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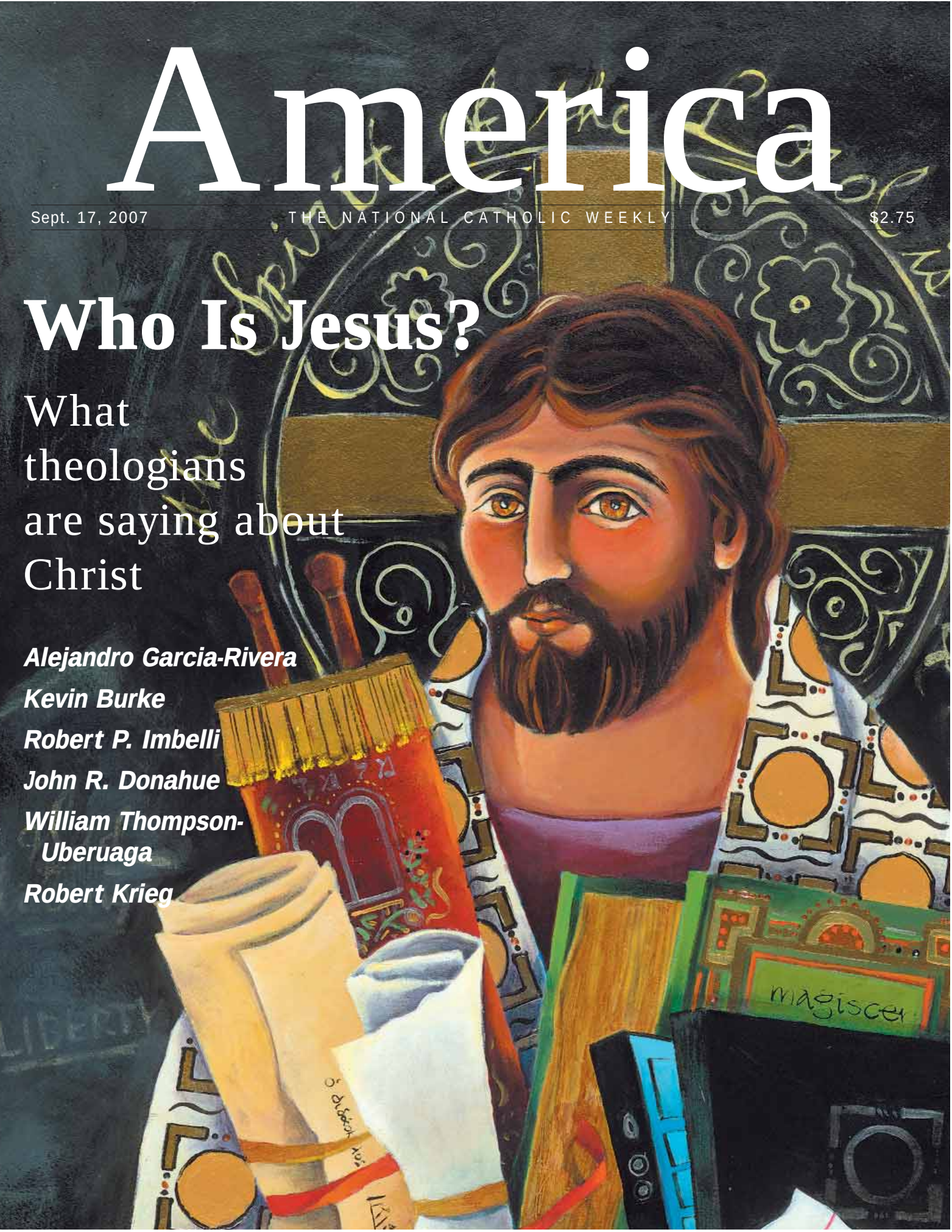

Who Is Jesus?

What theologians are saying about Christ

Alejandro Garcia-Rivera

Kevin Burke

Robert P. Imbelli

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Robert Krieg

Of Many Things

FOR THE BETTER PART of two weeks last month, I found myself engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. At the University of Notre Dame, I participated in the fourth annual Mennonite-Catholic Theological Colloquium, where theologians from both communities evaluated *Called Together to Be Peacemakers*, the 2004 report of the International Catholic-Mennonite Dialogue. Theologians on both sides explored how to build new bridges. Some pressed those responsible for the dialogue to move still further, while others reminded everyone that some differences will not be easily overcome.

There was considerable disappointment on the Mennonite side that Catholics have done relatively little to make *Called Together* better known. (An abridged version with discussion questions is available for parish and congregational use from Pandora Press, Waterloo, Ont.) Peace activists on both sides pressed hard against the just war theory and the failure of the U.S. bishops to condemn the war in Iraq once it had begun.

Gerald Schlabach, a professor at St. Thomas Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., who recently became a Catholic, embodied this ecumenical spirit in making a strong case for a cause he has been promoting for a few years: a Mennonite order in the Catholic Church. One can think of precedents. The Anglican Usage, for example, is the celebration of much of the Anglican liturgy by former Anglican parishes that have accepted communion with Rome.

The limits of formal, high-level dialogue and the consequent need for mid-level gatherings, like the colloquium, and grass-roots ecumenism like Bridgefolk, a North American Catholic-Mennonite encounter, were also evident as I listened to presentations and audience discussion. For some participants displayed a perfectionism that wished for more than an institutional dialogue can reasonably deliver on short order after 500 years of estrangement.

Before and after my days at Notre Dame, I met with Jesuits from around the world who are engaged in interfaith dialogue. First, at Fordham University in New York, we gathered as Jesuits in Dialogue With Jews; then at Georgetown University in Washington as Jesuits Working Among Jews and Muslims.

In New York, we were joined by both Jewish interlocutors and Catholic lay colleagues. Jewish contributors like Rabbi Harold Hirsch from Regis University in Denver and Professor Harold Kasimow from Grinnell University in Iowa showed enormous appreciation for the teaching and initiatives of Pope John Paul II. One could sense as they spoke just how much John Paul's commitment to Catholic-Jewish relations had achieved. During a tour of Jewish New York, the hazan or cantor at the Portuguese Synagogue on Central Park West, the oldest in the United States, educated us not only on early American Jewish history but on the various liturgical styles of western Sephardism, singing for us the very different melodies used in Amsterdam, Hamburg and Venice, the other cities where the Portuguese Jewish diaspora had taken refuge.

Among the formal papers were studies of anti-Semitism in the Spanish *conquista* of the Americas and of the exclusion of *conversos* (Jewish converts and their descendants) from the Jesuit order beginning in the late 16th century. James Bernauer, S.J., of Boston College reported on Jesuits named among "the righteous" by Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust Memorial, for saving Jews from extermination.

In Washington we explored Ignatian themes informing our interreligious involvements. These included the early Jesuits' desire to live and work among Muslims (whom they called infidels) and the *praesupponendum* of the Spiritual Exercises, a disposition on entering into dialogue to give a generous interpretation to the statements of others—in other words, not to presume a negative or hostile meaning in their words.

It is sobering to remember that Jesuit dialogue with Muslims began with a mule. As a new convert, St. Ignatius Loyola encountered a Muslim who he believed had insulted the Virgin Mary. Angered, Iñigo wanted to follow and throttle the Moor. Hesitating at the prospect of committing violence, he left the problem for his mule to decide. It took a trail that led away from the alleged blasphemer, averted a fight and so inaugurated a line of faith-filled openness to others.

Drew Christiansen, S.J.

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Articles

This week @ America Connects

James Martin, S.J., talks about his new book, *A Jesuit Off-Broadway.* James T. Fisher and Edward Murphy, S.J., discuss the new documentary, "The Camden 28." Plus archive articles, interviews and podcasts at **www.americamagazine.org.**

It's a Dog's Life

Cruelty toward pets, all agree, is the kind of behavior law-abiding citizens should not tolerate. Understandably, then, recent revelations that N.F.L. quarterback Michael Vick oversaw a dog-fighting operation that tortured and killed dogs have prompted widespread public condemnation, as well as satisfaction that Vick could face up to five years in prison. But does one detect a certain excess of zeal in some of the reactions? "While we are pleased to hear that the Vick case is being settled through the criminal justice system," said a representative of the American Kennel Club, "we remain concerned that the punishment will be inadequate considering the heinous nature of the crimes."

In many jurisdictions in the United States, a five-year sentence exceeds the maximum allowed for spousal abuse or assault. Countless athletes over the past decade have been found guilty of one or both and walked away with far lighter sentences. No one will shed too many tears for Michael Vick after discovery of his awful crimes, but does the sudden frenzy of calls for draconian retribution send a disturbing message to human victims of physical violence? That our pets are more important than our people?

Don't think so? Note that the late Leona Helmsley left two of her grandchildren $10 million apiece, leaving two others nothing at all, "for reasons which are known to them," as she stated in her will. There was room, however, for another gift: she left $12 million to her pet dog, Trouble.

Klan Group Under Fire

Hate groups around the country continue to be challenged by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Imperial Klans of America, the nation's second largest Ku Klux Klan group, is the defendant in a lawsuit filed by the S.P.L.C. in late July. An earlier suit against the same organization stemmed from the vicious beating in 2006 of a 16-year-old American boy of Panamanian descent. Two of the attackers, members of the Imperial Klans, are currently serving prison terms. The beating, which resulted in serious injuries, took place on the county fairgrounds in Brandenburg, Ky., during an I.K.A. recruiting drive, at which the men were distributing flyers for the "white only" event.

The present suit includes as defendants not only the I.K.A. organization, but also its Imperial Wizard, Ron Edwards, who owns a 28-acre compound in Dawson Springs, Ky. The compound serves both as the group's headquarters and as the site of the annual Nordic Fest, a white supremacist music festival held on Memorial Day weekend. It brings together not only Klan members but also racist skinheads and members of other violent hate groups.

Commenting on the larger picture of racism in the United States, the center points to a 40 percent rise in hate groups in the last seven years, contending that the increase has been driven by "anti-immigrant furor aimed largely at Latinos" (Lou Dobbs, take note). Because of litigation against supremacist organizations over the past decades, S.P.L.C. officials have received death threats—a sign of just how successful the litigation has been.

Going Soft

A recent profile of the publisher and editor Mort Zuckerman in The New Yorker included the surprising news that despite an impressive run in the 1990s, which saw his print periodical, U.S. News & World Report, almost catch Time and Newsweek in terms of circulation and prestige, the magazine recently gutted its investigative staff in favor of soft news "amid a retrenchment severe even by the dismal standards of the category."

It's depressing news for Mr. Zuckerman, but he has company: most of the mainstream print organs in the United States have seen their relevance diminish rapidly in recent years, and journals of opinion everywhere struggle with declining (and graying) readerships. What does it all mean? Are Ray Bradbury's feverish dreams of a deliberately illiterate culture becoming a reality?

One can view the latest news from Iraq within scant minutes on CNN; similarly, any number of Web sites can tell us much quicker than The New York Post what exactly Lindsay Lohan's breath smelled like to her arresting officer. Even some devotees of newspapers will admit that the instant gratification provided by online information has changed their reading habits; we skim the headlines, scan for items above the fold, absorb the pictures without always bothering with the text.

What will happen to long-form investigative journalism in this brave new world? In a nation whose fourth estate has a long and proud history, where will tomorrow's journalistic enterprises find the time or place for the muckrakers of yesteryear?

The President's Man

THE RECENT RESIGNATION of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales brought to an end the most misguided attorney generalship since John Mitchell ran the Justice Department as a field office of the Nixon re-election campaign. In fact, the two attorneys general have something in common. They both saw themselves principally as servants of the president's political agenda rather than the public interest. In Mr. Gonzales's case, he never appeared to make the transition from partisan White House counsel to impartial attorney general. This was nowhere more evident than in his vigorous defense of the dramatic expansion of executive authority that has occurred during this administration.

The American people look to the Justice Department to protect the integrity of our constitutional system. Mr. Gonzales helped to undermine it: the firings of able federal prosecutors for political ends, Mr. Gonzales's possible perjury before Congress, his defense of a virtually unrestrained executive privilege and his questionable legal justifications for the detention of so-called enemy combatants at the Guantanamo prison have all weakened important constitutional safeguards.

At every turn, the Bush administration has sought to expand the power and authority of the president. We are told that this is justified on grounds of national security. No one disputes that these dangerous times require unconventional responses. But there is also an ideological agenda at work. This White House is a champion of the so-called doctrine of the unitary executive—a distorted view of the Constitution used to justify unlimited expansion of presidential authority. This specious theory was developed in full in the 1970s and '80s in response to the diminution of presidential authority during the post-Watergate years.

It should be remembered, however, that the president's power was deliberately curtailed at that time because it had been illegally expanded and seriously abused. To be sure, both Democratic and Republican presidents have pushed presidential power beyond its constitutional limits. But it was the scandals of Watergate and Vietnam that finally prompted Congress and the American people to dismantle what the historian Arthur Schlesinger called the "imperial presidency" and restore the office to its proper place in our constitutional system. President Bush has sought to undo this reform; and unfortunately this Congress, afraid of appearing "soft on terrorism," has largely permitted his expansion of executive authority to go unchecked.

A disturbing example of this is last month's amendment of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA), the federal law that regulates how and when the government can spy on its own citizens. We learned in 2005 that the Bush administration was conducting warrantless telephone and e-mail surveillance of American citizens in obvious contravention of FISA. Last month, Congress rewarded this illegal behavior by legally permitting it—effectively suspending our Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable searches and seizures until the law expires in six months.

FISA was enacted before the globalization of telecommunications. Because of changing technology, the law needed updating. This was not unusual; FISA has been updated more than 50 times since it was first enacted. This time, however, it was different. Congress and the administration went far beyond closing loopholes—they placed direct oversight of the FISA surveillance program in the attorney general's office, removing it from a court of law. In other words, now the executive branch is to police itself.

EVERY GRADE SCHOOLER KNOWS that our constitutional system relies on checks and balances in order to function responsibly. The new FISA undermines this system by giving the executive branch a greatly enhanced ability to listen in on the private communications of American citizens without proper judicial or legislative oversight. Moreover, the Bush administration now asks the courts and Congress not only to ignore its previous illegal wiretapping but to grant immunity to the telecommunications companies that were complicit in it. Some congressional leaders have said that many provisions of the new FISA law are unacceptable and should be revisited. The rest of Congress should follow their lead. When the law expires in February, lawmakers should restore direct judicial oversight over all domestic surveillance by insisting on warrants for spying on U.S. citizens.

If Americans are asked to waive part of their constitutional rights, they deserve to know why. They also deserve an attorney general who will defend the rights of American citizens and the government of law promised by our Constitution. Congress should view additional reform and restraint of FISA as only a first step toward restoring the balance of power in the federal government.

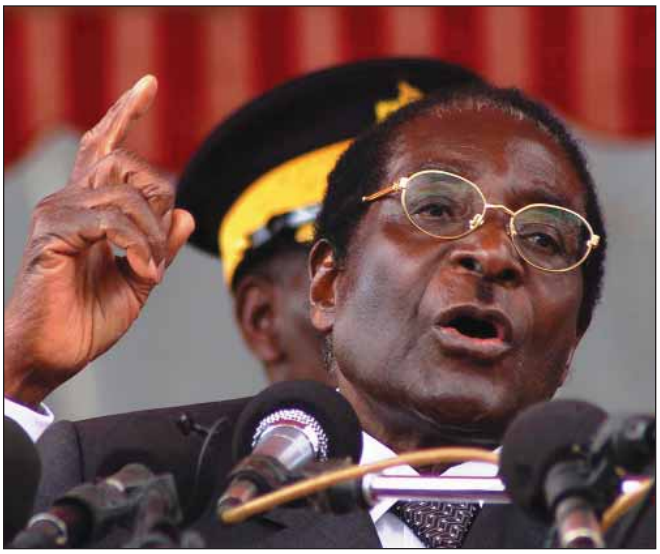
Ex-Legionary Group Offers Court Computer Files

The head of a network of former members of the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi has offered to hand over computer files to a Virginia circuit court after being sued by the religious order. Paul Lennon, president of the nonprofit organization Religious Groups Awareness International Network, appeared before the Circuit Court of Alexandria Aug. 22 during a seizure hearing. Glenn Favreau, a former member of the Legionaries and a member of ReGAIN, told Catholic News Service Aug. 28 that the court accepted Lennon's offer. No further steps have been taken in the case against Lennon and ReGAIN, Favreau said.

The Legionaries are suing Lennon and ReGAIN to recover what the order claims is private property and to deter what it said is improper use of stolen materials. The complaint said ReGAIN, "along with other co-conspirators, have intentionally taken out of context excerpts from...stolen materials and posted them on the Internet as part of a concerted effort to wage a malicious disinformation campaign against the Legion."

The complaint, dated Aug. 2, was posted on the Web site of ReGAIN, which offers information about alleged problems associated with the Legionaries and Regnum Christi, an apostolic Catholic movement associated with the Legionaries.

Zimbabwe's Bishops Deplore Attacks



Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe at a burial service in Harare, July 18, during which he mocked Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo.

Zimbabwe's bishops called attacks on Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo "outrageous and utterly deplorable" and an attempt to divert attention from the catastrophe that Zimbabwe has become. "The recent attacks by some politicians and the state media on the person" of Archbishop Ncube, who is being sued for adultery, "constitute an assault on the Catholic Church, to which we take strong exception," the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference said in an Aug. 29 statement from the capital, Harare. "The Catholic Church has never been and is not an enemy of Zimbabwe," the bishops said, noting that the church's service to Zimbabweans includes running 60 hospitals, 174 schools and many orphanages. "Our record during the years of the liberation struggle speaks for itself," they said. Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain in 1980 after a guerrilla war. The bishops noted that the archbishop's case was before the High Court of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo and should not be discussed in public until a verdict has been delivered. In July, Onesimus Sibanda claimed damages from the archbishop for an alleged affair with his wife, Rosemary Sibanda.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Doctor Fights Cancer With Umbilical Cord Cells

Patrick Stiff

About 10 years ago, Holly Becker's future appeared bright. At 24, she had just graduated from college, moved out of her parents' home and taken a job in sales and marketing. But then something went terribly wrong. She started running temperatures of 105.4 degrees and she could not eat. Doctors diagnosed Becker with stage 4 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The cancer had already spread to her spleen, liver and bone marrow. She spent six months undergoing chemotherapy without success. She was in desperate need of a bone-marrow transplant, but no donor was available. "I was really as bad as somebody could get," she told The Catholic Explorer, the newspaper of the Diocese of Joliet, in a telephone interview. Running out of options, she went to the Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood for an umbilical-cord-blood stem-cell transplant. "Cord blood has opened the door to curing patients who otherwise would die," Patrick Stiff, M.D., director of Loyola's Cardinal Bernardin Cancer Center, told The Catholic Explorer. "We actually have transplanted patients in whom the only other option was a hospice program." Before receiving the cord blood, Becker received full-body radiation treatments twice daily and high-dose chemotherapy to wipe out her immune system.

School Checklists Reflect Modern Times

Long gone are the days when it was enough for school officials to take inventory of desks, school supplies and audio-visual equipment before the start of the school year. Today's back-to-school checklists are far more complex in order to ensure that faculty and staff members are ready to face any kind of potential disaster from a weather-related event, a medical emergency or an act of violence. "The more prepared we are, the less chance we'll be vulnerable," said Michael Caruso, assistant superintendent for secondary schools and government relations in the Diocese of Washington, D.C., during an Aug. 24 emergency-preparedness seminar for principals. At the very least, school officials need to have such items on hand as: updated first-aid kits, emergency supplies, evacuation plans, emergency contact information, student and staff rosters, portable communication devices, like walkie-talkies or cellphones, and, if possible, an emergency weather radio. They also need to consider worst-case scenarios and be prepared for their response.

Modern Pilgrims: Jet-Setters or Trekkers?

The sky was no longer the limit when a Rome travel agency started offering specially chartered flights exclusively for globe-trotting pilgrims. Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi, run by the Diocese of Rome, had long been offering special package tours for religious destinations worldwide. Each year some 300,000 pilgrims book their religious journey by plane, train and bus through the agency. Recently, Opera Romana signed a five-year contract with Mistral Air, a small Italian airline run by the Italian postal service, to run charter flights exclusively for pilgrims. The inaugural flight from Rome to Lourdes Aug. 27 went well; but because of security rules, the pilgrims were not allowed to bring their bottles of Lourdes water with them on the return flight.

Despite the conveniences of air travel, greater numbers of modern-day pilgrims are traveling the old-fashioned way with a backpack, plenty of water and a sturdy pair of shoes. One of the most ancient and most popular paths for the foot pilgrim is to the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela. More than 100,000 people walk, bike or ride atop donkeys or horses every year to visit the shrine of St. James there. A once little-known pilgrim path from Canterbury, England, to Rome—the Francigena Way—is also gaining in popularity.

Rabbi Knighted for Interfaith Work

Pope Benedict XVI has honored Rabbi Leon Klenicki, naming him a Knight of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great for his contribution to Jewish-Catholic relations. Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston led the ceremony Aug. 26 at the Holy See Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in New York. Rabbi Klenicki was the longtime interfaith director of the Anti-Defamation League. In his acceptance remarks, he thanked his high school teacher who introduced him to the thinking of Jacques Maritain, Gabriel Marcel and Emmanuel Mounier, mid-20th century French Catholic philosophers. Maritain was a leader in the Neo-Thomist revival and Mounier was a founder of the school known as personalism.

Rabbi Klenicki described the Jewish-Catholic dialogue as "my I-Thou vocation," alluding to the groundbreaking book *I and Thou*, by Martin Buber. "The recognition of the other," he continued, "entails a sense of responsibility, an affirmation that the other is irreplaceable.... Dialogue is an attempt to know and accept the validity of the spirituality of the other, sharing his or her living experience of God." He concluded, "Let us build on this sacred relationship of Catholic to Jew and Jew to Catholic, of subject of faith to equal subject of faith, that God may pass and light the world with understanding and blessing."

Indian Archdiocese Temporarily Closes Schools

People set a truck on fire during a protest in the Northern Indian city of Agra Aug. 29.

The Agra Archdiocese temporarily closed all its schools and colleges after violence erupted in the city that is home to the Taj Mahal, the famous marble mausoleum. Police imposed a curfew Aug. 29 after one person was killed and several were injured in demonstrations reacting to the deaths of four Muslim youths. Television footage showed a deserted city and smoke billowing from vehicles in some areas. "The Christian community is safe," the Rev. Ignatius Miranda, archdiocesan chancellor, told the Asian church news agency UCA News Aug. 30. "The situation is calm now."

The archdiocese closed its schools and colleges in the area as a precaution, Father Miranda said, and planned to reopen them Sept. 1. Violence broke out in the early morning of Aug. 29, after a speeding truck mowed down and killed four Muslim youths who were returning home after a religious procession.

Paying Down the Debt

‘Private enterprise is not the answer to financing college education.’

As millions of college students settle into the new academic year, criminal investigators across the nation are looking into troubling relationships between student-loan providers and financial aid offices. By all indications, these relationships have very little to do with education and lots to do with the notion that students are just another group of customers, to be catered to when necessary but exploited whenever possible.

Several months ago, I took note in this space of the then-fledgling loan scandal, and wondered how and why we have allowed college loans to become an industry rather than the government-funded program it ought to be. Since then, an investigation begun by New York’s attorney general, Andrew Cuomo, has spawned similar inquiries in several other states. Prosecutors are trying to determine if colleges have improperly steered students to lenders, some of whom may have engaged in predatory lending practices.

While official inquiries still are in a preliminary stage, media investigations have uncovered horror stories about recent college graduates struggling to pay back six-figure loans, a task made even more burdensome by double-digit interest rates. In some of the reports I read, more than a few hard-pressed graduates sported degrees from Catholic institutions. Six-figure debt is hardly restricted to students with predictably expensive Ivy League degrees.

Apparently many students, being students, did not read all the fine print in their loan documents, and they were surprised when their adjustable interest rates ballooned to 12 percent and higher. The same predatory mentality that led financial institutions to underwrite subprime mortgages may be behind the burgeoning college-loan scandal.

Beyond the issue of our collective failure to provide more money for government loans, beyond the questionable lending practices and possibly unethical relationships between colleges and lenders, there is this question: What kind of society are we creating when college students leave school burdened with such huge debt?

For all our paeans to the importance of teachers, how many young people can afford to return to the classroom if they have to write checks of $1,000 or more every month just to service their college loans? For all our professed reverence for marriage and family, how many young people can even think about settling down when they are so deeply in debt? How many young people with six-figure student loans can afford to rent a living space of their own, never mind handle the additional burden of a mortgage? How many would-be writers, artists, social workers, musicians, public servants and research scientists will have to give up their dreams at the age of 26 because they cannot live on the less-than-munificent salaries such careers provide?

Were I of a conspiratorial mind, I might be inclined to believe that the financial services industry, with the tacit cooperation of higher education, is attempting to turn a generation of students away from liberal arts and the humanities by making it financially impossible to pursue anything but a career in business, financial services and the industries that support them. Not that there’s anything wrong with being a commodities trader, or a public relations executive, or a corporate attorney—far from it. Some of us in the non-profit world (a category that would include journalism in general and writing in particular) benefit from the skill, vision and leadership of American businessmen and women.

Still, the notion of a generation forced to the counting house because of crushing college debt ought to give us pause, and not just out of sympathy for the debtors. Our knowledge-based economy is as dependent on teachers, scientists, mathematicians and historians as it is on financial advisors, brokers and adjustors. Our culture requires young artists just as surely as our economy requires young entrepreneurs.

Friends tell me of children who wish to be journalists or math teachers or marine biologists but who are being encouraged to go to business school or law school in part so that they can afford to live an independent, adult life even as they dutifully pay down their debts. How sad is that—for them, for their parents, and for society?

Making matters potentially far grimmer is the near certainty that a long period of steady economic growth without inflation seems destined to end soon. Thanks to low-cost imports and other efficiencies, increases in the cost of living have been held in check (except, of course, in housing) for more than two decades.

But, as anybody knows who has put a child through college in recent years, our collective chokehold on inflation has not extended to higher education. Tuition increases have outpaced inflation since the Reagan administration. What will happen if, or when, the cost of daily life begins to spike—accompanied, as would seem inevitable, by even larger increases in the cost of nonpublic higher education?

It is becoming clear that private enterprise simply is not the answer to financing college education. As the horror stories from recent graduates indicate, private lenders are far too eager to view students as just another exploitable market.

Forget our dependence on oil—our prosperity depends on the energy and creativity of our young people. And we will have precious little of either if their first and overriding concern is paying down their debt.

Terry Golway

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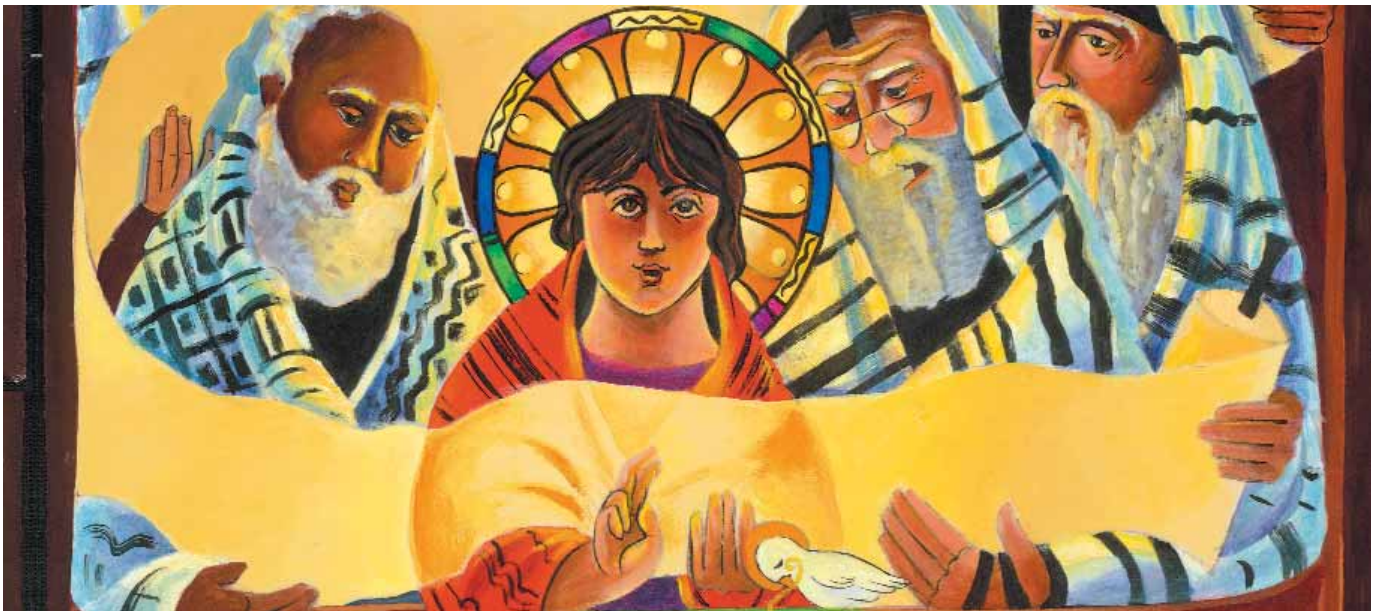
What Are Theologians Saying About Christology?



"CHRIST THE STUDENT" ART ON PAGES 11 TO 24 BY MICHAEL O'NEILL MCGRATH, O.S.F.S., FROM *AT THE NAME OF JESUS.*

Editor's Note: After the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a notification March 14 on some works of the liberation theologian Jon Sobrino, S.J., the editors wondered how we might inform our readers about the questions at stake. We concluded that the most useful approach would be to set the issues in the context of contemporary Christology, explaining what major theologians, Scripture scholars and schools of theology are saying regarding the six questions about Jesus to which the congregation drew attention in its notification: method, divinity/humanity, incarnation, the kingdom of God, Jesus' self-consciousness and soteriology (explanations of how Jesus achieved our salvation). We have asked six theologians to explain what the tradition and their colleagues are saying today about the church's confession of Jesus as Christ and Son of God (Pages 11 to 20). Two additional commentaries follow.

Faith and the Poor

Alejandro Garcia-Rivera

RECENTLY I HAD THE HONOR of listening to Metropolitan Kallistos Ware as he gave a talk on the Orthodox understanding of the Holy Spirit. During the question-and-answer session, a young Roman Catholic seminarian asked him what he thought of the recent Vatican notification on the works of Jon Sobrino, S.J. Bishop Ware smiled, thought for a minute and quoted this famous passage from St. John Chrysostom:

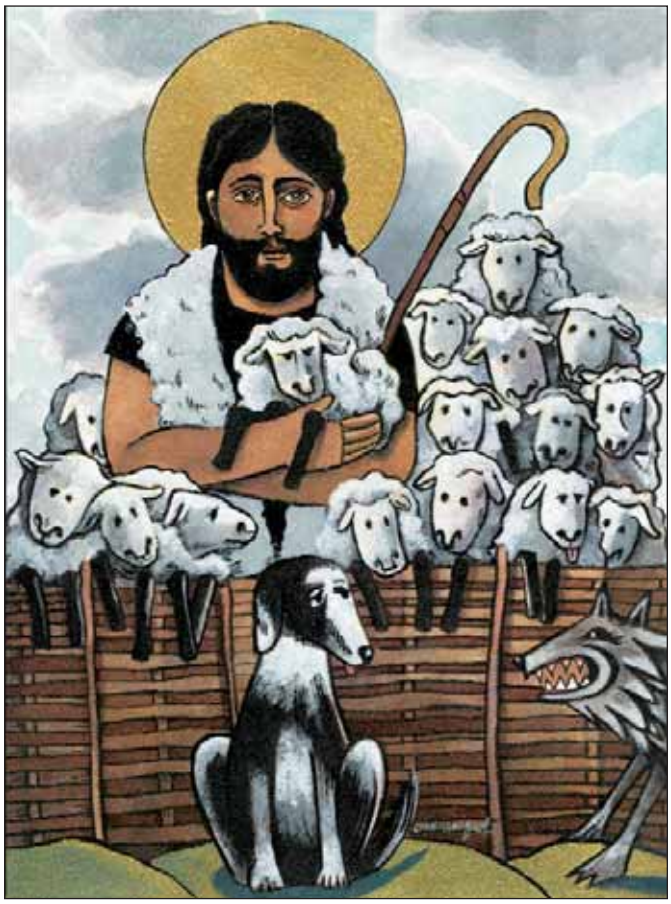
> Would you see his altar?... This altar is composed of the very members of Christ, and the body of the Lord becomes an altar. This altar is more venerable even than the one which we now use. For it is…but a stone by nature; but become holy because it receives Christ's body: but that is holy because it is itself Christ's body…[which] you may see lying everywhere, in the alleys and in the marketplaces, and you may sacrifice upon it anytime…. When then you see a poor believer, believe that you are beholding an altar. When you see this one as a beggar, do not only refrain

from insulting him, but actually give him honor, and if you witness someone else insulting him, stop him; prevent it.

Homily 20 on
2 Corinthians

Wisely Bishop Ware refused to elaborate on the quotation and left us to ponder its meaning. Its relevance to the Sobrino notification, however, has become more and more evident as I have studied the text by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The notification questions first the methodological presuppositions of Sobrino's Christology. Father Sobrino emphasizes the social setting defined by the "church of the poor"; the notification identifies the proper context as the "faith of the Church."

The C.D.F. apparently thinks Sobrino is playing fast and loose with the nature of the church. By identifying the church with the poor instead of with the faith, the C.D.F. warns that Sobrino's Christ is being wrenched from his ecclesial matrix. What is feared, I suppose, is a Christ who emerges out of a social setting instead of a communion of faith. Such a Christ could be subject to political and ideological currents that have little interest in faith. Indeed, Sobrino's method of taking the social context as the ecclesial matrix from which Christ emerges may lead to an unabashed theological pluralism where the one Lord can become a Christ of a thousand faces, each depending on its own social setting.



"GOOD SHEPHERD"

Such a scenario might be one reason this notification was issued. Sobrino's method opens up a postmodern Pandora's box of theological speculation. To ask if Jon Sobrino's Christ is too postmodern is to ask if the C.D.F.'s primary concern is the role that truth plays in theological reflections. The notification, referring to *Donum Veritatis*, suggests as much: "Thus the truth revealed by God himself in Jesus Christ, and transmitted by the Church, constitutes the ultimate normative principle of theology." Trust in the normative power of truth claims is at odds with the postmodern zeitgeist, which questions not simply the truthfulness of statements but truth itself. Such faith and the deep value it holds can legitimately be offended by the skepticism over normative claims so prevalent today. Does the notification assert that Sobrino's Christology falls prey to such skepticism? There is reason to think so, namely, the concern for "the manner in which the author treats the major Councils of the early Church." The notification lifts out this particular quote from Sobrino's *Christ the Liberator*: "While these texts are useful theologically, besides being normative, they are also limited and even dangerous, as is widely recognized today." While recognizing the limited character of dogmatic formulation, the notification insists that "there is no foundation for calling these formulas dangerous, since they are authentic interpretations of Revelation."

Here the wisdom from the Orthodox tradition and the relevance of Chrysostom's text become evident. The Orthodox warn against making dogmatic claims with too much confidence. While truth is behind all such claims, the ecclesial setting for truth is not objectivity but love. Truth is not simply about objectivity but also solidarity. And this is one of the lessons I learned from Chrysostom's text. The Christ the church worships at its altar is also the Christ found at the altar of the world's poor. In this sense both

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Sobrino and the C.D.F. appear to speak truthfully and accurately. Christ's ecclesial matrix is the church that worships in faith. It is also the church of the poor. This is the famous both-and that marks the church as Catholic.

Having a both-and Christology is not the same as postmodern skepticism. It is the very nature of a faith that proclaims that God is one and three, that Jesus is human and divine. There is something more dangerous to the faith than a Christ who can only be grasped through multiple views; it is a view of truth as either-or.

"Definitive" truth that is not loving can bring only despair to an already nihilistic world. Postmodernism thrives precisely because it sees the suffering of this world as having reached horrendous and senseless proportions. A church that is methodologically indifferent to senseless suffering is at odds with the methods of Jesus himself. Only a Jesus who belongs to a church that is not afraid to identify itself with the suffering of this world can have any rational claim on the world itself. In other words, the normative character of the truth of the church's faith is protected, defended and nurtured by a praxis that will not regard as normative the senseless suffering of billions. The church has two altars. The C.D.F. points rightly to one; Sobrino points to the other.

Balancing Human and Divine

Kevin Burke

CHRISTOLOGY IS A COMPLEX discipline. It requires an intricate balancing act among assertions perennially in tension with one another. One of my first theology teachers, Brian Daly, S.J., emphasized this point in a course tellingly entitled "The Christological Controversies." He noted how every orthodox Christological claim tends toward one or another heresy and needs to be complemented by other claims. Moreover, this process of complementing and balancing involves more than rehearsing the facts of church doctrine, for the language of faith often explodes like a riot of color in a wild garden or a true poem. As such, Christology involves evocation. Its arguments turn on the subtlest of metaphors.

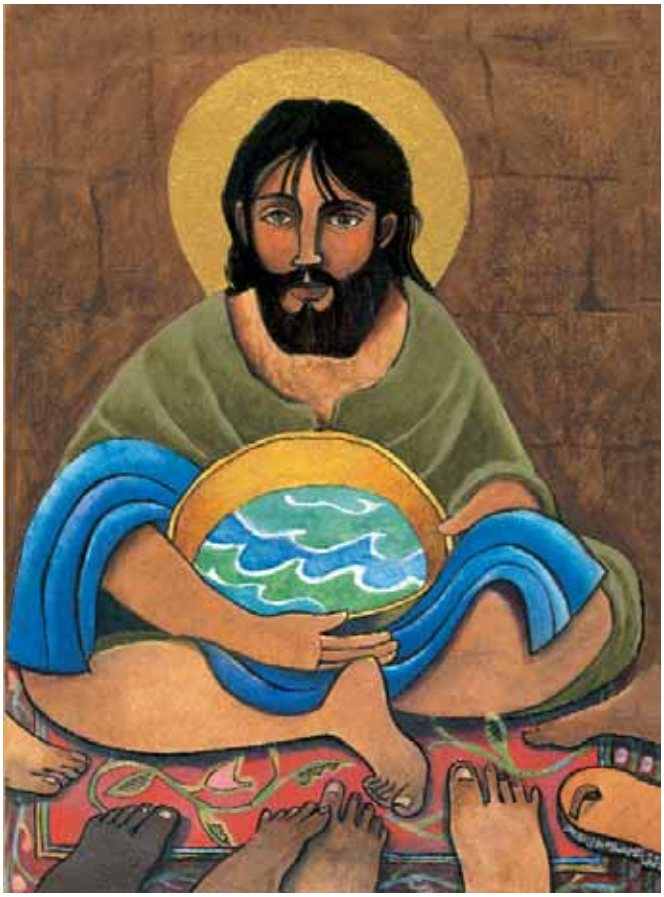
And the work is always unfinished. Theology itself has to grow to stay alive. Theologians betray their vocation if they simply repeat word-for-word definitions taken from Scripture or doctrine, as if formulas could contain faith or words exhaust mystery. Every age, every culture needs to find access to Jesus Christ from within its own distinctive language and worldview. But the future of theology does not undermine the importance of its past. Theological growth needs direction to remain authentically alive. It needs Scripture (the normative witness to apostolic faith) and the Christological dogmas formulated by the theologians of the early church.

However, the teachings of Scripture and tradition are not self-interpreting. For this reason, Christology is not only complex but dangerous. Even devout believers can lose their way in the thickets of Christological reasoning. Even clear and apparently unambiguous statements like "Christians believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ" need to be interpreted in relation to other statements. Taken in isolation, without reference to the full humanity of Jesus, this statement is misleading and potentially harmful. In contrast, the classic formula developed at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, affirms the *full divinity* and *full humanity* of the *one person*, Jesus Christ, "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." And even this profound and balanced definition is not the end of the matter, for inquiring minds want to know: How do we make sense of this?

In the effort to make sense of the language of faith, the choice of where to begin is crucial because it shapes the way we imagine Jesus. This, I believe, represents the key difference between the Christology of Jon Sobrino, S.J., and the logic of the Vatican notification that criticizes his work. The notification implies that theology should start "from above," with the Nicene Creed's affirmation of Jesus' divinity ("one in being with the Father"). Sobrino, by contrast, begins "from below" where the synoptic Gospels begin, with Jesus as he appeared to his contemporaries ("Is this not the carpenter's son?"). The one approach starts with doctrine. The other begins in history.

On the surface, starting from doctrine appears to be the strongest way to safeguard the faith. But throughout Christianity's history, it is the return to Jesus that consistently protects theology from the greatest danger of all—the temptation to use its own logic to misrepresent God. Concern for this danger lies behind the commandment forbidding false images of God: God cannot be described by analogy to what we think a god ought to be like. For his part, Sobrino is wary of the assumption that "we already know what divinity is" when we apply the term to Jesus. Rather, Jesus reveals what divinity means. Starting with Jesus and moving from there to an interpretation of his being the eternal Word of God unmasks the temptation to manipulate his image (and thereby God's image) for our own ends.

Furthermore, Sobrino begins with Jesus precisely to "make sense" of Christian faith in a world burdened by



"HIGH PRIEST"

"senseless" suffering, especially the suffering that results from inhuman poverty and violent oppression. Starting with Jesus and his scandalous love for the poor provides the best way today to lead people to authentic faith in Jesus Christ. It empowers Christians to live as disciples of Jesus while confirming their claim to be advocates of a universal, integral justice. Finally, it provides a credible way of holding the tension between the divine and the human natures of Jesus. Sobrino directs the imagination to that which is most easily imaginable: Jesus as he appeared to his contemporaries. He then leads it beyond its normal limits, as theology must, in order to give a complete account of Christian hope.

The Vatican notification warns that Sobrino's method might scandalize believers who are not sophisticated enough to follow his subtle theological ascent. If people begin by imagining Jesus in his humanity, they might remain there, with a "merely human" Jesus. Of course, a corresponding risk exists for those who start with the Nicene Creed and utilize a dogmatic imagination. This approach can lead simple believers into a heretically high Christology like Docetism, in which Jesus, the Son of God, only appears to be human.

Christology wrestles with difficult questions. Indeed, its own use of reason can be dangerous. But not every danger can be addressed by authoritative pronouncements. Moreover, while it may be prudent to warn believers about the possible dangers of Sobrino's Christology, it seems equally necessary to call attention to corresponding dangers in Christologies that begin with Jesus' divinity. At the very least it is a mistake to think that Christologies "from below" pose the only or the greatest danger to Christian faith.

Word Incarnate

Robert P. Imbelli

PRESSED TO CHOOSE but one New Testament verse to recapitulate the Good News, the Gospel within the Gospel, one might opt for the climax of the Prologue of St. John (1:14):

> And the Word became flesh
> and made his dwelling among
> us, and we saw his glory, the
> glory of the Father's only Son,
> full of grace and truth.

The Word, the eternal Son of the Father, who precedes and "pre-contains" all creation, became part of created reality, entered into human history, lived a complete human life, became one of us—even unto death.

So stupendous is this mystery that already in the first century some demurred. Surely it was unseemly for the divine to enter into the muck of humanity, confined in a body, subject to the indignities and torments to which flesh is heir. So began the perennial Gnostic revulsion against the flesh, and especially against the flesh-taking of the Holy, Immortal One.

The First Letter of John stands at the origin of the ecclesial tradition of discernment of spirits. It reiterates with insistence: "Beloved, do not trust every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Messiah has come in the flesh belongs to God" (1 Jn 4:1-2). The incarnation of the Word is not adventitious to God's saving action; it is the very heart of salvation.

The Letter to the Hebrews sealed the canonical New Testament's incarnational conviction. "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to God who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Heb 5:7-9).

Almost 400 years later, the great Christological Council of Chalcedon

articulates, in the language of its culture and time, this core discernment and persuasion of the New Testament. Jesus the Christ is "perfect [Greek *teleion*] in divinity, perfect in humanity, truly God and truly human, of a rational soul and body." In a famous formulation the council confesses the one Lord Jesus Christ "in two natures with no confusion, no change, no division, no separation...the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being." Here the mystery of the Incarnation is neither explained nor reduced, but confessed and celebrated. Chalcedon enunciates the "deep grammar" that governs the church's preaching, catechesis and theological reflection.

Fast-forward 1,500 years. As part of the commemoration of the anniversary of Chalcedon, Karl Rahner, S.J., wrote an essay that stands at the origin of renewed Christological reflection in the Catholic tradition. The essay, in revised form, appears in the first volume of his *Theological Investigations* under the title "Current Problems in Christology." In the context of the Catholic theological world of the 1950s, these sentences rang like a manifesto:

> We shall never cease to return to this formula [of Chalcedon], because whenever it is necessary to say briefly what it is that we encounter in the ineffable truth which is our salvation, we shall always have recourse to its modest, sober clarity. But we shall only really have recourse to it (and this is not at all the same thing as simply repeating it), if it is not only our end but also our beginning.

Rahner lamented that there was far too much mere repetition of creedal formulae, rather than genuine appropriation of the council's insight. Moreover, he also judged that some of what was said in standard textbooks and in popular preaching was, often inadvertently, not consonant with Chalcedon's measured doctrine. In particular, Rahner discerned a "crypto-monophysitism" that emphasized the divinity of Christ to the virtual exclusion of his full humanity.

In retrospect, this article (published in German in 1954 and in English in 1961) anticipated the direction of much of post-Vatican II Christological reflection by Catholic theologians. It stressed the need to do full justice to the humanity of Jesus, to return anew to the canonical range of New Testament witness rather than relying, almost exclusively, on the Gospel of John. It advocated complementing a "Christology from above" with a "Christology from below," one that takes with utmost seriousness "the human experience of Jesus."

Rahner already anticipated that this commitment would entail not only a focus on the human nature of the Word in some abstract, timeless fashion, but a consideration of the "flesh-taking" in its concrete historical, religious and social setting. This commitment, supported and promoted by the experience and teaching of Vatican II, led to a profusion of works in Christology: from Hans Küng to Edward Schillebeeckx, from Hans Urs von Balthasar to Walter Kasper, from Jon Sobrino to Elizabeth Johnson. Though the works of these authors certainly differ among themselves, all would echo Rahner's claim that Chalcedon marks not only an end, but also a beginning of the church's never-ending reflection on the mystery of its Lord.

In the present situation of Catholic theology, at least in its university setting, I think few would contend, as Rahner did 50 years ago, that there flows "an undercurrent of monophysitism." The acknowledgement of the humanity of Jesus, of his immersion in the Jewish religious-cultural world of his time, has become an indisputable given (see Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus*; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*; Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: a Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*). New archeological findings continue to "flesh out" the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth (see James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and Archeology*, Eerdmans, 2006). The present danger may lie, rather, in an inclination to present a Jesus who is fully, but only, human: a "Christology from below" that never quite manages to get off the ground. The church's foundational faith in the incarnation of the only Son risks being reduced to a vague avowal of the divine inspiration of one who is a provocative prophet. Indeed, some even hint that the church's dogmatic tradition distorts the reality of the first-century Jewish figure.

I read the recent notification of the C.D.F. on some writings of Father Jon Sobrino as a call to accountability to the grammar of Chalcedon, even as theologians probe new insights and forge new language. In the spirit of 1 John, it offers guidelines for discernment. I do not think Karl Rahner would object in principle to this admonition, though he might differ, of course, with regard to the congregation's specific findings.

The challenge before us all, not only theologians, but preachers and parents, artists and educators, is to rekindle in our day and place the Christic imagination: to appropriate and extend Vatican II's confident confession that Jesus is "the light of the nations" (*Lumen Gentium*, No. 1), that he is "the mediator and fullness of all revelation" (*Dei Verbum*, No. 2) and that the Holy Spirit offers to everyone "the possibility of being associated with Christ's paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et Spes*, No. 22).

In pursuing this inexhaustible blessing and mission, we can do no

better than take as a sure guide the Letter to the Hebrews, which so forthrightly celebrates the humanity of the Lord. For it also, with equal boldness, proclaims his unsurpassable uniqueness (Heb 1:1-2):

> In times past, God spoke in partial and diverse ways to our ancestors through the prophets, but in these, the days of fulfillment, God has spoken to us through a Son, whom he has made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe.

Jesus and the Kingdom of God

John R. Donahue

THE KINGDOM OF GOD assumes a central place in the notification on the works of Jon Sobrino, S.J., as it does in contemporary New Testament scholarship. A wide spectrum of New Testament scholars of all denominations significantly agrees that the central theme of the public proclamation of Jesus was the arrival of God's powerful reign. Beyond this consensus is a virtual storm of scholarly discussion and debate. The kingdom is a major topic in three recent scholarly tomes: *Jesus: A Marginal Jew*, Vol. 2, by John P. Meier (reviewed in **America**, 4/8/95); *Jesus and the Victory of God*, by N. T. Wright (**Am.** 3/8/97); and *Jesus Remembered*, by James D. G. Dunn (**Am.** 12/3/03).

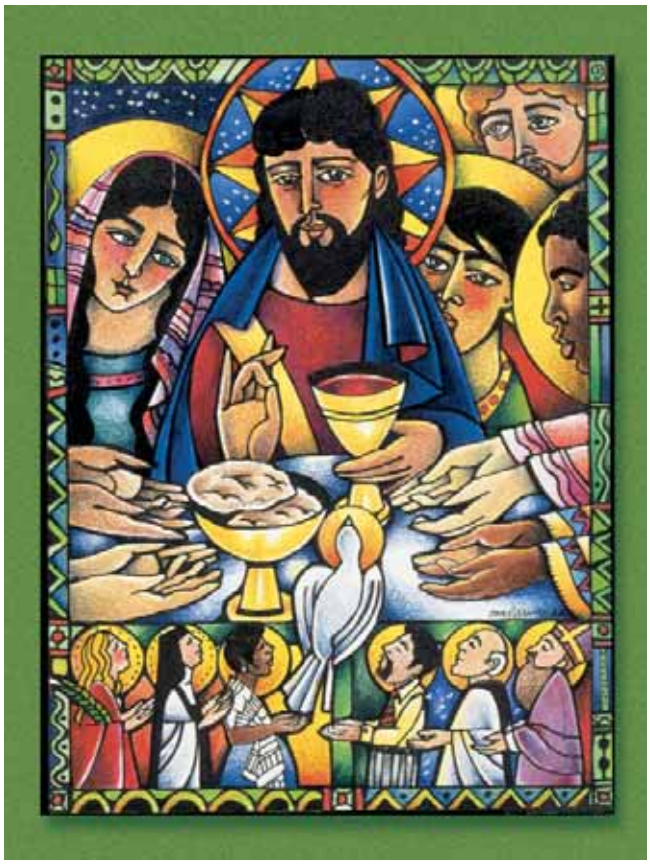
The Greek term itself, *basileia tou theou* (literally, "kingdom of God"), expresses the power of God active in the ministry of Jesus, but it also implies a spatial or local dimension, as in "United Kingdom." The expression is a tensive symbol, evoking a host of associations rather than a single referent. The proclamation has a clear eschatological dimension—the final and definitive rule of God is at hand.

A host of problems accompany interpretation of this proclamation. There are three principal groups of sayings. The first stresses the presence of the kingdom; the second, its future coming; the third, its demands on people who wish to accept or enter it. A seemingly endless debate centers on which sayings are closest to the actual statements of Jesus (his *ipsissima vox*). Advocates of the presence of the kingdom interpret Jesus primarily as a prophet of reform (John Dominic Crossan), while the future sayings form the basis of interpreting Jesus as an apocalyptic preacher (Albert Schweitzer). Current exegesis leans toward some version of the thesis of Joachim Jeremias, that Jesus proclaims God's reign as already at work in his ministry, while anticipating its fullest realization in the future.

Evidence for both positions is ample. Jesus inaugurates his public ministry by proclaiming that the kingdom of God is at hand and summoning people to reform and renewal (*metanoia*, Mk 1:16-17). Jesus also proclaims that the kingdom is "among you" (Lk 17:21), not "within you," a translation that spawns many inaccurate appropriations. His mighty works of healing, confrontation with demons and his power over nature are the signs of God's power now at work in his life and teaching. The kingdom is "of God," both as gift and challenge; despite common parlance, nowhere does the New Testament speak of "building the kingdom of God." For his part, Jesus speaks often of the kingdom in parables drawn from the ordinary lives of his hearers. Human experience is the path toward the transcendent.

Future expectation is also strong. Disciples are to pray that the kingdom will come, just as they pray for God's will to be be done on earth as in heaven (Mt 6:10). Other sayings of Jesus reflect Jewish apocalyptic thought, with its emphasis on the end of the world, when the exalted Son of Man will reign as king to judge evildoers and restore justice to the elect (the sheep and the goats, Mt 25:31-46). According to Paul, eschatological fulfillment of the reign of God will come when at the end time the risen Jesus will hand over his kingdom to "his God and Father" (1 Cor 15:24).

The radical challenge of the kingdom is crystallized in a series of say-



"BREAD FROM HEAVEN"

ings on conditions for "entering" the kingdom. Rather than scandalize a child or commit other sins, one should be willing to enter the kingdom of God blind (Mk 9:47). Those who wish to enter the kingdom should be powerless like children (Mt 19:14); riches provide an overwhelming obstacle to entering (Mt 19:23-25). Disciples who seek the prestige of sitting at the right hand of Jesus in the kingdom are urged instead to become servants and slaves (Mt 20:21-25).

The powerful reign of God is not otherworldly, but embodied in history. Its arrival brings special hope to the poor, the suffering and the marginal. When Jesus calls the poor happy because "the kingdom of God is yours" (Lk 6:26), he is declaring that God's reign is on their behalf. After the rich young man fails to heed Jesus' call to give his wealth to the poor, Jesus comments to his disciples about the young man's reluctance, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:23).

Jesus' personal consciousness of the reign of God constitutes an enduring problem. Though, apart from John 18, Jesus never refers to "his kingdom" and does not accept the title "king," he has a unique relationship to God's reign. For decades scholars have called attention to Origen's description of Jesus as *autobasileia* (literally "himself the kingdom"). Recent magisterial statements have frequently appealed to this text. While reflecting on Matt 18:23-35, Origen says that "king" refers to the Son of God. He goes on to ask: Since Jesus is "wisdom itself" (*autosophia*), "justice itself" (*autodikaiosyne*) and "truth itself" (*autoasphaleia*), is he not also *autobasileia* "the kingdom itself" (*In Mt. Hom.*, 14:7)?

Origen prefers the spiritual sense over the literal, and his commentary is allegorical and Christological. The phrase "the kingdom itself," therefore, is a theological expression on the trajectory that leads to the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. It is an interpretation, rather than a description of the historical Jesus.

Jesus' Self-Consciousness

William Thompson-Uberuaga

REGARD FOR JESUS' HUMAN identity and consciousness is not new. Luke 2:52 tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom. The Gospels attest to threshold moments in which Jesus' consciousness unfolds, such as his baptism (which brings a heightened awareness of his relationship with his Father and his mission, tutored by John the Baptist), his desert experience (when he confronts his "demons" and readies himself for the struggles to come), his anointing by the Spirit (bestowing the gift of bringing good news to the poor), his transfiguration (opening up further depths of his particular person and mission) and his struggle in Gethsemane (about the will of God for him unto death).

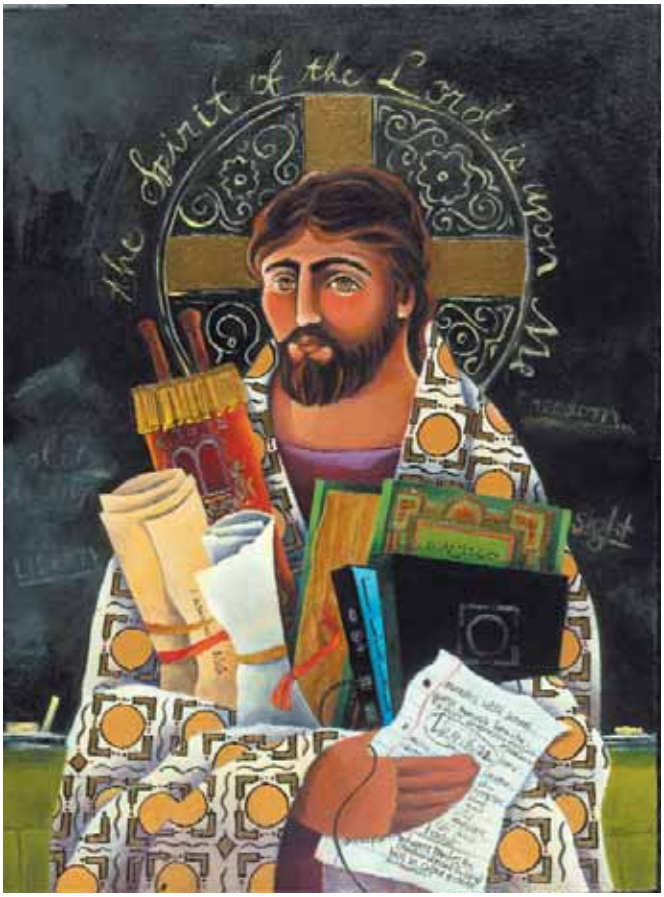
In the second century Irenaeus wrote that the Son established a genuine communion with us through passing "through every stage of life" (*Against Heresies*). Still, early church councils found that they had to defend Jesus' authentic human soul, intellect, will and vital energy against some who would deny them, so counterintuitive did it seem that God would come among us as a human being.

Since the connection between persons and their consciousnesses is an intimate one, it is reasonable to think that any special qualities of personhood would also shape one's consciousness. Such thinking brings special challenges to our understanding of Jesus the Christ. His person, according to Christian doctrine, possesses two natures, divine and human. The communion between Jesus' divinity and humanity, as a true communion, would entail an exchange of attributes between the two: God truly sharing the human condition. All of this is attested to by Scripture and taught by church councils. But does his divine identity and nature affect Jesus' human consciousness? If so, in what way(s) can this happen without tampering with an integral human nature and human mind, and so risk being inconsistent with the doctrines of Chalcedon and Constantinople III?

The question is difficult and brings us to one of the fault lines among theologians today. We might argue a case deductively, based on a view of how God would act. God would never do anything to harm Jesus' consciousness, we might say, but rather would create it and sustain it. That position uses the theological principle that God as the creator always enhances rather than curtails creation. We cannot do much without general principles like that from which to make deductions.

But we reach a limit here. For how well do we know who God is and how God should act? Some early heretics thought they knew God's being well enough to argue that it would be inappropriate for Jesus to have a truly human intellect and will, because that would diminish the sovereignty of his divine nature, giving too much independence to his humanity. This sounded reasonable. Yet the church, following Scripture, could not accept such a view. The Word truly became human in Jesus, and being human entails the presence of a fully functioning human intellect and will. Apparently God was trying to reveal to us a different view of who he is and how he acts.

Other theologians take an induc-



"CHRIST THE TEACHER"

tive approach, led by the witness of revelation. Scripture teaches that Jesus was sinless (Heb 4:15), for example. Sinlessness is one of the special ways in which Jesus' divinity enhanced his humanity. It coheres with Jesus' mission, too, which is to be the way out of humanity's sinful condition. Scripture teaches that Jesus possessed an extraordinary ability to discern the depths of the human heart, like the hearts of Judas, Peter and the Samaritan woman at the well. Sinlessness and deep discernment of the human heart exemplify the exchange between Jesus' divine and human natures.

Overlapping the fault line is the theologians' tendency either to maximize the ways in which Jesus' divinity enhances his human consciousness or to understate them, in a more reserved way. For example, did Jesus enjoy the "full" beatific vision from the moment he was conceived—did he know as a fetus in the womb all that he would know after the resurrection? Was Jesus the only human ever able to see the Father continually creating his humanity, thus making it easier for him to be faithful to his Father's will in accepting his death, as Bertrand de Margerie holds ("The Double Consciousness of Christ")? When does the divine enhancement go too far, reducing Jesus' humanity and leaving him with only one nature, the divine nature?

Other theologians choose to be reserved about the divine effects, unless compelled by revelation. Jesus, they suggest, enjoyed some vision of his divine nature and of his Father and the Spirit, but not the full, beatific vision of the resurrection state. Jesus' earthly vision likely started out dim and grew in clarity as he passed through threshold experiences and matured. These theologians suggest that along with his special visionary knowledge as the Son in obedience to his Father, Jesus still was a person of faith, albeit of a unique kind. Such reasoning can be found in the work of Karl Rahner (*Theological Investigations*, Vol. V), Hans Urs von Balthasar (*Theo-Drama*, Vol. III) and Walter Kasper (*Jesus the Christ*) as well as Jon Sobrino (*Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View* and *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*). Gerald O'Collins (*Christology*) offers one of the more developed analyses of the types of faith manifested by Jesus, that of trust and that of believing certain truths, such as those about God taught him as a Jew.

My impression is that the magisterium reflects the spread of views noted among the theologians. Reflecting the reserved, inductive tendency, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, so far as I can tell, rather than attributing the beatific vision to Jesus, speaks of his knowledge of everything pertaining to God, such as an "intimate" and "immediate knowledge" of the Father and a full understanding of those plans of God he had come to reveal (Nos. 472-74). This knowledge of his Father entails his knowledge of his own unique sonship (No. 444), of course. The catechism also attributes to Jesus a "trusting commitment" to the Father (No. 2600), which seems to be faith-as-trust. By contrast, the "Notification" sent to Jon Sobrino reflects a maximalist perspective, attributing the beatific vision to Jesus and arguing that it obviates the need for any faith by Jesus.

The views expressed on both sides of the fault lines fall within a legitimate spread of interpretations of the Catholic faith. From time to time we theologians may go too far, but doing so results in error rather than heresy in faithful theologians. Occasionally "some magisterial documents might not be free from all deficiencies" either, as Cardinal Ratzinger has written (*Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian*, 1990, No. 24).

Jesus as Savior

Robert A. Krieg

HOW DID/DOES CHRIST bring about our salvation? The question comes to mind when reading the

recent notification by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith concerning the theology of Jon Sobrino, S.J. In the C.D.F.'s judgment, Sobrino's writings contain an inadequate account of the "salvific value" of Jesus' death.

In theology an entire subdiscipline, called soteriology, is devoted to such matters. Soteriology means critical, systematic reflection on the mystery of God's saving activity on our behalf. In particular, it inquires into the redemptive significance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection by examining Jesus' own proclamation as found in the New Testament and as interpreted and transmitted in the Christian tradition, in specific church teachings and in the witness of contemporary Christians.

Today six widely held convictions shape soteriology.

1. Jesus saw his suffering and death as the price he would need to pay for remaining faithful to his proclamation of the coming of God's reign (Mk 1:14-15). He judged his passion to be part of his mission and, along with his entire life and ministry, it had redemptive significance (Mk 8:31-33).

2. Jesus did not, however, explicitly offer a complete explanation, much less a doctrine concerning the salvific value of his life, death and resurrection. Rather, he spoke of his passion using such images as a "ransom" (Mk 10:45), a "grain of wheat" that dies and "bears much fruit" (John 12:24), the "beloved son" sent by his father to reclaim the vineyard (Mk 12:6), and his body "that is for you" and his blood "poured out for many" (1 Cor 11:24; Mk 14:23).

3. To elucidate the redemptive meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the New Testament writers employ a wide range of metaphors. Paul speaks of Jesus Christ as the "new Adam," who lived and died in unswerving faithfulness to God, bringing grace "for the many" (Rom 5:15). Mark depicts Jesus as succumbing to death and thereby "tying up the strong man," Satan (Mk 3:27). Matthew portrays Jesus' passion as the death of an "innocent" and hence truly "righteous" person (Mt 27:19; Wis 2:12; 3:1). Luke perceives Jesus' death and resurrection as the releasing of the Holy Spirit into history (Lk 24:49; Acts 2:4). John presents Jesus' entire life, culminating in his suffering and death, as the revelation of God's love (Jn 10:11).

4. The Christian tradition in the West similarly contains at least five different types of models or "theories" concerning the salvific value of the cross. The Christus-Victor view of St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395) speaks of Jesus Christ freeing us from Satan's grasp. The "satisfaction theory" of St. Anselm (d. 1109) presents Jesus Christ initiating the restoration of right relationships in creation. According to the "penal-substitution" theory of John Calvin (d. 1564), Jesus Christ deliberately became the victim of the wrath of God that we all deserve. The sacramental view of Abelard (d. 1142) perceives Jesus' cross as the definitive revelation of God's love. And the representative theology of St. Irenaeus (d. 200) holds that Jesus Christ brought about the cosmic breakthrough of human faithfulness and love in response to God's grace.

5. Although God's saving activity in Jesus Christ happened once and for all, it is at the same time an ongoing reality. Thus it can be mediated through the sacraments, the act of faith, participation in the life of the church and care for people in need.

6. God's redemption in Jesus Christ is a mystery, a reality that we can increasingly understand but never fully fathom. For this reason it is best understood by means of a variety of metaphors and models. In the Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*), four distinct "theories" of how Christ saved us occur all within the same article (No. 22). Jesus Christ saved us because he is "the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love" (sacramental model); he is also identified as the "new Adam," who "has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin" (representative model). Moreover, Christ "merited life for us by his blood, which he freely shed" (satisfaction model), and he united us with God by "freeing us from the bondage of the devil and of sin" (Christus-Victor Model).

As the C.D.F. rightly states, Catholic theologians must uphold "the normative value of the affirma-

"KING OF THE JEWS"

tions of the New Testament as well as those of the great Councils of the early Church" (Explanatory Note, No. 3). Yet the C.D.F. neglects to clarify that theologians serve the church by exploring the soteriological implications of these "affirmations," especially since the church possesses no complete and final doctrinal formulation concerning the theological value of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

An evaluation of an individual theologian's soteriology is a complex endeavor. It requires analyzing the scholar's entire use of redemptive metaphors and classic theories, and then locating this theological configuration within the spectrum of soteriological positions contained in Scripture, tradition and church teachings.

On the one hand, Sobrino's work contains some soteriological statements that are inadequate or ambiguous, especially when they are extracted from their texts. For example, Sobrino wrote in *Jesus the Liberator*, as the C.D.F. notes, "Let it be said from the start that the historical Jesus did not interpret his death in terms of salvation...." This statement by itself is inadequate. When it is completed by its subordinate clause, it becomes more acceptable, but remains ambiguous: "Let it be said from the start that the historical Jesus did not interpret his death in terms of salvation, in terms of the soteriological models later developed by the New Testament, such as expiatory sacrifice or vicarious satisfaction" (P. 201). Also problematic, as the C.D.F. has observed, is the following statement concerning Jesus' death: "This saving efficacy is shown more in the form of an exemplary cause than an efficient cause" (P. 230). Is Jesus Christ no more than an example or role model of a life of love?

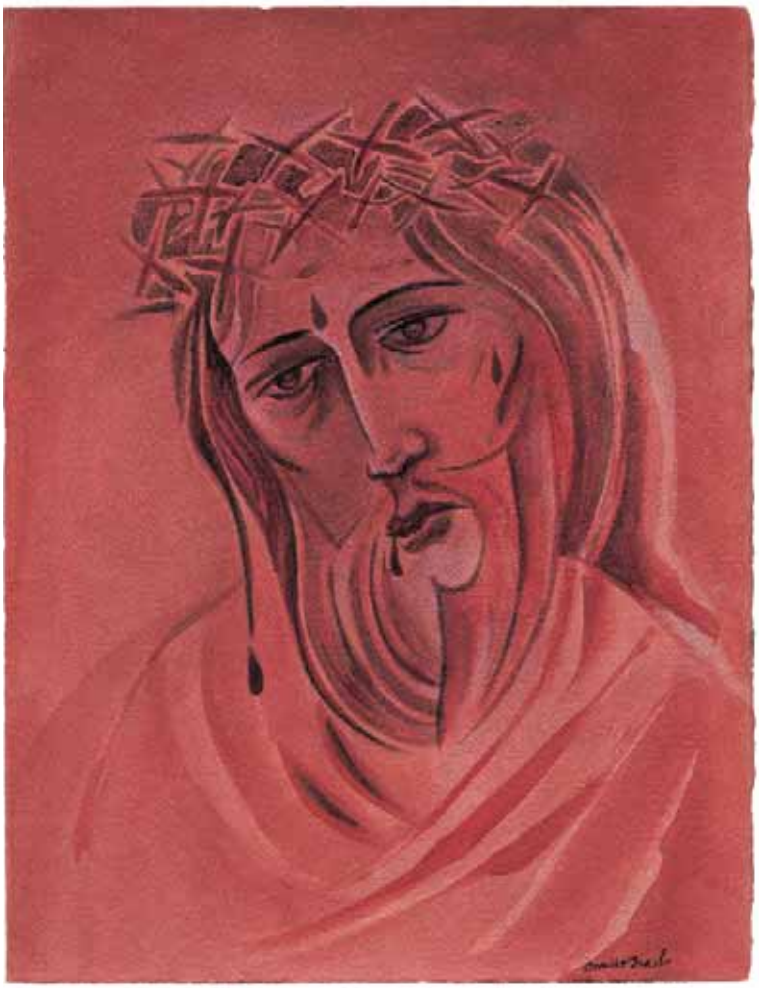
On the other hand, the notification understates the merits of the Jesuit theologian's critical, systematic reflections on salvation in Jesus Christ. In *Jesus the Liberator* Sobrino unites three of the classical "theories" of Jesus Christ as redeemer—Christ the victor who remained faithful to the true God amid "the battle of the divinities and their mediators," and thereby overcame death by "bearing the evil from which we have to be redeemed" (Pp. 219, 217); Jesus the new Adam, "the revelation of the *homo verus*, the true and complete human being...depicted by the New Testament as one who 'goes about doing good,' who was 'faithful and merciful,' who came 'not to be served but to serve'" (P. 229); and the cross as sacramental: "Jesus' cross is the expression of God's love.... And God chose this way of showing himself, because he could not find any clearer way of telling us human beings that he really wills our salvation" (P. 231).

Taken as a whole, Sobrino's writings express a rich—though not flawless—Catholic soteriology. Father Sobrino deserves the church's gratitude, not its suspicion. A

Mutually Enriching

The work of bishops and theologians

JOHN J. STRYNKOWSKI



"SUFFERING SERVANT"

As a seminarian from 1960 to 1964 and as a priest from 1969 to 1971, I studied theology at the Gregorian University in Rome. One of the lessons I learned from several of the Jesuit professors there was the importance of attending to the historical circumstances surrounding the doctrinal pronouncements of ecumenical councils.

It was important, first of all, to know the conflict that led to an issue being debated at a council and resolved there. Knowing the theologies of the parties involved offered an invaluable background for such debates and the factors that led to certain words being used to settle them. For more recent councils there were records of the proceedings and discussions in commissions and at the formal sessions of the councils themselves. All of this study helped to clarify the meaning and intention of the council with respect to a particular statement.

This approach to dogmas was ratified by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1973 with its declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, which notes the "difficulties [that] arise from the historical condition that affects the expression of Revelation." The congregation describes as conditions that affect teaching: the limitations of the language and culture of a particular era and the need in a particular time to address a specific question or error.

Another lesson I learned from our professors was that no theologian works in the abstract. Every theologian comes from a theological tradition and is influenced by predecessors in both positive and negative ways. A theological tradition can be called a school, not necessarily in the sense of a specific building but in the sense of methodology and emphasis. A theologian may be molded by that school and work within its framework or react against it and perhaps become the founder of another school. In the early church, Origen was a formidable influence on later generations, as were Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure and Duns Scotus in the Middle Ages and beyond. In the early 19th century there was the Tübingen school, and the 20th century gave us such great

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theologians as Karl Rahner, S.J., and Bernard Lonergan, S.J., participants in a broader stream of transcendental theology, whose work continues in countless numbers of disciples today. These are only a few of the schools of theology that have existed in the history of the church.

Every theologian also works in the context of the contemporary culture and the current pastoral needs of the church. While the teaching of the church is the fundamental given on which the theologian works, questions come from the world and the life of the church that frequently provoke the theologian's inquiry into the Christian tradition and dogmas. It can be easily shown that much of the productive theological output of the period between World War II and the Second Vatican Council was prompted by the challenges that people of faith had to address as a result of the violent wars of the 20th century and the rise of a militant atheism in the Soviet Union and a philosophical atheism in Western Europe.

Theologians also have to work with the faith, as the people of God "penetrates it more deeply through right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life" ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," No. 12). The experience and faith of God's people lead theologians to articulate that experience and faith by drawing on the depth and breadth of the Christian tradition. That articulation, in turn, further deepens our understanding of the tradition. The massive poverty of the people of Latin America, for example, led to liberation theology and the church's preferential option for the poor, embraced as a formulation of the church's mission by both Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Just as no theologian works in the abstract, so too no exercise of the magisterium occurs in the abstract. That was already clear from *Mysterium Ecclesiae*. The C.D.F. notes, for example, that truths enunciated by the magisterium may bear traces of "the changeable conceptions of a given epoch," and so theologians "seek to define exactly the intention of teaching proper to various [dogmatic] formulas." But theologians are involved in the very formulation of teaching as well. John Courtney Murray, S. J., and Msgr. Pietro Pavan, for example, were principal contributors to Vatican II's "Declaration on Religious Liberty" (*Dignitatis Humanae*). Earlier Pavan had been the major adviser for Pope John XXIII's social encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963). The participation of theologians in the formulation of church teaching has always been the case and is still the case today.

Bishops are called to the office of teaching for the ultimate discernment of the truth to be proclaimed, and theologians are endowed with the charism to deepen and articulate in credible ways the understanding of the truth proclaimed. Some bishops have had and have the charism of being theologians as well, but it is not intrinsic to the office of bishop to be a theologian in the sense of a rigorous and scholarly pursuit of the history of church teaching and its application today. That is why the magisterium turns to theologians for assistance in formulating teaching.

Theologians, of course, bring their own limitations. The genius of the bishops at Vatican II was to listen to all the schools of theology at that time, which is reflected in the documents of the council. That makes the documents more difficult to interpret, but it also respects the diversity in unity characteristic of the Catholic Church. It is not surprising, then, that documents of lesser magisterial weight, dependent on a smaller circle of theologians as consultants, will provoke debate.

No one knew that better than Cardinal John Henry Newman. In his *Apologia pro Vita Sua* Newman described the relationship between authority and reason in the church as a "noisy process." He wrote: "Every exercise of Infallibility is brought out into act by an intense and varied operation of the Reason, both as its ally and as its opponent." Theologians are involved in the work of the magisterium at every level of preparation and authority, but they are also involved afterward in the work of deepening understanding, opening new avenues of discussion and linking particular teachings to the larger context of church tradition and teaching.

Our Jesuit professors at the Gregorian in the 1960s honored always the deposit of faith, but they also taught us that the truth comes to us in the fragile forms of human language. To pursue the truth in its fragile forms is necessary, demanding, controversial, but never without divine surprise. A

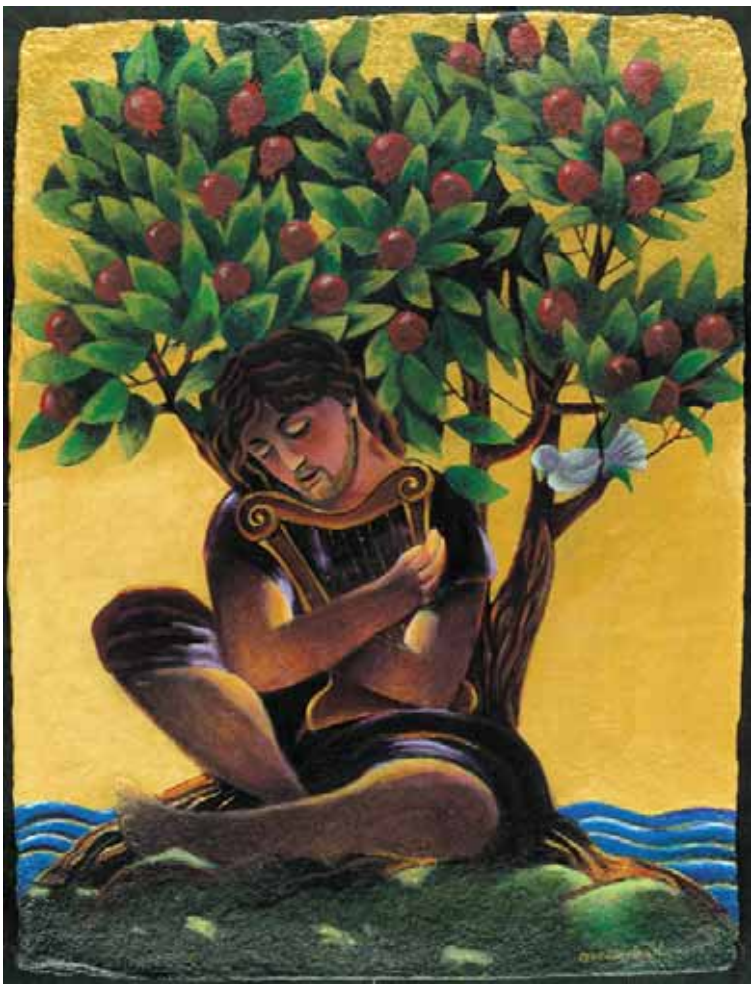
A Challenge for Theologians

Three puzzling positions

GERALD O'COLLINS

In its notification on two works by Jon Sobrino, S.J., the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recalls and re-affirms some utterly basic Christian teachings about Jesus Christ—above all, that Jesus was truly divine and fully human. Such doctrines, embodied in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of A.D. 381, which is accepted by all Christian communities, require a firm assent from any Catholic theologian worthy of the name.

There are, however, several particular positions adopted by the notification that seem less than convincing and have puzzled commentators. Let me give three examples, two of them theological and one of them biblical.



"SON OF DAVID"

First, the notification takes up a point of theology that might seem somewhat arcane but does, nevertheless, lie at the heart of the teaching of the Councils of Ephesus (A.D. 431) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451). This is the *communicatio idiomatum*, or exchange of properties (No. 6). By describing the exchange of properties as "the possibility of referring the properties of divinity to humanity and vice versa," the notification could be misleading. It gives the impression that we would, for example, be justified in attributing to the divine nature of Christ the property of mortality and to the human nature of Christ the property of omnipotence. The meaning of the exchange of properties is entirely different. We can name the *person* of Christ with reference to one nature ("the Son of God") and attribute to his *person* some property due to the other nature ("died on the cross"). Such attribution justifies the language of Christmas carols, for example, in which the Christ Child is described as "the creator of the sun and stars." This language names the person in reference to one nature (his humanity) and attributes to his person a property (the power to create) that belongs to his other nature (his divinity). The *communicatio idiomatum* is not an optional extra or a game to be played by theologians alone. It essentially serves to defend the unity of Christ (at the level of his person) and his duality (at the level of his two distinct but not separated natures). One may not gloss over the fact that attributions are attached to the person of Christ and go on to describe the *communicatio idiomatum* as a matter of "referring the

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properties of the divinity to the humanity and vice versa" (of the humanity to the divinity).

Second, the section where the notification deals with the self-consciousness of Jesus seems less than clear about the position that it intends to maintain (No. 8). On the one hand, it expounds "the filial and messianic consciousness of Jesus" and "his intimate and immediate knowledge" of the Father—a doctrine that is well supported by the Gospels and by the theology of Karl Rahner (which this section echoes in passing). On the other hand, the section appears to advocate a return to the view of St. Thomas Aquinas—namely, that from the very first moment of his human conception, Jesus enjoyed in his earthly mind the beatific vision. This view was not included in the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It had already been dropped by the majority of theologians and biblical scholars. Aquinas's view does not appear in several documents issued during the 1970s and 1980s by the International Theological Commission and the Pontifical Biblical Commission. These texts assemble the information that can be gleaned from the Gospels about Christ's consciousness of his personal identity and redemptive mission. These highly relevant documents from two official commissions fail to make an appearance in the notification. To be sure, Aquinas's view of the beatific vision as experienced by the human mind of Christ was endorsed in passing by a 1943 encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*. But that encyclical was primarily concerned with the doctrine of the church. It certainly did not intend to determine once and for all a position on the consciousness of Christ inherited from Aquinas.

Does the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ask Father Sobrino and other theologians to agree with the already widely accepted position that Jesus, during his earthly life and in his human mind, enjoyed a unique, intimate knowledge of the Father and consciousness of his personal identity and saving mission? Or does the C.D.F. require a return to the view that from the very first moment of his conception, Jesus enjoyed in his human mind the vision of God enjoyed by the saints in heaven—a view that would rule out the possibility of recognizing the perfect faith exercised by Jesus during his earthly pilgrimage (see Hebrews 12:2)?

Third, apropos of the redemptive value of the crucifixion and resurrection, the notification rightly wishes to establish the significance that the earthly Jesus ascribed to his coming death (No. 9). It appeals to relevant texts from the narratives of the Last Supper in support of this conclusion. But the notification also cites Mark 10:45: "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Many mainstream scholars agree that the first part of this saying goes back to the words of Jesus. Few, however, maintain that "giving his life as a ransom for many" derives directly from Jesus himself. These words appear, rather, to be a formulation stemming from the Evangelist Mark or his sources in the church tradition; they express, of course, a perfectly justified theological interpretation of the significance of Jesus' violent death.

With reference to Isaiah 53, the notification holds that "Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant" (No. 10). Beyond question, the New Testament authors frequently echoed or cited this fourth and final "Song of the Servant." But many reputable scholars hold the view that Jesus himself did not necessarily have in mind this remarkable Old Testament passage when he recognized the saving value of his own passion and death. It was one thing for Jesus to indicate the redemptive and expiatory value of his imminent death.

It was another for him to do so precisely in terms of Isaiah 53. There are some biblical scholars who do hold this view, but one cannot say that there is a consensus among mainstream biblical experts that Jesus explicitly invoked Isaiah 53.

In sum: With the basic concerns that lie behind the C.D.F.'s notification there can or should be no argument. Jesus was truly divine and fully human. But there is clearly room for some respectful quibbles over the description offered of the "exchange of properties" (*communicatio idiomatum*), the proposed return to a "maximalist" view of St. Thomas Aquinas on the human consciousness of Jesus and the use of Isaiah 53 to support a thoroughly justified position on the saving intentions of Jesus. A

The Peculiar Grace of Failure

A year of teaching, a lifetime lesson learned

BY VALERIE SCHULTZ

ART BY DAN SALAMIDA

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN a reasonably successful person: a long marriage, beautiful children, published clips on demand, no criminal record, no bankruptcies. I've been a hard worker at every job I've had. I've been O.K.—until this past year, which I have spent as an English teacher in a public high school. That was not O.K. I was ineffective, unsuccessful and miserable.

I have been writing bits of this essay for months, on scraps of paper and in my head. Writing time surrendered to teaching and, to my horror, failing. The writer George Bernard Shaw once said, "He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches," which is the most egregiously false maxim ever perpetuated. It is misguided to consider teaching as a fallback career, a back-up plan, which is what I did.

My husband is a gifted educator. He has been a teacher of just about every elementary grade, a site administrator, an educational technology director and a consultant. He has devoted his career to education. He earned his doctorate with the plan to teach at the university level, and an opportunity soon arose. The only problem was that the new position, while on a tenure track, meant a 30 percent cut in pay. This was serious money to a man with four daughters and a wife working as a sporadically paid writer.

But the professorship was his dream, a chance to educate new teachers, so we decided that I could

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make up the difference in income by working full time. I had been a substitute teacher, and had taught classes at church. So I often figured that if it became necessary, I could always teach.

I could always teach. Don't we all figure that, Mr. Shaw? We assume that if our real lives don't work out, we can always settle for the security of a job for which there will always be a demand, as long as people insist on procreating. I could teach, having watched my husband do it for years.

Through the friend of a friend, I heard of an opening in a small, out-of-the-way district. Classes were going to start in a week, and the administrators were desperate for an English teacher. They hired me as soon as the interview was finished, with the stipulation that I enroll in an intern program at the very university where my husband was now a professor, in order to earn my clear credential under California's stringent requirements.

This must be where God wants me, I figured, as I signed the contract against my better judgment. In retrospect, I realize that I panicked, took the first job I was offered and blamed it on God, in a far cry from true discernment. God may very well have wanted me somewhere else, because God surely wanted me to use the brain he gave me. In a year's time, I have learned some difficult lessons, like the importance of searching one's intellect to make a sound decision. The next most obvious lesson is that not everyone can teach, or at least teach well. In order to teach well, one must commit to far more than a six-hour-a-day job. Teaching is a life commitment. Of the scores of teachers we have all had, most of us really remember only those three or four who reached us and somehow touched us, who taught us, whom we credit with forming our lives in significant ways. Teaching, I have finally understood, even though I have always known it in my heart, is an all-consuming undertaking, a passion, a gift, a holy calling. This should not be taken lightly, nor, I came to realize, can it be faked.

I thought that liking kids and liking to write would be enough to make me a good English teacher. Rubbish. Liking teenagers and understanding how their brains learn, how best to reach them and how to engage them in a subject are completely different activities. Face-to-face with five different groups of assorted teenage faces, some expectant, some bored, some impassive, I had to face my own inadequacy. I found that I did not have the soul of a teacher, because rather than being consumed with my students' education and well-being, I watched the clock until each period was over.

Things went very wrong. From classroom management to grading to making grammar palatable, I was clueless. In Room Six, the inmates were running the asylum. A kid came to class drunk, and I didn't even recognize the signs; I believed he had a migraine. I lost two kids during a fire drill. Several pointed out that I did not seem to know much about teaching. Kids who refused to do any work faced me down.

The experience took its toll. I lost weight. I became a chronic complainer. I rarely prayed. I developed insomnia, the nocturnal despair of which I had never experienced. When I did manage to sleep, I had nightmares about poor lesson plans and tests not arriving in time. I had strange dreams. In a word, I was a mess.

I was taking two college courses in addition to teaching full time and trying to keep my writing career alive. My teaching advisor, whose job was to observe me and

then spell out everything I was terrible at, as if it weren't painfully evident, asked me about the rest of my life. I began to tell him: I had four daughters; wrote two columns, one weekly, one monthly; I taught confirmation classes at my church; volunteered at the state prison.... "Stop, stop!" he said, covering his ears. "You're making me tired just listening to this!" He told me that if I expected to complete the credential program I would have to give it all up—well, except for the daughters.

I was unconvinced. I had no wish to give up any of these parts of me. I slogged on through the first quarter, publishing what were essentially rough drafts of columns, teaching, grading, going to classes, neglecting my family. One evening, during the beginning teaching seminar, my advisor said to another student, offhandedly, "No one goes into teaching for the money. If that's why you teach, you should not be a teacher."

Everyone laughed. But I froze, stunned. He was right! Here I was, teaching for the money. I was doing the teaching profession a huge disservice by passing myself off as a teacher. I was a fraud. I was in the wrong place. And I knew it.

> Teaching is an all-consuming undertaking, a holy calling. It should not be taken lightly; nor, I came to realize, can it be faked.

It was downhill from there. I failed both of my college classes and dropped out, an embarrassment to my poor husband, who could not imagine that anyone, especially his wife, would not love being a teacher. My district determined that I would finish out my year's contract by taking a "leave of absence" from the intern program.

I knew then I was never going back.

Getting an F, let alone two, was painful. But it was also strangely liberating. In failing, my initial horror gave way to a creeping sense of peace. For the first time ever, though cloaked in failure, I did not internalize another's disapproval. I was somehow, wickedly, calm. I was learning how to wear failure, but with style.

Anyone who has ever tried to do something for which he or she is not suited has my understanding and sympathy. Before I tried to be a teacher, I would have been judgmental and impatient with such a person. But failing has shown me that trying is not always enough, and that it is difficult to recognize our shortcomings—and then accept them gracefully.

My "teaching" year of failure oddly strengthened me; it was a long, profound lesson in humility and led to my recognition that those who can teach must do so with passion and purpose. Those of us who fail merely ask God to pick us up, dust us off and send us on our grateful, humble way. A

Horace McKenna, Apostle of the Poor

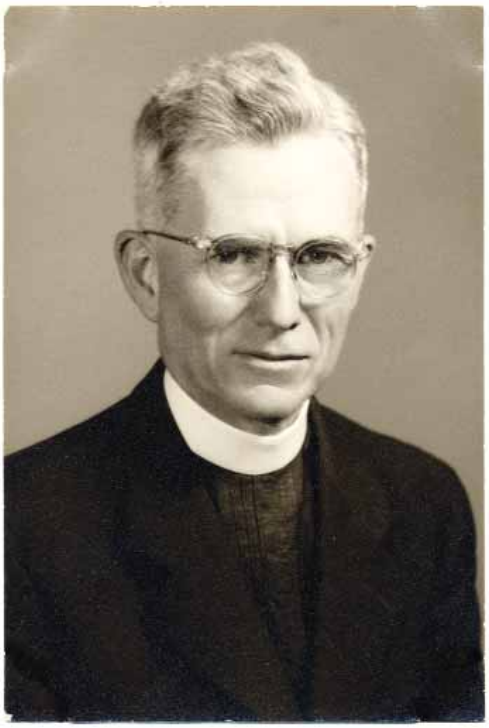
BY KEVIN O'BRIEN

A LINE STILL FORMS outside the Father McKenna Center at St. Aloysius Church in Washington, D.C. People come to the cramped but homey church basement looking for food, clothing, housing and personal support. They still tell stories about Father McKenna, who died 25 years ago. To know the story of Father McKenna is to enter into the lives of the poor whom he loved as a father. "You can't understand me if you don't understand my people," Horace liked to tell his friends as he brought them for a walk around the neighborhood.

In his lifetime, as they do today, people freely called Father McKenna a "saint." His father, Charles, had a sense of things to come. In his insightful biography, *Horace: Priest of the Poor*, John S. Monagan recounts how Charles insisted that his son be baptized with the name Horace. The priest protested: There is no St. Horace. "He'll be the first," Charles replied. Thus was Horace McKenna baptized in a New York City church in the winter of 1899.

Horace met the Jesuits at Fordham Preparatory School in the Bronx. As war raged in Europe, Horace entered the tranquil confines of the Jesuit novitiate overlooking the Hudson River near Poughkeepsie, north of New York City. There he immersed himself in Jesuit ways of praying and benefited from a learning that was, by his own account, "deep, broad and accurate." After professing his first vows, he studied humanities and philosophy, growing in "confidence in thought, truth and love."

Horace was then assigned to teach at a high school for affluent boys in Manila, Philippines. Far removed from his comfortable upbringing and the insular world of studies, Horace felt his mind and heart stretched. He remembered particularly how an elderly Filipino Jesuit would regularly canvass the school playground for scraps of food left over by the privileged students. The brother would then bring the food over to the school wall, where hungry children anxiously waited for the delivery. According to Monagan, the Jesuit brother's kindness and the children's desperation made a lasting impression on Horace.



Horace McKenna

PHOTO COURTESY GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

When he returned to the United States to study theology at the Jesuit seminary in Woodstock, Md., not far from Baltimore, Horace taught Sunday school to African-American children who were not permitted to attend the segregated parochial school. Like his experience with the poor in Manila, his contact with those children transformed his understanding of his priesthood. After Horace was ordained in 1929, he asked his superiors to send him to work with African-American families suffering under segregation laws.

With the blessing of his superiors, Father McKenna made his way to southern Maryland, where for over 20 years he served as a pastor. Horace thrived in his sacramental and pastoral duties, traveling around southern Maryland in his old car. Walter Burghardt, S.J., then a young priest, recalls driving with Horace and stopping frequently so that Horace could say hello to people along the way, usually addressing them by their last name as a sign of respect. During the Great Depression, Horace set up a food distribution system and over the years provided assistance to struggling farmers. Inspired by other Jesuit trailblazers like John LaFarge and Richard McSorley, who worked in southern Maryland at one time or another, Horace vigorously advocated for racial integration in churches and schools.

Horace could become impatient (a "passionate impatience," Horace admitted) with a too-cautious approach to racial integration. His zeal won him many friends and a fair number of adversaries, even among his fellow Jesuits and priests who argued for a more gradual approach

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to racial equality. With a blend of friendliness and righteous persistence, Father McKenna always spoke his mind. After one tense, emotionally raw town meeting, Horace approached a man in the hostile audience, extended his hand and said, "I hope there are no hard feelings." The man responded by looking up at the rafters and saying, "There's where you should be hanging from."

As racial tensions continued to flare, Father McKenna was transferred in 1953 from his beloved southern Maryland to St. Aloysius Church in the District of Columbia. Except for a six-year stint at a parish in Philadelphia, Horace would spend the rest of his life ministering just blocks from the U.S. Capitol. "It's the same work," he said, "chasing sheep; except that the ground is harder." The St. Vincent de Paul Society office in the basement of the church became a center for Horace's charitable work.

Just as he had driven around the counties of southern Maryland, Horace walked the streets around the church, getting to know his neighbors by name. By the mid-1960s, St. Al's, once mostly white, had twice as many black parishioners as white. The once residential neighborhood was changing. White families were moving to the suburbs and office buildings were rising. The redevelopment around North Capitol Street caused a shortage of affordable housing for the urban poor. Responding to this need, Horace and his friends established a new housing complex. They named it Sursum Corda, a Latin expression from the Mass that means, "Lift up your hearts."

Horace's work was ecumenical at its core: he partnered with other churches and served anyone in need, regardless of their religion. In 1970, with the help of friends at Georgetown and other religious leaders, Horace founded S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat), an organization that provided hot meals to the hungry not far from St. Al's.

Horace could not turn away anyone needing help, including a man who gave his legal address as "the back seat of Father McKenna's car." On one occasion, his car was stolen. The thief was caught in West Virginia. When Horace arrived there to retrieve the car, he refused to press charges and even gave the thief a ride home to D.C. If asked, he gave away whatever money he had in his pocket. Father McKenna did not hesitate to eat or sleep overnight in the city's homeless shelters, because he "wanted to see how my brothers in Christ are treated."

On most days, Horace amiably greeted people in the line that formed outside the church basement. As Horace's reputation for generosity grew, so did the line. Gonzaga High School students, many of whom came from Washington's affluent suburbs, would walk by the line every day. One of those students was Martin O'Malley, now governor of Maryland. He recently told The Washington Post: "So you'd come in from the lily-white suburbs and you'd see the nation's Capitol looming in front of you and then...you'd walk by the morning line of homeless and poor and jobless men who were waiting in line at Father Horace McKenna's. That was not lost to many of us walking into school by that line every day: how lucky we were, how much we had."

> 'My greatest cause for thanksgiving is that I am involved with God's poor.'

Horace was an avid fundraiser and communicated news of his work to well-connected friends along the East Coast. He tried to educate the privileged about the plight of the poor. Accolades and honorary degrees came his way. He courted politicians in the name of the poor. With his charming personality, simplicity of lifestyle and selfless zeal, Horace easily won over benefactors.

In the late 1960s and 70s, marches and protests were common in the District of Columbia. Horace walked down to the mall and befriended the protesters. He marched against the Vietnam War. By the end of his life, as the nuclear arms race continued unabated, Father McKenna described himself as a pacifist.

Amid all his social work, Horace remained faithful to his ministry as a parish priest. His prayer and preaching grounded his activism. Celebrating Mass was the center of his day. He earned a reputation as a succinct, engaging homilist and as a wise, compassionate confessor. He called the confessional the "peace box," because people found peace there. A fellow priest commented, "He was so close to the Lord that he could speak with authority and we could reasonably believe that this was the divine word."

Horace's most difficult time as a priest came in 1968, after Pope Paul VI issued his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. He publicly dissented from the archbishop of Washington, Cardinal O'Boyle, who had issued guidelines for priests to apply the teaching prohibiting the use of artificial birth control. Horace, who had great personal affection for the cardinal, joined a group of priests in protesting a literal application of the encyclical. Relying on more than 40 years experience hearing confessions, Horace argued for some pastoral accommodation for married couples who as a matter of conscience found the teaching unduly burdensome. Because of this dissent, Cardinal O'Boyle, who had equal esteem for Horace, restricted him from hearing confessions. Being kept from the "peace box" pained Horace deeply. After two-and-a-half years of canonical appeals and personal pleas, Horace and other dissenting priests expressed assent to a series of statements of doctrine, after which O'Boyle restored their faculties to hear confessions.

As he approached his 80th birthday, Horace encountered physical limits to his once boundless activity. Though his mind remained sharp, he started to lose his sight and needed help getting around. Talk of his saintly character grew. When Washingtonian magazine named Horace a "Washingtonian of the year," the editors commented, "He is said to be the closest thing we have to a saint." Mayor Barry of Washington, D.C., declared July 15, 1979, "Horace McKenna Day" and named him "Apostle of the Poor." Governor Hughes of Maryland awarded Horace a special citation for his service in southern Maryland. He was given his fourth honorary degree, this time by Fordham University. Of his many honors, Horace

treasured most of all the celebration of his 50th anniversary as a priest, hosted by his Jesuit brothers.

On May 11, 1982, Horace suffered a massive heart attack and died. Years earlier, Horace had imagined what would happen after his death:

> When God lets me into heaven, I think I'll ask to go off in a corner somewhere for half an hour and sit down and cry because the strain is off, the work is done, and I haven't been unfaithful or disloyal, all these needs that I have known are in the hands of Providence and I don't have to worry any longer who's at the door, whose breadbox is empty, whose baby is sick, whose house is shaken and discouraged, and whose children can't read.

The Church of St. Aloysius was packed for Horace's funeral: rich and poor, black and white, men and women from all walks of life. He was laid to rest in the Jesuit cemetery on the Georgetown University campus, buried in a simple coffin, befitting both his lifelong vow of poverty and his faithful accompaniment of the poor.

Kevin Gillespie, S.J., recalls an encounter with Horace one cold winter night just months before he died. Kevin was a young Jesuit teaching at Gonzaga High School. Father McKenna, partially blind and using a cane, asked Kevin to drive him to a homeless shelter. "I want to be where Jesus is tonight," Horace explained. Arriving at the shelter, a group of men came out to greet them. Kevin helped Horace get out of the car and entrusted him to the arms of the men of the street who loved him as a father. They carefully led Horace into the shelter, the door shutting behind them. Their saint had come home to them one last time.

One testament to a saintly life is the vigor with which the holy person's work is carried on. On the first anniversary of Horace's death, Archbishop James Hickey of Washington, D.C., dedicated the newly renovated basement of St. Al's in honor of Horace. The Father McKenna Center has since expanded to include a small shelter for men. S.O.M.E. now offers food, clothing, health care, job training and housing to thousands of people each year. Sursum Corda continues to operate, but its future as publicly supported housing is precarious. Horace's old neighborhood is changing rapidly. The gentrification of the area and development of more office buildings have further squeezed poorer families out of the neighborhood.

To those facing present-day challenges and opportunities, Horace would undoubtedly offer his encouragement. During his lifetime, he would often interject at meetings a question pertinent to those carrying on his mission today: "And what about the poor?"

A single-minded focus characterizes those special people we call "saints." For Horace, the focus was always the poor and powerless. In them, he glimpsed the face of Christ; in them, he always found a home. A

Poem

Chewing

I chew.
I chew about this.
I chew about that.
I chew about them.
All that chewing, I'm still not satisfied.
I'm still not full.
I chew some more.
I chew about what they do.
I chew about what they don't do.
I masticate.
In the end I discover
I have eaten away the best part of my life.

Anne Fleming

ANNE FLEMING, a graduate of Loyola University Chicago, has worked for years commercially as a visual artist.

Son of Privilege, Common Man's President

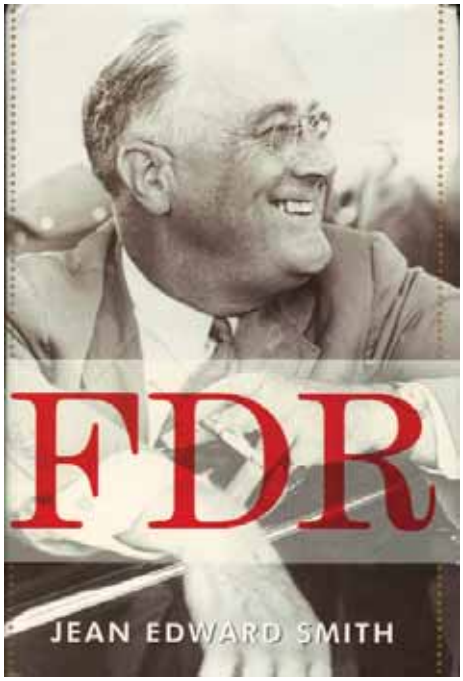
FDR

By Jean Edward Smith
Random House. 880p $35
ISBN 1400061210

Jean Edward Smith, the renowned biographer of Ulysses S. Grant, John Marshall and Lucius D. Clay, now graces our bookshelves with his encyclopedic work on Franklin Delano Roosevelt. "Sixty years after his death," Smith announces, "it is high time Roosevelt be revisited"—and revisit he does. In his *FDR*, a straightforward chronological biography, Smith draws upon the writings of Roosevelt cronies and historians, traipses across controversial issues and keeps the reader engaged in his narration of the serious and the humorous.

The events are familiar. Born in 1882, the patrician Roosevelt had toured Europe eight times before he was 14 years old and then matriculated at Groton and Harvard. Never letting law school "interfere with his personal life," he nevertheless mapped his future: New York Assemblyman, assistant secretary of the Navy, governor and then, as one law school friend remembered, he thought he had a "good chance to be president." In his first political outing, his 1910 bid for the New York State Senate, F.D.R. set the tone for the next 35 years. With one month in which to campaign, Roosevelt rented a "fire-engine red, open-top Maxwell touring car," hired a piano salesman who knew all the back roads and, "wheezing along at the dazzling speed of twenty miles an hour," shook hands, addressed all who would listen (including buying drinks for a crowd in a Sharon, Conn., saloon where his entourage had inadvertently crossed the state line), ordered 2,500 campaign buttons and was swept into office in the Democratic landslide. He had "outspent" his opponent and "outcampaigned and outorganized him."

But his natural buoyancy needed refining, his aristocratic mannerisms needed softening (Frances Perkins remembered that many of his colleagues thought him a "dilettante," "damn fool" or "stage dandy" in 1910) and his reformist ideas needed grounding in the realities of Tammany Hall politics. Trading his piano salesman for the "astute tactician" Louis Howe, F.D.R. set out to fulfill his political predictions.



This is a familiar story, and Smith calls upon myriad Roosevelt-era historians, memoir writers, political analysts, critics, journalists and letter writers to tell the saga once again. The reader will welcome Smith's reverence for such historians as Frank Freidel, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and James MacGregor Burns, as well as his homage to contemporary historians and those like Doris Kearns Goodwin and Michael Beschloss, with whom 21st-century television audiences are especially familiar.

Interwoven with the political is the personal, a command performance these days for any Roosevelt biographer. Sara, "the most important figure in Roosevelt's life," Lucy Mercer, "the woman he loved" and whose affair had "an equally profound effect" on F.D.R. as his struggle with polio, and Missy LeHand, "the woman who loved him," Smith suggests, were as crucial to the shaping of F.D.R.'s strengths as Eleanor Roosevelt. Yet those who know better (followers of Joseph Lash and Blanche Weisen Cook, to say nothing of the writings of Eleanor herself) will point out that besides bearing six children in her first 10 years of marriage, Eleanor launched her own activist life in Washington (under the savvy tutelage of Louis Howe) while F.D.R. was busy at the Navy office.

At first, like so many women of her class and era, Eleanor volunteered at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, but soon was forging her own contacts with women activists in the labor movement and other feminists. She taught at the Todhunter School in New York and campaigned for Al Smith. And by the time F.D.R. returned to Washington, this time as president, he was relying on her to quell political fears. When veterans encamped in the capital, she joined their lunch line and lent a sympathetic ear to their complaints—a "buffo performance," according to Smith. One of the men later remarked: "Hoover sent the Army, Roosevelt sent his wife." Within days the veterans disbanded.

F.D.R. followed his wife's actions with his own. He offered some 2,600 veterans positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps and paid the fare home for the rest. By 1933, he had honed his political acumen, broadened his inner circle of strategy wonks to include policy mavens like Raymond Moley and Rexford Tugwell and used effectively his ability to make a "nimble response to circumstances." Congress and the nation responded and the New Deal was launched.

In this powerful story, Smith brings together the mundane and the monumen-

The Reviewers

Constance M. McGovern, emerita professor of history at Frostburg State University, in Maryland, is currently at work on a study of African-Americans in western Maryland before the Civil War and an analysis of the role of race in late 19th-century psychiatric practices at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Gale Swiontkowski is a professor of English at Fordham University, New York City.

John Savant is emeritus professor of English at Dominican University of California, in San Rafael.

tal. The reader chuckles over the poker games where F.D.R. preferred "Woolworth's," a free-wheeling wild card game where no one curried favor with the president, and smiles at the audacity of F.D.R. on a sailing expedition to Campobello, during which he purposely steered his yacht into waters far too shallow for the Navy flotilla of two destroyers, three Coast Guard cutters and a cruiser to follow. Smith freely admonishes Roosevelt for his Supreme Court and party-purging blunders and his moments of petulance, yet excuses F.D.R.'s inaction and lack of ingenuity when confronted with reports of Hitler's final solution. Smith explains that because of the 1920s immigration legislation, F.D.R.'s "hands were tied." As others have done before him, Smith acknowledges that Roosevelt "muffed" some negotiations with the Japanese, yet the author concludes, "there is absolutely no evidence that he was complicit in the events of December 7, 1941." And although F.D.R.'s comprehension of the civil war in China and the potential menace of the postwar Soviet Union was deficient, his relations with Churchill and Stalin were "statecraft at its finest."

On the other hand, Michael Beschloss (*Presidential Courage*, 2007) has recently praised F.D.R. because he announced his unprecedented third term run for the presidency even as he advocated the peace-time draft and lend-lease policies to an isolationist nation. His aide Harry Hopkins remembered that Roosevelt had no clear idea of how to implement lend-lease, but "there was not a doubt in his mind that he'd find a way to do it." And he did. ***Constance M. McGovern***

From Dark to Light

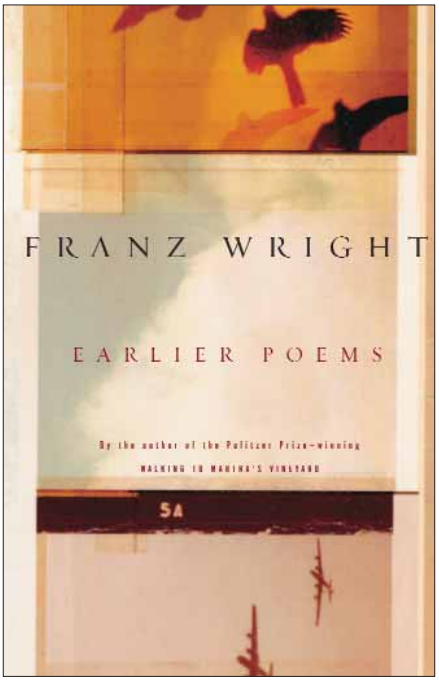
Earlier Poems

By Franz Wright
Knopf. 272p $26.95
ISBN 0307265668

In 2004, Franz Wright won the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry for *Walking to Martha's Vineyard*. In 2006, Wright followed this success with *God's Silence*, about which James S. Torrens, S.J., poetry editor of **America**, has written in these pages (4/9), and which I consider brilliant—many of its poems works of genius. But do not read *God's Silence* first. That volume is a culmination of Wright's work to date, his spiritual work, as well as his poetic work. If you are new to Wright's poetry, turn first to *Earlier Poems*. These confessional poems present honestly and sometimes brutally the experience of spiritual suffering, the fruits of which appear in *God's Silence*.

> *But when I cut myself*
> *I have to say:*
> *this is my blood shed*
> *for no one in particular.*
> —"Blood"

Don't misunderstand me; these early poems are good—much more than good—but they are the utterances of a



man struggling sometimes just to be, and then to be good, and of a poet seeking his voice and his subject, only just becoming aware he has already found them. Consider these lines from "Heaven":

There is a heaven.

These sunflowers—those dark, wind-
threshed oaks...

Heaven's all around you,

though getting there is hard:

it is death,
heaven.

Earlier Poems collects verse from four volumes—*The One Whose Eyes Open When You Close Your Eyes* (1982), *Entry in an Unknown Hand* (1989), *The Night World & the Word Night* (1993) and *Rorschach Test* (1995), all previously collected in *Ill Lit*. The epigraph of that earlier volume, from Søren Kierkegaard, reads in part: "One must never desire suffering.... If a man desire suffering, then it is as though he were able by himself to solve this terror—that suffering is the characteristic of God's love...." Many of the poems in *Earlier Poems* show what suffering is for, what confessionalism can bring about, if the poet works at it and is lucky. And sometimes, in the realm of spiritual experience, being lucky may be a question of having some bad luck.

Whatever it is
I was seeking, with my tactless despair:
it has already happened.
...How happy I am!
There's no hope for me.
—"At the End of the Untraveled Road"

In an interview in the fall 2006 issue of the journal Image, Franz Wright recounts some of his struggles. His father, the poet James Wright, left the family when Franz was in early adolescence, and his stepfather was physically abusive. "By the time I was eighteen, I felt like a broken person. I was terrified of the world."

Wright subsequently struggled with alcohol and drugs, and he credits poetry in part with enabling his recovery: "I can say that writing gave me a reason to try to be well as much as possible.... I had the good fortune to have this second infinity, this second universe, inside of me, which I carried around with me...writing poetry [is] an attempt to be part of that company of people who made this reality possible in the world."

The answering cold, like a stepfather
to a silent child

And the light
if that's what it is

The steplight

No

the light that's always leaving
—"Untitled"

Just as Wright sought to join the community of poets, he yearned to enter "the early Christian communities...people who believe something is possible, who refuse not to believe it," and eventually he joined the Catholic Church. Wright speaks of one parallel between creative inspiration and spirituality: "...to get to them you must go through long, arid, terrible, painful periods." Out of the acceptance of suffering comes joy; Mass becomes "an experience of participation in the human family.... This new sense of unqualified acceptance and love was the most moving experience of my life. It made me want to

write again."

For Wright, putting suffering on a page is not only a metaphorical act but also a spiritual one: "We are all words made flesh.... It is the greatest accomplishment of human beings to see this possibility, to recognize the figure of Christ. No human endeavor can go beyond the achievement of seeing the possibility of the infinite participating in our pain and terror and failure."

I see the one walking this road
I see the one whose coat is thin whose shoes need mending
who is cold it's a very cold day
for stopping beside this dead cornfield
and basking one's face in those gray Rorschach clouds
I see the one whose lips say nothing
I see through his eyes I see the buried radiance in things
the one who isn't there

—"The Road"

For this reason, Franz Wright despairs somewhat of his post-Pulitzer success: "You can never get your private, anonymous love back.... If fame comes, there's an element of self-consciousness that can never be eluded after that.... But nothing is going to stop this feeling of failure and pain at not writing what I think of as a real poem today.... And that pain is all I have."

Wright seems to believe that our humanity is dependent upon our consciousness of our own suffering and mortality, our participation in the Crucifixion, and that poetry should preserve and enhance this awareness. And I am very glad he does. ***Gale Swiontkowski***

Wrestling With Religion

There Before Us

Religion, Literature, and Culture From Emerson to Wendell Berry

Roger Lundin, editor
Eerdmans. 250p $18 (paperback)
ISBN 9780802829634

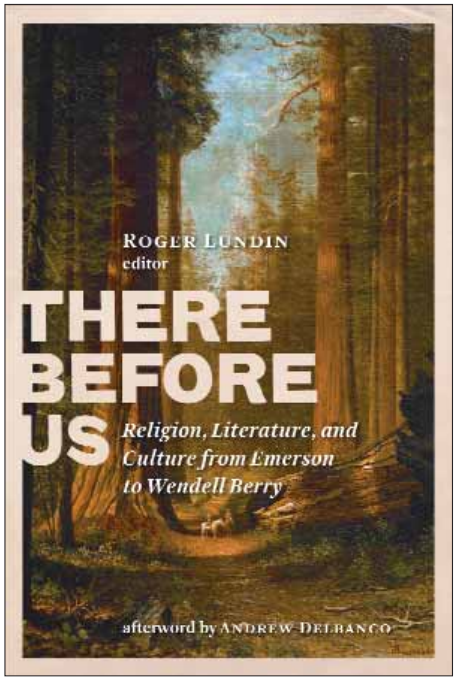
Critics of American culture like R. W. B. Lewis note the tremendous importance of America's origins in the shaping of her self-perception, her sense of national character and destiny. Whereas cultures generally, says Lewis, grow out of the long gestation of history, expressing their emerging identities in myth and custom, America, uniquely, was the product of an idea; and that idea was very much the creature of several forces: the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on individual reason and autonomy; the emerging rule of science, with its emphasis on individual research and observation; and the Reformation, with its emphasis on the "priesthood" of the individual, and, in America especially, with its co-option of the secular myth of progress within the religious myth of God's kingdom come.

The desired product of this "idea" was to be a different kind of citizen—a "new Adam," innocent of old-world corruption and free of its restrictive institutions. This idea, furthermore, was given a perfect laboratory for its evolution—a new Garden of Eden, some 3,000 miles and several months removed from the powers and conventions of mother Europe; and some 3,000 miles also of rich, unsettled land spreading into the mysterious West. Given the religious motivations of so many of its first settlers, it is no wonder that this new Adamic society in its new Eden would be imagined and celebrated in a rhetoric and imagery correspondingly religious.

In *There Before Us*, nine participants in the American Literature and Religion Seminar (sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trust and the University of Notre Dame) examine the effects of these origins upon our subsequent literature and culture; the various gyrations by which writers from the mid-19th century on wrestled with, incorporated or dismissed this religious heritage; and, especially, the strange reluctance of critics to address its pervasive and continuing influence on our literature and culture. The volume editor, Roger Lundin, who is Blanchard Professor of English at Wheaton College, Illinois, asks in his introduction, "How are we to explain the fact that so many academic observers of the literature of the United States have, in effect, expatriated themselves from one of their culture's most vibrant and fascinating provinces?"

Chronological in sequence, the essays trace effects of the freedoms mentioned above on subsequent religious thought and literature. Beginning with the strongly individual transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, the essays examine, among other topics, Charles Dickinson's passionate wrestling with belief, and Herman Melville's with the "absence of God"; the role of the Bible as a source of power in African-American culture (and of "justification" in pro-slavery circles); the gradual shift from specifically theistic themes

toward a more secular and "impersonal nationalistic faith in America itself," especially manifest in Mark Twain; the rise of a liberal individualistic tradition in William and Henry James, in whose writings "categories borrowed from the Christian past are pressed into the service of the political present"; at century's turn, the movement of literary modernism into the world of the "social gospel" as variously expressed by Ezra Pound, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) and T. S. Eliot. The concluding essay, examining the interplay of religious belief with environmental responsibility, ranges, appropriately, from Thoreau to such contemporaries as Thomas Berry, Barry Lopez, Annie Dillard and Mary Oliver.



If you are looking for a systematic study of the interplay of religion and culture, this collection will not meet your expectations. But as a sustained literary conversation given point and particularity in the varied interests of its scholar-authors, this collection is, for me, much more inviting—and provocative—than a more formal treatise. A few examples may show why.

Discussing Emerson's "signing off" (with numerous others) from organized religion, Barbara Packer asks a question we may well ask today: "Had the toleration forced upon Americans by political necessity acted to quench the zeal of the true believer? Would the final fate of American tolerance be complete religious indifference?" She cites Alexis de Tocqueville, who, finding Americans zealous mainly in the pursuit of wealth and noting "a great depth of doubt and indifference," concluded that in America "faith is evidently inert." In John Gatta's study of Thoreau's "sacred space," one can find strains of British romanticism in his "project of reaching beyond the desacralizing tendencies of post-Enlightenment civilization to recover a spiritually archaic or 'original relation to the universe.'" As Thoreau locates the sacred—the "wholly other" than ourselves—in the numinous world of nature and in our private encounters with it, one wonders what this implies for men and women who, as social animals, must seek God in the sacrament of community.

The essays by Michael Colacurcio on Melville and Roger Lundin on Dickinson are compelling studies of individual wrestlings with faith outside the context of traditional institutional teachings or consolations.

Especially pertinent today, Lawrence Buell's concluding essay, pondering our wilderness and pastoral heritage against the individualistic thrust of private enterprise, cites one environmental philosopher who argues for religion's pre-eminent role in creating an environmental counterculture because it is "the only form of discourse widely available to Americans…that expresses social interests going beyond the private interests articulated…and institutionalized in the market."

These selections are representative of the themes and theological questions that run throughout *There Before Us*, demonstrating what a study of religion in American culture can bring forth. If, indeed, our vaunted tolerance has become indifference, rendering religion more a quaint artifact (or political pawn) than an integral player in American governance and policy, we must ponder ways to restore its relevance in a world that tends to prefer utility to value, individual interests to communal need and quantitative answers to problems calling for the more complex human sensibilities of imagination and faith.

John Savant

"The first thousand years are all paperwork."

CARTOON BY PAT BYRNES

A Great Mitzvah

In "Lovingly Observant" (6/18), Susannah Heschel beautifully expressed why her father's writings touched the hearts and minds of so many people—Jews and Christians alike. If ever there was a crystalline example of what Hans Urs von Balthasar called "kneeling theology," it was Abraham Joshua Heschel's. I am only sorry that Professor Heschel or **America** failed to mention his last work, *Heavenly Torah as Refracted Through the Generations* (Continuum, 2005; disclosure: I am a vice president and senior editor at Continuum Internationl). Booklist and Library Journal gave it starred reviews. Choice named it one of the 10 top books in religion for 2005. And Daniel Harrington, S.J., in your pages (3/13/06) called it Heschel's "masterwork...an astonishing accomplishment of historical and theological scholarship." But this is a small matter indeed. If your interview leads some new readers to Heschel's work, it will have been a great mitzvah!

Frank Oveis
New York, N.Y.

Call and Identity

In your issue of July 30, Mary Alice Piil, C.S.J., states in her book review of *The Permanent Diaconate*, "Nor is there any question that the deacons themselves find it difficult to articulate a clear personal identity." This is a tangential statement that may or may not come from the book, but shows a bias that I simply do not believe is true. As a recently ordained permanent deacon, I object to the thought that deacons cannot articulate a clear personal identity.

Our identity lies exactly in being part of both the work world and the ordained world. It lies in being visible, ordained ministers in workplaces that can be hostile to all God-talk, when others are running for cover. It lies in service to the poor and the imprisoned and all who have no voice. It lies in the service at the altar, in baptizing and conferring the sacrament of marriage. It lies in dedication to the study of Scripture and to the living out of Scripture and to bringing Scripture to all who will listen. For me, the attraction to the diaconate originated through other deacons who lived and

loved their diaconal call and identity daily. They knew who they were and what they were called to be.

Whatever other discussion may need to continue concerning the role of the permanent deacon in the larger church, never doubt the clear personal identity that we have for our call.

(Deacon) Phil DiBello
Billerica, Mass.

Our World Family

My thanks for the excellent and insightful article "The New, Lay Face of Missionaries," by Vincent Gragnani (7/30). Our church needs to recognize the value of lay missionaries as it does of clerical and religious ones—and to support lay missionary organizations accordingly. Whether as missionary priests, religious or lay people, we are all proclaiming the Gospel in word and action in our world family.

Established in Los Angeles in 1955, the Lay Mission-Helpers Association has trained and sent over 700 lay missionaries to 36 countries in Africa, Asia, South Pacific, Central and South America for over 50 years. We are facing many of the same challenges as the lay mission organizations mentioned in this article in regard to recognition by the wider church and financial sustainability.

We join in the collaborative efforts of other lay missionary organizations and invite interested lay people to consider a call to serve abroad. Living a simple life close to the poor could be the best years of a person's life!

Janice England
Los Angeles, Calif.

Indispensable Expression

I would like to commend Vincent Gragnani for "The New, Lay Face of Missionaries" (7/30), which brings much-needed attention to the valuable ministry that lay men and women provide the Catholic Church. As executive director of the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service, a membership organization of nearly 200 lay mission programs, I have seen firsthand the ministry of lay missionary service blossom. In 2005, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 906 lay men and women served internationally in 55 different C.N.V.S. member programs. And as more people become aware of the opportunity to live out the Gospel missionary call in an international setting, we anticipate that this number will continually increase.

In his article, Mr. Gragnani rightly points out the fundraising and marketing challenges facing our lay mission organizations. We trust that just as God is now calling so many lay men and women to serve, God will also provide them the means to do so through the greater support of the church as a whole. Just as the church has always supported its ordained and religious missioners, we believe that it will rise to this new challenge in the 21st century. Mr. Gragnani's article is an important step in the process of making the wider church aware of the dedication of lay Catholics to the Gospel's missionary values.

Pope Benedict XVI writes in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, "For the church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but it is part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being." His is a timely reminder that that all baptized Catholics—not just priests and religious—are called to service. C.N.V.S. and our affiliated lay mission organizations seek to ensure there is a place for all whom God calls to serve.

Jim Lindsay
Takoma Park, Md.

Collaborative Ministry

Our suburban parish is enriched by the dedication and expertise of our business manager/pastoral associate. This wife and mother of a teenage daughter manages her family's schedule and her many responsibilities within the parish. This accomplished C.P.A. with a degree in theology is highly respected by our parishioners. But this is only one example of many priest-partner ministries within our archdiocese. In two neighboring parishes, the two on-site administrators are known as pastoral life directors. One is a member of a religious community and the other is a wife and mother. Both of these gifted women work with priests assigned to provide sacramental ministry within the parishes. Thomas P. Sweetser, S.J., is to be applauded for recognizing the many men and women whose collaborative ministry and love for the church make the lives of pastors more peaceful and the lives of all parishioners more aware of the "variety of gifts but the same Spirit" within our church.

(Rev.) Christopher J. Whatley
Catonsville, Md.

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Money and Spirituality

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), Sept. 23, 2007

Readings: Amos 8:4-7; Ps 113:1-2, 4-8; 1 Tim 2:1-8; Lk 16:1-13

"You cannot serve God and mammon" (Lk 16:13)

THE WORDS "MONEY" and "spirituality" are seldom found in the same sentence. Yet Luke and other biblical writers give a good deal of attention to money and possessions. In Luke's own community there seems to have been some tension between rich and poor, and he took a special interest in addressing it. If we define spirituality broadly as how we stand before God and relate to others, then money is an inevitable and important aspect of Christian spirituality.

Jesus was not an economist, and we cannot expect from the Gospels master plans applicable to 21st-century economic conditions. What we can expect from Jesus the wisdom teacher are wise principles that can direct our thoughts and actions about money and possessions.

Today's text from Luke's Gospel consists of four units of varying lengths, all concerned with money and spirituality. Each unit can (and probably once did) stand on its own. As in other wisdom instructions, they have been joined together because they deal with the same general topic, not because they develop a logical argument on one point.

The first and longest unit (16:1-8) is traditionally called the parable of the dishonest steward. He is said to have been squandering his employer's resources. The parable concerns the ingenious plan the steward devised to save himself from personal and financial ruin. There are two ways to interpret his plan. In one reading the steward is simply dishonest. He cheats his employers and involves others in his plot, thus setting up the possibility of blackmailing them in the future. In another reading he forgoes his own commission, sacrificing a short-term gain for long-term security. In either case it appears that the steward's strategy is so clever that even his former employer had to admire it. The point of the parable is that many people in our world display enormous intelligence and energy in financial matters in comparison with the little attention that they pay to the state of their souls. The industry, creativity and tenacity that go into making money and securing one's financial well-being often far outweigh the time and effort given to life's ultimate questions: Who am I? What is my goal? How do I get there?

The second unit (16:9) urges people to use their money wisely (however they might make it), in order to gain good friends. If you should lose your money, such persons may help you out in your time of need. And when you die, they may welcome you into their heavenly home.

The third unit (16:10-12) suggests that there is some consistency between how one handles money and material possessions and how one handles spiritual matters. Those who are conscientious and trustworthy in material matters are very likely to be conscientious and trustworthy in spiritual matters.

The fourth unit (16:13) reminds us that "no servant can serve two masters…. You cannot serve God and mammon." The word "mammon" derives from the same Semitic root as "Amen." It refers to what one puts faith in or trusts, and so came to mean money. The saying warns against making money or material possessions into one's god, or the ultimate good in one's life. While few people might actually worship money in theory, in practice many seem to live as if they do.

The four units that make up today's Gospel reading remind us that money and spirituality do not belong to separate realms. They urge us to apply some of the intelligence and energy to things of the spirit that we devote to money and possessions, to use money wisely, to be trustworthy and honest in money matters and not to make money into a substitute for God.

Today's reading from the prophet Amos indicates that greed, exploitation of the poor and dishonest business practices are not new phenomena and that they have been and still are sinful in God's eyes. The selection from 1 Timothy 2 offers a benign view of the Roman Empire (as in Rom 13:1-7) and urges prayers for political leaders and government officials. The idea seems to be that political tranquility will enhance the possibility of religious practice. A very different (and highly negative) view of the Roman Empire appears in the book of Revelation. The summary of Christian faith embedded in 1 Timothy 2 ("Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all") features a financial image ("ransom") and reinforces Luke's message that Christians live out their faith in the world of economics and politics. How we deal with both reveals much about who we are and how we relate to God and to others. The connection between money and Christian spirituality is real.

Daniel J. Harrington

Praying With Scripture

- In practice, do you serve mammon better than you serve God? Do you use the kind of ingenuity in spiritual matters that you give to money matters?
- Do you use money wisely and well? How do you define those terms?
- Are you trustworthy and faithful in both financial and spiritual matters?

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