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Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M.

Introduction

Young Adults: An Urgent Pastoral Agenda

Each article within this issue reminds us that the Church must be ever renewed by each generation. The authors, scholars and pastoral ministers, suggest in a variety of ways that the Catholic community is not doing too well in ministering to the generation of young adults in their twenties and early thirties.

Sometimes, young adults, unkindly designated as "Generation X," the men and women born in the 1960s and 1970s have their own needs and hopes. They also have their own generational history different than those of us born earlier in the century. Young adults are the first truly post-conciliar generation of Catholics. Their early religious education was very different than the one familiar to many of us who now wish to minister to them. Watergate, *Humanae vitae*, the Great Society, Vietnam and Cambodia, Vatican II, these are as unfamiliar to them as a world without personal computers. Despite their youth they, of course, have memories and historical baggage, yet these are quite different than older Catholics.

Each generation must fight its own battles, but there is a danger if one generation imposes its agenda upon another. For a generation known as the Baby Boomers that is a hard lesson to learn. That generation, due to its size, has for so long dominated American society that it has come to think that its concerns, its experiences, its hopes must be the ones which dominate the culture. To permit that to continue within the Church is to make a major error of judgment for it would be to lose touch with a new audience which requires a new pastoral agenda.

In the essays which follow, readers will learn much about what the Christian community can and must do if it is to pass on the faith to young adults. Until now many of this new generation have been inadequately evangelized or catechized. Some have suggested that the post-conciliar generation of adults is spiritually earnest but religiously illiterate. Whatever one makes of such a diagnosis, our authors suggest there is reason for hope precisely in the spiritual energy present among young adults. The challenge before the Church is that many young people are engaged in a spiritual quest outside the ecclesial

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community. It is not evident to these men and women what the Church has to offer them on their pilgrimage. It may even be that they are unsure if the Church welcomes them to find out. If the Catholic Church in this nation is to meet the challenge presented to it to pass on the faith to others it is urgent that pastoral ministers reflect on and act upon material such as presented in this issue of *New Theology Review*.

In the opening essay John Cusick and Katherine DeVries, both of whom have extensive pastoral experience with young adults, speak about the urgency of ministry with and to young adults. Then the prominent sociologist James Davidson presents a summary of his recent research on the religious attitudes of three generations of American Catholics. Allen Gustafson lays out the psychological and spiritual dimensions of the dilemma confronting young adults in our society. He also sketches the implications of the dilemma for the Church's pastoral agenda. Jeremy Langford, himself a young adult, speaks personally about his own journey to faith. Readers will get a sense of the sensitive and thoughtful young people who can greatly enrich the Church if we as a community give heed to their voices. In the fifth essay Margaret O'Brien offers a hopeful and practical reflection on how to develop a spiritual ministry to our young people. Finally, with his characteristic style and insight Richard Sparks suggests that the Catholic moral tradition may be attractive to young adults if it is presented in a theologically sound and pastorally attentive manner.

Two authors, Eugene Bianchi and Andrew Skotnicki, O.Carm., contribute non-thematic articles on challenging issues for the Church.

Also included in this issue are our regular columns, one of which treats the case of discussing church membership with a young adult. A number of book reviews fill out the remainder of this issue.

With this first issue in volume eleven of *New Theology Review*, a new editorial team is at the helm. The noted author and professor of homiletics Robert P. Waznak, S.S., will serve as co-editor along with myself, Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., professor of moral theology at the Washington Theological Union. Edward Foley, Capuchin, the highly respected professor of liturgy at Catholic Theological Union, is associate editor. Daniel Grigassy, O.F.M., who teaches in the department of word and worship at the WTU, will serve as book review editor. With these changes the editorial offices of the journal are now located in Washington, D.C. Please note the address on the inside front cover. At the end of the book reviews is the style sheet to be followed by authors wishing to submit manuscripts for publication.

The journal will continue to be a work of close collaboration between the faculties of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and the Washington Theological Union. In closing, the new editors wish to acknowledge the fine work of Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., the founding editor, and

John Pawlikowski, S.M., our immediate predecessor. These gentlemen and scholars have contributed greatly to the life of the American Catholic Church in our time. Not least among their accomplishments is the work they did for this journal. Our aim is to build on what they have done. We look forward to making *New Theology Review* an important and valued resource for you, our readers.

John C. Cusick and Katherine F. DeVries

A New Age in the Church: Young Adults

It was not so long ago that the backbone of the lay leadership and activity of Catholic parish life consisted of people in their twenties and thirties. We did not call them young adults then. They were adults—earning a living and raising a family as participative members in church, schools, government and social communities. They often married soon after completing school and were parents by age twenty-five. Some of them were “veterans” of foreign wars before age thirty. Now we call them young adults. They stay in school longer; delay marriage, and are less certain about career paths. They may change jobs five or six times before their early retirement. And they are not as active in the Church as they once were.

The essays in this *New Theology Review* seek to address the Church’s ministry with this group of people we now call young adults. Why are so many absent from our churches? Why have so many young adults not found in our churches an answer to their spiritual hunger? There is an abundance of popular literature that indicates there is a deep spiritual hunger for meaning, definition, and direction in life. It is rooted in an inquisitiveness about what really matters. It reaches higher than career goals, as important as those can be, to seek a purpose in life more intrinsic than work or social status. Yet those same searchers and seekers acknowledge that they are having a hard time getting their spiritual needs met in institutional churches. How is it that so many young adults who are spiritually hungry are not finding the Catholic Church a place to be fed?

THE SELECTIVE PRESENCE OF YOUNG ADULTS

One young man observed recently that his connection to the Church is between two sacramental moments—confirmation and marriage—and that time in between is longer than ever before. Once they are married, young adults may not be in church until the baptism of their children. Once the water has been poured, they may not return until the onset of their child’s religious instruction five or six years later. In the past, even if the sacramental moments did not bring young adults in closer contact with the parish church, their progeny did. Young parents still may get involved in church life for the sake of the kids. “Today,” a young woman observed recently, “my parish deals with two groups of

people—school-age families and senior citizens.” Even if young adults are not as regular in their Sunday Mass attendance and even if their moments of return to the Church are infrequent, still Catholics continue to affiliate with the Church at the same rate they did thirty years ago. How can this be? What is the message that young adults are sending the Church by their selective presence?

The continued affiliation with the Catholic Church at a consistent rate and a new-found spiritual hunger among the late “boomers” and Generation X, should be understood as signs of hope. Young adults are not agnostic. They are not leaving the Catholic Church in droves. They may not practice their Catholic faith in conventional forms and their practice may not always be consistent, visible, and measurable. But maybe that is not their problem. Perhaps they have not found a lot to attach to in the Church if they are not a school-age parent or a senior citizen. If we listen to what they are saying, they also might reveal the strategy that needs to be employed in the Church as we enter a new millennium.

Young adults may state they are Catholic. They have been baptized but they are not registered in a parish. What some young adults discover is that registration in a parish seems to count more than membership in the Church through baptism. Just ask young adults what the first question they, their peers, siblings, or Catholic friends are asked, when it comes to approaching the Church to celebrate a marriage or baptize a child. “Are you registered?” If the answer is no, the availability of those sacraments diminishes quickly and dramatically. Comments we’ve heard recently include “My parish reminds me of a private (religious) country club. Take out your membership. Pay your dues. And only then you get the perks—sacraments”; “I called five churches today looking for a place to be married. Each and every one asked if I was registered. Not one asked if I was Catholic! No one ever bothered to ask if I was in love!” It is important to remember as we minister to young adults that their first moments of adult faith are often connected to preparing for marriage and passing on the tradition to the next generation. A warm, sincere, compassionate welcome at the time of marriage will do more to nurture an adult relationship with the Church than “I’m sorry. We only marry our registered parishioners.” It’s time to give the next generation experiential reasons to register.

CELEBRATING THEIR MOMENTS OF RETURN

The sacramental moment is a beginning, not an ending. The wedding begins a life of marriage in the Lord. Let it also begin an adult relationship with the local church by choice; not end that possibility by default. If forced to and if need be, they will register. They will attend all compulsory preparation programs. They will do it our way. But they

will not forget. Most will continue to check that Catholic box on the survey form. Yet when the “assembly” gathers to be in communion with one another and the Lord, many young adults do not feel in union with that assembly.

Perhaps the pastoral strategy needed here is to learn how to celebrate young adults’ moments of return. And a young adult moment of return is not limited to a return to the Church after time away. It is actually a return to the depth of life that happens in some very special and often times intense moments of the life journey. We have mentioned two moments of return already: marriage and baptism. There are at least three more in the young adult years of life—moments of sickness, death, and personal decision. Life can be very unfair. For young adults the unfairness and unevenness of life is seen in the sickness and disease they experience in themselves or among family or friends. These are profoundly spiritual moments when some hard questions and some profound realities need to be addressed. When the fact of death occurs in the passing of a family member or friend, death is no longer abstract and the mystery of life demands a response.

The fifth moment of return, though less visible than a marriage or baptism and less dramatic than sickness and death, is nonetheless just as real and equally important—moments of personal decision. Changing jobs or careers, making decisions about relationships, dating and marriage are more and more complex. These personal decisions are not entered into lightly. They are moments of meaning and personal identity. These moments, too, open many young adults to the spirit side of their lives. All five of these moments (and many more) can be assisted and celebrated not just by young adults’ relationship to the Church, but, maybe more importantly, by the Church’s relationship to them.

YOUNG ADULTS AND THE CHURCH: FOUR ASPECTS OF A NEW RELATIONSHIP

Effective ministry with young adults begins by transforming our attitudes toward them. They are not the enemy. They are not an indifferent, consumer-driven, narcissistic group, who care little for what the Church is all about. They are our people. They are God’s people. They are not the future of the Church. They are the present Church waiting to be welcomed. Once they understand we regard them as the present Church, a new relationship can develop in several ways.

(1) Compassion before legalism reflects the attitude of Christ. He loved and embraced people who did not always do it right. We need to do the same, especially with young people who do not always understand our/their church laws and local parish customs. They need to know they are wanted, appreciated, and accepted as members of the

Church, the body of Christ, first and foremost. Once you know you belong, then you are much more willing to explore how to belong.

(2) The Jesus Method of Organizing is a positive response to the critique that young adults are not around the parish and never volunteer for anything. Jesus employed a time tested method; direct personal invitation. Jesus did not put a sign on a cedar of Lebanon, "All Those Who Want To Be Apostles Sign Up Here." The real question is how to move someone from being an affiliative Catholic to a more practicing one. Or how do you get a word of welcome out to a new group of people who normally don't believe that anything is really for them in the local church. When they walk into weekend Mass, it is clear from a visual survey that the ushers, Communion ministers, lectors, and choir are not their age. If it worked for Jesus, why would it not work for those in pastoral, liturgical, or catechetical ministry today?

(3) The third pastoral strategy for the local church in developing a relationship with young adult people is the third moment of a sacrament. As we said above, perhaps the first moment of adult faith for many young adults comes at their time of marriage or the baptism of their progeny. For many this is also the first personal contact with the Catholic Church in many years. Sometimes it is not always a pleasant first contact. That first contact and the programmatic preparation for the sacramental ceremony is the first moment of the sacrament. The second moment is the actual sacramental event.

After the marriage or baptism ceremony is concluded, normally nothing happens. But there is a third moment to those ceremonies. It is the follow-up and ongoing relationship with the newly married couple or young adult family. That third moment is the local church, its ministers and people, reaching out with a sense of missionary zeal to its own young adult people by supporting their marriages, inquiring about their family and exhibiting on a regular basis, in person or by phone, a genuine interest and care for them as God's people.

The local church has an abundance of power. In any given situation it has the power to reach out, invite, welcome, respect and graciously respond to all its people. Very often a compassionate church minister, interfacing with this generation at a significant moment in their life or the life of their family (birth, love, sickness, death, and discernment), creates a spiritual openness to something More, to the presence of the Divine in a given moment of life. The compassionate outreach and response of the local church will not eliminate the struggles with doctrine, rule or custom, but can open up other aspects of the Catholic tradition that are more immediate, present and life-giving.

It would be easy, and totally wrong, to categorize the young adult generation as negative, aloof and hostile toward the Church. Part of their struggle is to understand the "why" of things. Our pastoral strategies

should be explained, not dictated. Our rules need to be understood, not simply enforced. Our beliefs need to be appropriated, not memorized. As they attempt to search for elements of lasting value for their lives, we claim to possess those values and traditions. We call it the Deposit of Faith. And the strategy to reveal the richness of the Catholic tradition might need to occur in a different way for young adults than it did for many of us.

(4) The fourth way that the Church's relationship with them can be developed is by using our Catholic tradition as a spiritual path to follow throughout life. At this age in their lives, they want to know how things "work" in their lives, not just what do they mean. They are not seeking a class to attend but a spiritual praxis to employ. Helping young adults seek a spiritual path might mean helping them ask the right questions: How do I get free (from my past)? How do I stay free (to be faithful)? Once those questions are asked, we can offer any searcher and seeker a number of spiritual paths from the Catholic Tradition that lead to freedom, perhaps most especially the sacrament of reconciliation.

SUMMARY

Young adults are looking for connection. They are searching for communion. At our Catholic Mass, we literally hold out that Communion. "The body of Christ," we say to those searchers and seekers. "Amen," is what we hope to hear in response. It can be the food for that spiritual hunger. Even more than a moment of personal piety or private religious expression, it is a sacred moment that says to them that this community of faith will make room for you to be in communion with Christ at Eucharist. When we are together and in communion with one another, we fill another place at the table of the Lord with their presence. We might not be able to make life easier for young adult people. Struggles, broken dreams, disappointments are a part of the human landscape for us all. But we can share such experiences and together let the richness of our Catholic faith give them meaning. And by doing so, perhaps those of us who minister in the Church today, can reveal by our actions and our communion with young adults, the sacramentality that drives our tradition. Every moment of life, the good times and bad, the sickness and health, the times alone, the times with others are shared with a God who loves us.

Developing a ministry that is responsive to the needs and life experience of young adults and yet faithful to the Catholic tradition is an urgent agenda for our time. There are ways out of the conundrum that keeps spiritually hungry Catholic young adults away from the Church. We have much to offer. They have much to learn. They have much to give. We have much to receive.

Fr. John C. Cusick is director of the Young Adult Ministry Office in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Katherine F. DeVries is associate director in that same office. Father Cusick, along with Professor Herbert Anderson of the Catholic Theological Union, served as sub-editors for this issue of NTR

James D. Davidson

The Post-Vatican II Generation of “Christian Catholics”¹

There is an awful lot of discussion about young Catholics these days. Catholic publications are full of articles about the post-Vatican II generation (e.g., Heckler-Feltz, 1997; Mancha, 1997; Staley, 1997; De-Turris, 1997; Scott, 1997).

Some church leaders worry about a loss of faith and moral perspective among so-called “Generation X.” The American bishops and leaders such as Joan Weber fear that young Catholics have very little attachment to the Church and that they are more inclined than any generation before them to make faith and moral decisions that are not in accordance with official church teachings. These concerns are fueled by writers such as Paul Wilkes (1996) and Robert Ludwig (1995) who claim that young Catholics are the most highly educated, but religiously illiterate, generation of all. These concerns also gain support from research by McNamara (1992) and others indicating declining levels of religious commitment and increased dissent among young Catholics.

Other leaders and researchers believe that today’s young Catholics are not much different from previous generations of young people. These observers (e.g., Greeley, 1989, 1990) assume that post-Vatican II Catholics express only limited interest in the Church and its teachings while they are young and single but, like generations before them, will rebound when they get married and have children. This more optimistic view suggests there is little or no need for church leaders to worry; post-Vatican II Catholics will bounce back, just as previous generations have, when they settle down and have children of their own.

Still other church leaders and analysts offer a third point of view: that, even before they marry and have children, today’s young Catholics are tending toward traditional approaches to faith and morals. Catechists and religious educators sometimes tell me that today’s young are more conservative than the previous generation of Catholics. These

¹The author is grateful to Lilly Endowment, Inc., for the funds to conduct the Catholic Pluralism Project upon which this paper is based. He also thanks all the members of the research team that contributed to the collection and analysis of the data presented in this paper. For more details on the project and further analyses of the data, see Davidson et al. (1997).

leaders have a sense that more and more young Catholics think the Church is important and want to embrace its teachings. They are encouraged by studies indicating increased conservatism among seminarians and young lay people (Cimino, 1996).

Which view is right? Compared to their parent's generation, are today's young people moving further and further away from the Church? Are they more traditional in their approaches to faith and morals than their parent's generation? Or, are they no different from previous generations of young people?

In my view, the best and most recent evidence indicates that today's young Catholics are different from their parents' and grandparents' generations; that overall they are increasingly inclined toward beliefs and practices that are not in line with official church teachings; and that there are very few signs of any trend toward more traditional beliefs and practices. There is little or no reason to believe post-Vatican II Catholics will think and act just like their parents and grandparents in the years ahead. I base my argument largely on national studies I have conducted in 1993 and 1995 (D'Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, and Wallace, 1996; Davidson et al., 1997). I also base it on focus groups that colleagues and I have done with different generations of Catholics.

THREE GENERATIONS

Generations are cohorts of people who were born at different periods of time and, as a result, share experiences that unite them and give them unique perspectives on all facets of life, including religion (Mannheim, 1952; Walrath, 1987; Roof, 1993; Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens, 1994; Williams and Davidson, 1996; Davidson et al., 1997). Generationally-specific worldviews that are formed during one's formative years last for a lifetime, producing different interpretations of the same lifecourse experiences. Formative experiences do not totally determine what we think forever, but they do foster ideas and actions that tend to persist well into our adult lives. I suggest, for purposes of this topic, one can think in terms of three generations, which I describe below.

Oldest Generation: "Catechism Catholics"

The oldest cohort consists of Americans who were born in the 1920s and '30s. These people experienced the Great Depression and World War II during their formative years. They have been labeled "the depression generation" or "the World War II generation" because these experiences have shaped their outlook on all kinds of matters, including money and national pride.

Catholics in this cohort were born and raised entirely in the pre-Vatican II Church. They tended to live in the so-called Catholic ghetto,

consisting of predominantly Catholic neighbors, Catholic parishes and schools, Catholic newspapers and publishing companies, and a whole network of Catholic organizations ranging from Catholic boy scouts and girl scouts to Catholic professional societies. They learned their faith and morals from priests and sisters, who relied on the Baltimore Catechism as their main teaching tool. They learned a pre-Vatican II theology that stressed the evil of the “outside” (largely Protestant) world; the idea that the Catholic Church is the “one true Church”; the teaching authority of the Church; the need for lay people to obey church teachings; a punitive concept of God emphasizing suffering, sin, guilt, judgment, and punishment. This is the “pre-Vatican II generation,” though we can also refer to its members as “Catechism Catholics” (emphasizing the prominence of the Baltimore Catechism in their upbringing).

Middle Generation: “Council Catholics”

The middle cohort includes people who were born in the 1940s and ‘50s. They were the population explosion that followed World War years, but also experienced the social and cultural turmoil of the 1960s. This generation is usually called the “baby boomers,” though sometimes it is called “the ‘60s generation.”

Catholics in this cohort have one foot in the “old” (pre-Vatican II) Church and one foot in the “new” (post-Vatican II) Church. In their earliest years, they experienced the same religious formation as “Catechism Catholics.” Then, all of a sudden, Vatican II took place. They learned that many of the old rules governing faith and morals were going to change. A loving God would replace their punitive God; English would replace Latin; guitars would replace the organ; folk songs would replace Gregorian Chant; and ecumenism would replace the parochialism of the past. We have called this generation “Vatican II Catholics” or “Council Catholics” (emphasizing the importance of the council as a defining moment in their formative years).

Youngest Generation: “Christian Catholics”

The youngest cohort consists of people born in the 1960s and ‘70s. This generation has experienced new levels of individual and collective freedom (e.g., women’s movement, gay rights movement); economic prosperity among the rich, but stagnation and impoverishment among workers and the poor; political conservatism (downsizing of the federal government, increased emphasis on local government); and the dissolution of many traditional relationships (increased divorce rates and more “latchkey children”). Young people have been told, and tend to agree, that theirs will be the first generation of Americans that will be

worse off than their parents' generation. Much to their chagrin, they are usually called "Generation X," "Gen X," or "the thirteenth generation."

Catholics in this cohort have been raised entirely in the post-Vatican II Church. All they know of the pre-Vatican II Church is what little their grandparents and parents have told them. They grew up in the post-Vatican II world of guitar music, altars facing the people and Mass in English. We have called this cohort the "post-Vatican II" generation or "Christian Catholics" (emphasizing their tendency to emphasize their status as Christians over their membership in the Catholic Church).

ARE YOUNG CATHOLICS DIFFERENT? IF SO, IN WHAT WAY?

Colleagues and I conducted focus groups with members of all three generations (Williams and Davidson, 1996; Davidson et al., 1997). The qualitative data we obtained from these focus groups revealed several tendencies among young Catholics. As I have reported elsewhere in more detail (D'Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, and Wallace, 1996), post-Vatican II Catholics:

- Place a higher priority on being good Christians than they do on being good Catholics. This reflects their religious education, which, in the wake of Vatican II's ecumenical emphasis, has stressed the common ground—not the differences—between Protestants and Catholics.
- Have a deinstitutionalized and democratic view of the Church. This finding is consistent with Kennedy's (1988) view that post-Vatican II Catholics are more inclined to think of the Church as the "people of God" working out their faith in collaboration with others, not as a hierarchical organization demanding their compliance with religious authority.
- Make a rather sharp distinction between God's law and Church law and, when the two are in tension with each other, put higher priority on God's law than on Church law. This finding is consistent with McNamara's (1992) idea that young Catholics emphasize "conscience first, tradition second."
- Are not as informed about Church teachings. Wilkes (1996) also argues that young Catholics are the most educated, yet religiously illiterate, generation in the Church.
- Are more likely to think and act in ways that disagree with Church teachings. This finding is consistent with McNamara's (1992) longitudinal study of young Catholics.
- View God as an all-loving and forgiving friend who wants us to be nice to others. Markey (1994) also calls attention to the recent emphasis on a loving God and what he calls the "theology of being nice."

- Lack a vocabulary to help them form a Catholic identity and interpret their specifically Catholic experiences. In contrast to older Catholics who use a rich specifically-Catholic language to describe their religious experiences, young Catholics speak a generically-Christian language that is also used by young people in mainline and evangelical Protestant denominations.
- Have learned that the rightness or wrongness of one's actions depends on the circumstances and the effects their actions have on others. Ryba (1994) also has noted the shift from a natural law approach in ethics to a consequentialist approach.

Overall, we concluded that there has been an inter-generational shift from an institutional to a more individualistic approach to faith and morals (Williams and Davidson, 1996; Davidson et al., 1997). While Catechism Catholics tend to see the Church as mediating their relationship with God, Council Catholics and especially Christian Catholics place more emphasis on having a personal relationship with Jesus. The pre-Vatican II cohort stresses the importance of obeying Church teachings; the Vatican II generation and especially the post-Vatican II Catholics emphasize their personal faith journeys and the need to be nice to other persons.

Colleagues and I have examined this inter-generational shift in more detail using quantitative data from two national surveys. The 1993 survey was the basis for our book *Laity: American and Catholic* (D'Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, and Wallace, 1996). The 1995 survey is summarized in our latest book *The Search for Common Ground: What Unites and Divides Catholic Americans* (Davidson et al., 1997).

The 1993 national survey indicated a growing preference for more democratic decision making in the Church; declining levels of religious commitment; and dwindling levels of compliance with Church teachings. Here are some specifics.

Whereas 52 percent of pre-Vatican II Catholics wanted more democratic decision making in their parishes, 61 percent of Vatican II Catholics and 67 percent of post-Vatican II Catholics agreed with that idea. While 58 percent of pre-Vatican II Catholics wanted more lay participation in the selection of parish priests, 75 percent of Vatican II and 83 percent of post-Vatican II Catholics felt lay people ought to be involved in the selection of priests. Essentially the same inter-generational pattern prevailed in responses to our questions about matters such as parish budgets, the ordination of women, divorce and remarriage, and abortion.

Declining levels of commitment were evident in responses to items about the frequency of Mass attendance and prayer and the importance of the Church. Whereas 59 percent of pre-Vatican II Catholics

said the Church is a very important part of their lives, only 48 percent of Vatican II Catholics and 29 percent of post-Vatican II Catholics felt that way. While 63 percent of the oldest cohort attended Mass weekly, only 45 percent of the middle cohort and only 24 percent of the youngest cohort did. Ninety percent of Catechism Catholics said they pray daily, compared to two-thirds of Council Catholics, and only 53 percent of Christian Catholics.

Dwindling levels of compliance with Church teachings also are apparent in answers to questions about what it takes to be a good Catholic. Forty-two percent of pre-Vatican II Catholics said one can be a good Catholic without believing in papal infallibility, but the percentage climbed to 51 percent among Vatican II Catholics and 55 percent among post-Vatican II Catholics. While 40 percent of the oldest cohort said one can be a good Catholic without accepting the Church's view of abortion, 53 percent of the middle cohort and 67 percent of the youngest cohort made that claim.

By and large, the 1995 survey confirms these findings. However, it also points to some important new insights relating to eight dimensions of faith and morals, which are defined below.

Pan-Vatican II beliefs include doctrines, embedded in the Nicene Creed, that were core Church teachings prior to the council and have been ever since. For example, the council did not change the Church teachings regarding the trinity, incarnation, the resurrection, transubstantiation, and Mary as the Mother of God.

Pre-Vatican II beliefs include ideas that were taught more vigorously prior to the council than since Vatican II. Beliefs of this type include the idea that the Church is the one true Church, that lay people are to obey Church teachings even if they do not understand them, and that the pope is the Vicar of Christ. We also asked about the idea of returning to more traditional teachings.

A third dimension, which we called *recent ideas*, includes opinions and attitudes that were largely anathema before the council but have gained in popularity since the council (e.g., ordaining women, being a good Catholic without attending Mass, priests and lay people having equal status in the Church, the use of inclusive language). Most of these ideas cannot be traced to the council itself, but have emerged in recent years as "the people of God" have experimented with new understandings of Church.

Pan-Vatican II practices include public rituals and private devotions that were prominent prior to Vatican II and remain important practices to this day. These include Mass attendance, reception of Holy Communion, participation in holy days of obligation, and private prayer.

Pre-Vatican II practices include activities that used to be emphasized but have not been promoted as vigorously in recent years. We examined

four such practices: starting and ending each day with prayer, praying the Rosary, practicing devotions to Mary or special saints, and going to individual confession with a priest.

Recent practices include activities that were not part of Catholic spirituality prior to the council but which have been emphasized much more in recent years. These include group penance and a variety of Scripture-oriented devotional practices such as reading the Bible, attending Bible study, and belonging to prayer groups and faith sharing groups.

We examined four matters of *sexual and reproductive ethics*: pre-marital sex, use of condoms and pills to prevent pregnancy, abortion, and homosexual activities. We asked Catholics whether these actions are always wrong, usually wrong except under certain circumstances, or completely up to the individual to decide.

We also explored four items relating to the Church's *social teachings*, especially its preferential option for the poor. These items related to the importance of helping the needy, the idea that the Church ought to be involved in economic and political issues, Catholics' duty to help close the gap between the rich and the poor, and the morality of economic decisions that increase poverty.

This exploration includes a wider variety of issues than most recent studies, which tend to focus on hot topics related to recent ideas and sexual and reproductive ethics and tend to overlook pan-Vatican II beliefs, pre-Vatican II beliefs, and social teachings. As a result, the 1995 study leads to several new insights. The results for the total Catholic population and the three birth cohorts are found in Table 1.

Table 1
Faith and Morals by Generation
(percent)

	Total Sample	Pre- Vatican II	Post- Vatican II	Vatican II
<i>Pan-Vatican II Beliefs (very important)</i>				
Mary as Mother of God	73	80	66	75
Resurrection	71	83	65	70
Incarnation	68	75	63	69
Transubstantiation	63	79	57	57
Trinity	53	66	48	49
<i>Pre-Vatican II Beliefs (agree)</i>				
Pope is Vicar of Christ	71	81	67	69
Put more emphasis on traditional teachings	62	69	58	61
Church is one true Church	50	64	45	46
Important to obey even if don't understand	45	57	37	44

The Post-Vatican II Generation of "Christian Catholics" 19

	Total Sample <i>(cont'd)</i>	Pre- Vatican II <i>(cont'd)</i>	Post- Vatican II <i>(cont'd)</i>	Vatican II <i>(cont'd)</i>
<i>Recent Ideas (agree)</i>				
Lay people just as important as priests	84	81	86	85
Can be good Catholic without going to Mass	64	51	63	73
Women should be allowed to be priests	58	41	61	66
Exclusive language bothers me	30	25	28	36
<i>Pan-Vatican II Practices</i>				
Private prayer (weekly or more)	77	82	78	73
Mass attendance (weekly or more)	43	64	40	33
Holy Days of Obligation (regularly)	40	53	29	42
Holy Communion (weekly or more)	36	54	31	28
<i>Pre-Vatican II Practices</i>				
Start and end day with prayer (weekly or more)	65	79	63	58
Private confession (once a year or more)	43	52	37	44
Devotion to Mary/Saints (weekly or more)	29	49	28	16
Rosary (weekly or more)	20	40	16	11
<i>Recent Practices</i>				
Group penance (once a year or more)	24	30	25	19
Bible reading (weekly or more)	19	23	17	17
Prayer/faith sharing group (monthly or more)	12	15	13	9
Bible study (monthly or more)	9	9	7	8
<i>Sexual-Reproductive Ethics (always wrong)</i>				
Homosexual acts	46	60	39	44
Abortion	34	45	31	31
Pre-marital sex	28	50	22	18
Artificial birth control	8	17	5	5
<i>Social Teachings</i>				
Helping the needy is an important part of faith (agree)	96	96	96	96
Economic decisions increasing poverty are morally wrong (agree)	76	76	76	77
Catholics have duty to close gap between rich and poor (agree)	53	48	48	62
Catholics should stick to religion and not get involved in economic and political issues (disagree)	33	33	30	36

Overall, there is a trend toward lower levels of religious commitment and more diverse beliefs and practices. As a rule, Catechism Catholics are most in compliance with church teachings, followed by Council Catholics, then Christian Catholics. The biggest generation gap is between pre-Vatican II Catholics on the one hand and Vatican II and post-Vatican II Catholics on the other. Catechism Catholics are far more likely than Council Catholics and Christian Catholics are to comply with church teachings; they also are least inclined to accept unauthorized ideas that have emerged in recent years. The differences between Vatican II and post-Vatican II Catholics are smaller, but more often than not, indicate that post-Vatican II Catholics are least inclined to adhere to church norms and values.

A straight-line trend toward less commitment and more diversity is clearest in five of the eight areas we examined: pan-Vatican II practices, pre-Vatican II practices, recent ideas, recent practices, and sexual-reproductive ethics. There is a slight U-shape curve in the areas of pan-Vatican II beliefs and pre-Vatican II beliefs. In the area of social teachings, the results are mixed: there are no meaningful differences between the three cohorts on two items, but some indications of a U-shape curve on two others. In general, when there are signs of a U-shape curve, the differences between the Vatican II and post-Vatican II generations are too small to be considered statistically significant.

CONCLUSIONS

I began with three often-heard scenarios concerning the religious orientations of young Catholics: that they are not as committed to the Church and its teachings as earlier generations; that they are like previous generations and will rebound when they get married and have children of their own; and that more and more young people think the Church is important and want to embrace its teachings. After reviewing evidence from focus groups and two national studies, I believe the evidence lends more support to the first scenario than it does to either of the other two.

The biggest generation gap is between the pre-Vatican II Catholics who were born in the 1920s and '30s and both of the younger generations. Vatican II Catholics and post-Vatican II Catholics are more similar to one another than they are different. Within this context, the most accurate scenario is that Christian Catholics are increasingly inclined to reach faith and moral decisions that are not in accordance with church teachings. There are a few small signs of a rebound toward more traditional conceptions of faith and morals, but these upswings only appear on selected beliefs and almost never reach statistical significance.

There is little or no reason to believe that young Catholics will think and act just like their parents and grandparents in later stages of their

lifecourse. They have been raised in a very different society and have received a very different type of religious education. The patterns that prevail in their current beliefs and practices are likely to persist throughout their lives. Unless there are significant changes in American culture and Catholic religious formation, these patterns are also likely to become more prominent tendencies in the American Catholic Church in the years ahead.

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Generation X: Its Challenges and Possibilities

Now—here is my secret:

I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again, so I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God—that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give because I no longer seem capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love.

—Scout, the twenty-something hero of
Douglas Coupland's novel *Life After God* (359).

Douglas Coupland has become the unofficial spokesperson for contemporary young adults who are referred to both as Generation X and the Lost Generation. Coupland declares his generation to be the first raised without religion. His book *Life After God* is a series of encounters between a young man named Scout and a cast of characters who have numbed themselves with drugs, sex, and pointless jobs and are now awkwardly searching for something more meaningful in their lives. Scout identifies the need that has given rise to this generation's search for something more as an inability to "make it alone." What they seem to lack is a vision of life that is compelling and challenging, and the ability to feel secure in knowing who they are.

The Generation X dilemma is how to construct a secure self-identity in an unstable, deconstructed world. The deconstructed social context of Western culture contributes not only to the identity confusion in the current generation of twenty-somethings, but also to a pervasive crisis of meaning, which is ultimately a crisis of hope. As the struggle to know who they are becomes linked to a search for meaning and hope, the young adult's quest for identity becomes a religious search.

THE PROCESS OF IDENTITY FORMATION

According to Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of development, achieving a stable identity is a lifelong process, but the period from adolescence to young adulthood marks the most crucial stage in this process. The transition from childhood to adulthood "demands that the

individual synthesize or integrate the wide variety of roles society will increasingly expect him or her to perform. Deciding which of these roles to accept occasions the crisis of this developmental period" (Fuller, 1988:36). Forming an identity means forging a union with one's past, identifying with primary social roles and making tentative decisions about who one wishes to become in the future. All this emerges only through interaction with the social world. For Erikson, the process is located in both the core of the individual and the core of the communal culture.

One of the major tasks of identity formation is adjusting one's self-image and behavioral strategies in light of the feedback supplied by others. A secure identity requires being able to maintain a consistent conception of oneself as well as maintaining a consistent impression on others. This self-conscious judging is informed and grounded by an ideological outlook.

A person needs an ideology to rely on in order to formulate a stable identity during this turbulent stage of life. An ideology provides a comprehensive landscape of how life operates and how one should act, and serves as a backdrop and support system for the person's chosen identity. An ideological system is a coherent body of shared images, ideas, and ideals which enable us to get a handle on how the world is and who we are in it, and in this sense identity formation is a religious quest.

The process of identity formation as both the achievement of self-awareness and the achievement of an effective social role is not settled in adolescence. Sharon Parks identifies a post-adolescent stage of human development (Parks, 1986:74). I agree with Parks, who finds it problematic to presume that identity and social recognition are fully established by the end of adolescence. Although by the end of adolescence the individual has the power of critical reflection, the self-conscious self often lacks the integrity of a social role.

The power of the emerging self arises from the awareness that there are a variety of other selves and other worlds that could become one's identity, and thus the self has the freedom and the responsibility to choose its own becoming. Its power is marked by the capacity to take responsibility self-consciously for choosing the path of its own fidelity. In choosing the path of one's own fidelity, the person commits to who he or she wishes to become and solidifies self-identity. The developmental task of the post-adolescent self is to exercise its new power and claim a path of fidelity by discerning a fitting relationship between self and society.

Although the post-adolescent period is marked by the promise of a new self and world, ambiguity about the character of one's self and world darken the promise. Navigating the ambivalence toward both self and society and choosing the path of one's own fidelity begins

with what Parks terms “probing commitment.” The probing of the post-adolescent is a serious exploration of the adult world and enables the young adult to make a commitment within the relativism revealed by its critical awareness. As one accumulates experience living within the chosen commitments of self and society, the character of one’s commitment changes from probing to tested; the self is not only self-aware but becomes self-reflective as a quality of centeredness replaces the ambivalence of an earlier time.

The period of the post-adolescent probing commitment designates the developmental stage of the young adult and the achievement of identity marks the threshold of adulthood. “*Adult* connotes one’s having achieved the composition of the self-aware self, with its attendant responsibility *for* the self. The qualifier *young* connotes the appropriate exploratory, wary, tentative, and dependent quality that stands at the threshold of adulthood” (Parks, 75). Albeit difficult to quantify, for Generation X, young adulthood usually lasts until one’s early thirties.

A DECONSTRUCTED WORLD

Young adulthood is a time of promise, because it is the birthplace of adult vision. The two qualities of young adult experience that fuel promise and vision are freedom and idealism. The ideal is that which is pure, consistent, authentic, and congruent. The search for the ideal grounds and shapes the pathway of fidelity chosen by the young adult. The pathway is the vision for adult life. This is the only time during the life cycle in which the forces exist to give birth to such a life transforming vision. A young adult’s vision will shape the remainder of his or her adult development. The vision is composed within the larger landscape of social forces, but these forces must resonate with what is authentic to the young adult.

The social world provides the opportunity for vision construction, while the individual supplies the potential for creating the vision. Therefore, the vision is comprised of a blending of social opportunity and individual potential. A deconstructed social context has left young people today struggling to create a vision and solidify an identity without the ideological context Parks finds to be necessary. I am using the term “deconstruction” to mean the critical examination and subsequent breakdown of the traditional meaning-making institutions and structures of Western culture.

Western culture’s deconstruction of the social, religious and political forces at work in the world began with the Enlightenment, the critical rationalism of the eighteenth century. Deconstruction has continued through various forms of sophistry and skepticism that have led to the pervasive “politics of suspicion” of our modern day. The philosophy of the postmodern time we live in is built upon rationalism and empiricism.

Serious critical reflection on the foundations and structures of Western culture is its chief aim. The social traditions and forces of the culture have been placed under the rational, empirical microscope of scientific inquiry. We have learned how these traditions and forces were created, how they have influenced us and what their imperfections and failings are. We deconstructed our world in order to more clearly and fully understand it and our role within it.

Over two hundred and fifty years of deconstructive thinking has enabled us to see things in new and different ways. It has not only shown a spotlight on idolatrous thinking, but it has provided the perspective and ability to move civilization in directions never before dreamed of. The benefits brought by deconstructionism, however, have come at a cost. The patterns of meaning and value that serve to hold life together and give it purpose and direction have come unraveled, and a new generation is coming of age in the throes of a collective crisis of meaning. For young adults, the deconstruction of our social contexts has left a perceived ideological framework that is uninviting, unauthentic, and unappealing.

A WORLD THAT IS UNINVITING

The young people of today have grown up in a social context that can best be described as inhospitable. The breakup of family structures, political and business scandals, the rise in violence and the decline in education, materialism run rampant and the mounting national debt are all signs that the institutions, systems and structures of public life seem broken, fraudulent, or dysfunctional. Public institutions and social forces no longer seem worthy of our trust or confidence and the “politics of suspicion” now functions as guidepost to our thought, attitude and behavior. Three pivotal cultural shifts—the changes in family life, the decline in religious literacy and socialization, and the rise of cynicism about our public life—are all by-products of deconstruction.

As the end of the 1960s marked the beginning of America’s divorce epidemic, the children of Generation X began carrying latchkeys for re-entering empty homes after school. Young people have been able to rely less on parents and their authoritarian guidance and have had to accept greater responsibility for decisions affecting their own everyday lives. As a result, youngsters have experienced greater freedom, but it is freedom accompanied by greater burden, less clarity, less access to the voices of experience and more room to make poor decisions.

Many of today’s young people know little about the religious tradition in which they were raised and have little sense of ownership or belonging to an organized religion. A 1992 Gallup poll revealed that significant numbers of today’s young adults “are turned off by churches and organized religion” and have “a glaring lack of knowledge of the

Ten Commandments" as well as the meaning of other fundamental religious tenets, like Easter (Ludwig, 1995:24). Clearly, the only organized religion young people know about is through their elder's growing cynicism toward Church and their own media exaggerated experience of unyielding patriarchy, pedophilia scandals, sexual phobias and institutional chaos.

This generation of young adults has had real-life civics lessons in which public scandals have become commonplace. They are the only generation born after the Civil War to come of age unlikely to match their parent's economic fortunes. For young people, cynicism becomes the rational response to the constraints that they perceive around them and the disillusionment they have experienced. Today, perhaps more than ever in American society, "the tendency to behave cynically is being reinforced to an unprecedented degree by a social environment that seems to have abandoned idealism and increasingly celebrates the virtue of being 'realistic' in an impersonal, acquisitive, tough-guy world" (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989:7). In citizen and country alike, there seems to be a loss of faith in people and in the very concept of community.

UNAUTHENTIC SOCIAL CONTEXT

Since family, religion, and politics no longer function as the authentic social force they once did in a young adult's formation of vision and identity, economics now plays the leading role in the social theater. The family and religious filter has been replaced by an economic filter. Harvard economist, Juliet Schorr, describes the American persona as *homo economicus*, defined by production and consumption (Schorr, 1991: 136ff.). Americans identify themselves with the things they make, have and use; human value is interpreted economically. Where organized religion has failed to market spiritual values to young people, American business has succeeded. Advertising sells spiritual values, such as belonging, community, intimacy, and love, through clothing and beauty aids, food and alcohol, clothes, and basketball shoes. Young adults have grown up with television, and from an early age have been assaulted with media sales pitches drumming the message, buying and consuming are the way to happiness.

What deconstruction has left us without is what Erikson knew every individual needed in order to take a firm hold upon life and to be able to make confident decisions in the face of seeming ambiguity. Deconstruction has left young people without a coherent, authentic, unified ideology that explains how the world operates. They long for a meaningful vision and a secure self-identity, but the symbolic universe of consumerism creates only temporary happiness for those with resources and frustration and discontent for those without. In the end it is not a universe in which anyone can safely live.

AN UNAPPEALING VISION

For Sharon Parks, identity formation in the young adult is a process of composing meaning as well as being composed by meaning. The ego makes meaning by the “composing and maintaining of pattern, order and significance in the most comprehensive dimensions of our awareness” (Parks, 16). In composing pattern, order and significance for the personal story, the ego relies on the larger patterns provided by the collective stories of the social world. Our dependence on these larger stories for creating significance in our individual stories means we not only compose, but we are also composed by meaning. The ego cannot endure without an accepted and reasonable social pattern and order to support its work.

What stymies the process of vision and identity formation is criticism. Young adults are very aware of what is wrong with everything; from family life, to education, to politics, to the workplace, all that is perceived is criticism. When our collective stories begin with negation we cannot create significance for our individual stories. It is impossible to build on a foundation of criticism, order and pattern cannot begin with negation. Ubiquitous criticism, aimed always at tearing down the institutions and stories of the social world and seldom at building up, is certainly unappealing. Tragically, it has created confusion in young peoples’ minds about what there is to embrace and accept, and this confusion has led to a crisis of meaning.

CONSTRUCTING SELF-IDENTITY IN A DECONSTRUCTED WORLD

Young adults reach the post-adolescent developmental point when a person becomes a self-conscious self, and the authority-bound, conventional way of knowing self and world have fallen victim to the person’s new powers of critical self-awareness. The responsibility of the young adult is to create a vision and to choose the path of one’s own fidelity. Deconstruction has called into question the social contexts which operate as pathways of a young adult’s fidelity. The social pathways available to the young adult all seem questionable and inherently flawed. Claiming and sustaining a personal identity in this environment is a difficult challenge at best, and at worst, leads to confusion, isolation and despair. Often individuals fail to ever move beyond exploration and tentativeness toward a long-term tested commitment.

Our deconstructed culture has left young adults with two ideological options as they struggle to solidify their identity. The one social construct our culture presents almost uncritically is consumerism and the single seemingly legitimate voice in our society is the media. This is the young adult’s first option. What they are selling is a market mythology that defines and values people on the basis of their success,

popularity and power. We are economic men and women, and who we are is what we produce and consume. Vaclav Havel contends that all we have left in the West are "things worth buying." Although we have all been shaped by the market mythology, in the end it fails miserably to satisfy our deepest hungers for meaning or provide us with a vision deserving our long-term fidelity.

The second option young adults have to solidify their identity is to "go it alone." The struggle to form a secure self-identity is at the heart of Richard Rohr's analysis of Western culture's crisis of meaning. Referring to what Joseph Chilton Pierce calls "the cracking of the cosmic egg," Rohr writes, "the symbolic universes, inside of which we lived safely, have largely fallen apart, leaving only the private psyche on its lonely journey toward meaning" (Rohr, 1993:1). What is left is mere episodic meaning. "There is no larger mythic story that explains our lives, and each day we must create some personal moment to make ourselves feel significant or even alive. Each of us has my little story disconnected from any Great Story. That is a lonely and tragic way to live (Rohr, 2)."

Without a legitimate larger story to help us compose our individual story and explain the meaning of our lives, we are left only with "the private psyche on its lonely journey toward meaning." Without a compelling ideology to guide and support, the person is left alone to create meaning from nothing. But, nothing means nothing, unless I decide it means something. The psycho-social process of identity formation is skewed and the responsibility for making meaning falls almost solely on the shoulders of the individual psyche. And so, each day a person is responsible for creating an episode of meaning, "some personal moment" whereby the individual can "feel significant or even alive." There is no outer criteria for support or accountability. There is no scale by which cultures, ideas, persons and moralities can be measured. In a deconstructed world, there is no longer an outer force to help us name who we are.

My argument up to now is I contend, contrary to Erikson, that identity formation is not settled during adolescence. The post-adolescent stage of development is significantly shaped by the ideological framework operative in an individual's social world. Since the contemporary framework is uninviting, unauthentic, and unappealing, for the young adult, the quest for a secure identity becomes a religious search. What does this mean for the Church and its ministry to young adults?

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH

Deconstruction has complicated the young adult struggle of identity formation by taking apart ideological structures and failing to replace them with meaningful substitutes. A meaningful ideology offers young adults a compelling vision of self and world that resonates with

their experience. It fuels their idealism and grounds their vision of adult life which also renews the collective human vision. It strengthens them as they enter into the subsequent developmental challenges of adulthood more fully prepared to reach toward their potential. It is a cornerstone in the psychosocial development of human life.

Although this generation of young adults has struggled, they have managed. They have endured and have found promise in a seemingly barren environment. There is promise in their candor and in their willingness to give generously of themselves. So often they display a penetrating honesty about themselves and their world, their feelings of fear and angst, and their desire and search for something better. Like Scout, the character in Coupland's *Life After God*, many young adults have a secret. The brokenness of the things of their world has been laid bare, everything is flawed and nothing seems sacred. They feel no longer capable of giving, no longer capable of kindness and unable to love. They can no longer go it alone. They need God.

The Church for the first time in many years is in a position to be a place of welcome and hospitality for a generation of young people who are searching. The spiritual hunger that many young adults experience is the result of their being unable to avoid the brokenness of their world and being unable to escape the emptiness of their lives. Their candor is their gift, we need to listen to their honesty, even though we may not always like it.

The Church can take advantage of this generation's openness, and mine the riches of its tradition to give young adults something to believe in. They hunger for a vision that is both compelling and authentic, one they can commit to, and one with the power to name who they are. We in the Church have rich resources within our traditions—the *Imago Dei* which affirms the value and uniqueness of each individual, the incarnation which ties the Spirit and social justice to the earth, Paul's conception of the body of Christ, and the gift of forgiveness which reconciles our estranged relationships—to give young people a positive, unified, comprehensive explanation of self and world. The Church cannot afford to get caught up in management issues of who is in and who is out. Sadly, in response to the social changes and new frontiers that Western society has faced these past decades, some in the Church feel the importance to preach a conversion to moralism, rather than a conversion to mercy.

Generation X, like every generation who has come before them, longs to meet a God of love and mercy. And like every generation they have their pain, struggles and woundedness. They need to know that they are part of a sacred universe, and despite everything that is wrong with our world, this life is ultimately trustworthy. Everything belongs, even our brokenness, and it is through our brokenness that we most

often come to Love. As the Church ministers to this generation of young adults may it be guided by the prophetic words of the songwriter, Leonard Cohen.

“Ring the bells that still can ring,
forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything,
That’s how the light gets in.”

—Anthem

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Margaret O'Brien, O.S.U.

The Spirituality of Young Adults: Handle with Care

Young people in their twenties and thirties are spiritual people. Like the generations who have gone before and those yet to come, the inner yearning for God continues to captivate and perturb the human spirit. The words of St. Augustine still pertain: "Our hearts are restless, O God, until they rest in Thee."

Yet, our young singles and couples are conspicuously absent from the churches. They have separated themselves from organized religion and are "altering the religious landscape of America in the 1990's" (Roof, 1993:1). Who are these younger generations, how is it that they are not in relationship with the institutional Church, and do we, today's church ministers, have what it takes to handle the potential challenges?

WHO ARE THE YOUNG ADULTS?

The focus here is on the generation following the "Baby Boomers," sometimes called the "Baby Busters" or "Generation X." This generation of women and men are now in their late teens, twenties, and early thirties. We cannot underestimate the impact of a changing world on these people. Almost all young adults have been inundated with the sounds and images of television for their entire lives. They have only known the world as a global village and have been able to watch events as they happen anywhere on this planet. Their computer experience on the Internet and World Wide Web has opened heretofore unknown possibilities for relationships, community, and knowledge. This is the most educated generation this country has ever known. A large percentage have completed college degrees and graduate studies, and now may carry responsibility for college loans.

Contemporary industry pays great attention to and is being guided by an ever younger labor force. According to Morningstar Inc., the Chicago fund-tracking service, more than one-third of all mutual funds are run by people in their twenties and thirties, who were actually in grade school at the time of the last bear market, back in the early '70s.

Young adults are mobile, fluid and busy. Careers demand flexibility and complete attention, even as loyalty to specific companies has been eroded by the down-sizing and consolidation of the '80s. For many

young adults, their financial prospects and hopes of achieving the American dream have decreased compared with those of their parents.

Our young people are exploring different lifestyles, having grown up when divorce, separation, and re-marriage were changing the definition of family. Many young adults live with their "significant other," skeptical about the notion of a long-term commitment. Keeping one's options open, life is to be lived in the short-term. In sum, as the pastoral plan for young adults *Sons and Daughters of the Light* states: "They come from diverse cultural, ethnic, educational, vocational, social, political and spiritual realities" (NCCB, 1997:v).

WHERE IS THE CHURCH?

. . . [W]e human beings seem unable to survive, and certainly cannot thrive, unless we can make meaning. We need to be able to make some sort of sense out of things; we seek pattern, order, coherence, and relation in the disparate elements of our experience. We must discover fitting connections between things (Parks, 1986: xv).

While society would want us to believe that our culture is totally secular, the majority of Americans have a faith, a belief system, which is central to their lives and which helps them come to some understanding of what life is all about. So, too, young adults yearn to make sense out of their lives. When they look to their church young adults want some assistance with this inner journey. They want answers to life's questions. They also expect to feel welcome and included by their local church. This inclusion entails the community accepting what young adults have to offer, letting their ideas and experiences be absorbed into the life of the parish.

These young people received their religious education long after the days of Vatican Council II and its call to renewal and adaptation. This historic church event is of minor importance to young adults, who have little understanding of its impact. Because their religious education did occur after the council, however, today's young people do not have the background or the knowledge about their faith that was handed on to earlier generations. They did not memorize the Baltimore Catechism under the watchful eyes of parents, priests and religious. Nor did they experience the Church's strict codes of behavior or the accompanying fear-filled images of God. As the Church struggled with its new identity as the people of God, religious educators were left floundering, unsure how to pass on the tradition.

As a consequence our young people may desire to be Catholic but many are not sure what that means. They are in search of spirituality and not religion. That distinction often causes them to turn away from

an institution which appears forbidding and to look elsewhere to deepen their relationship with God. At times it can seem like the Church will be of little help in the spiritual journey. The institution's rules and regulations, its imposing aura, its authority and strength can cause the searching and confused to believe they are not good enough to enter its doors. Young adults may sense that they do not belong, that the Church would not accept them due to the messiness of their lives. The Christian message that despite our creaturely limitations, indeed even with our sinfulness, we are still the beloved of God; this message has not always been effectively communicated to the newest generation of adults.

WHAT THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY CAN DO

The gift that the community of faith can offer to our young adults is our rich spiritual heritage. This is what the Church is all about. Spirituality is the driving force behind everything that we do. The values and priorities of the People of God arise from their on-going relationship with The One Who Loves Us All.

Our Catholic spirituality has enabled us to develop a powerful outreach to the world's poor, underprivileged, abandoned, widowed, and homeless. The desire to be of service was taught to us by the One who came "that you may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Sacred Scripture gives us a way of life which leads us towards the Creator, which calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and which challenges us to live by values and priorities that are contrary to the popular culture, but which will bring us life's fullness. We, as a Church, have the message which can respond to the searching young adult. We have some of the answers they need and a way to live with the questions that are not easily answered. The spirituality which young adults are looking for is available within the Catholic tradition.

Just as businesses have learned how to respond to the needs of the times, religious leaders and ministers are being challenged to respond to the needs of young adults. So much of commercial advertising reaches beyond an individual's defenses and touches a deeper place, our desire to be loved and included. Local banks invite us to join their family, a car is described as our best friend that will never let us down. People in fast-food commercials often cause the viewer to smile, catch a breath, or even bring a tear to the eye. If business is reaching the spiritual place inside of us then certainly religion should be capable of doing so.

In the October/November 1997 issue of the business magazine *Fast Company*, the resident futurist at a global think tank suggests that the watchwords for the future will be "Downward nobility." He predicts that one will get attention by walking into a room and saying that one is happy or has been happily married for twenty-five years. He continues:

Satisfaction and domestic contentment are the status symbols of the future. The market is supersaturated with physical stuff, so instead of depending on conspicuous consumption, status will hinge on what's scarce—spiritual experiences. That's downward nobility, and it will become a fundamental organizing premise of the desires of humanity (Wacker, 1997:40).

This vision of the future, proposed by a forty-three-year-old Baby Boomer, is contrary to the image so often portrayed in current media. The lead figure in this future society is the storyteller. A new sensitivity develops in which the role of spirituality is acknowledged and applauded. While such a world may remain a dream, the sociologist Andrew Greeley maintains that it is the very stories of Catholicism which continue to appeal to the Catholic imagination. "Catholics remain Catholic because of the Catholic religious sensibility, a congeries of metaphors that explain what human life means, with deep and powerful appeal to the total person" (Greeley, 1994:38). We have stories, the means to pass on the tradition to the younger generations, to tell them the Catholic stories, and to affirm their desire to live their faith with depth and conviction.

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US

During a Young Adult Conference held in 1994 within the diocese of Rockville Centre, the following question was asked: How can parishes make young adults feel welcome? Following are a few responses:

- Provide ways for recent college graduates interested in spirituality to meet each other.
- Homilies need to be directed to our age-group.
- They can validate us as vital and important members of the Church.
- What about those people who cannot be who they are because of the Church's condemnation of their sexuality?
- Have less expectations of what we will do, and invite us.
- Get away from the model of "married, with children in the parish school."
- Provide programs directed to young adults, such as dances, bible study, etc.

From such comments it is evident that these young adults are looking for something. By such statements, they are telling parishes what they are not finding. And when they do not find what they need, our young adults lose the connection with parish life. They make other choices. They may spend Sunday morning in a museum, riding a bicycle in the park, or just doing what they do not have time for during

the rest of the week. The practice of going to church is no longer seen as a priority, and the whole impact of Sunday as a day of worship and a day of rest fades away. Alternatively, the religious option may be to find a place for worship where they are made to feel at home. This might be a college campus, another parish they have heard about, or perhaps a church of another denomination which creates a welcoming atmosphere and speaks to their issues.

Business as usual is not working for the Church any more. Just because the lives of previous generations rotated around the parish complex does not mean that will inevitably be the case in the future. Years ago, the parish was frequently a family gathering place for the entire community and neighborhood. Religious and priests were household figures. Sunday was the day everyone went to church together. Many children went to Catholic school, played under the auspices of a parish-affiliated sport league or social activity, and grew up naming their parish as the place where they lived.

Today, the parish no longer plays such a central role. With their busy lives and being so much on the move, many young adults do not know to which parish they belong and will often claim their parents' parish as their own, even if they live far away. As transients they may not even know who their neighbors are, having little or no relationship with the community where they reside.

If you build it they will come is not the secret to a thriving parish either. This may be the crucial strategy when opening another suburban mall or establishing a new sports stadium. But even these, if they are to stay in business, must meet the needs of the people. It will no longer be enough for parish leaders to discuss strategies and plan programs with the good of the young people in mind. Our young adults need to be on board from the start so that their needs are clearly known.

Who has the time to start another program? is too often heard from busy church ministers. While church leaders are busy about many things, the simple fact is that unless we take time for the next generation we will become "un-busy" quickly. Our congregations will continue to decline as will the numbers of people responding to God's call to serve in church ministry. There is plenty we can do to serve young adults.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN

In order for church ministers to respond to young adults they might begin by getting in touch with their own spirituality. As ministers, we need to name for ourselves the spirituality which is the driving force behind our lives. Then, when young people question the Church and its behavior, its teachings, we can *speak to them from our own lived experience about the God whom they seek*, about the relationship for which they yearn. As part of a contemplative approach to life, we are invited

to recognize the blessings and gifts all around us and within us. St. Paul says we hold a treasure in earthen vessels. But we tend to be more aware of the earthen vessel than the treasure. Our relationship with God reminds us of our goodness, our blessedness. Can we, as people of the Gospel, articulate this to ourselves and to others?

Can we talk about our prayer? What are we like when we come to God? What happens as a result of our interaction with God? What is our image of God at this moment in life? How has the image changed over time? Each of us discovers the ways that assist us in focusing on our inner life, and we have developed, over time, our own personal spirituality. Because of the ups and downs along the way, we have come to terms with our faith. We have owned that faith, that framework which supports our values and priorities.

Young adults yearn to be with people who can and will talk about these crucial, interior struggles. They want to know how we experience God, what we mean when we use the term God's will, how we live with losses and untimely deaths. We can be mentors for them on their journey to God.

Outreach to this generation of young adults needs to *begin with personal invitation*. The Church is not on their computer screens, so the Church must reach out, personally, and invite young people to participate. Bulletin announcements and requests for volunteers after Mass will not elicit an enthusiastic response. Ministers need to develop specific strategies of outreach and inclusion which will incorporate young adults into the life of the local church. A personal invitation to a conversation about the needs of young adults, for example, will be engaging and has the potential to lead to further involvement.

We who are church leaders cannot hand young adults a packaged program and expect them to carry it out. Young adults need to be invited to develop the program themselves. We can be available for support and suggestions, for sharing ideas about previous experience and recommending guidelines which we have found invaluable. However, for young adults to feel ownership of a program or to feel involved and included in the life of their church, their own ideas and suggestions must be incorporated. Such *collaboration with young adults* is a necessary strategy.

As the young adults take ownership of their involvement in parish life, they will minister to each other. This *peer ministry empowers them* to develop their own direction, respond to needs as they arise, listen to, support, and encourage each other. Thus, leadership and relational skills are developed in the context of what it means to be Catholic.

Underlying the development of young adult involvement is the creation of *an atmosphere of welcoming and hospitality*. Like any of us, they need to be greeted and helped to feel at home when they come to

church. Young people would gather at Eucharist if we invited them to participate. They need to see their peers involved as ministers at the celebration. Church leaders ought to invite young adults to be lectors, ministers of the Eucharist, ushers and leaders of song. It must be clear that the parish desires to see young adults present, is willing to include them in a significant way, and recognizes the valuable contributions that they bring.

Customers are welcomed when they walk into a clothing store, are offered coffee when they wait at the garage until the car is ready. Surely fellow Catholics can welcome each other when we gather for weekend worship. Young adults are disappointed that they can come to church and leave again without speaking to anyone, as if they had been at the movies. They, and we, are coming to church to be nourished on the spiritual journey. They need to know that others travel with them and are similarly challenged and plagued by the bumps along the road. A gracious and welcoming community can make the journey much more palatable.

A FEW CAUTIONS

Several points must be remembered as church leaders take up the challenge of ministering to young adults:

- *Put aside your agenda.* While ministers may have great dreams about the participation of young adults in parish life, the needs of the younger generations must be the driving force behind any outreach.
- *Be their resource.* Young adults have limited knowledge about things Catholic. Yet, their urge to be connected with that spirituality is what will draw them. Leaders should be available to participate in conversations and to provide sound theology. Making available the names of speakers, spiritual directors and counselors will emphasize the importance of spiritual companions.
- *Don't do much. Teach a few and let them teach the rest.* Gather support teams together. Find the people you want in leadership roles and ask them to be a part of the team. Talk with a few and show them how they might build an agenda, set a direction, go out of their way to welcome the newcomers. Let them broaden the circle and invite whomever they wish to come to future gatherings. They will be the best ambassadors and, by word of mouth, will pass on to others like themselves the good news about what is happening.
- *Watch your language. Handle symbols with care.* Young adults do not know Church language. They may be versed in computer language, but they are not likely to know what RCIA means, for example. They will not be familiar with the languages of liturgy or

of sacred Scripture. The symbols use by our gathered community are filled with tradition and meaning. Our reflective use of religious language and symbol must be within the comprehension of our young people while remaining faithful to our own Catholic tradition.

PILGRIMS TOGETHER

“Pilgrimages are commonly group movements in which pilgrims of different rank and status must learn to relate supportively at a level of deep faith and love with one another” (Arbuckle, 1996:109). Today’s pilgrims are no different. Perhaps those with more experience can be persuaded that their valuable life stories need to be told to the younger travelers. At the same time, perhaps the young adults can be persuaded to join in the conversation, to listen and question, to reflect and take to heart.

Today’s young singles and couples are not tomorrow’s Church but today’s Church. They are leaders in industry, the teachers of our children, policewomen and fire-fighters. Some are unemployed, raising children on their own, immigrants in a new land, living on military bases miles from home. While they long for meaning in life, and search for inner peace, they do not automatically turn to religious institutions for answers to life’s questions. The Church offers a way of living which can respond to the inner spiritual journey, the young person’s search for God. As God’s gathered people we have the gifts to meet young people’s greatest need. Do we, as church ministers, have the abilities to respond effectively? Now is the time to do so. Let us not hesitate.

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Jeremy Langford

Odyssey of a Young Adult Catholic

This issue of *New Theology Review* hits close to home. As a twenty-seven-year-old Catholic and a member of the so-called Generation X, I join countless others in their twenties and thirties who are keenly interested in exploring with their parish leaders (ordained and lay), families, and friends the many dimensions of what it means to believe in God, cultivate a healthy relationship with the Church, develop a life-giving spirituality, and lead a meaningful, moral life. Belief is never easy—on the one hand it makes no sense and on the other hand nothing else makes sense without it. What to *do* with our belief is an equally vexing problem, for belief requires the best of our brains and the whole of our hearts but finds its true essence and expression in service and action. The dialogue, then, between those who serve and those who are served is crucial.

Far from being an expert on matters of belief, Catholicism, culture, or my generation, I offer here my personal testimony and observations as a young Catholic who has spent a lifetime striving to achieve a closer union with God and the past five years working as an editor in Catholic publishing. I have arranged this essay into three parts: belief, religion, and action. All three are parts of the same whole, not necessarily in the order I have assigned them, and serve as paths to one another.

BELIEF

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis distinguishes between belief and religion by using the following metaphor:

The name *Christians* was first given at Antioch (Acts xi: 26) to “the disciples,” to those who accepted the teaching of the apostles. . . . “Mere” Christianity is . . . like a hall out of which doors open into several rooms. If I can bring anyone into the hall I shall have done what I attempted. But it is in the rooms, not in the hall, that there are fires and chairs and meals. The hall is a place to wait in, a place from which to try the various doors, not a place to live in. . . . It is true that some people may find they have to wait in the hall for a considerable time, while others feel certain almost at once which door they must knock at. . . . When you have reached your own room, be kind to those who have chosen different doors and to those who are still in the hall (1952:11–12).

As many others in Generation X, I have struggled to discern for myself whether or not I believe in God. Lewis's metaphor of the hall of belief leading to the rooms of religion brings to mind Jesus' words to his apostles at the Last Supper, "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms" (John 14:1-2). My own journey into and through the hall toward a particular room has been one of early Catholic initiation; profound experiences of the divine, which I call "God moments"; hours of study and reflection; and the good fortune to have as friends teachers, priests, and mentors.

Getting into the Hall

Catholicism has always been a significant part of who I am. Growing up in the Catholic Church instilled in me a worldview rooted in God and a respect for the sanctity of life. And no matter how admirable or deplorable my participation in the Church has been, I have always seen the world through Catholic eyes. Ingrained in me are *Catholic sensibilities*. I first heard this term in conjunction with a book I edited on the playwright Eugene O'Neill (Shaughnessy, 1996:3). In it the author notes that even though as an adolescent O'Neill disavowed himself of the Church all together, he constantly wrote about Catholic themes—sin and redemption, suffering and joy, forgiveness and reconciliation. No matter how hard he tried, O'Neill could not shake his Catholic view of the world. Neither can I.

Rather than move away from the Church, however, I have worked hard to move toward it. But first I had to get into the hall of belief.

God Moments: A Personal Story

An essential component to my journey of belief has been my ability to identify "God moments"—those occasions when God has been present to me whether I knew it at the time or not—at various points in my life. The God moment that comes to mind now is difficult for me to write about. But time and distance have allowed me a fresh perspective and I see more clearly God's loving hand at work in my life when I needed it most.

When I was ten and my younger brother, Josh, was eight, our parents got divorced. In what seemed a flash my brother and I said goodbye to all that we had known in South Bend, Indiana, and moved with our mother to her hometown of Minneapolis. Life then was frustrating, confusing, tense, and sad.

As the new man of the house by a mere seventeen months, I felt a keen sense of responsibility for my brother and mother. I also felt a deep sense of loss in being so far away from my father. The whole notion of "visitation" was just sinking in and it made no sense. How could I "visit" one of my parents?

As I grew accustomed to my new way of life and got back to the business of being a kid, I started to relax a bit. Once school began I worked hard to meet people and develop friendships. Just as I was starting to feel at home, one of my classmates from the neighborhood caught me after school and asked if we could walk home together. As we approached the modest townhouse my mother was renting, my acquaintance asked if he could meet my family sometime. "Well," I said rather matter of factly, "my parents are divorced and my dad lives in Indiana, where I'm from. But sometime you can meet my mom, brother, and dog if you want." "Oh," he replied before running off, "you're from a broken home." I stood there stunned. Broken home? What could that possibly mean?

Perhaps this neighbor kid—and even the whole world—knew something I was too dumb or naive to understand: children from broken homes do not make it. How could they, the very foundation from which they come gets shattered right before their eyes.

I immediately hated the whole idea of broken home. Josh and I had been told that our parents loved us and that we would be assured good relationships with them both. What was broken about that? Sure, my parents were no longer together, and there were many difficult times, but in the end we were not broken, were we?

As the words "broken home" made their way into the recesses of my wounded psyche, I walked up the stairs toward my bedroom. Upon opening the door I threw myself on my bed and started to cry.

On that lonely afternoon I spent hours staring out onto the parking lot just beneath my window. With the sun high in the sky my eyes traced the outlines of the cracked black top surface and then focused on each object that littered its surface: broken bottles, rusty cans, old newspapers, discarded toys. When that became too much I followed the useless rain gutter along the side of the leaky garage up to the roof. More litter, including a shattered mirror. The whole scene provided a perfect metaphor for how I was feeling inside.

I must have studied the parking lot for hours because I only snapped out of my quandary when I noticed the sun was setting. At that moment I felt an incredible sense of peace. The beautiful hues of orange, red, and yellow filled the sky and bathed everything in a majestic light. My mind turned back to the idea that I was from a broken home. In that instant, in my ten-year-old way, I recognized that my home would only be broken if I allowed it to be. Somehow I realized that I was more than I seemed, bigger than my situation.

Refixing my gaze on the garage roof, my eye again caught the shards of the broken mirror, now glowing in the sun's light. Like the mirror, the litter on the roof had been transformed into a thing of beauty, providing once again the perfect metaphor for how I was feeling.

Looking back now I see that as lonely as I felt at that crucial juncture in my young life, I was anything but alone. In that God moment I was able to see beyond the immediate circumstances and know that my life would be what I made it. My life has been filled with countless God moments, which have had a deep impact on my belief in and desire to pursue a path toward God.

My Epiphany

I remember clearly when I finally decided that I believe in God. It was just over five years ago. During my senior year at the University of Notre Dame, I was sitting in one of my upper-level philosophy classes listening to a detailed explanation of Immanuel Kant's *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. In this work Kant seeks to establish the supreme principle of morality, which can be summed up in his famous categorical imperative: Always act in such a way that you can also will that the maxim of your action should become a universal law. Kant claims that this is "the one supreme principle for the whole field of morals, including the philosophy of law (politics) as well as the moral requirements of duties to oneself to maintain one's personal integrity and of duties to others in one's association with them (ethics)" (1981:v).

In the midst of taking notes I suddenly wrote "I cannot not believe in God." In other words, "I believe in God." The whole idea of subscribing to a "supreme principle" of morality based solely in logic made no sense to me. It seemed clear that morality and ethics must be rooted in a supreme being, not a supreme principle. As shocking as it was, I had finally resolved my quest to decide if I believed in God or not—right in the middle of a philosophy class!

Throughout college I adored philosophy because it presupposes no other given than a thirst for knowledge. Theology, on the other hand, always frustrated me because it necessarily presupposes a *theo*, God, and I was never able to profess confidently a belief in God. On an intellectual level, belief made no sense. Yet in my heart I knew I believed in God; I simply had to tell my mind.

While I know that belief is ultimately not a matter of the mind, I remember feeling grateful when the words "I cannot not believe in God" finally came. A whole new world broke open to me.

Opening the Catholic Door

Once through the hall of belief, I entered the room of the Catholic Church. I had been in this room many times before, but not by my own choice. Like so many, my Catholic upbringing left me little room for questioning. If I took in what was taught, I had all the answers I needed. Just shut up and listen, memorize and regurgitate. But I have never had any use for such passive Catholicism. Consequently, I never felt

much attachment to the Church. It is only in recent years that I have worked hard to claim my Catholic heritage for my own, to dive into it, study it, argue with it, and rest in it.

Navigating the River of Life Through the Eyes of Belief

In his wonderful book *Life on the Mississippi*, Mark Twain tells of his love for the river and his journey to becoming an expert steamboat pilot. Twain's description of how he came to see and know the river provides a perfect analogy for how we might come to see and know the sacred that flows through everyday life.

From his earliest days Twain had one permanent ambition: to be a steamboatsman. Other ambitions of all sorts came and went throughout his childhood, but he never lost his focus on the river and his dream of someday navigating a ship on it. Steamboat captains were the modern-day equivalent of "cool"—they had a way with people, they were adventurers, and they were paid handsomely for their skills. As enticing as these things were then or are today, however, Twain's passion ran deeper. Quite simply, he loved the river and wanted to be part of it.

He eventually ran away from home, vowing that he would not return until he was a pilot. After leaving Hannibal, Missouri, Twain made his way to Cincinnati and soon thereafter boarded a vessel named the *Paul Jones* bound for New Orleans. While on the ship Twain made a deal with the ship's captain, Mr. Bixby—if the seasoned pilot would teach him to navigate the river the young Twain would pay his mentor five hundred dollars out of his first wages upon graduating.

After many trips up and down the river, Twain realized just how hard it was to navigate it skillfully. He filled his notebook with the names of towns, "points," bars, islands, bends, reaches, and so on, but sadly none of it remained in his head. Each time he thought he knew enough to at least navigate the ship in the daylight, Mr. Bixby would test him and show him that there was still much to learn. If Twain knew where a snag lay hidden in the distance, Bixby would ask him to describe the shape of a distant sandbar from memory or to rattle off the depth of the water in various points along the river.

Frustration eventually set in, and Twain threw up his hands saying, "When I get so I can do that, I'll be able to raise the dead, and then I won't have to pilot a steamboat to make a living. I want to retire from this business. I want a slush-bucket and a brush; I'm only fit for a roustabout. I haven't got brains enough to be a pilot; and if I had I wouldn't have the strength to carry them around, unless I went on crutches" (1990:59).

The stubborn Mr. Bixby would not let his cub pilot give in and assured him one day he would be able to read the river. Sure enough, the eager pilot finally got it, saying:

It turned out to be true. The face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book—a book that was a dead language to the uneducated passenger, but which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice. And it was not a book to be read once and thrown aside, for it had a new story to tell every day (63–64).

In many ways Catholicism is the study of how to navigate the river of life and get the most out of it. We have to fill our notebooks with teachings, principles, experiences, inspirations, and interpretations to see better God's loving presence in our lives and the world around us. Sometimes it can be overwhelming. When we finally get it, as Twain got the river, the sacred lays itself open to us in ways that are "dead to the uneducated passenger."

RELIGION

Religion and spirituality in America are big news these days. While people are much more comfortable saying they are spiritual rather than religious, perhaps because the former is more ambiguous than the latter, there is plenty of room for both.

As a Catholic publisher I have tracked with intense fascination the explosion of interest in all things related to the sacred. A quick survey of the *New York Times* bestseller list at the time of this writing (September 21, 1997) reveals eight "religious" hardcover and paperback nonfiction titles in the top spots: *Conversations with God: Book 1*; *Conversations with God: Book 2*; *The Bible Code, A Simple Path*; *Simple Abundance*; *Kitchen Table Wisdom*; *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*; and *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*. Past lists have featured *A History of God*; *Care of the Soul*; *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*; *The Celestine Prophecy*; *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*; and *God: A Biography* as dominant national bestsellers. I had the extraordinary privilege of acquiring and editing Joseph Cardinal Bernardin's *The Gift of Peace*, which remained on the *Times* bestseller list for over four months in 1997.

Publishers Weekly, the bible for anyone in the book industry, calls religion the "publishing success story" of the '90s. The American Booksellers Association said sales for religious books increased 92.2 percent between 1991 and 1994. In 1995 Barnes & Noble increased its stock of religion titles by 35 percent. Last year 37 percent of all commercial audiotapes produced dealt with religion or spiritual issues.

But it does not take a publisher to see that people are hungry for the sacred, religion, and spirituality. Just turn on the television or look at the cover of the news magazines in the check-out line at the supermarket. Cover stories from the small collection of *Time* magazines I have saved over the past two years include (in order of appearance) "Is

the Bible Fact or Fiction?" "Faith and Healing," "Can We Still Believe in Miracles?" "The Right Hand of God," "The Search for Jesus," "And God Said . . . The Debate Over the Meaning of Genesis," "Jesus On-line," and "Does Heaven Exist?" *Newsweek* magazine has also run its fair share of religious cover stories including more recently "The Mystery of Prayer" and "The Meaning of Mary."

God Goes Prime Time

In the September 22, 1997, issue of *Time* magazine, reporter Joel Stein says, "This season the networks are paving a multilane highway to heaven with an unprecedented eight shows with religious and spiritual themes" (95). Four of these shows are returning after successful debut's last year: *Touched By an Angel*; *7th Heaven*; *Soul Man*; and *Promised Land*. Joining them are *Good News*; *Teen Angel*; *The Visitor*; and the hyped and most controversial of the newcomers, *Nothing Sacred*.

What gives? Stein argues, "As the millennium approaches and baby boomers begin to confront their own mortality, people have begun to seek out the comfort of religion in all aspects of their lives—even on TV" (96). So where does Gen X fit into all this?

Talkin' 'Bout My Generation . . . X

Getting a handle on Generation X is no easy task. Not even for one smack dab in the middle of it. When Douglas Coupland coined the term *Generation X* in his 1991 novel by the same name, he made famous the idea that those of us born between 1964 and 1977 are slackers, cynics, and drifters.

As the children of the Baby Boomers, we became the Baby Busters. And as bearers of the torch for the new generation (or as Pepsi calls us, generation neXt), we changed the rules and did things our way. That "way" has gotten a bad rap, which, deserved or not, begs the question, Where do Xers come from?

Understanding our parents' generation is essential to understanding our own. In her book *Re-Discovering the Sacred: Spirituality in America*, Phyllis Tickle, religion editor at *Publisher's Weekly*, provides this assessment:

Just as Hiroshima's crucial influence on our times is obvious to everyone who cares to look, so too is Vietnam's. . . . The one clear lesson that we as a citizenry got out of Vietnam was pervasive as well as central: Never trust authority—not its morals or its integrity or (God help us) its edicts, directions, and explanations. . . . No authority, ever. Period. After Nam, Nixon, and that string of assassinations at home and abroad, the individual's perception of right and wrong, do and don't do, believe and don't believe became the

litmus test for commitment and . . . also for moral responsibility and judgment. (1995:22–23)

And the Boomers' relationship to God, religion, and spirituality? Tickle continues:

. . . because they as baby boomers were/are many more in number, greater in influence, and more enfranchised financially than any other segment of late-twentieth-century America, their distrust of external authority has made all the difference in contemporary America's attitudes toward the sacred and all things depending from it—morality, spirituality, faith, theology, and most assuredly, religion itself (23).

As the descendants of the Boomers, we Busters derive our attitudes from our forebears and face our own challenges in light of what we have learned. What has been the Xers' experience?

My generation has grown up with, among other things, the recession of the early 1980s, the 1987 stock market crash after a growth period, the recession of 1990–91, an unprecedented divorce rate, the advent of latchkey kids, homelessness, a bankrupt social security system, holes in the ozone layer, AIDS, crack, MTV, the Internet, downsizing and layoffs, cutbacks in federal funding for students, and the lingering threat of a multi-trillion-dollar federal deficit.

In the face of all this, we became jaded. We have experienced many changes in social, moral, religious, and cultural standards unlike the stability which marked the childhood of Baby Boomers. It is difficult to put down deep roots when everything is changing so rapidly (Tomaszek, December 1995–January 1996:8).

Yet in the six years since Coupland named us, something dramatic has happened to members of my generation. "Slapped with the label Generation X, they've turned the tag into a badge of honor. They are X-citing, X-igent, X-pansive. They're the next big thing," argues Margot Hornblower in her *Time* cover story "Great Xpectations" (1997:58).

The forty-five million Xers alive today are comprised of a higher percentage of college graduates than any previous generation and represent \$125 billion in annual purchasing power per year. Rather than being lazy and listless, we are ambitious and competitive. While the nearly seventy-eight million Boomers still outnumber us, manufacturers, politicians, churches, military recruiting offices, moviemakers, magazines, and so on have their sights set on the elusive and almost uncategorizable Xers.

So what does Gen X make of religion and spirituality? One of the Xers interviewed for the *Time* article says, "The soul of Gen X is amorphous, intangible, elusive. That's why I like the term X: fill in the blanks."

Fill in the blanks indeed. While there is a certain appeal to the limitless possibilities X can represent, there is also a danger, especially when it comes to the soul, that people of my generation will avoid naming the unknown variable or will name it something that is less than life-giving and healthy.

Where does God fit into the equation? "He doesn't," Friedrich Nietzsche would say, "God is dead as a matter of cultural fact and therefore all things are possible." I believe the exact opposite, God lives and therefore all things are possible. I think a good percentage of Xers would agree with me. The great question remains: How do we reach the soul of Gen X?

Generation(s) of Seekers

In 1993 Wade Clark Roof, a professor of religion and society at the University of California at Santa Barbara, published a seminal work entitled *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation*. Roof documents the rise of spirituality and religion in contemporary America among those adults most shaped by the experience. Because of his research Boomers have become known as the Seeker Generation.

We have already discussed some of the reasons Boomers are seeking, primary among them being that they are looking to plug themselves into life-giving systems and institutions such as the Church and religious traditions, watered down as they may be, after a long hiatus from allowing any external authority into their lives.

But I contest that Boomers are not the only generation of seekers. Generation X is also hungry for meaning and is certainly not oblivious to the value of the spiritual quest. To miss this point is to miss reaching a generation ready to talk.

Admittedly, things are different for Xers than they were for Boomers. Researcher George Barna, author of *Baby Busters: The Disillusioned Generation*, has said, "In terms of evangelicalism, we have a generation coming up that doesn't speak the same language, doesn't go to the same places, doesn't have the same needs, and isn't looking to Christianity to answer their spiritual concerns. We either change or we lose them" (Tapia, 1994).

In *Modern Liturgy* magazine, Thomas Tomaszek, a campus minister at Alverno College in Milwaukee, offers some excellent ideas on how to reach Generation X. He says that liturgies need to (1) celebrate diversity and take into account that Xers are more diverse ethnically, culturally, and economically than any generation that has preceded it; (2) appeal visually and musically to a generation that grew up in the age of multimedia; (3) appeal to Xers' desire for community and family in an age when the breakdown of the family and community runs rampant; and

(4) provide homilies that address the real-life issues we face today (December 1995–January 1996:7–9).

ACTION

Members of Generation X, or any generation for that matter, rightly desire ministers, parish leaders, and the like to reach out to them, but they also need to take an active role in fulfilling the goals of their seeking and searching. Being attracted to religious tradition, ritual, and spiritual heritage because these things bring us closer to God, others, and ultimately ourselves is a good start. But it is not enough. Belief and religion require action.

So I Believe in God, Now What?

As I reflect on my belief in God and participation in the Catholic Church, I cannot help but to see the hand of God at work in my life. I have worked hard, yes. But I have also been blessed with many opportunities and experiences that go beyond luck into the realm of providence. The key to it all has been keeping an open mind, embracing the journey of life, and being grateful for the gifts I have been given.

When I graduated from Notre Dame, I found myself constantly discouraged by the dreadful lack of good preaching and effective liturgy outside of campus. I know that I was spoiled by the intimate dorm Masses, strong sense of community, and wonderful care the priests took in addressing us students, but nonetheless I was astounded that I could not find something akin in my community at large. So I stopped going to Mass.

After nine months of working in a bookstore and as an editor for my family's publishing company, I began applying for jobs in Catholic publishing. Though I was still figuring out my relationship to the Church, my background in English and philosophy as well as my interest in theology seemed like a good fit for Catholic publishing houses.

I landed a job at Loyola Press and moved to Chicago. Immediately I felt the Catholic presence in the life of the city. From time to time I would venture out to parishes in Chicago, but none ever really held my interest. My real Catholic education was taking place through my work as an editor.

Finally two years ago I met Fr. John Cusick, another of the essayists in this issue and a dear friend of mine, and through him found my way to Old Saint Patrick's where he preaches. St. Pat's is located just west of the Loop in downtown Chicago. It is not in a neighborhood and requires some effort to get there. Yet, people from all over the city and suburbs flock to the church in droves, including many members of Generation X. The preaching is good, the music is good, the community is good. So I go to Mass regularly these days.

Through St. Pat's, its pastor Fr. Jack Wall, along with Father Cusick and Kate DeVries, who direct the Young Adult Ministry office of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I have also become involved in the life of the parish and the archdiocese. I have been a speaker at various programs, including the annual month-long Theology-on-Tap series featuring forty speakers and serving forty-three parishes throughout the Chicago and Joliet dioceses. I have also read at Mass and offered ideas on ways to serve the community of people who attend St. Pat's. This year I became a board member of the Young Leaders of Old St. Pat's, an organization dedicated to fostering social and professional relationships, providing spiritual nourishment, heightening the awareness of the pertinent issues of our community, and cultivating the leadership skills of its members.

These past two years have been wonderful. My weekly participation in Mass and the parish programs have given me a chance to meet many terrific people of all ages who, like me, are working to put their belief into action. From my experience I can say that Generation X is well represented in this archdiocese and that far from being slackers and aimless whiners, we are dedicated and committed to putting our belief into action.

When faced recently with a decision whether or not to stay in Catholic publishing, I reaffirmed my commitment to acquiring and developing books that make a positive difference in people's lives and accepted a job with Sheed & Ward, a division of the National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company, Inc. As one who is in the midst of questioning and exploring my faith, I hope to bring a much-needed perspective to the world of Catholic publishing.

Now what? As I understand it, the ultimate goal of Catholicism is to find such things as meaning, peace, happiness, freedom, and loving relationships on this part of the journey as well as at the end. In the course of living my belief, I wait in joyful hope for all that is to come.

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Morality and the Next Generation: Amoral, Immoral, or Morally Different?

Recently I attended a book discussion in conjunction with the Catholic Theological Society of America's annual convention. Those on the dais were prominent scholars, *all* in their forties or fifties, holding forth on ethical issues related to "our generation" vis-à-vis church hierarchy and authority. The audience too was heavily children of the 1950s and '60s, or even earlier. I find this to be an accurate demographic description of many Catholic theological, ecclesial, and religious education gatherings in these waning years of the last decade of the twentieth century (Cateura, 1989; Kennedy, 1988; Roof, 1993).

One of the speakers, an ethicist, scholar, and mother of five, called our attention to the graying and balding nature of the assembly and to the valid, but time-contexted content of the discussion. The distinctiveness of Christian ethics; the role of church authority in the quest for truth; the proportionalist debate over moral norms; feminist consciousness and the ordination of women—all these are critical questions for baby-boomer Catholics in dialogue, often debate, with an older generation or at least an older mindset within the Church and its hierarchy. Not to diminish the importance of these ongoing, mutually respectful struggles, the speaker suggested that her children, the next generation, "could care less" about many of these issues. For the most part, they are not where we are concerning the Church, morality, or the future.

The task for this generation of parents, clergy, pastoral ministers, theologians, educators, and catechists would seem to be more about how to pass on the Catholic-Christian faith and "way of life" (i.e., morality) to the next generation than about resolving our own rightful, long-standing generational issues of freedom, authority, dilemma ethics, and gender equality. While still involved in constructive criticism and ongoing ecclesial reformation, how do "we" inspire, mentor, and influence the moral and faith life of "them," the next generation? Who is this "them"? Do they need our help? Has the evolution and/or revolution in Catholic moral theology of the post-Vatican II era failed? Or, is it yet to be tried and fully implemented?

With some degree of fear and trepidation, I take up the mantle of the prophet and moral pundit for this brief overview of the next generation and its moral terrain. Others have worn this mantle before with

similar qualms about their ability to prognosticate the ethical shape of the upcoming new millennium (P. McCormick, 1993; R. McCormick, 1993, 94). First, we will take a look at young adults today, that generation known variously as “Generation X” or “Thirteeners,” those in their twenties to forties, born after the post-War baby-boom of the Truman/Eisenhower years (Coupland, 1991; Howe/Strauss, 1992). Are they truly one generation? Are “twenty-somethings” of the Bush/Clinton decade really kindred spirits to those-over-thirty of the Reagan era? Stereotypes can be dangerous, but does this “generation” have its own ethos and earmarks? Second, we will examine briefly the post-Vatican II trends and movements within Catholic moral theology to see where this discipline, the study of morality, has come and is going. Finally, we will attempt to marry or merge the two. How does contemporary scholarly and pastorally-sensitive moral reflection intersect or conflict with, influence or miss-the-mark of so-called “Generation X”? There seems to be more hope for convergence and conversion than fundamentalistic doom-sayers may fear or predict.

YOUNG ADULTS IN THE 1990s: WHO ARE THEY?

For those who went through the Great Depression of the 1930s, the value of a dollar, the security of a job, and the support of one’s family and community are treasured lessons learned in the “school of hard knocks.” For veterans of World War II or Korea and those civilians who remember rationing and war bond rallies, values like patriotism, self-sacrifice, and freedom are central and ring true. For children of post-War Eisenhower prosperity, the Cold War, and the 1960s Age of Aquarius, a tenuous combination of idealism, materialism, and cynical realism seems to have evolved. But what about the generation born in the 1960s and ’70s, children of us baby-boomers? What do young adults today hold dear? How has this generation been influenced by growing up during the presidencies of Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton, as well as the pontificate of John Paul II?

In official church and religious education circles the term “young adults” is used to designate those in their twenties and thirties. Unfortunately, the same term is more often used in common parlance for adolescents and teen-agers, in an attempt to elevate their status and to differentiate them from prepubescent children. In some sense, there seem to be some common sociological threads running through all three of these decades of young adults—adolescents, twenty-somethings, and those in their thirties. They are all children of the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate, post-Vatican II era. At the same time it would be unfair to lump together the thirty-somethings approaching middle age (whose childhood is more heavily shaded by the consumerist ’80s of Ronald Reagan) with those in their twenties (whose adolescence was

colored more by the end of the Cold War and the mainstreaming of personal computers) with today's teens (who are now bursting into puberty as well as into cyberspace and onto the information super-highway). Between and among the decades there are admittedly shades of difference and distinction.

Just as there is no commonly accepted name designation for this generation, so too the pundits and scholars differ widely in their evaluation of the earmarks or traits which best summarize or synthesize them as a subset of the culture. One description, focused on the lower end of this three-decade spectrum, suggests:

As they shield their eyes with Ray-Ban Wayfarer sunglasses, and their ears with Model TCD-D3 Sony Walkmen, today's teens and twenty-somethings present to Boomer eyes a splintered image of brassy looks and smooth manner, of kids growing up too tough to be cute, of kids more comfortable shopping or playing than working or studying. Ads target them as beasts of pleasure and pain who have trouble understanding words longer than one syllable, sentences longer than three words. . . . Newsclips document a young-adult wasteland of academic nonperformance, political apathy, suicide pacts, date-rape trials, wilding, and hate crimes (Howe/Strauss, 1992:74).

Surely there is "some" truth in this unflattering overview. Slackers, whiners, shoppers, "mallers," children-of-divorce, and latchkey kids are some of the elements associated with young adults reared in the affluent late-1970s, '80s, and '90s. Raised on fast food and in the ambiance of the burgeoning computer age, they are used to immediate response, glitz, speed, conspicuous consumption, ready access, and fairly instant gratification. Young people today are staying in school longer, maturing slower, often living at home indefinitely, while simultaneously expecting to enter the job market immediately after graduation fairly high on the ladder of corporate pay and prestige. Frequently they live in socio-economic ghettos, yuppie condos or gentrified neighborhoods, associating almost exclusively with "their own kind," despite the increased multicultural demographics and potential of the '90s global village (Giles, 1994).

Some of this negative critique bespeaks the inevitable hand-wringing analysis of one generation about the shortcomings of the next. Despite our pledges not to adopt parental phrases like "in our day we didn't ____" or "what's this world coming to?" older critics tend to harp on the shortcomings or perceived lacunae of those who come after them. Sociologically every generation does a certain amount of moaning about the music, mores, and manners (or lack thereof) of the younger generation.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

However, I propose five threads or traits that I believe say something about what many young adults share in common, some broad brushstrokes about those who will be in their mid-life prime as we enter the new millennium. I offer these without ascribing praise or blame. They reflect core aspects of the peer-cultural terrain in which members of "Generation X" will have to do their own moral reflection and ethical decision-making. Young adults today tend to be: (1) bright, though not necessarily wise; (2) instinctively respectful of authority figures, but not of their advice; (3) focused on short-term goals and immediate satisfaction; (4) morally inconsistent; and (5) spiritually hungry, altruistic, and seeking to "belong," though somewhat naively so.

1. *Educated but Wise?*

Young adults today tend to be bright and fairly broadly educated. Despite the peaks and valleys of national test results, those educated in the last three decades have an impressive, multifaceted range of knowledge. In addition to the three Rs, this generation has had far greater exposure to science, math, computer technology, the humanities, languages, geography and global issues than previous generations. However, the downside of this broadly-based education seems to be a certain shallowness of insight. Some suggest that while young people today have more knowledge, more data, more factual information, they may be less prepared to deal with it in terms of human relationships, depth or perceptive insights, and genuine philosophical wisdom.

"Delayed adolescence" seems to be related to this phenomenon. While the onset of puberty and the imparting of information happens earlier these days, it is not clear that young people in recent decades have been as able to accept the challenge of maturity and responsibility at the same accelerated rate (Coupland, 1991; Adler, 1994). Despite the breadth of their education, the depth of their insight and experience seems disproportionately superficial at times. Broader is not deeper. While young adults in every age tend to be a bit impetuous and unnuanced in their reflections on life, this generation seems even less prepared to accept and/or cope with life's disappointments and trials. *Formation* seems not to have kept apace with *information*.

2. *Attitude Toward Authority*

Unlike children of the 1960s, who came to somewhat cynical maturity under the clouds of assassinations, Watergate, and Vietnam, young adults in the 1990s seem far less suspicious of authority, far more accepting of the good will and sincerity of those in charge. This seems true of their view of political figures like Bill Clinton or George Bush, of

entrepreneurs like Bill Gates and Donald Trump as well as about popular spiritual icons as diverse as Mother Teresa, Mother Angelica, Billy Graham, and the Dali Lama. The anti-authority penchant of the 1960s has given way to an almost naive acceptance or appreciation of authority. Perhaps this has been spawned in part by the security of growing up during the long and largely stable 1980s, the decade of paternal figures Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II.

At the same time that young adults seem to accept and even appreciate the integrity and sincerity of world leaders, sports and entertainment figures, and other successful persons as potential “heroes,” the next generation seems less prone to listen closely to them, to engage their ideas, or to adopt and endorse their values. For example, despite the fact that nearly a million young people flocked to Paris for World Youth Day in August 1997, and despite their enthusiastic welcome for Pope John Paul II, akin to the adulation accorded a rock star or other pop culture idol, they seem less prone to accept his teachings and admonitions. The sexual mores of these same young people, their consumerist lifestyles, and minimal sense of social justice seem to be little influenced by the Pope’s impassioned pleas for abstinence and marital fidelity, greater simplicity of lifestyle, and heightened global and social concern. In short, while many young adults today admire and respect powerful and influential community leaders, at the same time they tend not to heed or inculcate the wisdom and advice of those same revered icons (Bellah et al., 1991; Carter, 1993; Hughes, 1995).

3. Short-Term Focus

Many young adults, in their twenties and thirties, seem overly focused on finding personal fulfillment in a rather short-term sense, focusing on immediate pleasures and “happiness” of a rather emotional and shallow variety. Their baby-boomer parents, who had been coddled and somewhat spoiled by their own parents of the Depression and World War II generations, have definitely tried to give this generation any and all advantages—materially, educationally, and socially. In a sense a silver-spooned generation has given birth to a platinum-spooned next generation, steeped in materialism, instant gratification, and a yearning for a kind of smiley-face happiness, sadly simplistic and inevitably unrealistic (Giles, 1994; Hughes, 1995).

Another way of saying this might be that young adults today generally do not deal well with “no,” with putting off present satisfaction for a greater yield in the long run, with delayed reward or even self-sacrifice minus personal gratification. This generation seems somewhat short on Audie Murphy-esque heroes who would fall on a grenade to save their comrades. Personal integrity—long-term fidelity to oneself and to others—seems in somewhat short supply. While ultimately

it may be the fault or responsibility of well-meaning parents and grandparents who spoiled them, the next generation seems not to be terribly fire-tried, battle-tested, or ready for “the long haul” (Bellah et al., 1985, 1991; Sparks 1996).

4. Moral Inconsistency

This earmark requires some *sitz im leben* or situating the question. There was a time in the pre-hippie, pre-Woodstock, pre-Kennedy era when young adults knew that sexual promiscuity and other libertine practices were wrong, wrong for others, and themselves. That does not mean that young people did not do them from time to time. Still, if it was wrong for others, it was wrong for me too. Guilt feelings, remorse, and frequent access to sacramental confession were often the remedies sought following inordinate passion, personal indiscretions, or dishonest deeds. In short, the World War II and Eisenhower generations tended to be conservatively morally consistent.

In the same way, with the dawn of the Age of Aquarius, the influence of the Haight-Ashbury subculture, and the British pop music invasion, a certain licentious “do your own thing” freedom swept through the young adults of the 1960s and ’70s. “You do your thing and I’ll do mine” led to a certain well-meaning but wishy-washy situation ethics, in which meaning well and personal sincerity seemed to be the primary moral benchmarks. Still, in such a young adult subculture there was a certain liberal moral consistency. License for oneself was matched by license for others—“I won’t tread on you and you don’t tread on me.”

What seems at odds today is that many young adults have combined the worst of both eras in a contradictory hybrid—license for me, and harsh judgment about others, particularly those “different” from me and my kind of folks. Thus, fairly widespread nonmarital sex, acceptance of contraception, pervasive materialism, heavy alcohol use, and some flirtation with recreational drugs all seem, in some circles, to be endorsed as morally neutral or even justified for “us,” the middle class or gentrified younger generation. At the same time, within this same group many are quick to judge rather harshly gay and lesbian persons and their lifestyle choices, the underprivileged and those on welfare, immigrants, and others whose sexual or socio-economic status seems threatening, traditionally immoral, or alien to one’s own clique and experience.

Moral consistency or congruency seems lacking for many young adults. Skinheads, white supremacists, and similar “radical” groups bespeak this even more vividly. Liberty for us, judgment and condemnation for them; what is good for the goose is *not* good for the gander. This seems especially operative along gender, sexual orientation, racial, ethnic, and socio-economic lines.

5. *Spiritual Hunger*

A genuine sign of hope is that young adults today seem ripe, primed for personal inspiration, open to genuine spiritual experience as distinct from repetitious religious exercises. There seems to be a genuine spiritual hunger across the culture that is particularly focused on young adults and their boomer-generation parents. The flourishing of new age spirituality; the science fiction craze; renewed interest in angels, miracles, ethereal phenomena, and the occult; the popularity of spiritual books by authors like M. Scott Peck, Thomas Moore, the Pope, and Kathleen Norris; the influx of converts to the Catholic Church, fundamentalist churches, cults, and so-called mega-churches—all bespeak a middle-aged *and younger* culture alive with spiritual hunger (Downey, 1997; Carter, 1993; Kantrowitz, 1994; Ostling, 1993; Roof, 1993; Ludwig, 1996; Coupland, 1994).

At the same time, once on fire with the Spirit, these seekers seem genuinely altruistic, open to a broadened worldview and a greater social justice consciousness. Once made conscious of the lived experiences and injustices endured by others, boomers and their young adult offspring seem ready and willing to act decisively—personally, politically, and socially (Bellah et al., 1985, 1991). Often their quick initial judgments about others, their seemingly closed minds and closed hearts, are more a matter of innocence or ignorance than a considered judgment or hardened conviction (Sparks, 1996).

In the same breath, this *conscientization* process seems for many to be a communal experience, encountered in a retreat weekend of some sort, a prayer group or small faith community, some profound experience of “belonging.” Once touched and empowered, community members, with a heightened sense of spiritual strength and social altruism, are truly a potent force for good (Downey, 1997; Giles, 1994; Kantrowitz, 1994; Poorman, 1993). Still, such first fervor runs the risk of quickly being extinguished because of the third trait noted above, short-term goals and the desire for immediate success. Thus, the spiritual hunger that is afoot runs the risk of being a bit naïve, superficial, and somewhat short-lived.

MORAL THEOLOGY COMES OF AGE

For a brief span let us lay aside the question of the next generation and take a look at where we have come and where we are in terms of contemporary Catholic moral theology. Has the scholarly reflection of the Vatican II era paved the way for any kind of meaningful dialogue or rapprochement with Generation X?

In the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the bishops of the world prophetically called for a renewal of Christian moral consciousness and scholarship:

Special care should be given to the perfecting of moral theology. Its scientific presentation should draw more fully on the teaching of holy Scripture and should throw light on the exalted vocation of the faithful in Christ and their obligation to bring forth fruit in charity for the life of the world (*Optatam totius*, 1965: #16).

Fortunately, this renewal of Catholic moral theology and wider Christian morality was already underway. It had begun in the theology schools of Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century (most notably Tübingen), but came to fuller expression in the decades surrounding the Second Vatican Council.

It is not altogether a caricature to say that moral theology, following the Council of Trent in the 1500s, gradually was reduced from its breadth and depth in the era of Aquinas to a mere skeleton of its former self, following the neo-scholastic attempt at recovery and “simplification” of the Thomistic synthesis. Add to this the fact that moral theology as a discipline became primarily a seminary tract for priestly confessors, and it is not surprising that most pre-Vatican II moral discussions focused on specific moral norms, act choices, primarily negative choices, and the gravity of potential sins committed (Häring, 1978; Mahoney, 1987).

What seemed to be lacking in much of Catholic moral theology prior to the Council—due to a lengthy period of Neo-Scholastic emphasis on a somewhat static view of natural law and act-oriented norms—was a specifically or distinctive Christian flavor. It was as if Jesus Christ were more a moral exemplar and philosopher than the incarnate Son of God and Redeemer. Nature and reason reigned, while grace and God’s redemptive action seemed secondary, even superfluous. It was the task of moral theologians of the 1950s and thereafter to regain a better balance, a deeper sense of what might be explicitly “Christian” about morality, while not losing the broader global and inter-religious ethical dialogue, which the natural law tradition affords (Curran, 1987, 1992; R. McCormick, 1989, 1993, 94).

The Time of Renewal

Among Catholic scholars of this period primacy of place arguably goes to Redemptorist Bernard Häring, whose ground-breaking three-volume work, *The Law of Christ*, incorporates a broader, deeper, and more distinctively Christian ethical vision (Häring, 1961, 1963, 1966). Historical documents acknowledge the profound influence Father Häring (and fellow Redemptorist Domenico Capone) had on the conciliar text *Gaudium et spes*, the Church in the Modern World document (McDonough, 1997). Häring helped to broaden Catholic moral theology from an almost exclusive focus on natural law and the morality of

specific acts, to a fuller examination of what it means to live *The Law of Christ* or, as he later rephrased it, to live *Free & Faithful in Christ* (Häring, 1978). So too, Jesuit Fr. Josef Fuchs, a peer scholar and contemporary of Father Häring, has made significant contributions to this ongoing renewal of Catholic moral theology (Fuchs, 1965, 1987). Some of the earmarks of such a renewed Catholic-Christian ethic include: (1) greater attention to the Christian story or stance; (2) a more personalist or holistic notion of what it means to be human and humane; (3) a deeper sense of the relational nature of human life; and (4) a more historically conscious, ongoing sense of moral discovery, both in theory and pastoral practice (Connors/P. McCormick, 1998; Curran, 1987, 1992; Gula, 1997; John Paul II, 1993; R. McCormick, 1989, 1993, 94; P. McCormick, 1993; Poorman, 1993; Sparks, 1996).

In a recent textual discussion of the Redemptorists' contribution to Vatican II, William McDonough makes a convincing case for the fact that this task of fashioning a renewed moral method, that is both true to the Christian tradition as well as pastorally sensitive to nuances of each case and context, is not a *fait accompli*. He argues that while Häring and the Council Fathers ushered in the concept of a creative tension or juxtaposition between objective moral values and situational pastoral application, there is much work to be done to make this a truly synthetic method of moral discernment. The relationship is still a bit vague as to how to reconcile three core factors: (a) magisterially-defined moral insights, (b) the further input of human experience (especially of those most involved in the moral situation under discussion), (c) all within the context of the wider *communio sanctorum*, the Church as a faithful, virtuous, historical (i.e., ongoing and changing) community (McDonough, 1997).

A Counter-Reform?

Some Catholic conservatives fear that this more broadly-conceived moral theology, although rooted in a more explicitly Christian and faith-filled perspective, is also less precise, less black and white, less able to be overseen and controlled by ecclesial authority. Moral absolutes, while still viable, are less clear and the list of clear-cut "thou shalt nots" seems shorter. Some would even suggest that the socio-cultural tilt to the left of the post-World War II decades not only parallels this broadening of the moral vision, but may be directly the result of it, all under what critics see as a mistaken notion of greater "pastoral care."

For those who adopt such a view, the rapprochement between moral theology and the next generation is simple—"batten down the hatches!" Return to a more deductive and exceptionless set of moral norms and then impose them, by exhortation if possible, by mandate if necessary.

Some suggest that the time is right for a pendulum swing back to a more God-fearing, absolutist, less situational approach to the moral enterprise. They argue that some or all of the five traits noted in section one above, regarding the character of young adults today, may be attributable to this broader moral morass ushered in by Häring, Fuchs, Vatican II, et al. Turn back the ecclesial and theological clock, they say, and we will regain a greater sense of moral unity and purpose.

A TENTATIVE SUGGESTION FOR MORAL RAPPROCHEMENT

I would like to suggest that it is simplistic and futile to see the next generation too one-sidedly as immoral, lost, rudderless, and in need of this firmer authoritarian hand. I think such efforts will either fail or, if successful, will be like the Gospel story of the one-and-seven demons, “the last state . . . is worse than the first” (Luke 11:24-26). Repression is not identical with conversion, though it may appear so in terms of external behavior alone.

As I hinted at the beginning of this essay, it may be that the time is ripe for a genuine dialogue between this revitalized Catholic moral theology and the culture for which and out of which it is being fashioned. The very lacunae of the former theology—lack of specific Christian faith and depth, too narrow a concept of the human, too individualistic, and a tendency toward an ahistorical absolutism—these parallel to a large extent either the flaws or the *raison d’être* for the shortcomings of the next generation of young adults, as well as what is missing in and for many of their baby-boomer parents. Much of the moral relativism, inconsistency, and short-sightedness outlined in section one may be a sign of a generation, or two, reacting (overreacting?) to moral laws which seemed too deductive, too neatly packaged, too ethereal, and somehow “out of touch with” common human experience, albeit flawed, weak, and imperfect.

In the face of a moral framework that seemed all too act-focused, airtight and a bit heartless, baby-boomers, their children, and now grandchildren may tend to jettison the baby of “objective” morality with the bathwater of its pre-Vatican II Neo-Scholastic packaging. And yet, all is not lost. I believe there is room for some rejoicing and a measure of hope. If the next generation is indeed bright, instinctively respectful of mentors, and spiritually hungry, then they are ripe for conversion, the kind of holistic faith-filled conversion that Häring, Fuchs, and Vatican II tried to usher in.

The Task Ahead

Can we, the older half of the Church, offer them a community experience, a liturgical experience, a catechetical experience, and a lived faith experience that is holistic and real? This starts with a faith and a

moral code that is at once more personal and humane as well as interpersonal and socially responsible. Thus, the Catholic social ethics tradition—with its emphasis on inherent and abiding human dignity, the common good, stewardship, and a preferential option for the poor—seems right on target (Curran, 1987, 1992; Connors/P. McCormick, 1998; Sparks, 1996). Our Catholic social justice theory, even if not always our actual practice, offers a vision that is morally consistent, neither libertine nor Gestapo-like. The question remains, in this present generation do we strive to practice what we preach? Or, at least, do we strive as individuals and together to better practice what we preach? Does our sacramental worship, our moral heritage, and a greater sense of living “in the meantime” speak to and invite the next generation? Hospitality is key; so, too, inspiration and consistency.

But even more than this, the next generation deserves to hear the Christian story told anew. It is as old as the Chosen People fleeing into the desert following the first Passover. It is as new as Nelson Mandela’s victory in South Africa, Mother Teresa’s life and death among the poor of Calcutta, or the last time any of us personally experienced light amidst the darkness in our daily lives. For those of us who call ourselves “Christian,” this core story is found distinctively, uniquely in the story of Jesus Christ, particularly the story of Good Friday to Easter Sunday.

In our efforts, following the Second Vatican Council, to emphasize God’s abiding love and goodness, we may have inadvertently collapsed the harsher death/redemption dimension of the Christian Gospel into the more jovial, but incomplete resurrection piece. In the process, God may have been reduced to a divine Pillsbury Doughboy (puffy and soft) and the Paschal Mystery may have been reduced to the American myth. Indeed, both the stories of Holy Week and of the rags-to-riches American dream (i.e., Horatio Alger stories) start out the same. We are each and all blessed with many gifts, talents, and blessings, and are called to make the most of them. The American myth goes on to promise that if you work hard, if you give your all to your dream, you will achieve that dream, with the counterpromise that if you fail, it must be your own fault. This myth is the basis of much of the lure of western capitalism and 1980s Reaganomics, and of the subsequent disillusionment following the economic recession of the late 1980s and early ‘90s.

The reality is that being gifted plus hard work is only part of the story. Sometimes the dutiful worker loses, through no fault of his/her own. Others may be more competent, or more corrupt and conniving, or perhaps it is just the “luck of the draw.” Sometimes we happen to be “the wrong person, in the wrong place, at the wrong time,” by chance or ill-fate, no one’s fault or responsibility.

In the end the Christian story advocates and rewards genuine fidelity—personal integrity and long-term commitment—not earthly success. Despite Jesus' doubts and fears in the Garden and again on the Cross, ultimately he finds the graced faith to say, ". . . not my will, but yours be done" and "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 22:42; 23:46). It is precisely in living the Christian way, the moral life outlined in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, that we attain moral integrity and eternal life as well. If we succeed in an earthly sense, we should thank God for our gifts and rejoice in our valiant efforts to use them wisely. However, if we fail on this side of the rainbow (through no fault of our own) there is still room for hope and abiding faith. As the prayer of St. Francis states so succinctly, ". . . for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying, that we are born to eternal life."

Conclusion

To a next generation that is hungering for real spiritual food, that is prone to altruism provided they can be shown the way, and who are on a quest for belonging, for heroes and communities in which they can believe, we Catholic Christians have a golden opportunity. First, our message of fulfillment through commitment rings true to those who are finding short-term goals too shallow and, in the long run, unsatisfying. Second, our efforts to deepen our sense of the human, our Vatican II concept of the "human person integrally and adequately considered," intrigues a generation turned off by too facile, too deductive an approach to morality and human well-being. Third, our very Catholicity—universality and communal sense of mission and salvation—appeals to young adults seeking a spiritual home, a place where they can sink roots and belong. Fourth, in our newly rediscovered sense of historicity in which this Christian story has begun but is still in process, we invite the next generation to join us in the quest.

We invite them to bring along their moral questions and doubts. We invite them to engage us in the ongoing dialogue, the search for God's reign in this distinct time and place. Their needs and honest search and our evolving Christian moral understanding are meant for each other. Providence draws us together and calls us forward into the new millennium (O'Keefe 1995; Billy/Orsuto, 1996; Connors/P. McCormick, 1998; Gula, 1997; Sparks, 1996). It is a bit scary, but also alluring. As in every age, God has set before us "life and death, blessings and curses." Seniors, mid-lifers, boomers, and Generation Xers together are called to "choose life" so that we and our descendants may live—loving God, neighbor and self "free and faithful in Christ" (Deut 30:19; Häring, 1978). And that is the sum and substance of Catholic-Christian morality, for the next generation, for every generation.

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Eugene C. Bianchi

The Ecological Challenge to Christianity

Most people who think seriously about the ecological crisis will agree that it presents the premier challenge for the coming millennium. Exploding human populations will put vast strains on resources. Global warming, deforestation, and other forms of pollution to air, land, and water will continue to expand as the ethos of technology takes over our world. In this evolving scenario of ecological degradation what is the role of religion in general and of Christianity in particular? Just as all religions were shaped in specific cultural climates all living religions have had to adapt their message and action to new crises in history. In his brilliant meditation on the poetics of matter-energy convertibility, David Toolan (1996:14) asks: "So now, what shall we make of nature?" In light of the new creation story, that of a multi-billion year development, and of the new physics in our time characterized by Einstein, Toolan seems to be asking our great world systems of spirituality to respond in depth to the ecological challenge.

I would like to explore some avenues for approaching this challenge to religions in a more limited way by focusing on dimensions of Christianity that are summoned toward revisionary thinking in face of the growing threat to the planet. Those of us who work in the interfacing of religion and ecology are aware of significant thinkers who are addressing these issues; a growing list of such scholars includes Thomas Berry, Sallie McFague, Jay McDaniel, James Gustafson, Rosemary Ruether, and others. There are also Christian environmental organizations and programs attempting to raise consciousness within churches and seminaries. But on the whole, the ecological reconfiguration of Christian thought and practice is still in its infancy. Ecology has hardly penetrated the shell of modern Christianity. The impact of this spiritual reconfiguration has not been felt significantly in the concrete circumstances of Christian living; it is like a distant comet still far removed from where we live. The new challenge calls us far beyond recycling or a few prayers for the earth at Mass or turning the church garden into a bird sanctuary or talking occasionally about a stewardship ethic toward the planet. If we take the challenge seriously, it will cut to the roots of our religious consciousness and activity; it will ask about how Christianity can become a nature religion. I will consider aspects of this challenge in the areas of doctrine, liturgy, spirituality, and ethics.

ECOLOGICAL DOCTRINE

Honesty demands an admission that in the realm of doctrine Christianity does not lend itself easily to becoming a nature spirituality. Lynn White in his now seminal critique of Christianity as anthropocentric and otherworldly, threw down in the 1960s a gauntlet that theologians have been running ever since. In *The Travail of Nature*, for example, Peter Santmire traces in Scripture and tradition myths that point in an otherworldly direction, to escape from earth and others that point horizontally toward journeying and fecundity on earth. While his effort is stimulating, it tends to make Christianity look more ecological than it really is. It is, of course, possible to find an Irenaeus in antiquity and a Francis of Assisi in the medieval Church who become spokesmen for a somewhat ecological vision. But Christian master stories, inherited from Judaism, and modified by platonism and by more than a touch of gnosticism and manicheism resist ecological interpretation. In the Hebrew stories, creation is certainly good, but the main drama is anthropocentric-theocentric; it is a parent-child tale about God and Israel. The long drama of the Jews is about salvation history of humans, not about salvation of the planet. Notice also how the Israelite mentality is shaped in constant struggles against pagan symbols, fertility statues in high places, and golden calves. They were protecting the transcendence of the divine; they were not encouraging its immanence, for the most part. Early Christian thinkers tried to defend against the extreme dualisms of gnosticism and manicheism, but Augustine's heritage of dualistic thinking (City of God/City of man, the depravity of the sexual body and human will over against God's grace) profoundly influenced subsequent Christian history. Even the famous Catholic doctrine of grace building on nature was about human nature, not about the nature of rivers, birds, and mountains.

I focus on these ecology-resistant dimensions of Christian teachings to underscore the need for candor, lest we slide into an easy theology of nature, something like Bonhoeffer's "cheap grace." Even the process of retrieving and reinterpreting ecologically friendly Christian doctrines will call for a kind of hermeneutical courage. For example, when we theologize about creation, incarnation, sacrament, and covenant in an ecological vein, we will find ourselves moving toward new understandings which may be quite different from those we were taught. The doctrine of creation, for example, points to the goodness of all creatures and to God's abiding love for the universe. But the doctrine of creation is intrinsically linked to that of redemption. We have not been used to thinking about God's work of redeeming the nonhuman world. If the latter is as valuable to the Creator as the human species, what restraints, accommodations, and additions will need to be made in other areas of Chris-

tian thought? Most Christians associate the doctrine of incarnation to Jesus as the Christ, although it is also understood in the broader sense of God's enfleshed or "en-mattered" presence in all things. But does the image of the crucifixion extend in an intrinsic way to the suffering of animals and to devastated rain forests? The christological myths express Christian faith as the nearness and concreteness of divine presence. But God's sacred dwelling will need to transcend humans to be found in calves tortured in immobilizing boxes to produce milk-fed veal, in poisoned rivers and bays, in mountains clear-cut and gouged by greed.

The process of rethinking Christian doctrines in an ecological direction raises at least two problems. One is the danger of turning Christianity into a form of pantheism. The Judeo-Christian tradition has resisted this move because of its faith conviction about the supreme mystery of God. The divine was not to be limited to or totally contained in the finite. I will not pretend to deal adequately here with this question. Rather I will point toward a helpful mode of approaching the inclusion of the universe in God in the Process Theology concept of panentheism. The latter permits us, at least intellectually, to conceive of a radical immersion of all things in God, while at the same time preserving the transcendence of the divine. A second problem in a serious greening of Christian teachings concerns the historical continuity of the very religion itself. Would the changes necessary to realize a deeply ecological Christianity result in creating a completely different religion? Again, answers to this question would require a long treatment of the possibilities for development of doctrine and institutions.

My thought on this issue takes two general roads. One way is summarized in A. N. Whitehead's phrase "religion in the making." All religions are the products of human spiritual imagination and experience over millennia. This statement does not exclude divine revelation; rather it points to the mode of that gradual revealing, that is, through the development of human consciousness in history over a vast evolutionary time. The human mind does its limited best in shaping creative metaphors (doctrines) to represent what it believes are experiences and contours of the divine. This is done individually (great teachers) and in groups (church, sangha). In this perspective, religions are always in the making as is the revelatory process in history. This outlook may be discomforting to those who demand certainty and conceptual literalness; it is a test of one's ability to live with ambiguity and even religious surprise. This also means that religions can change, in light of new conditions and experiences, much more profoundly than many of us are willing to acknowledge. A second path to grappling with the continuity problem has to do with taking the contemplative, the mystic dimension of religion with primary seriousness. Our doctrinal metaphors are very valuable aids for religious thinking, but they are secondary to the

experience of prayer and contemplation. Christianity, like most religions, has as a central purpose the inward transformation, both ethical and spiritual, individual and communal, of its adherents. I will make more of this below in a section on ecological spirituality.

ECOLOGICAL WORSHIP

While doctrinal issues are important, Christians are more immediately formed by involvement in liturgy and worship. Ecological spirituality is still generally absent from worship in Catholic and Protestant churches. The earth is merely an incidental backdrop to the main action in liturgies of Word and Eucharist. Listen to the readings from Scripture, to sermons, and eucharistic prayers. The messages are almost uniformly about human-divine and inter-human transactions. One can go through a whole year of the liturgical cycle and hardly know that the earth exists much less that it is sacred. The problem is only partially one of lack of seminary formation in ecological liturgics and homiletics; the more profound issue is that ecological questions, as we know them today, were not being asked during Christianity's last two millennia. Religions are shaped in terms of key questions posed during their formative periods. Even when nature is mentioned in hymns and prayers, it is rarely commended for its own intrinsic value; it is used rather as testimony to the glory of God or as an example to underscore human virtues. The worshiper's orientation is pulled away from nature. Earth continues to be seen as a cluster of beautiful or frightening objects but not as multiple subjects for spiritual communion. To rephrase Toolan's question here, it is not so much what shall we make of nature, but what can we learn religiously from nature's voices? Can Christianity be greened by listening with respect to those religious traditions we used to dismiss as "animist"?

Even an amateur survey of the gospels, read regularly at Christian worship, reveals a remarkable number of references to nature. Here is a partial list: salt, light, physical illnesses and cures, stormy and peaceful waters, multiple eating scenes, seeds, trees, vegetables, the weather, fruits, bread, wine, wilderness, flow of blood, wells and springs, birds, flowers, sheep, mules, yeast, humans and references to their different organs. Most of these nature tropes are employed as background for parables that focus on human-divine relations. We need to foreground these many nature symbols for an ecological interpretation of Scripture. The same point could be applied to the larger body of Hebrew scriptures. The book of Psalms, for instance, is replete with nature references. Here again, they serve as background for the great myths of parent (God) child (Israel or the psalmist) relations in a context of persecution from enemies. In the process of foregrounding the earthly aspects of the psalms) we could emphasize the intrinsic value of the natural realities

which both praise Yahweh and are filled with divine presence. If they are filled with this presence, they become subjects for intercommunion, not dead objects of lesser value. In this vein, two kinds of gospel stories, those of healing and of eating, are particularly fraught with ecological potential. These passages are not just for something beyond nature, a spiritual healing alone or a banquet somewhere in the heavens. Rather they speak of healings of body and mind right in the natural realm, and of convivial and inclusive meals in the here and now. Where are the ecologically trained biblical and liturgical scholars now that we need them?

When I asked a renowned liturgical scholar for leads to books of contemporary ecological liturgies, he was stumped. Articles here and there dealt with the topic but not books. An ancient and a modern version of ecological liturgy provide examples of work that can be mined from the past and created in the present. A eucharistic prayer compiled in the fourth century, *Apostolic Constitutions*, has a remarkable description in some detail of natural elements right down to the "hissing of reptiles and the cries of birds." Sources for creativity in reformulating Christian worship in an ecological mode can be found in liturgical writings by eco-feminists, like Dolores LaChapelle, and others influenced by the contemporary Wicca movement. Another rich source for creative liturgists are the abundant works of nature writers and poets. These artists of the word can lift our souls in a holistic way into feeling mystically the beauty and meaning of nature.

There is understandable resistance to making substantial changes in the liturgy. The prayer of the Church has existed in its present form of a God-human drama for ages. Yet great liturgical festivals like Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost are related to nature events: the winter solstice, the rebirth of Spring, and the gathering of harvests. It might be helpful to approach a liturgical revision of the Christian calendar by way of theological analogy. A number of the New Testament stories of love, such as that of the good Samaritan or the prodigal son, do not speak explicitly of God or of things out of the earthly order. The love actions are horizontal, this-worldly: caring for a wounded man, embracing a lost child. The theme of the First Letter of John sums up this point: when we open our hearts to our brethren, we are implicitly loving God. We don't have to be using the explicit language of "God" or "Lord" or "Father." When we love the neighbor, it is understood that we are loving God who dwells in him or her. By analogy, it seems correct to say that when we are liturgically meditating on the splendors or the sufferings of nature, we are implicitly honoring the God who, to people of faith, lives in the natural world.

Serious liturgical revision in an ecological mode could also be based on the teaching of the cosmic Christ. This is a way of looking at trinitarian doctrine in an intensely sacramental manner. By reflection on the cosmic Christ, the Christian imagination sees the presence of God

in the universe as a saving or reconciling interconnectedness. In this perspective the universe becomes the sacrament or outward sign of a redeeming God. A neglected period of church history could also provide insights for an ecological liturgy. We need to revive our knowledge of Celtic Christianity in the fifth and sixth centuries. The religion of Patrick and Columba was still closely linked to the sacred places and mysterious groves of the Druids and Bards. The Celtic religious leaders saw no opposition in using the language of nature to speak of holiness and spiritual presence. They found a holy intimacy of human, natural, and divine. John Scotus Erigena could speak of the two shoes of Christ: Scripture and nature. Monastic traditions like that of Iona bonded with nature as already graced.

I have stressed liturgical renewal in an ecological direction because liturgy at its best moves people from the realm of concept to that of experience. It transcends the merely intellectual to grip the worshiper aesthetically and affectively. It is mainly in the realm of affect and beauty that we learn to bond with nature as sacred. Without such bonding with earth our environmental ethics will risk being anemic and externalist. Nature will remain for us a zone of objects, of commodities for conservation management rather than a community for communing with subjects. E. O. Wilson, the sociobiologist, understands this very well in his concept of biophilia. If we don't love nature deeply and feel united to what we love, he is telling us, we will not cherish it. But liturgy is only one way for the Christian to bond spiritually with the earth. Equally important is the development of a naturalistic spiritual life.

ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY

Perhaps the greatest deficiency in Christian nurture today in most churches is their almost total neglect of cultivating our mystical potential. Most Christians associate the spiritual life with going to church, with formal, mostly oral prayer or singing, with liturgical participation, and with listening to sermons that exhort them to do good and avoid evil. Few have the sense of a personalized spiritual path that can be enhanced by regular meditation and other spiritual methods. Institutional religion in the west has generally been suspicious of mysticism because it is hard to control. Some of this is changing today with the expansion of retreats like the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius into the daily life of retreatants as well as the recent development of techniques for centering prayer.

The Deep Ecology movement in the post-World War II era challenges Christianity to rediscover its contemplative tradition as a major way of contributing to a fuller appreciation of being an ecological self in an environmental community. A leading visionary thinker in the Deep Ecology movement, the Norwegian philosopher-ecologist Arne

Naess, would have us awaken to the ecological self. In the image of Joanna Macy, we are today called upon to recover from a millennia-long amnesia, especially in the west, to who we really are. We have seen ourselves as separate and competitive beings generally isolated from the natural world rather than coextensive with all planetary life. This ecological sense of selfhood calls for a spiritual change, a new kind of metanoia, through which we experience ourselves profoundly interconnected with the rest of nature. Gregory Bateson called the false separation of the human ego from nature the "epistemological fallacy of Occidental civilization." From the early days of twentieth-century science to contemporary systems theory we have been challenged to re-imagine the human self as deeply interactive with other species and with the environment as a whole. Deep Ecology does not deny the distinctiveness of our species nor the particularity of other species. Rather integration and differentiation are the very rhythm of the evolutionary dynamic. At one and the same time, we are the rain-forest thinking and yet distinct human entities.

Without using God language, the deep ecology movement understands the importance of a mystical or deeply experiential conversion in our attitudes toward nature as a prerequisite for thinking and acting in ecologically sound ways. But a contemplative ecological movement needs more than theorizing. It needs to learn from the experiences of contemplative traditions that have not only thought about the mystical tradition, but which have also developed techniques and insights for the meditative process. In this regard, deep ecologists like Macy tend to seek wisdom from Buddhism with its long meditative tradition. For the most part, the Christian contemplative tradition seems to be unknown to the ecologically-minded who look to traditional world religions for resources. This is understandable since most churches today ignore their own contemplative traditions when it comes to popular piety. The Quakers may be the only Christian family that has preserved meditation as a regular practice for all the faithful. In general, most Catholics and Protestants would not know what to do with long periods of silence in our now wordy services. They have not been taught the ways of contemplative prayer. For most Christians going to church means prescribed prayers, hymns, sermons, and other liturgical actions. It does not mean learning and practicing the inward journey, the way of deeper personal union with God immersed in the universe and in our inner being.

Yet Christianity has venerable contemplative traditions from antiquity to the present. Unfortunately, this spirituality has usually been confined to religious orders, with the exception of retreat movements among some laity. It is heartening to see significant changes today in the expansion of contemplative prayer and spiritual direction into the lay world. The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises are being conducted with

and even by lay people in the daily circumstances of their lives. Spiritual guides like the Cistercians Thomas Keating and William McNamara are making the ways of contemplative prayer known to a wider public. Keating presents centering prayer as a means toward an interior silence a "resting in God," that is beyond thinking, images, and emotions. As a spiritual guide, he is showing people through one type of meditative prayer how to gradually move away from a false self, "dis-eased" by fears and cravings and other negative thoughts and emotions to find their authentic selves in a peaceful union with the freely given mystery of God's presence. It was encouraging to see Keating on national television instructing an Episcopal congregation on contemplative prayer. But Keating and other Christian spiritual directors do not significantly incorporate nature into their meditative teachings.

The same critique can be made of those who lead retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius. Again nature is only backdrop, a congeries of stage props in the composition of place; the main drama of discernment takes place in personal relations between the retreatant and God. Perhaps the clearest place in the Exercises for Christian nature mysticism comes in the final meditations where Ignatius summons the retreatant to contemplate the vast, dynamic process of God's love coursing through the whole universe. The challenge to ecological retreat leaders will be to re-imagine the Exercises in light of this culminating point. A key for this rethinking, this foregrounding of nature, can be found in the central Ignatian genius of finding God in all things, of discovering the extraordinary in the ordinary, of becoming people for others. The "other" here in its intrinsic sacredness can be bird or river or mountain or air, all constituting the body of God.

Ecological sensitivity within Christian spirituality will take special notice of our own traditions that are explicitly open to nature. The recapitulation theology of Irenaeus offers a sweeping vision that gathers all things into a Christic framework that need not be limited to humans. Eastern Christianity sees its icons as images of the "divinization" of nature of God's sanctifying presence in the very wood, metal, and artistry of the icons. We have already noted potentially rich sources in early Celtic Christianity. The Benedictine monastic tradition certainly had its hands in the soil, as it were, teaching agriculture, animal husbandry, and herbal medicine to populations surrounding their monasteries. St. Francis stands out as a primary nature mystic. Matthew Fox has helped us better appreciate the nature mysticism of medieval visionaries like Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich, and Hildegard of Bingen. What is true of most great writers is certainly applicable to Dante: an immersion in natural images from the dark forest at the start of the *Inferno* astronomical visions in the *Paradiso* of that which moves the heavens and all the other stars.

A rich vein of Christian reflection on nature in an organic as opposed to mechanistic way can be found in the tradition of the fifteenth century school of Marsilio Ficino in Florence to Pico della Mirandola, John Dee, and Giordano Bruno. This tradition, combining forms of Neo-platonism and the old hermetic wisdom was widely respected in its time, even by churchmen like Nicolas of Cusa. An ecological re-visioning of Christian spirituality would certainly want to look again at the great religious art and architecture of medieval and Renaissance Europe. The cathedrals themselves, as natural extensions of hand and brain, were not only shaped in stone, but the tales carved into them include plants and animals and other natural elements. Perhaps we can learn today to move against that tendency in Post-Reformation churches to look with man-achiean eyes at the earthy beauty of Renaissance and earlier art. God might be found again in the beautiful breasts and lips of Botticelli's Florentine maidens celebrating spring. The erotic and the sensual, despite all attempts by clerical censors to the contrary, belongs to the long sacramental heritage of Christianity.

New Partners in Spiritual Dialogue

In its attempt to become ecological, Christian spirituality will need to become broadly ecumenical. Such a dialogue could begin with nature writers whose humanistic outlook may be full of spiritual insight in secular idiom. A long American literary tradition of such writing stretches from Thoreau to Whitman to Gary Snyder, Barry Lopez, and Annie Dillard. These verbal artists know how to evoke the deeper resonance of things and our relations to them. In their works, nature comes alive as subjects speaking to our imaginations and hearts, messages of intrinsic worth, shared benefits, and special needs. A number of great modern scientists like Edwin Schrodinger and Albert Einstein have left us profound spiritual reflections from their experiences of physical reality. Scientific visionaries like Loren Eiseley and Teilhard de Chardin are also sources for a contemporary *lectio divina* on the spirituality of the natural world.

As Christians develop a more adequate ecological spirituality, the ecumenical journey involves crossing over into other religious traditions and returning enriched by mutual conversations. Or as John B. Cobb, Jr., the noted process and ecological theologian, has learned from years of dialogue with Buddhists, religious traditions can offer correctives to one another as they mutually seek truth. Buddhist teachings present a non-dualistic worldview in their concepts of nonself, of co-dependent arising and compassion towards all sentient beings; these perspectives lend themselves to an ecological grasp of the evolutionary process. Buddhism also offers valuable contemplative methods, many of which have already been incorporated by western thinkers and practitioners of the

spiritual life. Christianity and Buddhism differ on important theoretical levels. But it is interesting to note how contemplatives from both traditions describe similar experiences when they talk about the outcomes of their meditative processes. The ancient Taoist tradition of China is rooted in respect for nature and knowledge derived from it. In the *Tao Te Ching*, the master not only teaches us the virtues and nonactive action of living in accord with nature, but she also helps us sense the deepest mystery of nature, the unnamable Tao, within ourselves and in the natural world.

Shaping a deeper ecological spirituality for Christians could benefit by studying American Indian attitudes towards nature. Christianity has generally favored time over space, the long sweep of human history as a temporal process over immersion in the sacredness of earthly places. Although the historical-temporal mindset dominates in Christianity, a sense of sacred place is hardly absent from it. In addition to the space-place perspectives of Celtic Christianity, one could argue that the great Christian churches and shrines possess a sense of holy space. Think of the pilgrimages to shrines like Compostela or Lourdes as well as the festivals drawing the faithful to great cathedrals or to landmarks of martyrs. Even though these shrines are human artifacts, they are also natural in the sense of being extensions of human creativity, and they also become a sort of holy ground. One might think this way about Francis's Subiaco or Ignatius's Montserrat. But the Indian perception of place occupies a much broader part of their spirituality. Their myths of origin are powerfully connected to a particular mountain or valley or mesa. Their processes of spiritual transformation, such as the sweat lodge rituals, the vision quest, modes of healing, and counseling participate closely in the concrete rhythms of animate and inanimate nature. The Great Spirit rises up from the center of the kiva, dug into the earth, to energize the tribe.

New Directions in Spirituality

A new Christian ecological spirituality will have to reconsider our relationship to animals. On the whole, Christian theology has been enormously negligent in reference to the animal realm. Our anthropocentric and hierarchical attitudes have relegated animals to inferior species; we treat them in almost totally instrumental ways. In a market capitalist culture, we reduce them to commodities without intelligence or affect or any rights to decent ways of living. Wanton cruelty to animals is still very widespread: the confinement of calves for milk-fed veal, the caging of de-beaked chickens, unnecessary laboratory experiments. An ecological Christian spirituality must be concerned with many ramifications of our treatment of animals. One of these aspects is the question of vegetarianism. Beyond the health dimensions of moving toward a more vegetarian diet, there are very important ethical, eco-

logical and spiritual considerations. Ethics of animal treatment is a very large topic involving issues of needless suffering and animal rights in general. But the ecological and spiritual aspects are less understood. The cattle and meat industries, for example, are involved in the destruction of rain forests to obtain grazing areas, excessive uses of scarce fresh water, and the pollution of soil and water tables with animal waste. Meat consumption is also a hugely inefficient and often unhealthy way to nourish humans. The generalized use of a more vegetarian diet could help to eliminate a number of these ecological problems.

But vegetarianism (respecting a whole spectrum of choices among people from more radical types to more moderate options) can also become a valuable spiritual discipline. It not only heightens our awareness of what we eat and the consequences of food choices. It also helps us appreciate the intrinsic value of animals; in the past Christianity has stressed mainly their instrumental value for humans. We can contemplate how God's presence in animals implies divine concern for them. If animals are part of God's body, the divine suffers in them. In many cultures, animals have been seen as spiritual guides; at the very least Christians would be called upon to reconsider what they mean by "the image of God" to include animals. Christians who choose to consume animals could profit spiritually from prayerfully incorporating an Amerindian attitude of gratitude and respect for the animal who gives its life for us. In New York City's Cathedral of St. John the Divine there is an annual ceremony of the blessing of the animals in which various species are processed through the church to receive the blessing. While such a service is ecologically sensitive, we might also wonder how we are spiritually blessed by animals. This can be understood by anyone who has had a long relationship with a companion animal.

An ecological spirituality for Christians would also involve new directions for pastoral counseling or spiritual direction. A growing body of literature in eco-psychology focuses on a key theme: technological culture with its mechanistic mentality has separated us from a deep connectedness with the earth and with communities of intimacy. Among the psychological results of this alienation from nature are chronic anxiety, anger, a sense of personal woundedness and of not belonging: a homelessness on earth. Many of our addictions in highly developed technological cultures are the result of not having primary needs met; as a consequence, we substitute secondary sources in addictive ways in an attempt to fulfill more basic needs for connection to the earth and to intimate communities. Another way of stating this problem is that the vast outward damage that we are inflicting on the health of the planet brings with it significant psychospiritual harm for individuals and groups. How much do spiritual directors appreciate the connection between our dis-ease and even rage about our condition

and our separation from the healing earth and from communities that are closer to it? In this regard, Thomas Berry made a very significant comment about our fear of death as related to our dissociation from our earthly roots. In Dylan Thomas' words, we "rage against the dying of the light," not knowing that our rage is largely based on denying our place on and eventually in the earth. Perhaps the earth-consciousness of the paleontologist, Teilhard de Chardin, led him to pray that he would be able to end well, at peace with his condition in nature. Certainly, the Taoist master understood this when he taught: "Immersed in the wonder of the Tao/ you can deal with whatever life brings you/ and when death comes, you are ready."

ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

The ecological challenge will also call for new reflection on Christian ethics. While there are a few good books in Christian ecological ethics, Churches have not written major documents or encyclicals on the topic. In some ways this lack of documentation may be a blessing. A truly serious Christian ethic on the environment should follow from the experiential living of an ecological spirituality in daily life. Otherwise we will tend to write an abstract set of principles and applications that do not derive from our own deeply felt participation in the natural world. We first need to become porous to the sacred in nature; we need to dwell holistically on earth letting its creatures dictate their needs to us. To be in dialogue with nature in this mode, we will have to listen carefully to the earth's voices, re-personalizing nature as a conversation partner after such a long period of desacralizing and depersonalizing it. The best Christian ethic for nature will be an aesthetic morality that is forged from our own bonding with the sufferings and joys of Gaia. Such an ethic will not be anti-instrumental, as all of nature uses nature in some manner or other. But a new Christian ethic for ecology will not start from a stance of dominating hierarchy, the human over all creatures seen as objects for manipulation and consumption. Rather this ethic will flow from a renewed sense of the co-creativity of God, nature, and humanity. It will be an ethic built on intersubjectivity that acknowledges sameness and difference, but that above all respects the intrinsic worth of the natural world and our essential interconnectedness with it.

Sallie McFague (1993) invites us to shape the foundations of a Christian ethic of nature in part from a reinterpretation of major stories in the New Testament. She points out the deconstructive or destabilizing aspects of Jesus' parables which overturn conventional hierarchies such as the human dominating nature. These dislocating stories make us realize that it is we who have marginalized our fellow creatures in nature for our own greedy purposes. The healing stories associated with Jesus bring forth the reconstructive task toward nature. Healing

here is not only of the human spirit, but of the physical, earthly bodies of the world around us. The many eating stories involving Jesus look ahead to a new kind of conviviality in which all creatures are invited to the banquet, accepting and respecting our differences. Again this is not a spiritualized feast, but one that feeds the legitimate and very real hungers of all creatures. McFague is shifting the focus of liberation theology to undergird an ecological ethic that identifies with the suffering and needy in nature.

These reflections on the present and coming challenge of the ecological era call for a profound reinterpretation of Christian traditions. Such a task will be one of both retrieval and of construction on the levels of theory and practice. Whether the greening of Christianity will go forward depends in large measure on how one judges the reality of ecological crises. Are these exaggerated fads, hyped by the media, or are they the most crucial dilemmas facing the future? The scientific evidence for the seriousness of ecological decline increases year by year. We can ignore it and live in denial, a dysfunctional mental state for which our progeny may curse us. Yet the ministry of Jesus, like the prophets before him, was to awaken people from spiritual blindness and denial. He wanted his hearers to become aware of the signs of their times.

The ecological challenge underlies most of the major world traumas: war, poverty, famine, overpopulation, the destruction of species, and many others. Christianity, in dialogue with other wisdom traditions, can contribute significant spiritual resources for ecological awareness and inspiration. This great mission will require joint efforts from the world's religions. A Laguna Pueblo prayer sums up this breathing together, this conspiracy for our sacred earth:

I add my breath to your breath / That our days may be long on the
earth / that the days of our people may be long / that we shall be
one person / that we may finish our roads together.

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The U.S. Catholic Church and Criminal Justice

The Catholic Bishops of the United States have issued a number of papers in which they seek to articulate a position in the area of criminal justice. These papers are noteworthy not only because the correctional system is in desperate need of fresh voices and alternative visions but also because the Catholic social ethic is grounded in a set of unique understandings of the human person and the social world. What is striking, however, is that the papers themselves are not so much a re-articulation of traditional Catholic responses to questions of crime and punishment as a relatively uninspired mimicry of themes otherwise unfamiliar to the Catholic mind. This essay seeks to analyze the statements issued by the U.S. Catholic Bishops regarding criminal justice, emphasizing the disparity between what historical sources reveal about Catholic attitudes in this area and contemporary church teaching that often echoes the secular liberalism that has been so inimical to Catholic ethics in other contexts.

The first part of the essay offers an analysis of the collective dissonance in criminal justice discourse, fostered by widely divergent premises concerning the nature and function of the correctional enterprise. It will then provide a brief overview of the development of corrections in this country, demonstrating the steady waning of the religious voice in penal affairs. The final two sections will focus on the limited role of Catholicism in determining American correctional policy; a failure at variance with significant developments in its own history.

THE CURRENT STATE OF CORRECTIONS

The current system of incarceration and imprisonment has been severed from an articulated ethical foundation which, as Robert Bellah claims, provides the meaning and motivation necessary to any institution or social system (11–12). Only an organizational pattern based on a set of moral principles, which in turn reveal an understanding of primary questions about human existence, can bear the weight of punishing men and women, whether the punishment is confinement in a narrow cell or referral to one of the currently popular alternatives to prison.

The initial task in the correctional project is to separate the issue of what kind of punishment from the necessary prior questions of the jus-

tification for punishment and what end is to be achieved from the action. If the goal of the correctional experience is a change in the attitude and intention of the offender then, it seems to me, that the change must be willed by the offender. And there is historical precedent to argue that the offender will not “will” even the most well-intentioned innovation unless he or she has a clear sense of the moral value of the program itself as well as a personal admission of the wrongdoing that must be “corrected.”

It is precisely this antinomy between punishment and its moral foundation that has caused the prison system first to drift into aimlessness and then, finally, to lapse into a self-absolving cynicism concerning the very possibility of correcting anyone. Such attitudes assure not only the vacuous state of today’s penal institutions, but have also led to the extension of the net of social control over the entire society. One cynical extension of the utilitarian moral technology of Bentham—which was designed to control the imprisoned by placing them under the omniscient and ceaseless gaze of the jailer, who was in turn under the ceaseless gaze of the superior—is to place the eye of the state on everyone. We are all suspects, to which the roving cameras, metal detectors, and centralized data banks bear witness.

Traditional Christian approaches to crime and punishment have provided the necessary systemic requirements for the renewal of an errant heart. They led to the development of the “time” sentence and the creation of the prison as a humane replacement to torture and other brutal forms of recrimination practiced in former times. Thus, one might expect that Christian voices would provide valuable insights in meeting the challenge of criminal justice, especially in an era when despair is more prevalent than hope in the face of the continued rise of crime and the failure of contemporary strategies to address and rectify it. The fact is, however, that the churches, and in particular the U.S. Catholic Church, have remained largely peripheral to the conversation.

THE LOSS OF RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE IN U.S. CORRECTIONS

The dominant shifts in the development of the American penal system can be traced to the religious community. The workhouse in the eighteenth century, as well as the penitentiary and the reformatory in the nineteenth century, all bear the undeniable marks of religious inspiration. Each new correctional foundation was an expression of the dominant theological and ethical paradigm of the age, beginning with the theocentric model of communal admonition and re-integration developed by the Puritans (Erikson; O. F. Lewis).

The penitentiary cannot be understood apart from the social frenzy of the evangelical, millennial crusades of the early nineteenth century as they sought to establish God’s reign on earth and bring to conversion

the individuals severed from the discipline of church and community. The history of the penitentiary is too complex to examine in detail, but these structures reflected the ethical presuppositions of the religious groups who dominated the areas where they developed. Despite their ambiguous history, penitentiaries (especially those in Quaker Pennsylvania) often provided the offender with a clear understanding of the nature of punishment, its goal, and a regimen which complemented the moral logic. And, most importantly, they were successful in returning regenerated members to the body politic (W. D. Lewis, 1965:113; Rothman, 1971:94).

The evolution of thinking that led to the development of Progressivism in the late nineteenth century and to the attendant development of the reformatory contained the seeds of the demise of religious leadership. Progressivism, with its positivist emphasis, fashioned a secular analogue to the evangelical millennial kingdom. The optimism that once characterized the evangelicals, who saw the reform of society and the religious conversion of misguided individuals as the result of new institutional constructs, was translated into a belief in the inevitable reign of peace and progress through the application of the principles of natural science to the problems of society. The Progressive Era marked a time when the American government sought to absorb and define the religious project (Rothman, 1980). While governments have sought to do this often in history, both Weber (1978:901ff.) and Reinhold Niebuhr remind us that their monopoly on the use of force and the self-serving nature of their designs make them utterly incapable of usurping the religious function or articulating any morality save collective egoism.

Progressive ideology, however secular in its rhetoric, was the inevitable outcome of a strain of Protestant thought that followed in the tradition of Kant and Schleiermacher as much as Comte and Herbert Spencer. Many religious leaders following the Civil War had become disenchanted with the explanatory power of evangelical revivalism in the face of complex social problems caused by industrialization and urbanization, not the least of which was a dramatic rise in rates of incarceration. These religious innovators turned to the methodical analysis of empirical and statistical data as aids in understanding the nature of and remedy for social deviance. They were the liberal forerunners of the Social Gospel movement, which fused millennial optimism with scientific analysis and willingly removed religion and religious symbols from the effort to build the perfect society.

The evangelicals, for their part, became incapable, for different reasons, of forming a critique of the American institutional structure. They continued to insist on an emotional, public conversion to Christ as the answer to the ills of the nation and of the criminal. They had become less politically active by the time Dwight Moody began his ministry in

the late nineteenth century and soon moved to a greater combative position with their liberal counterparts. Although present in force in today's penal institutions, by and large, they continue to see the fate of the prisoner as measurably in his or her own hands, in terms of a personal conversion rather than a systematic critique of the criminal justice enterprise.

CATHOLICISM AND U.S. CORRECTIONS

The U.S. Catholic Church played a minimal role in the development of the penal system in this country. There are several reasons that account for this limited involvement, not the least being a pointed anti-Catholic bias which accompanied the growth of the Church throughout the period in which the American correctional structure and ethos were fashioned.

All of the Nativist pressures notwithstanding, there is abundant evidence that American Catholicism was too preoccupied with developing its own identity, witnessed in repeated internal disputes over ecclesial organization and autonomy from Rome, to render a meaningful judgment as to the treatment of offenders and the evolution of American penal theory. By and large the Catholic Church reflected the concerns and theological trends that preoccupied the dominant Protestant churches. Post-revolutionary Catholics, following John Carroll, largely supported a democratic model of authority, local autonomy, and the separation of Church and state; in other words, a congregational pattern of church polity. As the evangelical revivals galvanized the Protestant churches in the 1820s and '30s, pious Catholics responded with the "cult of Jesus" spirituality and with the initiation of the parish mission, a Catholic effort to imitate the Protestant revival (Dolan, 1978:xix). As the first seeds of division entered the Protestant churches in the 1840s with the growth of sentimentalism and romanticism, similar trends developed among Catholics. The birth of devotional Catholicism in the 1840s featured the same traits found among Protestants, what Ann Douglas has called the "feminization" of American culture: emotionalism, sentimentalism, and docility (6-13). Thus even if the Church had decided to enter into the public debate on correctional issues, history suggests it would have added little to the responses of its Protestant counterparts.

The occasional critical Catholic responses to political issues came when members of the community sought to speak from a paradigm informed by the Church's traditional social ethic. The Aristotelian/Thomist frame of reference that dominates Catholic social thought urges the Church to maintain a watchful eye over secular politics even as it respects the natural basis of the political community. There is within this tradition a compelling ecclesial responsibility to offer a moral voice over against the state, and to call individuals to a moral accounting of

their actions in terms of principles in which individual flourishing is based on a conception of the common good.

Despite this tradition, the particular character of American Catholicism has led John Tracy Ellis to remark that contemporary Catholics have become “less and less distinguishable from other Americans, and it would be a foreign visitor of extraordinary powers of observation who could sort them out in the body politic” (292). This observation and the history that preceded it go a long way toward explaining the well-intentioned but ineffectual attempts made by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) and its social arm, the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), to inform and correct the system of criminal justice. As with Catholics in the nineteenth century, the Church has operated largely within a context dominated by the ethical insights of its social contemporaries. Thus, in the area of corrections, it tends to provide a lukewarm echo of themes more germane to Protestant and civic republican ideologies.

In 1973 the USCC published “Rebuilding Human Lives: The Reform of Correctional Institutions in the ‘70s.” It came on the heels of the devastating riot at Attica prison in New York. While basing itself on a proper warrant to speak on such matters (“crime and punishment are pre-eminently moral issues”), the document failed to engage either in historical analysis or provide a theoretical foundation in dialogue with Catholic tradition. The bishops question the existence of the prison without providing an explanation of its meaning and justification (345). They call for rehabilitation without defining what it is or under whose terms rehabilitation is to be accomplished (*ibid.*). They call for treatment programs though hundreds of studies at the time revealed their results to be ambiguous at the very best, often producing higher rates of recidivism (Martinson, 1974). This critique is not meant to imply a rejection of prison alternatives, but is a reminder to those who would reform the prison that they must confront two serious projects before they can carry out their task: to re-form an institutional system one must know how it was formed in the first place; and one needs to enunciate clearly a theory of correction, understanding that there are competing ideologies (rehabilitation, retribution, deterrence, incapacitation) that are either inappropriate within the Catholic framework or often work at cross purposes.

An example of such theoretical confusion on the part of the bishops is their affirmation of the concept of deterrence. While crime prevention is clearly a laudatory goal, deterrence itself is the hallmark of a utilitarian penal framework, perhaps best embodied in the influential writing of Cesare Beccaria (1963). Despite his famous assertions that criminal justice must be swift, certain, rational, and moderate in punishment, his utilitarian formula is based on a barren teleology resting on func-

tional/mechanistic foundations. Rather than an end fashioned from a moral ontology, which defines the meaning of human life and human community, deterrence is based on a means-end calculation, placing justice within a calculus determined by the self-interest of the acting subject. It is clearly at home in a capitalist framework in which pragmatic and materialist decisions predominate, but deterrence needs a careful and nuanced analysis to fit within the Catholic framework.

In partially affirming a logic of incapacitation (345), the bishops revive the positivist penal philosophy of which incapacitation was a principle component: that the offender was to be molded and reshaped to the beneficent values and work habits of a market economy on a case by case basis by an array of penal professionals and specialists. Those who could not conform to the demands of productive citizenship were to be detained or incapacitated (von Hirsh, 1985:5). The positivists held that the offender's condition was not his or her fault *per se* but the result of hereditary and environmental factors which could be supplanted by education. This perspective informed the progressive ideology of peace and progress through scientific method which, it might be added, viewed religion as a superstitious anachronism. Many liberal Protestants and Catholics gladly acceded to this ideological shift since it fit their belief that secular American institutions were the bearers of the divine plan for humankind.

An example of this tendency to combine unexamined and often contradictory criminal justice strategies is found in a statement by the bishops of Louisiana: "We want to release energy and creativity in pursuit of ways to reduce crime (deterrence?), protect the innocent (incapacitation?), punish the criminal (retribution), work for change in offenders (rehabilitation) and yet consistently stand for the respect for life even of those who treat the lives of others with disdain" (95). The bishops of New Mexico, in like manner, call upon the state to be retributive ("punish wrongdoers"), seek "the rehabilitation of inmates," follow the positivist logic of treatment ("therapeutic communities") and, in a final admonition: to change "the image that our prisons and jails are 'schools of crime' rather than environments conducive of reintegrating offenders into society" (585, 587).

The statements of the bishops over the last quarter century have been awash in a sea of good intentions but seem oddly out of step with Catholic tradition and underscore the theoretical confusion that marks the secular debates going on around them. Certainly, the bishops seem unaware of the fact that one of the most humane innovations in the history of penology was the development of the time sentence as opposed to sanguinary punishment. This led to the attempt to create an environment where silence, work, and spiritual counsel affected an internalization of the values that could rehabilitate, or convert an errant

heart. The irony, not to be ignored, is that all of these insights were developed within the Catholic Church.

CATHOLICISM AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The justification of punishment for wrongdoing has a long history in Catholicism, grounded in the Bible and restated throughout the development of the Church especially by way of its sacramental form of penance. There is an organic relationship between penitential expiation and compassionate forgiveness. Theological ethics creates a bond between punishment and reconciliation that insists on the subjective assent of the offender to the particular penitential discipline. A further justification is located in the development of the Aristotelian and Thomist concept of virtue instilled through repetitive practice and framed by a vision of the common good strengthened through the punishment of offenses against the community. The tradition is exemplified by St. Thomas whom the U.S. bishops quote in their 1980 pastoral against capital punishment: "In this life, however, penalties are not sought for their own sake, because this is not the era of retribution; rather, they are meant to be corrective by being conducive either to the reform of the sinner or to the good of society, which becomes more peaceful through the punishment of sinners" (IIa, IIae, q.68. a.1).

The formal involvement of the Catholic Church with the correction and reintegration of the offender by a combination of prayer, work, solitude, and spiritual counseling goes back at least to the Rule of St. Benedict. In that treatise the offender is to be admonished secretly for initial instances of misconduct, followed by public chastisement if errant ways are not corrected. Finally, if the intransigence continues, he is to be "excommunicated" (i.e., cut off from the common life of the monastery, working, praying, and eating alone in his cell "in penitential sorrow"). Always the intention of the punishment was the re-instatement of the erring brother to the community with an understanding that the abbot should assure there is comfort and solace given to the penitent "lest he be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." Benedict remembers the words of St. Paul, "let charity be strengthened towards him, and let everyone pray for him" (75).

Virtually all of the "innovations" that have informed the history of penal practice evolved from these and similar beginnings. One finds a justification for punishment (largely biblical and communal). The meaning of punishment is expressed by an appeal to the moral law which was held to reside within the offender, that he or she may come to own their guilt. Included in this component of the process was the important Catholic assumption that, despite external influences, human beings are the authors of their own acts and can, with appropriate reflection and discipline, redirect those actions toward ends in

harmony with the common moral vision. The final element was the environment, the cell, in which the work of reformation could be affected.

As early as 1487 the Alexian brothers had the habit of receiving certain types of juvenile delinquents for care and reformation within their monasteries, containing sections called "bettering houses" (Sellin, 1944:18-19). One of the precursors of modern penology was Fra. Filippo Franci who in 1653 established a hospice for the abandoned boys who slept and begged in the streets of Florence. Franci developed such innovations as the monitorial system (peer counseling) and probation, which did not enter the American penal milieu until the early twentieth century. Franci's success with homeless children caused many families to commit their delinquent youth to his care. He developed a correctional department within the hospice. The young men were placed in cells whose purpose was to facilitate reformation through prayer, work, and the screened visits of spiritual and moral counselors (Sellin, 1927:109). Franci took great pains to protect the reputation of his charges that they might "retain their good name," exacted no corporal punishment, and achieved such success that the institution was unable to contain all those who sought to utilize its regimen. After the death of Franci it continued to serve not only "sons of families of ordinary means but sons of rich and noble parents as well" (*ibid.*, 110). It was eventually taken over by the civil government which by ducal decree abandoned the cellular format in 1786. Sellin says that Franci's use of cellular segregation was "the first practical attempt to use this mode of treatment for the avowed purpose of correction and reformation" (*ibid.*, 112).

Jean Mabillon, the noted Benedictine historian of the seventeenth century, wrote an essay in the 1690s on monastic prisons. Once again, the meaning and justification of the penal experience were situated against the horizon of the Catholic moral tradition. Mabillon's description of the monastic prisons anticipated the organization of one of the most influential penal institutions ever constructed: the Quaker sponsored Eastern State Penitentiary at Philadelphia. Sellin says of Mabillon: "As to his ideas on the internal regime of prisons, all that can be said is that we are still striving to put some of them into practice" (1927:593).

Clement XI constructed possibly the first civil penitentiary, St. Michael's, in Rome in 1704. It certainly contained the first cell block, added the ingredient of work in common (which was taken up in penitentiaries in the United States and in many other countries) and, despite its ambiguous history, was seen as a major innovation in an otherwise brutal period of penal evolution. The argument of Clement in his "motu proprio" of 1703 was inscribed in one of work rooms: "It is of little advantage to restrain the Bad by Punishment unless you render them Good by Discipline" (Sellin, 1929:534). The experiment at St.

Michael's was lauded as exemplary by the most famous of the European prison reformers, John Howard, whose distaste for Catholicism as an English Nonconformist would not have led him to be favorably disposed to the institution.

Sellin sums up my intent in this section of the essay when he maintains that "the real sources of our entire penitentiary system" must be looked for "in the Church" and specifically in its harmony of silence, isolation, and internal conversion "as the true road to salvation" (1927:600-1).

Against this rich and methodologically consistent background, statements such as the following made by the Committee on Social Development of the USCC and the bishops of New York State seem at best uninformed: "Our present prison system clearly does not reflect Christian values. . . . Prisons communicate a message of hopelessness and of community anger devoid of concern" (1981:234-35). "State prison facilities, by their nature, breed violence, frustration and low self-esteem" (1983:572).

CONCLUSION

The prison system is in many ways a Catholic innovation, but is finally, like all institutions, a projection of the deeply held beliefs of a people as articulated and fashioned by the religious community. The system in this country was inaugurated and guided by the dominant Protestant religious community: evangelicals directing the development of the penitentiary, and liberal Protestants providing the energy and vision for the reformatory. That leadership allowed itself to be replaced by a positivist mentality, able to amass impressive and useful analytical data on the offender and all aspects of the correctional process, but unable to provide the necessary justification and meaning for the correctional experience.

The American Catholic Church has issued several statements in recent years that have basically expanded on the obvious tragedies and inconsistencies of the penal system. They have had little, if any, effect and in some ways have only added to the confusion of contemporary corrections. While this may not be troubling to the average citizen it is of considerable consequence to the over one million men and women who currently dwell in penal institutions that have lost the ability to articulate the reasons for their existence save in the most crude terms of social control.

Critiques of modern correctional philosophy, particularly those by the religious community, need to do more than simply remind us of the obvious, that prisons have become dehumanizing. A religious vision in the national debate on corrections would need to enunciate a moral program of reformation, consonant with its historical inheritance, that

offers some solace to those who face the necessary problem of punishing men and women against their will.

The prison system needs a clear statement of why it has the right to punish, explained not in the failed terms of vengeance or self-interest but in terms of the meaning of human life and human community. Only with that in place can the meaning of the reformatory program come into focus for the offender. It has been the argument of this essay that the American Catholic Church, despite the resources at its disposal, has failed to provide significant help in addressing that crisis.

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The Church and Science in the New Millennium

INTRODUCTION

As I drive to school each day I cannot escape reading the signs of the times in the neighborhood. A religious book store headlines a new book: *Mommy, Why Don't We Celebrate Halloween?* For \$2.99, parents can get quick help in explaining to their children how their friends are actually participating in a pagan ritual when they dress up like monsters and goblins at the end of October. Further along I spot the title of next Saturday's sermon posted outside a Protestant church: "Why and How the End is Coming." As someone who has taught homiletics for the past twenty-five years, I wish we Catholics also had the tradition of announcing the Sunday homily in a pithy, focused statement. But I also admit my suspicion. I wonder what scientific data, what biblical hermeneutics the preacher will employ for that sermon. Yet another sign catches my eye. It is the announcement of a seminar concerning the Beast in the Book of Revelation. For \$20 we are invited to hear someone speak on "What Church Would Jesus Join Today?" Again, my Catholic bias kicks in. I am certain that the speaker will use unscientific data and flawed biblical tools of interpretation to make sure that the Church Jesus would join today is his own and definitely not Our Lady of Sorrows.

As we enter the new millennium, we can be sure that predictions about the end times and conflicting theories about creation/evolution, science/religion, historical consciousness/fixed beliefs will proliferate. Those of us ministering in today's Church will have to wrestle with how believers can relate to science.

There was a time when theology was a familiar conversational partner with science. Before the late seventeenth-century science (from the Latin word *scire*, "to know") referred to universal knowledge which comprised all specialties including philosophy and theology. Christianity's tradition of biblical revelation was so well valued in theories of knowledge that Christian theology was called "the queen of the sciences."

The modern definition of science as knowledge obtained from human observation and research came about when it became separated from speculative thought and revelation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The data of revelation was now considered suspect and irrelevant by the scientist. Absolute Reality was found not in the Bible but under the telescope.

More recently, a number of developments have begun to question the facile distinction between theology and science. I will name three.

(1) *A Dynamic View of the World*. As we reach the twenty-first century, science has taken on “a more catholic appreciation of its work and a more modest estimate of its role in understanding the nature of ultimate reality” (Fiddes, 1987:96). Scientists also sense that they see through a glass darkly. Many have retreated from dogmatic scientific positivism, according to which scientific knowledge is the only kind of knowledge accessible to us.

Ironically it was the very discoveries and successes of the twentieth century that led scientists away from the abstract study of forms of nature to an exploration of inner relationships. Physicists today search for a unified field theory, “the manifestation of a single force which, embracing the reality of space and time, energy and matter, will explain all the disparate forces of the universe (ibid., 97).

When cosmologists today speak of the universe in terms of a dynamic unity in which all action and reality have a common focus, science becomes more user-friendly. The search by physicists for a unified field theory, the manifestation of a single force embracing the reality of space and time, energy and matter seems a proper empirical fit for contemporary biblical scholarship. Theologians, both speculative and pastoral, must recognize this positive sign of our times.

(2) *God at the Edge*. Ten years have passed since Stephen Hawking’s provocative *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*. Carl Sagan wrote in the book’s introduction that Hawking’s argument for “the absence of God” is based on the premise that there is “nothing for a Creator to do.” Hawking knows that the concept of the absolute beginning implied in the Big Bang model implies the existence of God. “The notion of a beginning means that there is an edge to the cosmos, and the acknowledgment of an edge requires us to ask what lies beyond the edge” (Peters, 1989:54). But Hawking argues for a single uniting quantum theory of gravity which holds that our developing universe is not fixed by original boundary conditions. The universe, therefore, does not need a transcendent Creator to bring it into existence or to carry out a divinely appointed evolutionary purpose.

What is fascinating about Hawking’s theory and the arguments of cosmologists who oppose it, is that “he has seen that physical cosmology cannot avoid entering into theological discussion. He has seen that the question of the beginning of all things—the edge to reality—leads ineluctably to the question of God” (Peters, 1989:56). Theology may not be “the queen of the sciences” as it once was, but the new cosmology cannot escape the discussion of a Creator.

(3) *The Church and Historical-Critical Methodology*. In the 1960s Nikita Khrushchev boasted how Uri Gagarin, the first Soviet cosmonaut, had

finally “disproved” Christianity by going around in the heavens without once meeting God or the angels. The Soviet Premier’s claims were met with laughter by modern religious people since they had incorporated into their belief systems the Copernican Revolution. They had accepted what Galileo had said long ago: “The Bible does not tell us how the heavens go but how to go to heaven.”

The Catholic Church gave a significant sign to the world that it sought a conversation partner with science when Pope Pius XII issued his encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* in 1943. The scientific critical study of the Bible that appeared in Catholic circles at the end of the nineteenth century finally received official approbation. Vatican II further supported the historical-critical method when it declared that we “should carefully search out the meaning which the sacred writers really had in mind, that meaning which God had thought well to manifest through the medium of their words” (*Dei Verbum*, 12).

Biblical scholars have paid attention to the specific forms of biblical literature and to the original issues that the biblical creation texts were addressing and the meaning of the words for those first using them. The use of historical-critical methods has allowed theological concepts to accommodate the age of the earth being stretched from the Bible’s roughly four thousand years to science’s roughly four billion years before Christ.

NEW CHALLENGES FOR THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

Despite the three areas of possible fruitful dialogue between theology and science listed above, a number of new challenges are also present for theology and ministry today. I point to two in particular.

(1) *The New Literalism*. While the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993) refers to the historical-critical method as “the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts” (34), it also warns that “many members of the faithful” find “the method *deficient* from the point of view of faith” (30–31). *The Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (1994: 48–49) advises preachers to use “sound exegesis, *principally patristic*, and meditated on according to the various methods supported by the *spiritual tradition* of the Church” (emphasis mine). Such ecclesial statements have made biblical scholars like Joseph A. Fitzmyer suspicious of what seems to be a turn from historical-critical hermeneutics (cf. *Scripture: The Soul of Theology*).

Some Catholic authors are disappointed by the literal interpretation of Scripture and the lack of appreciation of the new cosmology in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Catechism*, for example, ignores the fact that billions of years before *homo sapiens* insects, plants, dinosaurs, horses, apes lived and died. Which is why Michael Morwood challenges

the *Catechism's* claim that with the Fall of Adam and Eve, "death makes its entrance into human history" (#400). He writes, "scientifically, this is nonsense" (Morwood, 1997:31).

Morwood pleads for a renewed appreciation of the story of creation as myth so that we do not continue to build a whole theological system based on a literal interpretation:

The story of creation, as a myth, is marvelous, and we will always respect the way it puts us in touch with deep human realities such as sin, struggle, death, meaning, and relationship with a God who can at times seem to be loving, sometimes vengeful, sometimes demanding, sometimes close, sometimes distant. As a myth it also has the capacity to relate us with other religious movements and their efforts to understand the transcendent (1997:118–19).

(2) *The Energetic Scientific Creationists.* I have described my spotting of the signs of today's scientific creationists on my way to school. Those who believe in "creation science" based on six twenty-four-hour days of creation, a "young-earth" dating, and a worldwide "flood geology" are particularly energetic about their beliefs. There are more than 350 books on the market that challenge evolutionary science. Many fundamentalist radio and television programs reaching multi-millions weekly have further spread the gospel of "creation science." As I drive to school, I do not see any signs outside Catholic and mainline Protestant churches inviting people to seminars which demonstrate the differences between modern scientific and ancient cosmological literature. It is difficult to locate an intelligent dialogue with the new cosmologists in our Bible study groups, homilies, and the RCIA. Our school boards, our neighborhoods, our air waves are inundated by "scientific creationists." Conrad Hyers has observed:

. . . it is clear that the ultraright has been energetically at work in all aspects of lobbying, publishing and mass media, while those representing a moderate and presumably normative position on the Bible and science have been napping (Rohr, 1988:185).

Those who minister in today's Church cannot ignore a healthy dialogue with today's scientists. History teaches us what an arrogant, isolated stance toward science and a biblical literalism can lead to: an impoverished doctrine of creation, inadequate christologies, patriarchal structures, ecological destruction, and a detour from pluralism and diversity. The references listed in this column can serve as a useful bibliography for today's pastoral theologian. I especially recommend Michael Morwood's new book *Tomorrow's Catholic: Understanding God and Jesus in a New Millennium*.

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Exegesis, Imagination, and Preaching in Easter Time

Does critical scientific exegesis open up or stifle the imagination? Since preaching is a creative act, the structured study of a text (exegesis) should aid not hinder this creative task. Structure need not be antithetical to creativity: Ludwig van Beethoven used the structure of the Sonata form and Bob Dylan used the three-chord blues form in very creative ways. These structures seemed to get their creative juices flowing. In this column I would like to examine the creative process, specifically the relationship between critical exegesis and imaginative preaching. Using the Gospel text for the Monday of the Octave of Easter (Matt 28:8-15), I will try to deconstruct my own process of writing a homily for this particular day and examine the bridge between exegesis and the homily.

I. EXEGESIS

The Gospel for this day picks up the story of the women at the tomb. Previously the women have witnessed a great earthquake and the rolling away of the stone (Matt 28:2). An angel announces to them that Jesus has been raised and commands them to announce to the disciples that Jesus will precede them to Galilee. As the Gospel for today begins, Jesus appears to the women as they are hurrying away with this message. Jesus repeats the angel's command and sends them to the "brothers." The Gospel ends with the story of the alleged stealing of Jesus' body and the bribing of the soldiers.

I must admit that my first reading left me unengaged. It is not that the Easter proclamation is not exciting and life giving but what more could I say about it on Easter Monday? I was preaching before my own Franciscan community so it was a community that I knew well, but it was also a community that had often heard me preach on the resurrection and new life. What was new or different in this Gospel story? How had our community story changed between Easter Sunday and Monday? I felt the well had run dry.

Since women were mentioned in the story I decided to begin by using a feminist approach to exegesis. This approach "seeks to rediscover the status and role of women disciples within the life of Jesus . . ." (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1996:18). This approach uses both historical critical methods (source, form, and redaction criticism) and a narrative

approach (5–7, 910) to recover the lost voices of women in the Scripture. So, at least I had some questions to address to the text: what was the status and role of these women in Matthew's story? As I searched to discover who these women were and how they functioned in this Gospel story I began by studying the limits of this passage and placing the story within the context of the whole of Matthew's Gospel. I found by comparing different translations and commentaries that the limits (28:8-15) set by the Lectionary were somewhat artificial since the story really begins in 28:1. The identity of these women is given in this verse: "After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb." A word search pointed out that Mary Magdalene and another Mary appear three times in Matthew's Gospel (27:56, 61; 28:1):

1. "Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee" (27:55-56).
2. ". . . Joseph [of Arimathea] . . . laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb" (27:60-61).
3. "After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb" (28:1).

Given these three passages the "other Mary" (27:61; 28:1) must be "Mary the mother of James and Joseph" (27:56). I expanded my narrative study of the passage by placing it within the context of Matthew's Gospel as a whole. I noted that these women were there at certain key points in the passion story: (1) Crucifixion (27:55-56), (2) Burial (27:61), (3) Rolling Away of the Stone/Appearance (28:1-10).

I was struck by the occurrence of the word "there" (*ekei*) in two of these three passages (27:55, 61). This led me to ask about the other "disciples"? Where were they? Matthew tells us that "all the disciples deserted him and fled" (26:56). They were not "there" at the crucifixion, they were not "there" at the burial, except for Joseph from Arimathea (27:57). The disciples do not appear again until the women bring them the instruction to meet Jesus in Galilee (28:8, 16). While the women were "there" at key points in the passion story the "disciples" were not. So, who is a true disciple in Matthew's story those who are called disciples or the women? What does it mean to be a disciple?

This structured study of the text and its narrative context brought to light that some of Jesus followers were with him throughout the whole

passion story and some were not. The simple adverb “there” seemed also to leap off the page of the text as it appeared in two of the three texts where the women appear. But how does one move from these exegetical observations to a homily? At least this exegesis had engaged my interest, I had questions about the text, about the role of women in the Gospel, about the meaning of discipleship. Lurking below all of this were questions about my community and myself.

II. HOMILY

The bridge between this exegesis and the homily was formed by the well-known African-American Spiritual, “Were You There?” The reason that the adverb “there” seemed to leap off the page was probably because we had used this hymn for our Good Friday service. This hymn became the creative catalyst with its three questions:

- (1) Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
- (2) Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
- (3) Were you there when they rolled the stone away?

I noticed that the women followers in the Gospel story could answer yes to these three questions, the other disciples would have to answer no. Now my imagination was engaged. I not only had a key question for the homily but this question, I noted, served as the refrain in this hymn. Might it not also serve as the recurring question or refrain throughout the homily?

The next step was to apply this question to the story of the Christian community throughout the ages and to the story of my own community. This application seemed to flow quite easily and naturally. As a Christian community one could ask were we “there” when they crucified the Lord at Auschwitz? Some Christians were “there,” most Christians were not. Were we “there” when the Lord was crucified by the institution of slavery in the United States? A number of Christians were, many Christians were not. Since I was preaching to a group of Franciscan friars who have a strong presence in Croatia, I asked whether we were “there” when they crucified the Lord in Bosnia-Herzegovina? Some Franciscans were “there” and some were not. But was this application justified since these were not literally crucifixions? Matt 5:11-12, it seemed to me, justified this application: “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account . . . for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

This African-American spiritual became the creative spark for this homily. It provided the structure, theme, and moral challenge. The Good News was the challenge of the cross of Christ and the hope of his death and resurrection.

III. EVALUATION

What were the strengths and weaknesses of this creative process? The strength of this process was that it moved me from disengagement with the text to a creative engagement. The structured or disciplined study of Matthew's Gospel led me to use a powerful hymn that retold that passion story, made it contemporary, challenging and evocative. The structure and question in the hymn correlated very well with the threefold appearance of the woman in the Gospel story. They clearly came off as the faithful disciples.

The weakness of this homily is that while it was very faithful to the Gospel of Matthew as a whole it did not directly engage the reading of the day beyond the reference to the women who are mentioned in the beginning of the gospel passage. I did not preach on the bribery of the soldiers and the story of the stealing of Jesus' body. Some have also suggested that preaching the cross and crucifixion the day after Easter goes against the joy of this season.

What was the bridge or the creative stimulus in this process? A careful or disciplined reading of the text made me more aware of the role of women in this text, a role I might have easily passed over. This reading also made me more aware of words and phrases in the text. Ultimately it was the seemingly inconsequential adverb "there" that awakened my imagination as I connected this gospel passage to the Hymn "Were You There?" The homily became a hymn in three-part harmony. The voices were (1) the gospel text, (2) the hymn "Were You There," and (3) my community.

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GETTING
DOWN
TO
CASES

Emily R. John

A Letter to a Young Catholic Woman

Dear Emily,

Hello from your long lost niece! When I called my mom to get your address, she said you had moved to Chicago. I suppose I should have known that but I have been in a funk for the last year. Sorry! How is Chicago? Do you have a neat apartment? How do you like your new job? Maybe we could celebrate our birthdays together next year because we are so close. Even though I am not very good at writing, I am always glad to get your birthday cards. I am proud you are my godmother. I really admire what you have done with your life. I hope I can do as well.

I am writing from Frenchburg, Kentucky. I am in my second week of volunteering with Habitat for Humanity through Campus Ministry at Marquette University. I thought I was going to be a law clerk for the summer but I was so miserable last year in pre-law I decided to do something totally different. I sure picked it. I have never been in such a small town. The people are really poor. And imagine me working with my hands! I have only hit my fingers instead of the nails four times. My old piano teacher would be very nervous if she knew what I was doing.

Being here has been a wonderful and strange experience. For the first time in my life, I feel useful. We have been putting in indoor plumbing. I don't think I have ever visited an outhouse in my life, but for some of these people, that is all they have ever known. There is so much to be done to help them. The campus minister who is with us keeps challenging us to think about a life of service. That is why I am writing to you. I am seriously considering changing to a theology major at Marquette so that I might be prepared to serve God in some way. I don't expect to change the world. I just want to make a difference in one other person's life.

When I called my boyfriend, he was stunned and maybe a little angry. I guess I was not surprised. We have talked about having a law practice together. I kind of figured he wouldn't understand. But something he said still troubles me. He wondered why any woman in her right mind would want to do ministry in the Catholic Church. "For women, the 'glass ceiling' of the Church is made of lead," he said. That is why I am writing to you. My mother has told me about some of your struggles to find a place in the Church. I feel God is calling me to serve people through the Church and the Catholic Church is all I know. Am I being foolish? Are the possibilities so limited for women in

the Catholic Church that I should look elsewhere? I hope you have time to answer this letter. I really need to hear from you.

*Your Goddaughter,
Suzanne*

Dear Suzanne,

How wonderful to hear from you! What an adventure you are on. You have asked me if there are possibilities for women in the Catholic Church. Ah Suzanne! You get right to the point of the matter! I have been asking myself this question for most of my adult life. It was about time for me to think about this again, so I took your letter with me on a recent backpacking trip to the Rockies and I thought of what you asked. Is there a place for women in the Catholic Church? I cannot answer your question with direct answers. But I can talk about what I have faced because I have decided to work within the Church. Ultimately it is up to you to make a decision that is right for you.

As I read your letter, I was reminded of my own service experiences in high school and university. They were some of the most life changing experiences I have ever had. I too spent time with some very poor people in the Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky. With people my age from all over the U.S., we helped build homes for those people who had no money for housing. I remember the hot sun and my blistered hands. I remember the frustration at bent nails and split wood. But somehow we managed to complete some helpful projects together.

The operative word here is together. I was with others as young and idealistic as me, and it became clear to me after the first day that I would not be able to get very far working alone. When in my ineptitude I split a 2 x 4, my new friend, Tim, would come over to help me try again, laughing at my inexperienced, fumbling hands, teaching me gently how to pound in nails. I still have pictures of all of us at night, our limbs bruised, and some singing together around a fire and accompanied by a guitar. I imagined I fell in love with the guitarist. We were from all different states, but we knew the same songs and we made beautiful harmony together. We fed one another's spirits; we held one another up.

Sometimes the Catholic Church is like this to me. I struggle in my life, I suppose, with the normal challenges in jobs, relationships, family, and alone. I feel I cannot successfully resolve everything. The many different people that make up the Church nourish my spirit, reminding me that there is more than the drudgery of everyday life, more than the struggles I face. I find God in the being together.

As you know, I love to hike and camp, and I have climbed many mountains in my time. I carry my food and necessary equipment on my back. Things are greatly simplified when backpacking. All I need

is reduced to a forty-pound pack: my tent, sleeping bag, clothes, stove, rain gear, and bread. As I climb, my legs become wobbly with fatigue and my back aches with the weight of my pack. After a couple of hours, I would wonder when the climb would end. Seemingly at exactly the right time, the peak would appear, and the glorious scenery of the surrounding range and glaciers would embrace my weary body and soul. The strain of the climb then takes a back seat to the glory I behold. We would stop to eat simple bread, water, cheese, and apples. At home perhaps I would have eaten vegetable soup, a tuna fish sandwich, and a coke. But on the mountain, simple bread and water is a veritable feast and nourishment plenty. Simple bread, simple wine, the most basic of food.

The Catholic Church offers us a simple meal of bread and wine and asks us to eat together. And as we eat we recognize the one who is often so invisible to us in our daily lives. Like my arduous climb to the peak of the mountain, the weight of the world seems to cut deeply into my spirit. I have to remind myself: Sit. Eat. Pass a piece of your bread to your hiking partner. "Do this in memory of me."

I am sure you know what I am saying. The meals you ate there with your new friends nourish your weary body and spirit. And as you eat them, in a special way God is with all of you then. The Church gives us the opportunity to eat together, and to find God in eating together, in sharing our lives together. I find God in the eating together.

But, let me give you one more image, dear Suzanne. There are numerous difficulties on a backpacking trip. A hiker knows that the water on the mountain provides essential sustenance, but it is not safe to drink. It must be boiled or treated with pellets we have carried with us. Of course there is also the threat of encounter with bears. At night we must hang all the food high in the trees. And if that is not enough, the path is often mired in mud or so rocky that our ankles are constantly strained. The ground is not always flat for our tents. And often my traveling companions have their own way of doing things which might not be the same as mine. I mean to say, dear Goddaughter, that our lives are imperfect. I do selfish things, make mistakes, and must ask for forgiveness more times than I care to admit. So too the Catholic Church is imperfect. Composed of fallible humans, the Church is also fallible and sinful. In the theological world, we call this human brokenness or lack of consciousness. Throughout history, decisions have been made at all levels of the Church which are sinful and alienating. I wish it weren't so, because then it would be easier for me to belong to this institution.

I have become angry with many church stances as I have become angry with my hiking partners. The Catholic Church, however, can be a place of dialogue. My anger and the anger of others is often righteous and good when this anger is generated by serious infractions of justice and peace. So, we are challenged to address the important issues and

perhaps take a prophetic role, confronting the issues and working for change. Amazingly, I have discovered that God is right there in the struggle; in the giardia-infected water, in the fear of bear attacks, in the struggles with my hiking partner, in the prophetic working for change in a Church that is imperfect, sinful, needing forgiveness, and love. And where there is forgiveness and love, there is God. I find God in the struggle.

You might ask me, why not join a service club instead of the Catholic Church? My heritage is Roman Catholic. My experience of religion has been Catholic. I am most familiar with Catholic symbolism; the sacraments feed me. I am in love with the Eucharist. It is a world I know and understand. I love the music, the richness, the art. Langdon Gilkey once told me that Roman Catholicism is a religion of the people. I am edified when I participate in the Eucharist in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris or a hotel room in Japan that the very same Eucharist is being offered by all types of people throughout the world. I am also in love with the monastic Prayer of Christians. The morning prayer I say is being repeated in various languages throughout the world at the same time. This to me is the glory of being Catholic: the universality of religious expression, my religious expression. I am not alone as I pray; I am part of a greater body comprising the body of Christ, at once holy and sinful, life-giving and broken. It is a challenge to live the paradox!

I know, dear Suzanne, that I may not have adequately answered your question. I can only share with you why staying in the Church has made sense to me. As they say, take what you need from what I have written and leave the rest.

Remember these wonderful days, little sister! There is a place for your critical mind in this Church. Belonging to the Catholic Church sometimes feels like climbing a high mountain with blistered feet or building a house while scarring your hands with splinter and misplaced hammer blows. But you have found God in the whole process, in the good and the bad, the pain and the joy, the saint and the sinner. God is here with us, in the center of it all; in the being together, eating together, in the struggle. For me, the Church is like the arduous trail and the magnificent mountain, the calloused hands and the completed home.

I am proud of your compassionate and serving spirit, Suzanne. Please write soon again and visit me anytime you can. You always have a home here.

Lovingly,
Emily

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Theresa F. Koernke, I.H.M.

God, the Cosmos, Faith, and Gender Relations

Once upon a time, most people assumed that the accounts in the two creation stories in the book of Genesis (1–2:3 and 2:4–3:24) were a description of actual events that occurred in real historical time. In these scriptural accounts, God has the characteristics of a human being. From out of the void, God creates the earth, all the heavenly bodies, and every living thing on the earth. God takes clay to form the male human being, and one of his ribs to form the female. God presents the earth to them, but asks them not to eat of the tree in the center of the garden, or they will die. A talking serpent tempts the human beings with the possibility of being like God if they eat of the tree. They do, and they experience disorder: shame over their bodies, a lack of enjoyment in their work, pain in childbearing, a disordered relationship between themselves, and death. The further consequences of their decision are recorded in the next chapters: out of jealousy, Cain kills his brother, Abel, and confusion develops because people attempt to “build a tower to God” without facing their social relationships.

For centuries, this literal reading seems to have been sufficient to account for the origin of a good creation, the goodness of human beings, and of the potential to exercise free will inappropriately. Why do increasing numbers of people today reject this reading? What happened to our language? How is it that the New Science image of the cosmos influences our account of creation by God? Is patriarchal social order “the will of God”? Is faith in God, as the source of all creation, an intellectually honest possibility?

Like members of every world religion, Christians (and our Jewish ancestors) have made an account of their experience of and relation to God (or, The Other). But until quite recently, we have not been very aware of the impact of concrete, social setting upon those accounts; indeed, we did not realize that our account of the God-creation relationship was a reflection of relationships in society. The encounter of ancient Jewish culture and language with that of Greek culture and language by way of the conquests of Alexander the Great would have powerful consequences for the interpretation of the origins of creation, as well as for religious, social, and political life.

The Greeks, our philosophical ancestors, took it for granted that there existed some universal, uncontaminated essence of ideas that

was shared by all thinkers. Words, they thought, were simply the medium in which these ideas found expression. We are familiar with the pyramidal image of the world and social structures that comes to us from the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle, and that was presumed to be “the way it is.” Today, however, scholars realize that the images and metaphors by which we make sense of our lives are, in fact, influenced by our social experiences, and that those images, in turn, tend to reinforce that image of creation and the social structures that it presumes. That Greek understanding, coupled with a literal reading of the scriptures, found its way into the imaginations of Christians. In turn, that structure of the world, of social relationships, and of the Church was presumed to be the will of God! So long as the patriarchal-pyramidal image of society was not challenged, few persons questioned the literal reading of Scripture, the image of God in it, the gender roles in Church and society, or that God is the source of creation.

Matters began to change in the sixteenth century. The cosmological discoveries of Nicholas Copernicus (1473–1543) and Galileo Galilei (1564–1581) shook our social structures and our language. To have publicly taught that the sun, rather than the earth, is the center of our planetary system contradicted the literal reading of the biblical account of creation. Their discoveries also questioned the controlling image of society, itself based upon a social order composed of a patriarchal ranking of beings. It is not at all surprising that, within one hundred years of their promulgation, the cosmological discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo would threaten the authority of monarchies of every sort (including that of the Church), and the language by which we had made an account of the relation of God to creation.

On our way to appreciating the relation of our social structures to our language, image of God, and our images of the whole of the cosmos, a more conscious realization of the reverse influence of cosmology upon language describing our social structures, image of God, and the meaning of “creation by God” has occurred. For Copernicus and Galileo to have discovered *empirically verifiable new truth* that had not been taught by either civil or ecclesiastical authorities would raise many uncomfortable questions: Can we be sure that there are pure ideas that are clearly expressed in our words? Can truth be controlled? If ordinary human beings can discover truth for themselves by the use of reason, is not *revealed truth* absurd? Indeed, some said that the idea of “God” is a creation of the human mind when it cannot or will not seek the truth. And besides, had not persons used religious notions of “God” to justify the persecution of others?

Initially, several philosophers and scientists called for the replacement of the metaphysics of Aristotle and “superstitious religion” by scientific method applied to knowledge of the world and to social

structures. Their cries for liberty and equality, however, were at first applied to males only. And yet, the *discovery of discovery* laid the way open to the scientific discoveries that would overturn the centuries-long assumptions that females are misbegotten males. No longer could we safely say that the truth articulated in human language is “out there,” untouched by social context.

Indeed, if the descendants of Descartes had sought to discard the metaphysics of Aristotle and the authority of the Church as articulated through Aristotelian language, they had sought to replace it with another meta (overall) explanation of reality such as mathematics. But, with the discoveries of galaxies beyond our own, and with the engagement of myriad cultures through electronic communication and global travel, philosophers, theologians, and scientists began to ask: If all language is culture bound, is any meta-explanation of reality possible? If all is in flux (Chaos Theory of the universe), what social system best respects and reflects this truth? Can we communicate about matters of ultimate importance outside of our own culture, our own “language game”?

It is from this context, in which massive challenges to metaphysics have and continue to be made, that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (each influenced by metaphysics and its patriarchy) are challenged to re-say what they hold to be true. They ask: Are these religious families mere variants of patriarchy and the language that defends it? Are their convictions of faith about God as the source of creation irretrievably tied to a literal reading of their creation stories? Can one hold to the Big Bang Theory of creation and its associated Chaos Theory and still be a believing, practicing Jew, Christian or Muslim?

The language of metaphysics, coupled with a literal reading of Scripture, could (and did) give the impression that our words actually captured reality. If we trusted that metaphysics and biblical literalism to give us ageless language by which to speak truth, and if now many of us recognize its patriarchal social roots, what are the options? If we now know, using the historical-critical method, that biblical accounts of creation are mythic literary forms that speak interpretations of reality—of its origins and our own human freedom—what are the options?

We could resort to nihilism and despair of making an account of faith altogether. Some Christians have turned to either biblical fundamentalism, papalism (“Whatever the Pope says”), or to traditionalism to provide some form of “secure truth.” And yet, if we distinguish the demands of scientific knowledge from the knowledge of the heart, there is no need to restrict our image of God as Source of All to the data of metaphysics or to a literal reading of Scripture. Indeed, the God we worship can never be captured by any set of human metaphors.

A contemporary use of Chaos Theory sees within the universe the urge to self-organization. Thus, deep within what may appear to be ran-

dom movement of particles is “the Strange Attractor” that reveals a pattern. As believing Christians, we could well say that the Chaos-Spirit of God at the heart of the cosmos is its ever surging life force, assuring that all will be well, and that disorder is not the final state of things. And inherent in Chaos is the pattern: the dying and rising with Christ, “the Strange Attractor.” In every celebration of the Eucharist, we are the disciples on the road to Emmaus, saddened because things have not turned out as we had hoped. And beginning with Moses and Miriam, our ancestors, Jesus interprets our history to us by naming the pattern of our lives. In eating the Bread we give ourselves to the Church from whom the Strange Attractor cannot be separated, and in drinking the Cup we give ourselves, yet again, to the pattern of the Strange Attractor of our lives.

For those who know the Christ Event in their bodies, scientific discoveries simply provide another set of metaphors to speak of God involved in the universe in our flesh.

SUGGESTED READING

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Edwards, Denis. *Jesus and the Cosmos*. New York: Paulist Press, 1991.

Tilby, Angela. *God, Self and the New Cosmology*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Old Testament Theology, Volume II. By Horst Dietrich Preuss. Translated by Leo G. Perdue. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996. x + 438 pp. \$34.00.

H. D. Preuss, a highly respected Old Testament scholar in Germany, is not well known in the English-speaking world. The two volumes of his *Old Testament Theology* represent the culmination of his years of teaching and research. They were completed just prior to his retirement and only two years before his death in 1993. Their translation and publication in the U.S. should establish his reputation here.

In the past two centuries the search for the theology of the Old Testament has been largely a Protestant (and German) effort. The twentieth century has witnessed the publication of several distinguished works in this field. But the attempt "to offer an overview of the world of faith and witness of the Old Testament" (I, 1) is a daunting task, one which some scholars consider impossible. For Hebrew Scripture is a collection of writings of varying viewpoints and theologies. Numerous authors and editors, appealing to different audiences over the centuries, contributed to these works. Can there really be a theology of the Old Testament? Can we really systematize such diverse material?

Biblical theology must understand Israel's religious ideas in terms of that nation's own historical and cultural context. This is not easy, since there is so much about the ancient Near East and the text of the Hebrew Bible which we do not know. Historical criticism is essential for drawing out the theology of the Old Testament, and yet it may not be sufficient. Modern scholarly research recognizes that there is more than one way to approach and understand a text.

Every Old Testament theology must deal with the relationship between God and Israel. Preuss understands *election* as the central theological concept of Hebrew Scripture. For him the "center" of the Old Testament is found in the divine activity which establishes an ongoing relationship with the people of Israel. This relationship was initiated by God but required a human response. Preuss is probably correct in assuming that every aspect of Old Testament thought is a consequence of God's election of Israel. However, we must recognize that some of Israel's religious ideas (for example, wisdom traditions) are not *immediate* consequences of its election.

Volume II of *Old Testament Theology* relates election to important aspects of Hebrew religious thought and activity. It contains parts three and four (chapters 6–15) of the combined work. Part three associates specific narratives and ideas with Israel's election: the ancestors, the monarchy, the city of Jerusalem and its temple, the priesthood, and the prophets. Part four is dedicated to the results and consequences of election as experienced in Israel's history. This section explores Israelite anthropology, ethical questions, the cult, eschatology, and the relationship between Israel (the chosen people) and the nations (the non-chosen).

Old Testament Theology is no work for a beginner. However, a pastor or minister who has gone beyond introductory biblical courses will find much in this work that will be helpful. Preuss's knowledge of the text and familiarity with biblical scholarship is phenomenal. His approach is largely historical critical. This could be disappointing to someone who prefers a literary approach to the Bible. Hebrew words appear frequently in this work, but in such a way that the non-Hebrew reader can ignore them and still understand what the author is saying. The two volumes are like an encyclopedia, for they attempt to explore every possible aspect of Old Testament theology. However, this can also be a drawback to the work. For one can get lost in the details of Preuss's scholarship. His tendency toward long paragraphs and critical dialogue with other scholars can also be disconcerting. However, these two volumes should be required reading for any serious student of Old Testament theology.

Timothy A. Lenchak, S.V.D.
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Lydia's Impatient Sisters. A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity.

By Luise Schotroff. Translated by Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995. 298 pp. Hardcover, \$29.95

This latest work of Luise Schotroff is not for the impatient, that is, those who look for simple solutions to the complex phenomenon of Christian patriarchy and its consequences. But for those patient enough to follow Schotroff's detailed argumentation, the effort is well spent. This is not an easy book; every page presents strong challenges in bold language. Using a feminist liberationist approach, Schotroff constructs a social-historical interpretation of the Bible. She seeks out the oppression of women and their praxis of liberation in terms of the concrete social conditions that have constructed women's economic, political, and social reality. By asking questions such as: "What did it mean for a woman to become Christian in the early days of Christianity?" Schotroff opens whole new dimensions of meaning.

The book is divided into four major sections. In Part I, Schotroff lays out her methodological approach. She insists that interpreters take seriously both their own social location and that of the people who speak in the Bible. Schotroff queries where a gospel that was originally critical of all patriarchal structures of domination became confused with that very ideology. She does a critical analysis of patriarchy and then offers a counter-concept of a feminist vision of the reign of God. Though the biblical tradition be androcentric, she sees it as yet transformable, still offering traces of a radical critique of structures of domination. But one must ask of each text, "Who benefits from this statement? Whose benefit does it claim to serve? What does it call for? What praxis follows from it? What other statements does it lead to? What statements support it? In what situation is it uttered? By whom?" (57). For those already committed to feminist endeavors, this first section will be somewhat remedial.

In the second part Schotroff takes New Testament texts that reveal the social reality of everyday women's lives, and analyzes traces of oppression and women's resistance. She shows the hatred of women's liberation, the reality of women's work, and control of money. Part Three centers on texts concerning the call of God, the gospel of the poor, and eschatology. The final section looks to the elevation of debased women with regard to marriage, family, and relationships of mutuality in the new community of believers. Each chapter in these three sections has four parts: (1) questions related to the texts; (2) the social-historical issues reflected in the texts; (3) feminist critique of the history of interpretation; (4) additional feminist observations on the use of the texts discussed.

The most revealing and persistently disturbing aspect of the book is the way in which Schotroff methodically un.masks unwarranted presuppositions and patriarchal biases that have colored interpretations of biblical texts. She makes a great contribution to New Testament scholarship by providing commentary from an alternative perspective and by asking previously unvoiced questions. By showing her readers how to persistently make such queries about the social reality of the women of the biblical texts, Schotroff's book succeeds in making one impatient to work for the transformation of structures of domination. It is eminently clear, however, from Schotroff's chapter on "The Gospel of the Poor and the Option for Women," that in dominant theology Christianity has been co-opted into "a religion that offers middle-class and rich people scope to create identity and to occupy their positions of power" (145). It is the poor who are impatient for transformation of the status quo; middle-class and rich readers who are attracted to the gospel of the poor must face their own contentment and patience with the delay in the hour of conversion.

Schotroff's book is a clarion to Christian women and men today not to let themselves be "driven into resignation by despair and fear," but rather to be reinforced by the impatience of our foresisters "who have raised up their heads because they have felt the power of God to be near" (xvi).

Barbara Reid, O.P.
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Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective. By Ivoni Richter Reimer. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. Pages, xxvi + 302. Paper, \$24.00.

This book is a must for anyone attempting to retrieve the fuller picture of the life and work of women disciples in the early Church. To my knowledge, it is the first extensive treatment of women in the Acts of the Apostles. Reimer asks previously uninvestigated questions and challenges sexist presuppositions that underlie traditional interpretations. In her six chapters, she analyzes the stories of Sapphira (5:1-11), Tabitha (9:36-43), Lydia (16:13-15, 40), the prophetic slave in Philippi (16:16-18), Priscilla (18:1-3, 8-19, 24-28), and women mentioned briefly or not at all.

Her feminist liberation method makes use of customary historical tools including extensive word analyses. Reimer's aim is to reconstruct the history of women, while recognizing that the sources are androcentric, revealing only a partial history. She asserts that the women featured in Acts are not exceptional, but rather, are typical of many others like themselves.

By posing questions that are not usually asked, Reimer both unmasks unwarranted assumptions of previous interpreters, and offers fresh possibilities of meaning. With Sapphira, for example, she asks, "Why did she support her husband in his act of concealment?" (6). Reimer concludes that Sapphira, like Ananias, does not wholly trust the community and that she "could not or would not withdraw from the control of patriarchal power" even though "she surely would have nothing to fear in the community of equals if she had resisted her husband in this matter" (15). For Reimer Sapphira's true sin lies in having reinserted herself into a patriarchal marriage in which she would not offer resistance to her husband's decisions (20).

This final assertion presents a difficulty that recurs throughout Reimer's work. Were the early Christians in fact free from all patriarchal structures, functioning as true communities of equals (126, 218, 267)? Indeed, Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-36, and other NT texts present such an ideal. But was this a reality? I am not as convinced as Reimer that it was. Almost every early Christian writing shows evidence of tensions over this very issue. I agree with Reimer that a liberative reading of the stories of women in Acts impels contemporary Christians to work toward egalitarianism, but is it a return to a former pristine practice? Or is it not striving for what has always been ideal but never fully achieved?

One of Reimer's most important contributions is how she unfolds the realities of the work lives of women. She shows Tabitha as a textile worker whose works of righteousness (9:36) were also challenges to unjust social and economic relationships. Lydia is not a rich merchant, but a foreigner, a freed woman, working with other such women in a despised trade, the production of purple cloth, engaged in subsistence work for herself and her household (112). The prophetic slave girl is not enslaved by the Pythian spirit, but rather, by her owners. Her exorcism will be liberating for her only if there are new possibilities of life open to her, now that her means of employment is removed. Prisca's life as a leatherworker was difficult and despised. She and Aquila were immigrant, lower class minor craftworkers. With these portraits of women in Acts, Reimer challenges the prevailing notion that Luke showcases rich women in his second volume. Rather, missionaries who spread the gospel include ordinary working women.

Reimer unmasks interpretations that reveal anti-Jewish biases. In Tabitha's story, for example, she shows how many commentators distinguish Christian from Jewish ethics, to the advantage of the former. Instead, Reimer sees Tabitha as exemplifying a Christian who continues to live a Jewish spirituality rooted in pious practices on behalf of the poor.

In sum, this book is an indispensable tool for understanding significant parts of the story of early Christianity that have been previously overlooked or misinterpreted.

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History of Vatican II. Volume I. Edited by Giuseppe Alberigo. With an English version edited by Joseph Komonchak. Maryknoll: Orbis Press. Leuven: Peeters, 1995. 527 pp.

Any similarity between the preparation for Vatican II and its final outcome is purely coincidental! This brilliant first volume of a projected five-volume study takes us into the “smoke-filled backrooms” of the Vatican where the council is being planned. For more than five hundred pages we are *treated* to a battle of minds, personalities, and power.

Giuseppe Alberigo gives the background in announcing the event that is to be Vatican II. The Ante-Preparatory phase is covered by Etienne Fouilloux. The third section, brilliantly arranged and presented by the American Joseph Komonchak, is by far the longest and the most informative chapter in the book. For more than two hundred pages Komonchak gives us an *experience* of the struggle that was the council’s preparation: the power-plays, the maneuvering, the dodges, the pettiness, and the parry and thrust of getting one’s own agenda “on the books” and getting everybody else’s swept away. The external climate surrounding the council: the press, reactions of various episcopates, the revolutionary style of the upstart Pope, and the disastrous Roman Synod is the material for J. Oscar Beozzo. The final chapter by Klaus Wittstadt brings us to the eve of the Council. In this section we get the final reactions of the various episcopates, the “touchy” situation of appointing the *periti* (theological experts). And this section informs us of all the things we were not aware we wanted to know about Vatican II’s more practical aspects: microphones, lighting, telephones, data processing for voting; also, steps taken to preserve secrecy (like hiring security men who did not know Latin!!). Add to these the super-practical questions: what happens when twenty five hundred older men have to go to the little bishops’ room? All the details are there, and, of course, the *very* bottom line: who is paying for all this?

On a less practical but more important note, Fouilloux in the second section gives a masterful overview of the Church in the 1950s, the setting sun for Ultra-Montanism, the Church with the problems that Vatican II was called to solve. The nucleus of this ecclesial situation, then as now, was the Roman curia. As expected, curial officialdom were *not* happy when it came to anything that would challenge their privileged position and centralized power base. The irony in all of this is that the initial responses from the world’s bishops were not terribly keen on changes either. Most wanted business as usual. This includes Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, who was not at all enthusiastic. A big number of bishops never bothered to respond. The Catholic universities reflected the same pattern. Chicago (Loyola?) ignored the request for prospective agenda for the council. A number of these same schools who at the time cared little about changes in Rome are presently the ones in a dog-fight with the Roman congregations. How history *does* play tricks on us!!

The major obstacles to the birth of the renewed Church can be laid at the feet of the Pope. John, as unpredictable as he was lovable, knew the need for change, yet he appointed curial officials to head the all-important conciliar commissions, a move very much like trying to get the House of Lords to vote themselves out of power. The result was: Catholicism already immobile by its certainties became paralyzed. The biggest difficulty had to do with the all-important Theological

Commission and its all-powerful head Cardinal Ottaviani. The TC was the conciliar counterpart to the Holy Office. The TC, holding all the marbles, *alone* could approve any material involving revelation. They used this power to torpedo ecumenism, liturgy, laity, collegiality, and any other issue not to their liking. The other commissions knew they literally did not have a prayer—any theological position was vetoed by the TC, unless it was *their* position. As a result, commissions submitted schemata that were little more than practical suggestions without theological bases. Ottaviani, however, met his match in Augustin Bea and his Secretariat for Christian Unity, a pet of the Pope. Technically, the SCU was not a commission, and, therefore, it had no authority to introduce conciliar schemata. But Bea and his group refused to lie down and die. (After the council began, the Pope raised the SCU to the status of a commission in a brilliant move that floored the TC and the curia.)

The Old Guard were determined to make Vatican II the finishing touch of the negative, authoritarian Vatican I. They wanted continuity with *Pascendi*, the infamous letter that ecclesially executed the Modernists, and they insisted on all the principles and policies of Pope Pius XII, especially those embodied in *Humani generis*. They wanted Vatican II to come down hard on the errors of the modern age and wanted no encouragement or direction for millions of good people, Catholic and non-Catholic, who deserved more than condemnation. The authors of this volume show us how the Holy Spirit was smuggled into Vatican II. We all knew the council was a struggle. This volume proves it was a miracle.

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Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States. By Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M. Second edition. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996. 258 pp. \$16.00

This is the second edition of a text first published by Macmillan in 1989 as part of the "Makers of the Catholic Community Series," commemorating the bicentennial of the initial organization of U.S. Catholicism under Bishop John Carroll. The author has written a new preface for this edition. The text has weathered the last eight years well, and it remains a solid achievement.

The book is organized chronologically and divided into five parts: An Enlightenment Synthesis, 1776–1815; The Immigrant Vision, 1830–1866; The Spirituality of Americanism, 1866–1900; A Fractured Inheritance, 1900–1930; and Seedbed of Reform, 1930–1965. The enlightenment synthesis, articulated by Bishops John Carroll and John England, addressed the pastoral needs of the Catholic minority in the colonies. The rapid expansion of the Catholic population due to immigration during the nineteenth century led to disagreement about Catholicism's pastoral strategy. Bishops Martin John Spalding, John Hughes, and John Neumann articulated the "immigrant vision," emphasizing a strong institutional Church as a bastion against Protestant hostility. Other leaders (Orestes Brownson, Isaac Hecker) argued for an "Americanist spirituality," one more open to dialogue with American culture.

This debate was interrupted by Leo XIII's 1899 encyclical *Testem benevolentiae* which condemned the heresy of "Americanism." Chinnici argues that this letter resulted in a "fractured inheritance" (135). Leo XIII, in all his teaching, reiterated that Church and state formed perfect societies which operated in different spheres, the supernatural and the natural. Thus American Catholic spiritual writers could no longer synthesize the spiritual and the secular; rather, "spiritual" and "secular" became parallel spheres of activity.

In the early twentieth century, Chinnici argues, this fracture can be seen in the writings of the social activist John A. Ryan, the eucharistic movement, and the retreat movement. In the final section of the book Chinnici examines figures who presage the reforms of Vatican II: Virgil Michel who led the liturgical reform movement; Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker; James Keller of the Christophers; and the Trappist Thomas Merton who touched off a widespread interest in contemplation.

Two aspects of Chinnici's contribution particularly stand out. First, the chapters are based on archival research and a reading of the primary texts. The conclusions about U.S. Catholic spirituality are thus not derived from European scholarly work in spirituality but are thoroughly rooted in American soil. Second, Chinnici focuses upon spirituality as a synthesis of "a Catholic's self-identity, experience of society, convictions about the institutional church, devotional life, attitudes toward asceticism, and image of Christ." Spirituality focuses these various components into "a cultural whole," a lifestyle that responds to the cultural context (xii). The word "structure" in the subtitle alludes to this approach. He traces how various structures of spirituality evolved as Catholicism faced new challenges.

The book's strong point—its solid basis in historical research—implicitly contains its weak point—its limited treatment of the subject. In the preface to the second edition Chinnici himself acknowledges that "the limitations of *Living Stones* are obvious" (xvii). Three such limitations can be mentioned here. First, with the exception of Dorothy Day, the book examines only Anglo males. A study of women's contributions would have enriched the book considerably. Similarly, the text would be enhanced by incorporating material from the diverse ethnic groups woven into the tapestry of American Catholicism. Second, several major figures are not covered. Why Chinnici would, for example, cover Rev. Terence Shealy of the retreat movement and not examine James Cardinal Gibbons is unclear. Finally, more treatment could have been given to popular expressions of religiosity (devotions, material artifacts, print media, radio and television).

The book is written in a lucid, accessible style and would be of interest not only to historians but to anyone wishing to further his or her understanding of U.S. Catholicism.

Acknowledging the book's limitations, one must still recognize Chinnici's accomplishment. *Living Stones* is the best available one volume history of American Catholic spirituality.

Bruce H. Lescher
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Christ in Christian Tradition: The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century. By Aloys Grillmeier with Theresia Hainthaler. Volume II, part 2. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995. 565 pp. Cloth. \$50.

The scholar of Byzantine history, christology, ecclesiology, or ecumenism will be happy to see this new book of the author's monumental research become available in English. This section of the history, from Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604), concentrates on the Byzantine capital, with a third part of this volume to concentrate on the patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch, Armenia and Georgia, and the Church of Persia, and a fourth, focusing on Alexandria, Nubia, and Ethiopia. In addition to these parts, already available in German, there will be a third volume on the West.

This great research project is oriented not only to the careful scientific exploration of the sources, theological arguments, and faith of the Church, but it is also meant to serve an ecumenical purpose, exploring the differences and compatibilities of the christologies of these Churches, divided these many centuries. In this respect, the evaluation of Justinian's strategy and theology, and the Fifth Ecumenical Council, Constantinople 553, are of particular importance. For this reason, it provides an invaluable resource to those following the reconciliation of Oriental and Byzantine Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in our own day. As the author notes, in reviewing the massive literature of the period, in retrospect, and especially in light of the Islamic conquest—next chapters in this ecclesial history—one finds more common christological ground than did the antagonists of that era.

The volume covers in depth and detail the theological positions and arguments of Severus of Antioch and his interlocutors like Julian of Halicarnassus, Nephalius, Leontius of Byzantium, Romanos Melodos, Leontius of Jerusalem, and the expanded circle of Chalcedonia theologians and monks. The author surveys, and provides an evaluation of, the most current critical sources, outlines their positions on the Cyrilian terminology, their formulations of the hypostatic union, and the implications of their protection of the duality or unicity of natures of Christ. He goes on to lay out the role of Justinian and Theodora, of Popes John II and Vigilius, and the various patriarchs. There are chapters on the *Three Chapters* dispute, the fifth ecumenical council, and the condemnation of Origen.

The discussions of various attempts at reconciliation of both terminology and theology on the one hand, and theologians and Churches on the other are explored in detail. Indeed, it is in this period, and at the Council, that the hermeneutics of Chalcedon and its formulation on the person and natures of Christ are set for the subsequent course of Christian history. The authors not only deal with the explication of the original sources and arguments, but they carefully survey the secondary literature and current debates, judiciously making judgments where possible, and laying out alternatives, where they feel the documentation does not support a definitive solution. The importance, for subsequent Christianity, of the condemnations of Origenist anthropology and cosmology, and the compromises and orthodoxy of Justinian are essential for understanding the rest of Christian history and its expression of faith.

As the authors note, it has been impossible to explicate the full range of Byzantine devotional life, liturgical development, and artistic expressions, all of which are central to the christological faith developed during this century. However, we can be appreciative of this massive research project, which will be the basis of teaching and research in christology and ecclesiology for decades to come. The volume ends with an appraisal of the sixth century and the Justinian era. Also included are an extensive bibliography and four indexes for both parts one and two of volume two.

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On the Moral Nature of the Universe. Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics.

Nancey Murphy and George F. R. Ellis. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

The cosmos as we know it today in the light of the sciences is an unfolding, chemical process that eventually generates life in the form of intelligent, free agents, at least on this planet. What might be the case beyond this planet we are not yet in a position to say. And when intelligent life emerges, it is a form of life which, as K. Rahner once wrote, is capable of taking into its own hands the very chemical process that begot it and of adjusting and manipulating the structure of that process itself, at least on this planet. One can hardly think of this seriously without being struck by the immense ethical questions which emerge out of such an understanding of the cosmos. What are we to make of the fact that the cosmos itself brings into being a form of life that is capable of such intervention not only in its own life, but in the life of all other creatures on this planet? We suggest nothing as to how far beyond this planet such intervention might eventually reach. It seems inevitable that one must eventually ask about the implications of contemporary cosmological insights for our understanding of human ethical activity. This is precisely the concern of this remarkable book in which the authors attempt to address the complexity and uncertainty of our times by bringing the sciences together with ethics and Christian doctrine.

The authors clearly lay out the scientific, philosophical-epistemological, ethical, and theological suppositions from which they work. Without hesitation, they state their conviction about the need for a functioning cosmology that can relate the vision of the sciences to the vision of theology and thus provide a framework for dealing with the larger questions of meaning and ethics. Against the claim that the experienced sense of moral obligation is a mere illusion, they argue that such is not the case, and that this experience itself provides important clues as to the nature of reality. They argue that only when our picture of reality moves beyond mere empirical description and analysis to the metaphysical and theological level does it become more adequate and begin to provide a basis for arguing against the deadly position of total moral relativism.

More precisely, their argument is shaped by specific forms of the Christian tradition, that of the Quakers and that of the Church of the Brethren. These traditions lead the authors to ethical insights of considerable significance in dealing with the problems of a socio-political culture shaped by the possibilities placed into human hands today by science and technology. Their argument moves away from the ethic of power and control which leads to the exploitation of nature and of our fellow human beings to a kenotic ethic of self-emptying for the sake of the other grounded in a kenotic concept of God. Human life is created not for domination and control but for other ways of relating that revolve around the issue of self-emptying. This line of argument will lead consistently to an ethic of non-violence. And non-violent ways of relating ought to be found not only in the context of inter-human relations, but in human relations to the rest of the world as well. A way of life for human beings characterized by a kenotic vision, they argue, is right for humankind because it coheres with the nature of the universe as perceived by the physical and the social sciences, and because ultimately it is grounded in the moral character of God which shines through in the moral sensibility of humankind. Beyond this, such an ethical insight helps shed light on the painful structures and the waste that seem to be involved in the begetting of life at all levels that we know on this planet. The position of these authors is not unlike that of Holmes Rolston III who presents a powerful case for the spiritual-ethical significance of suffering not only in the Christian context but in the cosmic context as well (cfr. "Does Nature Need to be Redeemed?" *Zygon*, 1994:205–29.) Thus, a theological, ethical theory helps to round out the insights of the sciences at the level of the boundary questions raised by the sciences.

Such a kenotic concept of God has appeared at times in theology, particularly in the case of Process-theologians who commonly speak of a dipolar concept of the divine. The ethical implications of such a kenotic view are recognized by a number of other important studies, but they are rarely discussed with such consistency and with such a sense of urgency. The authors of this study treat the kenotic ethic not only in its Christian form, but also in the form in which it appears in other religious traditions. Readers with a long sense of the history of Christian spirituality and theology may well recognize reverberations of the medieval poverty-debates in this discussion and overtones of the medieval understanding of voluntary poverty as equivalent to humility and as foundational for the spiritual life in any form.

Those familiar with studies on environmental problems are aware of the widespread conviction that a fundamental shift of values is crucial to the solution of the major problems in this area. This book can be seen as an extended argument about the nature of that shift. It is an argument that is well-informed, coherent, and convincing. It is also disturbing. And so it must be if, in fact, we are talking about reformulating the basic values by which we come to define ourselves and our place in the world.

This book is not light reading. It is directed to a public that is at least minimally literate in the sciences and concerned about environmental issues. The authors have presented an account of the moral nature of God and of God's will for human life that they believe is uniquely fitted to the universe as we now understand it. Not just any theology and not just any ethic is compatible in this

way with the contemporary scientific world-view. Clearly the implications of the ethic for which they argue fly in the face of much of contemporary, Western consciousness. These authors are brave. And their message needs to be heard.

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Catholic Theological Union*

Ecclesiology in Context. By Johannes A. van der Ven. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996. xvi + 568 pp. \$29.00.

This book is rooted in unabashedly addressing the religious crisis of the West. It does not pursue liberation theology in third-world countries and that theology's application to first- and second-world countries. The focus is not poverty or issues of power, but the process of secularization which is the result of more global processes of modernization and rationalization. Provided the reader remains aware of the author's limited horizon, the book's focus is strong and is not meant to deny the gains of liberation approaches. The question which van der Ven poses refers to the self-understanding of the Church and its role in the process of rampant secularization.

Interdisciplinary in approach, the book employs biblical, historical and systematic thought, hermeneutical theory and semiotics, and empirical studies. It provides the uninitiated with a helpful introduction to the new field of Practical Theology with its marked reliance on the use of quantitative measurements in theology. Its Dutch author personifies the European roots of this emerging and increasingly important discipline, and he acts as a bridge between Europe and other parts of the world. J. A. van der Ven teaches at the Catholic University of Nimegen and is guest lecturer at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. For readers involved in pastoral activity, the book will prove useful in demonstrating the indispensability and the applicability of social and cultural analysis in ministry.

The book is divided unequally into two major sections. The first examines in eight chapters the crisis of secularization, defined as the loss of the centrality and self-evidential character of religion, and how a practical theology can address the issue by examining the notion of "function" from the social sciences and "codes" in the light of semiotics. These chapters are highly theoretical and demand a great deal of effort at understanding, but are essential to the book's later argumentation.

The thesis of the first section is that the process of secularization forces the Church to understand itself differently than in the past. Without ceasing to understand itself as Church, it must, however, simultaneously understand and explain itself in the sociological terms of a denomination and an association in particular. It is incumbent on the Church as association to communicate its religious message to the secularized world, which no longer offers the Church a privileged place in society. Communication, therefore, becomes the general function of the Church. The theory of signs, or semiotics, then, becomes the

way the Church of the West today fulfills the task of communication, in particular by applying the semiotic theory of codes and supercodes as religious signs to the empirical phenomena of the Church. The chief general codes for interpreting reality religiously are creation, liberation and completion. More specifically, the codes for interpreting the Church as association are the people of God, the Jesus movement, the body of Christ, the building of the Spirit and the Church of the poor. A supercode for interpreting this great variety of codes is the Church as sacrament.

In the second section consisting of sixteen chapters, van der Ven examines the four core functions of the Church in a time of radical secularization: identity, integration, policy and management. Employing the religious codes of the people of God and the Jesus movement, the core function of identity seeks to address the underlying issue of the Church's vision and mission in a time of secularization. Next, the religious code of the body of Christ addresses the issue of forming community which emerges out of the attendant individualization of the secularization process. Then, the religious code of the building of the Spirit aims at the core function of policy, i.e., the implementation of the vision and mission of the Church, and so addresses the issue of utilization. Finally, the religious code of the Church of the poor aims at the core function of management, which adapts the Church's resources to the attainment of its goals by examining service quality, personnel development and finances.

There is a great deal to be learned from this book. This reviewer especially appreciated van der Ven's carefully defining technical terms often used today but rarely explained. His distinctions and divisions of general terms was very useful. He is also to be commended for his frequent summaries as he works his way through complicated and cumulatively massive material. Longer summaries at the end of both major sections help the reader review the general lines of the book's argument.

Still the book is not without its flaws. North American readers will be put off somewhat at the author's heavy reliance on empirical studies of the Christian Churches of the Netherlands. How much can be extrapolated from them with reference to other countries? English translations of books and articles noted in the Bibliography have not been provided when this could easily have been done for the English edition of the book, which appeared originally in Dutch in 1993. Particularly glaring is the absence of indices of authors and subjects, given the length and textbook-like character of the book. Readers might want to list their own references to important concepts and subjects. This reviewer also found the method of referencing directly in the text to works in the bibliography, instead of using the more usual footnotes, particularly unhelpful. What is appropriate in a shorter article is very cumbersome in such a long work. Finally, the title strikes this reviewer as somewhat misleading. This is not a general work on ecclesiology but a specialized treatment from the point of view of practical theology. Perhaps the title should read "The Church in Practical Theological Perspective." This dense and demanding book is well worth the effort it exacts.

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Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology.

By Anne E. Patrick. New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1996. xi + 252 pp.

The author, a professor of religion at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, is a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, has served as a director of the Society of Christian Ethics and has contributed a number of writings on religious, ethical and literary topics in books and periodicals, including *Commonweal*, *Concilium*, *The Journal of Religion* and *Theological Studies*.

The book is written in the light of a perceived state of lost confidence in Catholic moral theological discourse. "[W]e must grow to new levels of confidence and competence as moral agents. Our consciences must be freed from all that inhibits a generous response to ethical challenges we face." The book is located within the Catholic moral tradition which it challenges to accept the required radical conversion that Anne Patrick believes the tradition is capable of accepting on the fundamental condition that it acknowledges that it "still needs to integrate theological affirmations of women's full human dignity into its official moral teachings and ecclesiastical practices" (x). This honest acknowledgment is seen as the presupposition and context of the emergence of a process of "liberating conscience." "This book is offered as a contribution toward closing the gap between present realities and a hoped-for future of justice, peace, and ecological responsibility" (x).

The book has seven chapters: Conscience and Community: Catholic Moral Theology Today; Conscience at the Crossroads: Invitation to Radical Conversion; Changing Paradigms of Virtue: The Good Life Reconsidered; Contested Authority: The Cases of Charles Curran and the Vatican 24; Seeking Truth in a Complex World; Toward Liberating Conscience: Spirituality and Moral Responsibility; Conscience as Process: Choosing our Common Good.

The very preliminary condition of the possibility of the radical conversion that Catholic moral discourse needs to accept is a radical concreteness of the ethical discourse itself. Concreteness accrues to ethical discourse if it remains at all levels, within the world of historical experience. In other words, ethical discourse needs to remain a discourse between historically identified persons, on identified historical issues, carried out in visible and audible historical discourse. Anne Patrick provides this concreteness in an eminent way. She offers her honest, clear perception, her sincere reasoned discernment of the moral quality of concrete instances of moral discourse concerning well-known issues and persons. This peculiarity of ethical discourse is even more important when attention is given, as Anne Patrick does in the last chapter, to the fact that there is the need of a critical examination and discernment of the ethical quality of ethical discourse itself, including the teaching of ethics.

She offers that critical assessment and does so from her acknowledged perspective of a feminist, liberationist and dialogical standpoint. She does it as well from her experience interpreted and discerned through her professional expertise, her evident love for the Church and for humanity, and her attentive search for a more complete and accurate understanding of the Christian faith and hope.

In this sense, Anne Patrick has written a partisan book. But this is as should be for a Christian theological ethical discourse. She does so with the hope to help move all participants in the Catholic moral discourse to the very core of our human historical situation where the bush is still burning and the Voice from the bush is still speaking from hearing and seeing.

The book is clearly a North American book. This also is a merit of the book. For it is not "parochial." On the contrary, it gives credible words to the universal importance of the North American experience of the Church from the standpoint of originating in the Church an ongoing moral theological dialogical discourse that carries both sufficient truth present in our moment of history and power to reveal that truth convincingly.

Liberating Conscience is not about the definition of conscience in the manner of the manuals. It is about the process of regeneration of consciousness and conscience both individual and communitary.

Anne Patrick has written an important book, an urgently needed book, and hopeful book. *Liberating Conscience* could well be used as an introduction to the realization of that new form of ecclesial, ethical, competent and sincere conversation that Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago called the "common ground." The Catholic Church, the real subject of concern of the book, needs to recover the consciousness that the concretely historical acts of *bene orare* and the historically concrete acts of *bene credere* are in need to be understood and lived as distinct but inseparable parts of equally concretely historical acts of search of *bene vivere*. This recovery can only be realized as sincere and generous participants in the on-going historical experience of the human creature still in process of genesis, at the four levels of any act of true historical experience: psychological, social, cosmic, religious. It needs to be consciously lived in the light of the Power, the Word and the Spirit, critically and competently discerned by the contribution of all capacities for truth that are the various sciences which are gifts from God. I found this experience in the reading of Anne Patrick's *Liberating Conscience*. I can only say thanks and invite all concerned to read and have the same experience.

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Worship in Transition: The Liturgical Movement in the Twentieth Century.

By John Fenwick and Bryan Spinks. New York: Continuum Publishing Company 1995. 202 pp. Paper, \$17.95.

As authors John Fenwick and Bryan Spinks acknowledge there is no dearth of printed information about the modern liturgical movement. In testimony to this richness, they cite almost 150 English titles related to the topic in the course of their book. It is this plethora of information on the topic, however, which seems to provide at least in part the genesis for this modest volume. Fenwick and Spinks report in the foreword that through their teaching they

discovered the need for an accessible work for their students that would concisely yet adequately chart the diverse phenomena which characterize the movement (vii).

They have admirably achieved their goal in a book which provides both an historical and topical introduction to the 20th century liturgical movement from an ecumenical perspective. The brief opening chapter provides some definitional groundwork for the topic, and chapter two charts some of what the authors consider to be main characteristics of the movement (e.g., its emphasis on community, participation, the bible, social engagement, etc.). Chapters three through ten are an historical accounting of the movement. Instead of a strictly chronological tracing, however, the authors provide a historical sketch of the movement within particular ecclesial traditions. Thus there are chapters on Roman Catholicism (4 and 7), Anglicanism (5 and 8), South India (6), English Reformed and Methodist churches (9), and even the Eastern churches (10). It is this ecumenical perspective which certainly sets this work apart from most other English-language treatments of the liturgical movement.

The second half of the volume is more topical, although these chapters yet reflect a propensity for historical method. The authors first address the impact of the charismatic movement (11), and then consider developments in Eucharist (12), and baptism and confirmation (13). They follow with chapters on the language of worship (14) and inculturation (15). One of the more fascinating chapters in this section outlines some of the opposition and reaction to the liturgical movement (16). Chapter 17 discusses the daily office, pastoral offices and ordination, while 18 provides "snapshots" of the movement in North America. An all-to-brief concluding chapter queries "Where next?"

Much of the information contained in *Worship in Transition* is available in other sources. What Fenwick and Spinks have done, however, is collected and arranged it in an accessible and instructive manner. Furthermore they have effectively combined an historical and thematic approach in this volume. The consequence is not simply dry reporting, but insightful analysis. Finally, such is achieved through a seldom employed ecumenical lens. Yes, one does read about Roman Catholicism, Gueranger and the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. There is also, however, material on the Church of South India, the Church of Scotland, Syrian Orthodox Church and much on the Anglican communion.

If there is any disappointment for the North American reader it is the limited attention given to the liturgical movement on this side of the Atlantic. The book heavily emphasizes England and the Continent. While such is understandable — given that both authors are British and the book was originally published by T & T Clark — this reviewer yet hoped for more than the "snapshots" of North America provided in chapter 18. Apart from this minor caveat, *Worship in Transition* admirably achieves the goals of its authors and is perhaps the best one-volume primer on the liturgical movement in the English-speaking world in print today.

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Sharing Heaven's Music, The Heart of Christian Preaching. Essays in Honor of James Earl Massey. Edited by Barry L. Callen. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. 230 pp. Hardcover, \$18.95.

Preaching on the Brink: The Future of Homiletics. Edited by Martha J. Simmons. Forward by Gardner Taylor. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. 180 pp. Paper, \$14.95.

Abingdon Press has honored two noteworthy African American homiletics with festschrifts. James Earl Massey, former Dean and Professor of Biblical Studies and Preaching at Anderson University School of Theology, has been a noted teacher, author, and preacher in the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). The title of the work that honors him, *Sharing Heaven's Music*, takes its inspiration both from Massey's early training as a concert pianist and his ultimate choice to spend his life embodying a preaching tradition in which music and preaching are inseparable. Massey is described as one who "pursued holiness, practiced ethical relevance, and preached under God's anointing." The work dedicated to him is divided into five major sections and a concluding interview with Massey. Barry L. Callan, the editor, is both a professor at Anderson University and an expert on the history and theology of the Church of God.

Sharing Heaven's Music includes general articles like Elizabeth Achtemeier's "Canons of Sermon Construction" and Donald E. Demaray's "Imagination: The Genius of Creative Sermon Construction," and more narrowly focused essays that address the needs of a particular audience like William Willimon's reflections on preaching to Generation X, "Hunger in This Abandoned Generation," and Justo Gonzalez's "Minority Preaching in a Postmodern Age." For this reader, the work's major contribution is to be found in the essays providing insight into the rich tradition of black preaching and today's challenge of addressing the life situation of the African American community from the perspective of the gospel. Frederick W. Norris reflects on the similarity of black preaching with that of the patristic tradition in "The Catholicity of Black Preaching," comparing a sermon of the fourth-century Church Father, Gregory Nazianzen, with one of James Earl Massey's. Cheryl J. Sanders reminds us of the rich tradition of black folk-preaching, providing a typology of its transcripts. And Ronald J. Allen and Jice-lyn I. Thomas focus on "The Challenge of Preaching on Racial Issues for Euro-American Preachers."

Preaching on the Brink honors Henry H. Mitchell, "the world's foremost Black homiletics scholar." Contributors include homiletics like Edwina Hunter, Eugene L. Lowry, and Samuel D. Proctor and pastors like Barbara Harris, J. Alfred Smith Sr., and Susan D. Newman. The editor Martha J. Simmons has previously collaborated with Mitchell on a study guide to his book, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*. Of particular interest for those engaged in preaching to a community that is African American or includes African Americans are the essays by Newman on preaching to baby boomers, Robert M. Franklin on the kind of preaching that reaches alienated African American men, Smith on "Preaching In Urban America," and Proctor on "Prophetic Preaching Now." The essays in this work make use of Mitchell's writings, so his presence is felt throughout the book. I would have liked to have heard Mitchell's voice in a

more extended fashion, as was done in the Massey volume through an interview—conducted by Henry Mitchell, no less.

If there is one absence in both books, it is the perspective of an Asian American. Otherwise, these works contain contributions by representatives of the dominant cultural segments in our country. Both volumes provide insights into the current state of homiletics at the turn of the millennium, into the challenge of preaching to the African American community, and into the enrichment that preaching has received from the Black tradition of talented preachers, men and women. Both volumes are a tribute to two great practitioners of a preaching tradition from which all preachers continue to profit.

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