

*New Theology Review: An American Catholic Journal of Ministry*, is published quarterly in February, May, August, and November by the Proprietor and Publisher, The Liturgical Press, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN 56321.

Co-Editors: Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. and Robert P. Waznak, S.S.

Associate Editor: Edward Foley, Capuchin

Book Review Editor: Daniel P. Grigassy, O.F.M.

Editorial Board

Dianne Bergant, C.S.A.

Stephen Bevans, S.V.D.

Ilia Delio, O.S.F.

Mary Frohlich, H.M.

Kevin Madigan

Mary Maher, S.S.N.D.

Dominic Monti, O.F.M.

Michael Naughton, O.S.B.

James Scullion, O.F.M.

The editorial policy is under the aegis of Catholic Theological Union of Chicago and Washington Theological Union, from whose faculties the Editor and Associate Editor are appointed.

© 1999 The Order of St. Benedict, Inc. All rights reserved.



*All manuscripts, books for review, and editorial correspondence* should be sent to THE EDITORS, *New Theology Review*, Washington Theological Union, 6896 Laurel Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20012. Authors should certify that the article is not being submitted simultaneously to another journal. See February 1998 vol. 11, no. 1 for a Style Sheet and author's instructions.

*New subscriptions and renewals* should be accompanied by a remittance in U.S. funds and sent to *New Theology Review*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321. Phone orders (U.S. and Canada): 1-800-858-5450.

*Changes of address and business correspondence* should be sent to *New Theology Review*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321.

*Yearly subscription*: U.S. \$28.00 (\$49.00 two years). Canada & Foreign \$32.00 (\$59.00 two years). Single copies and back issues \$8.00. Subscription Manager: Lloyd Svihel.

Cover by Ann Blattner.

Typography by Mark Warzecha.

Printed by Edwards Brothers, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America.

POSTMASTER, please send address changes to *New Theology Review*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321.

Periodicals postage paid at Collegeville, Minnesota, and at other mailing offices.

ISSN 0896-4297

# New Theology Review

Volume 12, Number 4 November 1999

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Introduction</b>   | 3  |
| The New Theology Review Prize in Theological<br>Reflection: Encouraging New Ideas, New Voices,<br>and Skillful Ministry | 5  |
| Style Sheet   | 7  |
| <i>Zachary Hayes, O.F.M.</i><br><b>Theology of Death</b>  | 9  |
| <i>Margaret Costello and James A. Wallace, C.Ss.R.</i><br><b>Preaching in the Face of Death</b>                         | 17 |
| <i>Herbert Anderson and Thomas A. Nairn, O.F.M.</i><br><b>Fitting Time</b>  | 27 |
| <i>William T. Donovan</i><br><b>The Trinity: Love Seeking Articulation</b>  | 38 |
| <i>Peter Black, C.Ss.R., and Kevin O'Neil, C.Ss.R.</i><br><b>Talking Points for Moral Theology</b>                      | 49 |
| <hr/>   |    |
| Signs of the Times:<br><i>Richard H. Bliese</i><br><b>Generation Theory and Ministry to Today's Youth</b>               | 62 |
| Liturgical Preaching:<br><i>Edward Foley</i><br><b>Liturgical Preaching at the<br/>    Turning of the Millennium</b>    | 67 |
| Keeping Current:<br><i>Ilia Delio, O.S.F.</i><br><b>Spirituality</b>  | 71 |

## 2 Contents

### Book Reviews

- James D. G. Dunn, **The Theology of Paul the Apostle.**  
*(Reviewed by James P. Scullion, O.F.M.)* 76
- James Matthew Ashley, **Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics, and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz.**  
*(Reviewed by Mary V. Maher, S.S.N.D.)* 77
- James Tunstead Burtchaell, **Philemon's Problem: A Theology of Grace.** *(Reviewed by Richard M. Gula, S.S.)* 79
- Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, **Catholics Remember the Holocaust.** *(Reviewed by John T. Pawlikowski, O.S.M.)* 80
- Mary Angela Shaughnessy, S.C.N., **Ministry and the Law: What You Need to Know.** *(Reviewed by James A. Coriden)* 82
- Russell B. Connors, Jr. and Patick McCormick, **Character, Choices and Community.** *(Reviewed by Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M.)* 83
- Teresa Berger, **Women's Ways of Worship.** *(Reviewed by David J. McBriar, O.F.M.)* 84
- John C. Schwarz, **Global Population from a Catholic Perspective.**  
*(Reviewed by Anthony J. Gittins, C.S.Sp.)* 86
- Anthony J. Ciorra and James Keating, **Moral Formation in the Parish. With Your Whole Heart Turn to God (Tobit 13:6).**  
*(Reviewed by Jeremiah J. McCarthy)* 87
- Denis Edwards, **The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology.**  
*(Reviewed by Donald W. Buggert, O.Carm.)* 89
- Robert L. Kinast, **Making Faith-Sense: Theological Reflection in Everyday Life.** *(Reviewed by John Welch, O.Carm.)* 90
- Annual Index** 92

## Introduction

During an editorial board meeting the editors were discussing what theme should be given to this issue. A number of possible themes were on the table, but one editor argued for the topic of death with the simple and oft-heard viewpoint about death and taxes being inevitable. Not only is it inevitable that each of us will one day die, but it is also inevitable that ministers will encounter death in their pastoral service. There simply is no avoiding death.

November is a fitting time to reflect upon death. With the feasts of All Saints and All Souls our Church's liturgy calls us to reflect upon death. In most regions of the United States and Canada, nature, with its falling leaves and fallow fields, also draws our attention to the processes of dying. The skies are grayer and the days are shorter. Perhaps our bones get a bit stiffer and our muscles ache just a bit more. We are reminded of our mortality.

Three articles examine different aspects of death and dying. All our authors touch upon significant pastoral concerns. One of the regular authors upon whom we call, Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., of Catholic Theological Union, offers a concise and helpful reflection on the theology of death. In a few pages he covers much ground and provides rich food for thought. Our second article by Margaret Costello and James Wallace, C.Ss.R., is a sensitive and insightful examination of the challenge to preach in the setting of death and grief. A host of practical and useful suggestions can be found throughout the article that should be of help not only to preachers but liturgical planners and others who must assist those who come to the Christian community to find comfort amidst their grief. The final article on the theme is also co-written and addresses moral and pastoral issues concerning the decision to pursue or cease further medical efforts to forestall death. As medical technology becomes more complex and readily available it remains important that the human dimension of patient care stay at the forefront. Readers of the essay by Herbert Anderson and Thomas Nairn, O.F.M., will find much good advice about keeping death a humane and Christian experience for both the dying and those who love them.

Speaking of experience, William Donovan provides a clear and helpful reflection on the mystery of the Trinity by reminding readers that it is a doctrine which is first of all rooted in religious experience. When religious language and theology obscures or denies salvific experience then we have another kind of "death." Retrieving trinitarian language the author suggests is an invitation to reflect upon three "moments" of God's love for us. A second non-thematic article adds to this issue's

#### 4 *Introduction*

richness. Peter Black, C.Ss.R., and Kevin O'Neil, C.Ss.R., offer a succinct and balanced treatment of the evolving state of Catholic moral theology. Under various headings the authors summarize a large amount of recent scholarship which has transformed our understanding of fundamental moral theology. Readers will find it a worthwhile and trustworthy summary of scholarly developments in an important field.

Because the article by Anderson and Nairn is an extended case study, we have not included our usual column "Getting Down to Cases" in this issue. But readers will find our three other regular columns along with a number of book reviews and our annual index for the issues of 1999. Our book review editor Daniel Grigassy, O.F.M., has been doing a splendid job both in selecting books for review and in getting reviews done in a timely manner.

Finally, the publishers and editors have an important announcement included in this issue. As was mentioned in our May issue of this year, this journal was one of only four Catholic periodicals to receive a grant from the Lilly Foundation for support of religious publishing. We are most grateful to the people at Lilly and one of the first initiatives to stem from the grant is announced on the next page, the establishment of an annual award for theological reflection. Readers will benefit in the future from the scholarship this award encourages. Maybe, too, upon reading the announcement readers will be motivated to take pen in hand or fingers to keyboard and submit their own essay. We welcome you to do so.

## *Call for Submissions!*

### THE NEW THEOLOGY REVIEW PRIZE IN THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

ENCOURAGING NEW IDEAS, NEW VOICES, AND SKILLFUL MINISTRY

#### *The Prize*

Beginning in the year 2000, the publisher and editors of *New Theology Review* will institute the **NTR Prize in Theological Reflection** to honor the best new article in theology on pastoral ministry. Each year the winning essay will be published in *New Theology Review* and along with the award, the author will receive \$2000.

#### *The Criteria*

All submitted articles should focus on some aspect of pastoral ministry relevant to the audience of *New Theology Review*, i.e., Catholics of the United States and Canada. Essays should be no longer than 4,000 words in length and written according to the style sheet of the *New Theology Review* (see pages 7–8). Submissions must be original work, not previously published, accessible to professional pastoral ministers, lay and ordained, provide new insight or synthesis of a pressing pastoral issue, and contribute to the ongoing theological reflection of pastoral ministers.

#### *The Judges*

Submissions will be evaluated by a panel of distinguished authors who are expert in theological reflection on ministry. Thomas Groome of Boston College, Robert Kinast of the Center for Theological Reflection, and Evelyn Whitehead of Whitehead Associates with serve as judges for the prize.

*The Rules*

All entries are due by May 1, 2000. The winner will be announced September 15, 2000. Subsequent years will follow a similar schedule of deadline and announcement.

Essays should be submitted in English, accompanied by a cover page with author information (name, mailing address, phone number[s], institutional affiliation [if any], etc.) and statement of intent that the essay is submitted in the contest. Essays should follow the style sheet of *New Theology Review*, which is printed on pages 7–8. No author identification should be on the pages of the manuscript. Judges will not be informed as to the identity of the author until after they determine the winning essay.

Please submit two copies of the printed text along with a copy on disk using a standard program (preferably Microsoft Word) in either PC or Macintosh format.

Send all entries to:

The Editors  
*New Theology Review*  
6896 Laurel Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20012

Decision of the judges is final. Submissions will not be returned. Faculty and staff of Washington Theological Union and Catholic Theological Union are not eligible.

*New Theology Review* is a journal of Catholic theology that informs men and women in ministry of contemporary developments in Roman Catholic thought and its pastoral import for the Church.



# THE NEW THEOLOGY REVIEW PRIZE IN THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## STYLE SHEET

---

- Spacing**      Begin the manuscript four double-spaces from the top of the page. Leave generous margins on the top, bottom and left sides. Double space everything, including any indented quotations, footnotes, and references.
- Citations**      NTR follows a modified version of the footnote and reference system of the Journal of the American Academy of Religion, examples of which may be found in this issue. Footnotes should not be used, unless absolutely necessary. Endnotes may be included, if the author deems useful. They should be kept to a minimum, however, and every effort should be made to include reference material within the body of the text.
- Bible**            Abbreviations for the books of the Bible, mode of verse citation, and transliterations of the Greek and Hebrew alphabets follow the system of the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*.
- Headings**        Texts should be appropriately interspersed with subheadings. Keep these headings short and pointed.
- Language**        NTR follows a policy of using inclusive language. Plural forms are preferable to he/she or s/he.

8 *Style Sheet*

- Tone** Articles submitted to **NTR** should be based on sound scholarship in theological disciplines, but should try as far as possible to maintain a pastoral focus of interest to those in ministry.
- Length** The average length of an article should be 10–14 pages double-spaced, including any notes and references. Use a standard 12 pt. font.
- Biography** A short biographical note will appear in connection with your article. Please supply your name, position, institutional affiliation, and any pertinent data (publications, pastoral experience, etc.) that you wish included. Also indicate the mailing address to which future correspondence will be directed.
- Persons** Proper caution should be exercised in making, or reporting, negative judgments on individual persons. Such judgments should be omitted if a case is in litigation unless specific permission is granted by the editors.
- Foreign** Foreign terms (or phrases) should always include an English translation in parenthesis.
- Mailing** Please submit two copies of the printed text along with a copy on disk using a standard program (preferably Microsoft Word) in either PC or Macintosh format. Hard copies and disk will not be returned. All manuscripts are subject to editorial changes.



*Zachary Hayes, O.F.M.*

## Theology of Death

My first personal experience of being with a dying person through the process of dying took place while I was living in a Franciscan friary in Germany. I had just left the seminary and as yet did not have any extensive pastoral experience. This occasion involved an elderly friar with a very colorful career as a chaplain in the Kaiser's army, and later as a preacher of parish missions and retreats. During the Nazi period this friar ran into frequent conflicts with the SS and was kept on the road for most of the later years of that period. He seemed to be preaching the wrong things. When I knew him, he was living in retirement in the friary which I called home for four years during my stay in Germany.

One evening, he did not show up for dinner. When members of the community went to see where he might be, he told them to call the Superior and bring the oils. He wished to be anointed. He sat in his bed, propped up with pillows, as the community gathered around his bed. We prayed the Latin texts of the rite as the Superior anointed the patient. In the meantime, the patient participated in the praying of the Latin prayers with a booming preacher's voice. He did not sound weak or frail. And when the rite was completed, he called out with utter clarity: "This is the end of the following of Christ." He then lay back on the bed, closed his eyes, and stopped breathing.

The impact of this death-scene has never left me. This all took place before I had heard anything about the contemporary movements dealing with death and dying. But I came out of that room with the clear impression that this man was actively engaged in the script of his demise right up to the very end.

### THE QUESTION OF DEATH

How can anyone talk about what happens when a person dies? If you want to know what it is like to write a book, you can try to do it yourself, or you can invite an author to tell you what the experience is like. If you want to know what it is like to play tennis, you can attempt to learn the game yourself, or you can invite a serious player to describe the experience to you. But when it comes to the question of death, there is simply no one available who has experienced death from the inside to tell us what it means to die. This places significant limits on what can be said about the experience of dying and raises serious questions

about any methodology that might be used to make claims about the actual experience of death.

#### CULTURAL CONTEXT TODAY

When we think of death and dying today, one of the first things that comes to mind is the fact that, for the most part, death has been removed from the ordinary experience of most people in our culture. It is true that we see death over and over on the evening news reports, but it is always distant and does not involve people who are close to us.

By way of contrast, I remember the death of my paternal grandfather. He died in his apartment not far from where I now live and was surrounded by members of the family. His body was laid out in the casket, and the wake was held in the living room of the apartment. I was only in the second grade when this happened, but I can remember many of the details of the ceremony with great clarity. My father and my mother also died at home, though by this time, it had become common to hold the wake at a funeral parlor.

This is all by way of saying that until rather recently, death could well be a part of our every-day experience of human life. Dying at home surrounded by one's loved ones was possible. Today it is virtually unknown. Most people today die in hospitals or other kinds of institutions, commonly surrounded by machines, tubes, and wires. This makes it possible for doctors and nurses to observe more closely the biological, physical processes involved in dying. We probably know more about such things now than at any other period of history. But, to an unprecedented extent, this has distanced death from the experience of huge numbers of people in our culture.

This relates to a second factor in our culture; namely, the idea of conquering death through technology, with all the problems that this has created, personal, legal, and medical. Death is perceived almost as an affront to the capabilities of our highly technological culture. So the common temptation is to use whatever means are available to prolong life regardless of the eventual outcome.

#### THE ART OF DYING

Those familiar with medieval literature will recall something called the *ars moriendi*. This was a form of literature that emerged during the late Middle Ages. The Latin title means simply the "art of dying." Such texts were generally written by clergy as aids in dealing with death in pastoral terms. The point of such a title becomes more obvious when we recall the meaning of art in medieval culture. Art is not first of all a question of being able to paint a beautiful picture or carve an impressive statue. It is in essence the ability to do something well and effec-

tively. Thus, one spoke of the art of navigation, the art of cooking, the art of weaving, and all the mechanical arts before one spoke of the arts of language, philosophy, and theology. How does one do these things well and effectively? Thus, in a period when death for people of virtually any age was a common part of every-day life, the idea of preparing for death and of helping others to do so could surface in this form of literature.

What might this suggest for our own time and culture; a period in which death has been virtually removed from the ordinary experience of most people? We are not likely to write an *ars moriendi* today. But we can invite someone who has worked with dying people to discuss their experience with us. They can help us understand what goes on in a person as death comes near. They can explain the importance of recognizing the emotional reactions to what is going on. They can help us prepare ourselves and others. What I have in mind is the work and the case-histories in the writings of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross (Kübler-Ross, 1969) and others who have worked in the area of death and dying. But even with this work now available to us, and even though the experience of ministering to such people can have an overpowering effect on those with the patient, it is important to keep in mind the religious context in which dying is experienced.

#### CATHOLIC TEACHING ABOUT DEATH

One of the tasks of Christian theology is to allow faith in Christ to shed light on the questions of our life. If faith should shed light on the questions of life, then surely it ought to shed light on the final question. What theology says will not remove all our problems and will not negate our human, emotional reactions to death. But it can put these in a context in which we can come to see the entire experience in a new way. Thus, the religious tradition will enable us to integrate the reality of death into a larger pattern of human life. Some of the specific elements of our tradition are the following.

1) *All human beings are subject to the law of death.* Human beings are by nature mortal. Over the centuries, theology has commonly related the experience of death to the reality of human sinfulness. In earlier times, the relation with sin was understood in terms of the paradisaal gift of immortality which was lost by sin. In more recent theology, the connection with sin is seen as a change in the way we experience death. We experience death differently because human sinfulness has distorted our relations to all of reality. It is the distortion of these relations now drawn into the context of our decisive relation with God that makes death appear as dark and threatening. From this side of our historical experience, we do not know whether death is finally total annihilation,

or whether something awaits us beyond death. And if the latter, what might it be? Any answer we give to such questions springs from our faith. And it is the Christian faith that what appears as a possible threat of nothingness is in fact the condition for the realization of the fullness of life in a dimension that transcends our historical experience.

2) *With death, the human experience of historical existence comes to an end.* That is, there is a point of no-return. Mainline Roman Catholic theology has never accepted the idea of reincarnation. And so-called “near death” experiences, real as they may be, are not strictly speaking death. They may more appropriately be compared with various altered states of consciousness (Küng, 1984: 8-21). Hence, for Catholic tradition, there is something decisive involved in death. We do not get another chance.

3) *Death involves also the experience of judgment for the individual.* When we stand before God’s love and glory, we will see ourselves in terms of what we might have become, and in terms of what we in fact have made of the opportunities given us in our life. In the presence of God, the truth of our own reality becomes fully clear to us. Judgment is the experience of the reality we have made of ourselves as we now stand in God’s presence.

4) *To the degree that one’s life-project is incomplete at the time of death, this must be remedied in some way.* This is commonly dealt with in terms of some process of purgation. Earlier generations thought of this as going to a particular place for a specific time. It is more common today to think of purgation as an element involved in the very process of dying itself. If in life we have built up many forms of resistance to the requirements of love, we will find the final encounter with divine love difficult and painful; for it will mean breaking out of the limits with which we have shielded ourselves from the demands of love during our life.

5) *Those who pass over into heavenly fulfillment are not isolated from those who remain on earth.* They remain in communion and can have beneficial effects on those still on earth. Hence, the Creed speaks of the communion of saints to underscore the conviction that human relations transcend the limits of our historical experience.

6) *It is Roman Catholic teaching that individuals have the ability to definitively frustrate the point of their existence.* That is, they can die resisting the offer of God’s love, choosing isolation rather than loving communion with others and with God. This possibility is expressed with the symbol of hell. The Catholic tradition sees this possibility as an implication of its understanding of human freedom.

7) *Christian understanding of death looks both to the death of Christ on the cross and to the divine vindication of Christ in the resurrection.* From this perspective, death should be approached with the Christian sense of hope for definitive life with God which is highlighted in the mystery of the resurrection.

#### CLINICAL REFLECTIONS

This theological material should be viewed in relation to the sort of insights involved in the work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross and others. Kübler-Ross describes the stages through which a dying person commonly goes. These are not necessarily in a strictly chronological order, nor do all patients go through all of them. But they range from initial denial, to anger, to bargaining, to depression, to acceptance (Kübler-Ross, 1969: 34–121). What stands out in this body of material is the importance of those who are with the patient, and the quality of their response to what is going on. One cannot read such material extensively without becoming quite convinced that, even when external signs may be lacking, there may be much going on in the dying person, certainly up to the last moment of life.

After Kübler-Ross has discussed these stages of reaction, she goes on to discuss the role of hope throughout the entire experience. At one level, there may simply be hope that there will be a cure for the illness; if not tomorrow, then next week, or sometime in the future (Kübler-Ross, 1969: 123). But when we view this from a theological perspective, we recognize that there may be hope at quite a different level. This is the Christian hope for a life that transcends death. Such a hope, which is basic to Christian faith, provides the possibility of integrating all that is happening into a meaningful framework.

#### PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

Is it possible to say anything beyond this? What precisely happens when a person dies? As long as we stand on this side of death, we do not really know. And when we have died, we do not come back to tell others about it. Even the material just discussed takes us up to the moment of death, but does not enter into the act of dying itself. What it suggests is that the dying person is personally engaged in what is happening even when there are no obvious external symptoms to suggest that. This all assumes that near-death experiences are not the same as death itself.

Theologian Karl Rahner has approached the issue from quite a different perspective. He views the experience of death in relation to the quality of human life. For human beings, dying is not simply a biological event. It is above all a human experience unlike the death of other life forms.

Human life, he argues, is at its core a search for meaning. And the historical quest for meaning is carried out in an ongoing dialectic of passivity and activity. We are confronted by others—people and things—constantly during our life, and in this sense we are passive; we are acted on. But we also actively respond to our encounter with the other.

Passivity really begins with our personal origins. We are not consulted; we are not asked whether we would like to be. In a sense, existence is something that is done to us without our prior consultation. Obviously it is done to us by our parents, and by a family history. But even more basically, it is done to us by a mystery over which we have no control. Existence is first of all a gift of a loving, creative God who calls us into being. It is the Christian understanding of creation that enables us to look at the fact of our existence and to see it as a gift and a grace. All this is intimated in the language of passivity. Existence in this sense is done to us.

But then we are capable of taking up the existence that has been given to us and of shaping it through our personal, free, active response. This we do in many little, day-by-day projects with which we fill our existence with some sense of meaning and purpose. This is the history of our personal freedom through which our lives can become ever more open and enriched by the presence of others; or ever more closed up and self-centered in an effort to keep the others out of our life. Thus, our entire history is one of being acted on and of reacting in freedom. And as each little project is completed we reach to another project to maintain the sense of meaning.

But finally, the question of meaning is confronted with the reality of death. There, again, something momentous will be done to us. From this side, it is not clear what awaits us. Is death the doorway to nothingness and annihilation; or is it the point of passage to the ultimate fullness of life that Christians name heaven? From our place in history, we can never know the answer. But clearly, something of ultimate significance is being done to us. Speaking of this, Rahner writes:

The mysterious interplay between action and passion in the exercise of human freedom appears above all in the fact that it is precisely at the very point at which the person freely achieves its own perfection that the person is, at the same time, most wholly subject to the control by another (Rahner, 1971: 290).

What is crucial is the way the person responds to that.

It is Rahner's understanding that the whole of our life in freedom is marked by the "little death" of our daily encounter with the things that are done to us and the limits placed on us by the people who enter into our lives. In this sense, all such experiences can be seen as a rehearsal

for the moment of death. What we know as death at the end is the high-point in the dialectic of passivity and activity that has marked the whole of our human existence from the start. In Rahner's own words:

The ultimate act of freedom in which one decides one's own fate totally and irrevocably, is the act in which one either willingly accepts or definitively rebels against one's own utter impotence, in which one is utterly subject to the control of a mystery which cannot be expressed—that mystery which we call God (Rahner 1971: 290).

The act of dying, then, is the ultimate act of human freedom; and it must be approached with a deep sense of trust and hope and with the readiness to surrender oneself to that unknown mystery.

Both the empirically based work of Kübler-Ross and the philosophical analysis of Rahner point, from different perspectives, to the conviction that the dying person is personally engaged in the experience of death. Dying is not simply something that happens to a person from the outside. Both perspectives indicate that the presence of others during the process of dying, and the manner of their presence can be of great significance to the dying person. What are the needs of the spirit? How should we attend to these needs? Kübler-Ross writes about her own book:

If this book serves no other purpose but to sensitize family members of terminally ill patients and hospital personnel to the implicit communications of dying patients, then it has fulfilled its task (Kübler-Ross, 1969: 126).

#### PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

Not so long ago, the understanding of care of the sick and dying for the priest would have involved principally a pastoral visit and providing the last sacraments. Not much more was expected. The material we have just discussed would suggest that quite a bit more should be involved both for the person approaching death and for the family and friends as they gather around the dying person.

Every form of ministry to the dying should stand under the sign of Christian hope. This means that it is, in essence, a way of preparing the person for a successful journey home, for the Christian believes that death is not an opening into a void or annihilation but rather a passage either into that ultimate isolation which Christian theology knows as hell, or into the fullness of life with God that Christians see when they look at the mystery of the resurrection of Christ. In the event that one is not fully prepared for the immediate experience of God, some form of purification will be involved in making this passage.

Ministry in this context will recognize that faith does not remove the darkness and fear that accompanies death when we approach it from our historical situation. The minister must allow both the patient and the friends and family to move through the various stages described by Kübler-Ross. Ministry should respect the dignity of the dying person, and should be willing to meet the patient precisely as a person with all his or her personal fears, hopes, and needs. The crucial factor is that the minister aid the dying person to encounter death with the sense of a full surrender of self to God.

#### REFERENCES

Kübler-Ross, Elizabeth, *On Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

Küng, Hans, *Eternal Life?* New York: Doubleday, 1984.

Rahner, K., *Theological Investigations*, vol. 7, 287–91. London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1971.

---

*Zachary Hayes, O.F.M* is professor of systematic theology at Catholic Theological Union.

*Margaret Costello and James A. Wallace, C.Ss.R.*

## **Preaching in the Face of Death**

*On that day  
God will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
Mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
For the first things have passed away (Rev 21:4).*

Of course that day has not yet come. There is still both “a time to be born and a time to die” (Eccl 3:2). Death continues to enter our lives in ways both expected and unexpected. In the past year, it came to Mary Lou and Bruce, both eighty-five years old, who died thirty-two days apart; it came to fifteen students at Columbine High School, and to a sixteen year old girl and her friend whose car hit a tree while driving home from a party. It came to a father who discovered his daughter’s body in the backyard, a suicide; and it came to a family whose last child was stillborn and who then lost another infant to crib death.

Whenever and however death comes, it is rarely welcomed. But neither can it be ignored, and the community of Christian believers acknowledges death’s presence by coming together and celebrating the various rites found in the *Order of Christian Funerals* (hereafter, *OCF*). The heart of the Church’s response to death usually occurs in the funeral eucharistic liturgy, and a pivotal moment within this rite is the homily. It is not the only time when preaching is possible during the period of mourning. Through a series of questions and responses, this article will reflect on the nature and purpose of the preaching that takes place when death comes to a member of the community.

### **WHAT IS PREACHING “DOING” WITHIN THE FUNERAL RITES?**

The General Introduction of the *OCF* begins by saying that “in the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity” (#1). The purpose of preaching in this particular setting is to make a proclamation of faith in the face of death. This proclamation affirms before the community that our God is the Creator God who has made us so we might have life and have it in abundance, and that our God is the Redeemer God who has brought about our salvation through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. Under the

shadow of death, the Church proclaims the presence and power of the living God.

But this proclamation must never lose sight of those to and for whom it is made. In a funeral liturgy the preacher gives authentic voice to the human struggle to come to grips with the very present reality of suffering and death. In the presence of the body of the deceased or the cremated remains, words are offered to the living. The function of this proclamation is to bring comfort and evoke hope in the hearts of those gathered. Once again it is helpful to take our cue from the OCF. In speaking of the homily, it calls on the preacher to “dwell on God’s compassionate love and on the paschal mystery of the Lord,” but then goes on to say that the homilist should do this in a way that the gathered community understands their own participation and that of the deceased in these realities. Thus, “the homilist should also help the members of the assembly to understand that the mystery of God’s love and the mystery of Christ’s mysterious death and resurrection were present *in the life and death of the deceased* and that these mysteries are active *in their own lives* as well” (#27).

#### WHAT DO PEOPLE WANT FROM PREACHING AT A FUNERAL?

When the preacher begins the homily at a funeral or memorial service, the faces in the assembly often reflect a strong sense of expectation, sometimes almost a desperation, to hear something that somehow interprets the death experience of their loved one through the eyes of scripture and the Christian tradition. Even those who have been devoutly practicing their Christian faith throughout life often find themselves more deeply invested in the paschal mystery at this time. In the grieving process, people sometimes experience a spiritual darkness that is filled with doubt and fear. They may be searching for a way to integrate this experience of death into the fabric of the faith in which they have wrapped themselves for most of their lives. While preaching in the face of such need may seem daunting to the preacher, it also offers an opportunity for honesty, compassion and a true sharing of faith.

No one expects that the preacher will have all of the answers. As theologian Alexander Schmemmann writes, “I do not know when and how the fulfillment will come. I do not know when all things will be consummated in Christ. I know nothing about the ‘whens’ and ‘hows.’ But I know that in Christ this great Passage, the *Pascha* of the world has begun, that the light of the ‘world to come’ comes to us in the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit, for *Christ is risen and Life reigneth*” (quoted in Sloyan, 1989: 121). Those who mourn are hoping for a homily that honestly addresses the mystery of death, and, in some way, names death from the perspective of faith. To do this, it can be helpful to turn to those wise men and women of the past, to the poets, prophets, and

apostles whose words can address our anxious hearts. Paul spoke of death as the “last enemy” that would be conquered (1 Cor 15:26), but that this conquest had already begun and that those who were baptized with Christ were baptized into *his* death, buried with him “so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life” (Rom 6:3-4). He also wrote that now death can be spoken of as being “at home with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8), as “gain” (Phil 1:21), and that to die was “to depart and to be with Christ” (Phil 1:23).

In Luke’s infancy narrative Simeon refers to death as “being dismissed in peace” (Luke 2:29) and, many centuries later, Francis of Assisi offered the most comforting of all perspectives by calling on “Sister Death.” While Clement of Alexandria called it “the dragon before whom all had to pass,” Julian of Norwich could assert that “the worst is done and it has been mended, and all will be well, and all will be well, and all will be very well.” Closer to our own time, Emily Dickinson wrote that, when Death stopped for her in a carriage, it held “but just ourselves and Immortality.” Circumstances will dictate how the preacher names death in a way that is honest in the particular situation and to the community mourning the loss of a loved one, but this naming must always be done in light of the central person of our faith, the focal point for the people of God: Jesus, crucified Lord and risen Redeemer.

#### WHAT IS THE PLACE OF SCRIPTURE IN PREACHING AND ARE THERE ANY GUIDELINES FOR THE CHOICE OF THE BIBLICAL TEXTS?

“All preaching must be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture” (*Dei Verbum*, #21). The Scriptures are at the heart of all preaching, for they continue to proclaim the word of God to people in all circumstances. God “speaks” when the Scriptures are proclaimed and in the act of preaching. At a funeral God’s word can be understood to have a least three functions:

a) It makes Jesus present to the community. If there is one gift that the preacher can offer people who have suffered the loss of a loved one in death, it is the gift of the presence of Jesus, the Lord of life. This presence is experienced in the biblical texts themselves, especially the gospel, but it can be especially central to the homily. The preacher does this by giving prominence to the images and words of Jesus found in the biblical texts. The biblical text, most notably the gospel, can be the source for making Jesus present to the believing community if the preacher attends to it in its specificity. Whether it is the Jesus who has come at the request of family members only to find his friend Lazarus

has died and who then says to the dead man's sister: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), or the Jesus who has gathered his friends around him the night before his own death and gently encourages them with the words, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places . . . I am going to prepare a place for you." (John 14:1-2). Or the Jesus who promised a thief dying by his side, "I assure you: this day you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). By placing one of these images at the heart of the homily, the preaching is given the weight and power of Christ's explicit presence.

These are only a few of the possibilities found in the texts proposed in the *OCF*. The choice of the texts should be made in light of the circumstances of death and the needs of the present community (*OCF*, #16). Was the death sudden or at the end of a long illness? What is the psychological and spiritual condition of those who mourn? In light of these factors, Jesus is presented so that his presence is felt in an immediate way. There is a difference between, "Jesus *said* that. . . ." and "Jesus *says* . . . ." One puts Jesus back in the past; the other places him with us. And that difference becomes important within the funeral liturgy where we believe that God speaks *now* to a grieving community through the words recorded in the Scriptures. Today Jesus is speaking; at this moment the Lord of life addresses us. The homily witnesses to this reality.

b) The texts may also help to name the emotion that surrounds this death. Again, in the story of the raising of Lazarus when Martha goes out to meet Jesus, it is not difficult to hear both anger and hurt in her opening words to him, "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). Or to imagine the numbness of the widow of Naim who has lost her only son (Luke 7:11-17). Or to feel the abandonment and shattering emptiness in the words of Jesus on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me!" (Mark 15:34). The gospel can help to name the feelings of the community as they first come together, reflecting an understanding of where the congregation is. Often a community is not ready to hear death referred to as "Sister" or as "a bridge to eternal life" when a homily begins; they need to be met where they are and gently helped to move forward.

c) Finally, the biblical text offers words that allow the faith of the Church to directly address loss. The strong proclamation of a particular biblical text can help the heart to move beyond the grief that weighs it down. Consider the words of Isaiah, "On this mountain . . . God will destroy death forever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces" (25:6a, 7), or the words of Lamentations, "My portion is the Lord, says my soul; therefore will I hope in my God" (3:24). Some of the most

powerful words are found in Paul's letters. "What will separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom 8: 35), the apostle asks in his letter and in a rapid sequence of images proclaims, "Nothing, nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of God revealed to us in Christ." Or his affirmation earlier in that same letter, "If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him" (6:8-9). Or the book of Revelation's brief proclamation that "Death will die in God's eternal dwelling," or its potent, succinct dialogue, with a voice from heaven saying, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," said the Spirit, "let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them" (14:13).

The use of Scripture in preaching at the time of death ranges from its ability to make Christ present, to name the feelings of the community, and to offer a solid witness of faith in a phrase both memorable and strong, healing and hopeful. The words of other writers, the poets and playwrights of past and present, might also serve, but they are secondary to that word we acknowledge as being "of God." When facing death, preachers can find the firmest ground in the imagery and thought of the biblical texts.

But before rushing to any one biblical text that has proved to be comforting, or that has "worked" in the past, the preacher should look and listen to those directly concerned and to the circumstances surrounding this particular death. Understanding how a family is hurting comes from listening to them. Scripture is most healing when it speaks to these needs. Well-meaning ministers can sometimes project their own feelings onto a situation, recalling how they felt at the time of a particular death. Such projection can function as a barrier to understanding how the present mourners feel. Taking time to listen can also lead to involving them. The funeral rites can be the final gift of family and friends to the deceased. They can be invited to select the Scriptures that will be proclaimed and to talk with the preacher about the meaning these texts hold for them or held for the deceased. To make this preparation possible, preachers could make available to families a copy of the texts in the *OCF*. Sometimes a family will say to the preacher, "You just choose everything." In rare cases, this may be the best alternative. Often, however, if the presider/preacher invites the family to fuller participation and, if a parish provides staff to assist them in doing so, they will gratefully accept this invitation.

#### WHAT ABOUT SPEAKING ABOUT THE DECEASED IN THE HOMILY?

The *OCF* is very clear in stating "there is never to be a eulogy" (#27) at the time of the homily. A eulogy is a classical speech form employed

at the time of a death in which someone “speaks well” (*Eu* = well; *logos* = word or speech) of the deceased. The statement of the *OCF* is concerned with safeguarding the role of the homily in liturgy. The homily is an integral part of the liturgy and has the purpose of bridging the liturgy of the word of God with what follows. At the funeral Mass, the homily functions so that “members of the family and community should receive consolation and strength to face the death of one of their members with a hope nourished by the saving word of God” (#27). And, as a eucharistic homily, it should always enable the community to celebrate the liturgy with faith (*Fulfilled in Your Hearing*: 18). At the funeral vigil “a homily based on the readings is given to help those present find strength and hope in God’s saving word” (#61).

Does this mean there is no room for any expression about what the deceased has meant to those who have gathered? Of course not; that would be pastorally insensitive, if not callous. The *OCF* explicitly notes two places where a family member or friend can speak in remembrance of the deceased: (1) during the vigil service, between the prayer of intercession and the blessing, or “at some other suitable time during the vigil” (#62); and (2) at the end of the funeral mass, between the prayer after communion and the final commendation (#170). There is certainly room for an expression of our appreciation of the person and his or her accomplishments in the course of their life, but that is not the primary purpose for our gathering and not the purpose of the liturgical homily.

Liturgical theologian John Allyn Melloh accurately observes that much eulogistic preaching can be as impersonal as a résumé, then goes on to say that, “What is most deeply personal is that which we, as part of the human family, share in common—our deepest yearnings, our shared beliefs, our common attitudes . . . The homily should seek to discover the taproot of the deceased’s existence and the deceased’s life as a Christian” (42). In directing our attention to what is central to the deceased’s life as a Christian, Melloh echoes what the earlier revised *Rite of Funerals* (1969) proposed in its statement that “the homily may properly include an expression of praise to God for his (*sic*) gifts, particularly the gift of a Christian life, to the deceased person” (*The Rites*, #41). Within the gift of a Christian life are the unique gifts God has given a person for the common good. The preacher might acknowledge one or another of these gifts as an expression of how God has touched us through this person.

When the personal is closely linked to the biblical text, when a representative anecdote about the deceased flows from the biblical proclamation, there can be a satisfying balance of biblical proclamation and personal remembrance. The rites surrounding the death of a Christian allow for the necessary expression of the gospel message of hope to be

done in a way which acknowledges the irreplaceability of the person who has died. There is room for both kerygma and kindness.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED WHEN  
PREACHING DURING THE FUNERAL RITES?

Yes. There are always things to avoid. First, it is not helpful to the family or to the assembly to be told that the preacher did not know the deceased (“but I wish I had!”). It is always possible that the deceased may have been a member of this parish for his or her entire life, but confined to home or a nursing facility for the past few years. And so the preacher does not know him or her. Still, every effort should be made to learn about this person. Listen to family stories when they first meet with you to discuss the funeral; talk with family and friends at the wake; read the obituary in the paper. Learning about the deceased and his or her relationships will make it easier to interpret this life through the Scripture readings that have been chosen.

Secondly, avoid pious phrases and mindless platitudes (“we shall not see his/her like again,” “gone but not forgotten,”) as well as theological jargon and bromides (“Death is part of God’s salvific plan” or “God must have wanted N . . . to come home”). Instead the preacher should draw upon powerful human images, particularly those found in the biblical texts that touch the depth experiences of life. For instance, consider the analogy of death as a birth to new life. Anyone who has looked at the face of an infant as it is being born understands that the process of birth itself is painful for the infant. At the time of birth, a baby might well choose to remain within the warm security of its mother’s womb, where all of its needs are met. Yet, who among us would choose to have stayed there, given the joys and blessing that have come with life? Death may be viewed as just such a passage on the other end of life. Most of us would not choose death, if we could find a way to avoid it. Even Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matt 26: 39). Yet faith assures us that “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, what God has ready for those who love God” (1 Cor 2:9). Ponder the images and they may speak in fresh ways.

Do not tell all you know or have found out about the person. Be careful about going on too long, especially when you knew and loved the person. As already mentioned, the homily is not a personal salute. Neither canonize nor presume that everyone loved the person. Be respectful always, but don’t lie (which does not mean telling all that *can* be told). Let an appropriate biblical text guide the selection of personal material. Be careful about telling those present how they should feel (as distinct from reflecting how they do feel). Above all, remember the purpose of the homily is not to reduce us to tears, but to evoke heartfelt

praise and thanksgiving for what God has done and continues to do for all of us through the saving death and resurrection of Christ.

#### ANYTHING ELSE TO KEEP IN MIND?

Coming to terms with the death of a loved one is often a long-term process. The wisdom of the *OCF* takes this into account when it considers three distinct moments at the time of death: the wake, the funeral service, and the committal. This is properly called a rite of passage. While the vigil service has received more attention in recent years, it is still not always recognized for its pastoral potential, particularly its offering another opportunity for the word of God to comfort and console. Recent studies are also looking at the theological and psychological values found in giving more attention to the preparation of the body and its committal to the earth (See Larson-Miller, *Liturgical Ministry*). The difference between a funeral liturgy with the body of the deceased present and with the cremated remains also is receiving attention (see Rutherford, *Liturgical Ministry*).

Beyond the immediate time of the funeral and its accompanying rites, the former custom of having some additional kind of commemoration offers opportunity for ongoing ministry. Having a service thirty or forty days after the time of the funeral can help to navigate that period when the initial shock and numbness have begun to wear off and the awareness of loss and loneliness as an ongoing reality is beginning to sink in. Family and friends could be invited once again to gather to remember the deceased in prayer and to comfort one another.

Preparation for dealing with death is not solely at the moment it occurs. The great feast and season of Easter calls us to reflect on the reality of Christ's saving death and the new life won for us and what this means when facing death in our lives; feast days like All Souls Day, the Assumption, and various celebrations of the saints and martyrs call us to live in the awareness of the communion of saints living and deceased and the hope they offer us. Beyond the calendar of the saints, there may also be a pastoral need to recognize those deaths which people grieve alone without the benefit of a community: miscarriages, abortions, executions in our prisons, deaths by violence in our streets and across our world, deaths of the homeless in our cities. It can be a powerful expression of Christian compassion to gather during the month of November to lament these deaths sometimes overlooked liturgically.

Finally, we must not forget that preaching at these times is a particularly privileged moment, not only permitting us to minister to the community of believers with the compassion of Christ, but allowing others who normally do not hear the gospel preached to come into contact with it. Funerals and memorial services provide great evangelizing

moments for the Church. People who would never choose to enter a church will come to pay their respects to a deceased family member, friend, or colleague. If they are met at these moments by powerful and well-prepared liturgy, inclusive and welcoming preaching, and a caring and sensitive presider, this experience may encourage them to consider—or reconsider—the role that the Church might play in their present life.

#### ARE THERE ANY RESOURCES THAT ARE HELPFUL IN THIS AREA?

Several come to mind. A few deepen our understanding of the *OCF*; others offer material that might inform our preaching at the time of death:

1. William Cieslak's *Console One Another: Commentary on the Order of Christian Funerals*, Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1990.
2. *Liturgical Ministry*, "Death and Dying," vol. 7, Winter, 1998.
3. *The Living Pulpit*, "Death," vol. 7 no. 3, July–September, 1998.
4. Peter Phan's *Response to 101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life*, New York: Paulist, 1997.
5. *Preaching on Death: An Ecumenical Sourcebook*. ed. by Virginia Sloyan, Blair Gilmer Meeks and Hilary Hayden. Silver Spring, Md.: The Liturgical Conference, 1997.
6. Richard Rutherford's *The Death of a Christian: The Order of Christian Funerals*. With Tony Barr. Rev. ed., Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990.
7. *Sourcebook about Christian Death*. Compiled by Virginia Sloyan. Art by Linda Ekstrom. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1989.

#### IN CLOSING

In Robert Frost's poem "Death of the Hired Man," a wife says to her husband that the hired man who had in the past worked for them has "come home to die. . . ." The husband retorts: "Home! That's the place where when you have to go there, they have to take you in." And the wife, in turn, responds, "I should rather have thought it something you somehow haven't to deserve." People come home to die in different ways. When family, friends, strangers, or the estranged turn to the Church at the time of a death, it is to be hoped that what they will find there is not a place where "they have to take you in," but rather a place of gracious welcome and hospitality, befitting a people who have come to know God's unfathomable love, a place that "you somehow haven't to deserve."

## REFERENCES

- Melloh, John Allyn. "Preaching at the Vigil/Wake," *Preaching on Death: An Ecumenical Resource*. Silver Spring, Md.: The Liturgical Conference, 1997.
- Order of Christian Funerals*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1989.
- The Rites of the Catholic Church*. New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1976.
- Rutherford, Richard. *The Death of a Christian: The Order of Christian Funerals*. With Tony Barr. Rev. Ed., Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990.
- U.S. Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry. *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*. Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1982.

---

*Margaret Costello, M.Div., is director of liturgy at Holy Trinity parish, Georgetown, in Washington, D.C. James A. Wallace, C.Ss.R., is professor of homiletics at Washington Theological Union.*

*"One owes respect to the living; to the dead one owes only the truth."*

—Voltaire

*Herbert Anderson and Thomas A. Nairn, O.F.M.*

## Fitting Time

My father died last July. He lived for “seventy-five good years and two bad ones.” The two “bad ones” were the two years he lived without his wife and my mother Stella. My mother died in a hospital two weeks after she suffered a massive stroke. Everybody, including my father, understood and agreed that she needed to be in the hospital. Tom O’Neill, her husband of forty-two years, could not have cared for her. When the doctor told us about extensive hemorrhaging to her brain, everyone in the family agreed to withhold everything but comfort measures—except my brother Jim, who was still hoping for a miracle. Seeing his wife die in the hospital gave my father new resolve about his own death: when it was “his time,” he announced to us one day shortly after mother died, he wanted to be at home. “Gramps in Charge,” as his grandchildren called him, had picked his place to die. Only the time was undetermined.

My father did not live easily without his wife Stella. He was lonely. He lost his appetite for living. He gave himself a year to “sort through,” as he put it, all his feelings and memories about Stella. Within six months of mother’s death, however, my father was diagnosed with lung cancer. He had not finished mourning his wife’s death before he had to face his own. A lung was removed and radiation treatment followed. About the time my father began to regain his strength, he experienced diabetes-related medical difficulties, and finally the word that the cancer had metastasized to the brain.

All of us felt “his time” had come, but nobody spoke of it. It was the grandchildren who said first what all the adults were thinking: “How long do you think we’ll have Grandpa with us?” they would ask. As the symptoms began to mount, most of the family agreed that “his time” had come, albeit much too soon. Everyone except my brother (who was still mourning his mother’s death) determined to support the passage toward death rather than fight against it. Tom O’Neill walked straight into the unavoidable and the mysterious. He responded to death much as he had responded to other challenges in his life: it was something that needed to be accomplished. And he would do it his way, at home. “Pain’s a lot easier to deal with in the comfort of your own home,” he said. I think my father felt safe knowing we would take care of him like *his mother* took care of *his father* at home when he died of cancer.

Once we could all agree that “his time” of dying had begun, my father began to tell stories about his youth, dating, his high and low (!) adventures as a young man, his early business days, about his family, all of which connected his living with his end time. Dinners with my father took on new significance when he began telling stories. His grandchildren prompted him, and he usually complied with gracious urgency. As my sister put it, “He simply wanted to empty himself of these memories and adventures because he wanted us to know all about his life, even as he anticipated his death.” My father’s remembering always made him feel better. It was as if he was determined to be known fully before he died. We felt better too. Moreover, each of us got to know my father in a much deeper way than we had known him before.

The anticipation of death was not any easier for him, but Tom O’Neill provided us, his children and grandchildren, with stories to cling to and claim after his death. By the time the end finally came, we had all said goodbye. When we gathered around the lazy-boy chair for *Viaticum*, my sixteen-year-old daughter spoke for everyone: “You don’t have to pray too long, Father Paul, because Gramps is pretty tired and he’s been ready for a couple of days now.” Hearing his stories had prepared us to send him on his way to God. It was the fitting time for Tom O’Neill to die.

Two days later, my father died peacefully in his own bed, after a day and a night of “active incoherence,” as we named it. After he died, we sat around the bed and shared more stories and cried for my father and for each other. I continue to grieve peacefully and gratefully for my father: peacefully, because we were able to honor “his time” of dying; gratefully, because of each storytelling moment my father shared with us during his dying. Even my brother, who had initially withdrawn, was drawn back to his father through the stories. My father’s own version of his life was amplified at the wake and funeral and the dinner that followed. Telling my own story of my father after his death has been made easier because I know his version. Had we not decided to honor “his time” of dying, however, we may not have known the stories he told that now linger in our memory of Tom O’Neill.

Melissa O’Neill Smith

The purpose of this essay is to explore the difficult and ambiguous period of time when family, patient (whenever possible), and medical staff must determine that an individual who has been critically ill is now irreversibly dying. It often begins when a physician reports to the family that “we have done all that we can” or “there is not much more we can do for your loved one.” Behind those statements is the assumption that everything that could reasonably help reverse the course of an

illness has been done. This is an important determination because it (a) shifts the focus regarding the patient from cure to care, (b) establishes *Viaticum* (or the Commendation of the Dying) as the appropriate ritual, and (c) creates a time in which families may be open to stories that will help the dying person bring closure to a life. It is still a difficult decision to make in our cultural context where death is the enemy and medical technology continues to promise one more remarkable procedure. The death of Tom O'Neill particularly illustrates both the importance and complexity of determining the "fitting time" to acknowledge that an individual has entered into the process of "irreversible dying."

The literature about end-of-life decisions can sometimes give the impression that such decisions are relatively straightforward. For example, the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* from the U.S. Catholic bishops simply states that a person has an obligation to use ordinary or proportionate means of preserving life but may forgo extraordinary or disproportional means. The distinction between the two is based upon an assessment of burdens and benefits to the patient, family or community (N.C.C.B., 22–23). Anyone who has been involved in such decisions, however, knows that they are inherently ambiguous (see Nairn, 39). Elsewhere in this issue, Zachary Hayes has noted the Church's tradition regarding the *ars moriendi*, the art of dying. Both ambiguity and art are present in Stella and Tom's deaths.

#### DECIDING FOR STELLA: AN AMBIGUOUS ART

When Stella awoke on her fateful morning, she had no idea that it would be her last day of consciousness. Strokes are the third leading cause of death in the United States. Of every thousand people in the United States over age seventy-five, between twenty and thirty will suffer a stroke each year. A third of all strokes are fatal (see Nuland, 64). Stella was rushed to a hospital and soon entered an intensive care unit, where physicians used all the technology available to keep her alive. Appropriately, the immediate medical response is to seek to redress the trauma or cure the illness. It is only later that families like the O'Neills must make the ambiguous decision to care but not seek for an impossible cure. Stella and her family quickly became part of the medical culture in this country, a culture with its own rituals, narratives, and with a language not always understood by untrained ears.

Since Stella did not regain consciousness after the stroke, the ambiguity inherent in end-of-life decisions was intensified. She could not participate in the decisions regarding her treatment, nor was she able to articulate her wishes, as Tom did later, regarding where she would like to die. Because the stroke came suddenly and unexpectedly, Stella had no opportunity to say her farewell to family and friends. We do not know from the story whether Stella O'Neill had previously executed a

durable power of attorney or another advance health care directive. Usually, such documents are the only way to ensure that the patient's point of view regarding continuing aggressive care or the withdrawal of treatment is respected by physician and hospital. Preparing a document such as durable power of attorney may also be a time when members of a family hear a person's wishes clearly stated and understand why these choices are important in the light of their values and beliefs. A variety of guides are now available to help such preparation, including a guide consisting of twenty-five questions produced by the American Association of Retired Persons and a more complete guide produced by Aging with Dignity entitled "Five Wishes." In the absence of advance health care directives, there is no guarantee that any family member or friend may speak for an incompetent dying patient.

In the situation of Stella, the O'Neill family members were invited into the decision-making process and allowed to express their understanding of what she would have wanted. American law, however, insists that those who engage in end-of-life decisions are not to act on what they personally think is in the best interest of a dying person. Rather, the members of Stella's family needed to determine what they think she would want under the present circumstances at the present time as the basis for making a decision. Such decisions are called "transmitted decisions." The extensive hemorrhaging in the brain made the medical decision clearer than many other end-of-life decisions that families face.

#### THE DIFFICULTY OF DECISION-MAKING AT THE END OF LIFE

Often, family members like Jim still hold some hope for cure or more life when they must decide whether or not to try another, perhaps more radical, intervention. Despite Jim's "hoping for a miracle" for his mother, his sisters and father moved ahead with the decision to take Stella off the ventilator. Family disagreements around end-of-life decisions are not always resolved easily or peacefully. When the family conflict is particularly intense, hospitals are likely to side with those seeking more medical treatment, especially if litigation is threatened. In the absence of durable power of attorney or another advance directive, the hospital will often choose the most conservative course of action. This possibility shows the need for *one* designated agent of the patient. It also demonstrates the necessity for the designated agent and other family members to understand and respect each other.

Family members need to put aside personal differences and particular treatment preferences in order to focus on determining what the family can do to respect the dying patient's wishes. If, however, individual family members try to dominate the decision; the wishes of the patient may be ignored. Occasionally, families are afraid or unable to

decide for fear of making a mistake or because there are irreconcilably divided opinions among family members. As ethicist Dennis Brodeur explains, "All people experiencing the trauma or difficulty of decision-making at the end of life want to come away knowing that they did their best, that medical treatments were used wisely and with reasonable expectations, that people were freed of as much pain and suffering as possible, and that no one was left alone to make decisions" (Brodeur, 4). The aim of end-of-life decision-making is to honor the vision of life and the values of the one who is dying, insofar as we are able. When the patient is not a participant in the decision-making process at the end of life, it is crucial that family and medical staff work together and not abuse their role in this joint moral process.

There are other participants in this decision-making process at the end of life, namely, the physician(s), medical staff, and sometimes the hospital itself represented by the administrator or other spokesperson. Again, in the story described by Melissa Smith, the physician's explanation of what was happening inside the brain of Stella made the decision easier. The physician exercised her proper role, described by Brodeur as offering "assistance in understanding the scientific aspect of a medical diagnosis or treatment plan and the importance or significance of statistical information in making decisions about whether to continue treatment" (Brodeur, 4). The physician's clarity and candor enhanced the family's decision-making process.

Physicians may also refuse to cede decision-making authority either to the patient's family or even to the patient. A number of studies suggest that it is often the physician's values and not those of the patient that are decisive in end-of-life decisions (see Orentlicher, *passim*). Similarly, Daniel Callahan has accused physicians of technological brinkmanship, "pushing aggressive treatment as far as it can go in the hope that it can be stopped at just the right moment if it turns out to be futile." He goes on to suggest that such brinkmanship "can both save life and ruin dying; that is the dilemma it poses" (Callahan, 192). All of us have health-care horror stories, many of which may involve the questionable use of aggressive therapies during the last part of a loved one's life.

The inability to provide genuine care for an individual at the end of life stems in part from the reluctance to acknowledge the reality that there is a time of "irreversibly dying" and that this is the "fitting time." When the patient is able to decide and communicate about his or her treatment, it is incumbent on family, medical staff, and the patient to acknowledge the shift that has already occurred from being seriously ill to irreversibly dying. A person is understood to be irreversibly dying when he or she is not likely to recover or continue living for an indefinite period of time. "If it cannot be agreed that an individual is irreversibly

ill and moving toward death, confusion or denial may lead to false hopes, insistence on restorative treatment, prolonged hospitalization, the search for a life-saving cure, dependent behavior, and a deterioration of relationships between family, the patient, and medical caregivers" (Anderson and Foley, 102). Although it is a difficult decision to make, determining that an individual is irreversibly dying is necessary for care, for ritual making, and for storytelling. In short, if the reality of impending death is denied, the care of dying people is diminished.

#### TOM'S DECISION: HIS TIME TO DIE

Tom O'Neill was obviously affected by the manner of his wife's death. He reacted to it by determining that when it was "his time" he wanted to die at home. According to recent studies, most terminally ill patients express a desire to die at home. Nevertheless, most of these people die in a hospital or long-term care facility (Pritchard, 1244). But Tom O'Neill was "Gramps in Charge" and wanted to exert appropriate control over his personal journey to death. As medicine is practiced in the United States, exercising such agency is not a simple task. When patients enter into the culture of medicine, they are assigned the identity and role of a sick person. People who are assigned the patient role are often deprived of agency and expected to be dependent. Sociologist Arthur Frank has suggested that medicine's rituals of diagnosis and prognosis create a new moral status for a patient:

The medical interview hails a person to be a patient whose diagnosis carries the responsibility to engage in a treatment. Diagnosis does the work of interpellation: the disease becomes not only what one *has* but more significantly what one *is*, for example, a cancer patient. Medicine hardly creates the cancer, but it does create the career of a cancer patient . . . implying what a person is entitled to ask from society, and what society expects from the person (Frank, 34).

Deciding where one wants to die, as Tom O'Neill did, does not, however, guarantee that the time of irreversibly dying will be used constructively to write our autobiography, mend fences, heal broken relationships, give gifts, and otherwise bring closure to a life. For that to happen, everyone involved must acknowledge that someone who has been seriously or even chronically ill is now irreversibly dying. Tom's determination to die at home and his willingness to tell his story meant that he wanted others to know he was more than his illness. And he remained an agent in his living until he died. By means of his dying at home and by telling his story to his family (and to others who would hear him), Tom made his time of dying a "fitting time." How he died

was his final gift to his family. It could not have happened, however, without the willing support of both family and physicians.

Tom O'Neill's medical situation allowed him to "be in charge." Even if his wife Stella could have died at home, it would not have been the same. He was capable of agency and therefore able to express to his family his own desires. And, more importantly, his illness was of such a nature that his family could honor Tom's wishes. Because Tom could decide and the family and medical staff concurred, no extraordinary measures were considered. If Tom had reached a point when it was no longer possible for his family to care for him, home hospice care might have been a necessary step offering the family supplemental medical and spiritual care. Behind the fierce desire to die at home one might see an equally strong fear of being abandoned to die alone. If it had become impossible for Tom to die at home, hospice could have offered a home-like atmosphere with pain control and support for living until he died. When families are faced with more difficult decisions at the end of life because of lingering suffering and/or severe incapacity, pastoral ministers and communities of faith are resources for "decisions of conscience" that must be made by those close to an irreversibly dying patient.

#### DETERMINING THE FITTING TIME: A DIFFICULT MORAL CHOICE

Deciding that someone we love who has been seriously ill is now irreversibly dying is a complex moral decision-making moment. It is always possible to insist that there is something more we can do, another specialist we might consult, another treatment we might try. In most families, there is someone like Melissa's brother who insists that "miracles are still possible." At the same time, the end-of-life is not simply a problem to be solved. There is also the sense that both the moment and process of dying are shrouded in mystery. "Irreversibly dying" is not an absolute category. Therefore the decision making process is an art form and the decision will be ambiguous at best. Furthermore, the process is fraught with unexpectedly powerful emotions. Melissa's brother withdrew from his father when Tom was first diagnosed because Jim was still mourning his mother's death. He had overloaded on signs of human vulnerability and needed to withdraw temporarily from the family process. A family does not usually act under crisis differently from the way they have acted before. When a family and medical staff honors an individual who is irreversibly dying, accompanies and does not abandon, and respects the patient's deepest desires and wishes, then artful dying is possible. If, however, a family or a dying individual has lived falsely, then this decision will be complicated or even impeded.

The shift from aggressive therapies to palliative forms of care, from sacrament of the sick to *Viaticum*, from being ill to dying is theologically complex as well as emotionally challenging. How we understand death will shape our response to this moral and spiritual transition. Death is part of life to be embraced with respect and dignity and not simply an enemy of life to be resisted and rejected. Death is like a thief in the night but it is also a human act. Karl Rahner articulates his paradoxical view of death in this way: "This simultaneity of fulfillment and emptiness, of actively achieved and passively suffered end, of full self-possession and of being completely dispossessed of self, may, for the moment, be taken as a correct description of the phenomenon we call death" (Rahner, 1961: 40). Respecting this paradoxical mystery of death is a prelude to acknowledging that someone we love is entering into a time of actively dying.

It is desirable that *Viaticum* not be delayed so that dying persons may be nourished by it while in full possession of their faculties. For some people, the ritual for dying may be *the* moment when everyone is able to acknowledge the inevitability of death for a loved person. Used in this way, the ritual may inaugurate storytelling as a way of marking the journey to death. In that sense, the ritual of *Viaticum* provides a framework that adds dignity to the dying process. By the time Tom O'Neill received *Viaticum*, however, he had entered fully into the dying process and had invited his family to walk with him as he told the story of his life. *Viaticum* was the culmination of narrative reflection that had included remembering his first Communion and confirmation. The renewal of faith into which one has been baptized is not only an important reminder of God's gracious promise; it is a foretaste of the reunion with loved ones who are already heirs of the promise of eternal life. Whether *Viaticum* initiates or culminates the narrative process, it is important to keep ritual and story closely linked in order to deepen the connection between God's narrative and ours. Because dying is an emotionally charged and socially complex process, it evokes the natural human tendency to cope through ritualization.

Our care for the irreversibly dying is, however, still care for people who are still living. The problems of the dying are the problems of the living. Loss of control, suffering, becoming dependent, and waiting are characteristics of living as well as dying. Because the dying have as many pathways and styles as the living, it is important that caregivers attend to the particularity of each situation. Even so, there are stories and rituals to aid the process that may also serve to enhance the process of telling the narrative of a life. The caregivers of the dying have a double task: to help someone live as fully as possible until death while at the same time mourning the loss that is an inevitable part of dying.

Acknowledging the reality that someone we love is now dying irreversibly presumes a willingness to share their grief. Dying persons grieve all the time. They are letting go of everything they have loved in order to get ready to die. Letting go of what might have been or should have been as well as what has been evokes a sense of loss and grief. In the process of bringing closure to a life, the dying person also needs to say many good-byes. Freedom to ritualize the litany of “lasts” provides a structural framework that keeps dying persons connected to those who wait with them until they die. For the dying, the grieving seldom ends with one outpouring. The dying person will need freedom to return again and again with tears to the deep sadness and grief that is a constant companion. If one can mourn the losses that are part of dying, it is easier to be with family and friends.

It is important to reaffirm the significance of good—value-laden—decision-making when patients and their families are confronted with a diagnosis of life-threatening illness and need to decide about continuing or stopping life-sustaining treatment. Value-laden decisions will include the values of the patient, family, professional caregivers, and institutions. By design, these decisions will be messy and garner a great deal of ambiguity and often emotional distress. Nonetheless, the fundamental aim in these difficult cases is to make decisions that reflect the values of multiple parties, especially the person who is dying. Sound, ethically sensitive decision-making is the goal of this process, regardless of the presence or absence of an advance directive (Brodeur, 4). Because even our best decisions are fragile and finite, however, we need to remember that all our decisions about living and dying are sustained by a gracious God.

#### THE MORAL OBLIGATION TO LISTEN

We began this essay with the story of a family that found a way to encourage grandfather to tell stories of his life as preparation to die. Night after night, with the family around him, Tom O’Neill told his grandchildren stories by which he emptied himself of memories and fashioned a narrative through which he will be remembered. Stories told by the dying are privileged acts of self-interpretation. Telling our story is not only a gift to those we love. It is narrating the way we want to be remembered. It is also an intentional act of agency. Even when physical constraints restrict mobility or freedom, when medical procedures may isolate us from community, or when family members are tempted to close our story prematurely, we can still fashion a life narrative (Anderson and Foley, 98ff). On the third Tuesday of Mitch Albom’s *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Morrie Schwartz hooked his glasses off his nose, wagged a finger at his former student, and said softly: “Mitch, you don’t understand. I *want* to tell you about my life. I want to tell you

before I can't tell you anymore." His voice then dropped to a whisper and he continued. "I *want* someone to hear my story. Will you?" (Albom, 1997, 63)

Morrie's plea to his former student introduces another moral dimension often overlooked in the complexity and ambiguity of the dying process. Reminiscing and storytelling may take some encouragement. Sometimes, the dying person wishes a commitment: "If I tell my story, will you listen?" Tom O'Neill had an eager audience around the dinner table that sustained him in telling the story of his life. Family and friends and caregivers of the dying need to be ready to hear before we invite the dying to tell their story. It is our moral obligation to listen carefully to the dying person's story and respond in a way that lets them know that they have been heard and understood and will be remembered. When stories are told and heard, a bond of mutuality is created with a dying person that transforms the dread of abandonment and the terrors of isolation into a community of hope.

## REFERENCES

- Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie*. New York: Doubleday, 1997.
- Anderson, Herbert and Foley, Edward. *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving the Human and the Divine*. San Francisco: Jossey/Bass Publishers, 1998.
- Brodeur, Dennis. "Informed Decision-Making: A Messy Pluralistic Experience." *Issues: A Critical Examination of Contemporary Ethical Issues in Health Care* 10 (November/December, 1995) 1-8.
- Callahan, Daniel. *Troubled Dream of Life: In Search of a Peaceful Death*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1993.
- Frank, Arthur W. "Enacting Illness Stories: *When, What, and Why.*" *Stories and Their Limits*, ed. Hilde Lindemann Nelson, 31-49. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Nairn, Thomas. "Reclaiming Our Moral Tradition." *Health Progress* 78 (November-December, 1997) 36-39.
- National Council of Catholic Bishops. *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*. Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1995.
- Nuland, Sherwin B. *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.
- Orentlicher, David. "The Illusion of Patient Choice in End-of-Life Decisions." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 267 (April 15, 1992) 2101-04.

Pritchard, Robert S., et. al. "Influence of Patient Preferences and Local Health System Characteristics on the Place of Death." *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 46 (October, 1998) 1242–50.

Rahner, Karl. *On the Theology of Death*. trans. C.H. Henkey. New York: Herder and Herder, 1961.

---

*Herbert Anderson, a former member of the editorial board of New Theology Review, is professor of pastoral theology at Catholic Theological Union. Thomas A. Nairn, O.F.M., is associate professor of moral theology at Catholic Theological Union and serves as an ethics consultant to a number of Catholic hospitals and health care systems.*

*"Death may be the greatest of all human blessings."*

—Socrates

*"Death is sometimes a punishment, sometimes a gift;  
to many it has come as a favor."*

—Seneca

*"Lord, let your servant now die in peace,  
for you kept your promise.  
With my own eyes I see the salvation  
you prepared for all peoples:  
a light of revelation for the Gentiles  
and glory to your people Israel."*

—Luke 2:29-32

William T. Donovan

## The Trinity: Love Seeking Articulation

### FROM EXPERIENCE TO ANALYSIS

A number of years ago when I was a seminarian in Rome, I had many opportunities to stand before Michelangelo's famous *Pietà*, gazing in silent wonder at the power and sublimity of this masterpiece. On one occasion, another student came by with a tour group he was leading. He went on to describe to them the statue's meaning, saying that "Mary's face represents tolerance," "Jesus' hand represents justice," "The supine figure represents God's closeness to humanity," "Mary's arm represents prayer," and many other things of the like. When he finished, and the tour group had left, in stunned disbelief I asked him if he thought that was what the sculpture really meant. He said, "Of course. I wrote a paper on it in college. If you don't analyze it that way, how else can you know what it means?"

The incident served to remind me that there are many people in the world for whom analysis is the only acceptable form of knowledge. Unless one can describe in logical terms the meaning of something, then there is no meaning to grasp. I wonder if Michelangelo himself would have seen it that way, or if he would have recognized this person's description as being about his *Pietà*. How do you logically analyze the love expressed in a work of art?

When it comes to talk of God, and of the theological symbol of the Trinity, I believe we are faced with a similar situation. While many are content to praise God in this way, and to revel in the experience of God's triune presence, others find a great necessity to analyze every possible angle and viewpoint, as if the "inner workings" of the Trinity were like some sort of mysterious gadget, or a marvelous brain-teaser. Somewhere between these two extremes, we find the bulk of Trinitarian theology, and somewhere we find the fine line between the human need to experience the wonderful and the human need to articulate that experience.

This paper will try to trace the historical path of discussion of the Trinity in broad strokes. First we will examine the experience of the early community which led to language about the Trinity. Next we will see how articulation of the experience became analysis as an end in itself. We will then look at the nature of language about God, and how

trinitarian language used one way kills growth in the faith and used another way helps to bring new life.

#### FROM LOVE TO ARTICULATION IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

While it is difficult to determine the actual words and teachings of Jesus as separate from the community's proclamation of him in light of the resurrection, there are certain aspects of the language of God which stand out in Jesus' message. The New Testament depicts him as proclaiming God as "Father," speaking of himself as a "son of God," and presenting the power of God called "Spirit" as a gift of God's presence within.

These views were not completely new; they were in many ways part of the very fabric of Judaism. Any Jew could be thought of as a son or daughter of the one God, who, as creator, could be considered the "Father" of the entire world. The power of God as Spirit is attested to again and again by the prophetic writings, by the creation accounts, by the Wisdom tradition, and even by the apocalyptic expectation that the Spirit would come upon humanity in the eschaton. It is Jesus' breach of the transcendence of God (whose name was not even to be uttered) which created problems for the acceptance of his preaching. He proclaimed a sense of intimacy with the Holy One that led him to call God "Abba," and he claimed a unique sonship, so that union with Jesus was union with God. Many people at that time asked how a man could speak such blasphemies and still be considered a prophet in the Spirit of God.

The resurrection was the experience which cast all of these things into a new light for the early believers, and the writings of Paul and the gospel stories are comprehensible only in the light of the power of this event. If Jesus was raised, then his claims are true. And if his claims are true, then who is he in the light of the monotheistic faith so precious to the heart of Judaism? The early believers experienced something powerful enough to make them wonder about who Jesus really was, and their awe and even fear is reflected in the stories of the walking on water, the calming of the storm, and the transfiguration. They also experienced a powerful surge of the presence of God within them, God as Spirit, power, or "boldness," somehow connected to the resurrection of Jesus and to the fellowship of communion. While they had known God as transcendent creator, sustainer and intervener in history, now they experienced God as present in one who had walked among them, and as one who guides them from within. They expressed these realities as the overflow of love, as a free gift to be given to others even to the point of death, and they felt the abiding presence of this love which flows from the very source of all creation.

The monotheism of Judaism came to be colored with the radical new experience of love as source, as presence, and as enabler. They would have to find ways to articulate this experience. Perhaps theology was not so much "faith seeking understanding" as it was *love seeking articulation*. Their experience of love, understood in the light of the resurrection and of Pentecost, led to the inevitable judgment: "God." Somehow the love present in their experience of Jesus' life and fate, and the love present within their Spirit-filled fellowship could only be called "God," as the God of their history had been called.

The early believers began to speak of the one God in terms of the way they had come to experience that God: as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Jesus, they experienced a powerful love for outcasts, the poor, the sick and sinners, a love which he continued to the point of giving of his own life. This outpouring of love, confirmed and radically made manifest in the resurrection, was for them the presence of God in a human person, Jesus. This same human person had proclaimed the radical love of the One who had sent him, and the love between them had been expressed by Jesus as the closeness of parent to child through the endearing term *Abba*. Jesus had taught them that all believers could call God their parent, and that it was *Abba's* love for them that had been the cause of Jesus' work among them as *Son*. After the resurrection, the community experienced a powerful spiritual infusion, which they perceived as the presence of the same loving God whom they experienced in Jesus and *Abba*, but now as an interior, abiding *Spirit*. This Spirit fostered their love for each other and their union with each other.

The perception of the early believers was that the one God had overflowing love for them manifested in these three undeniable "moments" of salvation. It was all the same God, and yet they had come to experience this love in three ways. For the believers, these were totally new ways to experience the one God, yet they had echoes in the earlier salvific moments of history. The faith community was called to continuing love, unity and fellowship as the experience of the presence of God among them. This experience led them to understand that love, unity and fellowship were of the essence of God whom they had come to know in three salvific ways.

The manner of explanation for how it was possible that God is like this was not the point. The undeniability of the over-flowing experience of love led them to articulation. The original language of the "Trinity" (as it was later to be called) was not an analysis of the inner workings of God; it was an attempt to put into words what had been experienced by the early believers through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It was not meant to be definition; it was meant to be doxology. The Trinity was revealed, "uncovered," through the community's experience of the love of God, not as a set of propositions, but as the inspired

ecstatic speech of a community of fellowship. The Trinity was grasped in reflections upon the *oikonomia*, the very actions of God in the lives of human beings.

#### FROM ARTICULATION TO ANALYSIS

There is a tendency within us human beings to want to know more about our loved ones. As we revel in the experience of loving or of being loved, the desire for unity is so powerful that we want to know our beloved in new and deeper ways. While we may come to love others for the many things that they have done for us, or for the way we feel in their presence, or for the new possibilities they open up for us in our lives, we still want to know more. We want to know their background, their past experiences, and their feelings. We want to know what interests them, how they are when they are by themselves, and how we fit into their lives. We want to see them as they truly are and to know them through and through. All of this we seek while carried by the original experience of love, which seeks new insights for articulation. In this sense, our interest can move from the experience of persons in our lives to a desire to know persons in their *immanence*.

The early community sought to know more about Jesus, and went deeper and deeper into his history to find out more about him. The historical development of the Gospels shows this. Mark begins with Jesus' baptism, Matthew with the virgin birth, Luke with the birth of John the Baptist as precursor, and John with the pre-existence of the Logos. In other words, as time went on, the church community sought to know about Jesus as he was earlier in his past, seeking new experiences to love. The dynamism of their love took them back into the very beginnings, to the time before they were part of the experience, into the very life of God *in se*. This kind of movement is a natural part of the process of a love relationship, as long as it occurs with the goal of deeper praise and love, and as long as it makes a contribution to one's living relationship to the beloved.

The search for the "background" of the Trinity began as praise for the glory of God's love poured out through Jesus in the Spirit. It was an extension of the knowledge of the *oikonomia*, of the loving and saving events of God for us, finding their origin in the very depths of God. Interest in the beloved is a dynamism which takes the human being into the history of the beloved so that this union can be even greater. This dynamism was reflected in the many prayers, sermons, hymns and works of art of the early believers, trying to express the mystery of the triune God in varied symbols of beauty and richness. The purpose of the symbols was not to analyze the beloved in definitive descriptions, but to extend the experience of love and to continue to articulate that experience.

Problems came about when the articulation of some members of the community did not seem to reflect the experience of the other members. When some members spoke about the beloved or relationship to the beloved in such a way that it seemed to contradict the experience of others, to neglect an “essential” aspect, or to detract from the “truth” of the experience, then there was conflict. The early “heresies” regarding the Trinity and the person of Jesus were deemed by the rest of the community to be this kind of detracting speech, but only after long and involved disagreements and condemnations.

What began as ecstatic speech, as articulation of the experience of love, and as doxology started to become tradition, “canons” and doctrine. The theology was no longer just “speech about God;” it became a more exacting language to delineate “true” articulations from “false.” In the Hellenized world of the early Church, philosophical language became more prevalent. It had been used for the articulation of the love found through faith, and later it was to be used to make distinctions between truth and falsehood in those articulations. As Leonardo Boff says, “Christians had to translate their doxology into a theology appropriate to [the Hellenic world] in order to assert the truth of their faith” (1986: 156). The proper articulation had now become a matter of “orthodoxy,” the right way of praise, and orthodoxy was measured through philosophical language as well as through fidelity to the scriptures. This movement signified a shift in the original intention of theology from praise of God to carefully reasoned analysis. The problem is that praise and the experience of love can get lost in the translation.

The perceived necessity of refined theological language in the face of the threat of heresy set the work of theology on the road to discussion of how the Trinity “really” is. In other words, before there were human beings to complicate the picture, before there was any history, before the encumbrances of imperfect humanity (the idea of Platonism), in a pre-existent realm of God, what was God like? This became the major shift in the theological discussion of the Trinity, away from the *oikonomia* to *theologia*, as Catherine LaCugna (1991) points out. She traces the split of *oikonomia* and *theologia* from the condemnation of Arius, through the Cappadocians, all the way through Augustine and Aquinas in the West and through Gregory Palamas in the East. LaCugna indicates that the net result was that theologians began to speak about God divorced from those experiences of “God for us” in history which had led to language about the Trinity in the first place. While interest in God as the beloved can serve the experience of love, divorcing God from the relationship of love for the sake of clarification and analysis can lead to distance in the relationship.

This distance has been pointed out by a number of writers. For example, Elizabeth Johnson writes that “the triune symbol has been di-

vorced from the original multifaceted, life-giving experiences that gave it birth in human understanding" (1992: 192). By launching into a search for the "nature" of God separated from the experiences by which we have come to know that God, theology has left itself in a philosophical box, trying to speak about God through ontological constructions, as if we had never experienced anything of the triune God other than "threeness." The language of "persons," "hypostases," and "substance" is derived not from the experiences of love as much as the need to make distinctions in arguing "truths" well apart from that experience. Johnson tells us that it is legitimate to speak of the Trinity theologically as a "short formula" of salvation history. But we must remain attentive to the historical experiences from which this kind of language arises (1992: 198).

#### THE NATURE OF GOD LANGUAGE

As we saw earlier, it is natural for the one experiencing love to want to articulate that experience. Answers to the question "what is it like to be in love?" can range from "like walking on a cloud," "warmth and tenderness in my heart," "we're always together even when we're apart," to "no longer two but one." If we were to take any of these statements literally, we would conclude some serious physical and ontological difficulties concerning the experience of being in love.

Somehow in theology it is very easy to forget the metaphorical and analogical nature of language about God. It is a language born out of the exuberance of an all-encompassing experience, seeking human articulation. As we move further away from the original experience, these once spontaneous and vibrant attempts to capture the ineffable in words become solidified into ritual, tradition and formulation. It becomes the accepted order to speak of the original experience always in the same way, losing its poetic, descriptive nature and taking on the solidity of dogmatic pronouncement. The mystery of involvement with God as Trinity begins to be expressed in such formalized language that deviation from the proscribed "text" is a suspicious endeavor of possibly material, if not formal, heresy.

In the presence of the mystery of God, which is truly beyond the ability of any human being to fully articulate, what then should be the human response? Walter Kasper asks "Is God a meaningful word in our language? Or must we not in the final analysis be dumb and silent before the mystical dimension of our experience?" (1992: 87). While silence is a possibility, as an act of adoration without words, it is not always satisfying to human beings, who need to articulate in order to have a complete experience. The articulation is not just something *about* the experience. It is an integral part of the experience, as we try to shape into words what we experience transcendentally. Boff also calls for

us to be silent, but “only after trying to speak as adequately as possible of that reality which no human words can properly express” (1986: 8). In the face of an experience which is all-encompassing, such as the Trinity, there is a need to say something, however inadequate. The articulation enables us to incorporate the experience and to communicate at least the fact of the experience and of its enormity, even if the content itself cannot really be communicated adequately.

The inadequacy is clear when we are close in time to the experience; as the distance increases, it becomes much less clear that the language is not to be taken at face value, especially when theologians of later generations have only the words about the experience, or are themselves lacking in a personal encounter. While we as a Church believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, which record the expressions of the experience of the early Church, and we trust in doctrinal formulation to help the community to avoid language not truly reflective of that experience, we must also be aware of the inadequacy of any language to completely express divine realities. Analogy enables us to say something positive about God based upon our experience, while still remembering that language is limited.

#### TRINITARIAN LANGUAGE AND DEATH

Theological language consistently falls into the trap of reification of language, that is, of making *things* out of *expressions of things*. By going off into philosophical debates on the nature of the Trinity *in se*, divorced from the original experiences which led to the language about the Trinity, and then imagining these philosophical concepts as things or accidental qualities of the Trinity, we have the perfect recipe for a human construct only tangentially related to the divine. As a result, the symbol of the Trinity became more and more obscure for the average believer, and relegated to the musings of speculative theologians. As Karl Rahner wrote, “One might almost dare to affirm that if the doctrine of the Trinity were to be erased as false, most religious literature could be preserved almost unchanged throughout the process” (1982: 79). All of the speculation on generations, spirations and relations have left the concept of Trinity cold and lifeless for the average believer. In many ways, the theological discussion of the Trinity has killed the meaning of the Trinity, leaving believers effectively as atrinitarian monotheists, cut off from the original experience of the early believers.

The symbol of God in a community is meant to reflect the highest good of that community. In Christianity, it began as the economic Trinity, the “short formulation” of the experience of God’s salvific presence. When that symbol became lifeless, the community lost its sense of the salvific presence and replaced it with the distant, self-involved God most clearly seen in the Enlightenment. It is a short step from there to

mass atheism, as Kasper points out: "As a result, theology has been stripped of its power to speak to people and to communicate with them. There are now no generally accepted images, symbols, concepts and categories with which it can make itself understood" (1992: 47). This also could explain the growth of cultic devotion to Mary and to the saints which sustained the faithful for many years, because they were looking for a way to express a real, present-day, living involvement of the supernatural in this world.

It is not only the indifferent use of the symbol which can be destructive. As the Trinity lost its sense of living salvific presence, it took on other culturally conditioned uses, all of which derived from a literalization of the language and concepts. As a symbol with deep historical and doctrinal roots, it was not to be relegated to the sidelines of church language. It continued to be spoken of, but the conveyed message had changed.

The monarchical concept of God, found in the sense of Father as unoriginate beginning, supported hierarchical structures in the Church and in society as "following the divine pattern." Kathryn Tanner says, "In one form of justification, Christian theologians claim that hierarchical relations among human beings match an order of similar relations within a divine sphere and are thereby justified" (1992: 132). This concept supports the status quo of many societies and allows injustices to continue under the blessing of the divine order found in the Trinity. Even if such concepts about the Trinity could once have seemed justified in the past, that does not justify their present use. Sallie McFague writes, "Language that supports hierarchical, dualistic, external, unchanging, atomistic, anthropocentric and deterministic ways of understanding these relationships [of ourselves and the world] is not appropriate *for our time*, whatever its appropriateness might have been for other times" (1987: 13).

Others point out the constant masculinization of language of the Trinity. While language about God is said to be metaphorical and analogical, the consistent use of male nouns ("Father" and "Son") and pronouns has divinized maleness in the minds of most believers. Elizabeth Johnson points out, "But what results when the human reality used to point to God is always and everywhere male? The sacred character of maleness is revealed, while femaleness is relegated to the unholy darkness without" (1992: 37). The Trinity becomes a pattern for patriarchy and male domination.

When the symbol of the Trinity loses its original living, salvific significance, theological discussion has left it dead. When it takes on intended or unintended meanings supporting the domination and oppression of some human beings by others, theological discussion has left it deadly.

## TRINITARIAN LANGUAGE AND LIFE

The Trinity, however, has never completely ceased being a source of life and inspiration in the Church. Even in the darkest hours of misuse, misunderstanding and mistakes, there have always been other life-sustaining understandings which have continued to express the faith of believers. Many theologians have undertaken the task of recovering those understandings of this symbol as a key for approaching the holy mystery of God's involvement with the world, and as a key for understanding the possibilities for human life.

Catherine LaCugna (1991) has pointed out that we lost a sense of "God for us" which is so vital to the Trinity. By stressing for too long God *in se*, we had forgotten that the Trinity emerged as an understanding of who God is in light of the saving mystery of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. For LaCugna, the Trinity expresses the *communion* of God, that God for all eternity lives in a unity and a community of three equals who share all in common, even the *arche*, the ruling power. This means that the Trinity has life-giving applications for all that we do. It is a remedy to the divisive individualism and uniformity which can be found in politics and in the Church, leading ultimately to tyranny. It becomes a call to build up the human communion in the pattern of the divine. The Trinity can be the way out for a society dead-ended by the injustices which come from a false sense of what it means to hold power.

Boff (1986) also sees this concept of communion, expressed in the ancient concept of *perichoresis*. For Boff, this concept expresses the total unity of each person of the Trinity with the other, of their interpenetration of relationship, of their dwelling in each other. Instead of beginning with a concept of the Father as unoriginate, generating the Son and the Spirit, Boff stresses *perichoresis* as the starting point. Unity in diversity becomes the "essence" of the Trinity, and therefore of society. The root of *perichoresis* means "to go around like a wheel," with no beginning or end, somewhat like a dance. It is an image of equality and of just relationships. Perhaps this is what Jesus was referring to when he said "the first shall be last and the last shall be first" (Matt 20:16), which finds its origin in an apocryphal saying (IV Ezra 5:42): "I will make my judgement like a round dance; the last therein shall not be behind, nor the first in front" (Jeremias, 1972: 36). Boff stresses this communion as the source and inspiration of true justice in the world, without the oppression of hierarchy and privilege. The Trinity can be the criterion by which to critique social structures and can be the precursor of a human utopian community based upon shared power and equal dignity.

Elizabeth Johnson speaks of the living relationship of the Trinity: "Not an isolated, static, ruling monarch but a relational, dynamic,

tripersonal mystery of love—who would not opt for the latter?” (1992: 192). This kind of equality of persons in the dynamic involvement of love becomes a model for how the world itself could be. Johnson points out the many ways in which trinitarian theologies have supported systems detrimental to women’s equality. She explores in great depth a fuller notion of the Trinity incorporating from the tradition both female and male images, shedding new light upon understandings more in keeping with the Christian notion of human dignity. In particular, she uses the biblical notion of Sophia, or wisdom of God, a female image which can increase our imaginative notions of God as Mother, as Jesus and as Spirit. A fuller understanding of the Trinity, incorporating more of the female and male metaphors could lead to a greater recognition of the dignity of women, and to a proactive stance toward their rightful place as equals of men.

Other writers have presented the Trinity in language and understandings which are life-giving. Some see the Trinity as the answer to atheism, others as the answer to systematic poverty and oppression, others as the truth behind all scientific discovery, and still others as the presumption and goal of all human knowledge. When the Trinity is not seen as an isolated *thing* for analysis, then its original salvific, living sense can be spoken.

## CONCLUSIONS

There are many ways truly to know something or someone, and the experience of love is the most all-encompassing. While analysis has its place in understanding and dialogue, it is no replacement for the original experience itself.

As we have seen, there have been problems with the theological discussion of the Trinity. The original salvific experiences of the early community, articulated in symbol and metaphor, became divorced from the discussion. In its place, theological discussion centered upon trinitarian relations in their “inner workings,” divorced from the saving events which gave birth to the original discourse. The metaphorical symbols, subjected to philosophical analysis, became hardened into literal realities. As a result, what was meant to be true and life-giving sometimes led to falsehood and support of deadly oppression within society and the Church.

The community is called to experience the reality of God’s salvific love once again in the three “moments” of love. When we speak about this love reflected in the language of the Trinity we can bring life and hope to all believers. When we have applied all that we know to articulate the Trinity, then we may apply the Trinity to ourselves, to articulate more humanly our experience of God’s love.

## REFERENCES

- Boff, Leonardo. *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Parables of Jesus*, 2d ed. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1972.
- Johnson, Elizabeth. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- Kasper, Walter. *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. M. O'Connell. New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- LaCugna, Catherine. *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.
- McFague, Sally. *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.
- Rahner, Karl. "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate'," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, trans. K. Smyth, 77–102. New York: Crossroad, 1982.
- Tanner, Kathryn. *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

---

*William T. Donovan, for twenty years a priest of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, is associate professor of systematic theology at Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington, New York.*

*Peter Black, C.Ss.R., and Kevin O'Neil, C.Ss.R.*

## **Talking Points for Moral Theology**

### INTRODUCTION

St. Alphonsus Liguori, patron of moral theologians, described moral theology as a salvific science, capturing two important aspects of the discipline. It is clearly a science and must meet the rigors of any theological discipline in order to be of service to the Church; however, its precise method of service is to contribute to the salvation, the wholeness of people. Alphonsus also said that moral theology is useless if it is not at the service of people.

Over the past forty to fifty years, moral theology has been in a process of transformation and renewal, marked often by a retrieval of the best of our Catholic moral tradition while offering new insights in light of new wisdom gained within the human community. A hallmark of this renewal is a fresh focus on the human person. During the last few decades we have seen the implications of this shift borne out in both moral theory and pastoral practice. We have selected six aspects of the human person and the moral life because we believe that they have a major influence in contemporary moral theology as science and also as “saving” pastoral practice.

We will examine the link between human action and the human person in reaction to a tendency to separate the two. We then consider five key areas which come into play in the daily moral life of the human person: the fundamental criterion for judging the rightness or wrongness of human action; the image of God and sin at work in the moral agent’s imagination; the connection between spirituality and morality; the relationship between reason and emotion, and finally the concept of human freedom.

We do not pretend to exhaust the significant issues of foundational moral theology operative in the daily lives of people. However, we have found the developments in these areas of moral theology as science particularly important with regard to the salvation, the wholeness, of believers. We believe that a greater grasp of these areas by pastoral ministers will lead to a more sound and salvific pastoral practice.

### THE MORAL PERSON / THE MORAL ACTION

“I am more than my actions!” After reading a chapter on virtue ethics we decided to put a theory to the test in a class on fundamental

moral theology (Keenan, 1998: 84-94). We asked the students to write down four moral issues on a piece of paper. There was great variety in the way of answers, such as the abortion issue, euthanasia, capital punishment, in vitro fertilization and the administration of artificial nutrition and hydration. While the answers were all different they had one thing in common. All involved moral dilemmas and asked for a judgment on a particular type of external action, namely, is this type of action right or wrong? We then suggested that the students list on the other side of the page four areas of their lives that really concern them in their more reflective moments. This list exhibited a variety of responses including such things as friendship, relationships with a spouse or parent, health, the future, personal commitments, self-confidence or lack of it, and wanting to become more extroverted and less shy. This set of responses exposed their fears and hopes about a good life.

Why were the items on the second list not included under the heading of moral issues? Many people still see morality almost exclusively in terms of right and wrong actions and the consequences brought about by particular external human actions in extraordinary situations. It only occurred to students after some prompting that moral theology is primarily about who we are or who we might hope to be, and that what we should or should not do is, in a sense, of a secondary nature. What then does this question of our identity as a human person and our pursuit of a good life entail? It asks us to consider the broader questions first. As Timothy O'Connell expresses it in a recent publication, we are called to reflect on our life's aims or project, our fundamental angle of vision, our attitudes, dispositions, purposes and ends (O'Connell, 1998: 33-34). The answer to the second question was really a response to the question, what type of person am I and what type of person do I want to become? This is the stuff of moral theology.

Naturally moral theology is also concerned with the rightness and wrongness of human external actions. It is a practical science, but a more adequate and insightful understanding of our external actions will come from a greater appreciation of our subjective selves from which the actions flow. Let us take an example to illustrate this talking point, called virtue ethics, in the revision of moral theology.

We may gradually notice a definite change in the actions of someone close to us. The comments she makes, the decisions she takes, the feelings she expresses, the situations and people she avoids, and slowly we come to realize that there is a pattern to the exterior changes. All the changes point to a new vision the person has of herself and a new project she has for her future. It could be a vocational change, a shift in primary relationship, a determination to be what she considers to be her real self, it could even be a conversion. From a basic disposition perhaps of anger and frustration, a vision of going nowhere or backwards,

a choice not to upset anyone or anything, she has found a new and an engaging project, an optimistic vision for the future, a change of disposition or mood and a basic attitude change. This personal shift explains the rather uncharacteristic actions and decisions. We could say rightly that to understand a person's actions and decisions we need to know who they are hoping to be (Kopfensteiner, 1998: 127).

To understand our own actions and decisions, or for our actions and decisions to have a coherent meaning rather than being a conjunction of random and disconnected external actions and decisions leading in no particular direction, we need to know what type of person we hope to be. In everyday language we have touched upon an ancient insight into the moral life that has recently been successfully revived by many theologians. A vision of what constitutes a fulfilling and authentic human life can give a coherence to otherwise erratic external actions. Having said this, there are still some outstanding questions. How do we determine what the fulfilling authentic vision of human life looks like and does it look the same for everyone? Or we can pose the question in another way. If a primary concern of moral theology is the development of the whole human person and not just their external moral actions how are we to know which is the more total vision or more authentic style of human person?

Traditionally we have argued that there are certain virtues that characterize an authentic style or more complete vision of who a human person ought to be. A notion of human person which leads to genuine flourishing would include such characteristics as being honest, courageous, just, chaste, prudent, and having a right attitude or disposition in our relationships to those who are dear and close to us. But in all humility we may have to admit, even though it may seem untidy, that there is no clear way of determining once and for all what makes up the total vision of the human person or the most complete and comprehensive list of virtues, right dispositions, or the best style or posture towards life. When it comes to the vision or aim of the human person we would be "suggesting that we need a broad, complex, comprehensive, and inclusive understanding of the human good. Such an understanding would allow for a variety of configurations of the virtues, a variety of forms of life, and differing ways of embodying social roles" (Kotva, 1996: 22).

In contrasting "what should I do" with "who should I be" a certain emphasis is placed on the future as well as the present. We sense that the moral life is an extended story, a struggle gradually to draw into reality the vision we have of the good life that brings with it happiness and a sense of flourishing. A story is not only an ongoing project; there is usually more than one character involved in a story. The virtues, postures, and aims for the human person involve other people. A solitary

life may well be the aim of other creatures, but the best life for human persons is in relationship with others (Kotva, 1996: 22). Our reflections on persons and actions do not endeavor to underestimate the power and influence of exterior actions on the moral life. Rather, it is an attempt to restore a certain balance of emphasis on both the human person and their actions when considering the meaning of the moral life. The moral life is more than principles, rules, and procedures for resolving our moral quandaries; it is the ongoing quest to move from who we are now to who we hope to become in the future.

#### CRITERION FOR RIGHT AND WRONG

So, the "What must I do" question is always answered within the context of "Who am I to become?" To respond adequately to what is right or wrong one must consider the whole of the human person and his or her true good.

Yet, if we reflect on the rightness or wrongness of human action and the "why" which lies behind the moral evaluation, we find "reasons" ranging from "because I said so" to "it's in the Bible." Parents often and rightly rely upon the strength of their relationship with their children to say, "Trust me, it's wrong." Presumably the parent believes that there is not enough time to explain or cognitive wherewithal in the child to grasp the reasoning. So, "because I said so" works for a time. Similarly responses such as "because it's in the Bible" or "because the Church teaches it" only go part of the way in forming people to reason properly to the rightness or wrongness of human action. There is still a fundamental criterion which underlies the moral evaluation of all action and which ought to become part of the moral framework of people's understanding of right and wrong moral action. John Paul II explains it this way in his encyclical on the moral life, *Veritatis splendor*:

"Acting is morally good when the choices of freedom are *in conformity with man's true good* and thus express the voluntary ordering of the person toward his ultimate end: God himself, the supreme good in whom man finds his full and perfect happiness" (John Paul II, 1993, #72).

So, the criterion or the measure against which action must be considered is to what extent it contributes to or detracts from authentic human good. An underlying assumption is that whatever is truly good for humans is in conformity with a loving God's will for them and gives glory to God.

This affirmation of moral theology offers a challenge to those of us involved in shaping the moral imagination and conscience of people.

We must do so in light of attention to authentic human good. This criterion serves even as a critique or challenge to the Scriptures and teaching of the Church. An example from each might help.

Raymond Brown notes that the Scriptures have been used rightly to nurture love within the community; however, the same texts have fostered hate among believers. He writes that the author of 2 John “supplied fuel for those Christians of all times who feel justified in hating other Christians for the love of God” in the remarks about the “secessionists from the community” (Brown, 1971: 135). Verses 10-11 read: “If anyone comes to you who does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house; do not even greet him, for whoever greets him shares in the evil he does.” So, the insufficiency of the Scriptures alone as the ultimate criterion in moral theology lies in two areas: its inability to offer specific moral guidelines with regard to all contemporary issues which arise in the moral life (e.g., the withdrawal of nutrition and hydration) and the historical context in which the texts of Scripture were written. They must be interpreted; the key for biblical interpretation is dialogue between the revelatory texts themselves and reflection upon authentic human good, recognizing that the Scriptures inform our concept of the good yet need, in turn, to be challenged by the collective wisdom of human experience.

Similarly, when dealing with authoritative non-infallible teaching of the Church, “because the Church teaches” is also not the ultimate criterion or foundation upon which rightness or wrongness of human action is judged. Rather, church teaching must bear in mind authentic human good and adjust teaching accordingly (Noonan, 1993). An example from the fairly recent past is that of religious freedom/freedom of conscience with regard to worship. Church history attests to an intolerance of freedom of religion in official teaching and practice over the centuries. The phrase “error has no rights” expressed the teaching well: no one has the right to practice his or her religion if it is not true. This changed, however, in 1965 with Vatican II’s document *Dignitatis humanae* when the council Fathers wrote that “in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits” (*Dignitatis humanae*, #2). This change was prompted by reflection on authentic human good. Notice “within due limits” in the text. Due limits would be affronts to the dignity of the person, to authentic human good.

So, in our ministry with others, in our formation of conscience, we must move people to a focus on the fundamental value of the good of themselves and others, a good always considered in the interpersonal context of a person in relationship with self, others, God, and all creation.

#### IMAGE OF GOD/IMAGE OF SIN

If the pursuit of the good is genuinely a pursuit of God, then what is going on for God and for us when the good is rejected through sin? Who is the God of the moral life, the God of saints and sinners?

There are two insights we would like to convey through this particular talking point in moral theology. One is, as it were, from God's point of view and the other is from our side of the theological fence. The first insight is this: the cost paid to overcome our sin was paid *by* God and not *to* God. If this strikes you like a clue to a cryptic crossword let us unravel the meaning with the help of St. Paul and see the implications for the moral life. The second insight is linked to our previous discussion concerning the human person and actions. If human persons are not totally identified with their acts, and therefore a description of all their actions is not taken as a total description of the person, does sin take on a new meaning?

The all too familiar picture of human sin is vividly portrayed by Paul in Romans I. Like a cool breeze entering the stifling heat, verse 24 of the third chapter announces: "They are being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which has come about in Christ Jesus" (Byrne, 1996: 122). Enter the righteousness of God into the grim terrain of sin. The God who is just, the God who is righteous or to be more precise, the God of saving faithfulness is loyal to humans despite sin and the Christ event is the expression of this God's faithfulness to us (Byrne, 1998). We are drawn back into a right relationship (justification) with our God through the redemption. What is this redemption? St. Paul explains it in Rom 3:2-5. "God put him forward as a means of expiation, (operative) through faith, in (the shedding of) his blood" (Byrne, 1996: 122).

Here is our point for moral theology. Must we presume that expiation can only mean to placate the angry One, to change that anger to a friendly disposition again? In other words, sin makes our God angry and Christ has to pay the price so that God's offended justice is satisfied and God's love is returned to us. Another way of understanding the redemption is to place the emphasis not on Christ's death changing God's attitude from one of anger to love but rather placing the emphasis on the fact that Christ does something on behalf of God, in fact dies, so as to change us. So the God of saving faithfulness and love through the costly death of the Son changes us human beings while we were still sinners. Our primary response should be to acknowledge this fact in faith. The cost is paid by God through Jesus Christ so that we may be saved from the wrath of sin not the wrath of God. "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath" (Rom 5:9).

No one denies that an act can be sinful. In fact, in our traditional Catholic understanding the basic image of sin has revolved around

acts. "In traditional Catholic view, the root understanding of sin, the very paradigm of sin, was that it is an act. Sin was something people do" (O'Connell, 1990: 81). Yes, we do commit sinful acts that are destructive, disobedient, and lacking in faithfulness. However, just as I am more than my actions, so sin has more to it than actions.

It is possible that just as I could develop a vision of life that is for the good of the human person, a stance or angle of sight that is basically virtuous and positive, I could develop a vision of my life, an aim or stance that is deforming and negative, where whom we hope to become does violence to a wholesome understanding of the human person. Here we have a vision or direction that is sinful and perhaps more destructive than a particular act or acts. To remedy the situation we must attend not only to individual acts but also confront the sinful vision or direction we have decided upon or gradually slipped into over a period of time. Eventually we come to realize that simply rearranging and voicing again and again the repeated destructive acts is not enough to stop our image of ourselves and the reality of our living from sinking into the depths. We need to confront the image and the vision we have embraced for ourselves. We need to gaze into that mirror and ask the hard question, do I really want to stay with this vision and these aims?

We could have called this section Image of God/Image of Self, sin distorting the image of self. In contrast to an angry taskmaster God scrutinizing every sinful act, our perception of moral theology is shaped by an image of God who is love and a recognition that the image of self deserves as much attention as the examination of our sinful acts.

#### SPIRITUALITY AND THE MORAL LIFE

The images of God and self, as well as the questions about our identity/vocation and our actions, are more intimately linked than was acknowledged in moral theology in the past. Once we accept that we are people made in the image and likeness of God we are saying something about who we are, who we are called to be, and the connection between spirituality and our moral life is brought into play. John Paul II says in *Veritatis splendor* that "to ask about the good, in fact, ultimately means to turn towards God, the fullness of goodness" (John Paul II, 1993, #9). We make two affirmations about this relationship: *Spirituality informs morality* and *morality incarnates spirituality*.

*Spirituality Informs Morality:* The shape that morality takes is very much informed by spirituality. If our starting point is that morality is about vocation as well as action, being as well as doing, we rightly recognize that one made in the image of God will look to God and believers to understand more clearly what their vocation and mission are.

Christian spirituality which informs morality is marked by the following of Christ and commitment to the cause of the Kingdom (Vidal, 1997: 32).

Moreover, linking spirituality and morality reminds moral theologians that the moral life is about the internal and the external, the spirit and action. Marciano Vidal describes it thus: "The Christian moral life is not moved by extrinsic norms but by an internal force (the Spirit) who, transforming the believer from within, makes him or her capable of desiring and realizing the good" (Vidal, 1997: 27). So, spirituality is the dynamism of the moral life in that it is the work of the Spirit from the start.

*Morality incarnates spirituality:* Perhaps a story can illustrate this best. Considerable space was given in the media in 1991 to the tale of two boy scouts who claimed to be atheists and did not want to have to recite the oath where there was mention of God. It ended up that there was a meeting between the parents of the "believers" and the father of the two boys. The discussion got heated and at some point some harsh words were said by the "believing" parents. At this point the father of the two boys was moved to say: "If you people are any reflection of what your God is like, I'm glad my kids don't believe." This gentleman was extremely perceptive about the connection between spirituality and morality, but perhaps intolerant of the process of integration of spirituality into one's moral life.

The man rightly expects to see believers image the God that they believe in, for morality incarnates spirituality. Seeing the type of people produced by this belief system, the man wonders about the object of belief, their God, and who their God might be.

## REASON AND EMOTION

If it is true that spirituality and morality were unduly separated, that the concept of sin in the tradition was incomplete, so was the treatment of the person regarding his or her full psychological makeup.

How often have we heard people apologize in the course of conversations or discussions because they are being "too emotional," as if that renders them less coherent, less sensible, or, even worse, unreasonable. When the classical texts of moral theology from the past few centuries dealt with passion and the emotions it was almost entirely in a negative context. How did one's passion present an obstacle to freedom and knowledge in moral action? We might hear, "I was so angry, I didn't realize what I was doing." Certainly, in this case, emotion is an obstacle to clear thinking on the part of the moral agent. Implied is that the absence of anger would have permitted the moral agent greater clarity in moral action. His emotional impulse compromised his freedom. How-

ever, the positive role of emotions in the moral life was rarely addressed. "I donated a kidney to save my brother's life because I love him." "I got so angry when I visited the Holocaust Museum; I can't believe that people were treated like that." The emotions move persons in one case to a generous action of love and in the other to an awareness of injustice. Our temptation might be to separate reason and emotion as if the passions only clouded reason's ability to function well; yet in these two cases, the opposite is true. In truth, emotion and reason are both necessary for sound moral reasoning and action.

The devaluation of the emotional dimension of our lives is a sure residue of Descartes and the Enlightenment when reason was championed as the distinctive and most important aspect of the human being. Unfortunately the positive role that the passions play in our lives, moral or otherwise, was rarely addressed. It is encouraging to see that the emotions have received greater attention in contemporary moral theology, but more is yet needed (see Callahan, 1991; Harak, 1993; Vacek, 1994).

Let us make three affirmations and one word of caution about the emotions: emotions are indicators; emotional reactions are learned; emotions must be tutored; emotions may mislead.

*Emotions are indicators:* Emotions are signs of life and important indicators of the moral fabric of a person. The reaction of anger on the part of the visitor to the Holocaust Museum points to her appreciation of the good of the human person and horror at the evils of the Holocaust. The initial disgust brought on by the actions of those responsible for the killing of millions indicates her value of the person, a value grasped through the emotions. In this case, the "gut" reaction prompted by emotions affirms a moral sensitivity within the person. A lack thereof would be cause for serious concern.

*Emotional reactions are learned:* Have you ever been astonished at the apparent lack of sensitivity of some people for the poor and the marginalized? "Why should I care about them?" is often heard. "They're the bane of society." Reactions of sympathy or concern are absent. On the other hand, another might be moved to tears or to social action on behalf of the homeless. Why? What one has learned to be good and valuable often differs. While one cannot help but see others as a brother or sister in Christ, the other cannot begin to grasp that concept.

*Emotions must be tutored:* It is a common aphorism that emotions are neutral or that they should be accepted uncritically. This is not true and is precisely where the interplay between reason and emotion occurs. While emotions are important indicators of value, reason must tutor the emotions for the veracity of the response. With regard to the case above, i.e., the marginalized of society, reason can affirm the reaction of

the one moved to social justice while challenging the apathy of the other emotional response. Ongoing affirmation of emotions confirms them and contributes to a shaping of character, for good or ill. Perpetuation of the neutrality of emotions fails to recognize their critical role in pointing to the moral agent's grasp of the good and his or her need for conversion.

*Emotions can mislead:* In light of the preceding remarks, one must recognize that emotions can mislead. A parent may cling to a child in good conscience when the best thing is to let the child go. Family members may espouse vitalism, keeping a loved one alive at all costs, without attending properly to the real needs of the dying patient. Fits of anger may contribute to faulty judgments and harm to self and others. There is ongoing need of dialogue between emotions and reason in order for one to act freely and in truth.

Far from widening the gap between reason and emotion, contemporary moral theology and pastoral ministers ought to bridge it so as to reflect more accurately the moral psychology of the human person and the authentic understanding of what the moral life is all about. It is no accident that John Paul II describes the moral life as a response "due to the many gratuitous initiatives taken by God out of love for man" (*Veritatis splendor*, #10). In his encyclical on life, John Paul says that "the meaning of life is to be found in giving and receiving love." Often the teachings of moral theology sound more like law language than love language. Concerns are raised again and again of *orthodoxy* (right teaching) and *orthopraxy* (right action). Yet, John Paul II's phrases are terms of the heart, of the affections. Vacek writes that moral theology is primarily about *orthokardia*, the proper ordering of the heart, the affections, because ultimately the Lord is concerned with the workings of the human heart, or, as Vacek says, "our perfection as a person is measured strictly according to the degree of development of our loves" (Vacek, 1994: 5).

#### FREEDOM FROM/FREEDOM FOR

The key to our perfection as persons is the proper and responsible use of the gift of freedom. In his Prologue to the *Summa Theologiae* (Ia, IIae) St. Thomas argues that it is in our free will that the true image of God shines most brightly within us. Although we frequently use the term freedom and assume that it is an essential part of the human person, we rarely define its meaning or often restrict its meaning. Servais Pinckaers encourages us to expand our understanding of freedom. "The only possible definition, if there is one at all, would be to say that freedom always transcends the action it causes or the thought in which it is reflected" (Pinckaers, 1995: 328).

How does freedom transcend the action it causes? Rightly, we say that our freedom is about having options or making choices between this action or that action. I can choose to swim rather than cycle because of the heat of the day. If there are no physical restraints stopping me from such a choice I can honestly claim that I am free to choose. I experience a freedom from restrictions, be they physical or legal. However, human freedom is not limited to our capacity to opt for different courses of action, for there is a more fundamental freedom which concerns us in moral theology. This type of freedom refers to the ability of a person to determine himself or herself, or to express it in another way, to shape who we are and who we are to become. Josef Fuchs refers to this exercise of human freedom as basic freedom and the other involving specific actions as freedom of choice (Fuchs, 1989: 187). In fact, freedom of choice and basic freedom are almost circular. On the one hand, when we choose the object of choice (a certain action) it helps to consolidate the type of person we are or will become. For example, someone may say to us that he merely told a white lie. However, perhaps the lie is not just an isolated choice of action but rather one of many repeated lies over time that are shaping a dishonest character. On the other hand, who we have become through the exercise of basic freedom will influence our choice of action (freedom of choice) in the future. This treatment of freedom should make sense in the light of our discussion about action and the human person.

Let us now turn our attention to the second aspect of Pinckaers's definition of freedom. Here we tap into an unexpected but ancient insight into human freedom. Is our freedom indifferent, in the sense that we can simply choose between this action or that or opt to become this type or that type of person, or is human freedom really a freedom for excellence, in the sense that certain actions and certain characters have a natural and spontaneous attraction? If there is this natural attraction we can in one sense argue that freedom involves more than just our disinterested thoughts, for our freedom presupposes certain natural inclinations, and therefore being really free means choosing that which is attractive because it is good for the person.

This distinction between freedom of indifference and freedom for excellence has a major influence on the motivation of the moral agent. I can opt for this action or this type of character because the options are just there before me or because a law or a command obliges me to choose in a certain way, or I can opt for a certain action or to be a certain character because this option has a natural attraction. For example, I will speak well of others because the laws against calumny tell me to do so, or I will speak well of others and say up-building things to them because such action has an attraction. I know from experience that this way of talking brings a joy and a positive attitude to life and others. It

has a natural attraction because it is good, the right action and the good character draw us, call to us, and being free is really the ability to recognize the right and the good and to choose it. In other words, I have a freedom for right action and good character.

Therefore, choosing the wrong action and a bad character is a use of freedom in a limited fashion, in the sense that there are indifferent options from which I can select, whereas choosing the right action and the good character is the exercise of real freedom in the fuller sense, opting for the right and the good. Pinckaers distills this wisdom concerning human freedom in a phrase worthy of an eye-catching poster, "you become free only by becoming better" (Pinckaers, 1995: 361).

## CONCLUSION

Our experience as theologians and pastoral ministers has convinced us that keeping moral theology a salvific science requires attention to the six talking points we have surfaced. The renewal of moral theology has been described as a move toward a person-centered morality where concern for the authentic human good of the person is primary, the fundamental criterion for evaluating moral action. Yet this must be a consideration of the person "integrally and adequately considered," i.e., the whole person. This requires the integration of and proper balance between the person and his or her acts, between reason and emotion, between basic freedom and freedom of choice. Anything less will promote a dualism and undermine the whole project. Finally, we recall that the moral life is lived within the context of God's grace. It is a response to God's action on our behalf; it is the incarnation of our spirituality. Far from sinners in the hands of an angry God, we are, rather, sinners pursued and embraced by a God who loves us and calls us to fullness of life in Christ.

## REFERENCES

- Brown, Raymond E. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times*. New York: Paulist Press, 1971.
- Byrne, Brendan. *Romans*. Sacra Pagina series, ed. Daniel Harrington, S.J. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Notes from a lecture given to the Redemptorists of Australia on the meaning of redemption in Paul's Letter to the Romans. June, 1998.

- Callahan, Sidney. *In Good Conscience: Reason and Emotion in Moral Decision Making*. San Francisco: Harper, 1991.
- Fuchs, Josef. "Basic Freedom and Morality." In *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, eds. Ron Hamel and Kenneth Himes. New York: Paulist Press, 1989, 187–98.
- Harak, G. Simon. *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character*. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.
- John Paul II. *Veritatis splendor*. Encyclical Letter, August 6, 1993. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993.
- Keenan, James F. "Virtue Ethics." In *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, ed. Bernard Hoose, 31–49. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Kopfensteiner, Thomas R. "The Theory of the Fundamental Option." In *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*. ed. Bernard Hoose, 123–34. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Kotva, Joseph J. *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996.
- Noonan, John. "Development in Moral Doctrine." *Theological Studies* 54 (1993) 662–77.
- O'Connell, Timothy E. *Making Disciples*. New York: Crossroads, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Principles for a Catholic Morality*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: Harper, 1990.
- Pinckaers, Servais. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995.
- Vatican II. "Dignitatis Humanae (Declaration on Religious Freedom)." *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbot, 675–96. New York: Herder and Herder; Association Press, 1966.
- Vacek, Edward. *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994.
- Vidal, Marciano. *Moral y Espiritualidad: De la Separación a la Convergencia*. Madrid: Editorial Perpetuo Socorro, 1997.

---

*Peter Black, C.Ss.R., is senior lecturer in moral theology at Notre Dame University, Freemantle, Western Australia. Kevin O'Neil, C.Ss.R., is assistant professor of moral theology at Washington Theological Union.*

## Generation Theory and Ministry to Today's Youth

Raised in a world of MTV, AIDS, computers, broken families, and virtual reality, "Generation X," by whatever name it is given in the media—Post-Boomers, Twenty-Somethings, busters, or Post-Moderns—is posing new challenges to the Church and its ministry. With many recent studies surrounding Boomers, Generation Xers and, now, Post-Millennials, one thing has become clear: the challenge the Church is facing is not only how to reach "lost generations," but what effect, if any, generational outreach might have on how churches understand the very context in which they minister. The young men and women who make up Generation X are as diverse in outlook and style as any generation before them. Consequently, any sweeping, easy generalizations and pop labels carelessly ascribed to this group are often deceptive. Nevertheless, there is one thing that members of Generation X, and now the Post-Millennial generation, have in common. They represent the first generations in North America to be raised in a predominantly post-Christian culture. What was realized about France in the 1930s perhaps needs to be realized about North America today: we are a "mission country," and the boundaries that we cross in ministering to youth today are as significant as any we cross when we minister in the Third World.

In these few pages, I would like to discuss, first, the relevance of generational theory as a source for developing approaches to ministry to and with today's younger generations. Then I will reflect on some of the challenges that these generations pose for the Church's continuing task of evangelization. Admittedly, mine is basically a Protestant perspective; I offer it as one of the "signs of the times," however, that ministers in the Catholic tradition might want to consider as they reflect on ways to reach today's youth.

### GENERATION THEORY

Generation theory is not new. Strauss and Howe (1991), in their pivotal work on generations in the United States, review the history of the field and trace its roots back into the nineteenth century. They also cite the work of twentieth-century philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who called the very notion of the generation "the most important concep-

tion in history" (Ortega y Gasset, 1961: 14–15). Although perhaps an exaggeration, Ortega y Gasset's conviction does point to the fundamental nature of this sociological concept. A generation today is usually defined as a group which is born within a limited span of consecutive years, the length of which approximates the span of a phase of life, and the boundaries of which are fixed by the commonality of age, beliefs, and behavior and perceived membership in a common group. A generation, therefore, is defined in relation to a span of years, shared common experiences, and a shared sense of identity.

There is no agreement in generation theory on the specific number of generations, their definitive characteristics, or what provides any group with its cultural glue. Furthermore, generational categories are often susceptible to significant changes due to political or cultural bias, demographic numbers of historical cues. Given these caveats, we can say that some general tendencies do run through the literature on generations, tendencies which many congregations and parishes have found useful in defining their own context for ministry. One detailed picture of generations is given by Diane Crispell in *American Demographics* magazine. Crispell's survey offers seven possible generations in North America today: the "G.I. Generation," those born before 1930; the "Depression Generation," born between 1930 and 1939; "War Babies," born in or after 1940 until 1945; "Baby Boomers," born from 1946 until 1964; "Baby Busters," from 1965 to 1976; "Baby Boomlet," born between 1977 and 1995; and the "Echo Bust," which is the generation of babies born since 1996. Church sources, in contrast, often restrict their demographics to four broad groups: the "Builders" (1925–1944), the "Boomers" (1945–1964), "Generation X" (1965–1984), and the "Post-Millennials" (1985 to the present).

Two issues are important as various approaches to generations are debated. First, generational theory is an important way to enable church leaders to understand their congregations, in particular the two generations ("Boomers" and "Generation X") which seem, at least to many, "lost" and "unchurched." Second, generation theory points to the fact that generations today are not merely "life stages" that we all go through. Youth today, for example, are not simply going through the same kind of adolescence that their parents and grandparents experienced. Recent generations have become, according to these theories, radically and fundamentally different from preceding generations in language, culture, and personal identity. Inter-generational ministry must be understood as cross-cultural ministry, and ministers need to learn a new language, new rules, and new cultural norms. To ignore the impact of generational particularity, therefore, and simply to view people in various life stages—as most congregations are wont to do—will prove to be an impediment to ministry.

### THE CHALLENGE TO MINISTRY

What impact ought generational theory have on the Church's ministry to youth today? I believe that what history did for bible studies in the first part of the twentieth century, this field of sociology can do for our efforts of evangelization. Evangelical Protestant groups in particular have intensely explored how worship and outreach can be generationally sensitive. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Leighton Ford Ministries co-sponsored a Baby Buster consultation in the early 1990s in which several leaders ministering to Xers were invited to discuss how to reach Generation X with the gospel. The tenor of the conference's discussion pointed to five main characteristics that Xers are looking for in faith groups: authenticity, community, an abandonment of dogmatism, a focus on the arts, and diversity. What marked this conference in particular, however, was its methodology. The radical methodological shift of the conference, now copied across the country in many churches and ministries, was first to define what a generational group "spiritually needed." Then, secondly, it reflected on how specifically to express the gospel message in a way that would address these needs.

Many other Protestant groups have followed suit and copied this methodology, either hiring experts in generational outreach or visiting "megachurches" which have thrived on generationally specific ministries—e.g., Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago and Saddleback Community Church in Newport Beach, California (for Boomers), and Forest Hill Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio (for Xers—although Willow Creek does have a ministry to Generation X as well).

Such "needs-oriented approaches," however, are not without their critics. Some are quick to point out that these approaches reduce the Church's mission to marketing strategies. It becomes, to these critics' minds, reduced to a vendor of religious goods and services, and the individual parish becomes one more store in the religious shopping mall. In addition, many of these seemingly successful congregations will admit that they have not always been successful in communicating the gospel to new generations. They still grapple with how to engage in a contextually relevant ministry to Baby Boomers or Generation X without remaining faithful to their church's traditions. As the title of a recently published essay puts it, the challenge is "Reaching Out without Dumbing Down" (Dawn, 1999).

As part of a mission leadership seminar at my own seminary, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, students visit and compare two Chicago-area megachurches—Willow Creek Community Church in White, affluent Barrington, and Trinity United Church of Christ on the South Side of Chicago. Their typical reactions to these two influen-

tial congregations is telling. When Trinity's pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright, states that his church "is unabashedly Black and unapologetically Christian," our (mostly White) students applaud his vision as contextually relevant. This, they say, is incarnational ministry within a Black context. In contrast, they often react harshly—"this is marketing!"—when Willow Creek attempts to be contextual and uses generationally sensitive worship. But does Willow Creek engage in marketing, or inculturation? Are the students perhaps missing pastor Bill Hybel's conviction that particular generations have particular cultures, and that these cultures are as different for mainstream Christians as the cultures of Latin America, Asia and Africa, or that of African-, Asian-, and Latino-Americans?

In particular, Generation X's unique view of life poses significant challenges for the Church, and will require some wrestling with basic questions of contextual relevance and faithfulness to the "tradition." Which of our beliefs are culturally bound? Can we learn from the post-modern mind with regard to issues such as community and personal transparency? How can we be faithful to our liturgical traditions? Both Tom Beaudoin and Willard Jabusch in *America* magazine have recently proposed ways of reaching youth today (Beaudoin, 1999; Jabusch, 1997). Is one right and the other wrong? Or are both approaches based on overgeneralizations (Johnson, et al., 1999).

What I am proposing is that the scientific theories of paradigm shifts and sociological theories of social discontinuity can serve as wake-up calls for ministers today to engage in ministry that is contextually sensitive. In particular, generational theory can be a source that can assist churches to conceptualize and cope with the dramatic changes they are experiencing all around them—not the least of which are in the real differences among generations.

#### REFERENCES CITED AND SOME SOURCES ON BABY BOOMERS AND GENX

Barna, George. *Baby Busters: The Disillusioned Generation*. Chicago: Northfield Publishing, Moody, 1994.

Beaudoin, Tom. *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Beginning Afresh: Gen-X Catholics." *America* 179 (November 1998) 10-12; 14.

- Crispell, Diane. "Where Generations Divide: A Guide." *American Demographics* (May 1993) 40–43.
- Dawn, Marva J. "Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Church in Postmodern Times." *Confident Witness—Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*. ed. C. van Gelder, 270–82. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999.
- Easum, William. *How To Reach Baby Boomers*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.
- Ford, Kevin Graham. *Jesus for a New Generation: Putting the Gospel in the Language of Xers*. Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995.
- Fowler, James W. *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
- Jabusch, Willard F. "Young and Conservative." *America* 177 (October 1997) 5–6.
- Johnson, Mary, Dean R. Hoge, William Dinges and Juan L. Gonzales, Jr. "Young Adult Catholics: Conservative? Alienated? Suspicious?" *America* 180 (March 1999) 9–13.
- Ortega y Gasset, José. *The Modern Theme*. New York. Harper and Row, 1961.
- Ritchie, Karen. *Marketing to Generation X*. New York: Lexington, 1995.
- Strauss, William and Neil How. *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. New York: William Morrow, 1991.
- Truehart, Charles. "Welcome to the Next Church." *Atlantic Monthly* (August 1996) 37–40; 42–44, 46–47; 50; 52–54; 56–58.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *Managing Generation X*. Dallas: Merritt Publishing, 1995.

---

*Richard H. Bliese is Augustana Heritage Professor of Global Mission and Evangelism at the Lutheran School of Theology and Director of the joint Chicago Center for Global Ministries.*

*Edward Foley, Capuchin*

## Liturgical Preaching at the Turning of the Millennium

It is at least challenging, if not ironic, that a column on liturgical preaching which emphasizes timeliness needs to be completed in such an untimely manner. Because of editorial deadlines and production schedules, the materials in *New Theology Review* need to be completed at least six months in advance of your reading. While such a time lag may not be problematic for a particular article or a book review, it highlights a real challenge in preaching.

As you may remember, this column was originally published under the banner "Scripture for Preaching." In the February 1999 issue, however, it changed to "Liturgical Preaching." This transformation signaled our interest in helping preachers not only plumb the depths of the Scriptures that are so foundational for the homily but also to consider the whole liturgical event in preaching. Thus one basic principle for liturgical preaching emphasized here is the need to preach the scriptures AND what could be called the "liturgical bible," e.g., those other texts and ritual actions which constitute the liturgy for a given day.

Our preaching, however, is not only about texts and ritual actions. It is also and essentially about the intersection of sacred texts and actions with people's lives. Some of us even believe that the true beginning point of homily preparation is not the Scriptures or the liturgical bible, but the present story of a local community (Foley, 1998, 25). The liturgical preacher needs to exegete not only the sacred text but also the sacred life of the local faith community. The last installment of this column explored this point by illustrating how a community's story could be juxtaposed against that vast stretch of the church year called ordinary time.

### PREACHING THE LITURGY OF THE WORLD

Besides wrestling with the Lectionary, the whole of the liturgical bible and the faith narrative of the local community, there is a fourth dialogue partner which confronts every homilist. That is the onslaught of world events which blare forth from our televisions, shout from banner headlines, and ambush us every time we log on to the Internet. Sometimes inspiring, often foreboding, this daily outpouring of crises and entertainment from the global media may seem more like a distraction for the homilist or faith community than a source of theologi-

cal reflection. Often the only thing preachers can do when confronted with one more report of ethnic violence, financial scandal, or political insecurity is to demonize the world.

There is, however, a different perspective on world events which the liturgical preacher must consider. Yes, the world can easily be targeted as a place of sin and evil. Conversely, however, preachers need to ask themselves about their ability to view the world as a place of grace. It might seem bold to proclaim the world as a place of grace, given the almost unimaginable stories of cruelty and suffering that confront us daily in the media. Then we recall that confounding revelation from John's Gospel, that God so loved the world that we were sent the Only-Begotten (3:16). Such revelation reminds us that God has had a love affair with the world from its foundations—a divine love affair which continues today. So, what is it about this sin-scarred world which evokes such eternal passion? And how does it inform the ministry of liturgical preaching?

Karl Rahner (d. 1984) was particularly eloquent in acknowledging the unbreakable link between the liturgy and the world. He recognized that God's self-communication is not limited to the confines of certain particular ritual or devotional activities, but occurs throughout the whole of human history. Rahner held the view that the world is permeated by the grace of God and is constantly and ceaselessly possessed by God's self-communication from its innermost roots. This continuous self-communication of God through all of human history is what Rahner calls the *liturgy of the world* (Rahner, 1976).

For many preachers the language about the linkage between "liturgy and life" may be more familiar than Rahner's language of the "liturgy of the world." Whatever the language, our preaching needs to be informed by the reality of the world. Thus the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry in *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* reminds us:

Preachers need to devote some time and energy to understanding the complex social, political and economic forces that are shaping the contemporary world . . . Without this kind of informed understanding of the complex world we live in, preaching too easily degenerates into platitudes of faith, meaningless broadsides against the wickedness of the modern world, or into an uncritical affirmation of the wonderful advances that have taken place in modern times [1982, 34].

## CONFRONTING THE MILLENNIUM

This column began with a lament about the six-month time lag which occurs between the writing and reading of this feature. While that half-year lapse may not pose great problems when addressing the

Lectionary texts or examining the liturgical bible, it is quite problematic when it comes to world events. Predicting the future is always risky business. There is no guarantee that the news stories which dominate the headlines in the late Spring will even be remembered when this issue of *New Theology Review* arrives.

Unless the Second Coming should occur within the interim between my writing and your reading, however, there is one world event which can be predicted with some certainty: the turning of the millennium. I raise this topic, however, with some trepidation. In my imagination, I hear an audible groan from some readers at the very mention of the impending millennium. The predictability of this event is probably only matched by its ubiquitous coverage. Millennium is, without question, a leading contender for "buzzword of the year." I hazard consideration of the topic, however, because of its unavailability as well as its inevitability. Thus, to my way of thinking, the issue is not "if" one should address the turning of the millennium in liturgical preaching, but "how" one should.

In early November 1999 we will find ourselves at the end of Cycle A, in the midst of the eschatological discourse from the Gospel of Matthew. We will proclaim familiar texts like the parable of the wise and foolish virgins on the thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (November 7), the parable of the talents on the thirty-third Sunday (November 14) and the last judgment on the Solemnity of Christ the King (November 21). Then the liturgical year turns on November 28 as we make the transition from Matthew to Mark. The eschatological trajectory does not wane in this transition, however, for on the First Sunday of Advent we will proclaim the end of Jesus' final discourse in Mark and hear another exhortation to vigilance. This call to alertness continues through the second and third Sundays of Advent (December 5 and 12) in the Markan accounts of John the Baptizer's call to prepare.

These powerful gospels about the end time and future coming, as well as the parallel readings from 1 Thessalonians and the prophet Isaiah, provide an unusual opportunity for the homilist to preach consciously in the midst of history. True, it is possible to abuse this opportunity by assuming an overly moralizing or even doomsday stance. The opportunity for abuse, however, should not dissuade us from capitalizing on the eschatological moment. The turning of the millennium in the context of a word that calls us to be faithful and alert is a graced occasion for a community to reflect on its mission to such faithfulness in the world.

Eschatology may seem like one of the more abstract parts of theology, focused on the end of time. Many believe that eschatological preaching requires at least a veiled threat to believers about judgment and the final days. The eschaton can be envisioned, however, less as a

“moment” than an “attitude.” This is not our impeding cataclysmic demise but the ripening of our lives; not so much about the future as living as though we *have* a future. Who ever thought that this five-syllable tongue-twister identifies an essential aspect of Christian spirituality? Yet it does, for it means living with an irrevocable commitment to God now *and into the future*, whatever it may hold.

As we approach the end of the church year, Advent and the great manifestation feasts of the Christmas cycle look for ways to help your faith community reflect on their willingness to live in the firm commitment that their future is in God. While others may fret about what the third millennium holds, we believe it holds the divine promise of God’s self-communication to the world: a promise once made incarnate in Jesus Christ. Though revealed definitively only once in history, that divine promise yet remains. Thus we approach the whole of the Christmas cycle not as an announcement of our past, but the mission for our future. In doing so we discover again what prompts the divine love affair with the world announced in the Gospel of John: the possibility of a renewed incarnation in the Church of the third millennium.

## REFERENCES

- U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry. *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*. Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1982.
- Foley, Edward. *Preaching Basics*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998.
- Rahner, Karl. *Theological Investigations XIV*, trans. David Bourke. New York: Seabury, 1976.

---

*Edward Foley, Capuchin, is professor of liturgy at Catholic Theological Union and associate editor of New Theology Review.*



KEEPING  
CURRENT

Scripture  
Liturgy and Preaching  
Systematic Theology  
Church History  
Cross-cultural Studies  
**Spirituality**  
Moral Theology  
Pastoral Theology

*Ilia Delio, O.S.F.*

## Spirituality

Of the many shifts and changes we have witnessed in theology over the past fifty years, none have been more diffuse than in the area of spirituality. Whereas in the past, books on spirituality pertained to the interior spiritual life, today, everything from comedy to T'ai Chi Chih falls under the rubric "spirituality." Perhaps this diffusion of spirituality into every human activity underscores the fact that the human person is, by nature, spiritual, and seeks ultimate fulfillment in ordinary everyday life. After all, grace *is* everywhere, so why limit spirituality to the confines of the soul? The fact that spirituality is now ascribed to just about every aspect of human life means that there are as many spiritual trends as there are human activities. In this respect, keeping current in spirituality is a somewhat difficult task. What I have to offer, therefore, might not whet everyone's appetite but it is worth mentioning a few recent books that are of contemporary, if not popular, interest.

Philip Sheldrake's *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* is one of the best introductions to the study of spirituality. Originally published in 1991, Sheldrake's revised text was published last year in the United States and continues to be one of the most instructive books on spirituality. The new text approaches the field of spirituality from an interdisciplinary perspective, taking into account religious pluralism and postmodernity. Sheldrake's principal approach, however, is historical and he offers excellent discussions on the meaning of spirituality, the relationship between spirituality and history, the interpretation of spiritual texts, and the various types of spirituality. For anyone interested in lifting spirituality from the emotional dribble of self-help techniques and placing its development in an historical context, this is a worthwhile book to peruse.

One of the fastest growing areas in spirituality today is the interface between the human spiritual quest and the world of science. Books in this area, written by both scientists and spiritual seekers alike, continue to surface daily. As we learn more from the new science about the dynamic world we live in, we are becoming more aware that fulfillment of the human spirit is not simply a vertical ascent away from the earth, as if the physical biological world we are immersed in is simply a stage prop for the supernatural quest. Rather, we are becoming aware that life in the universe is pervaded with mystery, and this mystery underscores the religious nature of the universe itself. For those who would like to engage in the universe story but fear the darkness of scientific terminology, I would recommend *The Sacred Depths of Nature* by Ursula Goodenough. As Mary Evelyn Tucker states, "Goodenough gives us a new bridge between science and religion that is both eloquent and elegant. She offers us the poetry, power, and passion of her vision of nature, a vision born from scientific knowledge, nurtured by religious sensibility, and inspired by nature itself. Such pathbreaking interdisciplinary work illumines the way for each of us—not because it says all, but because of all it says."

Goodenough, daughter of the renowned scholar, E. R. Goodenough, is on a spiritual journey, although she struggles to profess belief in a personal God. Through the scientific understanding of the natural world, however, she experiences the mystery that is woven into the physical world and describes this in terms of religious experience, which she expresses as awe, wonder, gratitude and joy. Describing the inner workings of biological life with exquisite simplicity, she offers short reflections at the end of each chapter that integrate her scientific knowledge with her wonder at the pervasive mystery. At the end of her chapter on the origin of life, for example, she writes: "And so I once again revert to my covenant with Mystery, and respond to the emergence of Life not with a search for its design or purpose but instead with outrageous celebration that it occurred at all" (29).

While Goodenough discloses the sacredness of the natural world, Paul Brockelman addresses the influence of the new cosmology on human existence, including the human world view, ethics, and culture itself. In his book *Cosmology and Creation: The Spiritual Significance of Contemporary Cosmology*, Brockelman identifies the new cosmology as the new exploration of life which is influencing our view of reality, changing our view of life and our role and destiny within it. As a philosopher and religious scholar, Brockelman seeks to bridge the gap between the scientific and spiritual, bringing together the head and the heart. These two realms have been isolated from each other for so long, he claims, that we have begun to lose a mystical sense of our place in the universe. The new cosmology, with its penchant for complex

mathematics and scientific detail, is disclosing a new universe story that puts a whole new spin on reality. According to the author, this new understanding of the universe gives us a spiritual vision of a wider order of being to which we all belong.

Although the new science is provoking a new fervor in spirituality, the ancient wisdom of the desert tradition is still one of the most influential guides for the spiritual quest. Belden Lane's *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* is perhaps one of the most profound books on the spiritual journey in recent times. A professor of theology at St. Louis University, Lane writes with the expertise of a scholar and the penetrating heart of a man who has known human suffering, pain and loss. While Lane's interest is in apophatic spirituality, he approaches the mystical journey not from the point of objective description but rather from the "bottom up" experience of human life. The "fierce landscapes" that Lane describes refer to the desert and mountain, places of retreat and solitude in the search for God. However, these geographical landscapes also refer to the landscape of the human heart which, through the trials of life, enters the desert of purgation and the mountain of truth through the rugged terrain of life's twisted experiences. The journey ends in the cloud of unknowing and abandonment, where love is discovered in the total freedom of letting go into God.

What makes Lane's book so rich is its unusual form. Using a mixture of narrative, description, and personal experiences, Lane weaves the wisdom of the desert tradition into the struggle for meaning in contemporary life. The underlying thread of the text is Lane's mother who, diagnosed with bone cancer and then with Alzheimer's disease, lives through her fierce landscapes of pain and suffering, eventually to arrive at the cloud of abandonment and peace which is her death. As the last and only child, Lane's apophatic experience of God is intertwined with his mother's journey. He draws from the wisdom of the desert fathers and mothers to describe the spiritual journey as one of risk and vulnerability in the search for God. The dilution of contemporary spirituality with "analgesic" techniques, Lane claims, has obscured the difficulties of the modern journey. As he writes: "My fear is that much of what we call 'spirituality' today is overly sanitized and sterile, far removed from the anguish of pain, the anchoredness of place. Without the tough-minded discipline of desert-mountain experience, spirituality loses its bite, its capacity to speak prophetically to its culture, its demand for justice" (20).

Lane's pursuit of God amidst the winding ravines of human life finds a counterpart in Henri Nouwen's *Sabbatical Journey*. Composed as a diary during his final sabbatical year in 1995, Nouwen, who was one of the most influential spiritual writers in this century, provides

detailed narratives of his friendships, pastoral experiences and daily encounters. While the text reads as a composite of daily diaries, it also reveals the “grist” of Nouwen’s meditations: friendships (which were extremely important to him), favorite places to visit, favorite foods and restaurants, the centrality of the Eucharist in his life, and the importance of community. Nouwen’s *Sabbatical Journey* is, in a broad sense, the kataphatic side of Lane’s *Fierce Landscapes*. Both authors are acutely aware of the human condition and of a “spirituality of brokenness.” While Lane places emphasis on the apophatic face of human experience, Nouwen emphasized the arena of human interaction—friendships, community—where God is revealed. Nouwen’s participation in L’Arche community of mentally disabled men and women testified to his own spirituality of brokenness.

This brief scan of spiritual currents simply underscores the fact that, throughout the daily rhythms and cycles of life, the search for God stretches forth in all directions from the rugged landscapes of human hearts. Amidst the violence of a disordered world, the human spirit struggles to be released from the shell of sin, to break open into the total freedom of love and peace. It is in the dynamism of the struggle that the meaning of spirituality continues to unfold, widening its embrace to include the universe, yet nurturing the solitary human spirit in its pursuit of God. For those who would like to continue reading in spirituality but have neither the time nor money to invest in books, I would suggest subscribing to the *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* published by Loyola Marymount University in California. With its erudite articles and engaging book reviews one cannot help but appreciate that spirituality is really not the “warm fuzzy” of theology but rather it is theology breaking forth in the human experience of God.

## REFERENCES

- Brockelman, Paul. *Cosmology and Creation: The Spiritual Significance of Contemporary Cosmology*. New York: Oxford University, 1999.
- Lane, Belden C. *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality*. New York: Oxford University, 1998.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M. *Sabbatical Journey*. New York: Crossroad, 1998.
- Sheldrake, Philip. *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995.

Goodenough, Ursula. *The Sacred Depths of Nature*. New York: Oxford University, 1998.

---

*Ilia Delio, O.S.F., is assistant professor of ecclesial history and Franciscan studies at Washington Theological Union. Chair of spirituality studies, she is a member of the editorial board of New Theology Review.*

*"Death comes for us all; even at our birth—even at our birth, death does but stand aside a little. And every day he looks toward us and muses somewhat to himself whether that day or the next he will draw nigh. It is the law of nature, and the will of God."*

—Thomas More to his daughter Margaret,  
Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*

## BOOK REVIEWS

---

**The Theology of Paul the Apostle.** By James D. G. Dunn. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998. Pages, xxxvi + 808. Cloth, \$45.00.

People's experience of Paul is often piecemeal: they hear snippets of his letters taken out of context as one of the Sunday readings. Even among recent scholars the study of Paul has been piecemeal: they have concentrated on the rhetoric or theology of a particular passage or letter. Until now we have lacked a contemporary and comprehensive engagement with Paul along the lines of Rudolph Bultmann's classic *Theology of the New Testament*. There are some good reasons for this lack: the hermeneutical issues today seem even more complex than in Bultmann's day and the methodological sophistication is even more demanding. The publication of Dunn's comprehensive study of Pauline theology, therefore, marks an important moment in Pauline studies.

Dunn approaches this task with the maturity that comes from writing well-received commentaries on Romans and Galatians as well as important studies on unity and diversity in the New Testament and the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. There is much to commend in this book even if it breaks little new ground. Perhaps its most important aspect is that it brings to the fore the "new perspective on Paul" associated with scholars such as E. P. Sanders and Dunn himself. This new perspective sees Judaism as first and foremost a religion of grace: the imperative (demands of the law) flows from the indicative (the graced experience of the covenant).

Cognizant of current hermeneutical concerns, Dunn sees his book as a "contribution to the ongoing dialogue . . . regarding what Paul's theology was/is and what its continuing relevance is to the study and practice of religion and theology" (xviii). In fact "dialogue" is the key optic of this work. Paul's theology develops out of a dialogue on three levels: (1) the deepest level, his inherited convictions, particularly his Jewish roots; (2) the pivotal level, the experience on the road to Damascus; and (3) the most immediate level of the letters themselves.

Dunn's approach is reminiscent of Rudolf Bultmann's own theology of Paul. Like Bultmann, he uses Romans to provide the template for his book. Dunn's rationale is that Romans "provides us with an example of the way Paul himself chose to order the sequence of themes in his theology" (25). While Romans provides the structure for his book, he does not fail to engage the rest of the authentic Pauline letters, particularly Galatians and 1 Corinthians.

In a prologue and an epilogue Dunn deals with key hermeneutical issues: the why, what, and how of writing a theology of Paul. He is careful to connect theology to anthropology. His first main chapter, therefore, deals with God and humankind. This chapter is then followed by an analysis of the sinfulness of humanity ("Humankind under Indictment") and the saving proclamation of the Gospel ("The Gospel of Jesus Christ").

In the next two chapters Dunn treats what he labels the "Beginning of Salvation" (viz., justification by faith, participation in Christ, gift of the Spirit) and the "Process of Salvation." In the chapter on the "Process of Salvation" he brings out the eschatological tension between the "already" and the "not yet" inherent in all of Paul's theology. Included in this discussion is his sensitive and challenging treatment of the question of Israel.

The final two chapters deal with the Church and ethics. In the chapter on ethics he highlights the importance of the relationship of the indicative to the imperative in Paul's theology and provides case studies of Paul's ethics in practice.

While the themes that Dunn covers are ones that most scholars would recognize as important it is the sustained and detailed engagement with these themes as well as explicit attempts to show the pastoral relevancy of these themes that make this book so important. Dunn engages in a sympathetic dialogue with Paul's theology and invites us to do the same.

James P. Scullion, O.F.M.  
Washington Theological Union

**Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics, and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz.** By James Matthew Ashley. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998. Pages, xiv + 293. Cloth, \$34.00.

This text provides the most comprehensive systematization of the theology of Johann Baptist Metz available in English. While the book is welcome enough for that, it offers much more. Ashley's analysis of Metz's theological career leads him to a fresh perspective on the much discussed question of the relationship between Metz's theology and that of Karl Rahner. He contends that the real differences between these theologies should be located in the different spiritualities that give rise to them. In the process of making his case, the author contributes intelligent discussions on the relationships between theology and spirituality, between theology and late modern (postmodern) philosophy, and between the mystical and political dimensions of Christian discipleship. Thus, the book is of interest to students and scholars from a variety of perspectives.

As a reworking of Ashley's dissertation, which was written under the direction of David Tracy at the University of Chicago, *Interruptions* nicely transcends the thesis genre, going beyond an initial analysis of the "what" and "how" of Metz's theological development to the more evocative question as to "why" Metz took the path he took, diverging in important ways from his philosophical and theological roots in the work of Heidegger and Rahner. In short, the answer is to be found in Metz's retrieval of an "apocalyptic mysticism" as the deep structure of a theology which he believes can meet more adequately the challenges of a postmodern, pervasively suffering, world.

The book is structured in six chapters. The first chapter describes the relationship between spirituality and theology; the middle four provide the com-

prehensive analysis of Metz's theological career; and the final chapter returns to the issues of the first, treating the relationship between Metz and Rahner as a "case study" in which their theological differences are shown to be a function of their different spiritualities.

In chapter one Ashley presents the relationship between spirituality and theology as mutually constitutive. In this way, he aligns himself with the host of twentieth-century theologians (including Rahner, Metz, and Tracy) who insist that the separation of theology and spirituality which began in the High Middle Ages must be corrected by a self-reflective, self-critical, productive interrelation of the two. The turn to spirituality is understood as inseparable from the turn to hermeneutics in late modern theology. Accordingly, a spirituality is defined primarily as "a classic constellation of practices which forms a mystagogy into a life of Christian discipleship" (12). However, this definition must be completed by a second (and secondary) aspect comprised of the oral and written traditions which are used to communicate a particular spirituality. Theology is understood as closely tied to this second dimension of spirituality—the necessary (critical) articulation of the practice of faith in symbols, narratives, philosophies, and so forth.

Ashley's point is that a more complete and fruitful grasp of a particular theology can be gained by understanding the particular spirituality with which it has, either implicitly or explicitly, a constitutive relationship. It is this insight which enables Ashley to organize the discontinuities and seeming contradictions in Metz's work. Metz departs in significant ways from Heidegger and Rahner as a result of his encounters with Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, and various thinkers of the Frankfurt School. Metz was enabled, then, to articulate what he had perceived to be the limitations of Heidegger's abstract historicity and the related inadequacies of the transcendental theology of Karl Rahner. Metz's encounters with the post-Hegelian critics of Idealism, particularly in Marxism, coincided with his personal and theological struggle to come to grips with his experiences in World War II and with the horrific catastrophe of the Holocaust. From them Metz recovers apocalypticism and he begins to argue for the centrality in theology of apocalyptic eschatology in which human subjectivity is structured by the categories of memory, narrative, and solidarity. The animating spirit of Metz's development toward his post-Idealist political theology is a particular spirituality at first implicit, but eventually explicit in his mature thought. That particular spirituality is an apocalyptic mysticism, a "suffering unto God," which alone, Metz feels, is up to the task of accounting for hope in midst of the radical evil and suffering in the contemporary world.

This brief summary of the central four chapters of Ashley's book does no justice to the care and depth of his presentation of the argument. This is a fine analysis of Metz's development as a theologian and any future work on the theology of Metz will have to take Ashley's analysis into account.

In the last chapter, the author essays his thesis that the theological differences between Metz and Rahner are best understood as a function of the different spiritualities to which they give expression. Rahner's theology is said to belong to the apophatic neoplatonic tradition of Christian mysticism and Metz's to the apocalyptic mysticism of "suffering unto God," with its focus on the threatened character of human history and an openness to the genuinely "new" of

God's future. Ashley raises critical questions regarding the distinction between the two spiritualities: can they be regarded as distinct alternatives or is the goal not somehow to bring their different emphases together (as did Bonaventure and Ignatius of Loyola)? Furthermore, he points to the ways in which Metz's theology would have to be developed for it to stand successfully as an alternative to Rahner's. Most notably Ashley points to the lack of elaboration by Metz of the trinitarian implications of his theological anthropology and apocalyptic spirituality. This said, it is striking that, among the many issues Ashley lists as needing address by Metz, there is no mention of the theology of grace. Metz constitutes the human subject by the memory of God's promises and he focuses unrelentingly on the future in which all are called to be subjects in that promise. How would he understand a relationship of intimacy, of shared life, between God and the human subject *now*? Can Metz say more about the mode of presence to God which emerges out of experiences of radical evil and suffering? Perhaps Ashley is correct. If Metz elaborates the trinitarian implications of his apocalypticism these, and many other critical questions, might well be satisfied.

The final chapter of *Interruptions* is written as an invitation to further conversations in an exciting variety of directions. It is much to be hoped not only that such conversations are soon engaged but also that one hears again soon from Professor Ashley himself.

Mary V. Maher, S.S.N.D.  
Washington Theological Union

**Philemon's Problem: A Theology of Grace.** By James Tunstead Burtchaell. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998. Pages, xvi + 334. Paper, \$18.00.

What might it mean to serve a God who loves us regardless of whether we love God in return, or to receive our neighbors as our brothers and sisters in Christ? These questions hold together what the author calls his "meditation on Christian faith." Philemon is the guide through it all.

Twenty-five years ago, James Burtchaell, formerly at the University of Notre Dame but now a full-time writer and researcher in Princeton, New Jersey, put out the first edition of *Philemon's Problem*. This jubilee edition (over twice as long as the original) retains the same structure, has the same interests, but expands the reflections in each section with an abundance of references to classic theological texts, literature and anecdotes.

Philemon's problem was that he had to make a radical shift of the social order of his day in order to fulfill Paul's demand that he take Onesimus as a brother, not a slave. How could Philemon overthrow the social order ruled by domination and submission and accept the new order of relationships brought about by Christ? Grace is the answer. Thus the subtitle of this book.

The book has three sections. Part one, doctrine, presents the mission of Jesus and the Church as revealing God always at work saving us from our selfishness and transforming it into generous love for others. Part two, ethics, examines who we are to become as a result of being confronted by the unyielding love of

God. Part three, worship, develops the thesis that ritual not ratified by service is hypocrisy, and that service without ritual celebration drifts into meaninglessness.

The section on ethics is the most disappointing. It repeats the material on situation ethics from the first edition and adds a lengthy section on proportionalism, a thought structure that was only beginning to receive attention at the time of the first edition. Burtchaell is rightly critical of the consequentialist preoccupation of situation ethics that is more interested in what our actions do than in the kind of person we become. However, he misses the mark in his description and criticism of proportionalism. He correctly acknowledges that proportionalism is concerned with the moral meaning of actions, but he treats it as situation ethics in disguise. Moreover, by neglecting to include the communal dimension of discernment which proportionalism requires, Burtchaell makes it more subjective than it really is. He also claims that proportionalism disallows moral absolutes. That is not true. When acts are fully qualified, absolutes pertain. Some of his own examples betray his misunderstanding: direct killing of the innocent, adultery, suicide, slavery, and pimping are references to qualified actions which warrant absolute prohibition. The author also misses the connection between proportionalism and virtue ethics. Proportionalism does not treat actions as abstractions. In making a moral evaluation, proportionalism is interested in the kind of person one becomes and the kind of society that we create as a result of acting in a certain way. Proportionalists do not have a totally open realm of possibilities. Some types of actions, like slavery and pimping, are closed off because they distort our vision of the kind of self and society we should be like.

This book has many fine insights into the meaning of believing in God's love for us. Reading it, however, requires a rugged stamina. It might be more inviting if it were shorter, and if there were not so many examples to illustrate a given point. Moreover, the audience for this book is not clear. It is too difficult to serve as an adult education text, and not comprehensive enough to serve as a classroom text. It may, however, appeal to the thoughtful reader who is interested in whether and how Burtchaell's thought has developed over the past twenty-five years on his principal conviction of God's love. But a shorter book could have served this purpose better.

*Richard M. Gula, S.S.*  
*Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley*

**Catholics Remember the Holocaust.** By the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998. Pages, 80. Paper, \$6.95

This brief publication is intended to situate the March 1998 document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* issued by the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews within the framework of Catholicism's growing study of the Holocaust. The complete text of the document is presented along with the letter of Pope John Paul II endorsing the statement.

This monograph is divided into two major sections preceded by an introduction by Archbishop Alexander J. Brunett of Seattle, chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Section I contains statements issued between 1994 and 1998, primarily to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Holocaust. Included are the ones from the Hungarian, German, Polish, Dutch, Swiss, French, and Italian bishops as well as a statement from Archbishop Oscar Lipscomb of Mobile, Archbishop Brunett's predecessor as chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

The inclusion of these documents issued prior to *We Remember* is far from peripheral in terms of the principal purpose of this monograph—dissemination of the March 1998 Vatican document on the Shoah. The message being deliberately conveyed is that these documents are critical for an overall understanding of the Holocaust by Christians. Both Cardinal Edward Cassidy whose Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with Jews (a subsection of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity) and Dr. Eugene J. Fisher of the U.S. Bishops' Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs who was principally responsible for the compilation of this monograph have argued, in response to questions why the Vatican document is not as forceful as some of these national documents, that *We Remember* as a global document had to speak to Catholics in regions where there is no direct connection to the Holocaust. Hence it could not be as specific as the national documents. But they equally insist that for Christians everywhere an adequate understanding of the Catholic Church and the Shoah requires reflection not only on the Vatican text but also on these national church documents.

Part II of the monograph presents the complete text of *We Remember* together with the papal letter of endorsement, and Cardinal Cassidy's statement accompanied the release of the document. This section also includes initial comments on the document by Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore who chairs the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Catholic-Jewish Relations and Dr. Eugene Fisher of the Secretariat, a statement by Cardinal John O'Connor of New York who has long been involved in Catholic-Jewish Relations, and a major address on the document and its reception by Cardinal Cassidy presented at the annual meeting of the American Jewish Committee in Washington in May 1998. In this address Cardinal Cassidy attempts a response to some criticisms of the document from Catholic and Jewish sources. This statement is considered by many to be the official interpretation of *We Remember* by Cardinal Cassidy, its primary author. Hence it should be required reading for anyone who wants to understand this new Vatican document. The monograph ends with four pages of bibliography on Catholic-Jewish relations.

One of the principal results of *We Remember* has been to establish Holocaust education as a clear-cut priority for Catholics everywhere. It is surely the most important document on Catholic-Jewish relations issued by the Vatican since the original conciliar statement in chapter four of *Nostra aetate*. This monograph is an indispensable tool in implementing the Catholic commitment to Holocaust education.

The document itself received mixed reviews in Catholic and Jewish circles. Some of the most critical assessments appeared in leading Catholic journals

such as *Commonweal* and *The Tablet*. Generally speaking these critiques focused on the following issues: (1) Whether Catholic anti-Judaism should be considered a failing of individual members of the Church or something resulting from church teaching and practice; (2) Whether one should speak of the sinfulness of the Church as an institution relative to anti-Judaism; (3) Whether there exists a significant link between Christian anti-Semitism and Nazi ideology; and (4) the record of Pius XII. Some factual errors have also been noted in the document. There also have been wholesale attacks on the document which are totally unjustified. For a fuller understanding of the issues involved, one needs to go beyond the material in this excellent monograph and reflect on the critical assessments by Catholic and Jewish leaders and scholars. Cardinal Cassidy himself has urged that the issues raised in and about the document should continue to be pursued in the dialogue.

In short, *Catholics Remember the Holocaust* needs to become a core text for any effort by Catholic educators to develop programs dealing with the Holocaust. It needs to be supplemented, however, by reflections on the document of a larger body of Christians and Jews.

*John T. Pawlikowski, O.S.M.  
Catholic Theological Union*

**Ministry and the Law: What You Need to Know.** By Mary Angela Shaughnessy, S.C.N. New York: Paulist Press, 1998. Pages, v + 85. Paper, \$8.95.

This book is like the sign in the filling station that warns: "Do Not Smoke Near Gas Pump." It doesn't tell you very much about the danger, but heeding it could save your life.

The book gives a "wake-up call," a "heads up" to those in ministry about issues in civil law which they need to heed. Only it would be better subtitled, "That You Need to Know" because it doesn't tell very much of *what* you need to know. It is a primer. It states elementary principles of law and lawsuits in clear and simple language. It lets you know that if you are engaged in one of the areas of activity covered by civil or criminal statutes, then you had better learn more about it. More than this little book presents.

Mary Angela Shaughnessy is a professor of education at Spaulding University in Louisville. She has a civil law degree from the University of Louisville, and she serves as university counsel at Spaulding.

The book opens with a little "pre-test" to let you know what you know and don't know about the law. Then the following four chapters explore very briefly: (1) the sources of law impacting ministry, that is, constitutional law, due process, statutory law, common law, and contract law; (2) types of lawsuits, namely, negligence, clergy malpractice, child and vulnerable adult abuse, defamation of character, and discrimination; (3) personnel issues, for example, pre-employment interviews, supervision and evaluation of employees, non-renewal decisions, employment contracts, employee conferences, volunteers in ministerial and educational settings; (4) special topics: boundary issues (e.g., confidentiality, sexual misconduct), discrimination, sexual harassment, AIDS-

related issues, parish finances and the IRS, and compliance with copyright laws. The book ends with a four-page glossary of terms and a very skimpy bibliography.

The book offers a quick overview of this wide range of issues, enough to alert those in ministry that they need to be aware of the law. The author presents this complex material with understanding and sympathy for those intent on their ministerial roles. She is obviously familiar with real cases, especially in schools.

The reader must be wary, not so much of mistakes or bad advice in the text, but of its elemental level. It is very introductory. Some reference to more thorough treatments of this same material, for example, the books of Couser (*Ministry and the American Legal System*), Eidsmoe (*The Christian Legal Advisor*), Hammar (*Pastor, Church and Law*), or Mazur and Bullis (*Legal Guide for Day-to-Day Church Matters: A Handbook for Pastors and Church Members*) would have been appropriate.

At times the limitations of this sensitive and helpful book are almost amusing: (1) the assertion (repeated four times in the first twelve pages) that persons in private institutions are not protected by the United States Constitution; (2) pre-employment inquiries about marital or family status are impermissible, but questions about being married in the Church are acceptable (36); (3) the final recommendation for dealing with the extremely difficult and emotional issue of HIV-positive individuals is to ask, "What would Jesus do?" (72).

*James A. Coriden*  
*Washington Theological Union*

**Character, Choices and Community.** By Russell B. Connors, Jr. and Patrick McCormick. New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1998. Pages, ix + 266. Paper, \$15.95.

After the manifold developments in moral theology since Vatican II there was a period when the characteristic genre for authors writing in the area of fundamental moral theology was the essay. In the sixties and seventies many of the moral theology books were really compilations of essays. But as the changes in moral theology have taken hold and new ideas have become mainstream we have seen a rise in the number of book-length treatments of fundamental moral theology.

Timothy O'Connell and Richard Gula have written widely read volumes and more recently Charles Curran and Terence Kennedy have also presented readers with works which can be used as textbooks in moral theology. Each of these authors has been successful in their attempts to present a thoughtful, lucid, and reasonably comprehensive treatment of fundamental moral theology. Each author has his angle of vision and has aimed his book at a given audience. To my mind no one has been more successful than Connors and McCormick in tailoring a work to an undergraduate or adult education population. The volume under review is, for its intended audience, simply superb.

Connors and McCormick write good, clear prose; the book is laced with stories, examples and case studies drawn from classic literature, everyday life and

popular culture. There are helpful questions posed throughout for reflection and/or discussion. The great strength of the volume is not its originality but in its lucid style of presentation and expert synthesis of post-conciliar moral thinking for undergraduates with just the right mix of detail and clever illustration.

The authors are familiar with and utilize classic categories of the Roman Catholic moral tradition in their treatment of topics like conscience or human acts. But the traditional ideas are presented in an engaging, common-sense manner which illuminates, not obfuscates, moral experience. In their theological perspective the writers generally fit with the proponents of the progressive middle—J. Fuchs, L. Janssens, L. Cahill, R. McCormick—and the authors mentioned earlier. As the title of the volume suggests, the treatment of the moral life is not overly individualized but includes the communal and social dimensions of moral experience.

Each of the twelve chapters is introduced by stories or examples which draw the reader in and show that the chapter topic is connected to life-experience. Following this introductory format is a sound and understandable explanation of the chapter material. Each chapter ends with a succinct and helpful summary that highlights the major points. One can envision the authors putting these points on a blackboard at the end of an enjoyable class lecture. Throughout the chapter or placed at the end are questions for the reader to ponder.

Over the years I have often been asked after speaking at a conference or workshop if there are any books I would recommend for a good introduction to moral theology. For a time the choices were limited and sometimes not suitable for the particular questioner. Today we have an array of fine, compact books which can be suggested. And for undergrads or the dedicated adult education group, I would put Connors and McCormick right at the top of my list.

*Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M.  
Washington Theological Union*

**Women's Ways of Worship.** By Teresa Berger. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999. Pages, xi + 180. Paper, \$21.95.

In the introduction to this splendid, careful, theologically and historically insightful writing Dr. Berger pays tribute to the millions of women at worship all over the world daily. As her pastor, I can attest that Teresa is one of these. She brings a received and lived reverence to her writing, which only makes that writing more credible. As theologian at the Divinity School of Duke University, Dr. Berger holds doctorates both in dogmatic theology and liturgical studies. She lectures widely on both ecumenical as well as feminist themes from the historical, systematic, and liturgical perspectives. In this publication, which sketches some of the contours of a history of women at worship, Berger immediately identifies the issue: "The mainstream narrative of liturgical history re-

mains virtually untouched by the discoveries and revisionings of the new scholarship on women (which itself, unfortunately, has shown a marked disinterest in women's liturgical lives.)" Like the serious scholar she is, Berger does not tackle the gargantuan task of laying out a historically continuous narrative of women's ways of worship. Instead, she chooses two axial historical moments, namely, the earliest centuries of Christian liturgy and the twentieth-century liturgical renewal to reconstruct women's ways of worship.

In Chapter 1, Dr. Berger carefully lays out 13 methodological principles which guide her gender analysis in liturgical historiography. In Chapter 2, she begins her gendered reading of liturgical history with the earliest Christian communities of faith. She admits that this is the most difficult period to reconstruct, albeit the most crucial. It is her claim that the earliest liturgical space was women's space, i.e., the home. Some women, e.g., Phoebe and Thecla, crossed boundaries into the male world of public space. Christian table practice is brilliantly illustrated by a late first-century fresco in the Catacomb of Priscilla showing seven women reclining together at the Eucharistic meal. But, after consideration of the data, Berger concludes that from the start of the Eucharistic meal, forms of genderization appear to be present. Initial women-friendly spaces gave way to women becoming increasingly distanced from the Holy of Holies in the Church of the empire. However, during this time women did find new liturgical spaces in women's ascetic communities and in their own ritual practices in the vicinity of the liturgy.

Chapters 3 and 4 are Berger's *tour de force*. She claims: "If the twentieth-century is the 'century for worship' of the church, then one of its defining features will be the irruption of women into liturgical practice and discourse" (p. 109). When the Women's Movement was at its peak, says Berger, the Women's Liturgical Movement came to full flower. The new women's liturgies were born out of disillusionment with the way men confined women to certain liturgical functions, e.g., cantors, lectors, Eucharistic ministers and acolytes. The Vatican and Feminist world clashed over the exclusion of women from ordination. "Tradition" was appealed to and used as a sledgehammer to end discussion of the issue. But, of course, "Tradition" always was shaped by Post-Tridentine appeal. Despite this hostile environment, women's ways of worship in the twentieth-century emerged and held firm. Examples of these "ways" are given in pages 130-49. I cannot recommend these pages strongly enough to the reader. The chapter sub-heading is "Liturgical Themes: Women's Experiences." Berger shows how the African-American women, the Mujerista women, the Native American women, Lesbian women, and Third World women challenged the experience of white Feminist discourse and in the process composed liturgical prayers and liturgical movements of extraordinary strength, sensitivity, and beauty. I found myself immensely touched by these prayers. They embody pleas, pain, joy, reverence, awe, and glory in a way which have eluded me.

Finally, Berger points out three fragments of truth in twentieth-century Feminist liturgies. First, these liturgies are crucially important for women. Second, women are able symbol-makers. To live without their symbol-making is impoverishing. Third, women have found magnificent ways to ritualize, and thus celebrate, their dramatically changed lives. If the Church wants to be more than a fellowship of "brothers," in the next century, says Berger, then that Church

would be well advised to observe, learn from, and include not only women's ways of worship but women themselves in its on-going liturgical practice.

"When?" "How?" These are the painful questions for a sympathetic male presider in today's Church. For Berger, however, there is still hope. She concludes her brilliant historical and liturgical study and analysis by recalling and rethinking Pat Parker's poem, "For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend." She names her poem, "For those who want to know how to worship with us":

"The first you do is to forget that we are women.  
Second, you must never forget that we are women."

Teresa, there are many who wait, pray, and work for that celebratory moment, grateful that you have led us and continue to lead us as a woman, a mother, a scholar.

*David J. McBriar, O.F.M.  
Immaculate Conception Church, Durham, N.C.*

**Global Population from a Catholic Perspective.** By John C. Schwarz. Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998. Pages, 256. Paper, \$19.95.

In 1950 the population of the world reached 2.5 billion. According to the newspapers, in mid-1999 (as I write this review) it will surpass six billion. Such is the context against which this book is written.

After a while, statistics dull the senses—and there are plenty of statistics in this book. Perhaps the starkest is this: the number of people born between 1950 and 1990 equals the total number of people born between the emergence of the human species and the year 1950 (p. 1). What saves the book from dullness is its pastoral focus and sense of urgency. The problem it addresses may be identified by a series of interrelated statements. Six billion people, rising to eight billion in the next half-century, are living on a small planet with limited resources. More than one billion will surely die as a direct result of lack of sustenance or lack of sustainable health, factors directly related to population growth and density. The Catholic Church, though acknowledging the need for action, is unbending in its opposition to what it deems to be immoral methods of population control. Something must be done. Previous statements and solutions are inadequate and may be unjust.

The author carefully develops his arguments that the official Roman Catholic stance on birth control, and its reactions to the problems of population, are highly contestable. He argues that using the very same sources as the church uses, different conclusions and applications may be legitimately drawn (3). Though the whole topic is contentious, the arguments adduced are respectful and moderate, and the language of the book is careful and balanced.

The language and style are popular and non-technical, and the book is addressed to church people and theologians, economists and demographers,

college students and teachers, Roman Catholics, other Christians and people of other faiths (4); it actually has some relevance to each of these constituencies. Part One has four chapters, which build up a composite picture of human population growth, and of Roman Catholic statements, stances, and statistics. The six chapters of Part Two develop a pastoral theology of population, intended to be identifiably Roman Catholic yet not simply a reiteration of previous statements and emphases. It is constructive, controversial, and relevant to the concerns of the immediate future and to the lives of the human family.

I found the book helpful on a number of levels. Each chapter concludes with questions for reflection and discussion: they are pertinent and provocative. The coverage of the official statements from Roman Catholic sources—Magisterial, Synodal, Episcopal—is comprehensive and painstaking. And alongside these statements are placed the mature judgments of people and agencies from all over the world. The result is to provide the reader with an enormous amount of information, to demonstrate the disjunction between various perspectives, and to indicate strengths and weaknesses in theological or demographic arguments.

To his great credit, the author avoids polemics and shows an overriding concern for persons, for integrity, and for truth. Half way into the book, he can state quite simply that “contraception has an important, valid role in dealing with population pressures”; that “the Catholic Church can and should reassess its position”; and that “direct reproductive controls nonetheless remain only one part of a very large and deeply perplexing population picture” (63).

The author’s credentials are impressive: degrees in theology and philosophy, years of formal, informal, and ecumenical teaching, and a deep loyalty to faith, church, and practice, have helped produce a balanced, informative, and provocative piece of work, endorsed by an impressive list of moral theologians. This book provides an excellent introduction to demographic issues from a theological perspective and is a stimulating conversation-opener for those who wish to blend inductive and deductive approaches to theology and to life.

*Anthony J. Gittins, C.S.Sp.  
Catholic Theological Union, Chicago*

**Moral Formation in the Parish. With Your Whole Heart Turn to God (Tobit 13:6).** By Anthony J. Ciorra and James Keating. New York: Alba House, 1998. Pages, xvii + 179. Paper, \$12.95.

In this little gem of a book, Anthony Ciorra and James Keating have crafted a primer for moral formation in the parish. The book is insightful, clear, and practical. It is a fine introduction to the art of spiritual discernment as a crucial skill for responding to moral crises and to tensions in the church at large. The discussion of the role of the liturgy as a means for formation of character and for evangelization is superb.

The authors organize their reflections in six clearly written and insightful chapters. They begin with a trenchant analysis of the excessive emphasis upon autonomy and individualism at the expense of community and dialogue in the pursuit of moral truth. The parish is an extremely powerful agency for correcting this imbalance. In the second chapter, the authors present the significance of the liturgical renewal in the Church and offer concrete suggestions on how the liturgy helps to form moral character as the crucial skill for moral action. Chapter three presents the art of discernment in a particularly cogent and compelling fashion. This summary is one of the best overviews I have read and articulates extremely helpful, practical applications of this spiritual legacy for moral formation. Chapter four focuses on particular questions in personal ethics and addresses the thorny and vexatious topics of marriage, family life, and sexual issues. While acknowledging controversy in these areas, the chapter confidently presents church teaching in an uncompromising fashion and suggests excellent approaches to help parishioners appropriate this teaching. Chapter five is distinguished for its attention to the “public” character of Catholic moral teaching. Concentrating on the topics of public Catholicism in society and politics, health care issues, and poverty, the authors are to be commended for showing the mutual relatedness of personal conversion and public action on behalf of the gospel. The vital baptismal witness of Catholics in the marketplace of ideas, work, and culture is a much-needed corrective to a tendency to restrict morality to the realm of private, personal behavior. Chapter six is a fine summary of strategies to address the needs of various parish constituencies, including young adults and youth.

In addition to the book’s clear, engaging style, and its cogently argued strategies for enhancing moral development and action, particularly noteworthy is its ability to rise above the polarizing rhetoric that contributes to division and paralysis in the Church around moral issues. The authors avoid the traps of reductionism that so often result in pointless debates and stalemates between the dueling dichotomies of “right” or “left,” “liberal” or “conservative.” The balanced alternative proposed by the authors is neither “tradition-less” autonomy, nor “blind obedience,” but faith-filled discernment which requires *both* individual commitment *and* allegiance to a community of faith-wisdom. The treatment of the dignity of personal conscience is finely nuanced. The authors state that “. . . conscience is not simply the isolated individual discerning the right, but rather the individual as member of the Church listening to the voice of God in his or her heart” (21).

Anthony Ciorra, associate professor of theology at the College of St. Elizabeth, Morristown, New Jersey, and James Keating, associate professor of moral theology at the Pontifical College, Josephinum, Columbus, Ohio, have skillfully blended their theological and pastoral gifts to fashion this admirable contribution to moral renewal in the church today. The book is brief, clear, and accessible to a broad range of ages and interest groups. It is to be commended especially to busy pastors and parish staffs and is a marvelous tool for adult education.

*Jeremiah J. McCarthy*  
*St. John’s Seminary, Camarillo, California*

**The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology.** By Denis Edwards. New York: Paulist Press, 1999. Pages, vi + 144. Paper, \$14.95.

In this work Edwards, a priest of the Archdiocese of Adelaide, Australia and professor of theology at Flinders University, makes accessible in a popular vein certain currents of thought emanating from the contemporary dialogue between theology and science. Edwards' specific concern is the significance of evolutionary biology for our understanding of the triune God and vice versa. Since theology is faith seeking understanding, it is incumbent that theology today be informed by contemporary science's understanding of the world. He presents the reader with a true "dialogue" between science and theology, which should be viewed as friends and not enemies, with each having something to say to the other. Science demands a rethinking of the faith, but the faith also can enrich our understanding of the created world, especially its meaning and purpose, with which the scientist deals.

Underlying and facilitating Edwards' dialogue between faith and evolutionary biology is his trinitarian vision of God as "a God of mutual relations, a God who is communion in love, a God who is friendship beyond all comprehension" (15). This particular trinitarian vision is itself deeply rooted in John's Gospel, the Cappadocian Fathers, Richard of St. Victory, St. Bonaventure, John Zizioulas, and Jürgen Moltmann. Given that God's own being as mutual and equal "persons-in-relation" is relational, it follows that the being of created reality is itself also relational. Each being is a being-in-relation. This theological view of reality corresponds with key insights from evolutionary biology, which "suggests a world of cooperative, coadaptive, symbiotic and ecological relations" (28).

With this relational understanding of God and the corresponding understanding of created reality confirmed by evolutionary biology, Edwards then addresses several major theological themes, all of which are being enriched by the contemporary dialogue between theology and science as well as undergoing both critique and development. Chief among these themes are God's relationship to the world, the interaction of divine and creaturely causality, God's creative causality with an evolutionary world characterized by random selection, chance, and natural laws, original sin and grace within the context of evolution, the evolution and "uniqueness" of the human, the continuity between God's creative and redemptive work, and finally the proper roles of each of the divine persons in the creative process.

This book is to be praised as a primer to the contemporary dialogue between theology and science. It is eminently readable, rooted solidly in the Christian theological tradition, and reflective of contemporary theological thinking on the topic. Among many points to be praised is its treatment of the unique and proper roles of each of the trinitarian persons in the evolutionary, creative work of God as well as the ethical-ecological imperatives flowing from a view of reality created by a God of equal and mutual relations. Only two minor criticisms. First, too often the Scriptures are merely cited with no accompanying scholarly exegesis. The result is that we are often left with more of a biblical poetics in the style of Moltmann than a clear, conceptual presentation. Second, the position on original sin which Edwards espouses (66-68) is basically that of "the sin of the world," made popular by Schoonenberg and others thirty years

ago. As important and insightful as this position is, it cannot explain either the origins of sin, when there was no sin of the world, nor can it really explain why it is that each person affirms and makes one's own this sin of the world. Must we not continue to retrieve Augustine's and Ricoeur's "connivance in evil?"

Donald W. Buggert, O.Carm  
Washington Theological Union

**Making Faith-Sense: Theological Reflection in Everyday Life.** By Robert L. Kinast. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999. Pages. xii + 89. Paper, \$8.95.

This work is an aid to Christians who want to live a life nourished by faith. It is for members of the Church who, while respecting its traditions, realize they also have to think and act for themselves. Such thoughtful attention to life is what Robert Kinast calls "making faith-sense."

Personally reflecting on life in the light of one's faith was not always expected of the Christian faithful. The Age of Enlightenment challenged individuals to honor their personal experience and, at the same time, to approach their lives with critical reflection. Such a personal approach to one's faith may lead to extreme individualism, something inimical to a Church which understands itself as a community of believers, but it also allows the individual to take responsibility for his or her own faith life.

Kinast, a skillful pastoral theologian, presents numerous cases in which Christians are challenged to make life's decisions while being sensitive to the demands of the gospel. What Kinast brings to this activity is a process for critically reflecting on life in a more intentional and orderly way.

Kinast uses the acronym "NAME" to identify the steps or moments in a reflection process. "N" is for *narrative*, a telling of the story factually, including one's emotional responses. "A" is for *analysis*, a deeper reflection on the experience which may reveal implications or assumptions not immediately evident in the narration. "M" is for the *meaning* which emerges as the experience, now engaged reflectively, is put in dialog with the faith tradition. This dialog may affirm or challenge the faith perspective one has, calling for greater flexibility, adaptability, even conversion. "E" is for *enactment*, a concrete, practical outcome as the result of making faith-sense.

Underlying this process is a method of correlation which brings together contemporary experience and Christian tradition. While the intent of the book is to help the individual Christian, or small groups of Christians, make faith-sense of life, the same correlation of experience and faith is a necessary activity for the Church. Just as an individual may be challenged to make adaptations in his or her life, so too the church needs to remain open to having its present understanding and pastoral practice challenged for the sake of an ever more authentic gospel witness.

This method of correlation is fundamental to formal theological studies today. Specifically, the elements of Kinast's reflective process are embodied in theological reflection seminars in graduate schools of theology which prepare men and women for ministry in the Church. Kinast's book is a helpful companion for both students and faculty who are engaged in such seminars. The process is relatively easy to grasp, but the actual critical reflection requires patient practice, helpful critique, and a willingness to try again.

Making faith-sense, however, does not require having a theological degree. Simply using one's present faith understanding, and having an openness to additional learning, is all that is required. The goal is a life enlivened by faith. The final step, enactment, is the culmination of the process. It is a reminder that Christianity is, after all, a way of life.

*John Welch, O.Carm.  
Washington Theological Union*

## INDEX TO VOLUME 12

### Articles

- Anderson, Herbert, and Thomas A. Nairn, "Fitting Time," 4:27
- Atkinson, Jeanne M., "Catholic Values and American Immigration Policies," 1:15
- Black, Peter, and Kevin O'Neil, "Talking Points for Moral Theology," 4:49
- Bonnot, Bernard R., "Media: Superficial or Spiritual," 3:58
- Buggert, Donald, "Current Issues in Christology," 3:40
- Collins, John N., "Does Equality of Discipleship Add Up to Church? A Critique of Feminist *Ekklesia*-logy," 3:48
- Costello, Margaret, and James A. Wallace, "Preaching in the Face of Death," 4:17
- Donovan, William T., "The Trinity: Love Seeking Articulation," 4:38
- Ellsberg, Robert, "Saints for Today," 2:17
- Fandel, Cecilia, "The Border and Immigration: An Invitation to *Posada*," 1:32
- Frohlich, Mary, "Thérèse of Lisieux: 'Doctor for the Third Millennium?'" 2:27
- Gaillardetz, Richard R., "*Ad tuendam fidem*: An Emerging Pattern in Current Papal Teaching," 1:43
- Hayes, Zachary, "New Cosmology for a New Millennium," 3:29
- Hayes, Zachary, "Theology of Death," 4:9
- Hoppe, Leslie J., "Unless the Lord Tarries . . . : Fundamentalists Await the Second Coming," 3:16
- Johnson, Elizabeth A., "A Community of Holy People in a Sacred World: Rethinking the Communion of Saints," 2:5
- Lawler, Michael G., "Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church: Ten Theses," 2:48
- Ligo, Vivian, "How Can I Sing God's Song in a Foreign Land? Immigrant Experience as Exile," 1:25
- Madigan, Kevin, "Apocalyptic Expectation in the Year 1000," 3:5
- Mindling, Joseph A., "Chosen People in Foreign Lands: Scriptural Reflections on Immigration and the Uprooted," 1:4
- Riebe-Estrella, Gary, "*La Virgen*: A Mexican Perspective," 2:39
- Tuohey, John, "Partnering for More Than the Survival of a Catholic Presence in Healthcare," 1:52

### Features

- Anderson, Herbert, and Thomas A. Nairn, *Getting Down to Cases*, "A Burdensome Gift: Birth by *In Vitro* Fertilization," 2:75
- Anderson, Herbert, *Getting Down to Cases*, "Reconciliation as Widening the Circle," 3:77
- Bergant, Dianne, *Keeping Current*, "New Studies of the First Testament," 3:73
- Bevans, Stephen, *Signs of the Times*, "Vital Statistics," 3:65
- Bhaktiar, Lahleh, *Signs of the Times*, "Islam in the USA," 2:64
- Bliese, Richard H., *Signs of the Times*, "Generation Theory and Ministry to Today's Youth," 4:62
- Coriden, James A., *Keeping Current*, "Not Null and Void, but Invalid," 1:67

- Delio, Ilia, *Keeping Current*, "Spirituality," 4:71  
 Foley, Edward, *Liturgical Preaching*, "Preaching In and Of the Liturgy," 2:68  
 Foley, Edward, *Liturgical Preaching*, "Tackling Ordinary Time: Divide and Conquer," 3:69  
 Foley, Edward, *Liturgical Preaching*, "Liturgical Preaching at the Turning of the Millennium," 4:67  
 Himes, Kenneth R., *Signs of the Times*, "The Millennium Blues," 1:64  
 Nairn, Thomas A. *Keeping Current*, "New Resources for Bioethics," 2:71  
 Scullion, James P., *Scripture for Preaching*, "Inclusive Language and the New Lectionary," 1:60  
 Turek, Doris Mary, *Getting Down to Cases*, "La Tierra Prometida: A Mother's Sacrifice," 1:70

*Book Reviews*

- Ashley, James Matthew, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics, and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz* (M. Maher), 4:77  
 Backous, Timothy, and William C. Graham (eds.), *Common Good, Uncommon Questions: A Primer in Moral Theology* (R. Sparks), 1:85  
 Barr, William R., *Constructive Christian Theology in the Worldwide Church* (S. Bevans), 1:80  
 Bartow, Charles L., *God's Human Speech: A Practical Theology of Proclamation* (J. Wallace), 1:78  
 Beck, Norman A., *Anti-Roman Cryptograms in the New Testament: Symbolic Messages of Hope and Liberation* (K. O'Malley), 1:90  
 Berger, Teresa, *Women's Ways of Worship* (D. McBriar), 4:84  
 Burtchaell, James Tunstead, *Philemon's Problem: A Theology of Grace* (R. Gula), 4:79  
 Campaign for Human Development, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (K. Himes), 1:88  
 Campaign for Human Development, *Being Neighbor: The Catechism and Social Justice* (K. Himes), 1:88  
 Campaign for Human Development, *Novena for Justice and Peace* (K. Himes), 1:88  
 Campaign for Human Development, *Way of the Cross: Toward Justice and Peace* (K. Himes), 1:88  
 Campaign for Human Development, *A Justice Prayer Book: With Biblical Reflections* (K. Himes), 1:88  
 Campaign for Human Development, *A Scriptural Rosary for Justice and Peace* (K. Himes), 1:88  
 Chase, Steven L. (ed.), *Doors of Understanding: Conversations on Global Spirituality in Honor of Ewert Cousins* (I. Delio), 1:89  
 Chilton, Bruce, *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God* (J. Okoye), 1:94  
 Ciorra, Anthony J., and James Keating, *Moral Formation in the Parish. With Your Whole Heart Turn to God (Tobit 13:6)* (J. McCarthy), 4:87.  
 Connors, Russell B., Jr., and Patrick McCormick, *Character, Choices, and Community* (K. Himes), 4:83  
 Davis, Kenneth G. (ed.), *Misa, Mesa, y Musa Liturgy in the U.S. Hispanic Church* (M. Francis), 3:92

- Dawn, Marva J., *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (M. A. O'Connor), 2:79
- DeGidio, Sandra, *Praying with the Sick* (E. Haase), 3:82
- DeSiano, Frank P., *The Evangelizing Catholic: A Practical Handbook for Reaching Out* (D. McBriar), 2:93
- Dunn, Edmond J., *What is Theology? Foundational and Moral* (W. McConville), 2:78
- Dunn, James D. G., *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (J. Scullion), 4:76
- Duquin, Lorene Hanely, *Could You Ever Come Back to the Catholic Church?* (F. Walsh), 2:81
- Edwards, Denis, *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology* (D. Buggert), 4:89
- Ellsberg, Robert, *All Saints* (B. Hanley), 2:85
- Farmer, William R. (ed.), *The International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century* (A. DiLella), 2:89
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A., *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies* (J. Wimmer), 3:88
- Gallagher, Michael Paul, *Clashing Symbols, An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (J. Donders), 2:91
- Gestrich, Christof, *The Return of Splendor in the World: The Christian Doctrine of Sin and Forgiveness* (Z. Hayes), 1:82
- Harvey, James E., *Who's in Charge? Leadership Skills for Clergy and Others in Ministry* (P. Levesque), 1:92
- Herbstrith, Waltraud (ed.), *Never Forget: Christian and Jewish Perspectives on Edith Stein* (B. L. Taggart), 3:94
- Himes, Michael J., *Ongoing Incarnation: Johann Adam Möhler and the Beginnings of Modern Ecclesiology* (W. Madges), 1:76
- Hoose, Bernard (ed.), *Christian Ethics: An Introduction* (J. Hanigan), 3:89
- Hoover, Brett C., *Losing Your Religion, Finding Your Faith: Spirituality for Young Adults* (F. Horn), 3:83
- Hunt, Anne, *What Are They Saying About the Trinity?* (D. Buggert), 2:95
- Keating, James, *Pure Heart, Clear Conscience: Living a Catholic Moral Life* (P. Lamoureux), 3:93
- Kinast, Robert L., *Making Faith-Sense: Theological Reflection in Everyday Life* (J. Welch), 4:90
- Lakeland, Paul, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age* (R. Viladesau), 1:84
- Manning, Michael, *Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide: Killing or Caring?* (R. Sparks), 3:90
- Megivern, James J., *The Death Penalty: An Historical and Theological Survey* (K. Himes), 2:87
- Meyer, Charles, *A Good Death* (E. Haase), 3:82
- Mitchell, Nathan, *Liturgy and the Social Sciences* (R. Duffy), 3:81
- National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Subcommittee on Lay Ministry, Committee on the Laity, *Together in God's Service: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry: Papers from a Colloquium* (B. Long), 3:84
- Nichols, Terence L., *That All May Be One: Hierarchy and Participation in the Church* (G. Scarfia), 2:83

- Pecklers, Keith F., *The Unread Vision: The Liturgical Movement in the United States of America* (G. Sloyan), 3:86
- Perelmuter, Hayim G., *Harvest of a Dialogue: Reflections of a Rabbi/Scholar on a Catholic Faculty* (J. Cook), 1:79
- Pfatteicher, Philip H., *Liturgical Spirituality* (J. Kubicki), 1:86
- Phan, Peter C., *Responses to 101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life* (R. Rutherford), 1:75
- Recinos, Harold J., *Who Comes in the Name of the Lord? Jesus at the Margins* (K. Davis), 1:83
- Schwarz, John C., *Global Population from a Catholic Perspective* (A. Gittins), 4:86
- Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Catholics Remember the Holocaust* (J. Pawlikowski), 4:80
- Shaughnessy, Mary Angela, *Ministry and the Law: What You Need to Know* (J. Coriden), 4:82
- Sulmasy, Daniel P., *The Healer's Calling: A Spirituality for Physician and Other Health Care Professionals* (T. Choma), 2:82
- Thangaraj, M. Thomas, *Relating to People of Other Religions: What Every Christian Needs to Know* (J. Kroeger), 2:88
- Vanderhaar, Gerard A., *Beyond Violence/In the Spirit of the Non-Violent Christ* (M. Dennis), 1:91
- Wainwright, Geoffrey, *For Our Salvation: Two Approaches to the Work of Christ* (D. Buggert), 2:80
- Waznak, Robert P., *An Introduction to the Homily* (D. Ruff), 2:92