is God,” as Mary Daly affirms.⁶

4 Feminist anthropologist and politician who has been key in the research and visualization of this problem.

5 Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano, ed., *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas* (Lexington, KY: Duke University Press, 2010), xv.

6 Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

It is clear how this concept of a powerful God works in one non-relational direction, from a male God to humans and easily transferred from men to women. A radical exercise of a linear conception of power can be helpful to understand how in a society where women have consistently had access to more opportunities, either for economic or personal reasons, the perception is that they have been gaining more power. Some men can easily feel threatened by the empowerment of women and see their self-worth and power diminishing.

Under a patriarchal system, there is blindness to seeing that one large part of the society feels empowered to hurt, cause damage, possess, be aggressive, and kill “just because.” The way a particular image of God as a powerful and omnipotent male has influenced the understanding of power and how this symbol of God legitimizes and justifies the patriarchal system that supports gender violence demonstrates how using exclusive male imagery to name God can exclude and dehumanize women. The need to redefine the understanding of God’s power continues to be a priority for our theology. We should be mindful that feminists are not suggesting abandoning male images of God; rather, the goal is to provide us with a wider concept that can present God in a more complete way.

I feel hopeful as I read different authors who have explored the “power in relation” where God is conceived as a loving and generating one who, instead of being in control from a dominant sphere, empowers and liberates. When God’s power is relational and life-giving, it is difficult to keep responding from a subordination perspective. A new call to act in solidarity with God and with one another emerges.

Theological Anthropology in Light of #MeToo

by Megan Kathleen McCabe

We are in the midst of a significant rethinking of social norms and expectations regarding sexuality and gender. In recent years, survivors of campus sexual assault have become activists who have pushed for change not only in how we, as a society, think about sexual assault on campuses, but also at the level of policy and federal law. This movement is shaping a greater social awareness regarding sexual violence. More recently, a series of allegations of sexual harassment and assault against Harvey Weinstein have opened the floodgates of women sharing their own stories of sexual violence and violation. After the social-media hashtag #MeToo took off in the United States, it spread to eighty-five other countries. At the 75th Golden Globe Awards on January 7, 2018, celebrities represented Times Up, an effort from many in Hollywood to combat sexual harassment, by wearing pins and black attire. These efforts have centered on women of privilege, celebrities who have public appeal and (mostly white) college women, and men who are public figures. Still, the implications of these movements are broader: women from many areas of work, including hotel housekeepers and farmworkers, have spoken out about sexual harassment in the workplace, and there has been a shift in the public consciousness regarding both the prevalence and the injustice of sexual violence. Many women, and some men, are raising their voices to expose and condemn the culture that allows for rape and sexual harassment.

It is perhaps unsurprising that these efforts have also prompted a backlash. Critics have raised concerns that this women-led movement has gone or is in danger of going too far. One concern is that the current movement is erasing important distinctions between criminal acts of sexual violence and otherwise crude or distasteful behaviors. As they highlight, not every instance of “bad sex” is rape, and not every poor attempt at a joke or come-on is harassment. Another related concern is that men are being talked about as somehow inherently predatory and violent.

These critiques represent both an important insight as well as a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of sexual violence. On the one hand, it is true that there are necessary distinctions that need to be made when certain behaviors and actions are being called out and condemned. Consequently, it is important to recognize that most men are not predators like Larry Nassar, the doctor for the US women’s gymnastics team who abused more than 150 women and girls over a twenty-year period. On the other hand, behaviors that do not meet legal standards to count as criminal forms of sexual violence should not be dismissed as “mere boorishness.” What we are seeing is

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women naming a range of experiences, including those that may not be criminal, as violating and, thus, unacceptable. It is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of sexual violence to view only the most extreme cases as experiences of violation or to maintain that only the most predatory of men can be perpetrators.

Instead, what this cultural movement is demonstrating is how normal it is for women to experience some kind of sexual violation. In fact, when #MeToo took off, my own news feed was full of women—just about every woman I know—noting that yes, they too had some experience of sexual violence or violation. Tina Fey, in her comic memoir *Bossypants*, highlights this common experience for women when she recounts attending an event for women in which all agreed that they first knew that they were a woman when they experienced a man doing something “nasty” to them. Sociologist Liz Kelly argues that most women have had experiences that belong somewhere on what she calls a “continuum of sexual violence,” which includes rape, stalking, and sexual harassment. The current context is bringing other forms of violation to the fore. For example, women have begun to talk about sexual encounters that they may have consented to, but in which their availability was assumed, and they were treated as objects to be acted upon. To highlight this range of experience is not intended to flatten everything into one level of seriousness and erase distinctions. Such distinctions are crucial, especially for delineating whether a crime has been committed. At the same time, recognition of the continuum of sexual violence allows us to highlight that various experiences share the failure to respect women’s full human dignity and autonomy.

If this is a fairly common experience for women, it no longer makes sense to suggest that only the worst perpetrators are responsible. Indeed, it can no longer be held that sexual violence or violation is perpetrated by men who are obviously bad and somehow “deviant” from other, good men. This way of thinking is flawed in several ways. First, it presumes that women are safe with men who are otherwise known and seem trustworthy. Women who experience violence at the hands of otherwise “nice men” may not be able or willing to even recognize or name their experiences for what they are. It also prevents us from being able to name, as third party “observers,” the violence perpetrated by somebody we may know in a positive context.

While not immune from this problem, Christianity brings a distinctive worldview to this conversation and offers a richer way of understanding the reality of sexual violence. A Christian theological anthropology understands human beings as created *imago Dei*, with inherent value and dignity while simultaneously being susceptible to sin. Any instance of sexual violation or harassment undermines the dignity of the person who experiences victimization and is antithetical to human flourishing. It is sinful in that it is a failure to love one’s neighbor. In addition to instances of violence that meet criminal standards, women are currently naming forms of violation that also undermine their dignity and are a failure in the demand to love. Such forms of violation may be characterized as *immoral* even as we attempt to maintain a distinction between the worst kinds of criminal violence and these other experiences that many women are opposing. We are not stuck limiting our analysis to either “criminal” or normal acceptable, albeit crude. And we should not be; the dual command to love God and neighbor demands more.

By identifying human beings as sinful, a Christian worldview recognizes the way that human beings fall short and do damage to one another. However, along with naming sinfulness as a reality comes the recognition that all persons are sinners, not only those who are seen as particularly monstrous by the community. Awareness of sinfulness in light of sexual violence can be helpful when thinking about perpetrators of sexual violence. Perpetrators do not have to be monsters to be sinful in this way; we may even experience them (or ourselves) as good in other respects. But the recognition of the ways in which we and others fall short and err can make room for the self-critique needed to begin to respond to the problem of sexual violence.

This self-critique and awareness of sinfulness is also necessary for the rest of us who are not perpetrators of sexual violence. Sin is also a social reality. In this instance, rape culture is appropriately named as a social sin. In this current cultural moment, we are seeing many women name the ways that what has been allowed by many others to go on will no longer be tolerated. These actions can include the worst instances of cover-up or choosing to ignore what is going on, like in the cases of those who worked with people like Weinstein and Nassar for decades. It is also present in less direct forms. We as individuals, even those who otherwise mean well, participate in rape culture when we write off experiences that women name as violating as if it is merely “boorish,” or suggest that women should be romantically or sexually available to men. By identifying this situation as an instance of social sin, we can look to the broader reality that manifests itself in sexual violence and that has allowed us to tolerate it for so long. We are able to recognize our own sinful participation in a culture that promotes violence and undermines the full human dignity of women. In such a culture, we fail in our responsibility to love our neighbor. This situation demands an active response. As the Jesuit theologian James Keenan states, our sin may be found in our “failure to bother to love.” We bear sinful responsibility for our failure to bother to respond to and resist this rape culture.

Lest this reflection end on a note of theological pessimism, it is worth observing that we are in a social moment of hope. It is a hopeful manifestation of love that we are, as a collective, starting to uncover and no longer tolerate the social sin of a rape culture. We have witnessed the interruption of suffering into our social context. People are beginning to ask how they might stand with survivors of a broad continuum of sexual violence. And we are beginning to ask how we might develop a communal conscience that allows experiences of sexual violence to shape the way we might live as a community going forward.

Engaging our Diversity through Interculturality

by Roger Schroeder

While the social sciences and business world have been using the term “interculturality” for some time, its appearance in theological and ministerial studies is more recent. Let us begin with several definitions. Internationality and multiculturalism refer to the fact that persons or groups of different nationalities and/or ethnic groups simply coexist, perhaps with little or no interaction. The minimum expectation is tolerance. Cross-cultural relationships point to a one-way movement from one worldview to another. As sincere as this may be, its goal is assimilation or accommodation. In contrast, interculturality implies a mutually enriching and challenging two-way exchange among different cultures. Theologically speaking, this is an image of the Reign of God. Sociologist-theologian Robert Kisala describes the meaning of interculturality as moving far beyond mere coexistence “to emphasize and make more explicit the essential *mutuality* of the process of cultural interaction on both the personal and social level.”¹ As a final definition, the term “culture” is used here in a post-modern understanding to include social location (generation, gender, economic class, etc.), social change, ethnicity/race/nationality, and particular individual and communal situations.² It is not limited to ethnicity.

The term “intercultural” appeared in some theological and missiological documents and programs in the 1980s, but the more systemized development of the understanding of the term began around the turn of the century in the writing of theologians like Robert Schreiter³ and Franz Xaver Scheuerer.⁴ The Center for the Study of Religious Life, which was located at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago, published a set of materials in 2001/2002 to assist religious congregations through a “Cultural Audit” to move beyond multiculturalism.⁵ It should be noted that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) in the 1990s had introduced the term of interculturality in opposition to inculturation. His use of the term was based on an idealistic perspective of abstract anthropology which avoided interaction with concrete cultural realities.⁶ This is not how interculturality is being understood in this article or, generally speaking, in the Catholic Church today.

1 Robert Kisala, SVD, “Formation for Intercultural Life and Mission,” *Verbum SVD* 50, no. 3 (2009): 335.

2 Michael Rynkiewicz, *Soul, Self, and Society: A Postmodern Anthropology for Mission in a Postmodern World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011); Gerard Arbuckle, *Culture, Inculturation, & Theologians: A Postmodern Critique* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010).

3 Robert Schreiter, “The Changing Contexts of Intercultural Theology,” *Studia Missionalia* 45 (1996): 359-80.

4 Franz Xaver Scheuerer, *Interculturality - A Challenge for the Mission of the Church* (Bangalore, India: Asian Trading Corporation, 2001).

5 Center for the Study of Religious Life, *Cultural Audit: A Tool to Help Religious Congregations Determine the Cultural Influences on Their Communities* (Chicago: CSRL: 2001/2002).

6 Christian Tauchner, “Editorial/Vorwort: Interculturality Revisited,” *Verbum SVD* 58, no. 1 (2017): 7-9.

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Theologians, missiologists, and practitioners in the areas of interculturality benefit greatly from the excellent work of social scientists like Milton Bennett, Mitchell Hammer, Geert Hofstede, Eric Law, and Edward Hall. Bennett developed a model for “intercultural competency”⁷ which was later refined by his former colleague Hammer.⁸ They identified six stages of moving from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, or what I would call interculturality: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Ethnocentrism is the all-too-human tendency to use one’s own culture (in the broad post-modern sense) as the normative measuring tool for perceiving, judging, and treating others. Hofstede developed four dimensions of cultural differences: power distance, individualism and collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and femininity and masculinity.⁹ The aspect of power distance has been further nuanced by Chinese American Law.¹⁰ Hall identified high- and low-context communication styles, which can be identified with Hofstede’s collectivism (socio-centric) and individualism (individual-centric) categories for societies that give priority to the needs of the group in the former, and those of the individual in the latter.¹¹ The works of social scientists are very important resources to help church personnel to understand, appreciate, and engage cultural differences.

From the church perspective, two very significant works on interculturality were published in 2015. *Living Mission Interculturally* by Anthony Gittins¹² is an excellent resource for leaders and members of religious congregations and all practitioners of church ministry. Gittins draws upon his anthropological training and years of preparing women and men for Christian ministry. It is hoped that this book will soon be translated into Spanish. Lazar Stanislaus and Martin Ueffing co-edited a two-volume work on intercultural living and mission,¹³ with contributions from a wide spectrum of international, ecumenical, and professional perspectives. A single volume of selected articles from this work was published in Spanish,¹⁴ and Orbis Books will be publishing a similar volume in English in 2018.

Theologically, interculturality is grounded in the Trinity and the *missio Dei* (“mission of God”), which was foundational for the Second Vatican Council. The second paragraph of the conciliar document *Ad Gentes* (AG) offers the powerful image of God the Father as a life-giving fountain of love watering the world and calling all peoples back to the fullness of God’s life. Furthermore, the Spirit continues stirring in creation and history, and “Jesus Christ, as God incarnate and the ‘face’ of the Spirit, called the disciples and the Church to continue his mission.”¹⁵ Since cultures are graced by God’s life, the church is to acknowledge those “seeds” of the Word (AG 11, 22) and “a sort of secret presence of God” (AG 9) in every culture. All cultures also contain “weeds” which are contrary to God’s reign. Therefore, interculturality must recognize the presence of both the “seeds” and the “weeds” in every culture or context. In this way, interculturality is to be mutually enriching and challenging as all God’s people journey together back to God. The movement toward interculturality has been described recently as a theology, practice, and spirituality of prophetic dialogue—both dialoguing with God’s presence in all cultures and taking a prophetic

7 Milton Bennett, “Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity,” in *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, ed. M. Paige, 2nd ed. (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1993), 21-71.

8 See work of Mitchell Hammer at *Intercultural Development Inventory*, <http://idiinventory.com>.

9 Geert Hofstede and Michael H. Bond, “Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions: An Independent Validation Using Rokeach’s Value Survey,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 15 (1984): 417-33.

10 Eric Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993).

11 Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), 74-123.

12 Anthony Gittins, *Living Mission Interculturally: Faith, Culture, and the Renewal of Praxis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015).

13 Lazar Stanislaus, SVD, and Martin Ueffing, SVD, ed. Vol. I: *Intercultural Living*; Vol. II: *Intercultural Mission* (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Steyler Missionswissenschaftliches Institut, and New Dehli, India: ISPCK, 2015).

14 Lazar Stanislaus and Martin Ueffing, ed. *Interculturalidad: en la vida y la misión* (Estella, Spain: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2017).

15 Roger Schroeder, “Interculturality as a Paradigm of Mission,” in *Intercultural Mission*, Stanislaus and Ueffing, 157.

stance against any elements that are contrary to God's reign and/or failures to acknowledge God's presence in that culture.¹⁶

Along with the theology of interculturality itself, much has been done in intercultural theology, particularly in Europe. In his excellent extended review essay of *Intercultural Hermeneutics*,¹⁷ the English translation of the first of three volumes by Henning Wrogemann, Terry Muck states that the author identifies the two major challenges facing the church as “coming to grips with its global diversity and . . . doing something about the misunderstanding that often results from that diversity.”¹⁸ Wrogemann advocates for a means of “developing a hermeneutic, a way of understanding, that facilitates conversations among the various sectors of the church.”¹⁹ While a fuller treatment of this major endeavor in intercultural theology by many authors is not possible here, it is important to note how interculturality is also impacting the content and methodology of doing theology itself.

Interculturality also implies practice. The Committee on Cultural Diversity of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2011 approved five guidelines for intercultural competence in ministry. A number of resources, training programs, and courses are now available to address varied pastoral challenges and opportunities related to cultural diversity, multicultural or “shared” parishes, and Catholic educational institutions.²⁰ Patricia Wittberg widens the parameters by addressing the perspectives of not only ethnic cultures but also generational cultures in the US Catholic Church.²¹ The growing initiatives of the past ten years to address the phenomena of short-term mission experiences, parish “twinning,” and non-US-born priests and religious serving in the United States should continue to draw upon the theology and practices related to interculturality.²² Many religious congregations are now more intentionally attending to issues of interculturality both domestically and internationally in a variety of programs.²³ Other concrete issues related to interculturality include reconciliation,²⁴ conflict resolution,²⁵ bullying, racism, inter-gender and inter-generation relations, personality and culture, intercultural communication,²⁶ immigrant/refugee situations, and the use of social media and the arts.

Finally, the theology, theory, and practice of interculturality must be accompanied with an appropriate spirituality. Theological and sociological knowledge regarding diversity would alone not lead to a change in interactions and attitudes among people of different backgrounds. Christian individuals, parishes, institutions, religious congregations, dioceses, and the church in general need to respond to an ongoing process of conversion from all forms of ethnocentrism, racism, and prejudices against those considered different or marginalized.²⁷ There is a strong biblical foundation for interculturality. Jesus Christ was the “Word . . . made flesh” (Jn 1:14) in a particular culture and context. However, he witnessed to the inclusive Reign of God by his practice of sharing food with those Jews

16 Roger Schroeder, “Interculturality and Prophetic Dialogue,” *Verbum SVD* 54, no. 1 (2013): 8-21.

17 Henning Wrogemann, *Intercultural Hermeneutics*, trans. Karl E. Böhmer (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

18 Terry Muck, “Intercultural Hermeneutics: Vol. I of Intercultural Theology,” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 41, no. 3 (2017): 194.

19 Muck, “Intercultural Hermeneutics,” 194.

20 See <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/index.cfm>

21 Patricia Wittberg, SC, *Catholic Cultures: How Parishes Can Respond to the Changing Face of Catholicism* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016).

22 For a further reference to the developments in the past ten years in these areas, see Roger Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church? A Guide for Catholics*, rev. and exp. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, forthcoming in 2018), chapter 8 and appendix 3.

23 For example, The Center for the Study of Consecrated Life (CSCL) at CTU is currently sponsoring a thirty-month program on “Interculturality and Consecrated Life” for twenty-one religious congregations, and the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), representing 2,000 women’s religious congregations, is planning to have a two-week program on interculturality in Rome in January 2019.

24 Robert Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).

25 Mitchell Hammer has developed a very useful framework for understanding four cultural models for conflict resolution. See <https://icsinventory.com/ics-inventory/the-ics-improves-communication-conflict-resolution-across-cultures>.

26 Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD, *Communicating Between Cultures: An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*, 4th updated ed. (Manila: Logos (Divine Word) Publications, 2012).

27 Philip Gibbs, SVD, “Conversion from Ethnocentrism,” in *Intercultural Mission*, Stanislaus and Ueffing, 3-16; Adriana Carla Milmanda, SSpS, “Inserted Life: The Radical Nature of an Incarnated Spirituality,” in *Intercultural Living*, Stanislaus and Ueffing, 38-52.

considered impure and marginalized according to a strict interpretation of Jewish table fellowship of some of his contemporaries (Lk 5:29-30; 7:36-38; 19:5-6). Furthermore, there were three major turning points or “events” for Jesus in relation to the Gentiles: a transformative encounter with the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28; Mk 7:24-37), opening new spaces for dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4:1-30), and his reference to a Samaritan as the ideal disciple (Lk 10:25-37). Later, the intercultural journey of the disciples of Jesus can be traced through the Acts of the Apostles,²⁸ particularly in the “intercultural conversion” of Peter around his encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10:9-35, 44-48) and the communal/ecclesial “intercultural conversion” at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:5-21). The church needs to undergo such ongoing “conversions” in its encounter with new cultures and contexts today.

This relatively new theological and intentional pastoral focus on interculturality has been developing in many exciting and challenging ways—theologically, missiologically, ministerially, practically, and spiritually. Fostering mutually enriching relationships across our differences is an urgent need in our society and church today, and it is a profound counter-cultural prophetic expression of God’s Reign.

²⁸ Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014). See chapter one.

“When You Pray”

by Gil Ostdiek, OFM

With these few words, Jesus began his response to the disciples’ request, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Lk 11:1-2). Their question remains with us today. The prayer Jesus taught them is one of simple yet breath-taking beauty: “Father, hallowed be your name ...” (Lk 11:2-4). This brief prayer quickly became known as *the* prayer for Christians. The prayers of Jesus recorded in scripture¹ have that same direct, unadorned style—a style characteristic of common speech in Jesus’s time. The Word of God, who became fully human in Jesus of Nazareth, taught and prayed in the ordinary human language of his own time and place.² That example stands in clear contrast to the more abstract and complex way Roman Catholics now pray in his name when we celebrate the Eucharist.

How did we get here from there? Several milestones mark how liturgical language has changed: Aramaic in the first decades, then common Greek (*koine*), and in the late fourth century Latin, the common vernacular of the empire. At that point two things happened. First, prayer styles changed as large assemblies in basilicas required a heightened form of public speech. Imperial usages and elements of Latin rhetoric shaped the common Latin into a ritual language. Earlier the prayers had been extemporized according to known patterns. Now they became fixed texts, mostly original compositions. Second, prayers oriented to liturgical practice became more overtly theological in expression under the influence of the great councils of that era.³ However, as the romance languages of Western Europe emerged in the early Middle Ages, Latin ceased to be the common vernacular, and thus its vocabulary and grammar became fixed. Although Latin no longer evolved as a living language, it remained the prayer language of most Catholics until the middle of the last century.

Vatican II changed that when it opened the door for the return to a liturgy using contemporary vernacular languages. What the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy envisioned was a modest introduction of today’s mother

1 See his short prayers: of praise to the Father for revealing to the childlike what was hidden from the wise (Mt 11:25-26, Lk 10:21-22), at the tomb of Lazarus (Jn 11:41-42), for his Father’s name to be glorified rather than for his own deliverance “from this hour” (Jn 12:27-28), in the garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:39, Mk 14:36, Lk 22:42), three prayers on the cross (Mt 27:46, Mk 15:34, Lk 23:34, 46), and also his long prayer at the Last Supper (Jn 17:1-26).

2 Furthermore, Jesus prayed in the pattern of his ancestors: thankful remembrance of what God does and is, followed by confident petition.

3 This theological development is apparent in the shift from the Apostles’ Creed to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, both of which appear in our present Missal.

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tongues.⁴ Within a few short years, bishops around the world flooded Rome with requests to allow the entire liturgy to be celebrated in local languages. That request was granted in 1967, and in 1969 guidelines for the work of translation⁵ were issued in all the major modern languages. By 1970 the completed official Latin text (*editio typica*) of the Roman Missal appeared. The English translation being prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) was completed in 1973 and approved by Rome in 1974.

The 1969 instruction envisioned a three-stage process to develop the vernacular liturgy: first, translating the official Latin text; second, evaluating and revising the translations after pastoral experience, and third, eventual composition of original texts for a fully inculturated liturgy.⁶ CLP emphasized that translations, as oral liturgical communication, should “take into account not only the message to be conveyed, but also the speaker, the audience, and the style” of the vernacular (CLP 7). Translated texts must be faithful to the message, the intended audience, and the vernacular’s manner of expression (CLP 8, 14, 25). Translators should keep in mind that “the unit of meaning is not the individual word but the whole passage” (CLP 12).

This principle of translating “meaning-for-meaning” stands in contrast to a “word-for-word” principle. These two approaches are called dynamic equivalence and literal (formal) equivalence. Dynamic equivalence privileges what the message can mean in the world of the receptor language; literal equivalence privileges what the meaning would have been in the world of the source language. These approaches actually lie on a continuum. An in-between approach, called corresponding equivalence, makes use of both approaches. Both ends of the spectrum can be pushed to extremes.⁷

In the first stage of its work, ICEL followed the first approach. Translation from Latin was done very quickly to meet pastoral demand for translated texts. After a decade of experience, ICEL undertook the second stage of revising the Missal.⁸ It began with an extensive worldwide consultation of all episcopal conferences where English is used in liturgy. It elicited many helpful critiques and recommendations to improve shortcomings in the prayers, such as short staccato sentences, occasional banal and informal language, and some omissions. In keeping with its original mandate and CLP guidelines, ICEL adopted a more heightened form of prayer-speech using fuller translations and drawing out biblical allusions. The system of speech stresses native to classical English masterpieces, such as the King James Bible, Cranmer’s Book of Common Prayer, and the works of Shakespeare, was applied to the revised translations to make them more natural to both proclaimers and hearers, in tune with the oral/aural qualities of English at its best. In addition, during these same years ICEL began composing original prayer texts, as CLP envisioned in stage three.⁹

4 Such as readings, instructions, and the collects (Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), no. 36, 3, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.)

5 This instruction is commonly identified as CLP, after its opening words in the French version (*Comme le prévoit*). Online at http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/documents/comme.htm.

6 CLP, no. 43.

7 Dynamic equivalence can lead to loose paraphrase, which so transposes the original content that its meaning is no longer evident. Formal equivalence in turn can lead to an unintelligible jumble of words called metaphrase. A famous story paradoxically illustrates both extremes. Computer translation programs have translated Mt 26:41, e.g., as “the liquor is strong, but the meat has gone bad.” Such mistranslations make two faulty assumptions: 1) that in both languages every word has only one meaning, rather than a principal meaning and a wide range of connotations nuanced to fit different contexts/usages (as enumerated in dictionary “definitions”), and 2) that a translator can find an exactly identical single-meaning word in both languages. Another story tells about a Sanskrit translation of the Eucharistic Prayer that the episcopal conference of India sent to Rome. Although no one there knew Sanskrit, the text was rejected because the institution account (identified by capital letters) did not have the same number of words as the Latin.

8 It is proper to note here that I worked for ICEL for fifteen years during this second stage. That included chairing the subcommittee on translation and revision of the Latin prayer texts (some 2,500 in number) and serving on the three-member final editorial committee. That experience has clearly shaped my thoughts.

9 Especially noteworthy were the well-crafted alternative opening prayers related to the scripture readings of each year of the lectionary cycle.

The stage-two revision, completed in 1998, was sent to Rome with the full support of the episcopal conferences of ICEL. It did not receive approval and remains on the shelf. In 2001 Rome issued a new set of guidelines for translation, known by its Latin title *Liturgiam Authenticam*.¹⁰ This instruction fully endorsed the principle of literal (formal) equivalence. The aim is not only to produce a full and exact word-for-word translation in “sacred language,” but also to replicate, insofar as possible, the word order and grammatical structure of the Latin. In effect, Latin syntax and grammar were to be retained, with the words in English. At the same time, a new official version of the Missal (*editio typica altera*) was in preparation. It was issued in 2002. The ICEL translation of that *editio* was approved by Rome and appeared in 2010. That is the version of the Mass now in use.

Why this shift? During the second phase of the CLP process, Rome had become more and more dissatisfied with ICEL’s approach, its seeming independence from Rome, and the deemed loss of “sacred language” and sense of mystery. Official oversight of liturgy underwent two important shifts during this time. First, the collegiality and authority of bishops and episcopal conferences over the vernacular liturgy set in place in Vatican II were reduced bit by bit as the reformed liturgy was implemented. Second, Roman congregations gradually reclaimed much of their previous authority in matters liturgical. In the 1990s the Congregation for Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments increasingly entered into the revision process, until it actively intervened in actual editing and re-editing of texts.¹¹ These shifts in oversight are embodied in the 2001 instruction.

A comparison of two prayers illustrates how the 1969 and 2001 guidelines have shaped different-sounding translations.

Sunday VIII in Ordinary Time Opening Prayer		
1973 translation	1998 translation	2010 translation
Lord, guide the course of world events and give your Church the joy and peace of serving you in freedom. We ask this . . .	Direct the course of this world, Lord God, and order it in your peace, that your Church may serve you in serenity and quiet joy. We ask this . . .	Grant us, O Lord, we pray, that the course of our world may be directed by your peaceful rule and that your Church may rejoice untroubled in her devotion. Through our Lord . . .

Pope Vigilius composed this prayer in the winter of 537-538. Rome was under siege and clearly would be sacked. In such a situation it would be natural to pray for some semblance of order, safety, and peace. The 1973 translation, though accurate, is direct and spare. It is almost *too* brief to lead people into prayer. The 1998 translation is fuller. Instead of ICEL’s normal reliance on the speech stresses of spoken prayer, it uses poetic meter: iambic (short-long) and its two variations spondee (long-long) and anapest (short-short-long). In this way it is not only the content but also the very sound of the prayer that communicate hopes for order, security, and peace amid chaos and ruin. The

10 Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Liturgiam Authenticam* (2001), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20010507_liturgiam-authenticam_en.html.

11 One can find another thread in these shifts. The crucial role of translation for liturgical inculturation is underlined in the 1994 instruction “Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy” (*Varietates Legitimae*), especially in numbers 5, 27-30, 39, and in 53, which states: “the first significant measure of inculturation is translation of liturgical books into the language of the people.” The position taken there seems much closer to CLP. The path to liturgical inculturation opened somewhat tentatively at Vatican II (CSL, nos. 37-40) also faces a struggle, despite some advances. *Varietates Legitimae* is online at the Adoremus website, <https://adoremus.org/1994/01/26/instruction-inculturation-and-the-roman-liturgy/>.

prayer is easily proclaimed and readily understood. The 2010 translation is more faithful to the Latin, especially in its word order and fuller use of subordinate clauses. Those clauses and the syntax, however, make it harder to proclaim or to understand without referring to the written text.

Sunday XVII in Ordinary Time Opening Prayer		
1973 translation	1998 translation	2010 translation
God our Father and protector, without you nothing is holy, nothing has value. Guide us to everlasting life by helping us to use wisely the blessings you have given to the world. We ask this . . .	O God, protector of those who hope in you, without you nothing is strong, nothing is holy, enfold us in your gracious care and mercy, that with you as our ruler and guide, we may use wisely the gifts of this passing world and fix our hearts even now on those which last forever. We ask this . . .	O God, protector of those who hope in you, without whom nothing has firm founda- tion, nothing is holy, bestow in abundance your mercy upon us and grant that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may use the good things that pass in such a way as to hold fast even now to those that ever endure. Through our Lord . . .

The 1973 text faithfully conveys the prayer’s central content, though in a direct and condensed manner. Split into two sentences, it is easy to proclaim and understand. The 1998 translation exemplifies corresponding equivalence, the middle approach on the translation spectrum. The word order and rhythm of the first part of the prayer follow the Latin closely, bordering on being word-for-word. The second part employs dynamic equivalence to a greater extent . The phrase *multiplica super nos misericordiam tuam* (“multiply your mercy upon us”) can sound too blandly mathematical if *multiplica* is transliterated into “multiply.” The editors chose rather to play on the etymological roots of *multiplica*: *multum* (many) and *plicare* (to fold, from which we derive “pleat” and “ply”): literally, to “fold many times.” “Enfold” subtly echoes our many human experiences of being enfolded by another to intimate something of God’s lavish “gracious care and mercy.” The prayer flows easily for proclaimer and hearers. The 2010 translation follows the Latin more closely. Latinate word order and choice of vocabulary make it harder to proclaim or understand.

The journey of liturgical translation will continue to unfold. In September 2017, Pope Francis set up another marker along that path. He issued an Apostolic Letter entitled *Magnum Principium* (The Great Principle).¹² In it he restored the responsibility and full authority Vatican II had given the episcopal conferences to prepare and approve liturgical translations, which were to be ratified by Rome,¹³ and he instructed the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments to modify its own regulations to focus on helping the episcopal conferences fulfill their responsibility. The Congregation’s task of confirming/ratifying those translations assumes the doctrinal

12 Francis, “Apostolic Letter Motu Proprio “Magnum Principium” Quibus nonnulla in can. 838 Codicis Iuris Canonici” (2017), <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2017/09/09/170909a.html>. The title refers to the “great principle” of Vatican II, that liturgical prayer should be accommodated to the comprehension of people necessary for “full, conscious and active participation” (e.g., CSL, nos. 14, 21, 48, 59, 124).

13 More substantial adaptations still need Rome’s approval.

fidelity of the translations as presented, requiring no need for the Congregation to involve itself further in editing or revising what the conferences already have approved.¹⁴

Magnum Principium has rekindled a glimmer of hope that the process of providing vernacular translations will continue to serve God's people better and better as they seek to pray as Jesus did. The 1998 translation shows that it is possible to both retain sound theology and yet capture something of the simple but elegant beauty of Jesus's own prayer in our own time and place. That is what makes prayer truly memorable and engaging. It remains to be seen how soon and how far along that journey *Magnum Principium* will lead us in learning to mirror Jesus's own prayer "when we pray." Stay tuned.

¹⁴ Pope Francis officially modified Canon 838 to incorporate these determinations and clarifications.

Nina E. Livesey. *Galatians and the Rhetoric of Crisis: Demosthenes, Cicero, Paul*. Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2016. 177 pp. \$26.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9781626982123.

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This is an outstanding book in its composition and design. The introduction presents the basic problem and purpose of this work. Four chapters on the primary tools and strategies of deliberative rhetoric follow: “Creating a Sense of Urgency,” “Persuading through the Promotion of Self,” “Persuading through Emotive Language,” and “Persuading through Disjuncture,” with a seven-page conclusion wrapping up. The notes (fifty-eight pages) are clear and helpful, as are the bibliography (seventeen pages) and indexes (fifteen pages).

The introduction sets up the basic problem being addressed in the four chapters and the conclusion. It involves a clear and insightful explanation of what many call the “New Paul.” Luther’s view was that Paul was focused primarily on the ineffectiveness of the Law for salvation. The Law was more a problem than a solution. Faith in Christ was the center of Christian preaching, but today it seems to a growing number of biblical scholars, both Jewish and Christian, that this is not what Paul was writing about in his letters. Livesey’s contribution to the discussion of what is becoming a widely accepted view of modern biblical scholars is that Luther and others who held firmly to the impossibility of salvation except by surrendering and giving in to belief in the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth were promoting a view not actually central to Paul’s teaching, one that has too often contributed to a view of Judaism as the entirely wrong way of seeking salvation in God. Livesey gives a brief yet clear description of who holds such views and how they have supported them. Her contribution to the discussion is that we need to take into account the effect of Greco-Roman rhetoric on Paul. Livesey examines the rhetorical works of Demosthenes, Cicero, and Paul. Paul’s letters are written forms of what he would strive to preach if he were able to be present to his communities. Cicero, when he forcefully opposed Mark Antony, learned a great deal from Demosthenes about how one destroys the arguments of one’s enemies. Livesey’s book shows how Paul arrived at many of his rhetorical statements about Jews who opposed him. For example, within the context of deliberative rhetoric a speaker endeavored to describe the present time as one of great crisis. It was important for a speaker to do this in cases that were not entirely clear. The orator must be taught to make emotional appeals to his or her listeners, as emotional appeals often had a greater effect on what a crowd of listeners was thinking than did logical arguments. Livesey’s major demonstration of this is to take the reader to passages in Demosthenes and Cicero that look very much like the kind of statements Paul makes in the highly charged rhetoric of his Letter to the Galatians.

Livesey wisely presents four- or five-verse-long quotations in Greek or Latin with English versions within a page so that one can read on without consulting a Greek-English dictionary. It is repeatedly clear that Paul, in dealing with his opponents in Galatia, uses the rhetorical strategies of Demosthenes and Cicero in their opposition to Philip and Antony. However, Livesey’s argument does not depend entirely on Paul’s verses having expressions or purposes in common with those of the rhetoricians. Rather, we see Paul taking up not only particular images for his arguments but taking on certain kinds of arguments that orators were trained to use. One of the best examples is the expression of urgency. By presenting a particular action as urgent a speaker can tap into the human emotion

of fear, which might more immediately persuade a listener to accept the speaker's warning. Livesey provides many examples in speeches by Demosthenes, Cicero, and Paul.

Another important means of persuading people is what Livesey calls "dissociative terms" (168). When used by an orator, these can be highly effective. It is often in the interest of the orator to employ pairs of potential opposites, such as "strong and weak," "saved and lost," or "timid and brave," but these are not in every way opposites. Livesey notes that they are "situationally determined." The orator appeals to such terms, repeatedly establishing a basic mental or emotional agreement from the hearers, but when taken out of context the terms can have a very different effect. What is frightening is the extent to which national leaders in modern times who fancied themselves orators, e.g., Hitler and Mussolini, made extensive use of such rhetoric.

I find Livesey's presentation persuasive and thought provoking. However, how are we to use Paul's rhetoric without increasing the negative results? Can the Christian world take on the negative potential of this dissociative rhetoric, such as the ways in which Christians acted toward Jews when Christians became the overwhelming majority? I expect that wonderful discussions must happen in the classes that Livesey teaches.

Tom Zanzig. *The Transformed Heart: Spirituality, Religion, and the Struggle for Integrity*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017. xxi, 228 pp. \$25.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9781626982161.

Reviewed by Mary Frohlich, RSCJ
Catholic Theological Union

Tom Zanzig has been doing youth ministry, writing popular catechetical programs, and giving workshops for more than five decades, and this book is in many ways both a memoir and a testimony to the fruit of this lifetime of practice. A great many Catholics who are now sixty or older will identify with his story of growing up in the pre-Vatican II church and then, after many ups and downs, discovering a completely different way to be “spiritual.” With much sincerity and humility, Zanzig recounts his personal conversion from a conformity-based, achievement-oriented, sin-focused spirituality to one that is profoundly open, vital, relational, and experiential. As he underwent this shift he discovered a pattern that he believes is universal in human spiritual growth: first hunger, then search, then an awakening, and finally a response. This is an ongoing spiral pattern, and it may take place at different paces in eight different aspects of our lives—physical, affective, relational, moral, intellectual, radical trusting/theistic, communal/religious, and Christian. Thus, the pattern itself is simple, but in our actual lives it may be quite complex—“like a wildly erratic Slinky,” as he puts it (95). Yet it always tends toward discovery of the integrity of our “true self” (a concept he borrows from Thomas Merton).

At the heart of Zanzig’s conversion is a shift from a high Christology, in which the divine Jesus comes from outside the world to offer us a chance at redemption, to a low Christology, in which Jesus lives a human life and offers us intimate accompaniment in our own human struggles. While affirming his own great love of Jesus, the author now believes that people can follow the spiritual path to integrity in any religion, or even in no religion. His shining example is his second wife, who is a fine human being who does not feel the need for religious practice. Zanzig continues to be a practicing Catholic, but he speaks for those for whom the walls of the church have dissolved, and who see God’s love flowing freely in all creation. He offers his testimony as a kind of bridge that may help those both inside and outside the church to recognize one another as fellow pilgrims on the path to becoming who they are most deeply meant to be.

Among the charms of this book are the many personal stories, as well as frequent experience-based suggestions for spiritual practices. Zanzig offers all this with both wisdom and humility, telling stories that demonstrate his own failures and struggles as well as the moments of great delight. Even while describing some “mystical” experiences, he stays fully grounded in everyday, ordinary life. The spirituality he presents is truly for everybody, no matter one’s age, state in life, spiritual experience, or religion (or “none”). The book seems particularly well suited for book clubs or discussion groups in parish or campus ministry settings. Even those who may quibble with the author’s low Christology and ecclesiology will find much benefit in reflecting on their own experiences of hunger, search, awakening, and response as he guides their journey with stories, practices, and reflection questions.

George Griener and James F. Keenan, eds. *A Lúcas Chan Reader: Pioneering Essays on Biblical and Asian Theological Ethics*. Bengaluru, India: Dharmaram Publications, 2017. xii + 260 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 9789384964726.

Reviewed by Conor M. Kelly
Marquette University

George Griener and James Keenan's *A Lúcas Chan Reader* honors the legacy of the late Yiu Sing Lúcas Chan, a Jesuit ethicist from Hong Kong who had a powerful but all too brief career in theological ethics that spanned the globe. In an effort to extend Chan's legacy, Griener and Keenan have compiled fourteen of Chan's previously published essays along with two of his unpublished writings (the latter of which is an especially moving excerpt from his final homily), creating an edited volume that captures the breadth of Chan's research. Griener and Keenan contextualize Chan's work with their own introductions, which is helpful and which underscores the significance of Chan's achievements for both the specialist and non-specialist alike. The result is a book that showcases Chan's approach to theological ethics and leads the reader toward a renewed appreciation of the need for scriptural ethics and contextual (Asian) ethics in the ongoing development of the Catholic moral tradition.

The book is divided into two parts, "The Biblical Essays" and "The Asian Theological Ethics Essays," neatly organizing the two major themes of Chan's career. There are additional divisions within each part, although the subsections serve different functions in each half. In the case of the Asian ethics essays, two subsections separate Chan's writings on the methodological prospects of Asian theological ethics from those outlining the value of contextual Asian ethics for Western theological discourse. The division provides a good opportunity to grasp one of Chan's central claims about cross-cultural ethics, namely, that dialogue needs to move both ways. The subdivisions in the first part of the book separate individual essays into their own sphere of concern, allowing Keenan to provide individual introductions that summarize each one and explicate its impact.

According to the editors, the individual essays were all selected out of a desire to increase access to Chan's work since he wrote in varied venues on many continents. Each of the essays reflects Chan's clarity and rich engagement with the existing scholarship, whether he is addressing virtue ethics, biblical ethics, Asian ethics, or Confucianism. Consequently, the volume offers some great resources for neophytes looking to break into any one of these fields. "A Hermeneutical Proposal" offers an especially valuable overview of biblical ethics. Similarly, "As West Meets East: Reading Xunzi's 'A Discussion of Rites' through the Lens of Contemporary Western Ritual Theories" and "Bridging Christian and Confucian Ethics: Is the Bridge Adequately Catholic and Asian" present remarkably succinct and accessible accounts of Xunzi's ritual theory and the Confucian tradition, respectively. Other essays that stand out are the excerpts from Chan's *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, which illustrate the applicability of biblical ethics for the moral challenges of ordinary life, and "Catholic Theological Ethics: Some Reflections on the Asian Scenario," which articulates a constructive proposal for Asian ethics that could be easily adopted by contemporary scholars as a way of preserving Chan's legacy.

Assembled together, the essays serve as a fitting testament to Chan's role as a pioneer in two emerging subfields of ethics, leaving the reader disappointed that his career came to such an untimely end and raising interest in Chan's other books. As a compilation of at least parts of all of one scholar's work, however, the volume does have some unique challenges. The most obvious is that there are repetitions in certain places because these essays initially appeared in stand-alone projects where a brief account of a particular theoretical framework like virtue ethics or the Confucian approach to morality had to be hashed out anew each time. The issue is clearest when one reads the book straight through, but there are indications that this was not the editors' intent (the chapters are not numbered, for example), and most readers will probably not tackle this book cover to cover. Instead, the work seems more likely to serve as a reference volume for readers who will pick up individual essays at different times. From that perspective, there could hardly be a better resource in biblical ethics or in Asian theological ethics. Those who do choose to read the volume as a whole will be rewarded with a glimpse of a young scholar "continuously becoming the theological ethicist he aspired to be" (11).

Charles Bouchard, OP, ed. *Incarnate Grace: Perspectives on the Ministry of Catholic Health Care*. Saint Louis: The Catholic Health Association of the United States, 2017. iv + 289 pp. \$25.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9780871251053.

Reviewed by Thomas A. Shannon
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

The comment, “I have learned that I am not a substitute” (231) by a layperson in Catholic ministry is a good summary of the themes in this book of sixteen informative and challenging essays examining the many transitions in Catholic health care. Thematic to all the essays are two key questions noted by Therese Lysaught: what does it mean to be a Catholic health care institution, and what does it mean to be part of the ministry of Catholic health care? The essays discuss the challenges of the transition from ownership and management by religious orders to that by laity, including the problems with mergers; the development of formation programs for these new managers and staff; updates in theological issues germane to Catholic health care; and an examination of institutional, canonical, and structural issues.

The book is organized in four sections: three essays discuss theology and health care; three examine the person and health care; four discuss the sacraments and liturgy in health care; and four examine the Church and health care. Also included are an introductory essay which overviews the others and a concluding essay that presents a model of how one health care system developed a formation program for its staff. The book is addressed primarily to those involved in the many aspects of health care, from administration to direct providers of health care and all the supporting staff of hospitals and health care systems. The essays move from the significant question of Catholic identity to providing Catholic ministry to those whom the institution serves, a critical question given the shift from primarily religious to lay ownership and management.

Although each essay is excellent, I want to highlight four essays in the book that I found particularly helpful. First is “Interpretation of Healing Narratives in the Bible” by Sean Martin. What is most valuable here is not only the thoughtful discussion of these narratives but also the Addendum that provides principles for interpreting the Bible. This may be unfamiliar ground for many, but Martin provides an outstanding overview of contemporary methods of interpreting and understanding biblical passages. Second is “God’s Presence in Our Suffering” by Robin Ryan, who lifts up several perspectives on suffering from the Jewish and Christian scriptures and enhances these with a thoughtful theological reflection on them. Ryan wisely notes that the Christian response to those who suffer is to pray for healing, recognizing that this may not result in a cure, but perhaps in spiritual healing and peace. Third, Darren Henson writes on “Eucharist as the Heart of Ministry.” He provides an excellent summary of Vatican II liturgical spirituality centered around the Eucharist, noting how its celebration can play an important part in formation programs. Henson notes that the Eucharist is “offered to change us into the image of Christ whose body and blood we take into our own” (177). The fourth essay is “Theology of Institutions” by Richard Gaillardetz, which is essential reading for everyone in the Church, especially the hierarchy. Gaillardetz discusses the sources of institu-

tional mistrust as well as other factors that intensified this distrust. This is paired with a substantive discussion of the Church as a sacrament, including the implications for the participation of non-Catholics in this institutional mission.

The physical book is well designed and illustrated with several plates from the St. John's Bible from Collegeville. However, I found the paper to be a bit too reflective as I read, and as I approached the end of the book the binding began to crack and pages came out. This in no way detracts from the excellent quality of the essays, but does compromise the book's utility to a certain degree. Nonetheless, this is a substantive contribution to the discussion of theological, ethical, and institutional issues surrounding contemporary health care ministry.