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Fellowship of Catholic Scholars

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Reminder: Membership dues will be mailed out the first of the year and are based on a calendar (not academic) year.

THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Friends—

It is my pleasure to greet you upon the issuance of this new edition of the *Quarterly*. As always, it brings to you some of the best thinking of our members—and our guests—on important matters related to our Faith and friendship, under the quite capable leadership of Fr. Koterski and Elizabeth Shaw.

We have just concluded our 40th annual convention in Arlington, Virginia, just across the river from our nation's capital. It was a well-attended and successful convention, with top-flight speakers. Indeed, several people have remarked to me that they thought it was our best yet!

Next year, in a change from our usual procedure of having our conventions at hotels, our convention will be held at Benedictine College in Kansas. This is a wonderful Catholic college that I am sure you will want to see, and it is where the Fellowship's Vice President, Susan Traffas, teaches. I also note that our awards will go to board member Fr. Tom Weinandy (*Founder's Award*), scholars Nick and Mary Eberstadt (*Cardinal Wright Award*), and Carl Anderson of the Knights of Columbus (*Cardinal O'Boyle Award*). I am sure you will want to be present to hear from the awardees, as well as the other speakers. The dates are September 28–30, 2018. Please make plans now to attend!

Cordially,
William Saunders

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

by Rev. Joseph W. Koterski, S.J.
Fordham University

In seventh grade, I had the good fortune to have had a teacher who suggested to our class that we keep a list of the books we had read. I've done it faithfully ever since—mostly because it is fun to look back once in a while and see if I can even remember what the books that intrigued me along the way were about.

The value of keeping such a list, however, is more than mere sentimentality. Each January, when I look over the list from the past year, I ask myself whether I have read enough in my field, and enough novels, and enough poetry, and enough books that I disagreed with. I doubt that I am alone in reading lots of authors whose views I share. But in this annual examination of conscience, there is good reason to say a *mea culpa* if I haven't cracked the spine of at least a few of the other kind.

It was one of the summers during graduate school when I really got this point. At a used book store I had picked up an inexpensive but badly dog-eared copy of Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*. It was heavily marked up with angry comments in thick black ink from someone who disagreed with Kirk from stem to stern. What roused my admiration was not the nature of the marginalia, but the brute fact that the annotator—whoever it was—had kept on marking up the book to the very last page.

There was no indication of any change of mind or any lessening of the choleric reactions. I could not help, however, admiring someone who disagreed so profoundly and yet rendered the author the honor of reading and thinking with him to the end of the book. There is an incredible civility in the practice that could counter the dismissive witticisms, enraged soundbites, and unfair judgments of the present era.

Lest I have nothing to report in this category next January, I recently decided to read a book that I would just as soon have passed over when it crossed my desk in the philosophy department. It is a book with a thoroughly awful thesis called *Beating Hearts: Abortion and Animal Rights* by Sherry F. Colb and Michael C. Dorf (Columbia University Press, 2016). I did not expect to be convinced by it, and I wasn't. Were it not for the duty that we have, each in our own way, to try and protect babies and their mothers, I doubt that I would have stayed with the book.

To be sure, there are more direct ways to attempt to be helpful, beginning with prayer and works of

practical charity. But, given the apparent intractability of the issue in our society, it also seems necessary for those who enjoy the privileges of academic life to assume its obligations too. It means being prepared for discussions and debates with those who hold views antithetical to our own, and it includes writing serious reviews of bad books. Personally, I would love to see the pages of this *Quarterly* have many respectful but hard-hitting reviews of books that need to be answered. It is an aspect of our *métier* more honored in the breach than in the observance.

From the title and the cover, I thought that this book by Colb and Dorf might be one given to pleading the case for the babies *and* the beasts. Thumbing through the book, I found some hope of this rising from the very presence of the term “pro-life.” Perhaps, I thought, the authors were planning to include the unborn in the coverage they envisioned to be a part of “animal rights.” It did not turn out to be so. The thesis of the book is that it is possible—in fact, to state the thesis more accurately, all but required—to be “pro-choice on abortion and fully committed to animal rights.”

It is interesting—but ever so sad—to see the authors explicitly acknowledge that legal abortion involves the deliberate destruction of a human life and then give their reasons for approving the practice. However much the moral foundations of our culture have weakened as the culture has grown more regressive, it is apparent from a volume like this that these authors feel that the times still require academic justifications to be provided for repugnant positions.

The tactic here is one that we have seen now for several generations. Prof. William Brennan of St. Louis University wisely identified it years ago as semantic gymnastics. For Brennan, that strategy was threefold: using misleading terminology to hide the reality, dividing up the actual tasks involved in the destruction of innocent human life among diverse people so as to minimize the pangs of conscience, and getting respected authorities like politicians, physicians, clergy, and professors to lend their authority and prestige to the approval of practices that contradict the received wisdom of society about the nonnegotiable immorality of certain practices.

Colb and Dorf are both professors of law at Cornell University. As an opening gambit they pose a set of questions that they take to require the thesis described above. How, they ask, could anyone who condemns hunting, animal farming, and animal experimentation

also favor legal abortion? What they take to be an indisputable moral wrong is the mistreatment of any animal. They regard nearly all human use of animals to be an exploitation that is unjustified. The problem, as they see it, is how a person with such views can resolve the apparent conflict that might arise in the course of defending the right to choose an abortion, for they see that choice to be at the core of the liberties that are at stake in the current culture wars.

In writing this sort of book, the authors seem to sense some hints of confusion about the legitimacy of abortion that might be lurking in the minds of those who have been persuaded to defend animal rights. Committed as they are to the notion of animal rights, they are concerned that a commitment to these rights could somehow dent the logic of the *Casey* decision that the abortion right is necessary if one is truly to have the right to define the meaning of one's own existence.

The bulk of the book is given to a discussion of alleged similarities in the strategies deployed by the pro-life and the animal rights movements. The authors worry about whether a democracy should enact laws against all the things that it might think to be morally bad or should allocate these matters to individual conscience. They worry about the social dangers latent in ever allowing the law to be a teacher of morals, and they liken efforts at placing legal restrictions upon abortion to the prohibition movement of the early twentieth century and the inadvertent creation of the Mafia.

Ceteris paribus, these are good questions that would worry the likes of Augustine and Aquinas as much as Hume and Singer. But all of these considerations depend on their more basic point: the identification of the proper criterion for one's moral evaluations. For Colb and Dorf, what matters is the sentience principle. The capacity to feel pain seems to them decisive in providing what they consider a principled distinction between beings deserving of legal protection and those not deemed worthy.

To their credit, the authors do not simply ignore the evidence that pro-life advocates have brought into public discussion in recent years: the pain felt by the unborn whose lives are taken by abortion. But they regard legislative efforts to restrict late-term abortion on grounds of fetal pain as a concession to their own position, for to argue in this way seems to concede the point that the sentience principle is the correct criterion. Claiming this point as their own, they concede that there will be times when the lives of some animals may have to be taken,

despite the pain that will be inflicted. In their view, however serious the question of late-term abortions may be, forcing a woman to carry a child to term is far more problematic as a form of gender-based exploitation. Since they are unwilling to grant the claim that nascent life in its earlier stages exhibits pain-sentience, they do not find its termination to be problematic.

What all this shows, it seems to me, is that we need to be ready to help our own students be better prepared for the defense of human life in those contexts when the discussion turns to animal rights. First, there is a need always to use good arguments, always to have sound reasons, and always to have clear definitions that reflect the truth of things. In trying to read this book as carefully (but without the angry pen marks!) as the previous reader of my copy of Kirk's book did, it seems to me that this book is a fine example of the sophisticated dangers that occasioned Brennan's thesis about semantic gymnastics.

The authors of this volume tirelessly repeat rather than genuinely examine certain terms that strike me as truly dangerous on this question. Forcing ourselves to be clear about the meaning of crucial terms can be decisive for understanding the errors that books like these perpetrate. Despite the recurrent attention they give to the *capacity* for feeling pain, for example, they accept without examination the notion that the unborn have "*potential* human life" rather than are already actual human beings with various *potencies* (abilities, capacities) that are at various stages of development.

Here one finds a telling point that needs to be brought to full light. The process of growth and maturation of the unborn cannot be adequately understood on the model of the construction of something out of parts like a car or a computer, so that it only becomes what we want to make when it is sufficiently assembled that it can do something, or in this case feel something.

Human development is an unfolding of something that is already actually an instance of the kind and a member of the species from its earliest nascent moment. If we have learned anything from the violence against human beings that has been justified by the practice of semantic gymnastics in the course of the twentieth century, it is that we dare not allow verbal counterfeits, even when spoken by respectable authorities, to hide the reality of the defenseless whose existence is judged inconvenient.

A second point that reading this volume elicited from me is the need to reiterate the correlation of duties and rights. There is something clever here in the

effort to turn the rhetoric of the pro-life movement against itself, as if it somehow really favored the sentience principle and the reduction of ethical and political issues to cases of competing rights-claims.

Now, given the realities of our political situation, we would be ill advised to stop talking about the "right" to life. But there is a vulnerability in using rights-language that can easily play into the hands of the animal rights movement. If it is life as such that has rights, then why not talk about animal rights? And, from a perspective that is not treated in this book but that could have been, why not see the right to life as rendering the death penalty not merely as wrong in certain circumstances but as wrong always and everywhere?

In using the phrase "the right to life," what we really mean is not that every form of life has rights but that only human beings do, and further, that it is not right for *innocent* human life ever to be deliberately taken. What is really basic, I think, is a duty never to harm, and when possible to protect, innocent life that then generates various correlative rights. The duty here is primarily a universal negative duty, that no one may ever legitimately attack the life of an innocent human being.

From that universal proscription comes the justification for talking about the right to life. But a moment's thought shows how this really works. Those who have innocent human life in their care have a duty to protect it, whether it be the parents of small children or the police of a given community. To do their duty, they may end up needing to use lethal force against an aggressor who threatens innocent life. Presuming here, to be sure, a carefully elaborated protocol for when and how lethal force may be used by civil authorities, we can see that there will be times when the use of lethal

force does not violate the right to life, precisely because the right to life derives specifically from innocence. As a principle of law in our culture, we presume that one is innocent until proven guilty. But the protection that the presumption of innocence gives to each person is forfeited when anyone attacks other innocent human beings. After the fact, we use courts to weigh these matters and to determine innocence or guilt, but at the moment of an attack and especially in the absence of public authority, it is the violent deed that is the proof that justifies the use of lethal force in self-defense and in the defense of others.

The very premise of Colb and Dorf's book—seeing the principle of sentience as the crucial element in moral evaluation—is unsound. The volume proves to be one more effort in a culture-saturated campaign to assign to individual consciences the prerogative of using lethal force without having a principled basis for its use. If one were to develop at length the considerations that we have begun to advance here, we could rightly conclude that private individuals have no right to use lethal force except to defend the innocent and only in the absence of proper authority.

We do well, of course, to worry about unnecessarily inflicting pain on sentient beings, but only because doing so arbitrarily risks dulling our own consciences in this area. Once we see that rights only emerge from duties—in this case, the duty never deliberately to attack innocent human beings—there will be no reason at all to think about animal rights, and much reason to make careful distinctions about any use of lethal force. The definitions and principles at the core of Colb and Dorf's book cannot make such distinctions. We will do well to have them ready by reading and reflecting on books that we may not like reading, like this one. ✘



Letter to Pope Francis

by Rev. Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

On November 1, CRUX published a news article concerning a letter I sent to Pope Francis on August 9, 2017 (see CRUX: <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2017/11/01/ex-bishops-doctrine-chief-says-darkness-coming-light-francis/>). I wanted to send this letter to you personally, as well as to tell you how I came to write this letter.

At the end of this past May I was in Rome to attend a meeting of the International Theological Commission, of which I am a member. I stayed at *Domus Sanctae Marthae*. Since I arrived early, I spent most of the Sunday afternoon prior to the meeting on Monday in Saint Peter's praying in the Eucharistic Chapel. I was praying about the present state of the Church and the anxieties I had about the present Pontificate. I was beseeching Jesus and Mary, St. Peter, and all of the saintly popes who are buried there to do something to rectify the confusion and turmoil within the Church today, a chaos and an uncertainty that I felt Pope Francis had himself caused. I was also pondering whether or not I should write and publish something expressing my concerns and anxiety. On the following Wednesday afternoon, at the conclusion of my meeting, I went again to St. Peter's and prayed in the same manner. That night I could not get to sleep, which is very unusual for me. It was due to all that was on my mind pertaining to the Church and Pope Francis. At 1:15 a.m. I got up and went outside for short time. When I went back to my room, I said to the Lord: "If you want me to write something, you have to give me a clear sign. This is what the sign must be. Tomorrow morning I am going to St. Mary Major's to pray and then I am going to St. John Lateran. After that I am coming back to St. Peter's to have lunch with a seminary friend of mine. During that interval, I must meet someone that I know but have not seen in a very long time and would never expect to see in Rome at this time. That person cannot be from the United States, Canada, or Great Britain. Moreover, that person has to say to me in the course of our conversation, 'Keep up the good writing'."

The next morning I did all of the above and by the time I met my seminarian friend for lunch what I had asked the Lord the following night was no longer in the forefront of my mind. However, toward the end of the meal an archbishop appeared between two parked cars right in front of our table (we were sitting outside). I had not seen him for over twenty years, long before he became an archbishop. We recognized one another immediately. What made his appearance even more unusual was that because of his recent personal circumstances I would never have expected to see him in Rome or anywhere else, other than in his own archdiocese. (He was from none of the above mentioned countries.) We spoke about his coming to Rome and caught up on what we were doing. I then introduced him to my seminarian friend. He said to my friend that we had met a long time ago and that he had, at that time, just finished reading my book on the immutability of God and the Incarnation. He told my friend that it was an excellent book, that it helped him sort out the issue, and that my friend should read the book. Then he turned to me and said: "Keep up the good writing."

In the light of Jesus fulfilling my demanding "sign," I want to make two comments. First, I decided to write Pope Francis a letter, which I intended then to publish unless he adequately addressed the issues I raised. Almost two months after having received my letter, I did receive an acknowledgement from Vatican Secretariat of State informing me that the letter had been received. This was simply an acknowledgement and not a response to my concerns. Second, I find it significant that not only did the Lord fulfill my demand for a sign, but also did so in, what I believe, a very significant manner. He accomplished it through an archbishop. By utilizing an archbishop, I believe, that Jesus' fulfillment of my request took on an apostolic mandate.

If you have any comments or thoughts, please feel free to contact me. Obviously, you are free to share the above with whomever you choose.

May the Lord Jesus bless you and all the work you do on behalf of his Church.

May Jesus bless you. Take care.

Tom

July 31, 2017

Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Your Holiness,

I write this letter with love for the Church and sincere respect for your office. You are the Vicar of Christ on earth, the shepherd of his flock, the successor to St. Peter and so the rock upon which Christ will build his Church. All Catholics, clergy and laity alike, are to look to you with filial loyalty and obedience grounded in truth. The Church turns to you in a spirit of faith, with the hope that you will guide her in love.

Yet, Your Holiness, a chronic confusion seems to mark your pontificate. The light of faith, hope, and love is not absent, but too often it is obscured by the ambiguity of your words and actions. This fosters within the faithful a growing unease. It compromises their capacity for love, joy, and peace. Allow me to offer a few brief examples.

First there is the disputed Chapter 8 of *Amoris Laetitia*. I need not share my own concerns about its content. Others, not only theologians, but also cardinals and bishops, have already done that. The main source of concern is the *manner* of your teaching. In *Amoris Laetitia*, your guidance at times seems intentionally ambiguous, thus inviting both a traditional interpretation of Catholic teaching on marriage and divorce as well as one that might imply a change in that teaching. As you wisely note, pastors should accompany and encourage persons in irregular marriages; but ambiguity persists about what that "accompaniment" actually means. To teach with such a seemingly intentional lack of clarity inevitably risks sinning against the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit is given to the Church, and particularly to yourself, to *dispel* error, not to foster it. Moreover, only where there is truth can there be authentic love, for truth is the light that sets women and men free from the blindness of sin, a darkness that kills the life of the soul. Yet you seem to censor and even mock those who interpret Chapter 8 of *Amoris Laetitia* in accord with Church tradition as Pharisaic stone-throwers who embody a merciless rigorism. This kind of calumny is alien to the nature of the Petrine ministry. Some of your advisors regrettably seem to engage in similar actions. Such behavior gives the impression that your views cannot survive theological scrutiny, and so must be sustained by *ad hominem* arguments.

Second, too often your manner seems to demean

the importance of Church doctrine. Again and again you portray doctrine as dead and bookish, and far from the pastoral concerns of everyday life. Your critics have been accused, in your own words, of making doctrine an ideology. But it is *precisely* Christian doctrine—including the fine distinctions made with regard to central beliefs like the Trinitarian nature of God; the nature and purpose of the Church; the Incarnation; the Redemption; and the sacraments—that frees people from worldly ideologies and assures that they are actually preaching and teaching the authentic, life-giving Gospel. Those who devalue the doctrines of the Church separate themselves from Jesus, the author of truth. What they then possess, and can only possess, is an ideology—one that conforms to the world of sin and death.

Third, faithful Catholics can only be disconcerted by your choice of some bishops, men who seem not merely open to those who hold views counter to Christian belief but who support and even defend them. What scandalizes believers, and even some fellow bishops, is not only your having appointed such men to be shepherds of the Church, but that you also seem silent in the face of their teaching and pastoral practice. This weakens the zeal of the many women and men who have championed authentic Catholic teaching over long periods of time, often at the risk of their own reputations and well-being. As a result, many of the faithful, who embody the *sensus fidelium*, are losing confidence in their supreme shepherd.

Fourth, the Church is one body, the Mystical Body of Christ, and you are commissioned by the Lord himself to promote and strengthen her unity. But your actions and words too often seem intent on doing the opposite. Encouraging a form of "synodality" that allows and promotes various doctrinal and moral options within the Church can only lead to more theological and pastoral confusion. Such synodality is unwise and, in practice, works *against* collegial unity among bishops.

Holy Father, this brings me to my final concern. You have often spoken about the need for transparency within the Church. You have frequently encouraged, particularly during the two past synods, all persons, especially bishops, to speak their mind and not be fearful of what the pope may think. But have you noticed that the majority of bishops throughout the world are remarkably silent? Why is this? Bishops are quick learners, and what many have learned from your pontificate is *not* that you are open to criticism, but that you resent it. Many bishops are silent because they desire to be loyal to you, and so they do not express—at least publicly;

privately is another matter—the concerns that your pontificate raises. Many fear that if they speak their mind, they will be marginalized or worse.

I have often asked myself: “Why has Jesus let all of this happen?” The only answer that comes to mind is that Jesus wants to manifest just how weak is the faith of many within the Church, even among too many of her bishops. Ironically, your pontificate has given those who hold harmful theological and pastoral views the license and confidence to come into the light and expose their previously hidden darkness. In recognizing

this darkness, the Church will humbly need to renew herself, and so continue to grow in holiness.

Holy Father, I pray for you constantly and will continue to do so. May the Holy Spirit lead you to the light of truth and the life of love so that you can dispel the darkness that now hides the beauty of Jesus’ Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap.

November 1, 2017

WASHINGTON—Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has issued the following statement on the nature of dialogue within the Church today.

Full statement follows:

“The departure today of Fr. Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap., as a consultant to the Committee on Doctrine and the publication of his letter to Pope Francis gives us an opportunity to reflect on the nature of dialogue within the Church. Throughout the history of the Church, ministers, theologians and the laity all have debated and have held personal opinions on a variety of theological and pastoral issues. In more recent times, these debates have made their way into the popular press. That is to be expected and is often good. However, these reports are often expressed in terms of opposition, as political—conservative vs. liberal, left vs. right, pre-Vatican II vs. Vatican II. These distinctions are not always very helpful.

Christian charity needs to be exercised by all involved.

In saying this, we all must acknowledge that legitimate differences exist, and that it is the work of the Church, the entire body of Christ, to work towards an ever-growing understanding of God’s truth.

As Bishops, we recognize the need for honest and humble discussions around theological and pastoral issues. We must always keep in mind St. Ignatius of Loyola’s “presupposition” to his Spiritual Exercises: “...that it should be presumed that every good Christian ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it.” This presupposition should be afforded all the more to the teaching of Our Holy Father.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is a collegial body of bishops working towards that goal. As Pastors and Teachers of the Faith, therefore, let me assert that we always stand in strong unity with and loyalty to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, who “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful” (LG, no. 23).”

Fr. Francis Martin

by Barry Levy

Meier Clinics, Rockville, MD

Even now I find my joy in the suffering I endure for you. In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the church. I became a minister of this church through the commission God gave me to preach among you his word in its fullness.

—COLOSSIANS 1:24

This text sums up for me how Fr. Francis lived, and the reason for the profound influence he had on so many, myself and my family included. Fr. Francis’s life bore the hardship of the Gospel. “In season and out of season” he focused on the reality of the living Jesus. Through prayer, personal sacrifice, and the preaching of the Word of God, Fr. Francis proclaimed the power of the Cross to change lives, especially his own. As a result, he spent himself to the end making the Scriptures come alive in an extraordinarily real way. For nearly eighty years, from age 7 until his passing from this life on August 11, 2017, Fr. Francis was dedicated to hearing, doing, and proclaiming the Word of God.

I first met Fr. Francis at the Atlantic City Charismatic Convention in 1977, the year my wife and I were married. As was the case with countless others, I was thoroughly impacted by his preaching. He shared about his experiences proclaiming the Word of God, particularly in Jerusalem, and I was so impressed that I told my wife, “This is someone who can help us deepen our life of faith.” Fr. Francis was, at the time, a member of Madonna House Lay Apostolate in Combermere, Canada. My wife and I, like many others, imagined how great it would be to live in community with him. Little did we know that six years later this would come to pass when we joined Fr. Francis to live in the Mother of God Community. It was there that he became our friend, priest, confessor, spiritual director, intellectual mentor, and brother for thirty-four years.

Fr. Martin was born on October 20, 1930, in New York City. At 7 years of age he knew that he was called to preach the Word of God. As a child he was known to gather the neighborhood kids and teach them about the bible. He credited his family, and especially his holy Aunt Mary, for their influence in his life. Fr.

Francis attended Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, and studied economics. He then joined St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, where he was ordained as a Cistercian on December 23, 1956. He later became a priest of the Madonna House community in the Diocese of Pembroke, Ontario, in which he was incardinated on October 15, 1969. In 1978, he became a member of the Mother of God Community in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and became the community chaplain in 1997.

In recent years, Fr. Francis held several positions: Professor Emeritus of New Testament at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C.; Senior Fellow at the Intercultural Forum for Faith and Culture at the John Paul II Cultural Center in D.C.; and Cardinal Adam Maida Chair in Biblical Studies at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan. In the past, he taught at the Gregorian University in Rome, Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem, and the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He also taught at the Franciscan University of Steubenville and the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Washington, D.C. A long-time member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, Fr. Francis was the recipient of the 2011 Cardinal Wright award. He received his Licentiate in Sacred Theology from St. Thomas Pontifical University in 1959. Fr. Francis earned his Doctorate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in 1978.

During that period of time in Rome, Fr. Francis served as an advisor to Cardinal Suenens during the Second Vatican Council. He had come in contact with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal at Madonna House and recognized how the work of the Council was to reach the laity through that movement of the Spirit. Fr. Francis became a leader in the renewal. He preached at the summer conferences at Steubenville for priests and deacons for many years. His teaching and spiritual direction renewed the spiritual lives and ministries of countless laity and many clergy. In the summer of 2010, a few weeks after vesting me at my diaconal ordination, he suffered a massive heart attack in an airport in Copenhagen, while traveling home from serving as spiritual director for a retreat. He never fully recovered, but he was able to return to active ministry for one last drive to the goal line: preaching, teaching, and spearheading the Word Proclaimed Institute, which offers

homiletic helps to priests and deacons. Then, beginning around 2015, having spent himself in the service of the Gospel, Fr. Francis began more deeply “filling up in his own flesh...the sufferings of Christ,” preparing to meet him face to face.

In the spirit of renewal Fr. Francis would often say that the first modern mind you have to preach the Gospel to is your own. He did this faithfully, and in the course of his own “hearing the Word of God with faith,” Fr. Francis brought many souls with him. He once said to the Lord, “I’ll trade you every sin I’ve got just to know you better.” One time he described an image he received in prayer of a chain being lifted from the mud. He understood that the higher one link was lifted, the more links it would take with it out of the mud. I was one of those links that his work and sacrifices lifted up. In community, in celebrating the liturgy, in prayer meetings, and through the Pastoral Institute, Fr. Francis brought his scholarship and spirituality to others seeking to deepen their spiritual lives, meeting people where they were, working hard at communicating in a way that would most effectively reach what he called “the average Sunday golfer in the pew.” He introduced us to Catholic biblical and philosophical scholarship and to the Magisterial documents that would move us to “renew our minds,” which Fr. Francis considered a precious gift to be cherished and protected. His circle of influence extended throughout the world by way of his writing, teaching, preached retreats, and conferences, including those he organized at the Mother of God Community and the Word Proclaimed Institute.

Among the many wonderful conferences organized by Fr. Francis, the Mother of God annual Healing Symposium stands out in my memory. Many scholars were invited to share from their areas of expertise, stimulating a fruitful dialogue among Catholic biblical scholarship, philosophy, spiritual theology, contemporary approaches to psychotherapy and neuroscience, along with the Orthodox spiritual tradition. (Fr. Francis was himself bi-ritual and engaged in a long-standing dialogue with the Orthodox tradition through his close personal friendship with Bishop Joseph Raya.) Professor Kenneth Schmitz, another dear friend of his, who died one week after him, was also a close collaborator in the thought and direction of the Healing Symposium, as were Bob Schuchts and Mary Healy. This collaboration was one of the richest associations of my life with Fr. Francis. Out of it grew my vocation to the

diaconate and a deepened Catholic approach to healing in my psychotherapy practice.

There are many characteristic sayings of Fr. Francis that his students remember him by. He was known to begin his courses by telling students, “In this class the Lord is going to heal your epistemology.” Very few knew what he was talking about, but many experienced the healing of the modern mind that Fr. Francis ardently promoted. Other similar sayings included: “Faith is as real as revelation is personal,” and “Faith is a way of knowing. It is a prophetic interpretation of reality.” When people would express admiration for his grasp of biblical languages, he would say, “Most of the saints never knew Hebrew or Greek, and they are in heaven. A lot of scholars knew Hebrew and Greek, and I don’t know where they are right now!”

The title of one of his books, *The Life-Changer*, describes Fr. Francis well. His transformational presence constantly pressed those who listened to him toward holiness: toward the intimate, personal knowledge of the Persons of the Trinity. He taught me how to pray and “do theology on my knees,” a favorite theme of his. His teaching in hermeneutics and biblical studies always aimed at the “reality that the text is talking about.” His doctoral dissertation was on the biblical theology of the encounter. For me, the Word of God took on a kind of human form in the way that Fr. Francis lived, suffered, preached, healed, and taught. Our hearts indeed burned within us as Jesus living in Fr. Francis brought the texts to life. He always taught that the liturgy was the native home of the Scriptures, and he never tired of teaching us how to move toward contemplative prayer through the practice of *lectio divina*, into a personal encounter with Jesus.

Fr. Francis Martin will be sorely missed by his family, friends, the Mother of God Community, the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, and priests and students around the world who were influenced by his spiritual direction and penetrating understanding of the Scriptures. He always acknowledged the giants on whose shoulders he stood: St. Thomas Aquinas, Origen, St. Augustine, Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthazar, and his professors, including Fr. Stanislas Lyonnet. Fr. Francis has faithfully passed on their legacy of scholarship, prayer, and fellowship. In your charity, please continue to pray for him, that the Lord may bring him to the fullness of the place that Jesus has prepared for him. ✠

The Confirmation of Neil Gorsuch and Other Pro-life Developments in the First Part of 2017

by William L. Saunders
Americans United for Life

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March for Life

January witnessed two large marches in the District of Columbia. One was the Women’s March on Washington on January 21. Although it was supposed to be an inclusive event for all women, pro-life women were barred from involvement.

The second march came a few days later, on January 27. It was the annual March for Life, protesting the Supreme Court’s creation in 1973 of an unrestricted right to abortion in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*.

This year’s March for Life differed from others in a major respect. For the first time ever, the vice president of the United States addressed the marchers. Introducing him, his wife, Karen, reminded the crowd that “this is not our [family’s] first March!” The vice president’s speech reflected his long-time pro-life commitment: “Life is winning in America...I have long believed that a society can be judged by how we care for our most vulnerable—the aged, the infirm, the disabled, and the unborn....I urge you to press on....We will not rest until we restore a culture of life for ourselves and our posterity.”¹

Vice President Pence was preceded at the podium by presidential advisor Kellyanne Conway. She asked the crowd what it means to be pro-life: “It means to stand up, stand tall, and stand together on behalf of babies in the womb. It is no coincidence that the first right cited in the Declaration of Independence is the right to life...It is God-given....So, to the March for Life 2017, allow me to make it very clear: We [the Trump administration] hear you. We see you. We respect you.”²

Pence and Conway were speakers at the program preceding the March. Another memorable speaker was Mia Love, the first black female Republican elected

to Congress and a child of Haitian immigrants. After the talk—wildly cheered and appreciated by the large crowd—the March itself commenced, finishing at the steps of the Supreme Court.

President Trump tweeted, “The March for Life is so important. To all of you marching—you have my full support!”

Pro-Life Consequences of the 2016 Elections

The elections in the fall of 2016 were of immense importance to the pro-life cause. First, at least nominally pro-life (Republican) majorities were elected in both houses of Congress. Second, Pence’s and Conway’s boss, Donald Trump, who ran at least in part as a pro-life candidate, was elected president. That means that pro-life laws can be passed in Congress and signed into force and effect by the president.

We shall see what legislative pro-life initiatives eventually become law, but priorities announced by congressional leaders include defunding Planned Parenthood and enacting the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act (H.R. 36), which bans abortion after twenty weeks (with a few exceptions).

Regarding Planned Parenthood, Congress and the president acted together to revoke a regulation put in place by President Obama in the last few days of his presidency. Obama’s rule prohibited a state from redirecting federal Title X family-planning funds away from abortion providers to other providers, something many states wanted to do. Under the Congressional Review Act, Congress, by a simple majority in each house, may revoke a regulation imposed during the last six months of the previous administration. Although it took a tie-breaking vote by Pence in the Senate, Congress voted to revoke Obama’s rule, and Trump signed the new legislation in mid-April, meaning states may now redirect family-planning funds away from abortion providers

such as Planned Parenthood.³

Regulations not subject to the Congressional Review Act can be changed under the Administrative Procedures Act, but such changes require a fairly lengthy “notice-and-comment” rule-making process and thus are more difficult and require more time. This is apparently the case with the HHS contraception mandate, which was adopted by Health and Human Services in 2012 pursuant to notice-and-comment rule-making and which threatens the very existence of Catholic and other organizations that refuse to provide insurance coverage for contraceptives and abortifacients.

On the other hand, anti-life executive orders can be reversed by the president acting alone. Trump did so within days of his inauguration. On January 23, he reinstated the Mexico City Policy, which bars federal funds from going to organizations that promote or provide abortions overseas.⁴ (The policy, which was first instituted by President Ronald Reagan, had been rescinded in 2009 by President Barack Obama.)

Another significant consequence of the elections is that many executive posts will be filled by the president, some requiring Senate approval. Although a significant number of important posts remain unfilled, noted pro-life figures are in place. For instance, former congressman Dr. Tom Price now heads HHS,⁵ and former senator Jeff Sessions is now attorney general and leads the Justice Department. Price will oversee the overhaul of Obamacare and, *inter alia*, the elimination of its anti-life aspects. Sessions is a strong opponent of legalized abortion: “I firmly believe *Roe v. Wade* and its descendants represent one of the worst, colossally erroneous Supreme Court decisions of all time.”⁶ Appointees like Price and Sessions will play a major role in shaping how the Trump administration both removes anti-life measures and takes positive steps to build a culture of life.

Confirmation of Neil Gorsuch

Probably the most important pro-life appointment so far is that of Neil Gorsuch to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Gorsuch was nominated a few days after the March for Life to replace Justice Antonin Scalia, who died in February 2016. Gorsuch was confirmed on April 7 on a vote of 54 to 45, in which three Democrats joined the Republican majority.⁷ He was sworn into office in a private ceremony at the Supreme Court by Chief Justice John Roberts on April 10, and in a public ceremony later that day at the White House by Justice Anthony Kennedy.

In 1993, Gorsuch had served as a judicial clerk for Justice Kennedy following the retirement of Justice Byron White, for whom Gorsuch also clerked at the time. (Both White and Gorsuch are Colorado natives.) After the swearing-in, Gorsuch immediately “assumed his seat” and on April 17 began hearing oral arguments in pending cases. One of the cases to be argued that week was *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer*, a case involving religious liberty under the Constitution. (The state of Missouri claims it may deny all state funds going to any “church-related” entity, including funds for resurfacing playgrounds at preschools pursuant to a state constitutional provision.)

Few, if any, nominees have ever had a more impressive resume than does Gorsuch. After receiving his undergraduate degree from Columbia University, where he was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa honor society, he attended Harvard Law School, graduating with honors. Subsequently, he received a doctorate from Oxford University under the direction of one of the world’s leading jurisprudential scholars, John Finnis. Later, after President George W. Bush nominated him, he was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to serve as a judge for the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. He served there for over ten years before being nominated by President Trump to the Supreme Court. The American Bar Association gave him its highest rating of “well qualified.”

And yet his nomination was subject to the first partisan filibuster in history. What are the reasons for that? What do they tell us about the potential significance of the Gorsuch confirmation?

First, of course, Gorsuch replaced Scalia. While Scalia was well known to be a pro-life justice, it would be more accurate to say that his judicial philosophy made it clear to him that there was no right to abortion in the Constitution. Remember, the reason there is a right to abortion in America is because the Supreme Court said the Constitution provided for it. The Constitution itself, however, does not contain the word “abortion.” Nonetheless, the Court said the “due process clause” provides for such a right.⁸ The due process clause is a portion of the Fourteenth Amendment. The relevant language of section 1 of the amendment says, “Nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law.” In *Roe* and *Doe* and in a subsequent case, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which upheld *Roe*, the Supreme Court said that the word “liberty” includes an essentially unlimited right to terminate a pregnancy.⁹ In *Casey*, the Court defined “liberty” thus: “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of

human life.” Scalia famously derided this as the “sweet mystery of life” passage. Scalia was an originalist, who did not believe judges were free to expound on a word like “liberty”; rather, for originalism the meaning of the word is limited to that provided by the original text, the actual language and structure of the text. Since the text is silent on abortion, Scalia would not find in it such a right. Those who disagree with Scalia, such as Justice Kennedy, believe justices should interpret words such as “liberty” as they think best for society. This philosophy is called by its admirers “living constitution” and by its detractors “judicial activism.” Scalia was an originalist, and Gorsuch is rightly put in the originalist camp. As he said during his hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, the starting point is the “plain text . . . read as a reasonable citizen would.” Thus, Gorsuch was opposed chiefly because of his judicial philosophy.

There are a few things to note about this argument over judicial philosophy. Originalism insists that rights must be enumerated in or clearly implied by the text of the Constitution. If they are not, any recognition of such putative rights is left to the states. If rights are to exist as national rights, they must be added by the people to the text of the Constitution through the amendment process. (This is the way the Constitution itself provides for it to be changed.) The Constitution does not give the power to the Supreme Court to add new rights. All the Constitution says about the Supreme Court is that it is one of three coequal branches of government with the power of review. The Constitution does not say that the Court is to resolve all controversies. It does not say that the Court should interpret words as the Court thinks is best. It does not make the Court the policy-making branch of government. The Constitution separates national power into three coequal branches. The policy-making power is reserved to the Congress, who, with its resources and large staffs, is better able to determine facts, and is better able to resolve conflicts among the competing preferences of different groups through the familiar horse trading of legislative politics. If courts take this role, they usurp the legislative role and effectively deprive the citizens of the right to rule themselves through the representatives they elect (and can “un-elect”).¹⁰ This is why judicial activism is also sometimes called judicial policy making—referring, that is, to judges making policy without the Constitutional right to do so.

One can understand the dispute over the Fourteenth Amendment’s meaning in this light. Is a Court supposed to apply a procedural rule? (That is, was the process by which the state acted in accordance with appropriate

norms, such as that legislation be “prospective” and “of general applicability,” meaning that it does not target a particular person for harsh treatment?) Or should the Court *develop* the meaning of the substantive provisions as it thinks best? If so, that is “substantive due process.”

This issue was central to the hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee during the Gorsuch nomination. Time and again, Gorsuch was asked if certain unenumerated rights, like abortion, were protected by the Constitution. Gorsuch took a limited view of the judicial role—a judge should decide only the case before him, and since the way an issue is framed depends on the factual context of the particular dispute, as well as how the arguments were presented by each side of the dispute, it is not appropriate for a nominee to say how we would decide a future case.¹¹ Frustrated senators asked him if precedent, that is, the holding in one or more prior cases, gave a right to abortion. Gorsuch, of course, conceded that is true (that is, decisions such as *Roe* do exist). Gorsuch admitted the Court had had numerous opportunities to overturn those decisions but had not done so. However, he would not go so far as to say he would not vote to do so, as these senators wanted him to do. Indeed, he noted that precedent is not always entitled to deference; it depends, in part, on whether the prior case was *rightly* decided, that is, whether it was based in the Constitutional text.¹²

The viewer of those televised hearings before the Judiciary Committee can be forgiven if he sensed a kind of dance going on. For the viewer would be correct—there was, indeed, a story behind the story, so to speak. It is a story with a long history, and it concerns particularly one substantive issue: abortion.

As noted, the “right” to abortion was really created by the Court from vague guarantees of liberty in the Constitution. Since the Court is poorly placed to decide disputed matters of public policy, its abortion decisions have spawned an unending public protest (such as the March for Life). Though the Court demanded that those protests cease in its 1992 decision in *Casey*, they did not: this year was, for instance, the forty-fifth *consecutive* March for Life.

Since most Americans did not support, and never have supported, the unlimited abortion rights created by the Court in *Roe* and *Doe* and sustained by *Casey*, supporters of abortion rights turned to the Court to protect them. The idea was that what elections would not produce (a pro-abortion majority of Congress) could be achieved by carefully controlling the make-up of the nine judges on the Court. Thus, abortion supporters sought to ensure that the Court contained pro-abortion

judges, and abortion opponents pledged to choose judges who would overturn *Roe*.

This first became evident in 1987, with the nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court by Ronald Reagan. Bork was a formidable intellectual, whom everyone expected to have a significant effect on future Supreme Court decisions. Within minutes, Senator Edward Kennedy went onto the Senate floor to claim that the confirmation of Bork would force women to have back-alley abortions. Kennedy was determined to ensure a pro-abortion majority on the Court.

This began the battle over the Court, and it has continued for thirty years. During this time, Democrats blocked many nominees of Republican presidents, even those to the lower or inferior courts just below the Supreme Court, the courts of appeal. How did they do this? After all, the president nominates and the Senate confirms. So one might think that if the president is pro-life and the Senate is likewise, a nominee of such a president would be confirmed. But things were not so simple. The minority had a right, under Senate rules, to “extend debate,” that is, to keep talking for as long as it wished; another term for this is “filibuster.” A majority facing a filibuster can end debate, but only if it can muster sixty votes; otherwise, the filibuster continues, preventing a vote on the underlying nomination.

When Democrats’ blocking of nominees through actual or threatened filibusters became acute during the presidency of George W. Bush, Republicans threatened to change the Senate rules to eliminate the filibuster (meaning a simple majority vote would end debate, and a second majority vote would confirm a nominee). The press referred to this as the “nuclear option,” suggesting that it was a drastic last step. However, moderate Democrats and Republicans struck a deal to allow some nominees to be confirmed, and the Republicans never proceeded to eliminate the filibuster.

Subsequently, in 2013, when Republicans were blocking some of Obama’s nominees, Senate majority leader Harry Reid employed the nuclear option. Extending the metaphor, Reid’s act might be called a “tactical nuclear strike,” for it did not completely eliminate the filibuster but left it intact for Supreme Court nominations while eliminating it for lower court and administrative branch appointments.

Thus we come to the Gorsuch nomination. President Trump ran squarely on the issue of Supreme Court appointments. He pledged to nominate someone from one of two lists he received from conservative legal and policy groups. Gorsuch was on that list.

Democrats are, of course, in the minority in the Senate. But they have more than forty votes and could thus successfully employ a filibuster in normal circumstances. However, the Republicans, learning from the thirty years’ war over judicial nominations in which they were constantly outmaneuvered by the Democrats, stated they would employ the nuclear option themselves, eliminating the Supreme Court filibuster this time. Democrats, who support abortion rights and want to protect them, faced a dilemma: employ the filibuster against Gorsuch or save it for the next nominee? From a certain perspective, the Gorsuch nomination was unimportant, for he was only replacing one of four conservatives on a Court that also contains four liberals and the essential “swing” vote, Justice Kennedy. A fifth conservative will be needed to establish a majority. The next nomination, when it comes, is likely to be for one of the liberals or for Kennedy and will thus be for “control” of the Court.

The Democrats chose to filibuster Gorsuch. This was a poor choice from some perspectives, since it meant the Republicans would eliminate the filibuster and it would not be around when needed to stop control of the Court passing to the conservatives with a future nomination. However, the raw political fact is that the Democrats could not prevent the final elimination of the filibuster. Under the procedural maneuver Democrats employed under Harry Reid, mentioned above, Republicans could change the Senate rules simply because they were in the majority, and Republicans had said they would do so. So if the Democrats held off on the filibuster until the next vacancy, the Republicans would simply change the rules then. Still, an argument could be made that the Democrats should have held off, because later, when control of the Court was at stake, there would be a better chance of provoking widespread popular political backlash that would cause the Republicans to refrain from eliminating the filibuster.

In the event, Democrats filibustered Gorsuch, one of the most qualified nominees in history, a man who is hardly an ideologue but who is surely an originalist.

There was a good deal of talk by the Democrats about needing to level the field after the way Republicans treated the nomination of Merrick Garland following Scalia’s death. The narrative was that Republicans had shamefully treated Garland by refusing to consider his nomination, either through a committee vote or a vote by the entire Senate. However, while this has a certain surface plausibility, the Democrats themselves, during the presidency of George W. Bush, had stated that, should a seat become vacant on the Court before the upcoming

presidential election, Bush should not nominate anyone, allowing the election to decide the president who would fill the seat. The Republicans simply followed that advice after the death of Scalia, and the issue of Supreme Court nominations was an important part of the 2016 presidential campaign, as noted above. (The Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell stated before the election that he would hold hearings on any Supreme Court nomination from Hillary Clinton if she were elected.)

While the elimination of the Supreme Court filibuster can be lamented, it was inevitable. Democrats themselves—including their nominee for vice president, Tim Kaine—had pledged to abolish it once they regained control of the Senate. The reason, again, is abortion. To protect it, Democrats decided to make sure the Court was composed of judicial activists who would continue to find abortion a matter of substantive due process under the liberty guarantee of the Fourteenth Amendment. In any case, the fact is that the Constitution is silent about the filibuster. The filibuster was created under Senate rules as a product of a traditional sort of civility that once prevailed in the Senate but has evaporated in the battle over abortion. Since elimination of the filibuster is consonant with the Constitution, it may more properly be called the constitutional option rather than the nuclear option.

Assisted Suicide

Gorsuch’s doctoral dissertation concerned assisted suicide. It was subsequently published as *The Future of Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia*. Written when Oregon was the only state to have legalized assisted suicide, it is a very thorough review of the law and an in-depth consideration of the arguments in favor and opposed. In a scholarly way, Gorsuch puts forward for consideration the chief argument against legalizing assisted suicide—the principle that the intentional killing of an innocent human being is always wrong.¹³

Sadly, many states and localities have proceeded to legalize assisted suicide since publication of the book, including, recently, the District of Columbia and Colorado.

The reason these jurisdictions could even consider the question whether to legalize assisted suicide is because the Supreme Court in 1997, in the twin decisions in *Washington v. Glucksberg* and *Vacco v. Quill*, refused to recognize, as a matter of substantive due process, a federal constitutional right to assisted suicide under the liberty interest of the Fourteenth Amendment, thereby

leaving the issue to the states to decide.

However, the Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges* appeared to call into question the continuing validity of those decisions. Indeed, if the living constitution philosophy reigns on the Court, it is difficult to see how the liberty interest under the Fourteenth Amendment would fail to provide a right to end one’s life. The nomination and confirmation of Gorsuch ensures that when that issue arises in the future, as it will, Justice Gorsuch will bring his scholarship and his judicial philosophy of originalism to bear on its resolution. ✕

ENDNOTES

- 1 Mike Pence, “Remarks at the March for Life,” January 27, 2017, Federal News Service transcript, C-SPAN, <https://www.c-span.org/>.
- 2 Kellyanne Conway, “Address at the Annual U.S. March for Life Rally,” transcript from audio, American Rhetoric, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/>.
- 3 Colin Dwyer, “Trump Signs Law Giving States Option to Deny Funding for Planned Parenthood,” *NPR*, April 13, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/>.
- 4 John McCormack, “Trump Reverses Unpopular Obama Executive Action on Abortion by Reinstating Mexico City Policy,” *Weekly Standard* (January 23, 2017), <http://www.weeklystandard.com/>.
- 5 Steven Ertelt, “Senate Confirms Pro-Life Rep. Tom Price as HHS Secretary despite Planned Parenthood’s Objections,” *LifeNews.com*, February 10, 2017, <http://www.lifenews.com/>.
- 6 Steven Ertelt, “Attorney General Nominee Jeff Sessions: *Roe v. Wade* ‘One of the Worst Supreme Court Decisions’ Ever,” *LifeNews.com*, January 10, 2017, <http://www.lifenews.com/>.
- 7 Ariane de Vogue and Dan Berman, “Neil Gorsuch Confirmed to the Supreme Court,” *CNN*, April 7, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/>.
- 8 The Supreme Court provided an alternative source, the Ninth Amendment: “The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.” However, this has not been developed in subsequent cases, which uniformly rely on the Fourteenth Amendment.
- 9 *Doe*, which said abortion could be chosen for any reason, made that choice subject only to the assent of the abortion provider, who obviously has a financial interest in seeing that an abortion takes place.
- 10 As Gorsuch said during the hearing, “Notice [of what the law is] is the key to the rule of law.” Citizens should not be held accountable to rules of which they could not reasonably be aware. He also noted that “if judges were secret legislators...the very idea of government by the people would be at risk.”
- 11 Gorsuch was following the so-called Ginsburg standard, under which a nominee does not speculate about future cases. As current Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said during her confirmation hearings in 1993, “A judge sworn to decide impartially can offer no forecasts, no hints, for that would show not only disregard for the specifics of the particular case; it would display disdain for the entire judicial process.”
- 12 Gorsuch coauthored a book with twelve other judges on the proper use of precedent, *Law of Judicial Precedent*. He frequently remarked that he would act in accordance with the analysis in that book, whose coauthors include liberals and conservatives.
- 13 This statement, on its face, appears to implicate abortion as well as assisted suicide, a fact not lost upon Senate Democrats. For instance, Senator Diane Feinstein raised it in her first round of questions. However, Gorsuch refused to speculate on how he would decide the abortion issue if it came before the Court again.

The Kingliness of Friendship

by Clara Sarrocco
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After what we have said, a discussion of friendship would naturally follow, since it is a virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living. For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods.

—ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.1.1155a3–6

History tells of many friendships, but few are as unlikely as the friendship between George Bernard Shaw and Dame Laurentia McLachlan, a religious in the Benedictine community of Stanbrook Abbey. The drama *The Best of Friends*, written by Hugh Whitemore, is based on the years of correspondence between Shaw and Dame Laurentia. His high regard for her was such that in 1924 he dedicated his play *St. Joan* to her.

Dame Laurentia was very much the equal of Shaw's famous wit and cynicism. She was elected Abbess at Stanbrook in 1931 and was a leading expert on music and medieval manuscripts. Pope Pius XI awarded her the *Bene Merenti* medal for her work on Church music and the restoration of Gregorian chant in England.

An atheist, Shaw indulged with her the polemics of their disparate positions in many enjoyable and lengthy letters. One day, well into years of their friendship, Shaw received a formal announcement bearing the name of Dame Laurentia, followed by a set of dates. In an uncharacteristic display of sincere emotion, Shaw bared his soul to the Sisters at the Abbey. He offered his condolences and indicated how much he would miss her, for she had become his true friend. Shortly afterward he received a reply from Dame Laurentia herself, who indicated that she was very much alive and that the announcement was sent in celebration of her Golden Jubilee in religious life. It was a delightful moment for Dame Laurentia, who outlived Shaw by three years.

C. S. Lewis never commented on Shaw's unlikely friendship with Dame Laurentia, but what he wrote in *The Four Loves* describes, albeit inadvertently, the relationship between Shaw and Laurentia:

In a circle of true Friends each man is simply what he is: stands for nothing but himself. No one cares

two pence about anyone else's family, profession, class, income, race, or previous history. Of course you will get to know about most of these in the end.... They will come out bit by bit, to furnish an illustration or an analogy, to serve as pegs for an anecdote; never for their own sake. That is the kingliness of Friendship.¹

In his own life, Lewis shared the kingliness of friendship with Sr. Penelope, CSMV, whom he often referred to as his "elder sister in the faith." Lewis, a man of letters like Shaw, and Sr. Penelope, a scholar in her own right like Dame Laurentia, began corresponding in 1939. Sr. Penelope also corresponded with Thomas Merton beginning in 1965. The letters were concerned with the writings of Isaac of Stella, a twelfth-century monk, theologian, and philosopher. They can be found in Merton's somewhat controversial book *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*.²

Sr. Penelope Lawson was an Anglignan nun. She was born Ruth Penelope Lawson on March 20, 1890, in Clent, Worchestershire, the daughter of the Reverend Robert Lawson, Vicar of Clent. At the age of nine she entered the Worcester High School, later to be known as the Alice Ottley School. It was there that she developed a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and a love of Latin and Greek. In her spiritual autobiography, *Meditations of a Caterpillar*, published in 1962, Sr. Penelope attributes to her experiences at the school the primary influence in developing her interest in religious life. At the age of twenty-two, after spending some time at Oxford, Ruth entered religious life at the Convent of St. Mary the Virgin. The community had its beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century. It was one of the first Anglican religious orders founded since the Reformation and dates its beginnings to the time of Tractarians, who adhered to the High Church movement.³ She took the religious name of Penelope, was professed in 1915, and was assigned to the community's training home for girls, where she worked for six years. Sr. Penelope spent four years teaching before being relieved of this duty on account of ill health.

The convent was located in Wantage, only about fifteen miles from Oxford, which allowed Sr. Penelope to continue her studies in theology and the Middle Ages at Keble College. Her work brought her a reputation among scholars as the best translator from Latin

in her generation. In 1939 she received the Lambeth Diploma in theology with a thesis on the Hebrew text of the Psalms. In 1940 she was awarded the Archbishop's License to teach theology. Sr. Penelope was eventually the author of numerous books, twenty-five on theology alone. She translated seventeen volumes of the Church Fathers, including several volumes in the Ancient Christian Writers Series, Faber's Classics on the Contemplative Life, and several in the series on the Cistercian Fathers. In 1970, at the age of 80, she began translating Hugh of St. Victor. Following the custom of the order, many of her works were published simply under the name of "A Religious of CSMV."

Sr. Penelope wrote *The Wood: An Outline of Christianity* in 1935. The book went through four editions with the last one coming out in May 1970 at the request of the Episcopal Book Club. The stated purpose of the book is "to help people whose view of the wood of Christianity is sometimes obscured by the trees." The book's three sections (Creation, Fall, Restoration) have the aim of showing God's hand in the created world, in the Bible, and in history. In the preface she notes:

I know that there are many faithful Christians who are vaguely uneasy about the status of the Bible. They are haunted by the idea that somehow it got discredited...., but you have no cause at all to fear.... The Bible is all right, and always will be. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Word of God Incarnate, but he is also the Word of God en-scriptured (sic), and all the scholars and critics and doubters in the world cannot dis-inspire Holy Writ.... Approach it in simplicity, believing in the Holy Spirit, asking him to guide you and you will find Christ there.⁴

Another of Sr. Penelope's books, *The Coming: A Study in the Christian Faith* (1974), was originally published in two parts. Part 1 was called *The Coming of the Lord* (1953), and part 2 *As in Adam* (1954). She wrote: "The theme of this book is that of the Incarnation, in the Spirit, in the Sacraments and in the Judgment, there is a single Coming, and that of Man in his entirety to heaven.... It will be a combination of the modern and critical with the traditional and typological.... It aims only at starting people on a train of thought.... Its purpose... [is to] send them all back to the Bible."⁵

Many of Lewis's correspondents expressed the desire to place his letters at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Before this was accomplished, however, Professor Clyde S. Kilby asked Sr. Penelope if she would contribute her letters to the Wade Collection at Wheaton College. According to Hooper's 1988 revised edition of

the *Lewis Letters*: "[Sr. Penelope] responded by telling me [Hooper] that I was dragging my feet over a British collection. She propelled me into action by giving the fifty-six letters she had from Lewis to the Bodleian (September 1967)." They are now in the Duke Humphrey's Division of the Library. Later the following year an arrangement was made with Wheaton College whereby each library would send the other copies of letters that it managed to collect.

Since then, the three-volume edition of *The Collected Letters* edited by Walter Hooper has been published. Volume 1 covers the years 1905 to 1931, volume 2 1931 to 1945, and volume 3 1946 to 1963. Sr. Penelope's letters are in volumes 2 and 3.

The letters that Lewis received from his many correspondents no longer exist. Lewis explained the reason in a letter to Don Luigi Pedrollo of the Verona Fathers, dated January 3, 1961. The Verona Fathers were compiling a dossier on Fr. John Calabria in preparation for his beatification and asked Lewis if he had any of Fr. John's letters. Lewis replied: "I wish I could send you copies of the letters which the Venerable Fr. Don John Calabria wrote. But I have neither the letters themselves nor copies of them. It is my practice to consign to the flames all letters after two days... not because I esteem them of no value, but because I do not wish to relinquish things often worthy of sacred silence to subsequent reading by posterity."⁶ Fr. John was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 17, 1988 and canonized by him on April 18, 1999.

The first of Sr. Penelope's letters is dated August 9, 1939. Surprisingly it does not relate to Lewis's religious writings but to his science fiction. According to A. N. Wilson, "[i]t was not, however, of learned matters that she first wrote to Lewis but of science fiction. She had enjoyed *Out of the Silent Planet*: 'At ordinary times we do not read novels at all, as you may imagine, but the right novel at the right moment can have a real spiritual value.'" Sr. Penelope continues: "[*Out of the Silent Planet*] provokes thought in just the directions where I have always wanted to think.... There are bits—the relations of the unfallen creatures with Oyarsa, their social order, their peaceful awareness of the spiritual world—which are more lovely and more satisfying than anything I have met before."⁸

Lewis's August 9, 1939 response indicated that he was preparing to write a sequel to the novel. He confided that the inspiration for the book came from a student who honestly believed in interplanetary colonization and that the scientific hope of defeating death

could be a real rival to Christianity. Ironically, because the prospect of war loomed so large (Germany invaded Czechoslovakia March 1939) some of the students were rethinking their areligious speculations. Lewis noted that only two of the sixty reviewers realized that the idea of the fall of the Bent One was not a fictional creation of his own: "I believe this great ignorance might be a help to the evangelization of England: any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under cover of romance without their knowing it."⁹

Sr. Penelope had sent Lewis a copy of her book *God Persists*. He indicated how much he valued it and asked her for information on a point she makes about the "crossing" of the nomadic and agricultural religions. In response to her questions, he recommends George MacDonald and Charles Williams as suitable reading for the convalescents who were in her care.

The relationship between Sr. Penelope and Lewis was one of contemporary scholars sharing interests in each other's writings, but it was also more than that. For Lewis it was a spiritual connection and it greatly helped him on his road to a deeper Christian faith. In the same letter he wrote: "Though I'm forty years old as a man I'm only about twelve as a Christian, so it would be a maternal act if you found time sometimes to mention me in your prayers."¹⁰

In return for *God Persists*, Lewis sent Sr. Penelope a copy of *Pilgrim's Regress*. She noted his satire on High Anglicans and this prompted Lewis's response in November of 1939: "[B]ut I am still not what you'd call high. To me the real distinction is not between high and low but between religion and supernaturalism & salvationism on the one hand and all watered-down and modernist versions on the other."¹¹

By October 1940, Lewis had progressed in his spiritual development, in part because of Sr. Penelope's influence and prayers. He wrote to her:

I am going to make my first confession next week, wh [sic] will seem odd to you, but I wasn't brought up to that kind of thing. It's an odd experience. The *decision* to do so was one of the hardest I have ever made: but now that I am committed (by dint of posting the letter before I had time to change my mind) I begin to be afraid of the opposite extreme—afraid that I am merely indulging in an orgy of egoism. However, *quod ubique quod ab omnibus*. ("Let us hold on to that which has been believed everywhere, always by everyone." St. Vincent of Lerins)...[T]hose who resist most violently in words are often those who go away and think it over most fruitfully.¹²

True to his word, the next month (November 1940) Lewis followed up with Sr. Penelope:

Well—we have come through the wall of fire and find ourselves (somewhat to our surprise) still alive and even well. The suggestion about an orgy of egoism turns out, like all the enemy propaganda, to have just a grain of truth in it, but I have no doubt that the proper method of dealing with that is to continue the practice, as I intend to do. For after all everything—even virtue, even prayer—has its dangers and if one heeds the grain of truth in the enemy propaganda one can never do anything at all.¹³

Lewis continued the practice of weekly auricular confession for the remainder of his life. His confessor was Fr. Walter Adams of the Society of St. John the Baptist known as the Cowley Fathers. When Fr. Adams died, Lewis wrote to Fr. John Calabria, his other spiritual confidant, just how devastated he was over Fr. Adams's death.

One year later Sr. Penelope sent Lewis a picture of the face of the Shroud of Turin. Lewis wrote: "Thank you so much for the head of Our Lord from the shroud. It has grown upon me wonderfully...the great value is to make one realize that He was a man, and once even a dead man. There is so much difference between a doctrine and a realisation [sic]." Lewis kept the picture of the face of the Shroud on the wall in his bedroom for the remainder of his life.

Poignantly in the same letter he continued: "I am writing, really for company, for I'm a sad Ass at the moment. I've been going through one of those periods when one can no longer disguise the fact that movement has been backward not forward. All the sins one thought one had escaped have been back again as strong as ever."¹⁴ In a following letter he wrote: "I am ashamed of having grumbled. And your act was not that of a brute—in operation it was more like that of an angel for...you started me on a quite new realisation of what is meant by being 'in Christ.'"¹⁵

At this point in his life Lewis was undergoing a difficult time both in his home life and spiritually. He confided to Sr. Penelope in November 1941:

I think what really worries me is the feeling...that there's really nothing I so much dislike as religion—that it's all against the grain and I wonder if can really stand it! Have you ever had this? Does one outgrow it? Of course there is no intellectual difficulty. If our faith is true then that is just what it ought to feel like, until the new man is full-grown...What you say about 'disappointed with oneself' is very true—and a tendency

to mistake mere disappointment in wh. there is much wounded pride...for true repentance. I ought to have devoted a *Screwtape* letter to this.¹⁶

Lewis sent his hand-written manuscript of *The Screwtape Letters* to Sr. Penelope for safe keeping because the only other copy was in the hands of his publisher and he was afraid that it might be destroyed in a bombing raid. Years later Sr. Penelope offered to send it back but in his reply, he stated that they could sell it on the remote possibility that anyone would want it and the money could be used for a charitable cause. When the convent needed funds for the renovation of St. Michael's Chapel, they reluctantly sold the manuscript to the New York Public Library. It is now in the Berg Collections located on Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street in the Main Research Division.

In many of the other letters by Lewis to Sr. Penelope their conversations turn to their academic work, their writing, and the difficulties in publishing. He tells her that he wishes to dedicate *Perelandra* to the Community of St. Mary the Virgin and that *That Hideous Strength* has been unanimously damned by all reviewers. He has been given a sabbatical in order to finish his *Oxford History of English Literature in the XVI Century*, and unfortunately the book he planned to write with J. R. R. Tolkien never came about. "My book with Professor Tolkien—any book in collaboration with that great but dilatory and unmethodical man—is dated, I fear, to appear on the Greek Kalends!"¹⁷ The book was to be titled *Language and Human Nature*. Another book that Lewis had hoped to write but was forced to abandon was a book on prayer. "I have to abandon the book on prayer; it was clearly not for me." He took it up again about ten years later and it became *Letters to Malcolm Chiefly on Prayer*. It was written about six months before he died and was published posthumously in 1964.

By 1951 Lewis had come into some of the joyfulness of his Christian faith. He wrote: "Everything without, and many things within, are marvelously well at present. Indeed (I do not know whether to be more ashamed or joyful at confessing this) I realise that until about a month ago I never really believed...in God's forgiveness. What an ass I have been both for not knowing and for thinking I knew."¹⁸

Again in 1951 Lewis had just read Simone Weil's book *Waiting on God*. He critiques it for Sr. Penelope: "Erroneous in many ways, but I have rather fallen in love with it. The fragment at the end, about the sons of Noah, wd. interest you especially."¹⁹

Sr. Penelope's book *The Coming of the Lord: A Study in the Creed* was published in 1953. Lewis wrote: "I am simply delighted, excited and most grateful...the best theological book by anyone I have read for a longtime. You are...the only person I ever met who gives me real light on the Old Testament...And many, many thanks for St. Bernard's conception of the Palm Sunday procession."²⁰

In the last two letters he wrote to Sr. Penelope before his final illness Lewis answers her obvious questions: Yes, he has been made Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge, and "Yes, it is true, I married...She is Joy Davidman whose *Smoke on the Mountain* you read."²¹

Lewis's last letter to Sr. Penelope was two months before his death in 1963. He was seriously ill and had just revived from a coma. He wrote, "[P]erhaps the almost continuous prayers of my friends did it...Ought we to honour Lazarus rather than Stephen as the protomartyr? To be brought back and have all one's dying to do over again is rather hard."²² Sr. Penelope, his "elder sister in the faith," outlived her dear friend and spiritual brother by fourteen years. She died in 1977 at the age of 87.

It is only from Lewis's letters to Sr. Penelope that we can infer what she wrote to him. The high regard he had of her as a scholar and writer is obvious, but more noteworthy is the influence she had on his spiritual life. It far supersedes in depth the correspondence that Shaw had with Dame Laurentia. Lewis confided to Sr. Penelope his very *cri de coeur* and always asked for her prayers and respected and accepted her advice. Although he told her he was neither high nor low church, he gradually began to accept some of the religious practices of the High Church. Both he and Sr. Penelope must have seen this momentous change with gratitude to God for giving him the joys of the sacramental life of the Anglo-Catholic Church:

[T]he best forms of friendship involve conversations about the highest things, about truth, the truth *that is*. If we cannot or will not have the truth, we cannot be friends together in anything more than a passing sense—something that is contrary to the nature of friendship itself...Our lives are not just ephemeral discussion groups. They are made manifest in stories that have a beginning, middle and end. They must finally be judged to be complete, a truth that is likely the most important thing we can know about ourselves.²³ ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), 103.
- 2 Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience and Social Concerns* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1985), 477–81.
- 3 On 1 January 2013 eleven of the sisters of the community of St. Mary the Virgin, including the Mother Superior, left the convent at Wantage to join the Roman Catholic Anglican ordinariate for Britain, the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham.
- 4 Sr. Penelope Lawson, *The Wood: An Outline of Christianity* (London: Mowbray, 1971), vii–viii.
- 5 Sr. Penelope Lawson, *The Coming: A Study in the Christian Faith* (London: Mowbray, 1974), 4.
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- 10 *Letters* 2:263–64.
- 11 *Letters* 2:285.
- 12 *Letters* 2:452.
- 13 *Letters* 2:453.
- 14 *Letters* 2:495.
- 15 *Letters* 2:497.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis, Volume III—Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950–1963*, ed. Walter Hooper (San Francisco: Harper, 2007), 6.
- 18 *Letters* 3:123.
- 19 *Letters* 3:158.
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- 21 *Letters* 3:837.
- 22 *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, revised and enlarged edition, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1966), 508.
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Same-Sex Parenting and the Vindication of Church Teaching

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Donald H. J. Hermann contends that the Catholic Church has it all wrong when it comes to same-sex marriage. Hermann not only approves of same-sex marriage but also takes issue with any notion that the children of same-sex partners do not fare as well as the children raised by their own biological mothers and fathers.¹ In this article, I wish to focus on Hermann's second point, that is, his denial of the difference in outcomes between the children whose parents are male and female and those whose parents are of the same gender. To start, though, I would like to offer some comments on the first kind of difference we encounter in family life, the difference between spouses.

Same-sex marriage lacks complementarity: the specific, nontransferrable gifts that only a male and a female can bring to the union of marriage. Spouses are not just supposed to be equal in marriage but *different* too. Difference makes possible the union of marriage, for without it all we have is a coupling that is hard to distinguish from other couplings in human affairs.

Same-sex marriage is like same-sex intercourse. What nature precludes cannot be made up for in technology without, at the same time, undercutting the very meaning of the state (marriage) or the act (marital). The intrinsic character of marriage cannot be feigned because the intrinsic character of the marital act cannot be feigned. Authentic marriage and authentic marital acts belong together; we cannot have one without the other.

The Pontifical Council for the Family in 2000 took up a consideration of homosexual unions in view of the fact that many people today (in some places, a majority of people now) have come to see so-called homosexual marriage as equivalent to traditional marriage. The Pontifical Council calls the demand to grant marital status to unions between two persons of the same sex “contrary to common sense” and stipulates that the conditions for the “interpersonal complementarity between male and female...at both the physical-biological and the psychological levels” are lacking.²

The complementarity on the physical-biological level is obvious enough to see. All that is necessary is that we look at a man and a woman and note that physically and biologically they are different from each other. The psychological aspect of complementarity

is not so obvious but it is just as important. “Men and women have very different ways of thinking and responding that affect judgment, preference, and conduct. They complement one another, making up for one another's deficiencies and accentuating one another's strengths.”³

Psychological complementarity is crucial because it exerts enormous influence. Sociologist David Popenoe contends that generally

fathers express more concern for the child's long-term development, while mothers focus on the child's immediate well-being.... The disciplinary approach of fathers tends to be ‘firm’ while that of mothers tends to be ‘responsive.’ While mothers provide an important flexibility and sympathy in their discipline, fathers provide ultimate predictability and consistency. Both dimensions are critical for an efficient, balanced, and humane childrearing regime.⁴

These parental influences—precisely in their maleness and femaleness—allow a developing child to appropriate the multifaceted dimensions of life and integrate them accordingly. The problem with having two fathers or two mothers is that it offers only a one-way or unilateral assimilation of life. In effect, it would be a double dose of the same thing that would come from having same-sex parents.

In an Instruction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith entitled *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, there is the following warning:

“[T]he absence of sexual complementarity in [homosexual unions] creates obstacles in the normal development of children.”⁵ What is missing, the document points out, is the experience of either motherhood or fatherhood. In reference to the children adopted by those in homosexual unions, the document cautions that these children are “[placed]...in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development.”⁶

Such appraisals on the part of the Church's Magisterium are admittedly not highly specific, but they are clearly negative. This is an important matter for a few reasons. First, the Church makes a judgment and does not assume a “wait and see” attitude. She knows by way of anthropology and is confident in making a judgment regarding the precepts of the natural law. Second, the data of the social sciences corroborates Church teaching on general principles, provided that tendentious testing and analyses are discounted. Third, the fog of political correctness is no match for the bright light of the truth. The latter wins out all the time even if it takes

a while for the public to be educated properly on issues in which there is a heavy ideological investment.

To appreciate the ideological investment in social issues, we need to go back to 1992, when in an address before the Commonwealth Club of California, then-Vice President Dan Quayle dared to criticize a popular television series called “Murphy Brown” for the lead character's decision to have a child outside of marriage. Quayle's speech drew immediate protest from the advocates of family redefinition and he was lampooned in the national media for taking the position that all parenting arrangements are not the same. The next year, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, writing in *The Atlantic Monthly* (as it was known then), weighed the evidence on different family structures and outcomes for children and concluded that the traditional structure produced the best outcomes for children. Whitehead adduces that

[a]ll [the] evidence gives rise to an obvious conclusion: growing up in an intact two-parent family is an important source of advantage for American children.... [T]he intact family offers children greater security and better outcomes than its fast-growing alternatives: single-parent and step-parent families. Not only does the intact family protect the child from poverty and economic insecurity; it also provides greater non-economic investments of parental time, attention, and emotional support over the entire life course.⁷

The inescapably good news, according to Whitehead, is that children fare best when they grow up in an intact, two-parent family. As she indicates above, the growing alternatives of single-parent and step-parent just do not produce outcomes for children on par with the two-parent family. The leading cause of the surge in alternatives is no secret. Throughout the 1970s and well into the 1980s, divorce rates soared across all sectors of the culture.⁸ Familial disruption became as commonplace in America as familial preservation. And of course when parental break-ups occur, there are profound and lasting repercussions for the children.

In her in-depth study on the family nearly twenty-five years ago, Whitehead does not hide the long-term negative effects of divorce on children. She writes,

Since most children live with their mothers after divorce, one might expect that the mother-child bond would remain unaltered and might even be strengthened. Yet research shows that the mother-child bond is also weakened as a result of divorce. Only half of the children who were close to their mothers before a divorce remained equally close after the divorce. Boys, particularly, had difficulties with their mothers.

Moreover, mother-child relationships deteriorated over time... The only group in society that derives any benefit from these weakened parent-child ties is the therapeutic community. Young adults from disrupted families are nearly twice as likely as those from intact families to receive psychological help.⁹

With such gloomy prospects for the children of divorced parents, some people see in homosexual marriage a remedy or cure. After all, they argue, if homosexual parents stay together, would not their children fare better than those children whose gender-different parents split up? Well, perhaps that might be the case if parents staying together were the only criterion that produced favorable outcomes for children. We already know, however, that favorable outcomes for children are related to complementarity in marriage. Yet, according to Donald Hermann, complementarity is a fluid concept; it means whatever you want it to mean at the time. For he claims “homosexual couples express psychological and emotional differences which form the basis for *their* complementarity.”¹⁰ For Hermann, the biological and physical dimension of complementarity is utterly immaterial. But how can that be? Some people try to redefine reality by revising the language that we use to describe things.

Substituting his own partial understanding of marital complementarity is not Hermann’s only mistake, however. He makes a second one in the research he marshals to bolster his position in favor of the no difference argument. Let me explain.

Back in 1995, Charlotte Patterson published an article in which she admits that “the social science literature contains no published studies examining the development of children adopted by openly lesbian or gay adults.”¹¹ Yet this admission does not preclude her from remarking later in the same article that “[o]verall, the picture emerging from social science research on children with lesbian and gay parents is very positive. Based on the research literature, there is no reason to believe that children of lesbian or gay parents are behind their peers in any aspect of personal or social development.”¹²

Well, which is it? There aren’t any published studies, or there are? As if that confusion is not enough, Hermann cites Patterson as an authority in defense of his own position.¹³ If we grant for a moment that there were studies around in 1995 supporting the no difference argument, we must acknowledge that nearly twenty years passed between the publication of Patterson’s article and the publication of Hermann’s article. A lot can change in twenty years!

In 2012, Mark Regnerus, a sociologist at the University of Texas, published his findings on the differences he found with the children of parents in same-sex relationships. Using the “New Family Structures Study,” Regnerus reports numerous consistent differences between the children of parents in same-sex relationships and the children who are raised by biological mothers and fathers and who are married to each other.¹⁴ He states emphatically that “the empirical claim that no notable differences exist must go.”¹⁵ In an interview with *Christianity Today*, Regnerus spells out what these differences are. Among other things, the young adult children of lesbian and gay parents are

more apt to report financial and employment difficulties, to finish less schooling, feel more ambivalence about their family experiences while growing up, smoke more, have more run-ins with the law, and report more sexual partners and greater victimization than those children from biologically intact, stable marriages.¹⁶

Curiously, there is not a single reference to Regnerus’s published research in Hermann’s article. What accounts for this omission, I do not know. What I am able to say, however, is that another sociologist, D. Paul Sullins, has also studied the differences in outcomes between the children of same-sex partners and the children of opposite-sex parents. He presents his findings in two articles published in 2015, which is a year after Hermann’s article was published.

In one article, Sullins reports that “[c]hildren with same-sex parents in the United States were more than twice as likely to suffer ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder) than were children with opposite-sex parents.”¹⁷ In a second article, Sullins reviews three studies that “present some of the strongest evidence in support of the no difference thesis”¹⁸ and “re-analyzes [the] original data in order to confirm or counter [the] findings with a greater degree of confidence that has previously been the case.”¹⁹ Sullins concludes that

[I]t does not appear that the operational benefits of marriage that accrue to opposite-sex couples are severable from the man-woman relationship. It may be that the kind of functional thinking that underlies the argument that the two forms of marriage relationship are analogous is mistaken, and the beneficial factors that are observed in man-woman marriage—greater stability, financial resources, relational security—do not float free in a manner that can be independently conveyed to another kind of relationship.²⁰

Regarding the no difference thesis propounded by Patterson and repeated by Hermann, a revision would seem to be in order. “Differences,” Sullins argues, “are manifestly present.”²¹ These differences are “substantially increased depressive symptoms, anxiety and daily distress, and lower educational achievement and school connectedness.”²² Based on his findings, Sullins declares that “much of the received social science wisdom about [same-sex parenting] is mistaken.”²³ That Sullins presents evidence to rebut the no difference position is important enough. However, it would be a mistake to pass over too quickly other matters to which his research calls attention. I start with the terminology Sullins employs.

He writes above that there are operational benefits in opposite-sex marriages that cannot be severed from the man-woman relationship. What he is arguing here is that the male-female dynamic belongs *by nature* to marriage. The opposing view of marriage, namely, that two persons of the same-sex are just as much spouses as opposite-sex couples, proceeds from a “kind of functional thinking.”

This truth, brought out into the open by Sullins’s research and commentary, places us at the center of the conflict over marriage today. Is there a nature, a human nature that sets boundaries for our choosing or not? Sherif Girgis, Ryan Anderson, and Robert George think that there is indeed a human nature and that marriage surely participates in it. As such, there is an objective core to marriage, they say, and it is fixed by our nature as embodied, and it is sexually reproductive.²⁴

That there are certain fixed aspects of our nature is a key notion for the understanding of marriage that Girgis, Anderson, and George present. But that is not how a lot of people see human nature today, and so they tend to have a changeable view of marriage. In all likelihood, a majority of people in the United States now view marriage as a malleable construct, as something utterly pliable and therefore leaving the interpretation of the marital institution entirely up to our will. In an address to the Roman curia before Christmas in 2012, then-Pope Benedict XVI describes the new but false understanding of marriage that prevails in many quarters right now. He contends that “people dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity, that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves.”²⁵

For many people, parenting, too, is what you

make of it. As we have already seen, once you redefine complementarity to mean only psychological and emotional differences—omitting the biological-physical component—you can also redefine marriage, giving it then a wholly idiosyncratic character. And even if the outcomes for children are not as favorable for those with same-sex parents, this factor will unlikely deter the men and women who lead with uninhibited wills. To be rather blunt about it, the attitude is: I want what I want and on my own terms. I do not have to conform to someone else’s version of reality.

Another crucial matter raised by Sullins is related to terminology as well. He holds that the operational benefits—which he cites as greater stability, financial resources, and relational security—do not float free, as quoted above, “in a manner that can be independently conveyed to another kind of relationship.” What Sullins is saying here is that there is no transference from marriage as we have known it traditionally onto any other arrangement, in this case same-sex relationships. Hermann insists, to the contrary, that there is transference. The transference is made possible because something does “float free” for Hermann and that is an understanding of gender. As complementarity is fluid and as human nature is unfixed according to Hermann, it makes perfectly good sense to him that gender be likewise fluid and unfixed.

In his book *Strangers in a Strange Land*, Archbishop Charles Chaput weighs in on what we have come to call gender ideology. Gender ideology is the effort to deny any intrinsic connection between biology and the meaning of human sexuality. Chaput avers that gender ideology “repudiates reality. People don’t need to be ‘religious’ to notice that men and women are different. The evidence is obvious. And the only way to ignore it is through a kind of intellectual self-hypnosis.”²⁶ Ignoring reality has precipitated a crisis with two recognizable dimensions. It is a crisis first of personal identity and then of morality. And each is inextricably bound up with the other.

Concerning personal identity, it is clear that children develop and mature into their own selves. They are never just extensions of their parents even though they bear resemblances—physically and psychologically—to the mothers and fathers who gave them life. Children grow up to have their own personalities and their own lives, and that is what gives them separation from their parents. Without that separation, children could never assume truly personal identities *on their own*. We understand this as an exercise in freedom. But freedom is a fragile gift and it can always be misused. In

the Christmas address of then-Pope Benedict XVI to the Roman curia in 2012, the Holy Father asserts that “the child has become an object to which people have a right and which they have a right to obtain.”²⁷ This point the Church enunciated twenty-five years before in *Donum Vitae*, when it was a matter of giving or withholding moral approval to the use of certain technological means to bring about the conception and the birth of children.²⁸ Whether it is the conception, the birth, or the rearing of children, it is legitimate to raise the question of personal identity. For the freedom to be creative is not the same as the freedom to create oneself.²⁹

We all ask: Who am I? Where do I come from? Can I answer these questions confidently and satisfactorily when my conception, birth, and rearing have effectively shielded my mother or father from me? And if per chance I have a name for my mother or my father, what is the likelihood I could ever have a relationship with her or him given the circumstances of my conception, birth and rearing?

And if doubt and confusion regarding personal identity are not enough, there is the matter of moral responsibility. And this is no small matter since it is covered by one of the Ten Commandments: Honor your father and your mother (Ex 20:12). How well is the Fourth Commandment observed, realistically speaking, with the complications wrought by IVF, surrogacy, and adoption by same-sex couples?

Benedict XVI warns about wanting to usurp the work of God the Creator in thinking that one can create oneself. By denying the Maker himself, the pontiff allows, man is stripped of his dignity as a creature of God.³⁰ As we all know, not stripping away the dignity of the person but upholding it is the preeminent work of the Church in every age. And as always, for this important task, the Church is guided unfailingly by her social doctrine.

The Church’s social doctrine is of a single piece with her anthropology. She reads human nature in a certain way, and while always taking account of historical change, the Church knows that it is not possible to surrender unchanging principles without at the same time abdicating her divinely appointed role of Mother and Teacher. What may seem to some then like interchangeable roles among adult males and females is really a negation of the essence of fatherhood and motherhood. That wisdom has to be offered even if it flies in the face of so-called progressive values. Let the Church offer that wisdom because she is the pillar and foundation of truth (cf. 1 Tim 3:15). ❖

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Pierre Manent and Rémi Brague on the Future of Europe

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Others have addressed the topic, but among cultural historians, political theorists Pierre Manent and Rémi Brague bring to its discussion uncommon knowledge and astute analysis.¹ The future may not be ours to see, but there are certain unmistakable trends that can be discerned. Europe has lost contact with the Hellenic and Christian sources of its being, and this will have severe consequences for its future.

Eighty-five years ago the Spanish-born American philosopher George Santayana, speaking of the West, wrote: “The shell of Christendom is broken. The unconquerable mind of the East, the pagan past, the industrial socialist future, confront it with equal authority. On the whole, life and mind is saturated with a slow upward filtration of a new spirit—that of an emancipated, atheistic, international democracy.”²

In an interview reported in *The Wall Street Journal* of May 26, 2017, Manent says much the same thing. There Manent tells Sahrab Ahmari: “We have a big problem with Islam. And it is impossible to solve it through globalist, individualist, rights-of-man mantras.”

In his attempt to understand the root causes of Europe’s decline, Manent employs the term “modernity” to designate the intellectual climate that prevails among the elites in Europe and North America. To examine modernity he looks to its origins. We have been modern for several centuries, he declares. “We are modern and we want to be modern.”³ In what century did we become modern? In the sixteenth? The seventeenth? Or was it the eighteenth?

Brad S. Gregory, author of the comprehensive study *The Unintended Reformation*, is convinced that modernity dates to the Protestant Reformation.⁴ The Reformation succeeded in the sense that it provided an alternative way of grounding Christian answers to life’s central questions. Thus it offered a basis for living a Christian life ideologically and socially separate from the Roman Catholic Church.

“On the eve of the Reformation,” Gregory writes,

“Latin Christianity had achieved a comprehensive, sacramental world view based on truth claims about God’s action in human history, centered on the Incarnation, life, teachings, and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Intellectual life was vibrant, if sometimes contentious, variously institutionalized not only in universities but also in monasteries, at princely courts, and among participants in the religious Republic of Letters.”⁵

One of the unintended effects created by the Reformation was the problem of knowing of how to know what true Christianity is. The quandary arose from the open-ended range of rival truth-claims that followed diverse exegetical interpretations of sacred scripture. Reason alone, like scripture alone, proved incapable of discerning or devising answers to life’s large questions that gained pervasive consensus. There was no shared agreement about substantive common goods, nor were there reliable means for answering the question. An important paradox characteristic of modern liberalism emerged as that ideology demands adherence to the view that there can be nothing prescribed about what citizens should believe, how they should live, or what they should care about.

For Manent, origins are bound to be obscure, but certain things can be said. In Manent’s judgment modernity is a project that was formulated and implemented first in Europe, and yet one that was intended from the beginning to affect all of humanity. It has proven to be a movement destined never to arrive at a term.

Developing a theme from his *The City of Man*, Manent probes Western history: “If we are meant to understand the modern project, we must begin with the city, for it is in the city that people deliberate and form projects for action. It is in the city that people discover that they can govern themselves and learned to do so. They discover and learn politics. . . . The city is the shaping of human life that made the common thing appear, and the execution of the common thing in a plurality of cities hostile to each other and divided within.”

The political form that succeeded the city was the empire. With the coming of Christianity, a third form came about: one created by the Church, for it is at once a city and an empire. Europeans soon found themselves

confronted by competing authorities. “They were assailed by prestigious and contradictory words—the words of Bible, the words of the Greek philosophers, the words of the Roman orators and historians—and they did not know which to retain.”⁶

With Luther’s revolt, the authority of the Word of God itself became divided between competing interpretations of the scriptures and competing visions of the true intellectual tradition of the Church. Ironically, the scriptures are accessible only through the mediation of the Church, and in the first instance in the language of the Church, Latin. Luther’s revolt created a spiritual upheaval, but also and inseparably a political revolution and an insurrection. The various European nations selected the particular Christian confession under which they chose to live and imposed it on their populations. Thus, says Manent, the confessional nation became one of history’s political forms.

Europe produced modernity, and for a long period of time Europe was its master and owner. Today, Bacon and Descartes reign in Shanghai and Bangalore at least as much as in Paris and London. Manent notes that within Europe, in spite of the multiple treaties that created the European Union, civic cooperation is feeble and the religious word almost inaudible. “Europe finds itself militarily, politically and spiritually disarmed in a world that has armed itself with the instruments of modern warfare. It soon will be wholly incapable of defending itself.”⁷

In his words, “[b]y renouncing the political form that was its own, Europe has deprived itself of the association in which European life had found its riches meaning.”⁸ Manent’s emphasis on the city follows his recognition that a degree of cultural unity is required as the foundation of a body politic. However one might prefer certain cosmopolitan aspirations, one cannot truly be a citizen of the world, he maintains, nor even of Europe. An identifiable civic good can only be the fruit of a coherent, sustainable tradition within a homogenous population.

In accounting for the left turn taken by contemporary liberal political theory, Manent finds it necessary to distinguish between two versions of modern political theory, one emphasizing science, the other experience. There is the political science of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke, three figures whom Manent identifies as the architects of the modern secular state. “The guiding spirits of modern politics,” he calls them.⁹ Arguing not from experience but from claims to scientific expertise, modern political theory takes its lead from Hobbes’s

fictional individual, postulated as existing in a state of nature in which all war against all. From that postulate Hobbes derived the myth of social contract theory and all that flows from it, including a limitless set of claims about human rights.

In Manent’s judgment, modern political science in its founding moment failed to acknowledge the actual *experience* of those living within Christianity. By preventing access to a prepolitical human experience, Hobbes constructs a new political order. Lost in his political theory is the experience of those living in the real world, a world informed by Christianity. A contemporary example of political theory based on a gratuitous postulate can be found in John Rawls’s *Theory of Justice*.¹⁰ For an example in the sphere of contemporary politics, we find that President Emmanuel Macron of France has proven to be equally utopian in his commitment to open borders and to a centralized European government.

Developing a theme from his earlier work, *Metamorphoses of the City*, Manent makes an interesting observation when he speaks of empire, church, and state.¹¹ He identifies what he calls the four great moments in the history of humanity: Jewish law, Greek philosophy, Christianity, and Democracy. “The four great spiritual determinants not only follow a chronological succession but also mark the major stages on the gradient of increasing universality.”¹²

In drawing his study to a conclusion, Manent is wistful. Is it possible, he asks, to imagine a new stage, the result of a mediation of Christianity and the modern conception of humanity? By way of an answer, he finds the building blocks in certain solidarity between Jewish law and Christianity, and between Christianity and Greek philosophy, insofar as these various accounts all provide a rational concept of the divine. One could also cite certain common conceptions of human nature as well.

By contrast, the “Religion of Humanity,” understood from the modern perspective, has left behind Jewish, Greek, and Christian notions of the divine. “Modernity,” writes Manent, “by embracing Humanity, has expelled the highest idea to embrace the largest idea which is the idea of humanity itself.”

What happens, Manent asks, when the Church is set aside? As Brad Gregory has pointed out, the spiritual ministry is appropriated by everyone in what some have called the universal priesthood. Lost is the mediation of the Church between man and God. Deprived of a distinct ecclesiastical order, the Christian community falls

under the state as it soon did in Luther’s Germany.

Like Paul Valéry before him, Rémi Brague insists on the recognition of another dimension of Europe that is sometimes overlooked, namely, the contribution of ancient Rome. He credits Rome not only for its sense of law but for its role as a transmitter of the Hebrew and Greek contributions to European civilization. In a work published in English as *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization* Brague argues that Europeans have failed to recognize, value, and defend what is a unique culture with consequences for the rest of the world.¹³

He begins his treatise with an attempt to define what we are talking about when we speak of “Europe.” It is a geographical entity to be sure. As to its content or character, Europe is a whole set of historically identifiable facts that have taken place within the geographical space we call Europe. Thus Husserl can speak of “European sciences,” and Heidegger of “Occidental metaphysics.”¹⁴ Obviously mere residence on the Continent does not make one European. Confronting the fact that many immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa refuse to assimilate and choose instead to retain their own culture and live under their own law, Brague insists: “A European is one who is conscious of belonging to a whole. One is not a European without wanting to be one. . . . The frontiers of Europe are solely cultural.”¹⁵

Further, Brague argues, “a culture is defined in relation to the people and to the phenomena it considers to be its other.”¹⁶ To the extent that it is Occidental, Europe is the “other” of the Orient. As Christian it is the “other” of the Muslim world, and to the extent that it is Latin Christendom, it is the “other” of the Byzantine world. “Byzantium,” says Brague, “never thought of itself as European. It always thought of itself as Roman.”¹⁷

The cultural realities that one designates in this way do not limit themselves to the European space, neither in their origin nor in their ultimate expansion. Given the question “Who are we as Europeans? Greeks or Romans, or Jews or Christians or in a sense a little bit of each?” Brague is convinced that Europe is essentially Roman. The Roman character of Europe is found in its sense of order, in the patriarchal family, and in its sense of fatherland.

To be Roman is to perceive oneself as Greek in relation to what is barbarous, but also as barbarous in relation to what is Greek. It is to know that what one transmits does not come wholly from one’s labor.

Roman culture is essentially a passage, in a way, an aqueduct. The relation of Europe—as Christendom—to the Old Testament is in a sense a “Roman” relation. Christians themselves are essentially Roman insofar as it is from Rome that they have their Greeks, to which they are tied by an invisible hand. In the light of this somewhat romantic analysis, Brague can justify his dictum that “Christianity is to the Old Covenant what the Romans are to the Greeks.”¹⁸

We know that Christianity played a major role in the shaping of the European Community after World War II, especially under the influence of Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, and Alcide De Gasperi. That influence has waned as time has gone by, and today the European Union is little more than a set of trade agreements and an enormous bureaucracy. As to the future of Europe, Brague (like Manent) is convinced that the cultural task awaiting Europe consists in becoming Roman again.

Europe must also become conscious of its intrinsic and global value, that is, of its exceptional nature, of its eccentric character, as it faces both internal and external barbarians. It must again become conscious of its worthiness, of its role as messenger and servant. “It must regain or become once again the place where one recognizes an intimate relationship of man to God, a covenant that descends to the most carnal dimensions of humanity, that must be the object of un-failing respect.”¹⁹

Amplifying that judgment, he writes: “For Europe to remain itself it is not necessary that everyone who inhabits it recognize explicitly that they are Christians.” As to its future, Brague hopes that in spite of the cultural problem created by its immigration policy, Europe will remain a place that recognizes the separation of the temporal and the spiritual, where each recognizes the legitimacy of the other in its proper domain.”²⁰

Pierre Manent and Rémi Brague are not alone in taking a dim view of Europe’s future. In his book *Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C.–1950*, Charles Murray summed up his conclusion when he asserted that “Europe’s run is over.”²¹ Although pessimistic, Manent stopped short of Murray’s conclusion. Brague calls for a “Counter Enlightenment.”

Viewing Europe in the light of its modern history, it is difficult to believe that the philosophical skepticism introduced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has so undermined the confidence of a civilization that has given so much to the world. Yet, the fact is that it is

now not able to defend itself. Christianity may be on the defensive in some self-blinded intellectual circles, but the empiricism of Hume and the fideism of Kant are easily challenged. It is, of course, a matter of who controls the mass media and the instruments of education. We teach the young to use “critical intelligence” when it would be more useful to promote appreciation of the inherited.²²

Ephraim Karsh, author of *A History of Islamic Imperialism*, offers a prediction about the future in a telling passage: “Only when the political elites of the Middle East and the Muslim world reconcile themselves to state nationalism, forswear pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic dreams, and make Islam a matter of private practice rather than a tool of political ambition will the inhabitants of these regions at least look forward to a better future, free of would-be Saladins.”²³ The reference here is to the twelfth-century sultan of Egypt and Syria. To his credit President Donald Trump said as much in his speech in Saudi Arabia on March 21, 2017.

That may be true, but it is also true that with the retreat of Christianity and the threatened loss of cultural and national identity among the member states of the European Union, Saladin’s dream of conquering the Continent may yet be accomplished through population growth favorable to Islam. ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 Pierre Manent is the former Director of Studies at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Rémi Brague is Professor Emeritus of Arabic and Religious Philosophy at the Sorbonne. Both lecture widely in Europe and the United States.
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- 18 *Ibid.*, 189.
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- 22 John Courtney Murray, decades ago, provided a useful insight when he defined the barbarian as a threat to the life of reason embedded in law and custom. “The perennial work of the barbarian,” he held, “is to undermine natural standards of judgment, to corrupt the inherited wisdom by which people have always lived, and to do this not by spreading new beliefs but by creating a climate of doubt and bewilderment in which clarity about the larger aims of life are dimmed and the self-confidence of the people destroyed.” John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), 13.
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Jesus Christ the Way and the Goal: Accompaniment and Discernment in Christ

by Rev. Robert Imbelli
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Let us listen to him say: ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’ If you seek the truth, hold fast to the way; for the way itself is the truth. The goal and the way are the same... through Christ you come to Christ.

— SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Tractates on John*, 13, 4

1. The Christological Hermeneutic of the Second Vatican Council

Permit me to begin autobiographically. Through a happy (providential!) chance, I began my theological studies in Rome in October 1962. The *Aula Magna* of the Gregorian University echoed to the hybrid Latin of such luminaries as René Latourelle, Francis Sullivan, Juan Alfaro, and Bernard Lonergan. But the students’ attention was, for the most part, riveted upon what was taking place outside the classroom in an even larger *Aula Magna*, the nave of St. Peter’s Basilica, where the Second Vatican Council had just opened.

Almost fifty-five years later, I still remember vividly November 20, 1962, the day when the Council Fathers voted to reject the preparatory schema, *De Fontibus Revelationis*, which they considered abstract, scholastic, and insufficiently biblical. As is well known, the vote fell narrowly short of the two-thirds majority needed to remand the schema, but Pope John XXIII intervened and reconstituted the Committee under the new joint chairs, Cardinals Ottaviani and Bea. From this Committee there emerged one of the final documents approved by the Fathers in November 1965: *Dei Verbum* the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. As many attest, that November day marked the true beginning of Pope John’s Council. Yves Congar, for one, expressed the thankful astonishment of many when he wrote in his journal: “I never would have believed it!”¹

I have argued elsewhere that *Dei Verbum*, one of the four constitutions promulgated by the Council, should

be considered the “first among equals.” As I have written, the reason is simple and straightforward: “Unless God revealed himself fully through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, then the Church is without foundation and the liturgy is a merely human construct.”² Thus *Dei Verbum*’s crucial assertion that “[i]n Christ, the mediator and fullness of revelation, the deepest truth about God and human salvation is made clear to us”³ serves as the golden thread binding the documents of Vatican II into a coherent pastoral-theological vision. Revelation is far more than a series of didactic propositions (however crucial these may be). It is the person of Jesus Christ himself, the Word incarnate, who recapitulates all God’s purpose and action for humankind.

John O’Malley, in his history of Vatican II, articulates an important principle for the interpretation of the Council’s documents. He writes: “the documents of Vatican II... implicitly cross-reference one another: they are coherent with one another and play off one another.” As a historian, O’Malley finds this mutual coherence a unique feature in the history of ecumenical councils. And he continues: “Recognition of the intertextual character of the sixteen documents is therefore... an essential step in constructing a hermeneutic for interpreting the council.”⁴

Now it is my contention that the hermeneutic in question must be an explicitly Christological hermeneutic; that the inner coherence of the Council’s documents are established by its engaging and profound Christocentrism. Indeed, the deepest recovery by the Council, in its laborious efforts at *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*, is its *re-Sourcement*: its theological and spiritual reappropriation of and witness to him who is the Source of its life, its liturgy, and its mission—the Lord Jesus Christ, *Dominus Iesus!*

Allow me to recall just a few of the salient Christological “cross-references” that permeate the Council’s documents. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, famously begins “*Lumen gentium cum sit Christus*”—“Since Christ is the Light of the nations, this Holy Synod, gathered in the Holy Spirit, earnestly desires to enlighten all men and women with the brightness of Christ.” There is no hesitancy, no qualification

here, only pure kerygma. Yet how many times, even in more tutored circles, does one meet people who say deprecatingly, “How can the Church, with all its failings, presume to be the light of the nations?” The Council’s Christocentric proclamation is thus completely obscured.

One need not linger over the evident point that *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, is Christologically saturated. Let one quote stand for myriad instances. “It is through the Liturgy, especially the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, that believers most fully manifest in their lives and to others the mystery of Christ and the true nature of the Church.”⁵ Perhaps in need of renewed insistence, however, is that the “*plena et actuosa participatio*,”⁶ envisioned by the Council, is preeminently a full and active participation in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ which is the heart of the liturgical celebration. Yet so often, busy-ing ourselves with parceling out liturgical functions, we risk evading rather than embracing the challenge to conversion that such a realization entails.

Gaudium et spes, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, has become the favored document for those engaged in social justice ministry, at times to the relative neglect of other documents of the Council. Hence, it is important to highlight the robust Christological foundation that *Gaudium et spes* lays for the Church’s dialogue with the modern (or, increasingly, postmodern world). The following is a passage of singular importance in the Constitution:

The Church firmly believes that Christ, who died and was raised up for all, can through His Spirit offer humanity the light and the strength to measure up to its highest vocation. Nor has any other name under heaven been given to man by which he must be saved. She likewise believes that in her Lord and Master is found the key, the center and the goal of all human history. The Church also holds that beneath all changes there are many realities which do not change and which have their ultimate foundation in Christ, Who is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. Hence in the light of Christ, the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of every creature, the council wishes to speak to all men and women in order to shed light on the mystery of man and to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time.⁷

Jesus Christ is “the key, the center, and the goal of human history.” Here, indeed, is a radical claim that, as I shall suggest presently, has been insufficiently echoed amidst postconciliar turmoil and polarization.

Finally, one of the Council’s final documents, *Ad gentes*, the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, contains this terse, summary statement. “The Church’s mission is to lead all people...to full participation in the Mystery of Christ.”⁸ Thus, though Vatican II has often been called a Council whose primary concern was the Church, I maintain that its great accomplishment was precisely its “re-Sourcement,” its experiential and personalist recovery of the centrality of Jesus Christ and its bold proclamation of the Mystery of Jesus Christ to the modern world.⁹

2. Christological Forgetfulness in the Reception of the Council

To speak of “Christological forgetfulness” in the Council’s reception may, at first blush, appear hyperbolic. After all significant books and articles on Christology continue to be published. Liturgical prayers ceaselessly invoke the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Roman documents appeal to Christ’s example and authority. Yet beneath the placid Christological surface there are also worrisome signs—one might even venture to call them contemporary “signs of the times.”

I have noted in theological circles and publications a benign neglect of *Dei Verbum*, in particular its confession of Jesus Christ as the fullness of revelation. This can stem from some feminists’ uncertainty as to whether “a male Savior can save women.” It can be found in a hesitancy by those engaged in (an otherwise commendable) interreligious dialogue to appear “triumphalist” in the assertion of Jesus Christ as “universal Savior.” One notices a tendency, in a number of quarters, to appeal to “Spirit” language in preference to the particularity of an appeal to Jesus Christ, so furthering what amounts to a soteriological relativism.

But “Christological forgetfulness” can also assume more mundane guises. The precipitous decline in many parts of Western society of attendance at Sunday Eucharist—surely the privileged locus of encounter with the living Lord—is a deeply disturbing sign of the times. Moreover, the growth of the so-called Nones (whatever the manifold causes of the phenomenon) cannot be construed as a sign of robust Christological faith. Even among those who continue to participate in the liturgy several commentators, among them Benedict XVI, have warned against a horizontalism in worship, whereby the focus gravitates toward the celebrating community

rather than toward the crucified and risen Lord who constitutes and nourishes his ecclesial body through the sharing of his Eucharistic body.¹⁰

New Testament scholar Luke Timothy Johnson (who can by no means be labeled “conservative” in matters theological) has issued a bleak, but compelling, assessment of our situation. He wrote: “the truth of the Gospel concerning Jesus the Lord has been eroded over a period of centuries, not through direct attack by Christianity’s cultured despisers, but through a steady process of revision by theologians who seem either unaware of or not to care about the consequences of their capitulation to the premises of Christianity’s cultured despisers.” Johnson does not exempt bishops from their responsibility: their “failure adequately to address the erosion of the heart of the Gospel.”¹¹

However, my persuasion is that the Second Vatican Council did seek to bring into full relief the Christological “heart of the Gospel.”¹² The fault, then, lies not in the Council, but in its reductive and half-hearted reception and misremembering.¹³ Already in 1968 the young Joseph Ratzinger voiced his grave concern. He wrote in the preface to the first edition of his *Introduction to Christianity*: “The question of the real content and meaning of the Christian faith is enveloped today in a greater fog of uncertainty than at almost any earlier period in history.”¹⁴ And in the important preface to the new edition, dated April 2000, then Cardinal Ratzinger stated the corrective required: “I am firmly convinced that a renewal of Christology, must have the courage to see Christ in all his greatness, as he is presented by the four Gospels together in the many tensions of their unity.”¹⁵ One can sense in this last remark the theological-pastoral urgency that led Benedict XVI to spend himself in composing his volumes on Jesus of Nazareth.

Happily, we all can enumerate examples which demand that such negative assessments also be qualified. There are parishes vibrant with rekindled faith. There are ecclesial movements whose members have passed from a merely notional understanding of Jesus Christ to a real life-changing encounter with the living Jesus.¹⁶ But there is sufficient indication of drift and confusion to warrant the urgent call of each of the popes since Vatican II for a new evangelization, directed not only *ad extra*, but *ad intra* as well.

It is in this context of Christological uncertainty that I would raise the pressing issue of how “discernment and accompaniment” are to proceed.

3. The Christo-logic of Accompaniment and Discernment

In a remarkable essay, penned in occupied France during the darkest days of the Second World War, Henri de Lubac proclaimed his faith in “*La Lumière du Christ*”—the “Light of Christ.”¹⁷ Significantly, the essay twice cites a sentence of St. Irenaeus, that the editor perceptively uses as epigraph to the entire volume. “*Omnem novitatem attulit semetipsum afferens*”: “Jesus Christ brought all newness by bringing himself.”¹⁸ The quote serves as leitmotif for the essay. But more than that, it sums up de Lubac’s conviction, derived from his decades long commitment to *ressourcement*. For de Lubac, Irenaeus here recapitulates the defining vision of the New Testament. “New teaching, new covenant, new commandment, new name, new song, new man, new life, second genesis of the world.”¹⁹

At the heart of the gospel and its proclamation is this overwhelming sense of newness, of eschatological, decisive revelation, not in words or deeds only, but in the very Person of the Son. Hence, however important it is for the Tradition to maintain that God’s revelation is *logikos*—according to the Word²⁰—that *Logos* has become flesh, fully human. Revelation, therefore, is personal in the deepest sense; and it aims not merely at instruction, but at personal transformation: transformation of persons in Christ, which is eminently the work of God’s “two hands” (Irenaeus again): the Word and the Spirit.

My contention is that, in the aftermath of Pope Francis’s Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, invocation of terms like “accompaniment” and “discernment” must probe the unique Christo-logic of these realities. To do so, they must be deeply rooted in a spiritual appropriation of the Mystery of Jesus Christ in its radical newness and the equally radical transformation to which it summons believers. For the Mystery of Christ is not separable from the Mystery of our identity in Christ. As the Letter to the Colossians proclaims: “the Mystery is this: Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).²¹

A crucial corollary of this realization is that the authentic doctrinal and the authentic pastoral flow from this integral and all-embracing Mystery. To separate “doctrinal” and “pastoral” in our accompanying and discerning is to fail to do justice to the integrity of the Christian Mystery and vocation. In a pregnant passage de Lubac writes:

One could no more separate the revealed truths from the very Person of the Redeemer, than one could conceive a true and complete idea of the transcendent newness of Christianity if one did not recognize that, in this Person of Christ, such as the Apostles already show him to us, . . . the reality of charity and the truth of dogma are indissolubly united. Charity constitutes the reality of this dogma, as this dogma itself constitutes the truth of this charity.²²

One might well translate the passage from Colossians thus: “the revealed Dogma is this: Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

In a recent article, quite in the spirit of de Lubac, Nicholas Healy writes: “The abiding source and the fullness of Christian doctrine is the person of Jesus Christ. . . . Christian doctrine is summed up and concretized in the figure of the crucified and Risen Lord.”²³ And Healy draws out some of the implications of this recognition when he asserts: “The oft-repeated refrain—‘no one is proposing a change of doctrine, only a change in pastoral practice’—hides a subtle temptation to conceive doctrine as an abstract set of propositions or general rules that do not really address the complex situations of human life.” But such is a disembodied and impersonal understanding of Christian truth, divorced from the One who is the way, the truth, and the life. Rather, Healy suggests, “A deeper understanding of the incarnational and sacramental dimension of doctrine holds the promise of a renewed form of pastoral care guided by the Spirit of Christ.”²⁴

Let us consider more closely the quotation from Augustine that serves as epigraph for this essay. “If you seek the truth, hold fast to the way for the way itself is the truth. The goal and the way are the same. . . . through Christ you come to Christ!” As so often with Augustine, one could spend pages unpacking these pregnant lines. Here is one sounding, which I trust is faithful to Augustine. We journey through and with Christ, the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord, to the *totus Christus*: Christ the Head together with those who are sharing in his life as members of his body. We are not traveling from an abstract idea or a moral ideal to a greater realization of that idea or perfecting of that ideal. We are traveling, and hence accompanying, from a living Person to the fulfillment of the identity of that Person as the new man, the *eschatos Adam* (1 Cor 15:45), the Head of a renewed human race. So in the dense language of Ephesians, we shall continue to accompany and discern “until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to the completed person [*eis andra*

teleion] according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Thus the accompaniment and discernment upon which we are engaged is, of its essence, mystagogic: leading from the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ into which we are baptized toward the full realization of the Mystery which is Christ in us, the hope of glory. The Apostle Paul is the master mystagogue: the model of such accompaniment and discernment, both in his sure grasp of the Mystery and in his commitment to its realization in the lives of those whom he guides. “I am in labor until Christ be formed in you,” he exclaims to the Galatians (Gal 4:19). And he assures the Colossians that, by his teaching and admonishing, he strives “to present every man and woman mature [*teleion*] in Christ” (Col 1:28). To do so, of course, requires authentic discernment regarding the true nature of life in Christ.

4. Discernment in the Spirit

It was already evident, from the days of the early Church, that “not every spirit is to be trusted.” Hence the crucial imperative to “test the spirits” (1 Jn 4:1). And it is also clear that the norm of such discernment must be Christological, because the Lord Jesus is the very heart of the Gospel. “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Messiah has come in the flesh is of God,” writes John (1 Jn 4:2). Paul concurs. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). Of course, such “confessing” cannot be reduced to the mere recital of words. It must be embodied in a life wholly given to Christ. For “no one of us lives to himself alone, and no one of us dies to himself alone. But if we live, we live to the Lord and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom 14:7–8). For it was to this end that Christ died and lives again: “that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living” (Rom 14:9).

It is in this determinate Christological context that Paul’s evangelical exhortation must be heard:

Therefore, I appeal to you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual worship [*logikén latreian*]. And do not be conformed to this age; but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Thus you can discern what is the will of God: what is good, acceptable, and perfect [*teleion*] (Rom 12:1–2).

In short, the Apostle exhorts Christians to undergo transformation, by taking on the mind of Christ and

thus becoming, in spirit and in truth, living member of Christ’s body.

The contemporary appeal to discernment repeatedly refers to its prominence in the Ignatian tradition of spirituality. However, apart from rhetorical flourishes, one often finds little development of this Ignatian reference. Let us then draw upon the studies of some commentators to flesh out a bit the substance of Ignatian discernment.

In his fine book *Discernment and Truth*, Mark McIntosh identifies the crucial contribution of Ignatius to the matter in these words: “attunement to Christ becomes the chief means by which a capacity for true discernment grows.”²⁵ In other words, Christian discernment is no neutral, detached exercise. Its authenticity depends on the subject’s growing conformity to the Lord Jesus, his or her appropriation of the mind of Christ. In contrast, the more the individual is centered on the ego and its needs, the less valid and free its discernment will be. True discernment is ever *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, not *ad majorem gloriam meam*. Hence, it always transpires for the Christian within the sphere opened by Christ’s Paschal Mystery. It always unfolds under the sign of the cross. In this vein the late Jesuit theologian Edward Oakes quotes from the *Spiritual Exercises*: “In all that concerns the spiritual life, everyone’s progress will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests.”²⁶

Spiritual discernment is less fixated upon coming to a decision, and more concerned with disclosing what spirit is animating the one discerning. Thus patience and honesty, humility and wisdom are incumbent upon those undertaking discernment. Ignatius knew too well that the enemy of humankind can well masquerade under the guise of an angel of light. The length and manner of the *Exercises* preclude precipitate resolution—a fact a culture of instant gratification can find repulsive. Indeed, field hospital admissions may require periods of prolonged recuperation.

For all the classic spiritual writers of the Christian tradition are painfully aware of our proneness to self-deception. Hence their insistence on the grace of a spiritual guide, a soul friend, who can gently counter the ego’s stratagems. Already the Letter to the Colossians contains a remarkable depiction of the “old self” [*palaion anthropon*]. This is the self prey to evil desires: impurity, wrath, covetousness, slander. In an intriguing injunction, Paul insists: “do not lie to one another!” (Col 3:8). I cannot but think that the Apostle intends more than mere garden variety untruths or “mental

reservations.” Rather he deprecates the false mode of living that contradicts the new life in Christ who is “all and in all” (Col 3:11).

Christian discernment, thus, can never be a merely individualistic endeavor. It is always entered into by one who is a member of the body of the Lord Jesus, “from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together. . . . grows with a growth that comes from God” (Col 2:19). Ignatius of Loyola, faithful to the Tradition of the Church, could never countenance a relationship with Christ that prescind from Christ’s ecclesial embodiment. To enlist under the standard of Christ is to engage not in purely solitary combat, but in the ranks of all those committed by baptism to the struggle against the enemy of humankind. Freedom in Christ is ever freedom with and for others. Mark McIntosh comments perceptively: “Being drawn into the Paschal Mystery will take the form of a difficult and fumbling new way of seeing one another and of living for the sake of one another.”²⁷

Rowan Williams, one of the most acute theological and spiritual authors of our day, has written of the Johannine view of the Holy Spirit as Spirit of forgiveness, but also of judgment and discernment. “In the Spirit, judgment is *constantly* to be pronounced upon ‘the prince of this world,’ the dominant destructiveness in unredeemed human relations.”²⁸ The liberation realized through Christ’s Paschal Mystery does not take hold in us without the ongoing “transcendence of violent and oppressive models of relationship,”²⁹ relationships which define the corrupt ways of the old unredeemed Adam.

Williams’s insight is a helpful antidote to the widespread facile invocation of Pope Francis’s “field hospital” trope. Unfortunately, its advocates have paid considerable less attention to the pope as “spiritual pathologist”: to his careful diagnosis of the diseases that necessitate the hospital stay. Thus in the encyclical *Laudato si’* Francis warns against “a misguided anthropocentrism” whereby “humans place themselves at the center. They give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative.”³⁰ Francis also decries the “use and throw away logic” that derives from “the disordered desire to consume”³¹ so sadly characteristic of contemporary culture.

In *Evangelii gaudium* the Pope laments that “the individualism of our postmodern and globalized era favors a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds.”³² It is impossible to read Francis’s cultural diagnoses without seeing them as sketching so many

modern manifestations of Paul's "being in the flesh," standing in stark contrast to the new life "in the Spirit" that Christ enables and calls us to embrace.

Here, then, are laid bare dimensions of our present cultural context which both require and also obstruct authentic discernment in the Spirit. In such a context discernment will perforce be, in good measure, countercultural, revealing Christ's Church to be a "contrast society." For it must contend with the ferocious and often deadly spiritual deficits of our contemporary cultural catechumenate whose intensity and all-pervasiveness leaves the ecclesial catechumenate at a decided disadvantage.

5. Ongoing Conversion

The Apostle Paul, peerless mystagogue and discerner of spirits, freely acknowledges in his most personal and affect-laden Letter: "I have not yet been perfected [*teteleioimai*]." The new life in Christ has not yet been fully realized in me! "But I strive to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." Therefore, "forgetting what lies behind, I stretch forward to what lies ahead": the transcendent call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12–14). These lines from Philippians stand at the very center of Gregory of Nyssa's profound spiritual-theological synthesis. They also serve as reminder to all the baptized that conversion is not a once and for all reality, but a daily necessity. "*Hodie*" serves as *cantus firmus* for every celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. "If *today* you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts!" (Ps 95:7–8).

The risen and ascended Lord remains the ongoing point of reference guiding and sustaining the ongoing transformation of the Christian. Jesus Christ's real presence and agency is, for the believer, the "never-failing source of affirmation, challenge, enrichment and enlargement."³³ All disciples, the greater like Paul, the lesser like many of us, must ever learn Jesus afresh, *de principio*. So we join the Apostle in prayer. "May Christ come to dwell in our hearts through faith. Rooted and grounded in love may we have the strength to comprehend, with all the saints, the breadth and length, the height and depth of the love of Christ—to know that which surpasses knowledge—and thus may we be filled with all the fullness [*pleroma*] of God" (Eph 3:18–19).

But this love, as the mystics testify, is a living flame of love, which cauterizes that it may heal, inflames so as to transform. The living Lord, whom we encounter,

ever bears the marks of his passion and, as Williams insists, "evades our surface desires and surface needs, and will not subserve the requirements of our private dramas." Every liturgical encounter with the crucified and risen Lord calls believers to forgo the effort "to interpret *his* story in light of *ours* and presses us to interpret ourselves in the light of the Easter event."³⁴

In our exodus, our spiritual venturing forth, our accompanying and discerning, it is only through Christ that we can truly and safely come to Christ. For he alone is the way, the truth, and the life. ✠

ENDNOTES

- 1 Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 195.
- 2 Robert P. Imbelli, *Rekindling the Christic Imagination: Theological Meditations for the New Evangelization* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), xv. I am honored that Jared Wicks, S.J., one of the foremost interpreters of Vatican II, has cited approvingly these words. See Jared Wicks, "Vatican II in 1965: Bringing in an Ample Harvest of Renewed Doctrine and Directives of Service," in *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 22, nos. 1–2 (2015): 13 n. 23.
- 3 *Dei Verbum*, 2
- 4 John O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 310.
- 5 *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 2.
- 6 *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 14.
- 7 *Gaudium et spes*, 10.
- 8 *Ad gentes*, 5.
- 9 For a fascinating account of the theological trajectory that led to the Council's revitalized understanding of revelation, see Jared Wicks, "The Fullness of Revelation in Christ in *Dei Verbum*," in *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 23, nos. 1–2 (2016): 176–204.
- 10 For the urgency of restoring Christocentrism to Catholic liturgical celebration see, of course, Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000).
- 11 Luke Timothy Johnson, "On Taking the Creed Seriously," in *Handing on the Faith: The Church's Mission and Challenge*, ed. Robert P. Imbelli (New York: Crossroad, 2017—second printing), 66 and 70.
- 12 Most recently Matthew Levering has argued at length and persuasively for the Christological hermeneutic that characterizes and structures the documents of Vatican II. He states his intent: "I hope to shed light upon the very heart of the Council's dogmatic and pastoral contributions: namely, its insistence upon the centrality of Jesus Christ within the modern pluralistic, technologically advancing, and historically conscious world." See Matthew Levering, *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 11.
- 13 It is sobering and instructive to read the discernment of Henri de Lubac (a theologian whose spiritual wisdom is rightly prized by Pope Francis). Already in 1965 he feels compelled to distance himself from the newly founded journal *Concilium* because "the orientation of the Review did not correspond to what its title had led me to expect." And ten years later he decries "the noisiest part of postconciliar theology" which "is moving farther and farther away from the norms of the Catholic faith and from the very teachings of Vatican II." Indeed, "it supports and accelerates that vast phenomenon of the Church's 'self-destruction' and 'inner-apostasy,' indicated so many times these past ten years or so." See Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 345 and 148.

- 14 Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 31.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 16 See the reflections in Joseph Ratzinger, *New Outpourings of the Spirit: Movements in the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007).
- 17 The essay may be found in Henri de Lubac, *Theology in History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 201–20. The editor of these collected essays, recognized the singular importance of "The Light of Christ" by placing it as the epilogue to part one of the book.
- 18 Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 34, 1. Pope Francis cites this very declaration of Irenaeus in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, 11, available at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html. See my essay "Christ Brings All Newness: The Irenaean Vision of *Evangelii Gaudium*," in *PATH*, Journal of the Pontifical Academy of Theology 13, no. 2 (2014): 367–76.
- 19 *Theology in History*, 209. De Lubac is here quoting with full approval Léonce de Grandmaison.
- 20 Certainly an important theme for Benedict XVI. See his "Regensburg Address," available at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html.
- 21 This phrase from Colossians serves as a key point of reference in Louis Bouyer's classic *Introduction to the Spiritual Life*, reprinted with an introduction by Michael Heintz (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013).

- 22 *Theology in History*, 216. I have slightly modified the translation in accord with the French original, published in Henri de Lubac, *Affrontements Mystiques* (Paris: Éditions du Témoignage Chrétien, 1949), 207–08.
- 23 Nicholas J. Healy Jr., "The Spirit of Christian Doctrine," *Communio* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 233.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 236. See also the excellent article by José Granados, "The Synergy of Doctrine and Life," *Communio* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 104–22.
- 25 Mark A. McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 68.
- 26 Edward T. Oakes, "Experience and Divinization," in *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 199.
- 27 McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*, 140.
- 28 Rowan Williams, *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1984), 53; italics in original.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 52.
- 30 *Laudato si'*, 122, available at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 123.
- 32 *Evangelii gaudium*, 67.
- 33 Williams, *Resurrection*, 62.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 84; italics in original.

Jesus Emerges from the Historical-Critical Fog

by Jerome D. Gilmartin

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Catholic Religious Studies 101

Welcome to this Catholic university and to Religious Studies 101—The Gospels. I know that many in this class have been taught that the Gospels were written by apostles who were eyewitnesses (Matthew and John) and by Mark (Peter) and Luke (Paul). But most biblical scholars today say that they are not sure who wrote these Gospels. They may tell us that there are historical indications that Mark wrote what he heard Peter preach, but they usually claim that evidence within the Gospel calls that into question.¹ Whoever Mark may have been, these

scholars tend to believe that *Mark* was the first Gospel written. Matthew, whoever he was, probably wrote next, using *Mark* as a source. Luke, whoever he was, wrote next, using both of the previous Gospels as well as other sources. In addition to these Gospels, the scholars say that there is one more source to which we can look in our search for the historical Jesus. It is called 'Q,' a hypothetical document that has never been found but one that is supposed to be a list of sayings of Jesus. Later this semester we'll consider *The Gospel according to John*, about which the scholars tell us that it was probably not written by John the apostle.²

"But professor, didn't the apostle Matthew write his Gospel in the Hebrew dialect before leaving Jerusalem?"

"Maybe," the professor replies, "but biblical scholars believe that whoever wrote the only text of *Matthew* we have, the canonical Greek *Matthew*, probably used *Mark*

as a source. The apostle Matthew would not have needed a source. For this and other reasons scholars believe *Matthew* was written later, anonymously. These four Gospels are part of the biblical canon, and the Church calls upon all Catholics to accept them on faith. In this class, however, we will study them not from the standpoint of faith, but primarily using the historical-critical method; specifically, we will use the Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis.”

The Unwarranted Dominance of Markan Priority and the Two-Source Hypothesis

Are the canonical Gospels historically authentic? If so, why do great numbers of college students lose their faith in the biblical Jesus? To answer this question, it may be helpful to consider certain points in the history of biblical interpretation.

Although earlier scholars had long studied textual similarities among the four Gospels and tried in various ways to explain the texts that we have, few Christians before the mid-nineteenth century doubted that the Gospels were four independently written accounts of the extraordinary life and ministry of Jesus Christ, written by eyewitness-apostles like Matthew and John and by “apostolic men” like Mark (Peter) and Luke (Paul).

By the late nineteenth century, however, soon after the proclamation of papal infallibility in 1870, Protestant scripture scholars began to scrutinize the first three synoptic Gospels using the historical-critical method initiated by Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677). In 1943 Pope Pius XII gave Catholic scholars permission to use this method.³ Since then many hypotheses have been proposed to account for the numerous instances in which identical or similar wording is found in two of the synoptic Gospels and sometimes in all three.

Despite serious unresolved difficulties, Markan priority—the theory that Mark wrote the first of the three synoptic Gospels and that both Matthew and Luke used *Mark* as a source—is taught in most colleges and universities today. To account for non-Markan content in *Matthew* and *Luke*, most such scholars posit a second source, a hypothetical collection of the sayings of Jesus called “Q” (German: *Quelle*, source). But postulating the existence of Q is problematic for several reasons: (a) Some scholars posit relatively few Q sayings while others posit many. Further (b), as Brant Pitre points out, no

Q manuscript has ever been found, (c) no early Church Father ever refers to it, and (d) the idea is fraught with internal problems.⁴

Numerous examples of the same or some similar text in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark indicates that one used the other as a source. Scholars differ on which of them wrote first. In defense of their hypothesis that “Mark wrote first,” proponents of the hypotheses of Markan priority and of two sources (*Mark* + Q) ask: “Why would the apostle Matthew—certainly literate as a former tax collector and an eyewitness to almost everything Jesus said and did as Peter was—need to have copied or paraphrased Mark’s account of what Peter preached?” The answer, according to many Markan priority proponents, is that Matthew would not have needed to do so. Therefore, according to this hypothesis, Matthew’s Gospel was probably written not by the apostle Matthew but by some unknown later writer who did need to do so. Further, these scholars hold as historically doubtful anything in *Matthew* that is not in *Mark* and most importantly the notion that Jesus was initiating Petrine primacy in the one Church he was founding: “Thou art Peter and upon this Rock...” (Mt 16:18–19). They regard as problematic the verses that affirm the words of Jesus about this (“One flock... One Shepherd” [Jn 10:16]), just as 500 years later many of our Christian brethren who separated from the Catholic Church by the Reformation find them problematic. Attempts to increase the credibility of non-Markan verses in *Matthew* and *Luke* by attributing them to Q are unhelpful to resolve such issues, for (as these scholars acknowledge), Q is hypothetical.

In *Dei Verbum and the Synoptic Gospels*, Bernard Orchard, O.S.B., a twentieth-century scripture scholar, provided a sharp critique of the idea of Markan priority. He lists thirty books dealing with the weaknesses of Markan Two-Source Hypotheses.⁵ And Brant Pitre, a contemporary biblical scholar, pointed out in 2016:

Finally, there are so many internal problems with the [Markan priority] Two-Source Theory that E. P. Sanders and Margaret Davies once concluded: “Of all the solutions, this one [the Two-Source theory], which remains the dominant hypothesis, is least satisfactory.”^{6,7}

In view of the resolute refusal of most scholars to reject or even question the idea of Markan Two-Source priority despite the many unresolved difficulties, David L. Dungan referred to it as *the Teflon[®] hypothesis*.⁸ The Two-Source Hypothesis is now considered the best working hypothesis in Protestant academia. Craig

Evans, among its best-known Protestant proponents, did not attempt to identify the writers of the synoptic Gospels, but at least he did not rule out the possibility that *Mark* may have been written before the year 70.⁹

The Dominance of the Markan Priority Hypothesis in most Catholic Centers of Higher Learning

The doubt-inducing anonymous Gospel variant of the Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis (TSH/AG) was introduced into Catholic centers of higher learning soon after the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965 by the Sulpician priest Raymond E. Brown, S.S. (1928–1998) through his many books and lectures. Brown specifically cast doubt on the possibility that the apostle Matthew¹⁰ (and apostle John¹¹) wrote a Gospel, cast doubt on Mark as the hearer and writer of what Peter preached,¹² and cast doubt on Luke as the close companion of Paul and writer of Acts and the Gospel that bears his name.¹³

In 1912 the Pontifical Biblical Commission had given Catholic scholars permission to discuss the Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis in the context of Church Tradition, but it forbade them to advocate this hypothesis. By that point Protestant biblical scholars had favored it for decades. In 1943, in *Divino afflante spiritu*, Pope Pius XII granted Catholic biblical scholars that long-awaited permission to employ the historical-critical method, but he stipulated that in that endeavor the scholar must study not only Greek but also Hebrew and must “diligently apply himself so as to acquire daily a greater facility in biblical as well as in other oriental languages.”¹⁴

The Pontifical Biblical Commission also encouraged the study of Semitic languages like Hebrew and Aramaic in their 1993 document “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” when they wrote: “[T]he study of... the Semitic mode of composition allows for a better discernment of the literary structure of texts, which can only lead to a more adequate understanding of their message.”¹⁵

Despite the requirement of Pope Pius XII and the encouragement of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, many Catholic exegetes have proceeded primarily from the Greek, with only passing reference (if any) to Hebrew and Aramaic and have generally affirmed

TSH/AG, thereby casting doubt on everything in the synoptic Gospels.

Pope Pius XII would have been astonished to read what Brown wrote in 1985:

no one of the evangelists was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus. Rather the evangelists were ‘second generation’ Christians.¹⁶

Brown also discredits the statement on the question by such Church Fathers as Papias, Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine, and Jerome:

[B]ut unless those writers [Church Fathers] had historical information they cannot answer historical questions.¹⁷

Brown was the author of twenty-five books, many of them promoting the doubt-inducing TSH/AG. His 878-page *Introduction to the New Testament* was published in 1997, the year before his untimely death. He had served on the Pontifical Biblical Commission under Pope Paul VI (1972–1978) and was again appointed to that body in 1996, two years prior to his death, by Pope John Paul II. And yet as early as 1975, Brown cast doubt on the primacy of Peter:

we [members of the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue] did come to significant agreement that much of what is peculiar to Matthew in that Caesarea Philippi scene [“Thou art Peter and upon this Rock I will build my Church...”?] is probably post-resurrectional in origin.¹⁸

But there are scholars who come to other conclusions. In *The Birth of the Synoptic Gospels* (1987), the French Hebraist Abbé Jean Carmignac presented compelling evidence that the canonical Greek Gospels *Matthew* and *Mark*, and some of the sources of *Luke*, were translations from a Semitic language, probably Hebrew but possibly Aramaic. This is the sort of evidence that was called for in *Divino afflante spiritu* and by the Pontifical Biblical Commission when they insisted on a Semitic-based study. In *An Introduction to the New Testament* Brown mentions “J. Carmignac” in a footnote, thereby indicating that he was aware that Carmignac’s conclusions strongly indicated an early Semitic origin for *Matthew*, *Mark*, and some of the sources of *Luke*, almost certainly within the lifetime of those Gospel writers, and thus making it almost certain that they were written personally by those evangelists. However, rather than attempting directly to refute the evidence for such early Semitic origin—which would discredit Markan priority in favor of Matthean priority—Brown arbitrarily differentiated between the apostle-eyewitness Matthew and, in his view, the later

unknown “Matt” whom Brown asserts wrote the *Gospel according to Matthew*:

Whether somewhere in the history of Matt’s sources something written in Semitic by Matthew, one of the Twelve, played a role *we cannot know*. (emphasis added)¹⁹

Ignoring the many Semitisms evident in *Matthew*, *Mark*, and the sources used by Luke enabled Brown and other exegetes to assign a late date for these Gospels and to assert that they are anonymous, thereby casting serious doubt on their historical authenticity.²⁰

In *An Introduction to the New Testament*,²¹ Brown attempts to cast doubt on the notion of the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* as eyewitness accounts by claiming that the discrepancies within these Gospels are not consistent with an eyewitness origin. [My responses to his questions are within brackets]. For example:

How could eyewitness John (chap. 2) report the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of the ministry and eyewitness Matthew (chap. 21) report the cleansing of the Temple at the end of the ministry? [Both *Matthew* and *Mark* report such a cleansing late in Jesus’s ministry. Could not Jesus also have done this early, as John reported? With Jesus doing “more things than the books of the world could contain” (Jn 21:25), can we not excuse these three evangelists for noting only one such cleansing, though there may have been two?]

Since Matt has a Sermon on the Mount and Luke has a similar Sermon on the Plain (Matt 5:1; Luke 6:17), there must have been a plain on the side of the mountain. [In his three-year ministry, is it improbable that Jesus gave similar sermons on a mountain *and* on a plain?]

Since Matt has the Lord’s Prayer taught in that sermon and Luke has it later on the road to Jerusalem (Matt 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4), the disciples must have forgotten it, causing Jesus to repeat it. [Again, is repetition of this important *prayer* by Jesus improbable?]

Mark 10:46 places the healing of the blind man after Jesus left Jericho, while Luke (18:35; 19:1) places it before Jesus entered Jericho. [Here *Mark* seems to have copied Luke’s second-hand account almost verbatim. Peter, as an eyewitness, may have corrected Mark’s account while noting that the miracle occurred as Jesus and the twelve were leaving Jericho and adding the beggar’s name, Bartimaeus, of which Luke was apparently unaware. If *Mark* was written first, as Brown believed, and Luke copied from *Mark*, why did

Luke omit the name of the beggar while including, for example, the names Joanna and Susanna in another passage? (Lk 8:3)]

In fairness to Fr. Brown, the reader will do well to consult his book *An Introduction to the New Testament* for his full defense of assumptions that are foundational to the TSH/AG as he promoted it in his books and lectures.

Friendship with Jesus Is Now “Like Clutching at Thin Air” and Faith Is “Driven out of Catholic Campuses”

In 2002, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger noted that the Two-Source theory, that is, the Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis, is “accepted today by almost everyone.”²² Four years later, as Pope Benedict XVI, he wrote with deep concern:

As historical-critical scholarship advanced...the figure of Jesus—became increasingly obscured and blurred...All these attempts have produced a common result: the impression that we have very little certain knowledge of Jesus and that only at a late stage did faith in his divinity shape the image we have of him. This impression has by now penetrated deeply into the minds of Christian people at large. Intimate friendship with Jesus, on which everything depends, is in danger of clutching at thin air.²³

Is it coincidental that it was the doubt-inducing TSH/AG that has been taught as the best working hypothesis in most Catholic colleges and universities since soon after the close of The Second Vatican Council in 1965?

As if to emphasize (then) Pope Benedict’s point, Wolfgang Grassl wrote in his 2014 essay “How can we save Catholic Higher Education?”:

Faith has been, and continues to be, driven out of Catholic campuses...The few remaining [Catholic faculty members] are becoming lonely, increasingly isolated from the centers of influence, and sometimes even embattled...God has largely been driven out of the academic enterprise...[T]oo many Catholic universities are now Catholic in name only.²⁴

I have no data on the extent to which Catholic clergy leave their parishioners “clutching at thin air” in regard to Jesus. I can only hope that few Markan priority proponents are as candid with their parishioners as a former pastor of mine was with me. As I sat in his office a few

decades ago, I must have said something about Pope John Paul II. I wasn’t prepared for his response: “The Pope may be Bishop of Rome, Jerry, but he has no authority outside Rome. There is no biblical basis for it.” “But Father,” I objected, “don’t we read in the Bible, ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church?’” “Yes, Jerry, that’s in *Matthew*,” he said, “but those words giving Peter primacy are not in Mark’s account of the same scene at Caesarea Philippi. So we have good reason to doubt that Jesus gave Peter primacy.”

Here is an excerpt from a message I received recently from a Catholic priest taught by Fr. Brown:

Dear Jerome,

I was taught the Historical-Critical Method in the seminary in the 1970’s...[by] Fr. Raymond Brown. [H]e saw toward the end of his life how this method could destroy Catholic Faith in people rather than build it up. I saw seminarians lose their faith in my class when exposed to the unbridled use of this method. Many were converted by this method to heterodox teachings or beliefs. Others lost their faith and left the seminary. For me, and by God’s grace, somewhere someone indicated that even if the Scriptures were not written by eye-witnesses to Christ, the oral tradition certainly came from them [and] it was the Risen Lord inspiring the written text and so Christ, the Risen Lord was completely active in this process. But it would be easy to be manipulated by the HCM to abandon the Catholic Faith in favor of some Ecumenical Church with loose doctrines or dogmas. The HCM calls into question not only the infancy narratives but also the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the Virgin Conception and birth, not to mention miracles of Christ and his physical death and resurrection. It really opens old heresies already resolved by the Church. And Catholic exegetes who use this method simply make the same mistakes of liberal protestant scripture scholars of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s which radicalized many believing Protestants and pushed them to fundamentalism and literalism that actually began to be institutionalized in the 1920’s... The Fathers of the Church can never be left out of the equation!

This good priest does not mention which doubt-inducing historical-critical hypothesis Brown was teaching in the 1970s when this priest was a seminarian. It may or may not have been based on what Brown wrote the following decade while advocating the TSH/AG: “no one of the evangelists was an eyewitness to the

ministry of Jesus. Rather the evangelists were ‘second generation’ Christians.”²⁵ Clearly the TSH/AG—pursued essentially *without* the Semitism study called for by Pope Pius XII and the Pontifical Biblical Commission—has been a faith-undermining force in our seminaries, our colleges, our parishes and, indirectly, in virtually every Catholic home.

Writing as Pope Benedict, Ratzinger faulted the Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis but still supported the validity of historical-critical exegesis. As an alternative to the TSH, however, he encouraged “canonical exegesis”:

‘Canonical exegesis’—reading the individual texts of the Bible in the context of the whole—is an essential dimension of exegesis. It does not contradict historical-critical interpretation, but carries it forward in an organic way toward becoming theology in the proper sense.²⁶

Surely many Catholic scholars who now teach the TSH/AG view that *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* are probably anonymous, and therefore subject to doubt, would welcome canonical exegesis. Doing so would allow them to teach with confidence the historical reality of Christ and his biblical teachings in the context of the whole Bible. Sadly, the TSH/AG arguments that the synoptic Gospels are of anonymous, second generation origin remain prominent. Until they are refuted, faithful Catholic educators may find it difficult to accept canonical exegesis. As an alternative to the TSH/AG, the Matthean priority Two-Gospel Hypothesis (TGH) is faith-affirming, consistent with Catholic teaching, and lends itself well to canonical exegesis.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*—the “sure norm for teaching the faith,” as expressed by Pope John Paul II, states:

[T]he Gospel was handed on in two ways: “orally ‘by the apostles...’” [and] “in writing ‘by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing.’”²⁷

The Vatican II document *Dei Verbum* at §19 affirms what the Church has always held when it states:

Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy maintained and continues to maintain, that the four Gospels just named, whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms, faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation, until the day he was taken up (Acts 1:1–2)... Whether they relied on their

own memory and recollections or on the testimony of those who “from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word,” their purpose in writing was that we might know the “truth” concerning the things of which we have been informed (cf. Lk 1:2-4).

In full accord with the *Catechism* and *Dei Verbum*, some young Catholics have been taught that the four Gospels really do faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, taught for our eternal salvation. Catholic Answers, EWTN, and many other fine organizations and individual Catholics have embraced the New Evangelization endeavor. But many Catholic colleges and universities undermine that endeavor and severely test (if not actually shatter) the faith of students by casting doubt on the Gospels with the TSH/AG, for it is taught as the “best working hypothesis.”

Matthean Priority—The Faith-Affirming Two-Gospel Hypothesis

In contrast to the idea of Markan priority, the notion of Matthean priority posits that the *Gospel according to Matthew* was the first Gospel to have been written. Among Matthean priority proponents, some have posited the sequence *Matthew, Mark, Luke*; other more recent scholars *Matthew, Luke, Mark*. In this latter view the physician Luke, an associate of Paul, wrote the second Gospel, using *Matthew* as one of his sources. Mark, last of the three, used two Gospels, *Matthew* and *Luke* (thus the name of this hypothesis) as sources in addition to the preaching of Peter and other sources that Mark may have had. In contrast to the Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis, the Matthean priority TGH does not posit Q or any source of sayings of Jesus that has been postulated but never found. It is consistent with the view of the early Church that *Matthew* was the first Gospel written. This *Matthew, Luke, Mark* sequence is also consistent with the commentary of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215): “[T]he Gospels containing the genealogies were written first.”²⁸ The TGH is a further development of the Griesbach Hypothesis that was introduced in its current form by William R. Farmer in 1964. In “The Present State of the Synoptic Problem,” after an analysis of five scholarly books, Farmer wrote:

[T]here appears to be no longer any theoretical basis for the existence of ‘Q,’ and it appears that the old Streeterian [cf. B. F. Streeter] reasons for belief in Markan priority are no longer regarded as valid.

None the less, most scholars continue to use the Two-Source Hypothesis as the “best working hypothesis.” The reasons given for this vary. But the most recurring one is that all major alternatives appear to be fraught with even greater difficulties than those associated with the Two-Source Hypothesis. *Among these difficulties the only one which appears to be so serious as to block a shift away from the Two-Source Hypothesis in the direction of its major rival, the Two-Gospel Hypothesis, is the difficulty in imagining how one can explain the omissions Mark has made from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke on the assumption that the author of Mark has derived his Gospel largely from those two earlier Gospels.* (emphasis added)²⁹

Why would Mark, having *Matthew* and *Luke* at hand, have omitted important teachings of Christ found in those Gospels? Let me offer a few thoughts that may overcome the block to acceptance of the TGH:

(1) Peter’s prudence in what he preached in Rome, with the agents of Claudius (41–54) and Nero (54–68) listening to his every word. In the pericope about Caesarea Philippi in the Gospel of *Matthew* Jesus says to his disciples, “Who do *you* say that I am?” Peter answers, “You are the Christ,” and Jesus gives him primacy among the apostles and in the Church he is founding: “Thou art Peter and upon this rock... I will give you the keys... whatever you bind... whatever you loose...” (Mt 16:13–19). The absence in Mark’s Gospel of these words of Jesus that give Peter primacy (Mk 8:27–30) would be consistent with Peter’s prudence in not including them in his preaching in Rome, with Nero’s officials listening and alert to anything that might threaten Rome’s authority.

But how, scholars ask, could Peter have failed to preach the Lord’s Prayer, which was at the heart of Jesus’s teaching? Surely Peter wanted to teach the Lord’s Prayer to his followers in Rome. But, with the Emperor’s agents ready to pounce, did Peter prudently delay teaching that perfect prayer—too long as it turned out—knowing that to preach “*Thy kingdom come* [a rival kingdom!]; *Thy will be done*...” [not that of Claudius/Nero!]; “*Deliver us*...” [overthrow Claudius/Nero!] could well have brought an immediate end to his ministry—and his life? Mark first uses the word “kingdom” in his first chapter, possibly during Peter’s pre-Rome preaching: “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). Mark quotes Peter using the word “kingdom” seventeen more times in his preaching, but always in a way unlikely to prompt the Emperor’s officials to arrested him. Both *Matthew* (19:28) and *Luke* (22:29–30)

relate the promise of Jesus that Peter and the other apostles would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Silence in *Mark* on this matter is another example of Peter’s prudence in what he preached with the Emperor’s officials listening.

(2) If Peter’s ministry in Rome had not ended abruptly with imprisonment and martyrdom under Nero about A.D. 67, he would have preached a more complete Gospel. According to St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215), Peter was still living and approved Mark’s Gospel before Mark promulgated it. Peter may have given that approval to Mark after Peter was arrested and during his brief imprisonment before being martyred by Nero.³⁰ In any event, Peter’s arrest would have cut short his preaching before he had time to preach a more complete Gospel.

Farmer suggests that the key difficulty preventing exegetes from accepting the TGH as the best solution to the synoptic problem is Mark’s failure to include in his Gospel important teachings of Jesus that Mark would have seen in the Gospels of *Matthew* and *Luke*. Clearly all such omissions, even of the Lord’s Prayer, can be explained by Peter’s prudence while preaching in the belly of the beast, by his abrupt arrest and martyrdom, and by what may have been Mark’s intent to limit his Gospel to what Peter preached—especially if, as Clement of Alexandria noted, Peter was still living (and in prison?) when Mark “gave his Gospel to those who had requested it.”³¹

There is yet another argument for taking *Matthew* to have been written before *Mark*, and it is perhaps the most compelling of all. Let us suppose—since those words giving primacy to Peter (“Thou art Peter and upon this rock... I will give you the keys...” [Mt 16:18–19]) are not found in Mark’s account of the same pericope (Mk 8:27–30)—that whoever wrote *Matthew* falsely added them later. Imagine the surprise, more likely indignation, of other apostles upon reading what we now refer to as Mt 16:18–19. Certainly John, who heard Jesus at that moment near Caesarea Philippi and would have known that Jesus did *not* give Peter primacy within the Church and over the other apostles. Would the response of John and the other living apostles have been quietly to accept this lie of the anonymous (according to the TSH/AG) “Matthew” when he subordinates them to Peter and Peter’s successors? No. They—certainly John—would have made the deception widely known and thus condemned *Matthew*’s entire Gospel to the dust bin of history. With such deception it would never have received the canon-

ical approval of the early Church. A strong indication, then, that *Matthew*’s Gospel is authentic. We have the attestation of St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) that John did, in fact, approve the other Gospels before writing his own: “John, last of all, seeing that the plain facts had been clearly set forth in the Gospels, and being urged by his acquaintances, composed a spiritual Gospel under the divine inspiration of the Spirit.”³²

And if Jesus never established Petrine primacy (as in Mt 16:13–19), consider the probable response of the Church at Corinth upon receiving, in an authenticated letter from St. Clement, who was Bishop of Rome in about the year 96–98, these words of admonishment, clearly from a superior to a subordinate:

These things, beloved, we write unto you, not merely to admonish you of your duty, but also to remind ourselves. For we are struggling on the same arena, and the same conflict is assigned to both of us.³³

If Jesus had never established Petrine primacy, I imagine that the response by the Bishop of Corinth, although more graciously written, might have amounted to: “I might accept such criticism from John, now head of the Church in Antioch. He is an apostle. But what makes you think that you, Bishop of Rome, can admonish me, Bishop of Corinth?” Regardless of any response that may have been written, the existence of such a letter from St. Clement, Bishop of Rome and third successor of Peter, is consistent with Petrine primacy (as indicated in Mt 16:13–19 and with its absence in Mk 8:27–30) probably because Peter prudently omitted it while preaching in Rome with the officials of the Emperor listening.

The same historical reasoning strongly points to *Matthew* as the writer of the first published Gospel and as the eyewitness-writer of the “Great Commission” (given by the risen Jesus uniquely to the eleven): “Now the eleven disciples [Judah Iscariot having killed himself] went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them... Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:16–20). This, of course, is the biblical passage that most strongly supports the unique claim of the Catholic Church to apostolic succession given personally by the risen Jesus; the succession that was summarily rejected by Luther and the other Reformers in the sixteenth century.

Mark also provides an account of the Great Commission (again uniquely given to the eleven). In *Mark* it is preceded by the appearance of Jesus “to the eleven themselves as they sat at table,” apparently before Jesus

directed them to the mountain to which Matthew referred. Mark continued: “And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation’” (Mk 16:14–20). Mark’s account of the details differs somewhat from that of Matthew, as we might expect, with Mark writing what Peter preached. But note that nothing in Mark’s account threatens the authority of the Emperor. In *Matthew*, by contrast, the Great Commission begins: “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, Go therefore...” (Mt 28:18–19). This is one more indication, it seems to me, that Irenaeus and others were correct in that *Matthew* was the first Gospel written and that differences and apparent omissions such as this in *Mark* reflect Peter’s prudence in preaching in Rome with officials of the Emperor alert to any threat to the authority of Rome.

Our separated Christian brethren are to be commended for taking to heart Jesus’s command to “Go make disciples of all nations.” They often do this with far better results than their Catholic counterparts. But often when they do so, they hear it as saying, “The Great Commission is *your* commission,” but they seem unaware of Mt 28:16 and Mk 16:14–15, in which Jesus gives that Commission only to the remaining eleven whom he taught intensively day and night throughout his three-year ministry as the predecessors of all later Catholic bishops and the successors of Peter whom they would, through time and with Christ’s continuing authority (Mt 28:20), elect to lead them and his Church.

The Great Commission of these apostles by Jesus in both Gospels in the one Church that he was founding is reflected three centuries later in the Nicene Creed. The amplified form, approved one-half century later at the Council of Constantinople (381) includes: “And (I believe) in...one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.” This statement is prayed aloud each Sunday in the Catholic Church, to which historically it directly applies. It is also common to all Eastern Churches separated from Rome and—Luther’s redefinition of apostolicity in the Reformation of the sixteenth century notwithstanding—to most Protestant denominations today.³⁴

Matthean priority is demonstrated most persuasively in *One Gospel from Two: Mark’s Use of Matthew and Luke* (2002), the 426-page book by David B. Peabody, Allan J. McNicol, and Lamar Cope, the research team of the International Institute for Gospel Studies. Although these authors do not address the question of

who actually wrote *Matthew* and the other Gospels,³⁵ they provide a formidable defense of *Matthew* as the first Gospel written. They demonstrate at many levels and in many ways the secondary character of the *Gospel according to Mark* with respect to the Gospels of *Matthew* and of *Luke*.³⁶ They point out that nowhere in the ancient sources is there any evidence that *Mark* was the first synoptic Gospel written,³⁷ and that the Patristic evidence in all cases specifies *Matthew* as the first Gospel composed and *John* the last.³⁸ They also note that Raymond E. Brown and other scholars continued to use arguments of B. F. Streeter, even though Streeter had been discredited and had purportedly altered whole phrases of *Mark* to make his conclusions appear convincing.³⁹

The Matthean priority TGH has earned peer recognition, as noted in *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views* (2016). In this book David B. Peabody defends the Matthean priority TGH against the Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis and two other hypotheses, both Markan priority.

In his book, *Why Four Gospels? The Historical Origins of the Gospels* (2001, 2010), after an eleven-point overview of the patristic and historical evidence in support of Matthean priority, David A. Black concludes that *Matthew* was always “first in the minds of the early fathers” and that this evidence “utterly fails to support the priority of *Mark* at any point.” Furthermore, Black asks, “How do Markan prioritists deal with this evidence?”⁴⁰ In the bibliography of this book Black lists 296 books and articles dealing with the synoptic problem, including the weaknesses of the Markan priority hypothesis.

The unwarranted dominance of Q—the speculative, never-found sayings of which vary with each individual speculator—prompted David L. Dungan to label Markan priority the “headless horseman who rises across the countryside every Halloween in the light of the full moon.”⁴¹

The case for the Matthean priority TGH is concisely explained by Mark Allan Powell in *Introducing the New Testament* in the section entitled “Evidence to support the Two-Gospel Hypothesis.”⁴² The table entitled “The Synoptic Gospels Compared” provides a three-column comparison of the content of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*.⁴³

Dead Sea Scrolls Semitisms Point to Early Hebrew Underpinnings of Matthew, Mark, and Sources of Luke—and to Matthean Priority

Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947–56) arguments for Markan priority and against Matthean priority may have seemed persuasive. Until then scholars who studied Semitisms were quite familiar with the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Mishnaic Hebrew that developed after the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70. They seem to have been less acquainted with the Hebrew of the middle period in which Christ lived and the Gospels were written. The Dead Sea Scrolls enabled scholars to translate more precisely the Hebrew and Aramaic of the time of Christ.

As noted, in *Divino afflante spiritu* Pope Pius XII encouraged exegetes to become skilled in Semitic languages, (for example, Hebrew and Aramaic) to better interpret Sacred Scripture. There are more than 900 Dead Sea Scrolls, most written in Hebrew, the first of which were discovered four years after Pius XII’s encyclical. The many Semitisms found in the canonical Greek of the three synoptic Gospels have led many scholars to conclude that these Gospels are largely faithful translations of documents originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic during the probable lifetimes of evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Such evidence points strongly to these evangelists as the writers of these Gospels. We have no evidence of fraudulent authorship of these Gospels as we have with letters falsely attributed to Paul (2 Thes 2:1–3) and “false words” attributed to John (3 John:9–10).

Carmignac’s book *The Birth of the Synoptic Gospels*⁴⁴ is the result of more than twenty years of studying the Dead Sea Scrolls. There he wrote as follows in regard to *Mark*:

We have here the literal, carbon copy or transparency of a translator attempting to respect, to the greatest extent possible, the Hebrew text which he had before him.... The invisible soul was Semitic but the visible body was Greek.⁴⁵ (And later)... and the proofs for this are so numerous that they cannot be doubted.⁴⁶

And *Matthew*:

Matthew is totally as Semitic as Mark.... [I]f it is

acknowledged that Mark was previously in Hebrew, then there is no difficulty in admitting that Matthew was likewise in Hebrew.⁴⁷

And *Luke*:

He has clearly composed his Gospel in Greek.... [I]n his Gospel we find the most unexpected Semitisms sprinkled about in the midst of turns of phrases of a most elegant Greek [probably because] he was working upon Semitic documents, translated very literally, which he inserted into his own redaction.⁴⁸

Citing more than thirty other scholars who affirmed the Semitic (either Hebrew or Aramaic) origin of *Matthew*, *Mark*, or sources of *Luke*, Carmignac wrote:

The [synoptic] Gospels therefore have been redacted earlier than is customarily claimed. They are much closer to the events. They have a historical value of prime importance. They contain the witness of disciples who followed and listened to Jesus.⁴⁹

Carmignac offered the following rebuttal to scholars who rejected his analysis and instead attributed the Hebrew/Aramaic Semitisms in the canonical Greek to the mother tongue of anonymous writers or their tendency to imitate the apparent indications of Hebrew in the *Septuagint*, the Koine Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible done in about the third century before Christ:

(1) He divided those Semitisms into nine categories: Semitisms of borrowing, of imitation, of thought, of vocabulary, of syntax, of style, of composition, of transmission, of translation, with the added category of multiple Semitisms; several mixed together.

(2) Then he defended unequivocally the Semitisms of the final three categories (composition, transmission, translation), each of which he explained at length.

(3) He continued: “But even in the first five categories... and especially the sixth (style), the abundance of evidence presented goes far beyond any possibility that the author [writer] was influenced by his mother tongue or by the prestige of a venerable text.”⁵⁰

This finding by many Hebraist/Aramaist scholars that the canonical Greek *Matthew* was a translation of an original Semitic (Hebrew or Aramaic) Gospel is important. It is consistent with the report by Irenaeus that the apostle Matthew wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew dialect while Peter and Paul were still preaching in Rome, with Mark writing his Gospel later, after both “departed.”⁵¹ It is consistent with the report of Irenaeus that Pantaenus found a copy of the Gospel of *Matthew* in Hebrew in India, apparently brought there earlier by

the apostle Bartholomew.⁵² It is consistent with David Alan Black's article, "New Testament Semitisms," in which he divides these many Semitisms into twenty-one categories.⁵³ It is consistent with the work of J. J. Griesbach, W. R. Farmer, B. Orchard, O.S.B., and others.

In addition to the other arguments, Semitism-based scholarship now makes it abundantly clear that the faith-building Matthean priority TGH is the best working hypothesis. Can Catholic and other Christian educators now continue in good conscience to keep the doubt-inducing Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis on its tottering pedestal, mindful of what that choice may mean for the eternal salvation of each student?

The Apostle John: Writer of the Fourth Gospel and Guarantor of the Authenticity of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke

The long life of the apostle John also adds to the confidence Catholics and other Christians should have, not only in his Gospel but also in the historical authenticity of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*. It is well documented that the apostle John lived until almost the year 100. Most scholars believe that he wrote his Gospel about the year 96 or soon afterward, either during his exile to the Island of Patmos or soon after returning to Ephesus in Asia Minor. Some believe that he fled to Ephesus in about the year 66, at about the time of the outbreak of the first Jewish war (66–73) and for the next three decades, except for his brief exile on Patmos, supervised the spread of the Gospel throughout Asia Minor.⁵⁴

In any case, as probably the last surviving apostle, John would surely have read the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*. Through Eusebius, St. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) affirms this:

The Gospels containing the genealogies [Matthew and Luke] [Here, within his quotation of Clement's statement, Eusebius adds, "he says"] were written first... Mark [wrote what Peter had proclaimed and] Having composed the Gospel, he gave it to those who had requested it. When Peter learned of this, he did not positively forbid it, but neither did he encourage it. John, last of all, seeing that the plain facts had been clearly set forth in the Gospels, and being urged by his acquaintances, composed a spiritual Gospel under the divine inspiration of the Spirit.⁵⁵

Would John have been concerned that Matthew and Luke apparently had different sources for their conflicting infancy narratives, or that Matthew and Mark placed Jesus's driving the money changers out of the Temple near the end of his ministry rather than soon after it began, as John did? If John observed that one or another of the other three evangelists had apparently copied or paraphrased text from another evangelist, but that what all had written was true, would he have objected, "seeing that the plain facts had been clearly set forth in [those] Gospels," if they differed only in inconsequential details? Would John, whose own Gospel is not strictly chronological, have been concerned that the earlier evangelists' accounts were to some extent structured logically or topically?

As an apostle who accompanied Jesus throughout his entire three-year ministry, John would have quickly recognized, and made known in writing to the seven churches in Asia Minor and to the Bishop of Rome, any substantive deviation in *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* from what Jesus actually said and did. Note John's sharp criticism of Diotrophes for his "false words" (3 John:9–10). We know that numerous "gospels" and other such early writings were rejected by those developing the canon two centuries later. Given John's preeminence in the Church, any substantive disapproval of the content of *Matthew*, *Mark*, or *Luke* by him would have disqualified them for the canon.

Translations or not, if, as virtually all biblical scholars agree, all three synoptic Gospels in Greek were completed by the year 96, we can be confident that they had John's approval after his return from exile in the year 96, if not before, and thus can be relied upon as authentic accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus.⁵⁶

It is important to note that the doubt-inducing TSH/AG popularized by Raymond Brown, S.S., and widely taught today in Catholic colleges and universities, depends for its very existence on the three synoptic Gospels' being written by anonymous second-generation Christians, not by evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The Flawed Rationale for the "Anonymous Origin" of the Gospel according to John

In support of his TSH/AG, Raymond Brown posited what we might call a second-generation pseudo-*Matthew*, pseudo-*Mark*, and pseudo-*Luke*, which the underlying Semitisms and the above commentary have shown to be untenable. For the last Gospel, Brown also posited a pseudo-*John*. In his book *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Brown wrote:

Was the Beloved Disciple the evangelist? That would be the impression given by Jn 21:20,24: "has written these things." Could this, however, be a simplification by the redactor who added chap. 21, hardening the more accurate 19:35?⁵⁷ The passage [in Jn 19:35]: ["This testimony has been given by an eyewitness, and his testimony is true; he is telling what he knows to be true that you too may have faith"] could mean that *the Beloved Disciple was not the evangelist* but a witness to Jesus and thus the source of tradition that has gone into the Fourth Gospel. The evangelist who wrote that passage could have been a follower or disciple of the Beloved Disciple (whom he describes in the third person) and not himself an eyewitness of the ministry.⁵⁸

Brown suggests that "*the Beloved Disciple was not [John] the evangelist.*" But at the Last Supper a beloved disciple was "lying close to the breast of Jesus" (Jn 13:23). If, as Brown suggests, this unknown "beloved disciple" who was so intimate with Jesus was not John the apostle, who was it? Whoever it was, Peter must have known him well; he asked that disciple who it was who would betray Jesus. A further question would be, is this a thirteenth disciple at the Last Supper? In both *Matthew* (Mt 26:20) and *Mark* (Mk 14:17) the "twelve disciples" are at the Last Supper. Luke identifies those at the Last Supper as "the apostles," obviously the twelve. John is undeniably one of the twelve. It seems we must then conclude either, (a) the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* are wrong, and there were thirteen disciples/apostles at the Last Supper, including John and this unknown "Beloved Disciple." Or, (b) that Luke was wrong about twelve *apostles* attending but Matthew and Mark were correct in that twelve *disciples* attended; eleven apostles/disciples and the unknown "Beloved Disciple." But we must then ask, "Which apostle was missing, and why do all four Gospels fail to mention this?" Finally, there is a reference to the "Beloved Disciple" or "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in four separate pericopes

in *The Gospel according to John* (Jn 13:23, 20:2, 21:7, and 21:20). To hypothesize this unknown, nonapostle, "Beloved Disciple" instead of the apostle John in each of these instances in the ministry of Jesus takes us beyond any semblance of credibility.

Manuel Miguens, O.F.M., S.T.D, S.S.D, taught at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., from 1969 to 1975. As indicated, he held doctoral degrees in theology and scripture. He was skilled in four biblical languages (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac), as well as Latin, Spanish, English, and four other languages. Miguens had this to say about Brown's casting doubt on apostolic succession:

Brown's argument is affected (and infected) by constructions like likelihood, probability, almost certainly, plausibly, it would seem, seemingly, etc. This precaution and uncertainty in argumentation is in sharp contrast to the certainty with which he states his conclusions. Brown appears to be not nearly so certain of his arguments as he is about what he wants them to prove. [Parenthesis in the published article].⁵⁹

It seems we have similar speculation as Brown attempts to cast doubt on the apostle John as writer of *The Gospel according to John*:

"Was [he] the evangelist?"; "impression given"; "Could this, however, be... a simplification?"; "could mean..."; "could have been..."; Jn 21:24 is "less accurate" than Jn 19:35"; "the redactor who added."

Again, this precaution and uncertainty in argumentation is in sharp contrast to the certainty with which he asserts that "no one of the evangelists was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus. Rather the evangelists were 'second generation' Christians." The same subtle method could eviscerate even the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not commit adultery; that would be the *impression given* by the sixth Commandment." "Could the sixth commandment be *less accurate* than the ninth?" "Was the redactor who added the tenth Commandment influenced by the seventh?" "The eighth commandment *could mean* only that we are not to lie when under oath."

In contrast to this flawed argumentation for an anonymous pseudo-*John*, we have the clear, well-attested statements of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and others affirming John, the beloved apostle who was an eyewitness to the entire earthly ministry of Jesus, as the author of *The Gospel according to John*.

Markan priority casts doubt on the Resurrection of Jesus, which John affirmed unequivocally in the last two chapters of his Gospel. We find further emphatic affirma-

tion of that Resurrection only about four decades later by Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, who in his youth was a disciple of the apostle John. In his *Letter to the Philippians* Bishop Polycarp affirmed the Resurrection of Jesus five times.⁶⁰ Two decades later, facing martyrdom, Polycarp chose death rather than “blaspheme my king who has saved me.” But, to the spiritual detriment of students, such poignant extrabiblical history is outside the purview of the Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis.

Some biblical scholars who posit Gospel anonymity claim that it was only later that the titles “*The Gospel according to...*” Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were added to our earliest copies of those Gospels. But Brant Pitre argues against that claim. Citing the research of New Testament scholar Simon Gathercole, Pitre writes: “[N]o anonymous copies of *Matthew, Mark, Luke* or *John* have ever been found... All the ancient manuscripts—without exception, in every language—attribute the four Gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.” After listing twenty-seven examples of manuscript evidence of various papyri and codices from the second to the fifth century, all specifically attributed to one or another of the four evangelists, Pitre notes, “According to the basic rules of textual criticism, then, if anything is original in the titles, it is the names of the authors.”⁶¹

Given Brown’s long-standing commitment to the TSH/AG, I can understand his attempt to defend it. However, as Pope Emeritus Benedict made clear, in the last fifty years, as historical criticism advanced, the figure of Jesus became increasingly obscured and blurred, placing intimate friendship with Jesus in danger of “clutching at thin air.” As noted, during this time the TSH/AG championed by Brown was the predominant historical-critical hypothesis taught in most Catholic universities and colleges, and it remains so today.

Summary and Conclusion

For the first eighteen centuries of the Christian Era, believers accepted the four Gospels as authentic accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In the late 1800s, however, more than three centuries after the Reformation, Protestant biblical scholars began to embrace the historical-critical method of biblical analysis. They concluded that *The Gospel according to Mark*, although written by someone else decades later, was the first and therefore the most authentic Gospel. The writer of *Matthew* was considered to be not the apostle but a later unknown writer. Doubt was cast on Matthew’s Gospel and that of Luke, especially where either was as odds with the text of *Mark*. In 1943 Pope

Pius XII gave Catholics permission to study the canonical Greek Gospels using the historical-critical method, but with the stipulation that they do so after developing skill in Semitic languages, namely, Hebrew and Aramaic. Unfortunately, the studies of most historical-critical Catholic scholars have instead proceeded from the Greek with little if any reference to a Semitic substrate. For more than a half-century a Markan priority Two-Source Hypothesis variant that regards the canonical Gospels as anonymous has been widely taught in Catholic centers of higher learning. This had been the case for more than four decades when, in 2006, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “Intimate friendship with Jesus... is in danger of clutching at thin air.”

As the priest taught by Markan prioritist Fr. Raymond Brown wrote, “[Brown] saw toward the end of his life how this method could destroy Catholic Faith in people rather than build it up.” In recent decades other scholars have developed a formidable case for Matthew, almost certainly the apostle, as the writer of *The Gospel according to Matthew*, the first Gospel, and an equally formidable case against Markan priority; so much so that David L. Dungan described Markan priority as “resembling the headless horseman who rides across the countryside every Halloween in the light of the full moon.”⁶²

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls greatly aided understanding of the Hebrew and Aramaic of the time of Jesus. Since then many Hebraist/Aramaist scholars have found compelling evidence for the Semitic underpinnings of the canonical Greek Gospels of *Matthew* and *Mark* and sources of *Luke*, thus dating these Gospels well within the probable lifetimes of those evangelists and therefore almost certainly written by them. As a result, they provide strong support for *Matthew* as the first Gospel written and as a probable source for Luke and Mark, and render Markan priority untenable.

The dark night of doubt-inducing Markan priority is over. In its place, instructors in Catholic colleges and universities now have a sound scholarly basis for teaching Matthean priority, in particular the faith-building TGH, as the best working hypothesis.

In Matthean priority we now have Jesus “emerging from the historical-critical fog” in the synoptic Gospels. We also have a clear rationale for believing that the apostle John, the beloved disciple, was the writer of *The Gospel according to John*.⁶³ ✠

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Slightly revised for publication.
Comments: <http://7stepcatholic.org>.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (1997; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 159.
- 2 Ibid., 368–371.
- 3 With the stipulations described on the following page.
- 4 The Farrer Hypothesis, “Markan priority without Q,” is outlined on the “Overview of Solutions” website: <http://www.hypotyposesis.org/synoptic-problem/2004/09/overview-of-proposed-solutions.html>.
- 5 <https://www.ewtn.com/library/SCRIPTUR/DEISYN.TXT>.
- 6 Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ* (New York: Image, 2016), 97–98.
- 7 E. P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1989), 117.
- 8 David L. Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 390.
- 9 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2u-Fq5Jo_9A, Evans: From 13:40 to 16:50.
- 10 Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 210–11.
- 11 Ibid., 368–71.
- 12 Ibid., 159–60.
- 13 Ibid., 268; 322–27.
- 14 *Divino afflante spiritu*, 15 and 16.
- 15 http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp-FullText.htm.
- 16 Raymond E. Brown, *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 14.
- 17 Ibid., 20.
- 18 Raymond E. Brown, *Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press International, 1975), 72.
- 19 Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 210, 211.
- 20 As an extreme example, Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels* casts doubt on the divinity, miracles, and most of the words of Jesus quoted in the Gospels. (New York: Polebridge Press/Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 16.
- 21 Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 109–11, including footnotes.
- 22 http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030510_ratzinger-comm-bible_en.html.
- 23 Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), xvi–xix. [J.G.: Pope Emeritus Benedict did not specify the variant of the Two-Source Hypothesis that has almost reduced intimate friendship with Jesus to “clutching at thin air.” However, he can be referring only to the Markan priority TSH/AG as championed by Brown and widely taught in Catholic centers of higher education, since the predominant TSH variant in Protestantism does not explicitly reject the possibility that the apostle-eyewitness Matthew and “apostolic men” Luke and Mark wrote those Gospels.]
- 24 Wolfgang Grassl, “How Can We Save Catholic Higher Education?” *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly* 37, no. nos. 1–2 (Spring/Summer 2014): 15. In choosing a college, Catholic parents and students may wish to consult *The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College*: <https://cardinalnewmansociety.org/new-edition-newman-guide-makes-searching-faithful-catholic-colleges-simpler-ever/>.
- 25 Raymond E. Brown, *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 14.
- 26 Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xix. Canonical exegesis was developed by American scholars and popularized by Brevard Childs. Childs described his canonical approach in his *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1970). He applied it in *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Grove City, PA: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1979).
- 27 CCC, #76.

28 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.

29 <http://www.markgoodacre.org/synoptic-1/FARMER.HTM>.

30 Irenaeus wrote: “After their departure [apparently after the death of Peter and Paul] Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.” *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1. This is not inconsistent with Mark having received Peter’s permission to publish his Gospel while Peter was imprisoned, though soon to be martyred by Nero, then publishing it after Peter’s death.

31 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.

32 Ibid.

33 *Letter to the Corinthians* 7. Trans. John Keith, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 9., ed. Allan Menzies (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1010.htm>.

34 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11049a.htm>. Luther attempted to reclaim apostolicity for Protestantism by defining an apostle as “one who brings God’s word.” This claim becomes problematic when “God’s word,” for reformers in the sixteenth century and later, contradicts “God’s word” as taught since the time of Christ by the apostles and their consecrated successor bishops. For example, “The Eucharist IS the body and blood of Christ” versus “The Eucharist IS NOT the body and blood of Christ.” Such a “reformed” entity, even if still called a church, would no longer be “one.”

35 The following quotation from *One Gospel from Two* suggests that authors Peabody and McNicol do not rule out Luke and Matthew as the writers of the Gospels that bear their names: “And we provided evidence in *Beyond the Q Impasse* that, in our view, makes it very probable that Luke knew Matthew.” David Dungan, David B. Peabody, Allan J. McNicol, *One Gospel from Two* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 14.

36 Ibid., 1.

37 Ibid., 16.

38 Ibid., 20.

39 Ibid., 5, 10.

40 Kindle Location 661.

41 David L. Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 389–90.

42 <http://cdn.bakerpublishinggroup.com/processed/esource-assets/files/778/original/hyperlink-04-08.pdf?1417381960>.

43 <http://www.awitness.org/synoptic/mark/mark1.htm>.

44 Original published in French: *La Naissance des Évangiles Synoptiques* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1984).

45 Jean Carmignac, *The Birth of the Synoptic Gospels* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1987), 2–3.

46 Ibid., 44.

47 Ibid., 5.

48 Ibid., 5, 6.

49 Ibid.; Carmignac’s signed message summarizing his work; back cover; paperback (1987). After noting in his book that he was influenced by nineteenth-century German exegetes (45), Carmignac speculated that *Mark* was the first of the synoptics written (43). Later, however, in #19 of his “Response to Criticisms” of his book, Carmignac acknowledged that according to Irenaeus the apostle Matthew wrote *before* Mark: “Irenaeus place[d] the composition of Marc after the death of Peter and Paul, so shortly before 70... [but] St. Irenaeus... determines the composition [of Matthew’s Gospel] before the death of the two apostles.” *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1; cited by Eusebius of Caesarea. Carmignac ends this response with, “Must we remind Grelot that these are the theories that must adapt to the sources, not the reverse?” This seems to suggest that Carmignac calls both himself and Grelot to adapt their differing theories to the Matthean priority view of Irenaeus. In context however, in the English translation at least, this is unclear. “Responses to Criticism” is not included in the English translation of Carmignac’s book *The Birth of the Synoptic Gospels*. For an English translation of Carmignac’s “Responses to Criticism,” contact jdgilmartin@hotmail.com.

- 50 Carmignac, *The Birth of the Synoptic Gospels*, 40.
- 51 *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1; cited by Eusebius of Caesarea. If “departed” is an accurate translation and Irenaeus meant “died” this is at odds with the later writing of Clement of Alexander, who wrote that Peter became aware of the Gospel Mark was promulgating and “did not forbid it” (n. 47).
- 52 Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 5.10.
- 53 Black’s article was published in *The Bible Translator* 39, no. 2 (April 1988): 215–23. Black’s twenty-one categories of Semitisms were included in Michael D. Marlowe, “The Semitic Style of the New Testament,” available at: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/hebraisms.html>.
- 54 <http://www.thebiblejourney.org/the-bible-journey/19-johns-letters-to-the-believers-in-asia-minor88730/introduction-to-john-his-3-letters/>.
- 55 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.
- 56 Brown expressed his own doubt that the apostle John was the writer of *The Gospel according to John*. That doubt is addressed later in this paper.
- 57 Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 369.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 369.
- 59 *Triumph* (April 1972). Published from 1965 to 1975 by L. Brent Bozell, former senior editor of *National Review* and author of *Conscience of a Conservative*.
- 60 <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0136.htm>.
- 61 Pitre, *The Case for Jesus*, 15–17.
- 62 David L. Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 389.
- 63 Comments on this article are welcome. They may be submitted after the article at the author’s website: <http://7stepcatholic.org>.

A special word of thanks to French scholar Marie-Christine Ceruti-Cendrier, president of the Paris-based *Association Jean Carmignac* and author of the book *Les Evangiles sont des reportages* (*The Gospels Were Written by Reporters*). Her book is being translated into English. In the first edition of *7-Step Reason to be Catholic* (2001), after a brief critique of Brown’s exegesis but unaware of the importance of Semitisms, I drew the analogy of a worker who uses a cutting torch to weaken a building for demolition and then says, “Look at this building standing straight and tall; what harm have I done?” In writing the second edition (2008), thanks to information provided by Marie-Christine Ceruti-Cendrier, I was aware that the many Gospel Semitisms noted by Carmignac and others strongly indicated that the canonical Greek *Matthew*, *Mark*, and sources of *Luke* were translations of earlier Semitic documents almost certainly written by the apostle *Matthew* and by “apostolic men” *Mark* and *Luke*. This evidence renders untenable the claim of Brown and others that those Gospels were written later, anonymously.

Thanks as well to the Sulpicians, Province of the U.S., Baltimore, for their kind permission to quote Fr. Raymond E. Brown, S.S.; to Dr. David A. Black for his twenty-one categories of Semitisms and permission to quote from his book *Why Four Gospels?*; and to Dr. David B. Peabody and Dr. Allan J. McNicol, coauthors (with Dr. Lamar Cope) of *One Gospel from Two: Mark’s Use of Matthew and Luke*, for permission to reference their book. The second holder of the U.S. copyright for *The Birth of the Synoptic Gospels* sold the copyright in 2007; the current copyright holder is unknown.

Durkheim’s Populism

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In recent months the word “populism” has entered the vocabulary of anyone who has access to Western media. What it means is open to interpretation. It may refer to the interests of the common man, the ordinary citizen, as distinct from that of the elite who may govern him. In a sense, it could even be exemplified by the Catholic Church insofar as the Church exercises a presence in a worldwide population. It might designate the attitude of those who resist the deep state as found in Brussels and Washington. In any event, the topic offers an excuse to examine the notion as found in August Comte and in his nineteenth- and early twentieth-century disciple Emile Durkheim. Hence the title of this brief essay, “Durkheim’s Populism.”

A question that has loomed large for the last three

quarters of a century is one that the French psychologist put to himself perhaps as early as 1904. Secularization in the aftermath of the French Revolution had changed the face of Europe. Durkheim asked, “How can societies maintain their coherence and integrity in an era when traditional and religious social ties no longer prevail?” Put another way, absent Christianity, how is one to achieve a common moral outlook, a “common faith,” as John Dewey was later to call it.

To answer his own question, Durkheim was led as a social scientist to explore how collective or group consciences are formed. Between 1898 and 1900, he published in the *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale* three essays on the nature of morals and rights. These were expanded and developed and eventually published in 1937 under the title *Leçons de Sociologie Physique des Moeurs et du Droit* (in English as *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*). Influenced by the positivist sociology of Saint Simon and August Comte and in accord with that methodology, Durkheim set about the empirical

examination of social, moral, and psychological phenomena supporting a given community.

The science of morals, he insisted, must be based on the study of moral and judicial facts. These facts consist of rules of conduct that have been sanctioned by a given community. The sociologist will examine how these rules of conduct were established over the course of time, and determine the interests or causes that gave rise to them and the useful ends they fulfill.

In his search for a communal set of beliefs that could replace what he thought was lost in the aftermath of the French Revolution, Durkheim was led to the study of religion in its most elemental form. That study did not lead him to the classical sources of Western culture for an understanding of religion, but to the study of primitive religions and totemism as he found it exemplified in Red Indian Pueblo rain dances and in the practices of Eskimos and aboriginal tribes in Australia.

One cannot fault Durkheim’s method of investigation, but one must acknowledge its limitation. Durkheim may have had greater success had he chosen to study the mature forms of religion rather than the primitive. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not a totemic figure but a Creator responsible for the order of nature. Durkheim, lacking a metaphysics, is unable to reason to an immaterial order, as did Plato and Aristotle, or even to a Stoic conception of morality. Religion in his study is left without a rational foundation. He can only describe what is.

Parenthetically we may note that John Henry Newman, no stranger to British empiricism, in his early study of religion, similarly devoted essays to the reasonableness of faith as actually practiced by the great mass of believers, while subjecting that faith to a phenomenological analysis. He found in the common man a spontaneous movement of the mind, involuntarily culminating in an assent to God’s existence. Such faith, he held, is an exercise of reason, “the acceptance of things real which the senses do not convey.” Newman was convinced that the unbelief or skepticism observable in his contemporaries was not unlike the belief of Christians, insofar as it too depended on presuppositions and prejudices, although of an opposite nature. He charged that typically the skeptic does not decide in accord with evidence, but instead considers the religious outlook so far improbable that he does not have to examine the evidence for it. He cites David Hume’s discussion of miracles as an example.

In *Le Division du Travail*, Durkheim acknowledges that social solidarity is a moral phenomenon that does

not yield to precise observation and measurement. Yet he identifies two broad categories of rules: first, those that apply to all men and, secondly, those that apply domestically, that is, family obligations and civic duties such as loyalty and service. He recognizes that no man exists who is not a citizen of a state. He recognizes too that the duties of a citizen are not the same in an aristocracy as they are in a democracy, or in a democracy as in a monarchy. Given the fact that human groupings are anterior to the birth of a human individual, the individual must be conceived of as a component part of the social organism.

On the subject of rights, Durkheim disputes the postulate that the rights of individuals are inherent: “It is not obvious that the rights of an individual are ipso facto his at birth. They are not inscribed in the nature of things.” It is the state that organizes and makes a reality of rights. Rights have to be won in contest from opposing forces that deny them. He is not alluding to conflicting claims on the public purse, but to something more fundamental. Among the forces that he finds suppressive of individual freedom are family, church, trade associations, and regional entities. As social life becomes more complex and varied, the state is obliged to intervene or provide a counterforce to those entities, given their propensity to absorb the personalities of their members. The state has the obligation to check the divisive character of these secondary groups. If they were left alone, they would enclose the individual within their domain and prevent him from assimilation into the larger whole. It is the function of the state to free the individual from patriarchal authority.

It is the state that organizes and makes a reality of rights, Durkheim argues. Take away from man all that has a social origin and all that is left is that he is an animal on par with other animals. It is society that has raised him to a level above physical nature. The stronger the state, the more the individual is free. The meaning of “self-government” is that choice is to be made in the context of collective or group consciousness. “A man is more free in a throng than in a coterie.” Durkheim in effect has provided the ideological platform for the Marxism yet to come, the radical absorption of the individual into the collective.

The irony of Durkheim’s populism is that in his attempt to free the individual from the restraint of secondary institutions and a ruling elite, he renders the individual subservient to the collective will. Belief in the power of ordinary people, the populace, to attain that collective outlook depends on a strong government.

Philip Mankowski, in reviewing Philip Eade's new book on Evelyn Waugh for *First Things*, brings out an aspect of populism that is relevant to the theme of this presentation. Waugh puts into the thought of one of his characters some insightful remarks. Rip is a protagonist in the short story "Out of the Depths." In contemplating the future, Rip is aware that the future may not resemble the past. He puts a question to himself, "What if all the political, cultural and solidities of twentieth century Europe were to disappear? What if everything taken for granted, every compliancy, has been demolished?" He continues to muse: "Suppose the contingencies of history have made conquering races out of the conquered, and suppose too," in Waugh's words, "the new empires have carried their civilizing schemes to the barbarous wild that was once Piccadilly and Grosvenor Square." Under such circumstances, Rip sees that only the spiritualities may remain unchanged.

Rip is not depicted as a pious, church-going Londoner, "yet the unsensational gestures and rhythms of the low Mass provide for him a touchstone of intelligibility, a shape in chaos." The Catholic, for example, may feel at home anywhere in the world where the Mass is celebrated. Yes, in spite of the fact, as Stuart Reid put it: "The destruction of the old liturgy is perhaps the greatest act of vandalism in history." This is an aspect of life that eludes Durkheim's positivistic method, an aspect that provides true freedom.

Durkheim is right in maintaining that a successful society requires a general consensual agreement on the values that social efforts are designed to achieve. Freedom cannot be secure in a society in which any

substantial social element does not identify its own aspirations and self-interest with the good of the whole. Rousseau will speak of a "general will," in contrast to Hobbes's "war against all."

Durkheim follows Aristotle in the recognition that if a true constitutional order or a true polity is to be brought into being, it must merge two opposing social tendencies: oligarchy, which he defined as rule by the few for the few, and democracy, which is rule of the many for the benefit of the many. A free society, he holds, depends upon its ability to maintain a balance between competing factions such that no group or interest is permitted to impose a majority dictum. Furthermore, in a well-ordered society each separable interest group must acknowledge that its own freedom to prosper depends on the maintenance of freedom for all competing interests. As James Madison argued in the debates prior to the adoption of the Constitution of the United States, representative government must represent the society it is called to govern. Freedom cannot be secure in a society in which either a tyrannical majority or a tyrannical minority is able to impose its will on all who dissent from its dictums. Enshrined in the American Constitution are multiple checks and balances, between states and the federal government, and among the legislative, executive, and judiciary.

The Constitution of the United States remains in spite of judicial attempts to undermine its intent. Whether the common consensual values it has for the most part enabled for 228 years are likely to survive in the absence of the Christian moral principles that prevailed at its adoption remains to be seen. ✠



Stacy Trasancos. *Particles of Faith: A Catholic Guide to Navigating Science*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2016. 160 pp.

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In our increasingly secular culture, a culture that often pits science against religion under the guise of contrasting reason with superstition, achieving the appropriate stance toward science can pose an intimidating challenge for the faithful Catholic. While we are aware that we benefit daily from the continual advances of science and technology, and we have hopes for the benefits of future advances, we are right to feel some unease at an unthinking reliance on what science has to offer us. Yet, to what extent and in what ways should we, Catholic nonscientists, engage critically with science? Stacy Trasancos offers both theoretical and practical points to help us approach this important issue in her book *Particles of Faith: A Catholic Guide to Navigating Science*.

Trasancos's guiding theoretical stance is one that should serve us in all aspects of our faith, but is particularly fitting in its bearing on our relationship to science. God is the source and loving creator of all things, including the physical world in which we reside as embodied beings, down to the smallest particle of matter and embracing all of history. Science attempts to discover truths about the physical realm. In so doing, science seeks to further our understanding of God's creation. Science is a powerful tool for its purpose, and we should respect it as such. But we should remember that science is limited to knowing only the physical aspect of reality, while we, as human persons, are not so limited. When we impose upon ourselves the limits of

the knowledge accessible to science, we thereby restrict our intellectual participation in the wider fullness of reality.

On the other hand, we also limit ourselves if we avoid engaging scientific claims under the false notion that science inevitably tends toward atheism. Insofar as science seeks truth, we have absolutely nothing to fear in its truthful claims. God, the creator of all things, is the source of all truth. True scientific claims can never actually be at odds with our faith. As Trasancos puts it, "Faith and science are two different manifestations of the same reality. When they seem to have conflicting conclusions, it is because our knowledge is not complete." Our knowledge may be incomplete with respect to the truths of the faith, to scientific claims, or to both, as they relate to the specific issue at hand.

Reality in all its fullness far exceeds that to which the method of science can be applied; but science *does* enable us to grasp important aspects of that reality. At the same time, human beings can truly flourish only in relationship with the Author of reality. That relationship ought to be one of dynamic growth, one in which we continually seek to know God better, and, as Augustine has it, thus to love God better, impelling us to know him yet better. Trasancos reminds us that if we allow ourselves to be frightened and confused by, or dismissive of, the findings of science, we are cutting ourselves off from an important source of knowledge about God, and so robbing our potential relationship with God of part of its richness. When we see the truths of science as reflecting the vast power and intricate care that God has over his creation, we are struck with awe and humble reverence. So not only should we not find science a threat to faith, we should

attempt to foster and maintain an understanding of the major topics of science as an aid to deepening our relationship with the Founder of the order upon which all scientific inquiry is based.

With this perspective on science, how do we go about the task of fostering and maintaining an understanding of scientific claims with the assurance that we are remaining on solid ground in terms of both faith and science? Trasancos offers some very useful and important guidelines that will be helpful particularly in cases where science and faith can appear to be at odds. First, we should seek to know our faith. In particular, we should know the difference between infallible dogmas and theological opinions in the process of development. Any claim of science that contradicts dogma should be rejected. But when science is used in aid of developing theological opinion, we are helped to explore and deepen our understanding. So this first step requires that we understand the nature and content of the relevant Church teachings and theological discussions. Secondly, we should attempt to learn the science. There are resources that are accessible to the nonscientist, such as popular science articles and textbooks. As Trasancos points out, there is no "magisterium of science," but we can and should seek out reputable sources of scientific information. While as individuals we might not have the expertise to make theological or scientific judgments of a high academic nature, we are capable of making headway on a level appropriate to reasonable people of faith, with the help of trustworthy sources.

Trasancos makes a crucial point about these two steps: we must "respect the real theologians and exegetes" and "respect the real scientists." Most of us would not attempt

to make scientific claims without the appropriate background and training, so turning to the real scientists will seem a matter of common sense. While some claims being made as “scientific” are driven by ideological factors, and as such are not to be considered genuine scientific claims, finding sources committed to an objective pursuit of science is important and doable. However, we are more apt to fall prey to self-proclaimed theologians and philosophers. Their opinions proliferate and are easily found. So here, too, we must be careful to rely on those who have the appropriate background and training. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, documents of Church councils, and the writings of Church fathers are excellent sources.

In this pursuit, Trasancos suggests, it will be helpful to keep in mind the “system of wills.” God’s will created and holds in existence all things. Rational beings have free choice of will and can affect the physical realm as matter-movers, imposing their wills on matter, yet subject to the laws of nature, laws themselves subject to God’s will. Scientists pursue truth within isolated physical systems. These systems are not autonomous, though for the sake of research they are often studied as such. They are small parts of a unified whole, participating in the wider order of reality. Keeping this in mind will allow us to remember that science is not equipped to provide proof for the truths of our faith, and we should not look to it for that purpose.

Trasancos not only provides this clear and helpful path for setting out in search of scientific understanding, but she goes on to illustrate how we can use this approach to tackle some of the more difficult questions posed to Catholics by science. Parts 2 and 3 of her book are titled “Questions in the Physical Sciences” and “Questions in the Biological

Sciences,” respectively. These cover the Big Bang, the reality of the atomic world, quantum mechanics and freedom of will, evolution, creationism and intelligent design, and the beginning of human life. For each of these topics Trasancos applies the theoretical and practical principles laid out earlier. She explains the science of these topics in ways that are readily accessible to the nonscientist, while at the same time respecting the intelligence of her readers. For each issue it is evident that, indeed, we have nothing to fear from science and only a wealth of knowledge to gain.

On a final note, Trasancos makes a point in passing that offers the potential for a wider application for the approach to science that she advocates. She states that questions of science need not divide Christians and atheists. Our commitment to truth as it extends to the truth of God’s creation can give us common ground for conversation. Pursuing science, then, with confidence, curiosity, and rigor, and teaching our children to do so, can provide us a way to engage our culture with meaning and significance, while showing that people of faith are, simultaneously, people of reason, not in spite of our faith, but because of it.

Douglas Murray. *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017. 352 pp.

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty
School of Philosophy,
The Catholic University of America

Given the widespread publicity accorded this volume by major print media, its principal thesis is well known. Douglas Murray, associate editor of the *Spectator*, argues in plain English that “Europe is committing suicide.” Its leaders have betrayed their peoples by their failure to acknowledge the Islamic threat. “As a result, by the end of the life span of most people currently alive, Europe will not be Europe and the peoples of Europe will have lost the only place in the world they have to call home.”

That a state of cultural and political disorder exists within Europe and the United States is widely acknowledged and hardly stands in need of Murray’s ample documentation, but his contribution is welcome nevertheless for its forceful contentions. Western nations on both sides of the Atlantic are confronted by massive immigrations of alien peoples who refuse to assimilate within their adopted country and demand accommodation for the customs they bring.

The present volume may be considered the latest in a long line of authoritative texts running from Julian Benda’s *La trahison des clercs* (1927), Hilaire Belloc’s *The Great Heresies* (1938), von Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), and Pierre Manent’s *Democracy Without Nations: The Fate of Self Government in Europe* (2007). There have been other calls to heed the threat; these are merely the best known. One could add a short treatise by Christopher Dawson that indirectly speaks to Murray’s topic, *Tradition and Inheritance*, published by

The Wanderer Press in 1970.

Julian Benda makes the case that the most serious form of anarchy is the treason of the intellectuals. Benda uses the term *clerc* to designate, as a class, writers, men and women of learning, artists, moralists, and churchmen. It is the *clercs* in his sense, and not the people of these nations, who have repudiated the value of their inherited culture.

Pierre Manent, like Murray, is convinced that Europe is on the verge of self-destruction because its democratic nations have surrendered authority to the centralized government of the European Union in Brussels. “The EU’s political contrivances,” he writes, “have become more and more artificial. With each passing day they recede further from the natural desires and movements of their citizens’ souls.” A nation, he holds, is the same people living in the same place, observing the same customs, and abiding by the same moral principles. In Manent’s judgment, Europe’s governing classes, without explicitly saying so, aspire to create a homogeneous and limitless human world. In fact, given its present intellectual climate, what distinguishes Europeans from one another and from others cannot be evaluated or even publicly discussed. Manent speaks directly to this issue in a volume called *Eccentric Culture*.

By 2015 it was evident that in Germany low birthrates among the native population and high birthrates among immigrants were undermining the culture of German society. It was also clear that the immigrants, mostly Muslims, were failing to integrate. This was true of Europe in general. Murray writes, “The countries let them in but had no idea what attitude to take towards them once they came.” It took six decades of immigration, he claims, for political leaders of France, Germany, and

Britain to state that immigrants should speak the language of the country to which they had migrated. It took until 2010 for Chancellor Merkel to insist that the laws of the land and the Basic Law of Germany must be observed by immigrants.

Murray is up to the minute with data supporting his contention that the elites are out of tune with the populace. He cites a study made in February of this year by Chatham House, a London think tank that polled 10,000 people across ten European countries. It asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposition that “[a]ll further immigration from Muslim countries should be stopped.” An overwhelming majority agreed with the statement except in Britain, where only 47 percent agreed.

He cites a recent study in Dundee, Scotland, where some of its pupils were asked to list words they associated with Muslims. Among the words volunteered by the children were “terrorists,” “scary,” and “9/11.” Soon Muslim women were brought into the classrooms to correct the children’s views. The children were told, for example, that 9/11 had nothing to do with Islam.

Another example of political disconnect is provided by the fact that on New Year’s Eve in 2016, after more than a thousand automobiles had been set alight in France, the Interior Minister described the night as having gone off “without any major incident.” Murray provides dozens of examples of violence that are explained away by officials or not reported at all by a complicit press. He is particularly concerned about his native Sweden, given that demographic studies show ethnic Swedes becoming a minority in Sweden within the lifetime of most people currently alive. Similar studies also reveal that even in Switzerland by

the end of the century 40 percent of the country’s fourteen-year-olds will be Muslim. One need not go on.

Murray is not oblivious to the source of Europe’s loss of self-confidence, which he attributes to its failure to acknowledge the Christian roots of its own culture. He is at one with John Paul II, who in 2003 wrote, “While fully respecting the secular nature of the institutions, I wish once more to appeal to those drawing up the future European Constitutional Treaty so that it will include a reference to the religious and in particular the Christian heritage of Europe.” Murray is appalled that “[i]ntelligent and cultured people appear to see it as their duty not to acknowledge debt, not to shore up and protect the culture in which they have grown up, but rather to deny it, or assail it, or otherwise bring it low.” “We may think badly of ourselves,” he says, “but we are willing to think exceptionally well of absolutely everyone else.”

Murray finds that most branches of European Christianity have lost the confidence they need to proselytize and some even the faith to believe in their own message. The Church of Sweden, the Church of England, and the German Lutheran Church have become left-wing political entities, promoting diversity action and social welfare projects and calling for open borders. The message of religion is muted. Texts that once were preached as the revealed word of God are now proclaimed in a circumspect manner in order not to offend.

Finally, the question looms, in Murray’s words, “How long can a society survive once it has unmoored itself from its founding source and drive?”

Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, with an introduction by Gerhard Cardinal Müller. *Teaching and Learning the Love of God: Being a Priest Today*. Translated by Michael J. Miller. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017. 384 pp. \$24.95, paper.

Reviewed by Rev. Joseph Koterski, S.J.
Fordham University

This volume is a collection of forty-three homilies that Joseph Ratzinger delivered between 1954 and 2000, all in one way or another on the priesthood. In addition, there is an appendix with the letter that he issued as Pope Benedict XVI to inaugurate the Year for Priests in 2009, the 150th anniversary of the death of John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests. It also contains an introductory essay by Gerhard Cardinal Müller, reflecting on the need for priests to undertake an inner renewal of their commitment to “teaching and learning the love of God” if they are to provide strong witness to the gospel in the face of contemporary challenges.

Cardinal Müller’s introduction provides an overview of the crisis that has afflicted the priesthood in recent decades, a crisis whose symptoms include mixed motivations in the clergy and sociological confusion about lay and clerical roles as well as failures in theological education and moral formation. The sermons gathered for this volume provide not only material for priestly reflection on retreats and resources for good preaching but a vision of the path needed to resolve the crisis and a set of foundations useful for developing a fruitful theology of the sacrament of Holy Orders.

In his homilies at the annual Chrism Mass in his diocese of Regensburg, for instance, Ratzinger outlines vital elements of a

spirituality for the priesthood that for decades has been missing even in seminary discussions amid the sociological focus on questions about who should play what roles in the Church. In some quarters, for instance, there has appeared a curiously apologetic stance among the clergy that the Catholic priesthood is not open to women. Without explicitly entering into that debate, these homilies nevertheless answer various questions about the teachings of the Church that some find embarrassing. While warning against a clericalism that supposes that “Father knows best” on any and every question, they defend a traditional view of the priesthood by stressing the decisions that Jesus himself made about the sort of men whom he chose for the priestly office, the prayer lives that he wanted them to maintain, and the personal faith that he demanded of them.

In addition, these homilies put into crisp and memorable formulas various truths on which priests need to meditate regularly if they want to stay focused on what the faithful need priests to be. He writes, for example: “No man dare on his own to use the ‘I’ of Christ as his ‘I’ without blaspheming. No one can say on his own authority ‘This is my body’, ‘This is my blood’, ‘I absolve you from your sins’. And yet we need these words as much as our daily bread. When they are no longer spoken, the daily bread goes stale and social achievements become empty” (40). For Ratzinger, the gift of—the priestly ministry is one that only the Lord himself can give.

Alluding to the sort of scandals that have rocked the Church, he comments: “Even if a priest contradicts these words with his life, they are still effective, precisely because the ‘I’ of Jesus Christ is what matters, and not the man’s ego. The man does

not forgive sins, but He does. The body of this or that man does not become present, but His does” (40). This spirituality implies an exacting standard for the priest himself: “But at the same time it is clear that we cannot say such words without them making demands on our own life and requiring interior correspondence to what we are saying” (41). If this is not taught to seminarians and expected of priests—and sadly this has sometimes been the case in recent years—then “all sorts of business may continue, but [such priests will] lack what is essential, and the Church then becomes a leisure time association, and she becomes superfluous” (41).

In addition to sermons from the Chrism Mass, the volume contains homilies from various jubilee Masses, and a reader might legitimately wonder whether the remarks delivered on occasions of this sort deserve inclusion. Prescinding altogether from sentimentality, Ratzinger devotes his homiletic energies at these events to conveying the fruits of his lifelong research on the Church and on the sacrament of Holy Orders in ways that are pastoral and free of academic jargon and scholarly baggage. His style in these homilies is somewhat like that of the three volumes of his *Jesus of Nazareth*. While the footnotes in those books show his engagement with the most important biblical scholarship of recent decades, his scriptural reflections confine themselves to setting forth a compelling picture of the Lord. I think, for instance, of the way he connects the role of the scapegoat in the liturgy of Yom Kippur in *Leviticus* with the way in which the Holy Spirit drives Christ out into the wilderness after receiving John’s baptism in the river Jordan.

In like manner, the sermons on the occasions of diaconal and priestly

ordination and on various anniversaries feature engaging stories—accounts of contemporary martyrs, for instance, and reports about the spiritual hunger of groups of people who were deprived of priests for long years by their communist rulers. Yet the preacher invariably makes clear the lessons about the priesthood that we need to draw from these stories. At the same time there is an attention to bringing out the continuity between the teaching of the Council and the long centuries of Catholic doctrine.

One of these homilies, for instance, stresses the threefold office of the priest and uses the language of Vatican II’s *Presbyterum Ordinis*. To present the traditional teaching about the ministry of teaching (“proclamation”), of sanctification (through the seven sacraments, and especially the Eucharist), and of governing (“shepherding”), Ratzinger employs biblical insights much like the fascinating account that he gives in *Jesus of Nazareth* about the results of the scripture scholar Joachim Jeremias, who used linguistic evidence to connect John the Baptist’s proclamation of Jesus as the Lamb of God not only with the sacrifice of Passover Lamb but also with the Suffering Servant poems of Isaiah.

This book is a welcome addition to our growing set of volumes in English from the pen of the Pope Emeritus. It has value both for scholarly and for popular reading.

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput. *Strangers in a Strange Land: Living the Catholic Faith in a Post-Christian World*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2017. 271 pp.

Rod Dreher. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Sentinel, 2017. 262 pp.

Reviewed by Thomas W. Jodziewicz
University of Dallas

Perhaps it is not wise to begin a review with a cliché, but it is difficult to do full justice to these two books. They are timely, provocative, perceptive, sober, hopeful, charitable—in short, admirable works of exhortation. Both of them begin with reflection on the profound understanding that God has first loved us and is always seeking us, and so we need to respond. Our time exhibits a shallow moral relativism and a materialistic consumerism. The American tradition of religious liberty is not just religious toleration. We are being tested, for our orthodox Christian beliefs and our sense of the natural law are often dismissed as bigotry and discriminatory, and there is risk that upholding them will be held to be illegal. Neither book explicitly cites the Baltimore Catechism’s well-known opening questions and answers about God and life’s meaning, but both attest to the authentic response to God’s eternal love: “to gain the happiness of heaven we must know, love, and serve God in this world.” Our world is becoming ever more problematic—a “strange land.”

It could be, though, that the apparent triumph of a modern secular liberalism that aggressively demands an affirmation of self-autonomy and a foundational relativism about “values” and personal choice can be an

occasion for gaining a rather ironical clarity as to the Christian vocation today. The public square is celebrated in the popular culture as naked, that is, immune from traditional notions of sexuality, marriage, family, and virtue, and thus in contrast with orthodox Christianity. Both authors agree on the dire circumstances of a post-Christian America, and both understand American history since the 1960s to have been a period in which a comfortable and broad-bottomed Protestant culture was progressively driven from the public square even as its well-intended defenders turned toward politics as a way to save the sacred. This rescue effort seems to have splintered on the rocks of political alternatives (liberal and conservative, left and right) much as the Corinthian community was split between Apollos and Paul.

Dreher offers a succinct account of the historical background for “how the West arrived at this blasted heath of atomization, fragmentation, and unbelief” (45–46). His story ranges over fourteenth-century nominalism and the Enlightenment, the industrial revolution, the horrors of the world wars in the twentieth century, the sexual revolution, and the exaltation of unrestrained personal desire. Chaput describes the way in which university administrations retreat from traditional commitments when students and faculty lobby to expunge any ideas that oppose the destruction of traditional morality. Chaput points to the lack of “a moral center of gravity” (143) in the academy, but his charge is actually an indictment of contemporary culture in general, especially in matters of sexuality. To oppose so-called homosexual marriage, he notes, is to be thought intolerant and closed to the notion that one can be whatever one wants to be. The forces of change require that everyone acknowledge that the new “meaning” of life is simply self-determination:

This should surprise no one. Sex is profoundly connected to human identity. Same-sex activists can therefore never be satisfied with mere tolerance or acceptance. They need vindication—which means the hounding of contrary beliefs. And this is exactly the course of events in places where efforts to ensure religious liberty by law have been attacked as “anti-gay.” This is rich in irony. Sexual expression, which has no mention or standing in the Constitution, now routinely seems to trump religious practice and teaching, which are explicitly protected under the First Amendment. (89)

Neither Chaput nor Dreher is sanguine about the prospects for religious liberty, given the way in which progressive elites (and, to be honest, nihilists) push forward. How is one to “know, love, and serve God in this [strange] world”? How is one to undertake the obligation to offer Christian witness today in such “strange” circumstances?

Archbishop Chaput warns against individualism, institutionalism, and clericalism as he recalls the Catholic faithful to their renewal as the Body of Christ:

[It] means cultivating in our clergy and laypeople a better sense of who and what the Church is, separate and distinct from the culture around us—a family of families; an intimate community of Christian friendship with a shared vocation to sanctify the world; a mother, a teacher, and advocate; the path to eternal joy; and an antidote to the isolation and radical individualism of modern democratic life. It means recovering a sense of Catholic history and identity; a deepened habit of prayer and adoration; a memory of the bitter

struggles the Church endured in this country; a distaste for privilege; and a love for personal and institutional asceticism. (188)

Dreher mentions his personal passage from Catholicism to Eastern Orthodoxy several times and is carefully ecumenical in the remedies he offers for a Christian revival. He would presumably agree with Chaput’s outline of the need for contemporary witness to Christ. But his “Benedict Option” features a vigorous return to reading the scriptures and a privileging of St. Benedict’s Monastic Rule for the communities that will be needed in this “strange land.” He thinks that they will need to practice self-abandonment, for the sake of others, and to be centered in cultivation of order, prayer, work, asceticism, stability, community, and hospitality (48-77). Rather than promoting any sort of sacred ghettoism, his book counsels being in but not of the world:

The way of Saint Benedict is not an escape from the real world but a way to see that world and dwell in it as it truly is. Benedictine spirituality teaches us to bear with the world in love and to transform it as the Holy Spirit transforms us. The Benedict Option draws on the virtues in the Rule to change the way Christians approach politics, church, family, community, education, our jobs, sexuality, and technology. (77)

Dreher offers many specific suggestions for living out this Rule today, including the creation of classical Christian schools and the revivification of trades in what he sees as a coming prohibition of Christian participation in many professions. He discusses various examples of “Option” communities and initiatives now forming in this country.

Chaput’s “rule” is to be found in

a chapter on the anonymous second-century “Letter to Diognetus” (205-23). That period in Christian history was also one dominated by an energetic paganism. It required a nascent Christianity to seek a foothold in a “strange land”:

If today the American soul has moved away from its biblical conscience, the Letter to Diognetus reminds us that the terrain of unbelief may be new, but it’s not unfamiliar. Christianity was born in a world of abortion, infanticide, sexual confusion, and promiscuity, the abuse of power and exploitation of the poor. The early Christians’ love for Jesus compelled them to choose a more excellent way, one that made them distinct, puzzling, and sometimes contemptible in the eyes of the wider culture. Like the apostle Paul, they let their everyday life in society attract others to the Gospel (as in 1 Cor 9:22-23). But they did not conform so much that they betrayed that Gospel. (213)

For Chaput, this “Letter” offers a wonderful and challenging description of what it is to be an alien in an alien land, and yet to see it as part of God’s world and thus a land of pilgrimage in which one can love God and one’s neighbor. It provides an opportunity for inculturation: “they didn’t abandon or retire from the world. They didn’t build fortress enclaves. They didn’t manufacture their own culture or invent their own language. They took elements from the surrounding society and ‘baptized’ them with a new spirit and a new way of living” (212). Chaput is sensitive to the sharp edges of his description of contemporary America, “but candor is not an enemy of love. And real hope begins in honesty” (146). We must, he reminds us, not give in to despair or to a presumption that

simply mocks our cultural chaos. Both of these roads lead, ironically, back to the self—particularly despair, which “sees, quite clearly, that the things of this world can never fully satisfy us. But despair makes sense only if God is not merciful and Jesus did not rise from the dead. That’s why despair is a denial of the mercy and the justice of God and of the possibility of redemption” (153). This land, in the end, is not our final destination:

That, in the end, is our calling as Christians: to make Christ known in the world. To hand on the hope that fills our hearts. To work for God’s justice in our nation, honoring all that remains

beautiful and good in it. And always to do so knowing that we’re on a journey to our final homeland. Longing for that life inspires us along the way. It’s hard to imagine what eternal life with God would be like, and maybe that’s why it can sometimes be so hard to hope in it. (163)

To close on an ecumenical note from one whose ancestors have known much of being strangers, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks counsels, as Chaput reports:

we can live as a conscious minority in a nation whose beliefs, culture, and politics are no longer our own, yet still nourish our

identity, witness our faith with zeal, and add to the common good as the prophet Jeremiah did. This demands humility. It also requires courage and a refusal to be digested and bleached out by the world around us. As Sacks said in 2013, the task isn’t easy. It demands a complex finessing of identities. It involves a willingness to live in a state of cognitive dissonance. It isn’t for the faint-hearted. But it is creative. (242-43)

As both books humbly and charitably attest, this is a burden that we can share with each other and, most wonderfully, with our God.

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