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# **Plural Spiritualities: North American Experiences**

**Christian Philosophical Studies, XIV**

Edited by  
*Robert J. Schreiter*

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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## INTRODUCTION

# SECULARITY AS THE FRAMEWORK OF POSTMODERN SOCIETIES

*ROBERT SCHREITER*

The “secularity” of the United States is notably different from that of European countries, even different from that of its neighbor, Canada. Why the U.S. has not followed European patterns of secularity has multiple historical causes. There has never been an established church in the U.S. in the sense of a church given priority status and financial support by the State. Consequently, support for churches has always had to come from their congregants. This has resulted in a kind of religious “marketplace” where Christian churches and other religious forms have had to “compete” for members and support. At the same time, there is freedom of religion that is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Moreover, as a country of immigrants, religion was often a significant part of immigrant communities’ identity and this has had an impact on the public sphere.

There is indeed secularity in the U.S., but there is also a kind of “civil religion” that allows, among other things, for a diffuse general public religiosity without clear denominational affiliation. The overwhelming majority of Americans claim to believe in God, claim to pray with some regularity, and say (ca. 70%) that they would not vote for an atheist for president. These generalized beliefs do not translate into regular church attendance (with about 40% claiming to attend at least once a month). At the same time, a growing number (ca. 20%) claim no religious belief. This appears strongest among adults under 35 years of age.

The U.S. thus presents a context where a significant secularity is present, but also a public sphere where religiosity is also a salient feature. While this religiosity may be free-form and there may be a bias against institutional religion, religious quests and public discussions of religion are not frowned upon and reports on religion appear regularly in the general social media. The highly individualized ethos of dominant U.S. culture and an enduring anti-institutional bias make commitments to communities beyond immediate face-to-face ones difficult to sustain. Religious quests will often seem to be concerned principally with therapeutic or self-realization schemes.

## SPIRITUALITIES WITHIN SECULAR SOCIETIES

Working with some fifteen teams under the guidance of Charles Taylor, Professor Emeritus at McGill University in Montreal, and of George F. McLean of the Center for Research in Values and Philosophy at The Catholic University of America, eleven scholars at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago took up Charles Taylor's challenge to look at the fourth of what he has termed "four disjunctions" between (Western) secular societies and the Roman Catholic Church. The four disjunctions are (1) the relation between religious "seekers" and "dwellers" in their sense of religious belonging and the commitments which the Catholic Church considers normative; (2) how the Church understands its exercise of authority and how authority is understood in liberal democratic societies; (3) differences in the understanding of sexual morality and historicity; and (4) the Church's engagement with the many religious and non-religious spiritualities that are present in the postmodern environment. Of this fourth disjunction, Taylor says "a spirituality that is open to enrichment by the experiences and spiritualities of the many great religious cultures and civilizations, even the nonreligious, versus a stress on the completeness of the Christian spiritual tradition."<sup>1</sup> The result of their explorations, undertaken over a two year period, is this book, "Plural Spiritualities: North American Experiences."

For background on secularity, the team relied on the work of Charles Taylor (especially his books *Sources of the Self, A Secular Age*, and *Dilemmas and Connections*) as well as a volume edited by Charles Taylor, Jose Casanova, and George McLean, *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age* (Washington, DC: Center for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012).

The book before you deals with the *plurality of spiritualities* that now mark Western secular societies, and especially their interaction with the Roman Catholic Church. These spiritualities derive from other religious traditions, as well as from non-religious, secular sources. Those living in secular cultures such as those of the West borrow from or appropriate those spiritualities. What challenges do they place before the Church? How might the Church engage them? And what challenges may the Church place before these spiritualities and the general culture that is their home?

The responses to these questions are qualified here in a number of ways. First of all, they represent "North American Experiences." All of the authors reside in North America and have worked there extensively, although four of them were born elsewhere (Barbour in France, Andraos

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<sup>1</sup> From an unpublished memorandum to the teams in the Disjunctions Project.

in Lebanon, Sison in The Philippines, and Nguyen in Vietnam). Moreover, many of the authors have experiences working outside North America, which helps them situate their outlooks and comments. So, from the beginning, it was felt important not to speak only of the dominant (White) secular culture, but to keep an intercultural perspective, situating secular manifestations within the plurality of cultures in the North American setting (See for example Barbour and Schreiter on U.S. Native Americans, and Andraos on Canadian Aboriginals).

Second, the concrete examples informing the chapters were drawn not only from the U.S., but from Uruguay (Sison), Canada (Andraos), Italy (Fragomeni), and Northern Europe (Ostdiek). This has helped add perspective to a largely U.S.-centered discussion.

Taylor's understandings of spirituality as presented in *A Secular Age* formed the point of departure for a working understanding of spirituality. Three other resources informed the approach here to spirituality. The first two were sociological descriptions of spirituality, by Courtney Bender and Omar McRoberts,<sup>2</sup> and by Nancy Ammerman,<sup>3</sup> respectively. The third was a more theological paper prepared by Mary Frohlich.<sup>4</sup> Gilbert Ostdiek, another author, provided an overview of a series of major authors in spirituality on the question of classification and definitions.

Bender and McRoberts note two widespread assumptions about spirituality in the United States that need to be challenged. First of all, spirituality is not simply a weak or attenuated form of religion; it is a social phenomenon that deserves to be studied in its own right. Second, while spirituality as found in secular cultures is often viewed as an individualistic phenomenon, it must be studied as well in its social forms.

They go on to urge that spirituality be studied (1) genealogically (in its developing and changing historical forms) and in the multiple discourses, practices, structures and imaginaries in which it is manifested; (2) in its spatial, social, and power-laden dimensions, and not just as something "ethereal"; and (3) in both its popular and scholarly manifestations.

Ammerman cautioned against creating a rigid binary between "spirituality" and "religion" and urged readers to attend to the variety of

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<sup>2</sup> Courtney Bender and Omar McRoberts, "Mapping a Field: Why and How to Study Spirituality," (Social Science Research Council Working Paper, October 2012). <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/05/Why-and-How-to-Study-Spirituality.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, "'Spiritual but not Religious'? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52:2 (2013), pp. 258-278.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method," *Spiritus* 1 (2001), pp. 65-78.

approaches to spirituality within the U.S. population. Out of her empirical research, she identified four cultural “packages” that shape discourse on spirituality: (1) one that ties spirituality to personal deities; (2) one that locates spiritualities in various naturalistic discourses about transcendence; (3) one that is more ethically oriented in nature, focusing especially on compassion; and (4) one focusing upon (not) belonging, in “spiritual but not religious” discourse.

Frohlich helped the authors form a tripartite perspective on spirituality from a methodological point of view. Spirituality is first of all “lived spirituality,” which involves concrete instances of what individuals and groups self-identify as “spirituality.” Second, spirituality may refer to “cumulative traditions” which are agglomerations of practices, ideas, values, and outlooks. These can be formations within Christianity (such as, e.g., Franciscan or Pentecostal traditions) or in other religions (e.g., Native American traditions). Third, there is the scholarly study of spirituality, as a discipline within itself or as an interdisciplinary focus.

In subsequent discussions, a common denominator seemed to cut across all these considerations: a quest for transcendence—however the transcendent object may be construed, either naturalistically (as in the “deep green” spiritualities explored by Frohlich in the book) or beyond Taylor’s “immanent frame” and “buffered self.” The authors tried to honor all of these considerations in the drafting of their respective chapters.

## **PLAN OF THE BOOK**

The first three chapters of this book explore themes of plural spiritualities in three major areas of discourse that are sites for the Church’s engagement with the secular world: the world of science, growing concerns about the environment, and the arts (here, cinema).

In the first chapter, Dawn Nothwehr examines how spirituality might provide a mediating role between science and religion. She begins by presenting research done on hundreds of contemporary scientists (in the fields of biology, physics, chemistry, sociology, economics, psychology, and political science) regarding their spiritual beliefs. Many identified themselves as “atheist,” but a significant group saw themselves as engaged in “meaning-making” through their scientific research—albeit often “meaning making without faith.” Such meaning-making bespeaks a kind of spiritual “seeking” on the part of these scientists. Nothwehr sees such “spiritual” scientists as potential dialogue partners for the Church: scientists concerned about meaning making in the face of the experience of an awe-inspiring universe; and Christian believers, working out of a relational ontology based upon a cosmology of an universe evolving toward a greater mutuality “set in place in the beginning by the Holy

Spirit's inspiring and creative activity." Rather than seeing science and religion as adversaries, the Church has the opportunity to reach out to a group of seekers who share an awe for the created world, but may think in different categories. Such a 'reaching out' can be a manifestation of the Church's catholicity. She ends by citing Pope Francis on what the Church's attitude should be toward contemporary science.

In Chapter II, Mary Frohlich asks whether the Church can find common ground with what has been characterized as "dark green" spirituality regarding the environment. "Light green" spirituality affirms care for the earth and concern for ecological sustainability as religious responsibilities. "Dark green" spirituality sees the earth as sacred in a naturalistic sense. Dark green spirituality manifests itself in different forms: (1) as a general sense of sacredness of nature; (2) as a belief that spirits inhabit natural creatures and entities; (3) a belief in Gaia (affirmation of earth as a living organism); and (4) a more mystical conviction that earth bears divinity and spirit. She goes on to note that a growing number of people in the U.S. identify religiously with one of these four dimensions, especially in pagan and witchcraft (Wicca) movements.

Frohlich then moves to a critique of the "nova effect" metaphor proposed by Taylor to present the explosion of forms of spirituality outside religious institutions. She sees this as in tune with postmodern sensibilities, but questions whether that leaves people as disconnected observers of a phenomenon. Such disengagement is potentially fatal when facing challenges to the environment. In place of this postmodern reading, she suggests a postcolonial one, where the image would be one of "habitat"—an image that would recognize the overwhelming challenge yet also require agency and responsibility as a necessary response, even though those kinds of responses will always be "local, contested, and in the midst of change." She continues with the kind of critique that can be brought to bear on deep green spirituality as perhaps nostalgic for an imagined past. Her chapter concludes with how theology might engage deep green spirituality by how it negotiates the relationship between transcendence and immanence through the use of proposals from contemporary feminist thought (using here especially Elizabeth Johnson and Susan Abraham).

Frohlich's contribution here is exemplary in presenting the challenge of an important dimension of ecological thought, the challenges it raises to the Church, how that dimension might be critiqued, and what the Church will need to do in order to meet those challenges.

In Chapter III, Antonio Sison takes up how the medium of cinema can mediate a discourse of plural spiritualities and the Church. He does this via the genre known as "Third Cinema," a theory of film making that began in Argentina and spread through other parts of the Global South.

What characterizes it is not only its choices of theme—presenting the suffering of the poor from their perspective, but also its utilizing of cinematic practices to capture the perception of the victims. He focuses on a 2007 Uruguayan film, *El bano del Papa* (“The Pope’s Toilet”), directed by Cesar Charlone and Enrique Fernandez. The film tells the story of Pope John Paul II’s 1988 visit to Melo, Uruguay, an impoverished village near the Brazilian border. Unemployment is very high in Melo, and the inhabitants hope to cash in on the expected crush of visitors by providing them food and other items for sale. The visit turns out to be a double disappointment. The turnout of people is much smaller than expected and those who do come bypass the offerings prepared by the people of Melo. Moreover, the Pope’s message does not touch the reality of the village: the Pope talks of the importance of trade unions, when the problem in Melo is mass unemployment.

In the film, Beto devises the idea to provide a pay-toilet as one of the amenities to be offered to the visitors. He is a small-time smuggler, and ekes out a meager living for his family in the border region. He bicycles to Brazil to bring back a porcelain toilet. On the way back, he is waylaid by Meleyo, a corrupt customs officer, who confiscates his bicycle. He ends up carrying the toilet hoisted onto his shoulder, and arrives back in Melo as the Pope is concluding his address and the people are dispersing. His entry into Melo recalls Christ carrying his cross on the Via Dolorosa.

Sison reads this film—which has religion in its theme but is not in what would be considered a religious genre—through the image of the “crucified peoples” of Salvadoran theologians Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, using Edward Schillebeeckx’s theology of suffering as a theological frame. While at first glance this may seem to be distant from the themes of secularity and plural spiritualities, it is rather a poignant reminder that the majority of the world remains mired in poverty, and that the comfortable life that the secular West enjoys as the benefits of centuries of colonialism and now of globalization has its continuing repercussions upon the poor. Moreover, a Church negotiating with plural spiritualities must also deal with how its message is often mismatched with the circumstances of its presumed audience, as is so poignantly clear in what the Pope presented to the people of Melo. These are “disjunctions” that are often overlooked in our discourse about the secular Global North and the Church. Pope Francis, in his call for a “going forth,” a *kenosis*, of the Church, and his insistence that the Church become a Church of the poor and for the poor, reminds us of the larger horizon in which the plural spiritualities project has to be framed.

The next two chapters take up engagement with the Native Peoples of North America to explore two themes of spirituality: double belonging

and coming to terms with a violent past through processes of reconciliation.

Chapter IV explores the phenomenon of double religious belonging, whereby individuals find various levels of self-identification with two religious traditions. It is explored here by Claude Marie Barbour and Robert Schreiter through the biographies of two men: a Lakota man who is an Anglican priest and a Lakota medicine man, and a Euro-American who is also an Anglican priest and has been a member of the Chiefs' Council of the Cheyenne since 1962. In interviews presented in the chapter, both share their spiritual journeys. For the first man, Francis White Lance, the two spiritual worlds that coexist within him are held separate; for the second, Peter John Powell, the two spiritual worlds are completely fused, especially in his liturgical action. While the Christian Church in general frowns on double belonging, it is something that happens extensively. Both men, as priests, operate in the two worlds with the knowledge and consent of their bishops. The authors go on to explore some of the themes that go with negotiating two spiritualities: the meaning of grace and the presence of God in all creation, the importance of action and doing rather than an exclusive focus on ideas and dogmas, and a special concern for dual religious belonging with Native traditions; the potential of yet another round of exploitation by White people of Native traditions when White people pick, choose, and refashion Native ways according to their own tastes, as well as the lack of respect for the integrity of those traditions. Double or multiple religious belonging is a fact in much of the world, and the Church needs to include consideration of it in its dealing with plural spiritualities today.

Chapter V explores Canadian efforts to come to terms with the exploitation and destruction of Aboriginal culture and traditions by means of processes of truth-telling and reconciliation. Michel Andraos explores especially the *cercles de confiance* (circles of trust) that are used in the Province of Quebec to create safe spaces for presenting that past and coming to terms with it. These circles are ritualized spaces into which not only Aboriginal persons, but also immigrants to Canada (both descendants of past immigrants and more current ones) are invited to hear about the wounds Aboriginal peoples continue to carry from forced separation from their families, stolen land, broken promises, and continuing discrimination and racism. The work of reconciliation finds a home in many spiritual traditions. Andraos' presentation shows how ritual, story, and the healing power of truth-telling and recognition form a bridge between traditions. They all touch deeper aspects of a shared humanity. Two tasks emerge here for the Church vis-à-vis plural spiritualities: acknowledging and seeking pardon for sins of the past that continue to be toxic for the present, and finding those common sources of

our humanity that are then articulated in forms of engagement such as the journey to reconciliation.

The next two chapters look at two significant populations with which the Church must engage regarding spiritualities: Pentecostal and charismatic Christians, and the Church's own laity and secularists.

Chapter VI takes up engagement with Pentecostal and charismatic Christians. The growth of Pentecostal faith in the past fifty years is perhaps the single most salient characteristic of late twentieth- and early twenty-first century Christianity. It is estimated that today Pentecostal and charismatic Christians may constitute as much as a quarter or even a third of all Christians. Although there are a significant number of charismatics within Catholicism itself (and growing rapidly, especially in Latin America and Africa), official Catholicism has been hesitant about this form of spirituality that gives preference to experience over dogma, and speaks of direct interventions of the Holy Spirit. Jeffrey Gros, long-time ecumenist and former president of the Society of Pentecostal Studies, gives a sympathetic view and a helpful roadmap of the Pentecostal movement from his many years of experience in those circles. Besides providing an inside view, he delineates a range of issues and steps the Catholic Church might take to engage better this most important form of Christian spirituality to have emerged over the past century. He delineates not only what the Catholic Church needs to do, but also what the Catholic Church has to offer Pentecostals, regarding a richer sense of history and tradition, a deeper sense of sacramentality, and a rich sense of relationality.

In Chapter VII, Melody Layton McMahon takes up what might first seem to be two disparate themes: how the Catholic Church relates to its own laity, and the engagement with a variety of secularist groups, particularly as found in the U.S. But a little closer reading shows the link. McMahon sees the vocation or call from God of the laity, given in Baptism, as not sufficiently recognized and valued. The vocation of laypeople about which she is most interested is the work that laypeople do in their day-to-day lives—not as church ministers (or lay ecclesial ministry), but in the secular workplace. Here she connects with those groups of secularists who come together—even using the social forms of religionists—to work for a better, more human world. She finds a significant number of secularist groups who are open to dialogue and social engagement with religionists because of shared values and concerns about the quality of life. Her map of these different groups helps break up the atheist-agnostic monolith sometimes created in Church circles as “secularism.” Work, and work for a better world, is a place where the Church can engage the many spiritualities now part of civil society in a constructive manner. Here, what the Pontifical Council for Interreligious

Dialogue calls the “dialogue of common social action” can come into play.

The final two chapters touch on two dimensions of spirituality that form potential bridges between spiritual traditions in the Church and the plural spiritualities of secular societies: ritual and story.

Chapter VIII looks at ritual from two perspectives. Richard Fragomeni, in the first part of the chapter, explores the relation between the officially sanctioned liturgical rites of the Church and the popular religious practices that have grown up alongside them. While the latter were often disdained by Church officials, they have had steady support from the people (and sometimes from local church leaders as well). He uses as a case study the Good Friday rituals he witnessed some years ago in Gubbio, Italy. In his reflection upon them, Fragomeni draws out the different theologies of the death of Christ they represent, and how they come to complement each other. This is of genuine importance for understanding plural spiritualities, because what leads to multiple approaches of spirituality is not always something like postmodern fracturing, but the sheer complexity and polyvalence of the most profound experiences of life. Certainly death—and especially premature and violent death—is one of them.

In the second part of the chapter, Gilbert Ostdiek expands on this insight by looking at contemporary “disaster rituals” in Global North societies. Disaster rituals are understood here as rituals organized after unexpected, catastrophic disaster is visited upon a society, such as the death of key figures (the death of Princess Diana in 1997 would be an example) or of mass death (9/11 in the U.S., or the Otoyá massacre in Norway in 2011). Patterns can be discerned in how these rituals are devised, with the public construction of “shrines” at the site of the disaster, memorial services, and later the erection of monuments. Some of this is sometimes seen as a “tendency to sacrality”—a reaching toward the transcendent in a general but indecisive way that might be considered appropriate as a response in a pluralist, secular society. Sometimes religious rituals are drawn upon in the process. Disaster rituals, Ostdiek suggests, may be a form of corporate self-transcendence in the face of catastrophe. At any rate, what both authors show here is how participation in ritual—whether institutionally sanctioned, institutionally tolerated, or temporarily devised—can provide a form of social engagement that leads to comfort, solidarity, and the beginnings of new meaning-making. Rather than having to choose one set of meanings in chaotic or polyvalent moments, rituals can encompass multiple meanings in their actions.

In the course of the book, a number of the authors have emphasized the importance of story and sharing stories to the spiritual quest. Chapter IX offers the story of Jesus as proposed by Luke-Acts as one that can be engaged in by people of different times and places. vanThanh Nguyen

suggests five themes that emerge from the Jesus story that can be points of connection to others: being spirit-filled, practices of prayer and reflection, the quest for social justice, the attitude of compassion, and the cluster joy-food-hospitality. These “perennial” (or one might say: classical) themes become points where people of other faiths and people of no particular faith might find connections or at least resonances with their own experience. The value of Nguyen’s presentation here is an example of a “cumulative tradition” of spirituality: what one might call a “Lucan tradition” of Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

All that is presented in this volume is under the aegis of what Pope Francis has called a Church “going forth,” a kenotic Church that is not preoccupied with its own status, privileges and prerogatives. What these explorations in engagement with contemporary spiritualities seem to indicate is that, while disjunctions continue to be important and need to be examined and challenged, the conjunctions can come to play an even larger role. To be sure, the failings of the past must be dealt with. And the difference, the otherness that is always present in pluralism cannot be ignored or avoided. But another kind of ethos underlies seeking out the implications and intricacies of conjunctions. It is precisely the ethos of “mercy” that has come to be the watchword of this papacy. Mercy is not oblivious to wrongfulness and wrongdoing; but it is always able to see the beauty of God’s work beneath the wrongdoer. Nor is it naïve about the sedimentation of wrongs in the past always distorting the present. But it never allows what is wrong to be the determining frame for any perspective and any discussion.

It is the hope of the authors in this volume that the explorations into plural spiritualities here will further the capacity of a Church “going forth” to acknowledge how God is at work beyond the Church as well as focus its critique of a secular and postmodern world in a way that will lead to constructive dialogue rather than dismissal or disparagement.

## CHAPTER I

# THE QUEST FOR INTERCONNECTEDNESS: COSMIC MUTUALITY

DAWN M. NOTHWEHR, OSF

### INTRODUCTION

*Cosmic Mutuality* is the overall theme of this chapter. My contention is that there is a radical relatedness that encompasses all that exists. Through ordinary encounters in daily living people (consciously or not) bump up against and encounter God/the holy, and it is through such engagements that seekers can find their way toward fulfillment of their deepest longings.<sup>1</sup> The connected (ontological) reality that current science presents to us is intimately related to the spiritual wholeness chronicled by religion (particularly the Abrahamic religions) and that seekers seek. There is a dynamic interconnectedness rather than a dualistic split between the “holy” and the “profane”; the “spiritual” and the “natural.”

Historically, scientists and religious authorities have often had antagonistic relationships. This impasse is frequently rooted in unyielding literalism, dogmatism, and power plays on both sides.<sup>2</sup> Today such approaches stand as a root cause for people choosing to be “spiritual, but not religious.”<sup>3</sup> Often ignored are efforts by scientists, theologians, ordinary believers, and practitioners who have found mutually complementary benefits from probing the greater depth of both science and religion, utilizing spirituality as a starting point toward common ground. Such findings present a challenge to authenticity, integrity, and humility for both parties. I see great potential for building a healthier relationship between these parties through open, respectful dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> “God/the holy” indicates the “holy” in contrast with the “sacred” as defined by Darrell J. Fasching, Dell deChant, and David M. Lantigua, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach to Global Ethics*, Second Edition (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> John Haught, *Deeper than Darwin: The Prospect for Religion in an Age of Evolution* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003), pp. 13-25,

<sup>3</sup> Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Nones’ on the Rise: One in Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation,” October 9, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx> [accessed February 17, 2013]. Also Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 51-70.

## SCIENTISTS AS SEEKERS?

Scientists are often viewed exclusively as contributing to secularization and the decline of religion. Scientists are seen as “carriers” or propagators of ethical and scientific ideologies that conform to their own social position.<sup>4</sup> Scholars who are public intellectuals or who work at top-ranked universities are often accused of chipping away at religious authority by demonstrating their ability to expose the wonders of the universe without appealing to the metaphysical, religious, or spiritual.<sup>5</sup> Remarkably, few surveys have inquired specifically of scientists concerning their understanding of spirituality as compared to religion, and how they viewed one or both of those in relation to science.<sup>6</sup> McLean,<sup>7</sup> Taylor,<sup>8</sup> and the 2012 Pew Survey have examined trends among the general population. Rice University professors of the sociology of religion Elaine Howard Eckland and Elizabeth Long set out to fill this gap.

Eckland and Long conjectured that most scientists are not merely prophets of atheism or agnosticism, but rather explorers at the vanguard of Charles Taylor’s “nova effect”—the idea that after non-belief there is a proliferation of various kinds of spirituality. More accurately, scientists purportedly remove the “blinders of faith”; and do not necessarily provide new sources of meaning.<sup>9</sup> Eckland and Long had a 75% response rate to their survey of 2,198 tenured and tenure-track faculty at 21 top flight U.S. universities (in the disciplines of biology, physics, chemistry, sociology, economics, psychology, and political science) about their basic religious

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<sup>4</sup> See Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963 [1922]), pp. 131-132.

<sup>5</sup> See Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006). Also, Christian Smith, “Secularizing American Higher Education,” in *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life*, ed. Christian Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 97-159.

<sup>6</sup> Elaine Howard Eckland and Elizabeth Long, “Scientists and Spirituality,” *Sociology of Religion*, 72:3 (2011), p. 273. Bibliography lists studies by Larson (1998) and Leuba (1916).

<sup>7</sup> George F. Mc Lean, *Project on Four Disjunctions of Secularity Context and First Disjunction* (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 509-510. Taylor calls “Faith in the strong sense ... a belief in a transcendent reality and ... the *connected* aspiration to a transformation which goes beyond ordinary human flourishing...” Also Charles Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity,” in *Dilemmas and Connections: Selected Essays*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 168.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

and spiritual beliefs.<sup>10</sup> Of those respondents, 501 were randomly selected (ensuring 50 from each of the disciplines) for an in-depth interview that allowed each to articulate religious or spiritual beliefs in their own words. 275 interviews were completed. Scientists were classified as “spiritual” if they: (1) voluntarily labeled themselves “spiritual”; (2) articulated a specific set of beliefs; (3) engaged in practices as a further instantiation of spirituality; (4) they had an experience they named as specifically spiritual. Thus, of the 275 interviewed, only 72 (26%) self-identified as “spiritual.”

Eckland and Long uncovered what these scientists called “identity-consistent spirituality.” Those respondents saw science itself as “meaning-making,” though this did not always include theism.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, among the 72 (as well as 20% of the self-identified “atheist” group) some respondents identified themselves as “spiritual atheists.” Those “perceived spirituality consistent with their identities insofar as it engages their everyday lives, and is instantiated in their practices as teachers, as citizens of the university, and as researchers.”<sup>12</sup>

The 275 scientists identified religion negatively, and spirituality more positively. Even 40% of the “spiritual” scientists had not attended religious services in the last year. Scientists used terms for religion such as: institutionalized dogma; religion is inherently against individual inquiry (or partisan); and religion is organized. They perceived spirituality as broader and that it allows “the type of individual inquiry compatible with science.”<sup>13</sup> Scientists saw congruence with spirituality—at its core science is about “meaning-making without faith.”<sup>14</sup> Just as scientists pursue knowledge as individuals, so too spirituality is understood as a lone journey. Scientists see religious dogmatism, prejudice, and outmoded ways of seeing the world as constraining science and put forth by unthinking collectives. In short, science is based on evidence, where religious commitment means buying into an “absence of empirical evidence.”<sup>15</sup> But science and spirituality are viewed as open-ended, lifelong engagements, and significantly, the aesthetics of science and the quest for meaning come from deep reflective processes that elicit awe and wonder.

As for those who identified themselves as “spiritual atheists,” the very act of choosing not to believe in God is thought to be a heroic act that frees them to pursue the truth through science. For some scientists,

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<sup>10</sup> Eckland and Long, “Scientists and Spirituality,” p. 258.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 261-262.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

the transcendent is just irrelevant to spirituality.<sup>16</sup> Without God, their focus stays on the science and the mystery of the universe. Others find a sense of awe or a feeling of transcendence in relationship to the natural world as their source for spirituality. Strikingly, because their knowledge of the natural world is more intimate, those scientists experience their spirituality enlivened beyond the mere experience of others who engage the natural world more cursorily.

About 1/3 of the 72 scientists also identified theirs as an “engaged spirituality” in which they link their spirituality with generating different approaches to research and teaching decisions, e.g. researching topics that benefit society or working with struggling students. Spirituality is an individual journey, but it is not individualistic.<sup>17</sup> It motivates and directs the scientists’ engagement with the world.

Perhaps the most noteworthy result of this study is the evidence of a possible opening for a dialogue between science and religion via spirituality. Particularly remarkable is the fact that for a significant number a scientists’ depth of understanding of the mysteries of the universe leads them to awe, and the “perception that there may be something beyond the reach of reason through science alone.”<sup>18</sup> This fact signals an important opportunity for religions to examine their foundational spiritual insights, and to find ways to escape those constraints that have alienated so many—including scientists—from them.

### ENGAGING SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY—A PATHWAY FOR DIALOGUE?

The “spiritual” scientists in Eckland and Long’s study represent a significant minority, but also a position that is not entirely new.<sup>19</sup> Walach and Reich trace the history of what is today’s commonsense understanding as “science.” They outline two strains of development: *science* that used rational methods of inquiry to explain the natural world, with its origin in classical Greece; and *scientism*, with roots in Sumer, Egypt, and China, that constituted a worldview using insights from natural science to inform people’s way of living and daily choices. Though ultimately the West was influenced by classical Greek *science*, the Dark Ages saw a withdrawal into and reinforcement of *scientism* with the

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>19</sup> Herald Walach and K. Helmut Reich, “Reconnecting Science and Spirituality: Toward Overcoming a Taboo,” *Zygon* 40:2 (June 2005), pp. 424-426.

Church's blessing. Through the efforts of the likes of Robert Grosseteste [c.1113] aided by influential Islamic scholars, science survived, though often embattled with the Church (e.g. the Condemnations of 1277). The maturation of science reached full bloom in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment when "to be enlightened meant to be scientifically minded.... [S]cience ... became not only a method of studying the laws of nature or a canon of methodological agreements but a general movement of rationality against dogmatism and teachings.... [T]his breaking free from religious dogmatism has created a new dogmatism, namely *scientism*, a worldview or philosophical stance toward the world in general."<sup>20</sup> Science taken to extremes resulted in a dogmatic worldview that lacked the intellectual balance that today we can see to be required by pursuing truth.

Walach and Reich underscore that until about 1260 a methodological unity existed in Western scholarship regarding nature and different kinds of experience.<sup>21</sup> But in the Middle Ages there was a critical split, and experience of the inner world became the realm of mysticism and contemplation, and that of the outer world through the senses became the exclusive purview of *science*.

Walach and Reich use dual aspect theory to explain the potential for dialogue between science and spirituality. Matter and consciousness are two complementary aspects of reality that have a common origin or source.<sup>22</sup> Science (matter) is one route and spirituality (consciousness) is another pathway to reflect on transcendent being. The inner experience of spirituality can be understood as "a holistic type of understanding, implicating at the same time cognitive functioning, emotional-affective functioning, and motivation."<sup>23</sup> The experience of transcendent being moves beyond the physical and biological; it stands at the heart of spirituality and also at the core of many institutionalized religions. It is this reality that holds promise for both scientism and religion breaking free of oppressive dogmatism that does not serve the search for meaning and truth that present day seekers, "nones," and "spiritual atheists" seek.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 426.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* See: Harald Atmanspacher "Mind and Matter as Asymptotically Disjoint, Inequivalent Representations with Broken Time-reversal Symmetry," *Biosystems* 68 (2003), pp. 19-30; Herbert Feigl, "Russell and Schlick. A Remarkable Agreement on a Monistic Solution of the Mind-Body Problem," *Erkenntnis* 9 (1975), pp. 11-34; William James, *The Works of William James. The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, [1902] 1985); Irving Kirsch and Michael E. Hyland, "How Thoughts Affect the Body: A Meta-theoretical Framework," *The Journal of Mind and Behavior* 8 (1987), pp. 417-34.

<sup>23</sup> Walach and Reich, "Reconnecting Science and Spirituality," p. 428.

Throughout history, religion was one vehicle for conceptualizing matter and consciousness and communicating that to the wider public. Walach and Reich locate the real problematic thus: “Tensions between science and religion do not pertain to science as an appropriate method of inquiry and spirituality as the core of inner experience in a given religion, but rather to a totalizing, border crossing, or methodological worldview (and thus a modern quasi-religion) and to religion as an often crystallized, ossified, sclerotic expression of religious experience.”<sup>24</sup>

It is simply not the case—contrary to some common sense notions of science, spirituality, and religion—that only science has methods of validating its truth claims extrapolated from experience. Walach and Reich rightly assert that spirituality can utilize equally rigorous verification processes. Using a thought experiment they illustrate the possibilities for verification of a new experience of transcendence gained through an innovative spiritual—which we will call “Practice A.” Verification and validation methods include accounting for: detailed description of “Practice A” and its purported effects; results of teaching “Practice A” to others; learning of other’s experiences of “Practice A” and its effects on them; and ultimately the facts about “Practice A” that have been observed and demonstrated with high validity after long-term observations and in repeated cases. Such scrutiny, along with further study and questioning, could produce new knowledge about consciousness. It may be possible that the same knowledge may become known but from two different and distinct starting points—external sensory evidence (science) and internal consciousness (spirituality).<sup>25</sup>

Further, from the perspective of science the unique character of that moment of insight, when a scientist intuits a new direction for research, has long been known. Indeed, “a seminal outline of a new theory which has to be worked out and tested is akin to a spiritual experience.”<sup>26</sup> Today nonalgorithmic abductive reasoning is defined as a holistic and synthetic process that is complementary to the analytic way of usual scientific reasoning. Such an intuitive awareness “as seminal to science might be from the same source as the light of spiritual enlightenment, a fact pointed out already by Grosseteste at the cradle of scientific reasoning during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries.”<sup>27</sup> Thus science and spirituality have not only a

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 429.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 433-435. Also K. Helmut Reich, “Spiritual Development: Han F. de Wit’s and Stanislav Grof’s Differing Approaches,” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 36 (September 2001), pp. 563-574.

<sup>26</sup> Walach and Reich, “Reconnecting Science and Spirituality,” p. 437. Plato remarks about this phenomenon in his *Sixth Letter*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 437. See Robert Crombie, *Grosseteste and the Origins of Experimental Science 1100-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953). Also, Richard

common goal of seeking the truth and understanding reality, “they are ignited and nourished by the same initial process: an experiential, intuitive, holistic grasp of reality, realized by consciousness turning back on itself and touching reality experientially.”<sup>28</sup>

### **COSMIC MUTUALITY DEFINED**

Mutuality is a multivalent notion found particularly in recent North American feminist literature. Margaret Craddock Huff defined mutuality as: “... a dynamic situation within which one is simultaneously open to the influence of the other or others, influencing them and aware of this. Both receptivity and active initiative are required, as are recognition and appreciation of the others’ wholeness and particular existence.”<sup>29</sup> Mutuality is necessary for genuine dialogue. Elsewhere I have retrieved four distinct forms of mutuality.<sup>30</sup>

Cosmic mutuality is one form of “mutuality” that characterizes relationship. Cosmic mutuality is *the sharing of "power-with" by and among the Creator, human beings, all earth elements, and the entire cosmos in a way that recognizes their interdependence and reverences all.*<sup>31</sup> Evidence for cosmic mutuality is provided by the sciences, especially astrophysics, ecology, and quantum physics, which demonstrate the foundational kinship of everything in the entire cosmos. From a Christian perspective, this radical relatedness can be understood as a “relational ontology” set in place in the beginning by the Holy Spirit’s inspiring and creating activity.<sup>32</sup>

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William Southern, *Robert Grosseteste The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

<sup>28</sup> Walach and Reich, “Reconnecting Science and Spirituality,” pp. 437-438.

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Craddock Huff, “The Interdependent Self: An Integrated Concept from Feminist Theology and Feminist Psychology,” *Philosophy and Theology* 2 (1987), p. 63.

<sup>30</sup> See my *Mutuality: A Formal Norm for Christian Social Ethics*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), pp. 10-11 and 96-97, especially 233: (1) recognition of interdependence among, and a reverence for, all things and all beings in the cosmos [cosmic]; (2) relationship to the divine and participation in the on-going co-creation and redemption of the world [generative]; (3) undergirding egalitarian relationships between women and men [gender] and (4) radical solidarity, reciprocity and identification with the least ones of the world [social].

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>32</sup> Denis Edwards, “For Your Immortal Spirit Is in All Things: The Role of the Spirit in Creation,” in *Earth Revealing, Earth Healing: Ecology and Christian Theology*, ed. Denis Edwards (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), p. 61. Also Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), pp. 2-3. See Beverly Wildung

Seeking truth and meaning in ways similar to the sciences, traditional Christian ontology asked: What is the origin and state of the universe? The Church concluded—that the world has a beginning and that reflection on divine revelation shows God as the Creator. God is distinct from the universe and the universe is distinct from God. Yet the deep relatedness between God and creation, known as panentheism, has been recognized for centuries as orthodox. The fact that God *is* Creator, Vivifier, Redeemer, only in relation to creation shows, in a certain analogous sense, need on God's part for relationship to the cosmos.<sup>33</sup> Significantly, Christians claim that the proper role of the Holy Spirit in the world is that of the giver of life and the creator of communion.<sup>34</sup> Acknowledging the kinship of all creation through the Spirit's life-giving and communion-building activity requires us, for example, to count non-humans as our neighbors.<sup>35</sup>

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's "solution to the problem of secularity is to rid ourselves of the old God of starry heavens and embrace the God of evolution."<sup>36</sup> In his understanding the *deep interrelatedness* (cosmic mutuality) of the entire cosmos was realized through the evolutionary processes, which were themselves evidences of the dynamism of God's creativity. For Teilhard de Chardin evolutionary processes joined matter and spirit; offered a realistic but meaningful perspective on suffering; and were profound and essential opportunities for the participation of humans in the evolution of Christ in the world and the world in Christ.<sup>37</sup> As Delio rightly suggests, Teilhard de Chardin called for a "deep secularity," a spirituality that acknowledges human origins in God, that is, a lived spirituality that remains attentive to interiority, and that grows in the ability to express the multitude of ways the divine permeates the cosmos (*divine milieu*). But what is required of religion and science in order to dialogue about "ways of God/the holy," today?

## KNOWING GOD/THE HOLY AND THE NECESSITY OF COGNITIVE MODESTY

People frequently overstate their mental grasp and midjudge the

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Harrison, "Politics of Energy Policy," in *Energy Ethics*, ed. Dieter Hessel, (New York: Friendship Press, 1979), pp. 56-59.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), p. 232.

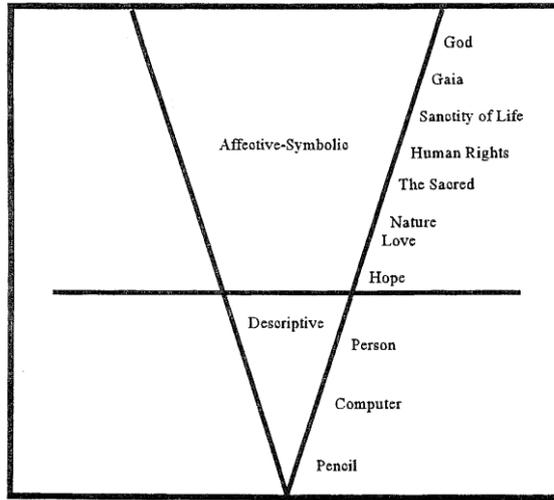
<sup>34</sup> Edwards, "Your Immortal Spirit Is in All Things," pp. 57-62.

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Woman, Earth, Creator Spirit*, 1993 Madelava Lecture (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), pp. 66-67.

<sup>36</sup> Ilia Delio, *The Emergent Christ; Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), p. 107.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

ways we come to know and comprehend reality. Clearly the complexities of knowing from the simplicity of description to the subtlety of the symbolic are great. Daniel C. Maguire offers a graphic useful for clarifying various ways of knowing.<sup>38</sup>



**Figure 1** The Dimensions of Knowledge (©1998 State University of New York)

At the base stands “descriptive” knowing; the place of science where things are identified and named, e.g. “a pencil.” To comprehend a “pencil,” its primary characteristics and functions must be known. However, beyond that is to move down to the place of mystery—where we probe the subatomic structure of the materials of the “pencil”—but even beyond that, to the place where we are only left with yet one more question (quantum physics).

We can name and describe a person’s physical characteristics or character. But to articulate precisely *why* the “person” has any value or worth quickly moves us beyond merely rational cognition. Terms such as “inviolable dignity,” “the sanctity of life,” *imago Dei*,” or human rights language indicate “affective-symbolic” knowledge, that depends on data that cannot be proven empirically, but which are non-the-less real. That is

<sup>38</sup> Daniel C. Maguire, “More People Less Earth: The Shadow of Man-Kind,” Figure 1, The Dimensions of Knowledge, in *Ethics for a Small Planet: New Horizons on Population, Consumption, and Ecology* by Daniel C. Maguire and Larry L. Rasmussen (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 34. Reprinted by permission, ©1998 State University of New York. All rights reserved.

the stuff for meaning making—by poets, the musicians, artists, and believers in God/the holy. Non-discursive knowing holds power beyond cognition. There we are dealing with mystery, which, as Gabriel Marcel asserts, is “something in which I myself am involved.”<sup>39</sup> What we know at this juncture is truly known and knowable, but it is beyond our control to fully grasp it. Indeed, as we come to know something of it, new horizons and new dimensions of the mystery open before us and compel us to engage them.

With this in mind, it is understandable that Thomas Aquinas acknowledged the highest form of knowledge of God is “as the unknown.”<sup>40</sup> Is this unspeakable “awe” all that distinct from the experience of the “spiritual” scientist? Or, as Chilean theologian Ronaldo Muñoz writes: “We cannot make God into an ‘object’ in the scientific sense of the word, something we can place in front of ourselves, to explain its contours and understand it intellectually.”<sup>41</sup> We err if we consider what is abstract to be concrete, or vice versa. To make God/the holy merely concrete or to consider a human person merely a disembodied nature is to err equally.

In some ways, affiliated believers and theologians are caught in a paradox. On the one hand, if we speak of God/the holy using ordinary terms (univocal) we end in anthropomorphism. Yet, if we use no familiar terms then we convey a kind of agnosticism—God/the holy is outside the realm of knowing and understanding. Most commonly believers and theologians revert to analogies to speak about God/the holy. What is dangerous is to fixate on some analogous names and thus exclude others that are more challenging, revealing, and compelling—of profound self-knowledge, or the cosmos, and God/the holy found in spiritual experiences. Clearly, speech about God/the holy must maintain the dynamic critical reality that lives between ratiocination and contemplation; between tangible embodiment and discernible ecstasy; between oppressive dogmatic absolutes and permissive relativistic whimsy.

Arguably all of the world’s religions acknowledge some form of this dynamic critical reality as they attempt to express what is known about or of God/the holy. This dynamic reality is found at the point that

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<sup>39</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), p. 117 cited in Stephen B. Bevans, *Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio Disputata de Spiritualibus Creaturis*, 11, ad. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ronaldo Muñoz, *The God of Christians* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), p. 4.

constitutes the mystical moral core of all true religion.<sup>42</sup> This point signals awe, reverence, appreciation, wonder, and a sense of giftedness—a response that may well be common to affiliated believers and “spiritual atheist” scientists alike. That primal awe gives birth to foundational moral and religious experiences and these are ultimately one. “The moral response pronounces the gift good; the religious response proclaims it holy and sacred.”<sup>43</sup>

Maguire holds that this point is at the origin of nine world religions’ expression of the holy animation of civilization.<sup>44</sup> Each expression radiates from this point. The further out from the common starting point on the radii, the more varied in the expression of its special character in rituals, texts, dogmas, etc.

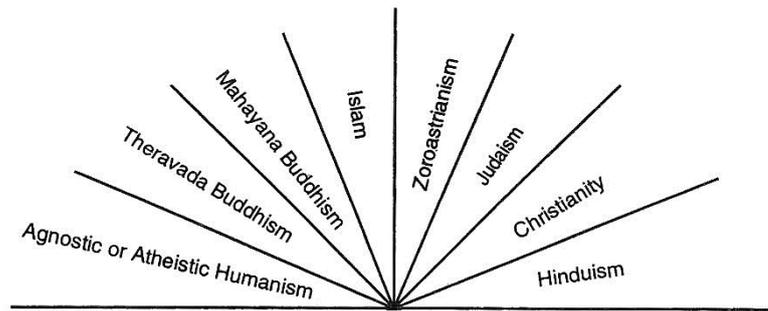


Figure 2 Model of Religions (©1993 Augsburg Fortress)

Notably, Maguire includes agnostic and atheistic humanism in the array.<sup>45</sup> For humanitarian agnostics the point is at the root of the awe that defines what they do and do not consider humane. Is this not the place of the “spiritual” scientists’ “engaged spirituality?” Awe is at the heart of wisdom, and wisdom taken to its depths grasps, and then moves beyond the limits of cognitive knowledge with its static absolutes, and dogmatic exclusions.

When understood in these terms (above) it seems not only plausible but necessary that cognitive modesty be exerted by *all* seekers; indeed many are repelled by its absence. Equally imperative is to acknowledge that any cognitively framed articulation of one’s experience (doctrine,

<sup>42</sup> Daniel C. Maguire, *The Moral Core of Judaism and Christianity: Reclaiming the Revolution* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 39-42.

<sup>43</sup> Maguire, “More People Less Earth,” p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> Maguire, *The Moral Core of Judaism and Christianity*, p. 41. Reprinted by permission, ©1993 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-47.

dogma, speculative position) *only points beyond itself to the commonly radical point.*

Presently, sacred texts, rituals, or dogmas of many religions (including Catholicism) no longer ring true for many seekers. They do not credibly and compellingly communicate a life-changing set of values, vision, and vitality capable of freeing the world. Yet seekers have primal desires for life and fundamental questions about the meaning of being. As seen in the scientists' "identity consistent spirituality," there is a fundamental organization of one's life or a center that brings coherence to the totality of daily living. There are both transcendent and immediate dimensions to one's spirituality. It is transcendent in that it engages ultimate questions and immediate in that it reflects and describes one's life story; each dimension forms the other. Roger Haight asserts: "One way to reach genuine seekers of spiritual meaning is to enter their perspective and respond to their questions with answers not constrained by formal religion."<sup>46</sup> Religions must use language and concepts understandable among people who are reflectively conscious of themselves. For many, the life story of Jesus holds some potential for a conversation with the life story of another human person in quite immediate ways, yet are there not other entrées to God/the holy—such as the scientist's awe and wonder?<sup>47</sup> Is it not possible to draw compelling spiritual meaning through reframing the narratives of religious doctrines, particularly creation, redemption, and incarnation, using models and concepts drawn from post-Newtonian sciences?

**AWE, WONDER, DIALOGUE: "SOMETHING BEYOND THE REACH OF REASON THROUGH SCIENCE ALONE."<sup>48</sup>**

### *Religion and Science*

From Copernicus forward heliocentrism, evolution, Big Bang cosmology, quantum mechanics, and biotechnology each faced opposition from the Church.<sup>49</sup> Though the Church judged evolutionary theory orthodox in 1996 and the true contingency of the created order was

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<sup>46</sup> Roger Haight, *Christian Spirituality for Seekers: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012), p. xix.

<sup>47</sup> See David Tracy, *Analogical Imagination—"Classic" & "Religious Classic."*

<sup>48</sup> Eckland and Long, "Scientists and Spirituality," p. 271.

<sup>49</sup> Don O'Leary, *Roman Catholicism and Modern Science: A History* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

validated in 2004, this is not known even among many scientists and theologians.<sup>50</sup>

Darwin's theory of evolution and quantum theory, perhaps more than any recent scientific developments changed human knowledge of cosmic reality, and that has been destabilizing, decentering, and threatening for many.<sup>51</sup> Yet from Augustine, Thomas, and Bonaventure on, Catholicism (and other religions) acknowledged a solid relationship between cosmology and theology. Indeed, the cosmos was understood to be the second book of revelation along with holy writ. But further, both evolutionary biology and quantum theory have demonstrated the radical connectedness of everything and everyone in the cosmos. The limits of this chapter allow only a brief mention of recent key scientific discoveries with reference to the "New Cosmic Story." We will highlight only benefits derived from recent dialogue between science and religion.

## MUTUAL BENEFITS FROM SCIENCE/RELIGION DIALOGUE

### *Three Approaches to Science and Religion*

John Haught helpfully outlines three approaches to the conflicts between science and religion, which are useful for dialogue.<sup>52</sup> The *Conflict* position holds that science and faith are opposed and irreconcilable, and no dialogue should be attempted. The *Contrast* position maintains that science and faith are distinct. Each responds to radically different questions. There is no real competition between them, and thus détente, not dialogue prevails. The *Convergence* position is that

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<sup>50</sup> *Message to the Participants in the Plenary of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*, October 22, 1996, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/messages/pont\\_messages/1996/index\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/pont_messages/1996/index_en.htm) [accessed February 25, 2013]; <http://www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/jp961022.htm> [english translation accessed February 25, 2013]. International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040723\\_communion-stewardship\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html) [accessed March 9, 2013].

<sup>51</sup> Bernard Lonergan, "The Transition from a Classicist world-view to 'Historical Mindedness,'" in Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, eds. William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 1-9.

<sup>52</sup> Also see Haught's *Making Sense of Evolution Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life*, (Westminster John Knox Press, 2010); *God and the New Atheism: A Critical Response to Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens*, (Westminster John Knox Press, 2008); *Is Nature Enough? Meaning and Truth in an Age of Science*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

science and faith are distinct because they ask different questions, but dialogue respecting the integrity of each discipline is possible and fruitful toward clarifying their relationship. Convergence tries to move to a richer and more nuanced perspective, one that allows ample room for ongoing conversation between science and faith. It focuses especially on the theological implications of the scientific discoveries found in the “New Cosmic Story.”<sup>53</sup>

There is a strong human need for unifying knowledge, in as much as all knowledge is somehow related. Through dialogue science can broaden the horizon of religious faith and faith can deepen understanding of the meaning of scientific discoveries.<sup>54</sup> The new science that continues to emerge from the “New Cosmic Story” challenges theology to reconsider the meaning of those discoveries, indeed the meaning of an emerging universe itself. The themes of promise and hope proclaimed by Abrahamic religions are consistent with the scientific understanding of an emerging universe. In fact, “the entire long quest by science for increasing coherence and intelligibility is completely consistent with the theme of hope that underlies Abrahamic theology.”<sup>55</sup>

While faith and scripture have no special insights into the physical characteristics of the universe, faith and theology can justify the scientific position that the universe is *intelligible*.<sup>56</sup> The common cause among science, faith and theology is truth seeking. Haught asserts that faith can provide the “deepest and most reasonable justification for the trust that a scientific mind needs if it is to persist in the often difficult struggle for understanding and truth.”<sup>57</sup> In turn, scientific discoveries can broaden and deepen human perceptions of God.

“New Cosmic Story”—Focal Framework for Dialogue

Haught uses an analogy to summarize the “New Cosmic Story” of the emergence of the physical universe 13.7 billion years ago:

Imagine the cosmic story as being told in thirty big books. Each book is 450 pages long, and each page stands for one million years in the story. The cosmos begins with the Big

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<sup>53</sup> John Haught, *Science and Faith: A New Introduction* (New York: Paulist, 2012), p. 9. Faith here means belief in the personal responsive God of the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam. Science explores physical causes in the natural world, asks how things come to be, and how they work.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. See Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* (New York: Modern Library, 1994), p. 46.

Bang on page 1 of volume 1. Then the next twenty-one volumes tell only about lifeless and mindless physical events. Clearly life was not in a hurry to come into the universe. The solar system appears around the beginning of volume 21, between 4 and 5 billion years ago. In volume 22, 3.8 billion years ago, the first sparks of life begin to glow on Earth. Still, life remains relatively simple, mostly single celled, until around the end of volume 29. At this point the famous Cambrian Explosion takes place, between 500 and 600 million years ago. During the Cambrian period, over a span of several million years, life “suddenly” begins to become much more complex than before. Dinosaurs appear a little after the middle of volume 30, and they go extinct on page 385. Not until the last sixty-five pages of volume 30 do mammals begin to flourish on a large scale, evolving into many different species at a relatively accelerated pace. The first monkeys appear around 35 million years ago. Hominids start showing up during the last four or five pages of volume 30, but anatomically modern humans don’t appear until roughly the bottom fifth of the very last page of the last volume. This is when reflective thought, ethical aspiration and religious restlessness finally arrive, at least in our terrestrial precincts.<sup>58</sup>

Haught asserts that the conversation between religion and science needs to be held in light of this story. The narrative language and the structure of drama are useful for communicating complex notions of both religion and science particularly because it avoids the alienating dogmatic nomenclature of laws and absolutes. Every drama has three elements: contingency, continuity, and development over a span of time. Using a narrative model people can find meaning in the drama of nature. The drama evolutionary science opens up can be engaged at many levels with theological and spiritual understanding and meaning toward a greater truth.<sup>59</sup> For believers, evolution is a theory that provides an “intellectual and spiritual framework for expressing faith’s understanding of life, human existence, and God.”<sup>60</sup>

The element of chance is inherent in every drama and is consistent with an understanding of a personal God who, in freedom and love, allows spontaneous and undetermined unfolding of the universe—including

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<sup>58</sup> Haught, *Science and Faith*, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Haught, *Deeper Than Darwin*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

human life.<sup>61</sup> Evolution is another way to understand God's invitation to humanity to participate in the ongoing process of creation. Through human choices and their very being, people share in God's work of creation. Human understanding and faith in God is part of the evolutionary drama; and "adventure of letting go of maladaptive images of God" as an enforcer, judge, or design engineer.<sup>62</sup> Evolution is consistent with God "who makes all things new" (Is. 43:19).

With evolutionary theory, science moved from a Newtonian conception of the universe as a *machine*, to a notion of an unfolding *drama* of the universe. Thus it is more adequate to think of the "laws" of the universe as "nature's grammar." Grammar allows for structure, but yet for a wide variety of expression and content.<sup>63</sup> Even events that religions identified as "miracles," when read through a narrative perspective of a drama of the unfolding universe, do not violate the "laws" of the universe. Rather, they are simply "bringing something new into the sphere of being."<sup>64</sup> Just as a sentence is dependent upon more than grammar, so too, the meaning of an unusual event or "miracle" must be viewed as part of an unfolding narrative.

### **COSMIC MUTUALITY: A RADICALLY RELATED COSMOS AND A RADICALLY RELATIONAL GOD**

The Big Bang and evolution each demonstrate the externally chaotic energy that emerges from a highly sophisticated internal order in creation. Yet, amid seemingly utter chaos, a self-ordering emergence is ongoing. Some, following Darwin's understanding, have suggested that altruistic love is the "cosmological and ontological principle."<sup>65</sup> Far from utilitarianism, Darwin understood evolved altruism to be associated with upholding human dignity.<sup>66</sup> He saw altruism evolving to become "ruled by reason, self-interest, and in later times by deep religious feelings and confirmed by instruction and habit" and eventually shaped by moral

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<sup>61</sup> See L. Charles Birch, *Nature and God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), p. 103.

<sup>62</sup> Haught, *Science and Faith*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>65</sup> Phil Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Cultures, and Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 208-209.

<sup>66</sup> Contrast with Herbert Spencer, *The Data of Ethics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), Chapter 3, [http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=331&chapter=45754&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=331&chapter=45754&layout=html&Itemid=27) [accessed March 4, 2013].

conscience.<sup>67</sup> This opened the possibility of thinking about altruism as originating in the unbounded love of God/the holy.<sup>68</sup> Considering the internal manifestations science detects and Christian theological tenets, concerning the Trinity, for example, a more powerful and adequate story can be told.

The triune Christian God is one of mutual relation; of *perichoresis*; this is the God of Richard of St. Victor who understood the love relationship that breaks out in dynamic, inclusive, delight (*condilectus*), and then spirals outward inspiring and animating the cosmos.<sup>69</sup> Or, as Elizabeth A. Johnson put it: “the love of friendship is the very essence of God.”<sup>70</sup> The work of Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas grounds the character of the triune God as communion and communion builder in all of creation in the rich traditions of Basil the Great (c.330-79), Gregory of Nazianzus (330-89), and Gregory of Nyssa (330-95). These Cappadocians show that “the being of God is a relational being.”<sup>71</sup> The truths of today’s quantum physics seem to leap out from behind these early writers who hold that communion is a primordial ontological concept, indeed nothing is conceivable as existing by itself.<sup>72</sup> Catherine LaCugna’s magisterial work, *God for Us*, names God as personal: “God-To-Be is To-Be in relationship, and God’s being in relationship-to-us is what God is.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, “Chapter 3: Comparison of the Powers of Man and Lower Animals,” 70-106, [http://darwin-online.org.uk/converted/pdf/1871\\_Descent\\_F937.1.pdf](http://darwin-online.org.uk/converted/pdf/1871_Descent_F937.1.pdf), [accessed March 4, 2013].

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Nagel, *Mind and the Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Also Gary Gutting, Kenneth B. Miller, and Stephen Barr, “Nagel’s Untimely Idea: Is There More to Nature than Matter?” *Commonweal*, 140:9 (May 17, 2013), p. 14-19.

<sup>69</sup> See Grover A. Zimm, *Richard of St. Victor: The Twelve Patriarchs, the Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

<sup>70</sup> Johnson, *She Who Is*, pp. 217-18; 145, 154, 228. See Johnson, *Woman, Earth, Creator Spirit*, pp. 27, 59-60, 66-67.

<sup>71</sup> See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1985), p. 17. Also John Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution,” in Christoph Schwöbel, ed., *Trinitarian Theology Today* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), pp. 44-60.

<sup>72</sup> Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 55. Quantum mechanics, which formulates the laws of the subatomic domain, “introduces an unavoidable element of unpredictability and randomness into science.” The properties of a single elementary particle or the identity of a point in space reflects and requires the whole rest of the universe for its existence.

<sup>73</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), p. 250.

All of this makes a great deal of difference in how Christians know God and receive divine revelation (biblical, cosmic, or the formal ecclesial magisterium) in today's world. I contend that there is much in the way that over the centuries Christians have come to understand the fundamental nature of reality (ontology), indeed the existence of all there is, that is compatible with current science that shows us a world that is cooperative, coadaptive, symbiotic, and ecological (evolutionary biology). Such a world is also relative, dynamic, emergent, whole, and energetic (quantum physics).

In any genuine, integral, two-sided but differentiated mutual relationship, those involved are in various ways and on different occasions self-limiting in order for the relationship to thrive. It is also true (human relations) that such limits bar others from knowing the entire and innermost character of the other(s). Thus we cannot know God's total intent for creation and the new creation or the experience of the non-human. Natural selection (biological evolution) and chance (quantum physics) which are intrinsic properties of the cosmos can be subsumed into new possibilities for life if—as Boff and others suggest—we can accept death as a part of life.<sup>74</sup> God creates through the losses and gains of evolutionary history, respecting the process, suffering with creation, in an ongoing, active, adventurous presence.

Theologian and biochemist Arthur Peacocke held that creation is an open system with some propensities that are “built in”; thus the role of chance is “simply required if all potentialities of the universe, especially for life are to be elicited effectively.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly, William Stoeger states: “God acts immanently in nature—in every nook and cranny of nature, at the core of every being and the heart of relationships—to constitute and maintain them just as they are and just as they evolve.”<sup>76</sup>

God is the grand artist who, like the jazz virtuoso at the keyboard, the poet, the painter, hostess, or the gardener—creatively uses what is there and creates within the limits of what the materials allow.<sup>77</sup> A Creator God who is “Persons-In-Mutual-Communion, is immanent in every

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<sup>74</sup> Leonardo Boff, *St. Francis: A Model for Human Liberation*, trans. John W. Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company 1982), pp. 131-156.

<sup>75</sup> Arthur Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine and Human*, Enlarged Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 119-120.

<sup>76</sup> William R. Stoeger, “Describing God's Action in the World in Light of Scientific Knowledge of Reality” in *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, eds., Robert John Russell, Nancy Murphy, Arthur R. Peacocke (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory, 1995), pp. 256-257.

<sup>77</sup> Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*, pp. 174-175.

creature, with a wonderfully interior relation to each of them, constantly luring each to be and become.”<sup>78</sup>

### **FROM DIALOGUE TO CATHOLICITY: A SPIRITUALITY FOR ALL SEEKERS?**

There is a revered philosophical principle that declares: *Quidquid recipitur secundum modum recipientis recipitur* (Whatever is received is received in terms of, or after the manner of, the recipient). Influences on human character and perceptions include culture, symbols, and history.

Ironically, science/religion conflicts have left many people stuck in the small restrictive world of Ptolemy or Newton and the arrogant absolutism such models allow. The profound tentativeness of the quantum and evolutionary worlds—the mystery of the particle/wave,<sup>79</sup> the whole/part<sup>80</sup> has yet to break through to stir a renewed reception and a fresh humility and openness. The deep wisdom of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* cries out for one to look beyond concrete descriptions to discursive experience, sign, and symbol.<sup>81</sup>

Small orthodox worlds need to be open to the reality of the whole universe and our intimate connection to it—by our very existence. Decades ago Buber taught that “I” and “Thou” in relationship formed a more whole (holy) “We.” Today we also know that every “We” is also a “part” of the cosmic “whole.” If religions want to hear what seekers—the “spiritual scientists,” “unaffiliated,” “spiritual atheists”—are seeking, we must observe carefully what they are doing—many are “worshipping” and “serving” God/the holy and all neighbors in the cosmos in ways often more characteristically than “Christians” or those who are formally “affiliated.”

Nearly two decades ago, Robert Schreiter suggested: “This diffuse religiosity is usually dismissed as being beneath the dignity of

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<sup>78</sup> Denis Edwards, “Evolution and the God of Mutual Friendship,” *Pacifica* 10 (June 1997), p. 200.

<sup>79</sup> Delio, *The Emergent Christ*, at 25: “... Neils Bohr called this ‘wave/particle aspect of reality complementary, which means neither description (wave or particle) is complete in itself, but there are circumstances when it is more appropriate to use the particle concept and circumstances when it is better to use the wave concept.’” See “Single Electron Double Slit Wave Experiment,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ-0PBRuthc> [accessed March 4, 2013.] University of Oregon, [http://abyss.uoregon.edu/~js/21st\\_century\\_science/lectures/lec13.html](http://abyss.uoregon.edu/~js/21st_century_science/lectures/lec13.html) [accessed March 4, 2013].

<sup>80</sup> David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1-2.

<sup>81</sup> John J. O’Malley, “Quantum Spirituality,” *America*, 202/15 Whole No. 4893, (May 10, 2010), pp. 21-23.

consideration by religious leaders and elites. But careful study of practices, rather than an elusive focus on ideas will yield up patterns of religion. They are not likely to replace historical religions, but may come to be accommodated along any of the pathways [resistance, hybridity, and hierarchy] discussed in the previous section on the formation of religious identities.”<sup>82</sup> Schreiter points out how in the course of Church history, at moments of conflict, change and transition reflection on the marks of the Church intensifies.

Amid ongoing global social, political, economic, and ecological crises, “spiritual” scientists (and other “unaffiliated” persons) are offering a new opening to the Church. This is an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the mark of *catholicity* the Church bears. Following Ong’s definition, *kath’holon* = throughout the whole, I propose that given our discussion in this chapter, the standpoint of the “spiritual” scientists and “unaffiliated” seekers needs attention. John Haughey reflects: “The term catholicity means openness and in contrast to what is incomplete and partial, sectarian, factional, tribal and selective ... The word connotes movement towards universality and wholeness ... the dynamism of catholicity is toward a fullness it never possesses, it awaits a wholeness that beckons rather than materializes.... Catholicity is a heuristic that is never completed but remains an orientation, a drive and undertow that anticipates a transcendent entirety.”<sup>83</sup>

This dynamic quality of catholicity, I suggest, provides an important interpretive lens through which to engage the wisdom nascent in the quest of seekers—“spiritual” scientists, “affiliated” and “nones.” Not only does *catholicity* signify “the whole,” it points outward from itself to time and space that is not static but open for engagement. This notion suggests not only surface engagement but one that is thorough (“throughout”). Catholicity can be associated with the Spirit of God that was, is, and that promises to be present in the entire cosmos: “Your immortal Spirit is in all things” (Wis 12:1), giving life and creating communion. The work of this omnipresent Spirit is “the ongoing creation of all things [that] can be understood in terms of the power of becoming and the gift of divine communion with each creature.”<sup>84</sup> If this is true, can we not think of this Spirit present in the evolution of the great diversity of life that develops together with laws within nature to select those organisms that best adapt to the environment and pass genetic

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<sup>82</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), p. 88. The pathways are given at page 64.

<sup>83</sup> John C. Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going: The Horizons of the Knowing Subject* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), p. 45.

<sup>84</sup> Edwards, “Your Immortal Spirit is in All Things, pp. 45-47.

characteristics to future generations? Can we not acknowledge the Spirit active in the novelty of nature through the recombination of genes or the shift of “the whole” to a “part” or “the part” to a “whole?” Can evolutionary “death”—where some organisms do not thrive due to random and natural attractions—not also be “in the Spirit?”

Catholics claim that God/the holy is present everywhere, at all times and places (Matt 18:20). Can we not acknowledge that all encounters also involve the presence of God/the holy—e.g. the Cosmic Christ of Paul, Scotus, and Teilhard de Chardin? Is the awe of the scientist not a signal of and an entrée to the deeply Incarnate One (“deep incarnation”)?<sup>85</sup> Is this not Teilhard de Chardin’s “deep secularization”? Is God/the holy not present when in awe and wonder Annie Dillard writes:

This Ellery cost me twenty-five cents. He is deep red-orange, darker than most goldfish. He steers short distances mainly with his slender long lateral fins; they seem to provide impetus for going backward, upward, up or down. It took me a few days to discover his ventral fins, they are completely transparent and all but invisible—dream fins. He also has a short anal fin, and a tail that is deeply notched and perfectly....<sup>86</sup>

Certainly, everything is connected. All stands in mutual relationship with everything else, engaged in the dynamic reality that is [W]hol[e]y. As *Nostra Aetate* § 2 puts it: “Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing “ways,” comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.” And finally, as Pope Francis affirmed:

**242.** Dialogue between science and faith also belongs to the work of evangelization at the service of peace.... the Church proposes [a] path, which calls for a synthesis between the

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<sup>85</sup> See Duncan Reid, “Enfleshing the Human,” in *Earth Revealing—Earth Healing*, pp. 69-83. Also Neil Darragh, *At Home in the Earth* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2000), 124. Also Niels Henrik Gregersen, “The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40 (2001), p. 205.

<sup>86</sup> Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek: A Mystical Excursion into the Natural World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 124.

responsible use of methods proper to the empirical sciences and other areas of knowledge such as philosophy, theology, as well as faith itself, which elevates us to the mystery transcending nature and human intelligence. Faith is not fearful of reason; on the contrary, it seeks and trusts reason, since “the light of reason and the light of faith both come from God” and cannot contradict each other. Evangelization is attentive to scientific advances and wishes to shed on them the light of faith and the natural law so that they will remain respectful of the centrality and supreme value of the human person at every stage of life. All of society can be enriched thanks to this dialogue, which opens up new horizons for thought and expands the possibilities of reason.

**243.** The Church has no wish to hold back the marvelous progress of science. On the contrary, she rejoices and even delights in acknowledging the enormous potential that God has given to the human mind. Whenever the sciences—rigorously focused on their specific field of inquiry—arrive at a conclusion which reason cannot refute, faith does not contradict it. Neither can believers claim that a scientific opinion which is attractive but not sufficiently verified has the same weight as a dogma of faith. At times some scientists have exceeded the limits of their scientific competence by making certain statements or claims. But here the problem is not with reason itself, but with the promotion of a particular ideology which blocks the path to authentic, serene and productive dialogue.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation—*Evangelii Gaudium*, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/apost\\_exhortations/documents/pa-a-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium\\_en.html#](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/pa-a-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html#) [accessed November 27, 2013].

**CHAPTER II**

**CAN DARK GREEN SPIRITUALITY AND  
CATHOLICISM BE ALLIES?**

*MARY FROHLICH, RSCJ*

**INTRODUCTION**

Humanity is currently entering a period of deep crisis that will determine not only its own future but the character of the next era of life on Earth. Awareness of the effects of massive ecological devastation, most notably in the form of fossil fuel usage and the accompanying climate change, can no longer be avoided except by those with an ideological determination to remain blind to them. As the most massive extinction of species in 65 million years unfolds around us, scientists acknowledge that the Earth is leaving the Cenozoic era to embark upon a new geologic era whose character will be shaped by current choices made by the human species. Some pessimistically believe that it is already too late to avoid the destruction of all human life, or at least its reduction to vastly smaller numbers subsisting in tragically impoverished environments. The more optimistic view, however, is that humanity still has a chance to make the difficult transition to what Thomas Berry termed the “Ecozoic Era” an era in which humanity will consciously take up its role as a responsible member of the global community of life on Earth.<sup>1</sup> The question is, who will take leadership in the substantive economic, political, scientific, and spiritual changes that are essential if there is to be hope of such an ultimately positive outcome? Is this a realm in which the Church can have an important voice, or are Catholics doomed to arrive “late and out of breath” to the conspiracy of those who will give their lives in hope that humanity can co-create a positive future on planet Earth?

In a recent book, Bron Taylor distinguishes between what he calls “light green” and “dark green” religion.<sup>2</sup> While light green religion affirms that care for the Earth and for ecological sustainability are religious responsibilities, dark green religion goes much further to regard the Earth itself as having an intrinsically sacred dimension. The key difference is in what is placed at the center of value. Light green religion (at least in its Christian version) tends to place God first, then humanity,

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<sup>1</sup> See Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era* (San Francisco: Harperone, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

then the Earth which is to be valued because God created it and humans need it. Dark green religion, however, tends to place the Earth itself at the center, with humans envisioned as members of the community of Earth creatures and God (if God is even a part of the picture) understood as manifesting through natural Earth processes. Light green religion is much easier to integrate with both traditional Christianity and late capitalist ideology, since it continues to justify an anthropocentric view of ecological sustainability—i.e., the Earth must be cared for so that it can continue to provide resources to sustain human life and progress.

Dark green religion, on the other hand, challenges Christian theology and capitalist ideology at a far more fundamental level. A much-referenced essay by Lynn White accused biblical religion of being complicit with the roots of the ecological crisis, especially in enshrining the notion that humans are the center of creation and are called by God to “subdue” and “have dominion over” the Earth.<sup>3</sup> Some adherents of dark green views explicitly identify themselves as pagan or neo-pagan. Indeed, surveys indicate that Wicca and other forms of Neo-paganism are the fastest-growing religious affiliations in the United States, although actual numbers remain tiny compared to more traditional affiliations.<sup>4</sup> Far larger numbers espouse with greater or lesser fervor such dark green perspectives as that other living species have equal rights with humans, or that a river, mountain, or forest may have a “spirit,” or that the divine is literally manifested in the natural world. Such beliefs, which many Christians would reject as heretical, are increasingly gaining currency in globalized post-industrial culture—both inside and outside the Churches.

In this essay I will first give some examples of dark green spirituality in today’s world, then place it in dialogue with a variety of contemporary views including Charles Taylor on the “nova effect,” some postcolonial perspectives, Catholic ecotheologians, and William Jordan’s environmental philosophy. The question at hand is how (or whether) Catholicism can reconcile with the type of spirituality represented by the “dark green” movements.

## **DARK GREEN SPIRITUALITY IN POSTMODERN SOCIETIES**

Here is Bron Taylor’s more extended explanation of the character of “dark green religion”:

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<sup>3</sup> Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155 (1967), pp. 1203-1207.

<sup>4</sup> Gary F. Jensen and Ashley Thompson, “Out of the Broom Closet: The Social Ecology of American Wicca,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47:4 (2008), pp. 753-766.

[It flows] from a deep sense of belonging to and connectedness in nature, while perceiving the earth and its living systems to be sacred and interconnected. Dark green religion is generally deep ecological, biocentric, or ecocentric, considering all species to be intrinsically valuable, that is, valuable apart from their usefulness to human beings. This value system is generally (1) based on a felt kinship with the rest of life, often derived from a Darwinian understanding that all forms of life evolved from a common ancestor and are therefore related; (2) accompanied by feelings of humility and a corresponding critique of human moral superiority, often inspired or reinforced by a science-based cosmology that reveals how tiny human beings are in the universe; and (3) reinforced by metaphysics of interconnection and the idea of interdependence (mutual influence and reciprocal dependence) found in the sciences, especially in ecology and physics.<sup>5</sup>

As the above description indicates, dark green religion as such is a postmodern phenomenon. It arises in the context of secularized cultures within which the dominance of classical religions has waned; it draws heavily upon recent developments in science; and it gains much of its sense of urgency from the perception that modern industrial capitalism is a juggernaut that destroys the health, welfare, and future of vast numbers of humans and other species. Charlene Spretnak identifies the Ecological Self as a form of “reconstructive postmodernism” that rejects deconstructive postmodernism in favor of a sense of oneness with the Earth and “interbeing” with her creatures.<sup>6</sup> Ingalsbee notes that “epistemologically, it incorporates emotional, intuitional, and mystical ways of knowing, along with scientific knowledge and rationalist thinking.”<sup>7</sup> In short, dark green spirituality is a postmodern practice of *bricolage* which draws on pre-modern and modern sources as it percolates forth a wide array of creative forms. Here I will attempt to sketch only a few of these forms.

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<sup>5</sup> Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Charlene Spretnak, *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Ingalsbee, “Earth First! Activism: Ecological Postmodern Praxis in Radical Environmentalist Identities,” *Sociological Perspectives* 39:2 (1996), pp. 268-269.

In his book, Bron Taylor identified two axes generating four streams of dark green spirituality.<sup>8</sup> The streams, of course, often intermingle. One axis is from naturalism to supernaturalism while the other is from simple animism to what Taylor calls Gaian Earth religion. Thus, Taylor's four streams are: 1) naturalistic animism (a general sense of sacredness in nature and its creatures); 2) spiritual animism (the belief that spirits reside in natural creatures and entities); 3) Gaian naturalism (the affirmation of Earth as a living organism); and 4) Gaian spirituality (a more mystical conviction that Earth bears divinity and spirit). Rather than attempting to use this typology, however, I am simply going to describe and give examples of four different emphases that frequently characterize dark green spirituality in the Euro-American context. The four are: embodied contemplation, political activism, "new story," and alternative religion.

#### *Embodied Contemplation*

In 2007 *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* published a theme issue on "Aquatic Nature Religion."<sup>9</sup> It included essays on spiritual experiences and convictions evoked within committed practitioners of whitewater kayaking, fly fishing, and surfing. These "recreational" activities are described as having the potential to promote ritualized encounter with sacred power. The author of the article on whitewater kayaking, for example, asserts that the experience of bodily immersion in the powerful currents of the river is comparable to the Hindu experience of "drowning in the divine." Themes that paddlers report include "intimate connection with immensity or perceiving something greater than the self, mindfulness, and finally, risk and fear." These are not just ideas; the paddler "performs them." Therefore, "paddling is an orthopraxy, in which correct performance of these ideas embodies or manifests the religious experience."<sup>10</sup>

The point made in these essays is that these physically demanding, adventure-filled practices—and others such as wilderness camping, skiing, mountaineering, and hang-gliding—not only can engender profound nature-based religious experiences, but also can fill out the social, psychological, ritual, and ideological spaces of "religion" in postmodern human life. The author of the kayaking essay notes, however, that the religious language these practitioners borrow generally derives

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<sup>8</sup> Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Spirituality*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75:4 (December 2007).

<sup>10</sup> A. Whitney Sanford, "Pinned on Karma Rock: Whitewater Kayaking as Religious Experience," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75:4 (2007), p. 881.

from Hindu, Buddhist, or Native American traditions rather than from Christianity. This is due to the perception that Western traditions identify the divine only in transcendent terms, while the more immanent language of other traditions has more openness to affirming the bodily locus of religious experience.

### *Political Activism*

Earth First! was founded in 1979 in reaction to its founders' belief that mainstream environmentalism had sold out to corporate and governmental interests. It is best known for using direct-action tactics such as tree-sitting and "monkeywrenching" (i.e. deliberately damaging systems to make them inoperable) in defense of Mother Earth. As its website proclaims, "When the law won't fix the problem, we put our bodies on the line to stop the destruction."<sup>11</sup> Participants in Earth First! actions often are willing to accept extreme physical deprivation and the risk of jail time to live out their beliefs. The movement has had an ambivalent relationship with explicit religious language, often rejecting it as a distraction from activism. According to Bron Taylor, however, long-time Earth First! leader David Foreman eventually came around to the view that "earth-based spirituality is about one's felt connections with, embeddedness in, and belonging to, this living and sacred earth." For Foreman, says Taylor, Earth First! is about two things: "'resacralizing' our perceptions of the earth and 'self-defense'"—the latter because "we are the earth."<sup>12</sup>

### *"New Story"*

Human beings find personal and communal identity through stories. For each of us, meaning is structured by the stories we tell about our own life, the history of our people, and the character of the cosmos. Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme have been among the primary proponents of the "new story" movement that aims to tell the scientific story of cosmic and Earth evolution as humanity's story of meaning, so that human identity becomes based in conscious participation in this vast and ongoing epic from which our very lives have emerged.<sup>13</sup> Berry was a

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<sup>11</sup> Earth First! newswire, <http://earthfirstnews.wordpress.com/about/> [accessed February 16, 2013].

<sup>12</sup> Bron Taylor, "Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part I): From Deep Ecology to Radical Environmentalism," *Religion* 31 (2001), p. 187.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example: Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Crown, 2000); Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, *The Universe Story*.

Catholic priest, and this approach is often embraced by Christians who weave scientifically-based information together with stories and themes from the Bible or other Christian texts.

Gaia theory, which is a related approach that focuses more intensively on the Earth as a single organism and/or a self-regulating evolutionary system, is more likely to be presented as a viable scientific narrative. NASA scientist James Lovelock proposed Gaia theory as an alternative to Darwinian views that assume violent competition as the driver of evolution. Lovelock argues that the whole Earth system is living and interconnected, so that animate and inanimate members of the system engage in cybernetic feedback loops that maintain beneficial levels of equilibrium and homeostasis. The mainstream scientific community initially rejected Lovelock's theory, but more recently it has become the subject of a lively debate within scientific publications. Grant Potts argues that Gaia theory represents an intersection between the "scientific imaginary" and the "religious imaginary," thus replacing the hegemony of traditional scientific explanations with "an imaginary that carries religious and normative as well as scientific and descriptive implications."<sup>14</sup> Thus this approach to dark green spirituality is one that creates opportunities for profound dialogue between religion and science.

#### *Alternative religion*

Many dark green sympathizers reject the use of the term "religion" for their spiritual practices and concerns, but some explicitly seek an alternative religious practice. As noted earlier, Wicca and other forms of Neo-paganism appear to be the fastest-growing religious identifications in the U.S. The American Survey of Religious Identification found that between 2001 and 2008 the total number of U.S. adults who were willing to publically self-identify as members of these groups grew from 274,000 to 682,000.<sup>15</sup> It is suggested that actual numbers of participants are probably higher, both because these religions are still regarded with much suspicion by mainstream society and because these movements do not put the same premium on explicit and exclusive membership as many other religions do.

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<sup>14</sup> Grant H. Potts, "Imagining Gaia: Perspectives and Prospects on Gaia, Science and Religion," *Ecotheology* 8:1 (August 1, 2003), pp. 30-49.

<sup>15</sup> "Pagans Go Mainstream: Wiccans and Druids and Goddesses—Oh My!" [http://www.religionlink.com/tip\\_091020.php](http://www.religionlink.com/tip_091020.php) [accessed February 16, 2013].

A 1999 study of Neo-pagans found that the strongest reason indicated for choosing this identity was rejection of traditional religion.<sup>16</sup> The same study found that Neo-pagans are mainly young to middle aged, urban, and of white European heritage. A slight majority are women. They are about equally working class and professional class, and income distribution parallels that of Americans in general. Ecological concerns are important for this group, but not as central as the researchers expected. Nonetheless, major leaders in the pagan and witchcraft movements—for example, Starhawk, Margot Adler, and Alice Walker—strongly emphasize dark green themes such as the sacredness of Mother Earth and the relation between the Earth and the Goddess.<sup>17</sup>

### **CHARLES TAYLOR, CATHOLICISM, AND THE NOVA EFFECT**

In many ways, dark green spirituality fits very closely the patterns that Charles Taylor described in *The Secular Age*.<sup>18</sup> Taylor wrote that in the movement into modernity, the peoples of the Western world went through a phase of the “buffered self” in which the fundamental sense of connectness to world and God was repressed. The result was an increase in personal autonomy, but this was accompanied by the withering of the need for a belief in a transcendent God. The normative way of being became “expressivist individualism”—that is, structuring one’s life according to one’s personal feelings and insights, rather than according to external or transcendent norms. This was accompanied by the increasing normativity of an “immanent frame” that excludes transcendence from everyday life and meaning-making, and that more often than not embraces an ideological materialism. In the twentieth century these pressures led to what Taylor calls the “nova effect.” In large numbers of people the repressed hunger for spiritual connectedness burst forth, leading to the proliferation of “seekers” who pursue lifelong journeys along a seemingly unlimited array of spiritual paths.

The characteristics of nova effect spiritualities include rejection of external authority in favor of individual feeling and choice, along with a strong emphasis on immanence rather than transcendence. Dark green spirituality fits this pattern, offering an individualized spirituality of immanence that cultivates a deep feeling of connectedness to the natural world. Taylor’s theory also helps to provide perspective for the claim of

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<sup>16</sup> Danny L. Jorgensen and Scott E. Russell, “American Neopaganism: The Participants’ Social Identities,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38:3 (1999), pp. 325-339.

<sup>17</sup> Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, pp. 162-164.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

dark green spiritualities that they reclaim premodern wisdom. Such spiritualities do indeed seek to reclaim a more organic, interconnected experience of life, but they do so in an individualist and free-floating style that would have been unthinkable in premodern communities.

In a subsequent essay Taylor explores the ambiguous relationship between Catholicism and these nova effect movements.<sup>19</sup> The positive aspect of the nova effect is that it fuels commitment to such emphases as individual dignity, human rights, equality for all, religious freedom, and respect for difference. As long as Catholicism remained politically dominant and culturally normative, its focus tended to be on the support of other values; for example, obedience, divinely instituted hierarchy, the inferior status of those not adhering to “the one true church,” the legal enforcement of moral norms, etc. It is ironic, Taylor observes, that the societal flourishing of such gospel values as human rights and religious freedom required the dethroning of the Church.

The current “plural spiritualities” project, of which this chapter is a part, defines itself in relation to Taylor’s “nova effect.” How can Catholic Christianity regain its footing in a world roiling with so many different spiritualities, each of which may claim some piece of the territory that once belonged to the Church but few of which ascribe any special authority to the Church? While some Church members are comfortable taking up a position that simply rejects the immanent frame, expressivist individualism, and the plurality of spiritualities, the vast majority of Catholics basically accept many aspects of this new cultural frame. Yet mainstream Catholic theology and Church practice remain in tension with this reality.

One place to start an effort at reconciliation is with a critique and re-direction of Taylor’s term “nova effect.” The nova effect metaphor presents an image of a spectacular cosmic explosion of light and fire, accompanied by an irreversible, outward-moving fragmentation of what once was solid. The image creates a frisson of excitement and even wonder, like watching a fireworks show—as long as one does not attend to the fact that it is the very habitat that sustains one’s own life that is exploding! Here I am using the term “habitat” partly realistically, partly metaphorically. The realistic concern of participants in dark green spirituality, as well as of many scientists and others, is that the Earth ecosystem that is necessary for human and other species’ life is literally being ground up into small fragments to fuel our exploding consumerist lifestyle, and will one day in the not far distant future become hostile to life as we know it.

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity?”, in *Dilemmas and Connections: Selected Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

In a metaphorical vein, “habitat” can be understood more psychologically or socially. Taylor’s own use of “nova effect” is closer to this, referring to a breakdown of external constraints and a breakthrough of unconscious energies that send people on a dizzying search for an inner “home.” Yet here too the metaphor of an irreversible explosion into fragments is bad news for human beings. The nova effect metaphor has a striking descriptive power, identifying a phenomenon that many people in post-industrial societies are experiencing and seeing around them. As an explanatory key, however, its implications become less than helpful.

I would suggest that in order to discover a way forward, we need to make two moves. The first move is from a more “postmodern” stance that can observe the nova explosion with an ironic and effete gaze, to a more “postcolonial” position that engages with the struggles of those burning up in the explosion. The second move is from the cosmic “nova” metaphor to an ecological “habitat” metaphor. What these two shifts have in common is the move from the stance of the relatively disengaged observer, to the stance of participant in relations that are both contested and sustaining. They are also both related to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s much-discussed call for a shift from a universalizing global perspective to a decentered planetary view.<sup>20</sup>

In relation to the first move, I acknowledge that both “postmodern” and “postcolonial” are notoriously slippery terms, and I cannot attempt here to deal with all their complexities either in themselves or in relation to each other.<sup>21</sup> The difference I am pointing to is that a more postmodern perspective revels in denying the possibility of ever finding firm intellectual or psychological footing, while a more postcolonial perspective insists on claiming one’s place even though one knows that place will always be local, contested, and in the midst of change. I will explore this shift in the following section through a further examination of the character of dark green spiritualities in relation to the categories of pre-modern, postmodern, and postcolonial.

Second, we need to shift our gaze from the vast cosmic context where nova explosions dazzle our eyes but offer no possibilities for our intervention, to a context closer to home where we can begin the extremely challenging process of learning to live in habitats that are

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<sup>20</sup> See Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera Rivera, *Planetary Loves: Spivak Postcoloniality, and Theology* (New York: Fordham University, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> See Graham Ward, “Theology and Postmodernism: Is it Over?”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80:2 (2012), pp. 466-484, for a discussion of the trajectory of postmodern thought toward re-engagement with the political. This suggests that the move I am proposing here is, in fact, taking place on a broader scale. As Ward notes, anxiety over the ecological crisis is one of the factors fueling such a shift.

undergoing profound changes. A more helpful metaphor than “nova effect” may be the ecosystem in rapid human-caused change that must be participatively guided to a new and ever-fragile balance. For this, I will turn to the environmental philosophy of William R. Jordan III.

### NOSTALGIA FOR THE PREMODERN AND THE POST-COLONIAL CRITIQUE

As noted, one of the key claims of dark green spirituality is that it is reclaiming lost or suppressed wisdom from earlier ages of humankind. Carolyn Merchant, for example, characterizes radical environmentalism as a biocentric worldview that “utilizes vitalist, holist, organicist perspectives from premodernist discourses.”<sup>22</sup> Dark green movements typically express admiration for indigenous and subsistence cultures because they appear to retain an intimate relationship with the earth and its processes. People engaged in subsistence farming or herding often have been the beneficiaries of dozens or even hundreds of generations of cumulative knowledge of how to respond to changing conditions in weather, soil, water, insect infestations, and other natural conditions within their local region. Many still retain roots in pre-modern indigenous cultures that encourage deep sensitivity to their local natural environments, and that practice rituals engaging elements of the natural world in a personalized (i.e. “animistic”) dialogue of reverence and mutual gift-giving. Thus, from the point of view of first world dark green spirituality, these “salt of the earth” families bear knowledge of great value for humanity’s desperately-needed transition to sustainability.

Shielded from the hard labor and vicissitudes of life on the land, however, urbanized middle class people in dominant economies may celebrate the pre-modern and indigenous lifestyle with an enthusiasm that is more nostalgic or utopian than realistic. Dark green spirituality in the form described so far is clearly a phenomenon of post-industrial societies in which very few people actually *have* to earn their living by personal engagement with the processes of nature. In reality, the relationship between indigenous cultures and dark green spirituality is riddled with ambiguities. Postcolonial thinkers note that an idealized contrast between “noble savages” and the dark destructiveness of modern civilization actually may perversely reinforce the mentality that has permitted dominant cultures to dehumanize and exploit with impunity.

An example of this shows itself in the 1985 movie *The Emerald Forest*, in which the young son of an American engineer is kidnapped and

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<sup>22</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980); the quote is from Ingalsbee, p. 268.

raised by a remote tribe in the Brazilian Amazon. A comic-book contrast paints the tribe as living a paradisaical life which the demonized engineers of modern technological civilization are coldly destroying. Postcolonial thought points out that the colonial mentality is characterized by making just such contrasts between “civilized” and “native” or between “White” and “non-White,” with members of the second group then being understood only in terms of their difference from the first group. Even when the second group appears to be put on a pedestal (e.g. celebrating the “noble savage”), it is still defined strictly in terms of the interests of those who have developed the categories. In this view, First World adherents of dark green spirituality are projecting their own need for idealized exemplars onto people who, in reality, are equally caught up in struggles with the complexities and ethical ambiguities of life in the world today.

One aspect of the moral ambiguity of indigenous and premodern cultures is seen in the fact that while some may have developed practices that enabled them to sustain the health and fruitfulness of their habitats over multiple generations, this has not always been the case. Anthropological research indicates that wherever human communities have flourished, they have altered their environment and, in doing so, have benefited some species while diminishing others. One well-known example is the burning of the prairies by North American native tribes. While in this example the practice seems to have been sustainable (that is, it could be continued over many generations), there are numerous examples of pre-modern human communities whose practices undermined the ecological viability of their own habitats. Jared Diamond’s 2005 book *Collapse* detailed several such case histories, showing how, over many millennia, human cultures have not infrequently made choices to continue over-exploiting their ecosystem even when the inevitable result was the destruction of its capacity to support their way of life.<sup>23</sup>

Moral ambiguity in dark green spirituality, on the other hand, is seen in its frequent failure to plumb the sources of the violence that has been, and still is, enacted upon indigenous cultures and their natural environments. Congolese Jesuit Daniel Syauswa gives an example of how ecological concerns look radically different from the perspective of the “underside,” as compared with that of dominant cultures. He notes that ecological concern in the West currently is strongly focused on the issue of global warming and its potential technological fixes. As a citizen of the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, however,

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<sup>23</sup> Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

Syauswa sees the most immediate ecological issue as the global arms trade. He writes:<sup>24</sup>

Being a native from the Great Lakes Region offers me a particular sensitivity to the violence that has characterized the relationships between the colonial Belgian presence in that region and the people on the one hand, and between the colonial powers and natural resources, on the other hand ... the consequences of arms traffic involve a sustained cycle of violence that destroys the environment and the human capacity to live harmoniously with nature and with one another.

In short, the irony of the “dark green” call to listen to the wisdom of premodern traditions is that it is proclaimed by members of the very cultures that have built their economies and identities by violently engendering major disruptions of the continuity of these traditions in almost every locale. Postcolonialists argue that in view of these permeating ambiguities and pressures, it is crucial to move away from simplistic categories and instead to highlight the complicated hybridity that affects all people today. Categorizing people as “postmodern vs. premodern,” “alienated from the land vs. close to the land,” or “globalized vs. immersed in local traditions” may simply update the old colonialist dynamic of oversimplification. As R.S. Sugirtharajah puts it:<sup>25</sup>

Postcoloniality [means that] it is not always feasible to recover the authentic “roots” or even to go back to the real “home” again. In an ever-increasing multicultural society like ours, where traditions, histories and texts commingle and interlace, a quest for unalloyed pure native roots could prove not only to be elusive but also to be dangerous.... What postcoloniality indicates is that we assume more-or-less fractured, hyphenated, double, or in some cases multiple, identities.

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<sup>24</sup> Daniel Syauswa Musondoli, SJ, “Ecology and the Quest for Integrity in a Broken World.” <http://www.uia.mx/shapingthefuture/documents.html> [accessed July 25, 2013].

<sup>25</sup> R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (SCM Press 2003), pp. 123-124.

In his exploration of Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks*,<sup>26</sup> literary critic Robert Spencer helps us reflect on how this postcolonial perspective may challenge the focus of green spirituality.<sup>27</sup> Shehadeh wrote about taking long, meandering hikes through his native Palestinian landscape, painfully encountering the ever-increasing destruction of both natural ecosystems and human culture that is being wrought by Israeli developments. He clearly loves this land—its animals, plants, fragrances, moods, colors. Yet for him there is no possibility of sinking nostalgically into the experience of that love, as one might in less troubled times and places. Like watching a loved one being tortured, Shehadeh's love of the land takes him apart piece by piece. At the same time it propels him beyond his focus on the immediacy of the local ecosystem in which he stands, to awareness of the complex national, ethnic, religious, and global forces that are at work within it, within himself, and within his "enemies." Instead of leading him to a place of inner peace, his "spirituality of place" engages him in both inner and outer contention.

Spencer comments that often those with ecological concerns promote a Heideggerian or Wordsworthian spirituality of "dwelling," that is, sinking deep roots of knowledge and attachment into a particular natural locale where one finds rest and refreshment. In contrast, "texts like Shehadeh's, which concern themselves with the environment in the context of an ongoing history of colonial domination, make available and compelling an environmental ethic that rejects the idea of dwelling and instead embraces a more far-reaching, even cosmopolitan sensibility."<sup>28</sup> This postcolonial cosmopolitanism, however, is not a blithe celebration of diversity or of some kind of intercultural universality. It is, rather, the awareness of the complexity of the multiple flows that are contesting in one's own identity as well as that of all other actors. Human identity, in this view, is a dynamic system comparable to that of an ecosystem, in which living and non-living beings interact and contest with one another in multiple and complex ways.

This section of the chapter has engaged in a hermeneutics of suspicion that has situated green spiritualities in relation to a postcolonial critique. At this point we are ready for an interlude of systematic theology, to see how some contemporary Catholic theologians are coming to terms with similar perspectives.

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<sup>26</sup> Raja Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks: Forays into a Vanishing Landscape* (New York: Scribner, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Robert Spencer, "Ecocriticism in the Colonial Present: The Politics of Dwelling in Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks*: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape," *Postcolonial Studies* 13:1 (March 2010), pp. 33-54.

<sup>28</sup> Spencer, p. 47.

## SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: THE RETRIEVAL OF IMMANENCE

The challenge for systematic theology can be stated starkly: Can the core biblical doctrine of the transcendence of the creator God be preserved while also affirming the kind of radical divine immanence that would be compatible with “deep ecology”? Is the biblical God necessarily a monarchical authority figure who demands an ecclesial structure and universalized theology to match? Or can our God be “God-in-the-chaos,” whom we glimpse everywhere taking on disturbing and exhilarating new forms in the midst of the ambiguity, conflict, and ever-evolving mess of real life on Earth?<sup>29</sup>

Many Catholic (and other) theologians are addressing these issues. Denis Edwards, for example, builds on Thomas Aquinas’ distinction between the primary causality of God as Creator and the secondary causality of created beings to make the case that since these two are of completely different orders, they are not in conflict. In fact, God’s transcendence is what makes it possible for God’s Spirit to be “radically immanent to creation, interiorly present to all things in the universe, nearer to them than they are to themselves, as the source of their existence, action and emergence.”<sup>30</sup> This intimate, transcendent/immanent, creating presence (primary causality) does not take the form of direct divine guidance of earthly events, but rather frees the natural world to exercise its own created creativity (secondary causality). Thus Edwards rejects the assertion of some proponents of dark green spirituality that Earth processes are divine (or, as Stuart Kauffman puts it, are the only God we have),<sup>31</sup> affirming instead that, as created, they are distinct from God and have their own proper autonomy—at the same time that God is always and everywhere present in and through them.

In her classic *She Who Is*, Elizabeth Johnson develops a similar view and takes it even further. She writes, “The one relational God, precisely in being utterly transcendent, not limited by any finite category, is capable of the most radical immanence, being intimately related to everything that is. And the effect of divine drawing near and passing by

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<sup>29</sup> See Sally A. Kenel, “Toward an Ecology of Salvation,” in *New Horizons in Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), esp. pp. 190-191.

<sup>30</sup> Denis Edwards, “Evolution, Emergence and the Creator Spirit: a Conversation with Stuart Kauffman,” *Colloquium* 42:2 (November 1, 2010), p. 229.

<sup>31</sup> Stuart Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion* (Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2008).

is always to empower creatures toward life and well-being in the teeth of the antagonistic structures of reality.”<sup>32</sup>

In her essay in the collection *Planetary Loves*, Susan Abraham develops an explicitly postcolonial perspective.<sup>33</sup> The book is the record of a 2007 conference that reflected on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s statement: “If we imagine ourselves as planetary subjects rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us; it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away.”<sup>34</sup> The distinction Spivak is making is between the “global agent” who claims the ability to make the whole globe its “other,” and the “planetary creature” who knows only by being relationally immersed in its ecosystem. Spivak, like many secularist proponents of dark green spirituality, explicitly rejects the notion of “divine transcendence” on the grounds that it reifies an imperial God who can be called upon to support oppressive political power interests.

Abraham argues, however, that the real import of Spivak’s call to “de-transcendentalize” ultimately converges with Catholic feminist theological proposals such as that of Elizabeth Johnson. Johnson affirmed a model of dialectical theism or panentheism in which God is “in the world and the world in God while each remains radically distinct. The relation is mutual while differences remain and are respected.”<sup>35</sup> Abraham writes: “In this model, transcendence and immanence are correlative rather than opposed.”<sup>36</sup> She compares this to Spivak’s work on *dvaita* or non-dual twoness, “a mode of approaching twoness, without letting it collapse into a rigorous singularity, [which] counters rigid belief systems so easily co-optable into nationalist, identitarian, and racist agendas.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, Abraham sees the fundamental agenda of both Johnson and Spivak as promoting new cultural ways of thinking that foster “mutual belonging, trust, and love”<sup>38</sup> within the mundane space-time of ordinary life.

Thus, our theological interlude provides a grounding for a potential convergence of green spiritualities and Catholicism. The key is in the shift from envisioning our role as that of “global agents” who operate from a

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<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (NY: Crossroad, 1992), p. 229.

<sup>33</sup> Susan Abraham, “The Pterodactyl in the Margins: Detranscendentalizing Postcolonial Theology,” in Moore and Rivera, *Planetary Loves: Spivak Postcoloniality, and Theology* (New York: Fordham University, 2011), pp. 79-101.

<sup>34</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (NY: Columbia University, 2005), p. 73.

<sup>35</sup> Johnson, p. 231.

<sup>36</sup> Abraham, p. 100.

<sup>37</sup> Abraham, p. 99.

<sup>38</sup> Abraham, p. 101.

universalizing perspective outside the world system, to understanding ourselves as “planetary creatures” accompanying one another in the midst of our evolving ecosystems. The environmental philosophy of William R. Jordan III can help us move further toward a practical theology for this accompaniment.

### THE ECOLOGICAL METAPHOR: PARTICIPATING IN REAL COMMUNITIES

In *The Sunflower Forest*, Jordan reflects deeply on how humans can begin to take up a role of constructive participation within ecosystems that have been profoundly altered by human activity. I have found his work very helpful in thinking about what role the Church may be able to play in the profoundly altered world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As a starting point, Jordan identifies three broad categories into which environmentalist ideas about human relationship with nature have fallen.<sup>39</sup> The *colonialist* concept understands nature as something to manage for human benefit. This can ground broad-based movements of conservation for the sake of beauty, recreation, and hunting as well as for economic use, but its limits are obvious. At the opposite extreme, the idea that nature is *sacred place* recognizes its intrinsic value and rights, apart from human utility. This mentality, which has often been embraced by first world adherents of dark green spirituality, underlies efforts to preserve natural places. The problem with this approach is that it tends to regard all human activity as destructive, so it is always fighting a rear-guard action and often has little ability to propose a way forward that acknowledges the reality of human economic needs in balance with the rights of nature.

The notion of nature as a *community* in which humans participate was most profoundly developed by environmental philosopher Aldo Leopold (1887-1948) and his followers. This has the most potential for fostering an engaged, respectful, and realistic relationship of humans with nature. Jordan notes, however, that frequently the espoused notion of community is vague and romanticized. Even when explicitly rejecting the religious framework of original sin, such philosophies are often based in a kind of Edenic notion that an entirely harmonious and peaceful community is “original” and can be reclaimed. Yet research on human communities, both ancient and contemporary—as well as a clear-eyed look at interactive processes in real ecological communities—does not bear this out. Real ecological communities, as well as real human

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<sup>39</sup> William R. Jordan III, *The Sunflower Forest: Ecological Restoration and the New Communion with Nature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), ch. 2.

communities, only achieve an imperfect and always-tenuous degree of harmony and balance through lengthy processes that include conflict, damage, and loss as well as more positive dynamics such as symbiosis and altruism. Here we see Jordan's view of community converging with the postcolonial awareness of the character of human social relations as always changing, ambiguous, and contested, yet full of potential for life.

Jordan's book proposes that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the middle way between the colonial mentality of controlling nature and the "sacred place" mentality that would strive to protect nature from humans is a concerted embrace of the practice of ecological restoration. If nature is a community and humans are part of it, nature does not need to be (in fact, cannot be) preserved from us, but rather needs us to learn how to participate in the community in a way that accompanies natural processes in a tendency toward health, balance, and harmony rather away from it. As Jordan puts it: "The future of a natural ecosystem depends not on protection from humans but on its relationship with the people who inhabit it or share the landscape with it. This relationship must not only be respectful, it must also be ecologically robust, economically productive, and psychologically rewarding."<sup>40</sup> In other words, ecological restoration accepts that humans do, in fact, manipulate ecosystemic dynamics and makes that into a mutually beneficial practice of cooperation with nature rather than encouraging either exploitation or withdrawal. In fact, the title of Jordan's book comes from Loren Eiseley's expression of a similar view. Eiseley wrote that humans "must make, by way of the cultural world, an actual conscious reentry into the sunflower forest he [sic] had thought merely to exploit or abandon."<sup>41</sup>

It is important to emphasize here that ecological restoration, as Jordan understands it, does not actually claim to return ecosystems to some previous "pristine" condition. To take the prairies of the U.S. midwest region as an example, small patches of restored prairie here and there are very different from the millions of contiguous acres that existed before the arrival of Europeans. Moreover, those millions of acres have always been in a process of change, and at even earlier periods of Earth history the same regions were covered by completely different ecosystems such as seas and forests. In some ways the word "restoration" is unfortunate as it may appear to connect Jordan's proposal with social and ecclesial restorationist movements which truly believe that the course of history can and should be rolled back to a previous Golden Age. Jordan's point is different. He argues that the *practice* of restoration, which engages people in learning to understand, love, and participate in the

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<sup>40</sup> Jordan, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> Loren Eiseley, *The Invisible Pyramid* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 155; quoted in Jordan, p. 54.

community dynamics of an ecosystem as it strives for health, is key to a healthy future for both humanity and the Earth.

Jordan proposes that taking up the practice of ecological restoration in this way is not simply making a virtue of necessity, but rather is the cutting edge of evolution itself. In the ontology that grounds this approach, he writes,

It is not nature as autonomous ‘other’ that is the ground and touchstone of being and authenticity, but rather nature in reflexive interaction with all its elements, including ourselves. Thus the authenticity of a thing depends not on its origins, its ontological pedigree, but on the intensity and reflexivity of its interactions with other subjects. Restoration and other modes of reproduction, in this view, do not compromise nature but actually fulfill or enact it, since it is the very essence of nature to reproduce itself, and to do so imperfectly, and at ever higher levels of self-awareness..... In fact, we are nature at its *most* natural, the cutting edge of its own self-transcendence, with all the violence and pain and discrimination and loss that metaphor implies. And the restored ecosystem, to the extent that it has been implicated in the frontier of creation through engagement with humans, is not less but actually *more* natural, more real in this sense than its less self-aware, ‘original’ counterpart.<sup>42</sup>

On the practical level, Jordan proposes that ecological restoration needs to take ritual seriously. Admission to communities, as well as intimate participation in them, has always involved ritual for human beings. Rituals are also the way humans deal constructively with conflict, loss, death, and shame. Jordan notes that the human relationship to natural creatures and ecosystems necessarily involves shame, both because we painfully experience our own imperfection, limitation, and dependence, and because we inevitably must kill and do damage in order to meet our natural needs. Ritual sacrifice was one of the ways that hunting communities dealt with the violence involved in the predator-prey relationship. Jordan asserts that we need to develop new rituals that both affirm and celebrate our relationship of community with natural systems, and help us deal constructively with the sorrowful aspects of that relationship.

In my view, Jordan’s philosophy offers rich possibilities for a conjunction between Catholicism and green movements. Jordan’s proposal of the practice of ecological restoration, in which human-

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<sup>42</sup> Jordan, p. 123.

damaged habitats are nursed to renewed health by judicious human accompaniment, offers a secular spirituality that enfleshes the postcolonial consciousness of immersion in flesh-and-blood locality as the milieu of any possible progress. At the same time, it is a model that could easily be woven together with fresh perspectives on biblical images such as stewardship, gardening, and pastoring, thus providing Catholics with an ennobling view of the call to participate in ecosystems as a caring community member.

Jordan's acknowledgement of the essential role of ritual both in coming to terms with sorrow and in celebrating the small triumphs of life also provides a rich opening for dialogue with Catholic sacramental practice, which has long experience in doing just that. What Catholic sacramental theology adds to Jordan's secular philosophy is the tension of transcendent meaning. The illness and renewed life of an ecosystem can be construed as an expression of the death and resurrection of the Word of God who is, biblically, the wellspring and pattern of all creation. Our rituals of repentance, lament, and celebratory reconciliation not only accompany creation in its travails, but also are accompanied by our God. In short, such a Catholic practical theology of ecological restoration has great potential for engaging in a fruitful dialogue, as well as collaborative work, with proponents of "dark green" spiritualities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Taylor's work has presented us with a challenge: How can Catholicism find its place in a world where spiritual authority is profoundly de-centered and where plural, hybrid spiritualities are the norm? Taylor visualizes the new situation that the Church faces with his metaphor of the "nova effect"—an image of uncontrolled explosion and fragmentation. This essay proposes the alternative metaphor of the ecosystem in a condition of rapid and disintegrating change. Such a condition calls forth new forms of participation from all those whose habitats are affected; from humans, specifically, it calls forth the intelligent practice of ecological restoration. This alternative metaphor offers a way of envisioning the Church's role as one of accompanying healing change through collaborative participation in the complex and dynamic community of life on Earth.

In regard to the theological challenge of "dark green" spiritualities that radically affirm immanence as the locus of the sacred, our explorations have led us to conclude that, on the levels of both systematic and practical theology, potential does exist for convergence between these spiritualities and Catholicism. Of course, real theological differences remain, and at times these different flows will find themselves more in contestation than in convergence. In view of this, the refreshing spiritual

style of Pope Francis may be the best guide to the way forward. Even in his brief time in office, Francis has embodied a style that is far less centralized, controlling, and hierarchical than his predecessors. In this he gives hope that a theology that is less obsessed with reifying transcendence, and more open to a “God-in-the-chaos” approach, may be beginning to gain traction. Francis has also modeled an attitude that affirms and engages with all that is positive in those with whom one disagrees, rather than categorizing them wholesale as “other” and unacceptable. On this model, remaining theological differences need not preclude Catholics from affirming and participating in dark green spiritualities insofar as they support life, community, justice and reconciliation.

### CHAPTER III

## **PERICHORESIS OF THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLES: SPIRITUALITY IN THIRD CINEMA**

ANTONIO D. SISON

Cinema celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1995. To mark the occasion, the Vatican released its list of the 45 best films of all time. Classified under three categories, namely, Religion, Values and Art, the film titles that made it to the Vatican “canon”—from religious masterpieces such as *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Karl Theodor Dreyer, 1928), *Nazarin* (Luis Buñuel, 1958), and *Babette’s Feast* (Gabriel Axel, 1987); to more unconventional, critically-acclaimed films like *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) and *Au Revoir les Enfants* (Louis Malle, 1987)—represent a diverse, thoughtful, and well-researched selection that defy stereotypical perceptions of the Church as being myopic in its approach to the arts and the media. This positive and respectful view of cinema as genuine art resonates with several church documents, a relatively recent one being the 1992 pastoral instruction *Aetatis Novae*, which calls for the Church to engage in an honest, respectful, and mutually critical dialogue with media arts.<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II echoed this positive mindset in an address he delivered at the 1995 plenary assembly of the Pontifical Commission on Social Communication:

We have seen that masterpieces of the art of filmmaking can be moving challenges to the human spirit, capable of dealing in depth with subjects of great meaning and importance from an ethical and spiritual point of view.... I am thinking of the many initiatives that present the Bible message and the very rich heritage of the Christian tradition in the language of forms, sounds and images through the theatre, cinema and television. I am also thinking of those works and programs that are not explicitly religious but are still capable of

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<sup>1</sup> *Pontificum Concilium de Communicationibus Socialibus*, “Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* on Social Communications on the Twentieth Anniversary of *Communio et Progressio*,” February 22, 1992, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/pccs/documents/rc\\_pc\\_pccs\\_doc\\_22021992\\_aetatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_22021992_aetatis_en.html) [accessed September 22, 2013].

speaking to peoples' hearts, prompting them to wonder, to question and to reflect.<sup>2</sup>

Theology and Cinema, the interdisciplinary area within which this work belongs, dovetails with the trajectory indicated by John Paul II. The scholarly debate is no longer confined to cinema that is overtly Catholic or “religious,” but to cinema that offers a deeper focus on the human story and, in the drill down, insight into the refracted light of the divine. In a very real sense then, cinema becomes *locus theologicus*, a space where theological wisdom germinates.

My project is two-fold. I present an imaginative and critical exploration of the cinematic representation of spirituality in a chosen case study, namely, the 2007 Uruguayan film *The Pope's Toilet* (“*El Baño del Papa*,” dirs. Cesar Charlone, Enrique Fernandez). Notwithstanding the connotation of its title, *The Pope's Toilet* does not fit strictly into the “religious” genre; rather, it is a film that raises important questions as to what constitutes a spirituality that is relevant for the “crucified peoples,” marginal communities who bear the stigmata of a cruel context. I approach the film from the perspective of “Third Cinema,” a Latin American critical aesthetic theory that examines how the conjoined stylistic elements of a film such as cinematography, editing, and mise-en-scene, work methodically as an audiovisual form of social analysis. Undergirding this trajectory is my contention that an exploration of the challenge of “Plural Spiritualities”—one of four existential disjunctions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century identified by Charles Taylor in the book *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*<sup>3</sup>—cannot disregard the spirituality arising from communities around the globe that are still struggling within the crucible of “Third World” living conditions. This cruel context has direct bearing on how spirituality is understood and lived, and it will have important implications for a “genealogical” understanding of spirituality as presented by Robert Schreiter in this book’s Introduction. A spirituality that seethes from the *via negativa* of history’s underside certainly merits closer attention if we are to look concretely at the “multiple discourses, practices, structures and imaginaries that make up spirituality.”<sup>4</sup>

Following the insights distilled from the hermeneutical

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<sup>2</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Address of his Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communication,” March 17, 1995, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/speeches/1995/march/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19950317\\_plen-pccs\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1995/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19950317_plen-pccs_en.html) [accessed October 9, 2013].

<sup>3</sup> Charles Taylor, “The Church Speaks—To Whom?”, in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, ed. Charles Taylor, et al. (Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> See Robert Schreiter, “Introduction.”

engagement, I offer a critical reflection on the disjunction between the worked-out message of the Catholic Church, and the concrete “questions” drawn from the lived experience of seekers on the ground. Set during Pope John Paul II’s 1988 pastoral visit to Melo, Uruguay, where he delivers a message that holds little meaning for his listeners, *The Pope’s Toilet* may be interpreted as a cinematic rendering of Taylor’s critique of the selfsame disjunction:

Too many answers choking off questions, and too little sense of the enigmas that accompany a life of faith; these are what stop a conversation from ever starting between our church and much of our world.<sup>5</sup>

Although Taylor acknowledges that he speaks within a Euro-American context, the disjunction he identifies will have profound relevance both for the Church of the poor, and the institutional Church that is prophetically challenged to make an “option for the poor.” My hope is to present, by way of an inductive process, a critical examination of the Catholic Church’s response to the continuing call for Christ-like kenosis as evinced in its public presence amid its suffering members.

Given that this is an interdisciplinary project, it is informative to discuss in greater detail the theological principle (liberation/political theologies) and the cinematic principle (Third Cinema) that comprise the discursive framework for this hermeneutical engagement.

### **THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE: THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLES**

In the light of the unspeakable human tragedies that fly in the face of the vision of a fully reconciled humanity, Edward Schillebeeckx describes the continuum of suffering as a scarlet thread that runs through the human lineage; human history is an “ecumene of suffering.” The Ghouta chemical attack on innocent civilians in Damascus, and the Typhoon Haiyan climate change tragedy in Samar, Philippines, leave little to argue that this prognosis continues to hold true. What liberation theologies bring into sharper relief is that the ecumene of suffering is, first and foremost, a Third World ecumene of suffering. Despite the diminishment of the categorization “Third World” following the collapse of the Second World communist bloc, scholars from the Global South have insisted on using the term in social analysis to describe a quality of life determined by structural inequality and abject poverty that continue to exist though the *Zeitgeist*, afloat on globalization’s promise of universal

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<sup>5</sup> Taylor, “The Church Speaks—To Whom?” in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, ed. Charles Taylor, et al., p. 20.

prosperity, had voted for its erasure.<sup>6</sup> Liberation theologians such as Jon Sobrino have chosen to describe the collective who continue to live under Third World conditions as “the crucified peoples,” a provocative phrase first proposed by martyred Jesuit theologian Ignacio Ellacuría. The term carries social and theological nuances that are not apparent in either “Third World” or “ecumene of suffering”; it is language that indicates “the historical enormity of the problem and its meaning for faith.”<sup>7</sup> First, the term “crucified” connects immediately to the *memoria passionis* of Jesus Christ; the unspeakable humiliation, punishment, and death he suffered in the hands of the powerholders of his time as a consequence of his absolute dedication to the Reign of God. In socio-analytical mediation, the first moment of liberation theology’s tripartite see-judge-act methodological approach, oppression and poverty are seen as a result of the phenomenon of “social sin,” unjust structures that have been so embedded in the matrix of society that they take on a semi-autonomous existence. The structures of inequality are perpetuated by the systematic social blindness of those who benefit from such structures, and the complicity of those who remain indifferent and silent. Ellacuría further nuances the term “crucified” as “always crucified” to indicate that the crucifixion is not only a phenomenon that is multiform but one that is historically constant:

... Ellacuría’s “always” makes sense, especially if the crucifixion of peoples is analyzed not only in terms of their unmet basic needs but also of the ignorance and indignity to which they are condemned, the depredation of their cultures, and the aberration of relative poverty in comparison with the affluent peoples. Things change, paradigms change. But we may wonder if there is not something trans-paradigmatic, if there are not principles of evil and sinfulness that run throughout history, with a dynamic of crucifixion that takes different forms but still produces death. That is what “always” means. And apparently it does exist.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> I deliberately use the term “Third World” as against the more recent synonymous terms, e.g. Global South, Two-thirds World, etc. Consonant with EATWOT and other postcolonial academic circles, I affirm the continued validity and relevance of the term as a supra-geographical “self-designation of peoples who have been excluded from power and the authority to shape their own lives and destiny.” See Virginia Fabella, M.M. and R.S. Sugirtharajah, eds. *Dictionary of Third World Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000), pp. 202-203.

<sup>7</sup> Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), p. 7.

Second, the Christological reference naturally signals paradoxical salvific power. Understood in the light of the resurrected Christ, “crucified” connotes historical fragmentary salvation here and now in the form of solidarity and liberative praxis, vis-à-vis the hope-inspiring promise of definitive eco-human salvation in the eschatological future. Human suffering is not the last word. Third, the word “peoples” highlights the fact that although the poor are a collective, they are not faceless entities. They are, first and foremost, human beings who are courageously seeking to be artisans of their own destiny though the hard facts—economic, political, social, cultural—warrant otherwise. The crucified peoples have as much claim to *Imago Dei*, in fact, a more urgent claim, than the powerful and wealthy who have already appropriated a disproportionate slice of the world’s income and resources. That said, the term “crucified people” carries with it profound theological and anthropological dimensions. Both liberation theologies and church social teaching construe this in the audacious ethical imperative “a preferential option for the poor,” a praxically-oriented spirituality based on a profound love of God and neighbor.

#### **CINEMATIC PRINCIPLE: THIRD CINEMA**

Third Cinema shares unmistakable resonances with theologies of liberation. For one, it was a social and aesthetic movement that arose from the sociopolitical ferment in Latin America around the decades of the 1950’s and 60’s, virtually the humus from which seminal Liberation Theology developed. While this is not the space to discuss historical details of the period, it is worth noting that it was characterized by a moral reaction arising from the realization that the poor are an exploited social class, and that the neocolonial powers, forging friendships of mutual convenience with the world’s superpowers, had stopped at nothing to maintain and perpetuate the status quo. From this prism, Third Cinema may be seen as the aesthetic facet of that historical period. Argentinean filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino are credited for promoting an unapologetically partisan cinema that denounces Euro-American social, cultural, and economic imperialism. Coining the term “Third Cinema” to distinguish a cinema of Third World liberation from First Cinema (Hollywood) and Second Cinema (art and auteur cinema), Solanas and Getino recognized the power of cinema to be a goad for social change. In 1968, they lensed a film entitled *La Hora de los Hornos* (“The Hour of the Furnaces”), an intellectual montage of both shot footage and “found” footage that present a clear-eyed diagnosis of the Latin American situation, and a strident social analysis that breaks open the causes of inequality and injustice. A disavowal of the commercial view of cinema as just one more consumer good, Third Cinema is envisioned as a

revolutionary, counter-cultural cinema where “the camera is the inexhaustible expropriator of image weapons; the projector, a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second.”<sup>9</sup>

At a later turn, Ethiopian scholar Teshome Gabriel published his book *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* where he reconfigures Third Cinema as a critical theory of film based on an analysis of the link between cinematic style and the ideology that undergirds it. The linchpin for determining Third Cinema (from other political cinemas it is dialectically related to) is not the geographical Third World origin of a given film (“Third World” is understood here as a virtual geography) but its social analysis—the cinematic representation of social issues must go beyond the miserabilist exposition of strife and suffering; a line of causation that goes deeper than the symptomatic must be established. Thus, Third Cinema is “moved by the requirements of its social action, and contexted and marked by the strategy of that action.”<sup>10</sup> This brings us to the second resonance between Third Cinema and Liberation Theology: social analysis. A salient feature in both the theology and the aesthetics of liberation is the critical use of social analysis that allows for the examination of the causes of social justice, complex as that may be.

With the heuristic framework provided by the Theological Principle and Cinematic Principle, we move to the project of examining spirituality in the Uruguayan feature film *The Pope’s Toilet*.

### ***THE POPE’S TOILET***

#### *Background and Summary*

In May 1988, the charismatic Pope John Paul II visited four Latin American countries, one of which was Uruguay. Following his visit to the capital city of Montevideo, the Pope also included a sortie to the small town of Melo in Uruguay’s Gaucho region near the Brazilian border. The media initially estimated that the event would draw 50,000 people, counting an anticipated influx of pilgrims from Brazil, but actual numbers were nowhere near that projection. The residents of Melo, many of whom were poor and unemployed, were hoping to eke out a living from the crowd by putting up roadside food stalls, only having to face the tragedy

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<sup>9</sup> Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Towards a Third Cinema,” in Simon Field and Peter Sainsbury, eds. *Third World Cinema* (London: Afterimage Publishing, 1971), p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Teshome Gabriel, “Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films” in Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, eds. *Questions of Third Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1994), p. 40.

of a mountain of unsold food and depleted savings. Ironically, the Pope's brief speech alluded more to the state of labor unions in his native Poland than the concrete, day-to-day realities of the people of Melo. Then working in Germany, filmmaker Enrique Fernandez was unaware of the event until ten years later when he visited his hometown. With his town mates' wounded memories of the papal visit as departure point, he lensed *The Pope's Toilet*, a tragi-comic feature film that would find an audience in the international film festival circuit; among others, it was shortlisted in Cannes and Toronto, and won the Horizons Award at the 2007 San Sebastian Film Festival. However, the most meaningful validation of the film would come from the reception it received in Melo where the audience wept as they viewed the crushing misfortune of May 8, 1988 re-told to them on the silver screen. As Fernandez relates, "It brought that day to their minds very clearly.... I remember a teacher of mine who is now about 65 years old and he was crying like hell.... He said it was a homage to the people who worked so hard every day to bring the bread to the family's table."<sup>11</sup>

From the first few sequences of *The Pope's Toilet*, we learn that protagonist Beto (César Troncoso) is a petty smuggler, who, like a few other men in the impoverished town, scrapes a living by transporting consumer goods in and out of Brazil on a bicycle.

The town is in the middle of a planning frenzy triggered by the news of the papal visit. Bent on milking the event for all its worth, the Melo residents labor to get the food ready—chorizos, burgers, fritters, bread rolls, sweets—in time for the crowds. Scrounging around for creative ways to support his family, Beto comes up with the off-kilter idea of building a pay-per-use outhouse for tourists. Naturally, the feasibility of the project depends on the availability of funds, but he is struck with bad luck and does not clinch smuggling jobs from his usual clientele. As the time of the Papal visit nears, Beto reaches a point of desperation and strikes a risky smuggling deal with Meleyo (Nelson Lence), a notoriously corrupt customs officer. His family discovers this when Beto's daughter Silvia sees him in an illicit conversation with the officer. His wife Carmen is incensed that her husband had virtually struck a deal with the devil, and this causes the remorseful Beto to distance himself from Meleyo.

The big day approaches and the townsfolk position themselves behind their respective food stalls as they get ready for the passing tourists. At the eleventh hour, Beto takes his bike and rushes to the Brazilian border to bring back the toilet bowl for the outhouse, but time flies too fast and the Pope and his entourage arrive. Inauspiciously, on his

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Greaves, "A papal visit that pigs will never forget" in *Catholic Herald*, August 8, 2008, <http://archive.catholicherald.co.uk/article/8th-august-2008/8/a-papal-visit-that-pigs-will-never-forget> [accessed October 19, 2013].

way back, he is stopped by an incoming truck—it is Meleyo, slighted and piqued by Beto's distancing. When Beto refuses to bite the bait after Meleyo attempts to win him back, the latter verbally abuses him and confiscates his bike. He is then left with no other choice but to bear the heavy toilet bowl on his shoulders and bring it back to Melo on foot. He arrives right after the Pope had given his final blessing, and Silvia, who had been anxiously waiting with her mother, catches a glimpse of his pitiful image—dead tired and with the toilet bowl on his shoulder—on the screen of a black-and-white TV. When the toilet bowl is finally set in place, none of the tourists need to use it. Similarly, his neighbors hardly make a decent sale as the size of the crowd was dramatically smaller than estimated. The whole town reels in the aftermath of the economic disaster, but soon after, their spirits are sustained by their usual good humor and neighborly support.

### *The Crucified People of Melo*

In the film's opening, the camera tracks the shadows cast on a dirt road by moving bicycle wheels; Beto and his companions are each carrying packages of goods on their bikes and are shown pedaling through the hills to avoid the checkpoint at the Brazil-Uruguay border. When they receive advance warning that the border patrol truck is in pursuit, Beto manages to hide behind a rock; some of them, however, are caught. A gun-toting Meleyo, the customs officer, subjects them to verbal harassment before confiscating a bottle of whiskey and driving away. As the bikers continue in their journey, wide-angle shots of an untamed landscape of dirt roads, grasslands, and rocky hills, emphasize the arduous distance they have to traverse just to bring each of their small cargo of goods back to Melo in exchange for some income. They are nickel-and-dime smugglers who have to pedal some 60 km. (37.2 miles) back and forth each trip for a pittance. Close-up shots reveal the bikers' strained, sun-beaten faces, visual canvasses that outline a hard life. Reprised at several points in the film, the border-crossing scene becomes a leitmotiv that emphasizes the constancy of the characters' struggle to survive amid the harsh realities of life.

Living from hand to mouth, Beto hands over his earnings to his wife, who immediately sends their daughter Silvia to the grocery store to purchase basic food items. *Mise-en-scène* further establishes the social location of Beto's family—their house, which is located in an unpaved, low-income neighborhood, is a concrete shack with crude, decrepit interiors.

The representation of the toilsome day-to-day existence of Beto, his family, and the Melo community, meaningfully bridges with the description of the poor as the crucified peoples; they are impaled on the

cross of social inequality, unemployment, and poverty, and this is further compounded by the burden of revilement and humiliation meted out to them by abusive local government officials who perpetuate a system of corruption and oppression. Widening the aperture, this is, in fact, indicative of the kind of oppressive suffering borne by many other marginalized peoples in the Third World. Gustavo Gutierrez presents a chilling litany that puts this crucifixion in concrete terms:

A thousand little things: lacks of every type, abuses and contempt suffered, tortured lives in search of work, incredible ways of making a living or more exactly a crumb of bread, petty quarrels, family separations, illness no longer existent at other social levels, malnutrition and infant mortality, substandard payment for their work or merchandise, total disorientation as to what is most necessary for them and their families, delinquency by abandonment or despair, loss of their own cultural values.<sup>12</sup>

It is within a similar cruel context that the Melo residents have planned to gamble everything that they have to sell food in time for the arrival of Pope John Paul II, who, they hope, would haul-in the miraculous catch of fish in the form of the hungry multitude. They are hoping for an economic miracle, if not a spiritual one.

Bringing its social analysis to sharper relief, the film problematizes the plight of the unemployed community through the actions and decisions of the film's protagonist. There is symbolic importance in Beto's absurdist choice of a pay-per-use toilet as a means to earn a living. The toilet is a blunt visual trope that averts any cinematic palliative. It serves to dramatize the desperation of a man who has been pushed to the edge of his wits in the quest for daily bread. Yet seen from another angle, it also functions as that one symbol of hopeful defiance against the conspiracy of forces that threaten to diminish Beto's human dignity and that of his family.

When seen from the perspective of Ellacuría, Beto's toilet could also be understood as a graphic symbol of prophetic-liberating denunciation; it functions as "an inverted mirror in which a disfigured image shows the truth that the First World seeks to hide or dissemble."<sup>13</sup> The "disfigured image" of Beto as a desperate man depending on a jerrybuilt toilet for livelihood will never figure in the sphere of reality of

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<sup>12</sup> Jon Sobrino draws from Gustavo Gutierrez' *Beber en su Propio Pozo* (Lima: CEP, 1971) in *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, trans. Robert C. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> As discussed in Sobrino, *No Salvation outside the Poor*, p. 5.

the world's affluent; the very idea of it becomes scandalous, if not ironically comical. As an inverted mirror, the toilet serves as a cinematic critique of First World scotosis, a systematic hardening of the heart that refuses to acknowledge the reality of structural evil and its implications for the weakest links of the global community. Even more poignant is the resonance between Beto's toilet in the film and Ellacuría's disquieting use of the metaphor of "coproanalysis,"<sup>14</sup> the medical examination of human excrement, to illustrate in dramatic fashion how a critical reflection on the existence of crucified peoples works to diagnose "the true state of health of the First World." In its allusive connection with coproanalysis, Beto's toilet exposes, at one and the same time, the great chasm that separates the Global North from the Global South, and, conversely, their fundamental connectedness and co-responsibility as integral members of one human ecumene. Again, the film's social analysis plumbs deeper into a hermeneutics of suspicion: the coproanalysis connoted in the central symbol of Beto's toilet further poses the question of whether there is also a real disjunction between the institutional church on one hand, and the Church of the poor on the other. This pivotal question is already alluded to in the film's very title—*The Pope's Toilet*.

### *Disjunction*

There are two nodal points in the dramatic arc of *The Pope's Toilet*: first is the much-hyped actual visit of Pope John Paul II; second is the suspenseful arrival of Beto and his toilet bowl in time for the crowd. I first draw attention to the former.

Whether for economic or spiritual reasons, there is a sense of great anticipation among the Melo residents in the few moments prior to the Pope's arrival. While Uruguay is known to be the most secular of the Latin American countries, the film suggests that there are signs of a living Catholic faith in Melo. This finds particular representation in the character of Beto's wife Carmen, who is shown praying and making frequent references to divine providence.

The scenes of the Pope's arrival and address are rendered in actual documentary footage fused with the fictional scenes of the film. The juxtaposition of history and story to create social commentary is a stylistic strategy associated with Third Cinema aesthetics and is most apparent in Tomas Gutierrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarrollo* ("Memories of Underdevelopment," Cuba, 1968). The documentary footage underscore both the historical verity of the Papal visit and real-life context of the story. Aboard his Pope Mobile, John Paul II emerges in grainy images from a television broadcast; ironically, he appears as a distant figure to

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Silvia and Carmen who are awaiting Beto's return, and to the Melo residents who are selling food by the roadside. Extra-diegetically, we the viewers also share the optic of the characters by extension. The Pontiff is so near and yet so far. Semiotically, the distance created by the documentary footage works as an audiovisual rendering of the disjunction between the Pope's message and the real struggles of the Melo community. The film only shows snippets of the address itself but an examination of the actual text reveals that the message was a general exhortation on the value of human work as drawn from his 1981 social encyclical *Laborem Exercens*:

Labor is not, therefore, something that people should perform solely to earn a living; it is a human dimension that can and should be sanctified to bring to human beings the full realization of their vocation as creatures made in the image and likeness of God.<sup>15</sup>

The Pope also extols Uruguayan women, mothers in particular, for their role as guardians of the faith in Latin America.

While the speech, as a theological treatise on human work, is noble and earnest, it does not represent the response of a listening church, a church attuned to the reality of wide-scale unemployment the Melo community struggles with daily on the ground. The only real acknowledgement of the Melo situation is a short mention in section 2 of the text where the Pope, referring to Matthew 20:1 in a vague, appropriated sense, says "... the Lord is not indifferent to the fate of those who are unemployed, waiting to be hired to work." The speech offers no direct pastoral reflection on the toilsome struggle of the unemployed who have resorted to incredible ways to earn a crumb of bread at the risk of their dignity as bearers of *Imago Dei*. Instead, the Pope focused more on the role of workers and the Church's support for trade unions—a tacit reference to the wave of organized strikes in his native Poland rather than the situation of the Melo community. As noted earlier, Taylor comments on the disjunction between the answers offered by the Church as an institution vis-à-vis the questions arising from the concrete realities of the lives of its members: "Any church which has so many pat and ready-made answers, and so little sense of the enigmas of existence is not likely to

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<sup>15</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Homília del Santo Padre Juan Pablo II: Melo (Uruguay) Domingo 8 de mayo de 1988" in *The Vatican Website*, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/homilies/1988/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_19880508\\_melo\\_sp.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19880508_melo_sp.html) [accessed October 19, 2013].

appear plausible to seekers today....”<sup>16</sup> Because of the shortfall of a question-answer correlation, the speech touches down cold, like steel on bare skin. It is worth emphasizing that the film does not spell out in any literal manner what Beto’s family and the Melo community expected to hear from the Pope; that said, the disjunction is clearly represented in cinematic language. When the Pope’s message reaches its conclusion, we see the look of disappointment on the faces of the Melo residents as they query, “That’s it?” Besides that, the very eloquence of the portrayal of their struggles becomes the theological interlocution, precisely, as a *via negativa*; like smoke to a fire, this draws a clear link to what a pastoral response from a listening, kenotic Church, ought to be.

Referring further to the Pope’s message as it is presented in the film, I propose that a liberationist understanding of Trinitarian theology can offer a clarifying lens for examining and interpreting the disjunction. His voice booming over the loudspeakers, the Pope begins his speech with the sign of the cross in Spanish: “*En el nombre del Padre, y del Hijo, y del Espíritu Santo....*” (“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...”), and bookends it with a sung Trinitarian blessing that has roots in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christian liturgy, “*Que la bendicion de Dios Todopoderoso, Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo, descienda sobre vosotros ahora y para siempre....*” (“May the blessings of the Almighty God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—descend upon you now and forevermore”). The mystery of the Triune God carries profound soteriological meaning expressed in authentic relationality—God is not a static, solitary being but “a self-giving communion of love.”<sup>17</sup> The renewed significance of the Greek term *perichoresis*, which is rooted in the theology of St. John Damascene of the Eastern Church, provides vivid language to describe the authentic relationality between the three persons of the Trinity in what can be imaginatively construed as the “divine dance,”<sup>18</sup> a kinetic and permanent interpenetration. *Perichoresis* suggests that this divine dance is the choreography of God’s love for humanity and for all creation so that what is shared in the dance is the very inner life of God. In the words of Karl Rahner, “The immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity, and the

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<sup>16</sup> Taylor, “The Church Speaks—To Whom?” in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, ed. Charles Taylor, et al., p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York and London: Continuum, 2007), p. 202.

<sup>18</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna describes the metaphor of dance as an effective image for *perichoresis*: “Choreography suggests the partnership of movement, symmetrical but not redundant, as each dancer expresses and at the same time fulfills him/herself towards the other . . . one fluid motion of encircling, encompassing, permeating, enveloping, outstretching.” *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 271-272. See also Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, p. 202.

economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity.”<sup>19</sup> Liberation theology draws attention to an understanding of the Trinitarian *perichoresis* as the dynamic principle at the heart of the call for a spirituality based on an option for the poor. “Spirituality is purely and simply a participation in God’s own history, history as assumed by God in Christ and the Spirit.”<sup>20</sup> While a Trinitarian blessing necessarily evinces a commitment and a call to participate in the dance of the Triune God, it also poses a practical question for the Church—“What does it mean for the poor to believe in the Trinity?”<sup>21</sup> In order to reflect on how *The Pope’s Toilet* engages this question, it is necessary to continue the exploration of the film’s meaningful stylistic layers.

#### *A Perichoretic Spirituality of Liberation*

In *The Pope’s Toilet*, an overt expression of Catholic spirituality is apparent when members of the Melo community gather for the Papal address and collectively perform the sign of the cross as they participate in prayer. A number of scenes that portray Beto’s family in close fellowship with their neighbors—sharing meals, earning a living together, mutually offering support to each other—indicate that there is a concrete referent substantiating this collective gesture; they are, *de facto*, a community in prayer.

As mentioned earlier, a more incisive representation of spirituality is evident on a granular level in the words and actions of the character of Beto’s wife Carmen. In one scene, when Carmen and Silvia pass by a church as they discuss the latter’s plans to study broadcast media, she reminds her daughter to “cross herself,” a popular practice in a number of Third World Catholic countries. When Beto needs to make a trip to the border despite an injured knee, Carmen lights a candle before the family altar and prays the Hail Mary. As she proceeds to say a personal prayer for Beto’s safety and offers thanks to God, a parallel scene shows Beto and his neighbor-friend Valvulina in yet another one of their smuggling trips. For Carmen, her family’s chances of obtaining a better lot in life depend on faith in divine providence.

In another instance, Carmen and Beto imagine how they would spend the anticipated profits from the toilet. Using kernels of corn to

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<sup>19</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1997), p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> Jon Sobrino comments on Gustavo Gutierrez’ Trinitarian understanding of liberation spirituality in *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, p. 52.

<sup>21</sup> Leonardo Boff, “Trinity” in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, eds. Leonardo Boff and Ignacio Ellacuría (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), p. 77.

stand-in for the cash they hope will soon land in their hands, the couple apportion their imaginary money according to their wish list—fix the roof, pave the pathway around the house, build a chicken coop, buy a new radio and batteries for Silvia. At one point, Beto asks Carmen what she wants for herself, and her gentle reply is sobering in its frugality: “Buy me some starch.” The real weight hidden in her answer is revealed when Carmen, in a hushed tone that is careful not to injure her husband’s fragile enthusiasm, shares that they need 2,000 pesos (about U.S. \$100) to pay for their electricity bill. The incremental dampening of their hopeful mood is subtly but unmistakably portrayed in the scene, but Beto refuses to accord the last word to their financial burden and insists that the bill will be paid. “God will help us,” he asserts. Carmen’s response reveals the unambiguous depth of her spirituality; she speaks as a theological interlocutor and remarks, “If God does not help the poor, who does he help?” The use of close-up shots make the scene poignant and personal; Carmen and Beto’s faces become thresholds of an inner and an outer, a wounded hope radiates from within even as the reality of mounting expenses threaten to cloud their resolve to find a light at the end of the tunnel. It is in this family’s audacious refusal to acquiesce to despair where spirituality, understood in an expanded, liberationist sense, can be found.

Edward Schillebeeckx’s conception of “negative contrast experiences” offers an illuminating lens for an understanding of a spirituality that arises paradoxically from human suffering. Schillebeeckx argues that the *humanum*—the vision of full human flourishing that is based on the ancient biblical symbol of *Imago Dei*—is not antecedently served to us on a silver platter, it is a dialectical reality, a noble goal to be sought after and struggled for within the reality of an ecumene of suffering. Where then is God’s presence in the human experience of unjust suffering? In a negative contrast experience, “God is the source of creative dissatisfaction with all that is less than God’s vision of humanity.”<sup>22</sup> Human suffering then, though unquestionably a negative “mis-experience,” becomes the very oil that kindles a praxis of resistance and protest against multi-form suffering and its causes. That said, God’s presence is not a static concept but a kinetic, liberative force.

I seek to identify moments in the cinematic narrative of *The Pope’s Toilet* that lay down a bridge for a resonant parallel with negative contrast experiences. Furthermore, I propose that the resonances with negative contrast experiences may be understood as a profound spirituality of the crucified people when interpreted within the frame of the Trinitarian principle of *perichoresis*.

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<sup>22</sup> Mary Catherine Hilbert, “‘Grace-Optimism’: The Spirituality at the Heart of Schillebeeckx’s Theology” in *Spirituality Today* 44 (1991), pp. 220-239.

The three characters that make up the family in focus—Beto, Carmen, and Silvia—share a certain audacity, a determined insistence on hope though the facts warrant despair, and this meaningfully resonates with Schillebeeckx's negative contrast experiences. As earlier discussed, one such reference to a negative contrast experience is Carmen's faith in divine providence in the face of her family's financial difficulties, and this is evidenced by her spontaneous, deceptively simple religiosity that expresses her Catholic spirituality. In the character of Beto, the negative contrast experience is seen not so much as an overt expression of spirituality but as a dogged refusal to accede to the various forces that threaten to destroy his optimistic spirit. This is apparent in the border crossing scenes where Beto, along with his co-sojourners, manages to find guileless humor and good cheer in the face of some very trying situations. In one scene, Beto and Valvulina engage in a good-natured bike race as they pedal toward the border while an uplifting musical score works to infuse an almost doxological spirit to the scene. Although Beto's human dignity had been subjected to the onslaught of oppressive forces, a sanguine outlook continues to seethe and bubble through it all. Beto's imaginativeness can also be interpreted as a representation of a negative contrast experience. In thinking of ways to earn a living, his ideas are outlandish but defiantly intrepid; Beto matches the burdens he is forced to bear on his shoulders with the capacity not only to endure them but to outwit them. The most powerful symbolic representation of a negative contrast experience in the film can be drawn from Beto's decision to build a toilet for the Papal visit. Enough has been said about how this tragic-comic turn resonates with Ellacuría's "reverse mirror" and "coproanalysis," but to look into its spiritual connotation it is necessary to follow the contours of the cinematic narrative and patiently arrive at an understanding drawn from a layering of meaning.

I propose that the point of view of Silvia serves as the hermeneutical lens for revealing the spirituality inflected in what I term as, for all intents and purposes, the "praxis of Beto." First, it is helpful to establish that negative contrast experience is also apparent in Silvia's character when she refuses to let go of her dream to become a news reporter even when she is fully aware that her family does not have the means to send her to the capital city of Montevideo for studies. She is also aware that her mother has been saving money so she could study to be a seamstress; in a couple of scenes, Silvia makes it clear to Carmen that while she will do no such thing as she is bent on going to Montevideo to pursue her dream. In addition, she protests her father's coaxing that she assist him in his smuggling trips, arguing that she will not play the role of smuggler's apprentice. Cinematically, Silvia's capacity to imagine an alternative reality, one that is more liberating and life-affirming, is represented by the visual leitmotiv of glass. When she looks outward from a window pane

and sees Beto out in the rain, contemplating on a business to put up for the papal visit, she is concerned that her father might get sick. “He’s going to catch a cold,” she exclaims.

It is interesting to note that in contrast, she catches Beto striking an illicit deal with the corrupt customs officer Meleyo as she looks out from the glass-less frame of a broken window. In the context of its semiotic function in the film, the glass pane may be construed as a symbol of Silvia’s spirituality in the sense that it is the optic through which she sees fragments of grace in a milieu that is freighted with uncertainty and contradiction. She sees what is praise-worthy and godly about her father, notwithstanding the contrasting view she gets from a glass-less window that exposes the disappointing image of Beto in his frailties and moral ambiguity as a smuggler.

The glass leitmotiv also appears in the form of the television screen that offers a different mode of seeing from the view of a transparent window. When it broadcasts images, the opaque TV screen becomes a portal, albeit a virtual one, that crystallizes Silvia’s possibilities before her eyes. In a couple of scenes, Silvia watches news coverage of the preparations for the Papal visit from a black-and-white TV and imagines conducting the interviews herself. She sees her dream of becoming a news reporter mirrored back to her. Through the shadows that threaten to cloud the fulfillment of Silvia’s vision for her own future, the TV screen had become a light at the end of the tunnel.

Returning to the task of examining the spiritual valence of Beto’s toilet as negative contrast experience, I point to the climactic turn in the film when he is in a frantic rush to make it back to town in time for the Papal visit. To recall, Beto was stalled by an unwelcome encounter with the vindictive Meleyo who mercilessly confiscates his bike and leaves him with no other choice but to bring the toilet bowl back on foot. The sequence that follows is tortured and painful—bearing the dead weight of the toilet bowl on his shoulder, an exhausted Beto musters all his strength to make it back to town, literally, one step at a time (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** From *The Pope’s Toilet* (©2009 Film Movement)

Intercutting scenes of the Pope's speech, just at the point when he offers the Trinitarian blessing, only works as painful irony, like salt added to an open wound. If there is any Trinitarian reference to the disjunction between the Church on one side, and the plight of Beto and the unemployed of Melo on the other, it can only be the spiritual and ethical imperative for genuine *perichoresis*, thus far, scarcely realized. In its sheer visceral power and force of meaning, Beto's *via dolorosa* serves as the central icon of *The Pope's Toilet*.

The true import of the scene is revealed when it is seen through the eyes of Silvia, who is watching the conclusion of the Pope's speech from a small black-and-white TV set up outdoors by their neighbor. The young girl spots a conspicuous figure struggling through the dispersing crowd—it is her father, carrying his cross in the form of a toilet bowl (Figure 2).

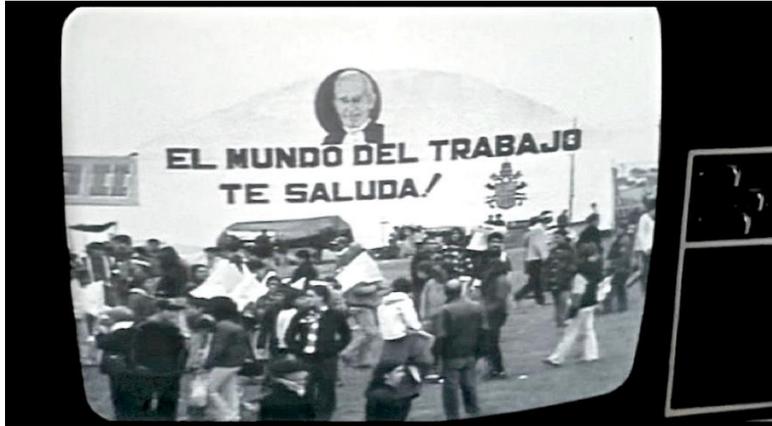


Figure 2 From *The Pope's Toilet* (©2009 Film Movement)

The painterly image produced by cinematography, mise-en-scène, and composition of the *via dolorosa* scene unfolding on the TV screen recall traditional representations of Jesus' passion found in religious art such as the 16<sup>th</sup> Century painting *Christus draagt het kruis* ("Christ carrying the cross") by the Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch. The Christic reference ennobles the tremendous sacrifices Beto makes as a father who truly loves his family. In a profound liminal moment of heartbreaking humiliation and sacrificial love, Silvia's father had inadvertently imaged the cross-bearing Nazarene. It is important to remember that this is the point of view of Silvia; close-up shots reveal the tears welling up in her eyes as she sees her father in a different light, interestingly, by way of the very TV screen that had reflected her own dream.

In contrast, the sole papal affirmation of Beto's sacrifice comes incidentally by way of mise-en-scène. As the TV coverage shows Beto's *via dolorosa*, a huge billboard looms conspicuously in the background—

emblazoned is a portrait of Pope John Paul II and a message of welcome meant for him: “*El Mundo del Trabajo te Saluda!*” / “The working world salutes you!” (Figure 3). Because the affirmation had issued from sheer coincidence and an inadvertent reversal of meaning, it is dissonant, or at best, bittersweet.



**Figure 3** From *The Pope's Toilet* (©2009 Film Movement)

The representation of the small family around which the film's story revolves—the interrelationship between Beto, his wife Carmen, and their daughter Silvia—is the hermeneutical ingress into the link between negative contrast experiences and a Trinitarian *perichoresis*. We established that each of the characters evince negative contrast experiences as they struggle to find hope and dignity under the weight of the cross of poverty. But they are not simply beings-in-themselves but beings-in-relation. At the heart of the family's struggle is authentic community; collectively, they represent the crucified peoples who are caught in the dance of life, upholding one another other through the *via dolorosa* of poverty. In a fragile *perichoresis* of negative contrast experiences, they form a faint but earnest reflection of the face of the Triune God who is pure and perfect communion.

*Epilogue: Advent of the Kenotic Church*

What does it mean for the poor to believe in the Trinity? It is more than a matter of professing a dogmatic truth and managing to understand its terms. It is also a matter of an existential actualization of the mystery of communion, so that

people may be concretely helped to live their humanity in a fuller and freer way.<sup>23</sup>

Journeying through the creative crossings between Theology/Spirituality and the film *The Pope's Toilet* offers imaginative insight on the quest for renewed ways of being Church in the light of the continued existence of the “always crucified” who bear the stigmata of poverty and marginalization. Four salient points may be distilled from the exploration:

- Affirming theologies of liberation, the historical, concrete experience of the crucified peoples is the locus for understanding a spirituality that is relevant for a Third World ecumene of suffering.
- A spirituality of the crucified peoples shares significant resonances with negative contrast experiences, the protest and resistance against situations that perpetuate unjust suffering, and the prophetic-liberating unmasking of their structural causes.
- In the spirituality of crucified peoples, negative contrast experiences are not so much an individual, privatized phenomenon, but a profoundly communitarian journey based on a faith in the God of life and a sacrificial love for one another.
- In view of the points mentioned, a spirituality of the crucified peoples may be described in Trinitarian terms as a “*perichoresis* of negative contrast experiences.”

For a Catholic Church that has its nerve center in Europe, these reflection points may be understood as a challenge—a call for a more authentic participation in the Trinitarian *perichoresis* that can only come from compassionate listening, and a more audacious option for the poor. Indeed, it is the continuing call for Christ-like kenosis.

The wind of change ushered in by Pope Francis and his personal witness of simplicity, sensitivity, and true solidarity for the poor and marginalized, offers compelling testimony that the Church has moved to take these challenges to heart. In a strikingly redemptive parallel to the 1988 Papal visit to Melo, Pope Francis recently visited the immigrant welcome center in Cagliari in the island of Sardinia, which is reeling from an unemployment crisis. In an unparalleled move, the Pope discards his prepared speech and chooses to share a personal message of solidarity to

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<sup>23</sup> Boff, “Trinity” in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, p. 77.

the unemployed migrants, many of whom were in their youth.<sup>24</sup> He first traces his own personal history in Argentina as the son of unemployed parents himself, and then shares a self-reflexive critique of empty speeches, and a sincere word of encouragement:

My father went to Argentina when he was a young man, full of hopes and dreams at the thought of going to America and instead he was faced with the Thirties crisis. They lost everything, there was no work.... I know about this suffering but I tell you, don't give up. I am well aware I need to do all that I can to ensure that my words of encouragement don't just sound like pretty words, that they don't just look like the kind of polite smile you get from an employee, an employee of the Church who comes and tells you not to stick in there. No, this is not what I want. I want you to feel courage on the inside and let it inspire you to do everything. I have to do this as a shepherd and as a man: we have to face this historical challenge together, in an intelligent way.

At one point in his message, he makes direct reference to what he himself had heard from the ground. Here, Pope Francis identifies the core issue of human dignity, but does so in a tone of pastoral humility:

One of you told me that this suffering takes away your strength, it takes away your hope. This suffering is caused by unemployment and leads you—forgive me to use such strong words but I speak the truth—to feel that your life lacks dignity. Where there is no work, there is no dignity

He then launches into a prophetic-liberating denunciation of a global economic system that has sacrificed human beings at the altar of profit.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> All text quotations of Pope Francis' message are from Giacomo Galieazzi, "Francis' message to the unemployed: 'Where there is no work, there is no dignity'" in *Vatican Insider*, September 22, 2013, <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/the-vatican/detail/articolo/francesco-francis-francisco-28028/> (accessed [accessed November 9, 2013]).

<sup>25</sup> In his latest apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis denounces a "throw away" culture that objectifies human beings as mere consumer goods and "leftovers." He issues a critique of the free market economy and the false promise of trickle-down theories that continue to perpetuate indifference and inequality. "To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed." *Evangelii Gaudium* n. 54, November 24, 2013, <http://www.vatican>.

We must pray for “work, work, work.” Work means dignity, it means putting food on the table, loving. By defending an idol-worshiping economic system that encourages a culture of waste, we neglect our grandparents and young people. We must say “no” to this culture of waste, we must say “we want a fair system that allows everyone to progress.” We must say, “we don’t want this globalised economic system that is so harmful to us.” Men and women should be at the centre, just as God wanted. Not money.

The denouement of the Pope’s address is an exhortation told in a way that is rarely heard, if at all, in traditional papal speeches. Using the vivid image of a community helping each other to blow the ash in order to keep the embers of hope glowing, Pope Francis, emphasizes the dialectical gift-and-demand character of praxis:

I wrote down some things I wanted to tell you, but now that you are here in front of me, these words came to my head and I wanted to share with you. I will send a written copy of what I was going to say to the bishop, but right now I want to tell you this: It’s easy to say “don’t lose hope,” but to all those with or without a job, I say “don’t let your hope be taken away from you. Hope could be like burning embers underneath the ash. Let’s help each other by blowing on the ash. Hope helps us move on. That’s not optimism, it’s something else. We all have to nurture hope. It’s ours, yours, everyone’s; that is why I tell you not to let your hope be taken from you. But we need to be clever because the Lord tells us that idols are cleverer than us. He encourages us to be smart like snakes but good like doves. We need to be clever and tell things like they are. At the moment there is an idol at the centre of our economic and life system and this will not do. Let us all fight together to put family and people at the centre and move forward. Don’t let your hope be taken away from you.

In its clear and purposeful emphasis on the praxical character of hope as something that the community and the family need to defend and struggle for in the face of a global economic system that obviates it, Pope Francis’ message represents a prophetic-liberating call that meaningfully resonates with a *perichoresis* of negative contrast experiences.

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[va/holy\\_father/francesco/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium\\_en.html](http://va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html) [accessed November 30, 2013].

It is what Beto, his family, the Melo community, and the actual crucified peoples they represent, needed to hear in 1988, and need to hear today. It is the voice of the kenotic church.

## CHAPTER IV

# PLURAL SPIRITUALITIES AND DUAL RELIGIOUS BELONGING

CLAUDE MARIE BARBOUR AND ROBERT SCHREITER

### DUAL RELIGIOUS BELONGING AS A CHRISTIAN PROBLEM

One feature of plural spiritualities that has come much more into awareness in North America and Europe has been dual or multiple religious belonging. This designation covers a wide range of phenomena, wherein individuals practice, and consider themselves part of more than one religion or spiritual tradition. The extent and degree to which this is the case—it may be a matter of borrowing some practices from another tradition all the way to “passing over”<sup>1</sup> into the other tradition and then returning again—varies greatly.

Focused interest in dual religious belonging in the West dates from the middle of the twentieth century. A number of European monastic figures—most notably, Henri LeSaux (1910-1973) and Bede Griffiths (1906-1993)—departed from their Benedictine abbeys for India, where they took up the ways of Hindu spiritual traditions. They remained in this dual state for the rest of their lives. They both reflected extensively on how they were part of their two traditions, admitting to the complexity of these relationships and how they could shift over time. Although he never spent extended periods of time among Zen Buddhists, the American Trappist Thomas Merton (1915-1968) felt more and more drawn into Buddhist traditions toward the end of his life.<sup>2</sup>

In the latter half of the 1960s, two other phenomena intertwined to bring dual religious belonging even more to the fore in Western society. One was the Hart-Celler Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. For the United States, it abolished quotas of immigrants based on nationality and, for the first time, allowed people from Asia to immigrate to the U.S. more freely. These immigrants brought with them their spiritual traditions. This led to a widespread interest in and experimentation with Asian spiritual traditions. The other phenomenon arising at about the same time was what came to be called New Age. “New Age” (referring to the change of the astrological sign to the new “Age of Aquarius”) is an

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<sup>1</sup> The term was first used by John Dunne. See especially his *The Way of All the Earth: Experiments in Truth and Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> See his *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968).

amalgam of older Western hermetic and theosophical traditions with admixtures of contemporary religious movements. New Age spiritualities also borrowed from those immigrant Asian traditions. They likewise borrowed from Native American traditions, notably shamanistic elements.<sup>3</sup>

Devotees of the New Age Movement have typically borrowed freely from these traditions to fashion their own ways of belonging. This borrowing and constructing have been criticized by leaders in some of the traditions who have been the object of such actions. The leaders of U.S. and Canadian Lakota Nations issued a strong condemnation of such borrowings in 1993.<sup>4</sup> The Roman Catholic Church issued a similar strong critique of these practices in 2003.<sup>5</sup>

Great efforts have been made to develop typologies or classifications of forms of dual belonging. These have been principally from a Global North and a Christian perspective. One such classification suggested three broad forms. The first form of dual religious belonging has the two traditions being practiced side by side, with the integrity of each being observed. This is frequently seen in places such as Africa or the Americas where evangelization has brought Christianity but indigenous traditions were not eradicated. They are maintained by those colonized as acts of resistance, or because the translocal Christian faith does not attend or address adequately local concerns.<sup>6</sup> A second form has one tradition being followed in its integrity, but with elements selected from the second tradition. These selected elements may or may not transform the main tradition significantly. An historical example would be what James Russell called the “Germanization of early medieval Christianity,” where elements of pre-Christian Germanic practices were incorporated into the Roman liturgy and became standard for the Western

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<sup>3</sup> See for example the popular and controversial writings of Carlos Castaneda: *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); *A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1971); *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> “Declaration of War against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality,” *Eyapaha*, no. 22 (June 10, 1993). See also James Fenelon, *Culturicide, Resistance and Survival of the Lakota (“Sioux Nation”)* (New York: Garland Publications, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Jesus Christ as the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the New Age* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> See for example Manuel Marzal, *The Indian Face of God in Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

Church.<sup>7</sup> A third form can be found in East and South Asia, among Christian minorities. There Buddhism and Confucianism (and in some instances, Taoism) are so deeply interwoven into the culture that one wonders whether one can be Christian without also being Buddhist or something else.<sup>8</sup>

These three very broad forms of classification do not begin to capture the complexity of dual religious belonging, although they have generated a good deal of further questions and reflection on the matter.<sup>9</sup> They are raised from a Christian perspective—i.e., a religious tradition that maintains firm boundaries as part of its identity. Efforts at a more nuanced approach to dual religious belonging from a Christian perspective have continued to appear.<sup>10</sup>

### **DUAL RELIGIOUS BELONGING AS A GLOBAL RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON**

For Christians in general, and Roman Catholics in particular, the challenge of dual religious belonging has to be considered today not only from a specifically Christian perspective, but also along the axes of two wider perspectives. The first is an examination of how dual religious belonging occurs between other religious traditions and from other religious perspectives that may include Christianity as well. Here Asia is a special site of research, since it is in Asia that all the great translocal religious traditions were born and where they have continued to interact through centuries of history. What constitutes what the West calls “religion”<sup>11</sup> comes into focus in a different way from the perspective of the religions of India, of Buddhism in all its forms, of Islam, and the philosophical traditions of China. Taking Japan as an example: for decades religious census-taking in that country has always yielded more religious adherents than members of the population. People will readily admit of following Shinto and Buddhist traditions, and often Christianity as well. Recent historical studies have shown profound interaction

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<sup>7</sup> James Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> See on this matter Raimun Panikkar, *The Intra-religious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> They are from Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), pp. 148-151.

<sup>10</sup> Most notably, Gideon Goosen, *Hyphenated Christians: Towards a Better Understanding of Dual Religious Belonging* (Bern: Peter Lange, 2011) and Paul Knitter, *Without Buddha I Would Not Be a Christian* (London: Oneworld, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> See Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

between Buddhism and Islam in Central Asia—often to an astonishing degree.<sup>12</sup> If Catholicism wishes to call itself a world Church, it needs to come into dialogue with these other approaches and practices of dual religious belonging. It should not embrace them uncritically, but patiently seek what it might learn about their construals of religious belonging. Such notions of religious belonging have to cope too with history, and the varieties of contextualizations that Christianity has experienced throughout two millennia.

The other axis of perspective on dual religious belonging must be along local, specific instances of such belonging. Rather than hoping to begin with all-embracing classifications, this more inductive approach is likely to reveal the motives, the histories, and the syntheses that practitioners of dual religious belonging develop out of their personal experience. Such close investigations may yield questions and perspectives that pre-set classifications obscure or ignore.

This chapter hopes to contribute to understandings of dual religious belonging amid a plurality of spiritualities by focusing upon this second axis, of specific and local understandings of what it means to belong to two religious traditions. It will explore the experience of two people who find themselves as belonging to two religious traditions—Christian and Native American. In the first instance, we will listen to the voice of a Native American who rediscovers his Native roots as he prepared for priesthood in the Episcopal Church. In the second, we will hear the voice of a man of European descent who, as an anthropologist and Episcopal priest, comes to belong in both Christian and Native traditions, achieving a synthesis of the two.

### **FRANCIS WHITE LANCE: THE JOURNEY HOME**

Francis White Lance is an Oglala Lakota. He is the son of an Episcopal priest, who is also a Native, and grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. There he learned virtually nothing about Lakota spiritual traditions, since it was Government and Church policy to eradicate Native culture, language and spiritual ways so as to “Westernize” Native people and assimilate them into the dominant White culture. For Native peoples most everywhere, their spiritual traditions cannot be disengaged from the totality of their way of life. To remove

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<sup>12</sup> John Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). The author explores, among other things, the iconic meeting of Altan Khan and Sonyam Gyatso. This Muslim-Buddhist encounter led to the tradition of the Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhism. Elverskog, pp. 206-207.

those spiritual traditions is to destroy their culture and their value systems as well.

While a student at seminary in the Chicago area—in training to become an Episcopal priest—he received an invitation from Claude Marie Barbour to speak to her class about his culture and spirituality. This occasion sparked his interest in his own traditions, and led him to explore these traditions ever more deeply. Under the guidance of significant Lakota leaders, he became a Christian practitioner of traditional Lakota spirituality. He became a leader of the Sun Dance and in the ways of the Sacred Pipe. He has gone on to become a spiritual teacher to many on his reservation, so that they might embrace their own history and spiritual ways. He has also written about his experience.<sup>13</sup>

The spiritual lives of many Native Americans have been grievously harmed by insensitive and unreflective policies and actions by Christian missionaries and pastors. Opportunities for them to retrieve Native traditions of spirituality are often discouraged or blocked altogether. Francis White Lance's spiritual journey to recover his own traditions is powerful testimony to the suffering that has been caused and the pain that endures as Native Americans strive to find a way to combine Native and Christian traditions. For some, it has meant wholesale rejection of Christianity. For others, it has brought conflict and division into their own families about how to engage and follow two traditions.

Eleanor Doidge conducted a telephone interview with him.<sup>14</sup> Francis White Lance identifies himself as an Anglican-Catholic priest who is also a Medicine Man, a Sun Dance Leader. When asked if there were other ways he should be identified, he said, "My uncle Leonard Crow Dog calls me a scholar for the Lakota Way of Life."

Is it complicated to live according to two ways? His reply: "I have chosen to not make it complicated. I don't see anything different if I say I am a Christian or I am a Traditionalist. It is just a tradition or traditions that I am living by. It is two rich traditions." Are the traditions operative for him at the same time—say, does he think of Jesus when leading a Sun Dance or sweat lodge? "I don't act as a Christian when I am leading a Sun Dance. I am following a tradition that is thousands of years old so I don't think about Christianity at all, nor do I think about it in the sweat lodge."

So when does he think of himself as a Christian?

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<sup>13</sup> See *Why the Black Hills are Sacred: A Unified Theory of the Lakota Sundance* (Rapid City, SD: Ancestors Incorporated, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> April 3 and 8, 2013. Dr. Doidge taught for many years at Catholic Theological Union, until her retirement. She has known Francis White Lance for more than twenty years through her work with Shalom Ministries.

When I am asked to do a baptism, or Last Rites then I follow the Christian tradition and I don't mix the two. Then I am a priest, not a Medicine Man. I don't have a church that I am responsible for, but I am under a bishop. He is aware of what I do and he will tell me if he thinks I am going too far. He is perfectly fine with my being a Medicine Man. It is the same God. The same God... It is the same God and there are two different ways of worshipping God and living out that way of believing in God. They are together in me, but I do not practice them together. The other thing this is important to me is if I talk about Christianity, my lifestyle better show it. So if I say I am Christian, then I better be like a Christian. If I say I am a Traditionalist, then I better be like one too. You won't find me in a bar or things like that. Being a Christian and a Traditionalist—both ask that I be a role model, that my lifestyle reflects what I preach and teach about. You are responsible to other people.

Speaking of other people, does he ever get questioned about being both a Medicine Man and a Christian priest? He answered: "People who are confident about who they are do not have a problem. Usually I find the questions from the novice Christian or the novice Lakota Traditionalist. People new to either way have questions."

What about non-Natives who try to adopt Traditional ways?

They are probably not too clear about it. It is very difficult to adhere to Traditional Ways because it is very strict and demanding. And suffering has a lot to do with it. When it gets that far then, not all—but some—of the 'seekers' will back out and create their own thing. And when they do that then the result is like what happened in Arizona: The seeker transformed the rules that he was taught and kept pulling them to his own use and his own thinking and got in trouble for it. It resulted in some deaths.<sup>15</sup>

I wrote an article one time to combat medicine men going around and charging money for ceremonies. Someone was quoted that the ceremonies are free because they are from the spirits. I said, no, they don't understand Lakota if they say

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<sup>15</sup> This is a reference to James Ray, a self-help guru who was leading people in the sweat lodge near Prescott, Arizona in 2009. Three people died because of the experience. Ray was convicted of negligent homicide and sentenced to two years in prison.

that. Because in Lakota when they explain it to you there are even costs and there is a price to be paid. You are told that up front so it is not a surprise. You don't get in and afterwards learn of the cost. They tell you up front, these are the costs and if you want to get into this, this is what is going to happen. The cost is not money. It's not 'greenbacks.' It is devotion, duty, balance—balancing things out.

What happens to these seekers often is that they have a preconceived notion of what they are going to do, and when we don't do it their way, they opt to bow out and do it their own way ... When people are sincere and a Medicine Man can see their sincerity, then they will work with them. Their actions don't really hurt our Traditional Ways. God has to put up with all of us.

#### **PETER JOHN POWELL: A PRIEST OF TWO FAITHS**

Father Peter Powell is an Episcopal priest of European descent, now in his mid-eighties. He has devoted his life and his ministry to accompanying the Cheyenne people. He sees himself (and the Cheyenne also see him) as a priest in the Anglican Church of North America (Fr. Powell explained that he is ordained to the Catholic priesthood). Strictly speaking there is no such thing as an Anglican priest, only Catholic priesthood (shared by Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Eastern Orthodox) in the Anglo-Catholic tradition and as a priest of Cheyenne ways. He is a "priest of two faiths," as he was called in a feature article published in the popular magazine *People* in 1975.<sup>16</sup> There he is quoted as saying, "The Cheyenne Maheo, the All-Father, the Creator who formed the world out of nothing, is what some of us call God.... In all honesty, for me the Cheyenne Priest came first.... I found my way into the priesthood through the study of the Sun Dance."

In an interview conducted for this chapter by Eleanor Doidge,<sup>17</sup> Father Powell narrates his own experience:

I became Cheyenne even before I got to the Cheyenne. But that is something I cannot say about myself. Only the Cheyenne can say that.... From the womb I wanted to serve Native American people. My first thought was to be an

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<sup>16</sup> Giovanna Breu, "Father Peter Powell is a Priest of Two Faiths—Episcopal and Cheyenne," *People*, vol. 5 (August 4, 1975)

<sup>17</sup> At Saint Augustine's Center for Native Americans in Chicago on March 15, 2013.

anthropologist. My father was a parish priest and the headmaster of a school. From a very early age I had access to books and libraries that other kids didn't have. The tribe that attracted me first of all were the Lakota. I studied everything I could about the Lakota and of course you can't know about the Lakota without first *being* Cheyenne.

He goes on to speak of his spiritual development:

At a very young age, as it were, I became aware of the holiness of the Catholic faith as it was taught by the Cheyenne and the Lakota. As I said, I started out in anthropology and as time went on I became more deeply aware of the fact that I wanted to offer the Holy Sacrifice too. And I wanted the Holy Sacrifice to be the very center, the very heart of my whole life. And so I thought that God was calling me to be a priest to offer the sacrifice.

Father Powell has been adopted into both the Northern and Southern Cheyenne. He has been elected and re-elected to the Cheyenne Chiefs' Council since 1962.

Adopted and more than that. As I say, I was completely consumed by the holiness of the Cheyenne way and by the holiness of the Lakota way, by that complete holiness that permeates every bit of the people's lives and culture. There is no separation between culture and life. There is no separation between culture and religion. All is one consuming worship of Him who is the Supreme Being and He is worshipped through sacrifice.

Sacrifice is a key concept for Father Powell. This action of praise of God he finds at the heart of Cheyenne traditions and Catholic faith:

What impressed me in both Lakota and Cheyenne is the essential unity of that which is the belief concerning the sacrifice. The Holy Sacrifice is the essential unity of the necessity of sacrifice, of one Holy Sacrifice being offered that will bring renewal to the people and to the whole world. And of course that's Holy Mass. That's what we are talking about. Sometimes when you hear it at home you don't pay as much attention to it as when you hear it elsewhere. And therefore anthropology taught me, as it were. The people taught me through anthropology. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the

fulfillment of the Sacrifice of the Sun Dance. It is the same sacrifice, it is the same theology. The Sun Dance is the Cheyenne (and Catholic) prefiguring of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, bringing new life and blessing to the Cheyenne people and their world. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the repetition of Christ's own Sacrifice for all nations. Our Lord's Sacrifice is the perfection, the fulfillment of all human sacrifice, the Sacrifice which brings endless new life not only to the Cheyenne and Lakota but to all people of the world. Beginning with the Lakota I began to see all of these, not similarities, but all these identities between the ceremonies of the people themselves and the Church's teaching.

Sacrifice is not only an act of praise of God, but also a renewal of the world, through the suffering of those who perform the Sun Dance and the suffering and death of Christ:

The sacrifice of the Sun Dance prefigures the sacrifice of Christ. The Sun Dance becomes the world renewing ceremony, the ceremony by which not only are the people themselves renewed, but all creation is renewed. It is the universal extension of that blessing that the two great covenants that the Sacred Arrows and the Sacred Buffalo Hat bestowed on the Cheyenne people. There also is the universality of blessing that flows from the Sun Dance and embraces not only the Cheyenne people and the Lakota people, but also the whole world itself: 'That the people might live.'

Every day for fifty-five years I have said Mass before a Cheyenne Christ.<sup>18</sup> That is the only face of Christ that I really know. What a difference that makes.... He [Christ] takes the identity of all the cultures He offered the Sacrifice for. And as I say, I've always seen Christ's face as an Indian face.

What is remarkable is how Cheyenne and Christian faith are a unity in Father Powell's life and work. It can be seen as a remarkable grace, to be a "priest of two faiths." Father Powell's response: "and being permitted to. That would not always have been the case." When asked about what effect his participation in Cheyenne sacred rituals might have had on his faith, he responded:

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<sup>18</sup> A carving made by the Cheyenne artist Dick West.

It has done nothing but strengthen my faith and at the same time made me deeply aware how the Catholic faith is present everywhere. That it is instinctive religion of humanity as well as the given religion as a way. Before it was given in the way we know it in Western culture, it was there. Not only were the seeds of it there, but the reality of life was there . . . in both Lakota and Cheyenne cultures there was the Catholic faith and all that was needed was the awareness of the One Who Was Present at the heart of it, our Most Holy Lord Himself.

When asked about his own spiritual practices, he says:

I begin every day and many other times during the day with the recitation of the *Veni Creator*. My constant prayer is that my mind might be completely united with the mind of Maheo. That I may comprehend creation as He comprehends creation. My mind I give completely to God as an act of adoration to God and with a prayer that I might comprehend first of all as I say, our Cheyenne people, all people, all creation, again as you say, all is one, all creation is one.

In speaking of his other spiritual practices:

I don't see myself doing anything different than any other priest. That is daily, whenever possible. And it is rarely that I miss offering Holy Mass, except on a day when traveling. It is the daily offering of the Most Holy Sacrifice that is at the heart of all life. And next to it is the daily hour of meditation. Then of course it is the daily recitation of the Divine Office, the Liturgy of the Hours. Again, as I say this is nothing different than any other priest.

And how does this manifest itself in his daily life?

I do not see it as a dedication, but rather entering into the lives of people who are so deeply spiritual and so committed to Him who is complete holiness. It's been a very joyous life. What greater joy can one have at the end of your life than to be able to say it has been a life of complete joy? OK, there have been a few heartbreaks along the way, but that is what we are talking about, sacrifice. Sacrifice is what we are talking about. The years with the people with whom I have spent them have been the greatest of all joys and I have certainly had that.

Father Powell's vision and work have not only earned esteem in the religious world, but well beyond as well. His monumental two-volume study, *People of the Sacred Mountain: A History of the Northern Cheyenne Chiefs and Warrior Societies, 1830-1879*, a labor of twenty-five years, won the 1982 American Book Award for history.<sup>19</sup> Earlier, he had produced another two-volume work, *Sweet Medicine: The Continuing Role of the Sacred Arrows, the Sun Dance, and the Sacred Buffalo Hat in Northern Cheyenne History*.<sup>20</sup> The work has become a reference tool for Native Peoples themselves for tribal history and ritual.

## **TWO PATHS TOWARD DUAL RELIGIOUS BELONGING**

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, there are many manifestations of dual religious belonging. Rather than dwell on finding a comprehensive classificatory scheme of the various ways that people belong to more than one tradition, we have chosen to focus on one particular venue for dual religious belonging through the biographies of two people. The venue is that of Native Traditions in North America, and the stories of two men—one Native and one non-Native—who discovered and came to dwell in Native Ways along with their Christianity.

Native Traditions have been subject to oppression (and in some instances, extinction) by Westerners who tried to suppress them in the name of “civilizing” Native people into Christianity and Western ways. Thus the initial encounter between Natives and Christians was (to use the words of Anthony Pagden) “violent and unequal.” Some Native people lost their language, their culture, and their spiritual traditions nearly entirely. Some have spoken of this as a “cultural genocide.” People colonized in this way are robbed of their own basis for dignity and identity, but are not accepted by the colonizing culture as full members of that culture either. Not only are they not accepted, but promises made to them about land and maintaining their own cultural integrity were broken again and again. They were denied their very dignity.

Retrieval of language, culture and spiritual traditions has been a long and difficult struggle. For most, it has meant not the abandonment of Christianity (although some have chosen to do so), but finding a way of being at home in both Christian and Native ways.

Francis White Lance's story is one such case. He was raised Episcopalian and lived according to Christian ways as he had been taught. It was only when he was studying for the Episcopal priesthood in his late twenties that the occasion arose for him to go exploring his own Traditions. With the help of two wise Native elders, he was led into the

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<sup>19</sup> (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969).

Traditional ways. Today he sees himself as an Anglican Catholic priest and a Medicine Man. He sees them as two distinct ways yet they are “together” in him. When practicing as a Medicine Man, he does not think of Christian ways. And the same is the case when he performing Christian rites as a priest. Yet they are together in him. Both are ways of serving the same God. But they remain distinctive ways, hearkening from different times and different places.

What is especially helpful here in trying to understand dual religious belonging is Francis White Lance’s emphasis on action—what one does and how one lives. Who he is finds expression in what he does and how he comports himself. He sees Christian and Traditional ways as having their own integrity, each with their own disciplines. He honors that integrity by the way he carries out his duties as priest and as Medicine Man, and how he lives his life according to the precepts of each way.

To an outsider looking into this story, questions will keep arising about how one can follow two ways. Yet he notes that the two ways do come together in two places: within his own person and with God. For these to have come together in his own person has required that he follows the disciplines of the respective traditions. As he makes clear in talking about the Traditional ways, these disciplines are not something one decides on one’s own. Nor does one tailor the outcomes to fit preconceived notions or expectations. The respective ways lead one to where one needs to go—not necessarily where one wants to go. This experience gives rise to the transforming—and transcending—dimensions of these traditions.

The first wound that Native peoples suffered was the suppression of their Traditional ways. A second wound that has been inflicted is how “seekers” sometimes poach upon those painfully retrieved and rediscovered traditions, taking from them those rituals and practices that suit their fancy or curiosity. Non-Native seekers will appropriate the rituals of the sweat lodge or the Sun Dance to enhance their own spiritual journeys. The rituals are thus taken out of their context and lose some of their integrity and meaning. In another way, the Traditional ways are being dismembered and thus undone once again. Worse, they sometimes find unscrupulous Natives who are willing to sell or barter these rituals and practices, thereby giving a shallow legitimacy to this kind of poaching.

Francis White Lance shows a great deal of calm in addressing this question. Non-Natives sometimes develop ideas of how the ways are “supposed” to be followed or performed, making them thereby curiosities or museum pieces rather than living realities. They can fail to see how these ways are embedded in a whole way of life that makes demands on participants that seekers may not be ready to follow. Yet at the same time there can be sincere seekers who are willing to submit themselves to the

guidance of wise elders and Medicine Men, and these seekers can be welcomed. Francis White Lance's response bespeaks a great deal of experience in dealing with non-Natives in this regard.

Father Powell's story is a case of a non-Native who becomes part of Traditional ways. As he tells his own story, his interest in Native peoples and their traditions goes back to his childhood. The quest for those ways was already there before he heard the call to become a Catholic priest. Indeed, he insists that the call to become a priest came *through* those experiences with the Cheyenne and the Lakota. What is especially remarkable about his account of being a "priest of both faiths" is how intertwined and integrated the two seem to be. For him, these two traditions come together in him and in God (as they do for Francis White Lance), but he also sees them intertwined in the ritual actions of each tradition as well: they are both about offering the sacrifice that renews the people and indeed all creation. In this way, Father Powell's story attests to a profound transformation—or perhaps better, a profound realization—in his own life. It is as if to say that to be faithful to what God was calling him to be, he had to be an adherent of both ways. He was "Cheyenne before the Cheyenne." But to be fully Cheyenne he also needed to become a priest. The spiritual disciplines of a priest—offering the Mass and praying the Divine Office—form a kind of framework to support the unfolding of his spirituality. But it is in his meditation and his constant recitation of the *Veni Creator*—the traditional Catholic hymn to the Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts and minds—where the convergence of these two traditions comes to fruition.

### **DUAL BELONGING, PLURAL SPIRITUALITIES, AND CATHOLIC FAITH**

So what might these two stories of dual belonging teach us as we look at plural spiritualities and Catholic faith today? These stories are not intended to display all the characteristics of dual religious belonging. Rather, they focus on one site—the encounter with Native Traditions and Christianity. This site has been one of great suffering, as well as of a struggle to retrieve and restore Native ways. The two stories recounted here—one of a Native rediscovering his own Tradition, and one of a non-Native who finds himself at a place where Native and Christian ways converge—explore pathways of dual belonging at this very special site. What are some things that can be learned for understanding dual religious belonging more generally?

First of all, for any non-Native to come to belong in Native traditions, such persons must be willing to be guided by adepts in those traditions, and respect them in the integrity of those traditions. Being guided by wise elders entails not only adhering to the disciplines laid

down by them, but also following the elders, even when what the non-Native sees as something that doesn't "fit" into a preconceived understanding of that tradition. A non-Native has to be prepared to embrace the Native tradition in its integrity and also in its living engagement with its current situation.

Second, a non-Native must wait to be invited to enter these ways. It entails a giving up of self-determination that has been sanctioned by an individualist culture as a legitimate way of developing a personal spirituality. Such submission is not surprising or limited to entering Native traditions. Spiritual ways in many religious traditions require this denial of self as a necessary prelude to coming into transformation. Francis White Lance's notion of duty and suffering underscores this point of view.

There is another dimension to this waiting for an invitation and entering into a path of self-abnegation. The culture from which the non-Native comes was complicit in the destruction of Native cultures. Such submission is not only necessary for proper initiation into Native ways; it is also an act of reparation for the willful destruction of Native ways that has happened in the past.

Third, the performative will likely precede the cognitive. The embodied participation in Native ways should not be subjected prematurely to intellectual ordering with tidy boundaries. Thus, in any analysis of dual religious belonging, one should begin with the actions and the experience of the respective traditions before moving to ordering them cognitively. This is not to say that intellectualizing is of no consequence; rather, premature intellectualization can foreclose on some dimensions of the experience. Thus, even though Father Powell does provide a thoroughgoing reflection on his experience, he is likewise quick to say that it must remain open to experiences that will draw him deeper into this way of belonging. Every reflection is accompanied by the *Veni Creator*.

Fourth, the experience of Father Powell especially shows the rich diversity within the Catholic Tradition. His understanding of the Eucharist and of sacrifice is certainly part of Catholic Tradition, even though the priestly identity that flows from it may not be shared by all Catholics today. Yet it reminds us that there are many chapels in the Catholic basilica, and some may make better meeting points for dual belonging than others. The consequences of dual belonging may make us more aware of the Catholicity of the Church of Christ.

Taken together, what all of this points to is that dual religious belonging should be understood first from its transformative power. For Francis White Lance, it was recovering an important part of who he is as a Lakota. For Father Powell, it was a completion of his identity as both priest and Cheyenne. The synthesis he finds in sacrifice—that profound

way by which we mortals communicate with the Transcendent One—grows out of that experience of prayer and meditation rather than beginning with a search for a theological principle.

“By their fruits shall you know them.” (Matt 7:20) The quality of the lives of those called into dual religious belonging becomes the first criterion for religious integrity and authenticity. While religious leaders and theologians may worry about the dangers of syncretism (and rightly so), what appears to be a mindless and formless admixture of elements from two traditions may be hearkening to a new synthesis. Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular has experienced many forms of inculturation through the centuries. Genuine inculturation might be seen as a new synthesis between Christianity and culture, a synthesis that gives Christians a deeper insight into the Gospel message and also reflects the True Light that enlightens everyone who comes into the world (cf. John 1:9). Put another way, our considerations about dual religious belonging have to be situated within a theology of religions that acknowledges the work of God in traditions beyond Christianity. This should not be done uncritically. But there are consequences to saying that God works in other traditions as well.<sup>21</sup>

The disjunction that Roman Catholics need to face in the presence of plural spiritualities—at least regarding Native Traditions—is first of all how Catholics and others come to be engaged in these Traditions. Are they invited? Are they willing to respect the integrity of those Traditions? And then: what results from pursuing paths of dual belonging? How does engaging in those Traditions transform their lives?

Even reaching beyond Native traditions to the larger question of dual religious belonging, it seems to us helpful to begin by looking at action and practices—and the behaviors that flow from them—rather than worrying in the first instance about potential errors that might be committed. What Native Traditions remind us is about the depth and integrity of traditions. Such in-depth engagement, guided by adepts in those traditions, not only helps assure respect for those traditions and the quality of what happens. It reminds us as well that spiritual traditions have traditionally only yielded their insights to those who have submitted themselves to the disciplines that define the way via those traditions to the Transcendent.

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<sup>21</sup> Here perhaps most importantly one can see what that entails in Jacques Dupuis, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001; second edition).



## CHAPTER V

# PRACTICES OF PLURAL SPIRITUALITIES IN A SECULAR SOCIETY: CIRCLES OF RECONCILIATION WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN QUEBEC<sup>1</sup>

MICHEL ELIAS ANDRAOS

### INTRODUCTION

The long history of unequal relations between the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, European settlers, and the Canadian State is very complex. Colonialism has been the primordial sin that shaped the relations with the Aboriginal peoples of the Americas. The commissioners of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) affirm that colonialism has been integral to the making of Canada, and that the colonial framework of the past has not yet been dismantled.<sup>2</sup> Christian missionary activity and the Churches of Canada as well have been complicit in this sad and shameful history. The human and material damage caused by these colonial relations is not a thing of the past. It continues to have a devastating impact on the lives of many Aboriginal peoples and their communities today. As in the past, the relations between Canada and its Aboriginal peoples today cry for deep reconciliation.

A process of reconciliation with such complexity has many dimensions that include the political, legal, social, cultural and spiritual levels. This chapter is not a summary of the history of that process. Many studies have been done on this topic, and some will be indicated in the bibliographical footnotes below. This chapter is rather a reflection on one dimension of this process of reconciliation that takes place in small circles of reconciliation that meet in Montreal and other places in Quebec. In

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<sup>1</sup> There is no one agreed upon term for referring to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada in general. Each nation or people have a particular proper name. Aboriginal people themselves, when referring to all their peoples in general, alternate between terms such as First Nations, Native Americans, Indigenous peoples, Amerindians, etc. In the current official government of Canada literature, the term Aboriginal, which includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis groups, is commonly used. I mostly use the term Aboriginal, but also use other terms when quoting authors or literature that do so.

<sup>2</sup> *They Came for the Children: Canada, Aboriginal Peoples, and Residential Schools* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012), p. 3.

these *Cercles de confiance* (circles of trust), Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples from different religious and cultural traditions meet to tell their stories and listen to each other in a spiritual environment of mutual respect and prayer.<sup>3</sup> The plural spiritual practice that is emerging in these circles of trust and reconciliation, which is a fusion of spiritual and cultural traditions and experiences that participants bring to the circle, is the main focus of my reflection in this chapter. The pluralist experience in these circles is a challenge to traditional Christian understanding of spirituality. Even though this particular process is relatively new, the practice of circles of reconciliation and healing is not. It is an old practice that has deep roots in many Aboriginal and other traditional cultures around the world.

As indicated in the introduction to this volume, in his analysis of the official position of the Church and certain practices of Christians today, Charles Taylor names four areas of spiritual disjuncture. One disjuncture Taylor identifies is the presence of "a spirituality open to enrichment by the experiences and spiritualities of the many great religious cultures and civilizations, even the nonreligious, versus a stress on the completeness of the Christian spiritual tradition."<sup>4</sup> Taylor's description of this disjuncture resonates with the author's experience in the practice of the circles of reconciliation mentioned above. This chapter is a description of and a theological reflection on this pluralist spiritual practice of reconciliation from a broader historical perspective and in the context of the changing relations between the Church and Aboriginal peoples.

The first part of the chapter sets the historical context of the circles of trust in the broader process of social reconciliation that is already taking place. The chapter begins with a brief survey of the history of the apologies by the government and churches and shows how these apologies prepared the way for further steps toward reconciliation. Based on the stories of victims told in the publications by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), part two considers the basic understanding of reconciliation from the perspective of Aboriginal survivors.<sup>5</sup> This

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<sup>3</sup> The *Cercles de confiance* are part of *Projet citoyen*, an initiative that sponsored several organized days of reconciliation in Quebec over the past two years. The project was presented to the TRC for approval in March of 2011 by two peace activists and leaders of the organizations *Initiatives et Changement* and *Espace Art Nature*. It was accepted in October 2012 and later approved for funding by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. For more information on the *Cercles de confiance*, see <http://www.espaceartnature.com/Pcitoyen.html> [accessed December 2, 2013].

<sup>4</sup> See the introduction to this volume.

<sup>5</sup> Several publications by the government of Canada and Aboriginal agencies have documented the experiences of the survivors of residential schools.

understanding is crucial for informing the practice of the circles and for shaping their vision for promoting reconciliation. The development, spiritual practice and social vision of the *Cercles de confiance*, and their spiritual and social significance are the topic of part three. Part four is a concluding theological reflection on plural spiritualities in the broader context of the changing position of the Churches towards Aboriginal peoples and their religious traditions, which is considered as one of the "signs of the times" in the Church today.

### **APOLOGIES AND RECONCILIATION**

On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, offered an apology to the former students of the Indian Residential Schools from the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Aboriginal peoples of Canada. These students are the victims of a residential, mostly industrial school system that had as an intentional policy to "civilize and Christianize" Aboriginal children. The government of Canada started this system in the 1870s and the last schools closed only in the mid 1990s. Funded by the government, a total of more than 130 schools identified by TRC functioned at different times during that period and were run jointly by the government and the main churches of Canada: Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and United. The schools were located across the country and reached most Aboriginal communities. According to official estimates, more than 150,000 children, out of whom about 80,000 are still living today, attended the schools. The schools' primary goal was to "civilize" Aboriginal children by forcing them to assimilate into the dominant Euro-Canadian society and worldview. The government of Canada in the 1880s, encouraged by a similar school system that was implemented in the United States, believed that Aboriginal children should be educated away from their families, community and culture in order for their assimilation to take place.<sup>6</sup> The above-mentioned Statement of Apology makes reference to the infamous saying "killing the Indian in the child," which was a shared perspective among those who promoted the aggressive assimilation policies. The 2008 Statement of Apology came as a response to several class-action lawsuits brought against the

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Among these organizations are The Aboriginal Healing Foundation and Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools, <http://www.wherearethekids.ca>; Legacy of Hope Foundation, <http://www.legacyofhope.ca>; See also Richard Gray and Martine Gros-Louis Monier, eds., *Collection of Life Stories of the Survivors of the Quebec Indian Residential Schools* (First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission, 2010); *They Came for the Children*, mentioned above, is a particularly helpful resource that includes a broad bibliography.

<sup>6</sup> *They Came for the Children*, p. 5.

government and the Churches of Canada by former students of the residential schools. Prior to the apology, a settlement agreement had been reached with the government, which made the apology acceptable and prepared for further actions of reconciliation. The agreement included, in addition to financial compensation and support for the healing of the survivors and their families, the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The mandate of the commission is to gather the stories of survivors and those affected by the residential school system, inform and educate all Canadians about these schools, and guide a process of national reconciliation.<sup>7</sup> Not all Aboriginal peoples accept the apology: however many believe it is a step in the right direction. The TRC makes clear that the reconciliation required today has a much broader scope and is a long process that involves the state and all Canadians, Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal. It must address both the historical and the ongoing assault on Aboriginal peoples, their land and their cultures, and develop plans of action to transform the colonial relations, which, according to many Aboriginal peoples, are still an ongoing reality. Reconciliation, in the words of the TRC chair, will require hard work for several generations.<sup>8</sup>

Canadians have been following the unfolding stories and the work of TRC, which has already held six major national meetings in different parts of the country over the last three years.<sup>9</sup> Many Euro-Canadians whose family history in this country goes back to the 19th century or earlier, and who have benefited from the colonial enterprise, are in a state of deep regret and shock about how to deal with the legacy of colonialism, and about what reconciliation means today. To use but one example, Shelagh Rogers, a national radio broadcaster and well known public figure, acknowledged in her introduction to *Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential Schools*, and during her testimony at the TRC meeting in Montreal how she and her family benefited from colonialism and how she is at a loss about how to deal with this past. She is convinced, however, that "Non-Aboriginal people will

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on the mandate of the TRC, see the text of the Apology mentioned above and the preface and introduction of *They Came for the Children*.

<sup>8</sup> Justice Murray Sinclair, *What Is Reconciliation*, video recording, 2011, <http://vimeo.com/25389165> [accessed, November 25, 2013].

<sup>9</sup> The TRC has already held national meetings in Winnipeg, June 2010, Inuvik, June 2011, Halifax, October 2011, Saskatoon, June 2012, Montreal, April 2013, Vancouver, September 2013, will hold another meeting in Edmonton in March 2014, and will have a closing meeting in Ottawa. The author attended the TRC meeting in Montreal, April 24-27, 2013. Our local *Cercle de confiance* was invited to participate in a session and speak about the group's experience and practice of reconciliation.

not be fully at home here as Canadians until we acknowledge the troubled genesis of Canada, its colonial past and present."<sup>10</sup> What this statement makes clear is that many Euro-Canadians have become now aware that the colonial relation with the Aboriginal peoples is not a thing of the past. They realize that they need to take responsibility for the past and work for reconciliation together with Aboriginal peoples for building a new relationship at all levels. Reconciliation today is urgent and it concerns all Canadians. And, as Rogers affirms, "The very soul of Canada is at stake."<sup>11</sup> This statement, in my opinion, is not an exaggeration.

The government's apology in 2008 was not the first or only one. In 1998, the Minister of Indian Affairs delivered a "Statement of Reconciliation" that acknowledged the government's role in the abuses that took place in the residential schools. The statement included a commitment on behalf of government to work together with Aboriginal peoples for assisting the victims and their communities, and for developing strategies for healing and reconciliation. The first public institution to offer an apology to the Aboriginal peoples, however, was not the government. It was the United Church of Canada, which offered two apologies in 1986, and 1998. The Roman Catholic missionary organization, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, also delivered an apology in 1991, the Anglican Church of Canada in 1993, and the Presbyterian Church in 1994.<sup>12</sup> The Churches have since written several pastoral documents on this topic and have been involved in many healing and reconciliation initiatives. While the government statements focused on the abuses that took place in the residential schools, the Churches emphasized the cultural and spiritual abuses as a result of their missionary work. They apologized and asked forgiveness for their role in exercising cultural and religious imperialism that, they said, was confused with preaching the gospel. They also apologized for not valuing Aboriginal cultures and religious traditions. But, as is well known, apologies do not automatically lead to reconciliation. A critical evaluation of the apologies and their impact on the process of reconciliation, however, is outside the scope of this chapter, and much has already been written on this topic.<sup>13</sup> My focus

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<sup>10</sup> *Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential Schools*. A Reader selected by Shelagh Rogers, Mike DeGagné, Jonathan Dewar, and Glen Lowry (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2012), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> For the text of the apologies, see Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné, eds., *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey*, vol. II, Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011), pp. 327-356.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Jeff Corntassel, and Cindy Holder, "Who's Sorry Now? Government Apologies, Truth Commissions, and Indigenous Self-Determination

here is limited to a reflection on the modest process of the circles of trust and to how the plural spirituality of the circles is contributing in a particular way to the work of reconciliation.

Several Aboriginal and non-aboriginal organizations, including churches and ecumenical groups, have been involved to the work of reconciliation since the 1990s. The main churches of Canada have also organized pastoral ministries and initiatives dedicated for this task. But the main work, as the testimony of many victims on the journey of healing make clear, is taking place in the Aboriginal communities themselves. The stories collected by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in *Speaking My Truth*, and *From Truth to Reconciliation* are a witness to the resilience of the victims and to the incredible traditional healing power still present in the Aboriginal communities today, despite their painful history and the destruction of their cultures, religious traditions, and practices.<sup>14</sup> A summary of these perspectives on reconciliation that will help us understand the spiritual dynamics of the circles of trust and reconciliation is the topic of the next section.

## **RECONCILIATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE VICTIMS**

In this section, I will summarize some perspectives of victims on reconciliation. I will do so by using direct quotations from Aboriginal survivors of the violence at the residential schools. Since it would not be appropriate to use quotations from stories I personally heard at the TRC or other meetings, I will use a selection from the testimonies that were made public by the AHF. These testimonies, which are similar to many others that I have personally heard, state clearly the victims' perspectives and what for them are key elements and minimal requirements for moving forward with reconciliation. The requirements mentioned below are an important background for the following part of this chapter where I will discuss the circles of trust and their both symbolic and actual contribution.

The experience of violence in the Indian residential schools did not happen only to the students who suffered physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Most students, according to survivors' stories, suffered devastating cultural violence because of the nature of the system's aggressive

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in Australia, Canada, Guatemala, and Peru.” *Human Rights Review* 9:4 (December 2008), pp. 465-489. The article includes excellent bibliography.

<sup>14</sup> See *Speaking My Truth*; Marlene Brant Castellano, Linda Archibald, and Mike DeGagné, eds., *From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools*, vol. I, Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2008).

assimilation policy. One of the most commonly talked about pains by survivors, where the damage left deep scars, is the issue of identity, both personal and collective. An assault on peoples' identity is an assault on one of the most sensitive areas of their human dignity. "Many of us went through a cultural identity crisis—loss of language, loss of family and community ties, loss of self-worth—to name only a few of the negative but real impacts of residential schools," says Garnet Angeconeb, an Anishinaabe from Ontario. He adds,

I lived through times of anger. I lived through times of cultural confusion, I lived through the disruption of my family relationships. At one time in my life, I was ashamed of my culture. To me, though, the residential school issue is not about making others feel bad or guilty. This issue is about truth and understanding. Truth and understanding are two key ingredients that will lead to healing and reconciliation.<sup>15</sup>

Survivor Madeleine Dion Stout affirms that healing and reconciliation are not given to Aboriginal peoples as a free gift. They are the fruit of resilience. For her, "Healing is the mid-section of a continuum with colonization marking one end and resilience the other."<sup>16</sup> John Amagoalik, speaking from an Inuit perspective, affirms that what is needed is not reconciliation, as in a return to a period when relations were good, but rather conciliation because the colonial encounter was violent from the beginning. John Amagoalik maintains that

Since the Europeans arrived on our shores.... There has never been a harmonious relationship.... The history of this relationship is marked by crushing colonialism, attempted genocide, wars, massacres, theft of land and resources, broken treaties, broken promises, abuse of human rights, relocation, residential schools, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

Conciliation according to Amagoalik requires that Canada acknowledge its past history of shameful treatment of Aboriginal peoples and its racist legacy. Broken promises for him are still happening today. First Nations, he adds, "still have to resort to highway and railway blockades, occupations, and civil disobedience to remind Canadians of

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<sup>15</sup> *Speaking My Truth*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

broken treaties, theft and murder."<sup>18</sup> For conciliation and forgiveness to take place, John Amagoalik believes that a genuine and sincere apology is needed. This should include putting in place "a long-term program to improve the socio-economic status of our people, to improve health and education, and to effectively deal with the housing crisis.... The legacy of broken promises must stop."<sup>19</sup>

For Ojibway survivor Fred Kelly, the experience of cultural and spiritual humiliation and abuse in the residential schools he went to is what he remembers most. In his words,

Immediately upon entry into the school, the staff began to beat the devil out of us. Such was my experience. We were humiliated out of our culture and spirituality. We were told that these ways were of the devil. We were punished for speaking the only language we ever knew. Fear stalked the dark halls of the school as priests and nuns going about their rounds in black robes passed like floating shadows in the night.... Our traditional names were Anglicized and often replaced by numbers.... We came to believe that "Indian" was a dirty word, oftentimes calling each other by that term pejoratively.<sup>20</sup>

Reconciliation for Fred Kelly is primarily "making peace with one's own self and reclaiming one's identity." He found assistance for doing so and beginning his journey of healing by returning to his traditional Anishinaabe spiritual way, which helped him understand and respect the interconnectedness of all life. "I am very happy with my place in creation, humble as it is. Mine are the gifts of life so sacredly conferred upon my ancestors by the Creator." From his new experience of reconciliation, he is even open to reconcile with the Church. He notes, "A church that validated the ruthless superiority complex of European monarchs to persecute indigenous people, steal their land, and overrun their cultures by condemning them as ways of the devil is one I am also prepared to discuss reconciliation with." Fred Kelly happily considers himself a "born again pagan."<sup>21</sup>

Many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars have also analyzed the destructive affects of colonization and what an effective process of

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39. The Idle No More! movement is a good example of the ongoing organized protests of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. See <http://www.idlenomore.ca/vision>.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

reconciliation has to take into consideration in order for transformation and healing to happen. Their work concurs with the above mentioned testimonies. One example is the work of Brian Rice (Mohawk) and Anna Snyder. Based on their involvement in healing and reconciliation initiatives among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, these two scholars name three aspects that would need to be taken into account for reconciliation to take place in a settler society like Canada. The first aspect is the realization that the Aboriginal people of Canada continue to experience an ongoing economic, cultural and political oppression as a result of colonization. In other words, colonization is not only an experience of the past that needs a healing of memories, but is also a present reality that requires systemic action at many levels. The second aspect is that telling the truth about Canada's relation with Aboriginal people should also include uncovering the myths that continue to rationalize the unequal relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canadians. For example, one of the dominant myths that are generally accepted among common people is that the French and English are the "two founding nations" of the country, thus marginalizing the contribution of Aboriginal peoples to the making of Canada. Despite a high level of education in Canadian society, very few people today are aware of or able to speak about Aboriginal peoples' significant contributions that made Canada what it is today. The third aspect that needs to be taken in to consideration, according to Rice and Snyder, is the awareness of internalized colonization within the Aboriginal communities, which is mainly manifested in the struggle for self-esteem as a result of the systemic destruction of culture, language and identity over a long period of time.<sup>22</sup>

The above are only a few snapshots that in many ways represent thousands of other stories that have been ignored for a long time and that are only recently being documented and brought to public awareness. These stories make clear to us the pains victims still experience and their anger, as well as their hopes for healing and vision for future reconciliation. Government programs alone cannot meet the minimal requirements for an acceptable process of reconciliation these victims articulate. Their demands are the very basic demands for a life with dignity. One theme that all stories above emphasize, which also appears as part of the title of almost every publication by AHF, is truth telling. "This issue is about truth and understanding. Truth and understanding are

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<sup>22</sup> Brian Rice and Anna Snyder, "Reconciliation in the Context of a Settler Society: Healing the Legacy of Colonialism in Canada," in Marlene Brant Castellano, Linda Archibald and Mike DeGagné, *From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools*, (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2008), pp. 47-62.

two key ingredients that will lead to healing and reconciliation," affirms Garnet Angecone. Listening to the experience of Aboriginal peoples, knowing the truth about their history, and taking responsibility for the past are, from the perspective of the victims, key demands for forgiveness, healing and reconciliation to begin to take place. The stories heard at the *Cercles de confiance* and TRC meetings communicate the same message. It is these stories and the analyses they offer us that inform the methodology, dynamics, vision, and actions of reconciliation by groups such as the circles of trust, which I will discuss in the following section.

### **THE *CERCLES DE CONFIANCE* AS A VISION AND PRACTICE OF RECONCILIATION<sup>23</sup>**

The Circle has healing power. In the Circle we are all equal... The Sacred Circle is designed to create unity. The hoop of life is also a circle. On this hoop there is a place for every species, every race, every tree, and every plant. It is the completeness of life that must be respected in order to bring about health on this planet. To understand each other, as the ripples when a stone is tossed into the waters, the Circle starts small and grows ... until it fills the whole lake.<sup>24</sup>

-- Chief David

On August 4, 2012 a one-day encounter of reconciliation took place in the city of Montreal that gathered representatives of Aboriginal peoples and Quebecers from different communities, including Euro-Quebecers, recent immigrants and refugees. While the focus of the day was mainly on listening to Aboriginal peoples' stories of the abuse they experienced in the residential school system and their difficult journeys toward reconciliation and healing, other stories also were shared during the day that included non-Aboriginal experiences. They were stories of people from around the world who fled their homelands because of different types of violence and who were forced to migrate and seek refuge in Canada. By including stories from other cultures that are part of the diverse society of Montreal and Quebec today and not focusing exclusively on the relation between Euro-Quebecers and Aboriginal peoples, the organizers enlarged the circle and helped participants reflect on reconciliation and healing from broader social and global

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<sup>23</sup> The reflections on the *Cercles de confiance* in this section do not represent the opinion of the organizers or other participants. They are strictly based on the author's personal observations and analysis.

<sup>24</sup> *The Circle of Life* (Native American Indian Association of Tennessee, n.d.).

perspectives.<sup>25</sup> In addition to plenary story telling, the day included sharing in small groups and rituals of healing and prayers that focused on acknowledging and honoring the stories told, and celebrating the ongoing yet fragile processes of healing mentioned during the day. There were several Christians from different denominations and cultures present, some of whom also shared their stories, but there was nothing explicitly Christian in the prayers or rituals. One of the First Nations' elders present, who also shared his story of abuse in a residential school and the long, painful and ongoing personal journey to healing and reconciliation, lead the ritual celebrations.

Similar public gatherings, coordinated by the same organizing group, were also held in other cities of the province of Quebec at different dates. These meetings were part of the public activities for promoting reconciliation, following the recommendations of TRC. One of the planned outcomes of these days of reconciliation was the launching of permanent *Cercles de confiance* (circles of trust) for continuing the work of story telling and reconciliation at the local level in different parts of the province.<sup>26</sup> The main goal of the circles is to create permanent spaces of encounter for listening and dialogue, focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on the experience of abuse of Aboriginal peoples and promoting the work of reconciliation. In the cultural and religious worldview of Aboriginal peoples, the circle, as well known, has many levels of meaning and is a central sacred symbol.<sup>27</sup> By initiating these small permanent meetings, the circles of trust take on a symbolically significant meaning in relation to reconciliation and healing, which I will discuss below.

A regular meeting of a circle evolves around story and truth telling by the participants, privileging the Aboriginal people present in the group. A core group of regular Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants is normally present and there are always new participants invited by the organizers and other members of the group. The meetings are open and are normally hosted by organizations that members of the group belong to. Meeting locations rotate between community centers, churches and other religious organizations. The meetings are conducted in the French language and accommodation is made for simultaneous translation to

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<sup>25</sup> The author participated at the public gathering in Montreal and attends the regular meetings of the local circle, when possible.

<sup>26</sup> See footnote above for the web site and more info on the history of the *Cercles de confiance*.

<sup>27</sup> On the importance of the circle in Aboriginal cultures and for the future of reconciliation, see the work of Wendat scholar Georges E Sioui, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle* (Vancouver; East Lansing: UBC Press, 1999).

English, when needed. Aboriginal elders and singers who participate often play a central role in leading the rituals. The meetings are not normally very formal or hierarchical, and they do not always follow a defined script or ritualized structure. They are rather spontaneous and follow the flow. But in most of the meetings in which I participated, what I described above has been more or less the format. The average number of participants usually varied between 30 to 50 people.

When Euro-Canadians and other immigrants from different cultures sit in a circle together and listen to the story of Aboriginal peoples, as well as to each other's stories, this is symbolically very important. In light of the complex, historical and ongoing colonial matrix of relationships, creating such an intentional social and spiritual space of sharing inaugurates significant transformation and reconciliation at many levels. What I find even more symbolically important in this exercise is that the Aboriginal people present in the circle are the ones who are normally taking the lead and are in a position of moral and spiritual power. When Aboriginal peoples invite others to share in their religious traditions and practices, which were demonized and rejected by the colonizers, including Christian missionaries and churches, the newly created space becomes a hospitable, gracious and subversive spiritual environment. Participants who belong to different religious traditions, including Christians and non-religious, are gathered in an Aboriginal spiritual space for promoting reconciliation among each other. Some circle meetings end with a pipe ceremony lead by an Aboriginal pipe-holder. All in the circle are invited, but no one is under pressure to participate. Instructions for respectfully declining to participate are given before the ritual. The pipe ceremony, as well known, is a central prayer ritual for many Aboriginal communities. The ritual is intended to help participants connect with the Creator, the Great Spirit, or the Great Mystery. It is a ritual of celebrating trust among those sitting in the circle and is also a traditional ritual for making peace. The same pipe that was demonized, broken and rejected by the Christian missionaries in the past centuries has become a gathering symbol for reconciliation, both with the past and for creating a new relationship for the future. The analogy here with the biblical metaphor, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (Ps 118: 22), repeated several times in the Hebrew Scripture and in the New Testament, is appropriate. Looking at this transformation from a Christian perspective, the new decolonial relationship constructed in the circle inaugurates a radical shift from the colonial past. The circle becomes space for creating a "new humanity" and for imagining another possible world.

There is an acknowledgement in the circle of the equality and dignity of all participants. There is also an acknowledgement of mutual respect among spiritual, religious and non-religious traditions and experiences present. There is a commitment to deep listening and learning

about the other and a commitment for creating an environment of dialogue and reconciliation. The circle meetings are also a space of cultural and spiritual safety. While telling their stories, participants are free to express their cultural and religious anger without being afraid of offending others who might not agree with them or who have a different experience. This experience of the circle resonates with the theology of reconciliation articulated by Robert Schreiter (editor of this volume). Writing about the circle of healing and reconciliation in the context of ministry with Aboriginal peoples, Schreiter emphasizes that "reconciliation is first and foremost a spirituality, a relationship with God that is strengthened and nourished by practices of prayer, of truth-telling, of healing, and of peace making."<sup>28</sup> Schreiter maintains that God's work of reconciliation begins with the victim, and that also through the victim that the process of social transformation for creating a new future begins. "Healing circles are about communities of reconciliation, which are at once *communities of memory and communities of hope*."<sup>29</sup>

Laurent Gagnon, one of the two main organizers of the *Cercles de confiance* meetings, envisions the Aboriginal peoples playing a key role in the national reconciliation in Canada. Making reference to the wounded healer metaphor, elaborated in the writings of Henri Nouwen among others, Gagnon believes that the Aboriginal peoples, who became the victims of the creation of the Canadian state, hold in their new emerging role the key for the future of reconciling the traditional and unresolved tension between Canada's main English and French speaking communities. The small personal transformations that take place in such circles, according to Gagnon, could have important implications for the future. One of his favorite sayings for expressing the importance of small transformed groups for broader social change is that "big doors swing on small hinges." Personal transformation is key for reconciliation, and creating space for small communities of reconciliation could have a significant social and national impact, even though such groups might be a minority in a particular society.<sup>30</sup> What inspires Gagnon in his work is

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<sup>28</sup> See Robert Schreiter, "Entering the Healing Circle: The Practice of Reconciliation," in Stephen Bevans, Eleanor Doidge, and Robert Schreiter, eds. *The Healing Circle: Essays in Cross-Cultural Mission. Presented to Rev. Dr. Claude Marie Barbour* (Chicago: CCGM Publications, 2000), p. 179. See also on this topic the other important works by Robert Schreiter, in particular *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> Schreiter, "Entering the Healing Circle," p. 184.

<sup>30</sup> Laurent Gagnon shared the above comments with the author in a focused conversation on this topic on January 3, 2014. Gagnon is the Quebec coordinator of the *Association Initiatives et Changement (I&C) Canada*. He has several

to think always about the future; what he does today is inspired by "the love of tomorrow," as he puts it.<sup>31</sup>

From a social science perspective, Wendat scholar Georges Sioui, cited above, makes a passionate argument about the importance and centrality of the circles as founding social principle in Aboriginal civilization before colonization. In his opinion, the vision of the circle

inspired a group of peoples who, seven centuries ago, created in central-southern Ontario an embryo of what was to become the society of modern North America—that is, a mingling of cultures united by differences of vision and the respective constraints of their existence, and animated by the desire to enlarge the Circle of exchange and communication to all peoples.<sup>32</sup>

For Sioui, recovering this rich, original tradition and human social vision is a great contribution to the work of reconciliation, today as it was in the past. The author believes this to be a "precious spiritual capital that is still available to humanity." He affirms in the conclusion of his significant study that "No more purely 'American' idea exists than the unifying, circular vision of the Amerindians; it best defines the world mission of the Americas."<sup>33</sup> For Sioui, Amerindians, ancient and modern, "have never had a more cherished wish than to recognize a strong, mutual sense of belonging—a feeling that binds the hearts, minds, and bodies of all who live in their homeland to the Earth, our Mother, not to the nation-states."<sup>34</sup> Sioui is not unique in this regard. A growing number of scholars, Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal who work in solidarity with them, are recovering and living out this tradition in a variety of areas including education, health care, spirituality, reconciliation and healing. The stories told in the numerous articles published by AHF affirm this recovery and revival. The *Cercles de confiance* are only one instance among many.<sup>35</sup>

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decades of experience working for reconciliation with I&C at the national and international levels.

<sup>31</sup> The phrase "for the love of tomorrow" comes from the book and film on the life of the French woman Irène Laure and her story of overcoming her hatred for Germany after the Second World War. This story inspires Gagnon's work. See Jacqueline Piguet, *Pour l'amour de demain* (Diffusion Ouverture, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> Sioui, *Huron-Wendat*, p. 88.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178-79.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180.

<sup>35</sup> On the use of the circle methodology in the areas of decolonial education pedagogy and reconciliation, see respectively the excellent works by Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2013), and Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within:*

## A CONCLUDING THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Using the language of plural spirituality on my part to describe the lived experience in the circles of reconciliation mentioned above is a theological reflection based on my own participation and observations. Other participants might have a different interpretation of this practice and experience. Participating in the circles as a reflexive Christian, given the involvement of the Churches in this history of violence and the need for reconciliation, raises for me important theological questions concerning mission theology today, relations with other religions, and, of course, about the encounter of spiritualities in our diverse urban societies. This concluding section is a theological reflection on the circles of reconciliation as a space of plural spirituality in the broader context of the changing relationship and attitude of the Catholic Church toward Aboriginal spiritual traditions.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, dialogue and collaboration with other religions in general has significantly improved since the second half of the twentieth century. The Second Vatican Council declaration *Nostra Aetate* calls on Catholics to respect and dialogue with other religions, and to collaborate with other believers for the common good. The attitude of superiority towards other religions that characterized Catholic official teaching about other religions before Vatican II has not been totally transformed, but the council teachings, documents and spirit certainly opened the possibility for a new relationships with other religious traditions. The attention and the space the Church has given since the council to interreligious encounters and to nurturing a spirituality of dialogue with other religions for the sake of peace, for example, has been remarkable. In addition, the particular attention the Church has been giving to indigenous peoples and their religious traditions globally since the 1980s has also been very remarkable. During his visit to Canada in 1984, Pope John Paul II had several encounters with the Aboriginal peoples and their representatives. He spoke on many occasions about the Church's affirmation of their cultural and religious traditions, beliefs and values. The Pope emphasized the importance of their cultural and religious experience for the Church and all of humanity.<sup>36</sup> The pope did

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*Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010). In the area of Roman Catholic ministry and theology, see the web site for Catholic Education TV, <http://www.kateritv.com>, sponsored by the Building Bridges Project and the Roman Catholic Bishops of Western Canada.

<sup>36</sup> For a theological commentary on the Pope's visit to Canada and the new attitude of the Church toward Aboriginal peoples and their religious traditions, see Achiel Peelman, *Christ Is a Native American* (Ottawa: Orbis Books/Novalis, 1995).

the same in his encounter with the Aboriginal peoples of Australia a few years later.

In 1993, one year after the five-hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the first Europeans to the American continent and the beginning of the conquest of its indigenous peoples, Pope John Paul II met with several thousand representatives of indigenous communities from all over the Americas in Izamal, Yucatan, Mexico. The site chosen for that meeting is built on the ruins of the ancient city of Itzamatul, an important Mayan religious center, which since the early days of the conquest had been used as a center for "evangelizing" that region. The Pope told the indigenous peoples present that they are the new evangelizers of the continent. He affirmed again the Church's respect for their religious traditions and cultures, and expressed openness for dialogue with them. The concluding document of Pope Benedict XVI after the meeting of the Latin American and the Caribbean bishops in Aparecida in 2007 also gives special attention to the relation with indigenous peoples. The document acknowledges in the introduction (4-5) the violence of the original encounter, pledges the Church's accompaniment to indigenous peoples in their struggles (88-89), and talks about a new place for them in the Church (90-92). The awareness about Aboriginal peoples and their struggles reflected in these Catholic documents, the acknowledgement of the mistakes of the past, and the expressed desire for moving forward toward building a new relationship is a new and welcome attitude and teaching. *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis, in the context of talking about evangelization, intercultural dialogue in the Church in relation to Aboriginal peoples, urges the Church to learn from different cultures and affirms that "It is an indisputable fact that no single culture can exhaust the mystery of our redemption in Christ" (116-118). Later in the document, Pope Francis exhorts the Church to embrace the cultural synthesis that is emerging in the cities where people from diverse cultures meet and create new spaces that are inclusive of the most vulnerable. In the spirit of this exhortation, what is said about culture, I believe, could be equally said about spirituality.

In Chiapas, Mexico, the local Catholic Church made significant shifts in its relation with the indigenous peoples since the 1970s. The pastoral work of the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas in the 1980s became primarily oriented toward supporting the struggle of its indigenous communities and their demands for life in dignity. Under the leadership of Bishop Samuel Ruiz between 1960 and 2000, this local church promoted in a unique way indigenous leadership in the Church and developed a new ecclesial model that nurtures and sustains these leaders

and their communities.<sup>37</sup> The diocese made a preferential option for its indigenous peoples, and affirmed in a pastoral letter that this option "guides our faith reflection, our pastoral activity and our ecclesial goal of advancing toward the emergence of a native church that is aware of its own salvation history, that expresses itself through its culture, that is enriched with its own values, that accepts its sufferings, struggles and aspirations, and that with the strength of the Gospel transforms and liberates its culture."<sup>38</sup> In the mid 1990s, during the conflict between the Mexican State and the indigenous movements in Chiapas, the local church and its bishop played a key role in the mediation for peace and reconciliation. Since that time, the work for peace and reconciliation with indigenous communities has been a high diocesan pastoral priority.<sup>39</sup>

What is happening in the broader Catholic Church is also true for the Canadian churches. After the years of the apologies to Aboriginal peoples in the 1980s and 1990s, a new era had begun. The ecumenical document "New Covenant: A Pastoral Statement by the Leaders of the Christian Churches on Aboriginal Rights and the Canadian Constitution," signed by representatives of all major Canadian churches in 1987 and reaffirmed in 2007, calls on the Canadian government to rectify the injustice toward Aboriginal peoples and constitutionally recognize their autonomy and self-government, and to guarantee their economic, cultural, political, and religious rights. The Churches pledge to support the recognition and implementation of these rights. This became the new orientation of many Aboriginal pastoral ministry initiatives of the Churches since the 1990s. On the Catholic side, the web site mentioned above and the educational multimedia material made available to Catholics is a good example. These developments clearly reflect a fundamental shift in the relationship between the Church and Aboriginal peoples.

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<sup>37</sup> See Michel Andraos. "Indigenous Leadership in the Church: The Experience of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico." *Toronto Journal of Theology* 21:1 (Spring 2005), pp. 57-65.

<sup>38</sup> *En Esta Hora de Gracia*, A Pastoral Letter by the Diocese of San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, 1993, par. 5.6. For an English translation, see "In This Hour of Grace," *Origins*, 23:34 (February 10, 1994), pp. 591-602.

<sup>39</sup> See the author's works, "Conflict, Mediation and Peacemaking in the Pastoral Praxis of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico." In *Justice and Mercy Will Kiss*, edited by Michael K. Duffey and Deborah S. Nash (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008), pp. 229-242; and "The Church and Indigenous Cultures: Beyond the Violent Encounter with 'Modernity'." In *Theology and the Crisis of Engagement: Essays on the Relationship between Theology and the Social Sciences*, Néstor Medina and Jeff Nowers, eds. (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013), pp. 128-140.

Many Catholic priests and bishops today speak very positively of Aboriginal religious practices and spirituality, integrate them into the celebrations of the sacraments and other church rituals, and themselves also participate in some of these rituals. Missionaries and bishops pray in the circle together with Aboriginal communities, share their sacred pipes, and participate in their sweat lodges and other practices of renewal and healing. Many Aboriginal peoples, as well as some Catholic pastoral leaders and theologians, find these practices controversial; however, these practices reflect an important development in the Catholic experience today. Despite these positive developments, many theological questions remain to be addressed in the future as the relationship of trust and reconciliation deepens between the Churches and Aboriginal communities. These questions concern how will the Church officially, from a theological standpoint, consider Aboriginal spiritual traditions.<sup>40</sup> This is a key question that pertains to our topic of plural spirituality.

Many Catholics today who enter into genuine relationships with Aboriginal communities, and are invited to participate in their rituals, admit that they are spiritually nourished by these spiritual experiences, sometimes in a way they are not in their local churches. How do they bring this experience back to their churches? Is talking about mutual evangelization, or evangelization in reverse appropriate? Missionary and theologian Claude Marie Barbour, also a contributor to this volume, has named many years ago this new phenomenon that missionaries experience as a "mission in reverse."<sup>41</sup> The question raised here is similar and it pertains not only to missionaries, but also to average Christian believers who find themselves in these situations. North American contextual theology has not yet addressed the Aboriginal theological question. How can we rethink what it means to be a Christian in North America if we were to engage Aboriginal religions and take their spirituality seriously?

A spirituality of *kenosis*, of self-emptying and openness to the other rather than self-exaltation, which has historically been the mark of Euro-Christian relations with other religions and cultures, may be what Christians are called to be in this new relationship. This spiritual approach, examined by other writers in this volume in more detail, is at

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<sup>40</sup> The work by Oblate missionary and theologian Achiel Peelman, *Christ is a Native American*, mentioned above, offers a good description of the new relationship many missionaries and Catholic bishops are experiencing with the Canadian Aboriginal Catholic communities. The book was written in the mid 1990s, but the trend continues today, as the new Catholic Church website <http://www.kateritv.com> indicates.

<sup>41</sup> See Stephen Bevans, Eleanor Doidge, and Robert Schreiter, eds., *The Healing Circle: Essays in Cross-Cultural Mission. Presented to Rev. Dr. Claude Marie Barbour* (Chicago: CCGM Publications, 2000).

the heart of the mystery of incarnation that, according to Paul's letter to the Philippians (2: 5-11), characterizes Jesus' fundamental relationship to God and the world. Maybe the new spirit that is blowing in the Catholic Church at this moment, moved by the particular charism of Pope Francis and his emphasis on dialogue and encountering the other, might open a new horizon for theological reflection on the above questions.

The change of attitude of the Churches toward Aboriginal peoples and their religious traditions, and the theological reflection questions mentioned above are important developments. However, equally important is how will Christian communities and churches stand in a meaningful solidarity with the movements for social and political transformation irrupting among indigenous peoples around the world, claiming their rights to life with dignity, and how will a mutual spiritual enrichment sustain the movements of justice and reconciliation. Processes of reconciliation such as the one initiated by the circles of trust prepare for deeper relations of solidarity in the service of transforming unjust structures, which, as many of the above mentioned testimonies affirm, is crucial for bringing about future reconciliation. In their Labor Day message (May 1, 2013) entitled "Popular Awakenings: Disturbances or Signs of the Times?," the Catholic bishops of Quebec mention Aboriginal movements of protest in Quebec and Canada among the "signs of the times" today. The *Idle No More* movement, the message says, "spread like wildfire from coast to coast throughout the winter, demanding that the First Nations be respected and listened to." The message speaks at length of such movements of protest, including students and workers movements, as signs of hope in society today. The theological language of the "signs of the times" is being revived in local churches and used to guide Christian engagement in the world. In his comments on *Evangelii Gaudium*, theologian Drew Christiansen notes that Pope Francis in his exhortation "revives one of the most important tools for engagement with the world that had been suppressed for the last 30 years: the reading of the Signs of the Times as a task of the whole people of God."<sup>42</sup> Could openness to enrichment by the spiritualities of other religious traditions, including Aboriginal peoples, for working together in solidarity for justice and reconciliation, be also one of the signs of the times in the Church today?

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<sup>42</sup> Drew Christiansen, "The Church Encounters the World," *America*, November 27, 2013, <http://americamagazine.org/content/all-things/church-encounters-world> [accessed December 18, 2013].



**CHAPTER VI**

**CHALLENGES OF PENTECOSTAL  
SPIRITUALITIES IN A  
POST-MODERN, POST-EUROCENTRIC WORLD**

*JEFFREY GROS, FSC*

The eclectic “seekers,” with their deinstitutionalized spiritualities, are a challenge for the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> However, other developments may be equally challenging for a kenotic spirituality in the Catholic Church. Many may find it ironic that with the loosening of institutional ties to religion and a decreasing support of religious convictions by a wider, fragmented culture, one of the fastest growing spiritualities, Pentecostal/charismatic, retains a high intensity of commitment and deep sense of the supernatural. It has an understanding mediated by direct experience of Christ and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and maintains a distance from traditional, modern institutions. Charles Taylor provides a helpful perspective on post-modern elements of the North Atlantic/West.<sup>2</sup> However, if we take the global perspective both North and South, popular religious spiritualities like Pentecostalism at all levels of societies are another major characteristic of the post-modern era.<sup>3</sup>

Many Pentecostal/charismatic Christians would characterize themselves as “seekers,” though outside observers would see a level of commitment uncharacteristic even of the traditional, modern, critical “dweller” church member. At the same time, studies show that the intensity of those associated with this spirituality also disguises a high turnover rate in these affiliations, demonstrating the patterns of post-modern religious mobility and eclectic spirituality.

While the post-modern pluralistic reality provides the secular context for the emergence of Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality, it also demonstrates clearly an instance where secularization does not mean subtraction of religion, but rather its intensification and separation from inherited forms. This new reality, both within the Catholic community and

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<sup>1</sup> See George McLean, “Introduction,” in Charles Taylor, José Casanova, George McLean, eds., *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values, 2012), pp. 1, 5.

<sup>2</sup> “The Church Speaks—to Whom?” in *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Matovina, *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America’s Largest Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 65.

beyond, warrants a kenotic dialogical response, as will be proposed in this chapter.<sup>4</sup> It is hoped that this chapter will both exemplify the thesis of the larger project in which this volume participates, and expand its parameters, both in global extension and in adding a form of spirituality to which Catholic resources can contribute and from which the institution and the scholars can also learn.

Studies of Pentecostal/charismatic reality use categories of spirituality and movement rather than church or doctrine to characterize the core of this religious phenomenon, corresponding to the understanding of spirituality presumed in this volume.<sup>5</sup> Classical Pentecostal denominations are a century old. However, charismatics within Orthodox, Catholic and historic Protestant churches; some African Instituted Churches; and neo-Pentecostal congregations also demonstrate the Pentecostal way of relating to God and to the Christian community: ecstatic phenomena like speaking in tongues, a quest for healing, an experiential sense of the presence of the Spirit, dynamic worship, the expectation of prophetic utterances, strong community solidarity and an urgency about the second coming of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Statistics in this field are notoriously unreliable and often biased by the data gatherers' social and confessional location. Yet it is reported that within the Pentecostal spiritual community in the Americas (including the U.S.), for example, charismatic Catholics account for the largest number of Pentecostal-style Christians in Latin America—some 73 million as compared to 40 million in classical Pentecostal denominations. In the U.S. Latino community, there are an estimated 5.4 million Catholic charismatic to 3.8 million Protestant Pentecostals.<sup>7</sup> In the U.S., Catholic English

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<sup>4</sup> McLean, "Introduction," p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Russell Spittler, "Spirituality," Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard Van Der Maas, eds., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002), pp. 1096-1102. Andrés Arango, *Aporte de la Renovación Carismática Católica a la Comunidad Hispana en los Estados Unidos* (Berkeley: Franciscan School of Theology, 2009), p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Pentecostals/charismatics are orthodox Christians who are open to the biblically attested gifts of tongues speech, prophecy, healing and an emphasis on the imminent return of Christ. (See D.W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* [Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1987]) For Catholics and most Protestants the charismata are seen as gifts, and not essential to the *ordo salutis*. There is a stream of "oneness" churches among the classical Pentecostal churches that baptize in the "name of Jesus only." These are often considered modalist in their understanding of the Trinity.

<sup>7</sup> Edward Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2011), p. 1. Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, p. 113.

speaking charismatic spirituality has found its niche alongside some more familiar forms, such as Franciscan spirituality, the variety of Marian devotions, or the Catholic Worker movement. In Latin America and other parts of the global south, the movement continues to grow.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter begins with an introduction, focusing on the persistent tension between a Christian spirituality focused on Christ and the Trinity, with an openness to inculturation and gifts from a variety of cultures and religions; and a bounded Christian spiritual identity, emphasizing the otherness of those who differ from a particular Christian group, ethnic culture or church. Catholicism is now open to religious freedom in principle, but Catholic cultures are struggling to develop a spirituality adapted to pluralism, especially new to cultures where Catholicism has a heritage of hegemony or of enclosed ethnic marginality.

The bulk of the chapter illustrates how this perennial disjunction and this adaptation to a new understanding of pluralism are being negotiated in the face of the rise of Pentecostal/charismatic spiritualities inside and outside of the Catholic community, both in the U.S. and in the context of Latin America.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Experience, rather than doctrine or institutional loyalty, is the common characteristic of Pentecostal/charismatic spiritualities, though practices may be grounded in identifiable theological convictions. Conversion stories drawn from these experiences bear remarkable parallels, whether from Catholic, Trinitarian Protestant, or oneness Pentecostal strains of the spirituality.<sup>9</sup> As one recent observer notes:

These Catholic charismatics are also difficult to differentiate from Protestant Pentecostals. Their worship is lively; their music is contemporary and repetitive; they speak in tongues and practice faith healing; and they are open to many different kinds of charismatic expressions. Most of all, they

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<sup>8</sup> Arango, *Aporte de la Renovación Carismática Católica*.

<sup>9</sup> For a survey of the of the literature and sociological models of conversion see Henri Gooren, *Religious Conversion and Disaffiliation: Tracing Patterns of Change in Faith Practices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); "Pentecostal Conversion Careers in Latin America," pp. 157-176, in Frans Wijsen and Robert Schreiter (eds.), *Global Christianity: Contested Claims* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007); "The Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Latin America" *Pneuma*, 34: 2, (2012), pp. 185-287.

are nurtured within egalitarian, lay-led charismatic communities.<sup>10</sup>

This characterization will be familiar to Catholic charismatics, Pentecostal ecumenists, and astute observers of the last forty years. Yet many sectors of Catholic leadership continue to treat it defensively and as a marginal movement.

Indeed, the common spirituality masks deep theological fissures in the movement: between oneness and Trinitarian Protestants; Catholics with their Marian emphasis and sacramental sensibilities; and Protestants, where many groups have inherited an anti-Catholic bias from the evangelical subculture, especially where Catholics have marginalized Protestants in the past. However, the common spirituality is also a resource for building bridges where Catholics and Protestants can overcome their defensiveness and realize their real, if imperfect communion as fellow Christians.<sup>11</sup>

Roman Catholic responses to this spiritual movement, both internally and among fellow Christians, run the gamut from embrace and dialogue to analytical distance and defense.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately for the unity of the Church, the leadership of Cardinal Leon Suenens and openness of Pope Paul VI to embrace and guide the Catholic charismatic movement in the 1960s, and that of the Secretariat (now Pontifical Council) for Promoting Christian Unity in beginning dialogue in 1972, set the Catholic Church on a path to mutual understanding.

### *The Persistent Disjunction in Christian Spiritual Approaches*

Before looking specifically at Pentecostal/charismatic spiritualities,

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<sup>10</sup> Timothy Wadkins, "The Postwar Path: A New Spirit is Alive in El Salvador" *America*, 207: 17, (December 10, 2012), p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Arango, *Aporte de la Renovación Carismática Católica*, pp. 88-92.

<sup>12</sup> The defensive position, especially in Latin America, is often attributed to fear in a post-hegemonic, pluralistic society. As one sociologist notes, in the context of the 2007 CELAM conference: "This fear is partially compounded of an older tradition that error has no place alongside truth, but more is at issue. There appears to be a conviction that faith and commitment are shallow and that therefore in an open competition will lose unless buttressed and supported by continued official support and extensive clerical advice and supervision. Loss of control seems to be equated with loss.... The seemingly sudden shift to openness and open competition seems to preoccupy [some of] the bishops, but it also is a source of potential energy and commitment in yet unknown forms." Daniel Levine, "The Future as Seen from Aparecida" in Robert Pelton, ed., *Aparecida: Quo Vadis?* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2008), pp. 186-189.

let us consider the context for studying current tensions. Christian identity and the spiritualities that support it, as defined in this volume, have represented a wide spectrum of emphases in the course of the Church's history. It is useful to identify two poles in this tension or disjunction which seem to be permanent: One pole presents a more open system focus on God's revelation in Jesus Christ, confident of God's presence in all of creation, recognizing the Holy Spirit's role in the development of culture. The other pole is more concerned about the boundaries of orthodoxy, orthopraxis and institutional loyalty. This tension can be illustrated by three examples:

In the apostolic era witnessed in Acts 15, discernment was necessary between openness to Gentile culture and enforcement of Jewish religious practice. In the midst of the "dissension and debate" Paul's party reported that "the conversion of the gentiles brought great joy to all believers." Others however said "It is necessary for them to be circumcised." The final resolution: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than is essential." (15: 28) This decision does, indeed, prescribe spiritual practices such as abstinence from blood and sacrificed food, which have not continued in the tradition. However, from the earliest days openness and boundaries had to be negotiated.

Another example of this tension emerged in medieval Spain, as the Muslim ascendancy in the peninsula gave way before Christian forces from the north. Arab-speaking Mozarabic Christians and their Muslim and Jewish compatriots had lived together for centuries in relative harmony (albeit with periodic regional wars and the disabilities typical of the era). They had engaged an exchange of culture, intellectual gifts and spirituality, the results of which had enriched the scientific and philosophical life of Christian Europe. The Christian reconquest (1085 – 1492) introduced a militant crusading spirituality and a Cluniac version of Latin worship, which displaced the interreligious amity and Mozarabic spirituality and forms of Latin worship from Visigothic times. New boundaries of Christian identity and spirituality emerged. In a few centuries' time, this crusading and closed system spirituality saw first the Jews and then Muslims expelled, and those who converted subject to the scrutiny of the inquisition.

A third example of this tension in spiritualities developed in mid-sixteenth century Italy. In the 1530s Pope Paul III deployed a group to envision the form a renewed Roman Church should take. Among these were Reginald Pole (1500 – 1558), Gaspar Contarini (1483 – 1542), Giampietro Carafa (1476 – 1559), and Giovanni Morone (1509 – 1580). All supported a strong papal-centered ecclesiology, a view which was later codified in Vatican I (1870). However, Contirini, Pole and Morone also had a spirituality rooted in a Christocentric piety with a high doctrine

of grace. They were part of a group known as the *spirituali*. These also had an openness to dialogue with their reforming fellow Christians in the north with whom they disagreed. On the other hand, Carafa and other reforming figures were known as the *intransigenti*, more focused on boundaries than dialogue. Carafa moved against his colleagues when he was elected as Pope Paul IV (1555). He had Morone thrown into the Inquisition jail in Castel Sant' Angelo, and Pole recalled from England where he was legate, last Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, and was beginning the process of reconciling the English people to the Church of Rome. Pole died before he could be brought before the Inquisition. Paul died before Morone's Inquisition process was finalized. However, this disjunction of spiritualities including styles of churchmanship still marks Catholicism after half a millennium.

These three examples show the sort of tensions endemic to a Christian movement which is committed both to dialogue, inculturation and openness to reason, and recognizes the need to set limits, articulate its essential message, and to finding appropriate institutional expressions for its spiritual life. "Agonizing dilemmas" are not new for this ancient Church. Without being anachronistic, there is an affinity between these two dimensions and the "seeker"/"dweller" typologies of our larger project. These are perennial disjunctions.<sup>13</sup>

The Church ... has the very challenging tasks, that of holding together in one sacramental union modes of living the faith which have at present no affinity for each other, and even are tempted to condemn each other.<sup>14</sup>

### *A Spirituality for Religious Pluralism*

Commitment to religious freedom and advocacy for the rights of religious minorities, especially in lands where Catholicism once predominated, has been an important challenge for the Catholic Church in the post-Vatican II years. When anti-Catholic bigotry is practiced even

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<sup>13</sup> Indeed, inculturation demands similar discernment: "The contemporary missiological use of the term syncretism is a theological judgment about a cultural formation's ability to carry true Christian meaning or not. Such judgments have to be made. But making them prematurely obscures the fact that both right and wrong expressions of Christian meaning are formed by the same social forces. Fear of syncretism often keeps Christians from looking at how their identities are actually being formed." Robert Schreiter, "Foreword," in Lynne Price, Juan Sepúlveda, Graeme Smith, eds., *Mission Matters* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997), p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, "The Church Speaks," p. 21.

by a persecuted minority in Catholic-majority contexts, outreach is particularly difficult.

For example, at the 1968 historic Medellín conference of the Council of Latin American Bishops (CELAM), the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* was among only three of the conciliar texts not cited. This was not because Latin American bishops were opposed to religious freedom (as some were), but because they did not have one mind on how to implement it in their cultures.

Indeed, there is still ambivalence on the question of pluralism and the implementation of religious freedom in the variety of cultures in which Catholicism finds itself.<sup>15</sup> Even when the official Church teaching commits Catholics to the support of the rights of minorities, prejudices among the Catholic people continue, and a culture of discrimination can have more impact in society than laws protecting minorities.

When there are rights in conflict, for example over divorce and remarriage, contraception or the rights of homosexuals in civil society, Catholic leadership may press for legal enforcement of their particular moral interpretations of Scripture and natural law, as we can see in a recent comment by a Vatican diplomat:

... democracies around the world have periodically exhibited traits of this new totalitarianism that emerges from a democracy-without-values, values that *must* be based on the timeless and universal moral principles adhered to and taught by our Church because these principles are founded on the Truth of Christ which came to set us free!<sup>16</sup> (emphasis added)

This attitude seems to be in tension with the independence and harmony, affirmed by the Council *Declaration* for others as well as the Church:

This independence is precisely what the authorities of the Church claim in society. At the same time, the Christian faithful, *in common with all other [persons]*, possess the civil right not to be hindered in leading their lives in accordance with their consciences. Therefore, a harmony exists between the freedom of the Church and the religious freedom which is to be recognized as the right of all [persons] and

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<sup>15</sup> For example, see Jeffrey Gros, "The Challenge of Pluralism and Peace: The Changing Relationships among the Churches in Colombia" *International Review of Mission* 98 (2 November 2009), pp. 241-359.

<sup>16</sup> Carlo Maria Viganò, "Religious Freedom, Persecution of the Church and Martyrdom," [http://icl.nd.edu/assets/84679/religious\\_freedom\\_persecution\\_martyrdom\\_nd\\_vigano.pdf](http://icl.nd.edu/assets/84679/religious_freedom_persecution_martyrdom_nd_vigano.pdf) 12 [accessed March 21, 2013].

communities and sanctioned by constitutional law.<sup>17</sup>  
(emphasis added)

As one U.S. prelate states, speaking of the Constitution: "... it also guarantees that the coercive power of the state will not be placed at the service of a specific religious idea or organization."<sup>18</sup>

The 2012 Roman Synod of Bishops sees the diffusion of Catholic teaching on religious freedom as integral to the New Evangelization.<sup>19</sup>

Vatican II was not yet a Council of global Catholicism, nor was it a vehicle for ecumenical reconciliation in itself. However, it laid out principles of religious freedom which open a whole new possibility for the Church globally in ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, social witness; and an urgency of creating a spirituality of dialogue and openness to this freedom in a pluralistic society.

## THE PENTECOSTALS AND CATHOLIC RELATIONS<sup>20</sup>

The classical Pentecostal churches grew out of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Wesleyan Holiness revivals and early 20<sup>th</sup> century events around the world, centered on the interracial, 1907 Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles. Pentecostal Christians grew from 74 million in 1970 to an estimated 497 million by 1997, an increase of 670 percent.<sup>21</sup> In the 1960s a vibrant charismatic renewal broke out in Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox churches.

In this section we will focus on 1) the Pentecostal reality, 2) the relationship, 3) the dialogue, and 4) Catholic challenges. It is the presupposition of this section that an effective strategy for dealing with the challenge of Pentecostal/charismatic movement is rooted in a spirituality of dialogue that avoids pat answers; an openness to pluralism based on human dignity; and a recognition of the perennial challenge of

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<sup>17</sup>[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651207\\_dignitatis-humanae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html), no. 13 [accessed March 21, 2013].

<sup>18</sup> Wilton Gregory, "Cardinal Bernardin: A Model for Civility in Public Discourse" *Origins* 42: 28, (December 13, 2012), p. 449.

<sup>19</sup> See final Propositions no. 13 "The Gospel offers a vision of life and of the world that cannot be imposed, but only proposed, as the good news of the gratuitous love of God and of peace," and no. 16. [http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino\\_25\\_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02\\_inglese/b33\\_02.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_25_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02_inglese/b33_02.html) [accessed March 21, 2013].

<sup>20</sup> See Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity: Ecumenical Documents and Critical Assessments* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010).

<sup>21</sup>Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

negotiating tensions between boundary setting, and an open systems approaches to spiritual development.

### *The Pentecostal Reality*

Scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century usually distinguish three movements of charismatic/Pentecostal Christianity: the classical Pentecostal churches; charismatics in the Catholic, Orthodox and historic Reformation churches; and Neo-Pentecostals, among them some African Instituted Churches. In approaching the movements it is important to note the diversity of the spiritualities; and the variety of stereotypes in the scientific literature, in church leadership, and even in self-presentations of the movements.<sup>22</sup>

Many sociological, psychological, political and economic models have been put forward to provide non-religious explanations for the rise and spread of Pentecostalism.<sup>23</sup> For the purposes of ecumenical dialogue, however, it is important especially for Catholics to listen to Pentecostal and charismatics' self-definitions and the narratives of their own history, motivation and religious self-understanding.

Many Pentecostal and Catholic charismatic critics find the anti-ecumenical/anti-Catholic, dispensationalist, health-wealth Gospel, entrepreneurial individualism and personality cult, racism and biblical literalism among their membership distasteful. The sectarian tendency, naïve approaches to biblical prophecy and personal revelation, and gender bias are challenges in both communities. Indeed, the early role of ordained women and evangelists in classical Pentecostal churches, and the high profile leadership of, for example, Bebe Patten or Aimee Semple McPherson<sup>24</sup> have often been obscured as Pentecostalism became more

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<sup>22</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Holy Spirit and the Unity of the Church: The Challenge of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Independent Movements" in Doris Donnelly, Adelbert Denaux, and Joseph Famerée, eds., *The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Christian Unity: Proceedings of the Consultation held at the Monastery of Bose, Italy, 14-20 October, 2002* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), p. 354; see also David B. Barrett and T. M. Johnson, "Global Statistics" in Burgess, *The New International Dictionary*, pp. 286-287. Thomas Rausch, "Ecumenism and America's Hispanic Christians" *Origins* 36:3 (June 1, 2006), pp. 41-45; "Catholics and Pentecostals: Troubled History, New Initiatives" *Theological Studies* 71: 94 (Dec. 2010), pp. 926-950.

<sup>23</sup> See Bernice Martin, "Interpretations of Latin American Pentecostalism: 1960s to the Present" in Calvin L. Smith, ed., *Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Impact and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 111-136.

<sup>24</sup> Edith Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

established and identified with the wider evangelical U.S. subculture.<sup>25</sup> The Catholic charismatic movement emerged during a time when clericalism and patriarchy were dominant in the Church, and frequently brought a religious legitimation to the subjugation of women. As Taylor and many researchers note, Pentecostal/charismatic growth in parts of Latin America has been a helpful antidote for the bane of macho culture, male irresponsibility and violence.<sup>26</sup>

It is also ironic that many classical Pentecostals have resonated with the style and communication of Popes John Paul II and Francis than have many modern critical, and post-modern seeker Catholics, who may know more of the inner contradictions of the office and its dysfunction for the community it is supposed to serve.<sup>27</sup> It is the personal holiness and not the effective (or ineffective) modes of teaching and administration, which can touch the seeker.<sup>28</sup> Of course, classical Pentecostals are as disposed as Catholics to have too little a sense “of the enigmas that accompany of life of faith,” by retreating into a biblical or experiential rigidity and literalism.

### *The Relationship*

The Pentecostal/charismatic movement is very diverse and expresses itself in many forms.<sup>29</sup> It is difficult to make generalizations about theology, ecclesiology and openness to dialogue, even though characteristics may be similar. In Latin America, for example, there is often the stereotype of tension between liberationist and charismatic movements within Catholicism, or between Catholic charismatics and Pentecostals, tensions which can be exemplified in Brazil.<sup>30</sup> However, there are other contexts, like Colombia, where the Catholic charismatic community has been a center for Catholic social teaching.<sup>31</sup> Some Pentecostal leaders are immersed in the liberation theology movement, while others avoid political engagement.<sup>32</sup> In some contexts, like Peru,

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<sup>25</sup> Estrela Alexander, Amos Yong, eds., *Philip's Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> See Taylor, “The Church Speaks,” p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, pp. 117, 121.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 76.

<sup>32</sup> Carmelo Alvarez, Ed., *Pentecostalismo y Liberación: Una Experiencia Latinoamericana* (San José: Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, 1992). Michael Wilkinson, Steven Studebaker, eds., *A Liberating Spirit: Pentecostals and Social Action in North America* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010).

Protestant Pentecostals have taken the *Life in the Spirit* seminars from Catholic priests. Catholics in Argentina have received Baptism in the Holy Spirit in Protestant rallies, and Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio (before he became Pope Francis) is pictured receiving the laying on of hands and prayers of the ministers and assembly during a Pentecostal prayer rally in 2006.<sup>33</sup>

The development of the charismatic heritage, whether within Catholic spirituality or in classical Pentecostal denominations, is influenced by non-religious factors but should not be reduced to them. Only face-to-face dialogue with Pentecostals, and common research in Scripture and the resources of the Christian heritage, can determine what we can agree on as the work of the Holy Spirit, as God's providence in history, and as an adequate and renewed witness to the faith of the Church through the ages.

Characteristically, the classical Pentecostal churches have not been ecumenically oriented, for a variety of reasons not elaborated here. They have often been marginalized by the dominant churches and frequently reject these churches as dry, lifeless and sometimes even apostate. Therefore, as Pope John Paul II admonishes, the dialogue of love precedes the dialogue of truth.<sup>34</sup> Relationships of trust must be built before church-dividing issues can be identified, mutual understanding can be enhanced, and the process of reconciliation in truth can begin. As the largest Christian community, and as a Church that self-identifies as in real, if imperfect communion with all other Christians, Catholics have a unique responsibility for outreach even when the openness is not reciprocated by some Pentecostals.

The relationship between Catholics and Pentecostals is difficult in many sectors of the globe. However, it will be helpful to recall three facts: 1) the largest group of charismatics in the historic churches is charismatic Catholic;<sup>35</sup> 2) there has been a formal, Vatican sponsored dialogue with Pentecostals since 1972;<sup>36</sup> and 3) some classical Pentecostal churches have more ecumenical openness than the majority. The Methodist Pentecostal Church of Chile exemplifies this latter situation, having been

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<sup>33</sup>Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, pp. 189, 175. See also Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, p. 99.

<sup>34</sup>*Ut Unum Sint* [http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0221/\\_\\_\\_P7.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0221/___P7.HTM), no. 28 ff. [accessed March 21, 2013].

<sup>35</sup> Matteo Calisi, "The Future of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal," in Vinson Synan, ed. *Spirit-Empowered Christianity in the 21st Century* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2011), pp. 69-106.

<sup>36</sup> Cecil Robeck, "Roman Catholic—Pentecostal Dialogue: Challenges and Lessons for Living Together" in Smith, *Pentecostal Power*, pp. 249, 276.

a member of the World Council since 1961 and part of an agreement on the mutual recognition of baptism since 1999.<sup>37</sup>

### *The Dialogue and Local Developments*

The Vatican sponsored dialogues are important texts even though they are not yet widely known among either Pentecostals or Catholics. They are resources for the educational and pastoral ministry of the Church, and texts on which both traditions can draw when the time is right, to move the dialogue of love to the dialogue of truth.

*Dialogues:* The official dialogue of the Holy See has been sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity since 1972.<sup>38</sup> Of the five reports one of the most significant is *Perspectives on Koinonia* (1989) which introduces the question of the nature of the Church, its visibility and the biblical categories we share.

One of the unique gifts which the Catholic Church brings to the table of dialogue for this young movement is the question of the nature of the Church and its unity.<sup>39</sup> As a movement barely a century old, the classical Pentecostal churches are only gradually developing clarity on their self-understanding as churches, their relationship to one another as a common movement, and their ecumenical profile.<sup>40</sup>

Visible unity, especially as Catholics understand it, will not soon be the goal of most Pentecostal denominations in their ecumenical agenda. However, the common study of biblical *koinonia* and a common recounting of the long history of the visible Christian community and the Holy Spirit's role in the development of this tradition will: a) lay the ground work for deeper understanding, b) generate Pentecostal scholarship on ecclesiology, their own and ecumenical, and c) instruct us in the historic churches how better to discern the Holy Spirit's role in the variety of renewal movements in history. It is amazing, for example, to

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<sup>37</sup> Juan Sepúlveda, "Another Way of Being Pentecostal" in *ibid.*, pp. 37-62.

<sup>38</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Achievement of the Pentecostal—Catholic International Dialogue," Ralph Del Colle, "Pentecostal—Catholic International Dialogue: A Catholic Perspective" in John Radano, *Celebrating a Century of Ecumenism: Exploring the Achievements of International Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 163-216.

<sup>39</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Holy Spirit and the Unity of the Church: The Challenge of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Independent Movements" in Donnelly *The Holy Spirit*. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1989)* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction To Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

see the 2006 Society for Pentecostal Studies' response to the 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* and its call for dialogue and help to reform the papacy.<sup>41</sup>

The 1997 dialogue text *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness*, likewise, is of particular importance because it a) defines terms like proselytism which are often used pejoratively to characterize others' evangelization styles, b) clarifies the commitments of the Churches to religious freedom and admonishes members of both traditions on the ethical implications of such commitments, and c) demonstrates examples of positive Catholic Pentecostal common witness.

The most recent round of the Vatican-Pentecostal dialogue is *On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings* (2006). This is a significant text because: a) it introduces a sacramental theme, Baptism, but in the broader shared context of initiation; b) it gives a common reading of Scripture and tradition, which helps scholars with very different methodologies, to understand how authority operates by dialogue and drafting; and c) it begins to take seriously a segment of history, the Fathers and Mothers of the Church, marginal to the interest of most Pentecostals.

Catholics bring an important sense of history and tradition to this dialogue. The first three generations of Pentecostal scholars have been primarily interested in biblical studies, as one would expect of an evangelical movement differentiating itself from American fundamentalism; and in spirituality, where the resources for renewal studies are found in the Christian tradition. The restorationist streams of Pentecostalism are often burdened with the myth of the Constantinian "fall" where imperial toleration of Christianity and its later being designated the official religion of the Roman Empire meant a departure from genuine Gospel faith.

When there is any interest in history, it tends to focus on research on the heritage of their classical Pentecostal denominations; the movements from which they spring, especially Methodism; and their own particular distinctive features: healing, the role of the Spirit, eschatologies, charismatic preaching and the like. A text, like this one on Patristics, would probably not have emerged without the stimulus of the dialogue with Catholics or Orthodox.

Catholic scholars are challenged to share the rich sense of history with Pentecostal colleagues; perspectives they bring to the Reformation, Middle Ages and global mission; and how they reconcile tradition, experience and Scripture in spirituality, church life and authority. Pentecostals' historical perspective also brings new questions to the

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<sup>41</sup>Terry Cross, "Possintne Omnes Unum Esse? A Pentecostal Response to *Ut Unum Sint*" *One in Christ* 41:1, (January 2006), pp. 4-41.

Catholic study of the tradition, especially renewal movements. Catholics need to support and mentor Pentecostal historians.

The dialogues will also need to treat of issues in biblical hermeneutics and authority as the relationship matures.

*Catholic Challenges in the Pentecostal Relationship*

This section lays out challenges for Catholicism as it faces the relational disjunctions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including the context of pluralism and Pentecostalism. Secondly, it proposes gifts that Catholics bring to the dialogue with global Pentecostalism.

*Catholic Internal Challenges:* Catholics will need to develop a robust catechesis for Christian identity in a plural world for a Church with an ecumenical commitment at all levels of church life. Catholics need to continue receiving Vatican II, especially its religious freedom and ecumenical commitments; and to train specialists in Catholic ecumenism including for Pentecostal relations. Whatever the past experience of establishment and cultural hegemony—“the default church of the majority,”—the future of Catholicism is that of a diaspora in an increasingly globalized, fragmented and pluralist world.<sup>42</sup>

*Formation for an Ecumenical Future.* In many sectors of Catholicism, there is a heritage of religious hegemony, and reliance on popular religion as the primary bearer of Catholic loyalty, piety and sensibility. Catholics will need a self-conscious, articulate and confident understanding of the faith. At the Vatican II Yves Congar and Latin American cardinals Raúl Silva Henríquez and Angelo Rossi were clear on the revolution in religious education necessary for Catholic communities without a heritage of pluralism, and for their formation for religious freedom in society.

If Catholics are to maintain their faith, in a society where the free market of ideas presents a wide variety of choices, then they need to have both an affective internalization of the Gospel, and sufficient cognitive resources to give account of their belief and share their faith with others. This does not mean a narrow, defensive apologetic, but it does entail a zeal for sharing the faith, building ecumenical bridges, and the ability to provide a winsome, biblically grounded apologetic for the Catholic heritage among unbelievers and fellow Christians.

Popular religion is a rich reservoir for catechesis in many cultures, but it is not enough to provide the Catholic witness necessary where education in the secular realm is on the rise and society is becoming

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<sup>42</sup> Taylor, “The Church Speaks,” p. 23.

increasingly pluralistic.<sup>43</sup> Careful attention to critical biblical approaches will be necessary as all sectors of the movement develop. In the global Catholic community, priests and religious moving from one cultural context to another need serious cross cultural, ecumenical and interreligious formation before they enter into their new pastoral situations.

Immigrants in particular need to be enriched by the Catholic, ecumenical and interreligious spirituality of their host community, as they begin to live their faith in a new environment. Religion as understood in the community of origin is especially important in identity formation; therefore both discontinuity and continuity in the transition are often negotiated through the religious community and its symbols.

Religious groups and/or fellowships are established as instruments for forming ties between old and new societies, and to help [immigrants] deal with and/or resist the ambiguities, discontinuities, and difficulties, that arise...<sup>44</sup>

This ecumenical and interreligious formation is especially important when Catholics move from a majority-Catholic context, like Eastern Europe or Latin America, to a pluralistic, ecumenically developed environment like the U.S. or Western Europe, or an interreligious minority context, like parts of Asia and the Middle East.

*Leadership for the Future.* Finally, if Catholicism is to face the challenge of global Pentecostalism, it needs to raise up and mentor informed Catholic leaders in this relationship. A spirituality of dialogue is an essential resource for facing this challenge.<sup>45</sup> The Catholic charismatic movement may provide the best resource for such leadership.<sup>46</sup> If Catholic

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<sup>43</sup>Jeffrey Gros, "Catechesis for Catholic Identity in an Ecumenical Context: A Conversation" in Diana D. Raiche, ed. *Catechetical Scholars III: Perspectives on Evangelization and Catechesis* (Washington: National Catholic Educational Association, 2005), pp. 1-10. See also Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, p. 108.

<sup>44</sup> Gemma Tulud Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 6. For a Pentecostal example see Juan Sepúlveda, "To Overcome the Fear of Syncretism: A Latin American Perspective" in Price, Sepúlveda, Smith, *Mission Matters*, p. 158.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey Gros, "The Ecumenical Calling of the Academic Theologian to Spiritual Pilgrimage in Service of Gospel Unity" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 44:3, (Summer, 2009). Walter Kasper, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> Arango, *Aporte de la Renovación Carismática Católica*, p. 88. See Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*, p. 172. Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, p. 116.

charismatics are to be effective in ecumenical leadership, they will need to be grounded in attention to the best approaches to Scripture, both at the popular study level and at the scholarly level, when called into that level of leadership. Likewise, as the Pentecostal community becomes more mainstream, interchurch families will be a resource for leadership.

Ecumenical leadership is not the calling of all Christians. Nevertheless, it is an important ministry in a divided world, as one Pentecostal ecumenist explains:

Ecumenism is a vocation, not simply a career. While good training clarifies what is at stake, informs one on how to advance an argument, how to mediate a conflict, or how to draft a document, good training is no substitute for the conviction that comes from a Divine call. When the way forward becomes difficult or the ecumenist is the victim of personal attacks, only a sense of Divine call will keep the ecumenist going. The ecumenical path can be a very lonely endeavor, especially for Pentecostals whose tradition has little experience with the subject.<sup>47</sup>

Both Catholicism and the classical Pentecostal churches have been blessed with outstanding leadership. However the time has come for a more intentional approach to cultivating leadership for the future.

*Catholic Relational Gifts:* Developing personal and congregational relationships are of course the first priority. As Pope John Paul II makes clear, the dialogue of love precedes the dialogue of truth. Because the classical Pentecostal churches see themselves as a renewal movement, those who share their spirituality, the Catholic charismatics, will be the front line in this ecumenical project.

In parts of Latin America, for example, where Catholic charismatics are entrusted with the Biblical emphasis week in dioceses across the region, they often use the occasion of bible study groups, preaching services and street evangelism to promote Pentecostal—Catholic participation, collaboration and common witness. During Protestant Bible week in Buenos Aires the Cardinal Archbishop and local Pentecostal leaders arranged that at every table selling and distributing bibles would

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<sup>47</sup> Cecil Robeck, “Approaching Ecumenism from a Pentecostal Perspective: Some Methodological Considerations” in Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, André Drooger, and Cornelis van der Laan, eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley, CA; University of California Press, 2010).

be a Protestant pastor and a Catholic priest, providing whatever translation/version the inquirer wanted, explaining that there was a common Scripture, even if with different notes and translations. In these contexts, an ecumenical and critical approach to the Scriptures will be important so as not to be caught in a narrow literalism, characteristic of some Pentecostal/charismatic pieties.

However, there is also a role for theologians in discerning where Catholic spirituality can contribute to the Pentecostal project, and to the role Pentecostal scholars can play as ecclesial theologians in service to their classical Pentecostal churches.<sup>48</sup> We have noted above in the context of the international dialogue, the challenge of history and ecclesiology. We will add here the example of sacramentality.

*Reflecting on Sacramentality.* This gift of Catholic sacramental spirituality, self-understanding and theology may be the most difficult, therefore among the most important contributions that Catholics bring to the relationship. There are some Pentecostal denominations with a sacramental understanding from a Wesleyan/Anglican heritage.

However, most classical Pentecostals have inherited an anti-sacramental rhetoric, if not understanding, from their evangelical ethos. Nevertheless, the theological heritage of sacramental thinking, from Augustine through Karl Rahner, Alexander Schmemmann and Avery Dulles, is a rich resource for Pentecostals<sup>49</sup> to understand: a) the incarnational tangibility of their rites, b) their high doctrine and experience of the Holy Spirit acting in the Christian community and its rituals, and c) their thorough going confidence in God's ability to use the material world as a vehicle for God's action in our lives.<sup>50</sup>

There is so much residue of misunderstanding around the central dominical rites of baptism and the Eucharist;<sup>51</sup> scholars may wish to start elsewhere, especially with healing and anointing. There are three reasons for this: a) many Pentecostals are shifting from a quasi-magical approach to healing often imbedded in a literalistic religious world view, to a scientific medical openness; b) it may help the Catholic recovery of the rite as really about healing the mind and body (not simply the soul as it

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<sup>48</sup> See Jeffrey Gros, "It Seems Good to the Holy Spirit and to Us: The Ecclesial Vocation of the Pentecostal Scholar" *Pneuma* 34 (2012), pp. 1-18.

<sup>49</sup> Wesley Scott Biddy, "Re-envisioning the Pentecostal Understanding of the Eucharist: An Ecumenical Proposal" *Pneuma* 28:2 (2006), pp. 228-252.

<sup>50</sup> Frank D. Macchia, "Tongues as a Sign: Towards a Sacramental Understanding of Pentecostal Experience" *Pneuma* 15:1 (1993), pp. 61-76. Daniel Tomberlin, *Pentecostal Sacraments: Encountering God at the Altar* (Cleveland: Center for Pentecostal Leadership and Care, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Gordon Smith, ed., *The Lord's Supper: Five Views* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press Academic, 2008).

slips into eternity), as we continue to move away from a “last rites” model; and c) Catholics and Pentecostals share a common biblical basis in James, without a history of polemical overlay.<sup>52</sup>

For example, it is instructive to go to the Church of God in Christ, with its African American congregations from various class and education levels, and see their approaches to healing. Of course, oil abounds and laying on of hands is provided for many concerns including healing. However, in some churches one still hears preachers excoriating the use of scientific medicine as a demonstration of faithlessness. In other, affluent megachurches there is a video clip on breast or prostate cancer or other scientific approaches to health management sandwiched between praise hymns and announcement of the Wednesday night healing service.

The long heritage of Catholic sacramental understanding of healing and anointing may be a helpful middle term, which honors medical science as a priority while not precluding the possibility of divine intervention, recognizing both as within the healing providence of God. Understanding Christ’s healing ministry, mediated through the community, can easily be recognized, phenomenologically, in any Pentecostal healing service. A sacramental approach to the ritual life of classical Pentecostal worship can contribute both to clarify their self-understanding, and to build bridges in recognizing the faith of the Church through the ages in Pentecostal worship.

All these themes: history, ecclesiology, biblical interpretation and authority, and sacramentality need further development in both our common understanding of Pentecostal churches and in their dialogue with Catholic theologians. But they are suggested here as a challenge for Catholics dealing with twenty-first century disjunctions and equipping ecumenical scholars in our tradition with the zeal for the relationship and the theological skills to make these contributions.

## CONCLUSION

Global Pentecostalism is here to stay. It is a major sign of the times in a post-modern, pluralized world. It is particularly vibrant in cultures that have bypassed Enlightenment skepticism and individualism. Like Catholicism, it is called by the Holy Spirit to be an agent of renewal for

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<sup>52</sup> “This examination [of Pentecostal healing] has been able to correct a widespread misapprehension about Pentecostals who are far from the non-sacramental Christians they are sometimes assumed to be.” Kimberley Alexander, *Pentecostal Ministry: Models in Theology and Practice* (Bradford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2006), p. 227. See Thomson Matthew, Kimberly Alexander, “The Future of Healing Ministry” in Synan, ed., *Spirit-Empowered Christianity*, pp. 313- 338.

Christians, a witness to the Gospel in the world, and a partner in the common quest for that unity for which Christ prayed. We are a long way from the mutual trust, relationships, and understanding that will make this calling transparent to the world or even to the majority of our own people, but global Catholicism is challenged to deepen its ecumenical spirituality and pioneer new relationships in service to its mission.

Catholicism at its best has always welcomed and discerned a variety of contributions to its spirituality. There are always inquisitorial moments in history and judgmental strains within the spiritualities of all traditions. Nevertheless, the Pentecostal encounter is particularly fruitful for exploring a discerning and nuanced approach to a variety of spiritual resources within Christianity. A truly ecumenical “hermeneutics of piety” is a necessary instrument in providing a basis for mutual understanding.

Catholics can hardly be less responsive and kenotic in their spiritual outreach than their Pentecostal colleagues—this in speaking to the reform of the Petrine office:

The eschatological call ... requires us [Pentecostals] to lay down our stingy, petty concerns about ecumenical dialogue and move out into a realm of the unknown—a region to which the Spirit calls the Church today—for the purpose of fulfilling Christ’s priestly prayer “that all may be one.” That Pope John Paul II has ... set the table ... should give no generous Pentecostal cause for concern, rather it should cause us to ask what we can bring to the table...<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cross, “A Pentecostal Response,” p. 15.



**CHAPTER VII**

**VOCATION:  
LAY SPIRITUALITY AND SECULARIST VALUES**

*MELODY LAYTON McMAHON*

**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter examines the possibilities of how Christian lay men and women who feel called to a “vocation,” that is, a particular type of work or service (paid or unpaid) outside of church life, and secularists who also feel a sense of “call” and value in the work they perform might come to a reconciliation and work together as a force for the end of culture wars and for social justice.<sup>1</sup> This brings together two interests of mine—the Christian vocation as lived by lay people in their daily work lives as well as in service to others, and the growing phenomenon of secularists or non-believers who want to find points of connection with Christians and others who consider themselves religious.

Not alone in this concern, Eboo Patel discusses his interest in this intersection in a preface to *Hearing the Call across Traditions*. He talks about how he felt the call of God, but wanted to live in the world he loved, and chose the world. Later he read that God had told Muhammad in a revelation, “You were sent to be nothing but a special mercy upon all the

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<sup>1</sup> The vocabulary for this paper is very difficult. By “vocation” I do not mean religious vocation in the sense of being called to be a priest, brother, or sister in a religious order. I mean the sense in which every Christian is called to a vocation in baptism. The term “religious” does not refer to these priests, brothers, or sisters in religious orders; it means people who adhere to a religion. By “lay vocation” I do not mean “lay ecclesial vocation”; I mean the “vocations” of people who do not work in church ministry. There are many terms for the people who are not “religious.” In this paper, I am referring to those who generally do not believe in a divine being or who are religious skeptics as non-believers and as secularists (realizing that Christians can subscribe to secularism as defined as those who believe in providing “a framework for ensuring equality throughout society—in politics, education, the law and elsewhere, for believers and non-believers alike.” See the National Secular Society, <http://www.secularism.org.uk/what-is-secularism.html>). While this would include some of the “nones,” [see the Pew report, “‘Nones’ on the Rise,” (Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, “‘Nones’ on the Rise,” October 12, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/9/nones-on-the-rise/>)] many nones are religious (or spiritual), but not affiliated. Of course, these nones must also be included in dialogue, but this paper focuses on the non-believing nones.

worlds.” Patel says, “When I read those words, I felt like the curtains had lifted, like faith and life were no longer separate, like there was a bridge between Heaven and Harlem—the bridge of service.” Though he came of age at a time of religious conflict, he found the same bridge in other religions and in secular humanism. His hope is that “the diverse community that is humanity is not fated to be divided by the clash of civilizations. We can just as easily be united on the common ground of service.”<sup>2</sup>

This chapter begins by seeking to understand who the secularists are and how the Church has sought to deal with them in the past. Then I explore how work or service can provide a way to find meaning, and how both laity and secularists seek to find meaning in their work. Then the impulse to find reconciliation by the laity and by the secularists is engaged. This is followed by what challenges and considerations exist for the Church and Christians in such a pursuit. What fruit might discourse on reconciliation within a common desire yield?

This hope to build a bridge based on vocation as a means of reconciliation fits in with the content of dialogue promoted by the Pontifical Council for Culture. It claims that two ripe areas are “the big existential questions” and “the major themes of society.” The question of “call” certainly is one of the big existential questions dealing with the meaning of life and its ethical dimension, and “work” is clearly noted as one of the themes of society, along with other themes that impinge upon various concepts of vocation.<sup>3</sup>

## WHO ARE THE SECULARISTS?

The Church has been aware of the need for dialogue with secularists for many years, however much atheism was seen as “among the most serious problems of our time.”<sup>4</sup> In 1965 the Secretariat for Non-believers was established (this became the Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-believers in 1988 and in 1993, was joined with the Pontifical Council for Culture).<sup>5</sup> After a plenary assembly in 2004, the Council published a

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<sup>2</sup> Eboo Patel, Preface, in *Hearing the Call across Traditions: Readings on Faith and Service*, ed. Adam Davis (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2009), pp. ix-xi. This book brings together readings from all faiths on why, whom, and how does one serve.

<sup>3</sup> Cardinal Paul Poupard, *Where is Your God?: Responding to the Challenge of Unbelief and Religious Indifference Today* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, no. 19, All documents cited are online at [http://www.vatican.va/phome\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>5</sup> This is a barebones history of a complex council. See the Pontifical Council for Culture, Profile, <http://www.cultura.va/content/cultura/en/organico/>

document that at last asks the questions, “Who are the non-believers? ... What are they saying to us?”<sup>6</sup> Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* has heightened the awareness of this growing chasm between the Church and secularists.<sup>7</sup> In it, he examines our society as secular “in this way: the change I want to define and trace is one which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others.”<sup>8</sup> He says, “We need to look at the issues of Church in a world of plural forms of spirituality. There are not only the other major religions, but also the spiritual lives of many who profess no religion, and even atheism. These are often very impressive, and invite us to modes of respectful exchange, from which we often have something important to learn.”<sup>9</sup>

The aforementioned 2004 document shows how diverse this group is—“atheists, non-believers, unbelievers, misbelievers or bad-believers, agnostics, non-practicing, indifferent, without religion, etc.”<sup>10</sup> In 2008, Phil Zuckerman figured that internationally there are between 500 million and 750 million atheists, agnostics, or nonbelievers. “Given such numbers, this means that there are approximately 58 times as many nonbelievers as there are Mormons, 41 times as many nonbelievers as there are Jews, 35 times as many nonbelievers as there are Sikhs, and twice as many nonbelievers as there are Buddhists. ‘Nonbelievers in God’ as a group actually come in fourth place—after Christianity (2 billion), Islam (1.2 billion), and Hinduism (900 million)—in terms of global ranking of commonly held belief systems.”<sup>11</sup> The big news in the Pew report of 2012 was the major growth in the “nones”: “In the last five years alone, the unaffiliated have increased from just over 15% to just under 20% of all U.S. adults. Their ranks now include more than 13 million self-described atheists and agnostics (nearly 6% of the U.S. public), as well as nearly 33 million people who say they have no particular religious affiliation (14%).”<sup>12</sup>

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profilo.html.

<sup>6</sup> Poupard, *Where is Your God?*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Taylor, quoted in George F. McLean, “Introduction: Disjunctions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, ed. Charles Taylor, Jose Casanova, and George F. McLean (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Poupard, *Where is Your God?*, p.13.

<sup>11</sup> Phil Zuckerman, *Society without Religion: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), p. 96.

<sup>12</sup> Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, “‘Nones’ on the Rise,” October 12, 2012.

In the recent book *Faitheist*, the author Chris Stedman shares the concerns brought forward in this chapter, and lists other names for secularists (freethinkers, wanderers, brights, etc.), but notes that atheism is a “statement about what I don’t believe in.” He finds the fellowship he is seeking in those who share values and not identity.<sup>13</sup> He points out that the overwhelming number of atheists in our country now are anti-faith and stridently calling for the “the end of faith” as one of the movement’s top priorities.<sup>14</sup> However, he and many atheists advocate for an atheism that tries to improve the world and work “toward freedom of—and freedom from—religion.”<sup>15</sup> Bringing an end to these kinds of culture wars and working together for good should be the goal of Christians today.

People on a quest for meaning can often be identified with the seekers in the four existential disjunctions studied in Charles Taylor’s work (even if most people have some of the seeker and the dweller in their personalities). These people on a quest are found in every religion and even outside of religion, as atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, secular humanists, or others.

## WORK AND SERVICE AS WAYS OF FINDING MEANING

Understanding our lives as having a call that provides meaning has gone back centuries across diverse traditions of belief, and not only for believers, but also for non-believers. Many describe having a vocation as being addressed by a voice to follow a path that one might not have chosen, but of which Annie Dillard says, “I think it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to grasp your one necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it limp wherever it takes you.”<sup>16</sup> While *Hearing the Call across Traditions* doesn’t specify “who” the call itself comes from, “our desire to serve is linked closely to our sense of who we are.” In short, it is not just about the tradition we come from, but a “fundamental part of our identity.”<sup>17</sup>

Meaning can clearly be found in one’s work. Indeed, work itself, as described by Pope John Paul II is “part of ‘what is old’—as old as man and his life on earth.” (*Laborem exercens*, no. 2) One purpose of John Paul II’s encyclical was “to highlight—perhaps more than has been done

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<sup>13</sup> Chris Stedman, *Faitheist: How an Atheist Found Common Ground with the Religious* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Stedman, *Faitheist*, p. 145.

<sup>15</sup> Stedman, *Faitheist*, p. 154.

<sup>16</sup> Annie Dillard, “Living like Weasels,” in *Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1982), p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> Adam Davis, “Why Do I Serve? Introduction,” in *Hearing the Call across Traditions*, p. 9.

before—the fact that human work is *a key*, probably *the essential key*, to the whole social question, if we try to see that question really from the point of view of man's good.”(LE, no. 3) By working, the person “*achieves fulfilment* as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes ‘more a human being.’” (LE, no. 9)

Besides this fulfillment, finding meaning in one’s work achieves several things that people long for; being in community is an important aspect of this. In “Who is Man?” Abraham Joshua Heschel says that “Man in his being is derived from, attended by, and directed to the being of community. For man *to be* means *to be with* other human beings. His existence *is* coexistence. He can never attain fulfillment, or sense meaning, unless it is shared, unless it pertains to other human beings.”<sup>18</sup> For workers, community is found in many ways. The people one works with at one’s workplace or at a service agency or in the field is a place to find others who share the same values and interests. Many workers also have a community they serve and become a member of that community; this is a way to demonstrate the values they hold dear.

Besides desire for community, another common factor might be altruism or love. *The Altruism Reader* discusses both the religious and scientific causes of altruism. The bioethicist Stephen G. Post writes about pure love and the love of self, a kind of altruism that does not depend on “reciprocal response.” “Deep community may emerge around helping behavior, but this must be distinguished from the self-interested, contractual relationships that only mimic true communion. Even if connections and relations do not emerge, the helping behavior continues unphased [sic].”<sup>19</sup> Thomas Jay Oord has defined love for those “doing research in love-and-science symbiosis:

To love is to act intentionally in sympathetic response to others (including God), to promote overall well-being.<sup>20</sup>

## THE CHRISTIAN QUEST FOR MEANING IN WORK

The Church has not been good at helping Catholic laypeople understand that they are called by God to a “vocation” through baptism,

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<sup>18</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Solidarity, Reciprocity, and Sanctity,” in *Hearing the Call across Traditions*, p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen J. Post, “The Core Meaning of ‘Love,’” in *The Altruism Reader: Selections from Writings on Love, Religion, and Science*, ed. Thomas Jay Oord (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008), p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Jay Oord, “The Love Racket: Defining Love and *Agape* for the Love-and-Science Research Program,” in *The Altruism Reader*, p. 14.

nor has it very often helped those who do know this how to live this calling in the world. An articulation of what is meant by vocation in this context would be, “Baptismal calling of the Christian to engage in secular activity intentionally as a disciple of Christ.”<sup>21</sup> The documents of Vatican II and other church documents provide confirmation that the Church does indeed believe this, yet it is not always clearly articulated to baptized believers. Through baptism, the laity “are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.” (*Lumen gentium*, no. 31)

They must assist each other to live holier lives even in their daily occupations. In this way the world may be permeated by the spirit of Christ and it may more effectively fulfill its purpose in justice, charity and peace. The laity have the principal role in the overall fulfillment of this duty. Therefore, by their competence in secular training and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them vigorously contribute their effort, so that created goods may be perfected by human labor, technical skill and civic culture for the benefit of all men according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word. (*LG*, no. 36)

The opening of the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, states that “modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified ... the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened particularly in fields that have been for the most part open to the laity alone.” (*AA*, no. 1) Later the document states that:

All those things which make up the temporal order, namely, the good things of life and the prosperity of the family, culture, economic matters, the arts and professions, the laws of the political community, international relations, and other matters of this kind, as well as their development and progress, not only aid in the attainment of man's ultimate goal but also possess their own intrinsic value. (*AA*, no. 7)

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Wheeler, “Christians’ Callings in the World” (working paper, Chicago, IL, January 8, 2008). Realizing that laypeople are in need of this help, Christians’ Callings in the World is a Lilly-funded project designed to help seminaries provide education to religious leaders in training to be able to “equip the saints” to fulfill their own vocations.

A spirituality of the work of the laity was formed in *Laborem exercens*: the Church “sees it as her particular duty to form a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ.” (LE, no. 25) It describes “creation, which we find in the very first chapter of the Book of Genesis, is also in a sense the first ‘gospel of work’.” For it shows what the dignity of work consists of: it teaches that man ought to imitate God, his Creator, in working, because man alone has the unique characteristic of likeness to God.” (LE, no. 25)

While the focus on the work of the laity has been found in Christianity for over fifty years, and while there has been a proliferation of information on the subject, it has produced very little change in church life. Thousands of books have been published on the “Religious Aspects of Work” since 1965 (the end of Vat II).<sup>22</sup> There is even a *Complete Idiot’s Guide to Spirituality in the Workplace*.<sup>23</sup> Yet, most Christians still seem to be unaware that their baptism provides the authority and power to live out their own unique vocation of bringing the reign of God into their proper sphere, the world of ordinary life.

Taylor has often discussed “the affirmation of ordinary life.” In his section on this topic in *Sources of the Self*,<sup>24</sup> Taylor brings to fruition an understanding of how marriage, family life, and sentiment arose from the Reform movement and is a hallmark of modern life. While not speaking specifically about lay “vocation” in “A Catholic Modernity,” he comes close with his further discussion of the affirmation of ordinary life. He is speaking about how this “dethroned the supposedly higher activities of contemplation and the citizen life and put the center of gravity of goodness in ordinary living, production, and the family.”<sup>25</sup> In *A Secular Age*, Taylor consistently forms arguments that point to the sanctification of ordinary life.

This is the basis for that sanctification of ordinary life, which I want to claim has had a tremendous formative effect on our civilization, spilling beyond the original religious variant into a myriad [of] secular forms. It has two facets: it promotes ordinary life, as a site for the highest forms of Christian life;

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<sup>22</sup> A search of WorldCat with these terms actually returns 53,484 hits.

<sup>23</sup> C. Diane Ealy, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Spirituality in the Workplace* (Indianapolis, IN: Alpha Books, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> Charles Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity (1999),” in *Dilemmas and Connections* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011), p. 174.

and it also has an anti-elitist thrust: it takes down those allegedly higher modes of existence, whether in the Church (monastic vocations), or in the world (ancient-derived ethics which place contemplation higher than productive existence). The mighty are cast down from their seats, and the humble and meek are exalted.<sup>26</sup>

It would be productive for reconciliation with non-believers if believers would more readily come to this understanding. He laments that it is rather sad that it took the movement of secular humanism to bring about this “revolutionary” gain in the primacy of life, though this outlook was found sometimes in the history of Christianity. He concludes that the finding of solidarity and benevolence in this quest:

... cannot be a matter of guarantee, only of faith. But it is clear that Christian spirituality points to one. It can be described in two ways: either as a love or compassion that is unconditional—that is, not based on what you the recipient have made of yourself—or as one based on what you are most profoundly, a being in the image of God. They obviously amount to the same thing. In either case, the love is not conditional on the worth realized in you just as an individual or even in what is realizable in you alone. That’s because being made in the image of God, as a feature of each human being, is not something that can be characterized just by reference to this being alone. Our being in the image of God is also our standing among others in the stream of love, which is that facet of God’s life we try to grasp, very inadequately, in speaking of the Trinity.<sup>27</sup>

For Christians, growing in the image of God is one where work promises this growth by providing a place to share compassion, knowledge, care, and creativity—becoming more like Christ in the sharing and utilization of these traits. This is vital for the Christian understanding of “vocation” as understood through incarnational theology and the fulfillment of the *imago Dei* in the *imago Christi*. Daniel Day Williams presents implications of this theology that bear out on our dialogue with non-believers 1) our humanness belongs to the goodness of creation; 2) life conformed to Christ is “not simply a having but a becoming,” and 3) “The *imago Christi* is the form love takes when the

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<sup>26</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 179.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity,” p. 185.

spirit becomes the servant.”<sup>28</sup> Through this, Day Williams says, “we know who we really are: creatures who can love one another and God and share our being with all his wondrous creation.”<sup>29</sup> Prabhu Guptara, a Hindu follower of Jesus and businessman, excoriates the light-weight contemporary Christianity which promotes “worship” (“as in the song: ‘the reason I live / Is to worship You’”) as the primary purpose of the Christian life. He claims that as far as he can “understand the teaching of Jesus the Lord, a relationship with Him is meant to be like ‘dynamite’ (or to use his own imagery, like yeast or like a tree growing, breaking up everything around and making something new and greater instead): we are here to be revolutionised and to revolutionise work and workplace and the world.”<sup>30</sup>

For Christians, though the “call” to a vocation is personal and unique, the call brings one to community, both the community one works in or serves, and the community that is the people of God. Through baptism, not only does the person receive their unique vocation and the authority to carry it out, but are “made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God.” (*LG*, no. 31) When the People of God are called together in congregation, they need to be given the means to “recognize that what they do together is directly related to how they live their lives when scattered in the world. The process of making disciples happens in the gathered church so that its members can continue their apostolic witness in their daily places of ministry.”<sup>31</sup>

### THE SECULARIST QUEST FOR MEANING IN WORK LIFE

This increased awareness of lay vocation (not only in the Catholic Church, but of Protestant Christians and those of other faiths) has been matched in some fashion now (in the past few years) by atheists or secularists. The “quest for meaning” found in work life often exists strongly for secularists. Some secularists might even describe a sort of “anonymous” call or a call from within to work that is full of meaning for them.

Secularists are talking about finding value in their work, though

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<sup>28</sup> Daniel Day Williams, “The Incarnation,” in *The Altruism Reader*, p. 146. Originally published in *The Spirit and Forms of Love*, New York: Harper and Row, 1968. This is also explicated in *Laborem Exercens*, no. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Day Williams, “The Incarnation,” in *The Altruism Reader*, pp. 144-146.

<sup>30</sup> Prabhu Guptara, “Spirituality at Work: A Comparative Perspective,” *Faith in Business Quarterly: The Journal of the Ridley Hall Foundation and the ICF* 5:3 (2001).

<sup>31</sup> Darrell L. Guder, “The Christians’ Callings in the World: Pastoral Formation for Missional Vocation,” *New Theology Review* 24, no. 4, 2011, p. 14.

they would not call it a “vocation” in the sense that it is God-given. However, the values they hope to demonstrate through their work are often the same as those of Christians. They hope to find an affirmation of life by showing what Taylor might refer to as “love” or “compassion,” and other Christians might call “agape,” instead might in secular terms be known as altruism, or “prosocial behavior, care, positive regard, and benevolence.”<sup>32</sup> In the New York Times Bestseller *The Element*, Ken Robinson quotes Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, “If you want to change the world, who do you begin with, yourself or others? I believe if we begin with ourselves and do the things that we need to do and become the best person we can be, we have a much better chance of changing the world for the better.”<sup>33</sup> Robinson too argues that finding this meaning in life, “The Element,” is not just a personal thing. “Finding the element in yourself is essential to discovering what you can really do and who you really are. At one level, this is a very personal issue.... But ... , The Element has powerful implications for how to run our schools, businesses, communities, and institutions. The core principles of the Element are rooted in a wider, organic conception of human growth and development.”<sup>34</sup> Stedman discusses how he found the desire he had to do service for others, something he had couched as “Christian ethics” during his Christian days, remained solid as “the desire to act selflessly for others [which] transcends religion.”<sup>35</sup>

Like Christians, these secularists find the personal, unique calling, which is their “one necessity,” and they find a community where they can carry out this calling and find meaning in their lives. For the purpose of finding like-mindedness with secularists, there is a correspondence in these—we can know our secularists friends as those who share in this in all but the belief in God.

## SEEKING RECONCILIATION

The desire to achieve reconciliation between believers and non-believers is a recent phenomenon, on the part of both sides. Prior to Vatican II, there wasn’t much of an impetus for Catholics to dialogue with any other religions, much less atheists, though of course there were the few outliers who brought these concerns with them to the council. This may seem strange as there are clearly Biblical examples of dialogue. Jesus himself engaged in dialogue par excellence; he spoke with Gentiles and other outsiders. Since Vatican II, many letters, documents, statements, as

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<sup>32</sup> Oord, “Preface,” in *Hearing the Call across Traditions*, p. vii.

<sup>33</sup> Ken Robinson, *The Element* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 224.

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, *The Element*, p. 251.

<sup>35</sup> Stedman, *Faithist*, p. 109.

well as the Council documents themselves have offered ways to dialogue in an effort to achieve understanding. In *Nostra Aetate*, Christians are invited into “dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions,” and to “recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.” (NA, no. 5) In *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Christians are called to cooperate in the endeavor of renewing the temporal order with all people. (AA, no. 7) This includes the social action that many non-believers seek to achieve with Christians.<sup>36</sup>

Taylor’s project to analyze the four disjunctions he finds, calls for a rethinking by the Church and its people. “Seekers” within the Church, who are beautifully described by his colleague, George F. McLean, are usually willing to dialogue with other seekers of goodwill.

Here the seekers can be seen less as having left the people of God, than as struggling to live the deep inspiration of the Spirit in the face of multiple responsibilities in the Church and the world, internal and external. The cost of their search for authenticity can be very high as it takes one beyond the following of authorities and the cultural attitudes of neighbors and confreres. Their need is not for a Church as an ideal institution, but one that is no longer enchanted and in many ways a fallible, human and humane way of living the gospel values. This is a community marked not by power and control, but by acceptance and encouragement of those who look to it in the needs they experience in their search. Here Christ on the Cross is the kenotic model for the Church manifesting the endless extent of willingness to suffer in order to serve.<sup>37</sup>

A useful summary along this line of thought is found in Carroll’s essay. Carroll believes that there was a theological renewal that:

Blossomed in the Second Vatican Council’s shift from understanding this relationship in an ‘extrinsic way’ to one in which grace becomes ‘intrinsic’ and ‘constitutive’ of human nature. This relationship is conceived by the Council Fathers

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<sup>36</sup> See recent cases of Christians refusing to work with atheists on social justice issues. Hemant Mehta, “Kansas City Homeless Shelter Tells Atheist Group They Can’t Volunteer on Thanksgiving,” *The Friendly Atheist*, November 11, 2013, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2013/11/11/kansas-city-homeless-shelter-tells-atheist-group-they-cant-volunteer-on-thanksgiving/>.

<sup>37</sup> McLean, “Introduction: Disjunctions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” in *Church and People*, p. 6.

as operating within a Christological context, following the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, in which a theological anthropology orchestrates the relational, existential, and historical indwelling of grace within nature that refuses the oppositional logic of modernity. This sacramental vision of reality reconnects faith and reason, the sacred and the secular, grace and nature in a Christological humanism in which human freedom is not opposed to God, as in so many nineteenth-century-forged “subtraction theories,” but rather grounded in the salvific event of the Incarnation. It is just such a theological vision which would inspire Pope Paul VI in 1975 to comment in *Evangelii nuntiandi* (2, 20), that ‘The split between the Gospel and culture is without doubt the great drama of our time.’<sup>38</sup>

The *New York Review of Books* recently printed the first chapter of the late Ronald Dworkin’s last book, *Religion without God*. Dworkin makes the point that by understanding a bit of philosophy, it is possible to “formidably shrink both the size and the importance of the [culture] wars.”<sup>39</sup> He was disturbed about religious war, calling it a “cancer, a curse of our species.” Dworkin hoped to disassociate religion from a supernatural person which might have the effect of “separating questions of science from questions of value.” Like Carroll and more recent moderate atheists, Dworkin believed there were zealots on both sides. “What divides godly and godless religion—the science of godly religion—is not as important as the faith in value that unites them.”<sup>40</sup>

A recent article in *Publisher’s Weekly* discusses over twenty new books which move atheism into the mainstream, several of which call for finding a common good, or at least hope to tone down the stridency of the “New Atheists” against religion.<sup>41</sup> In *Faithiest*, Chris Stedman brings the view of an atheist who is involved in interreligious dialogue. He points out how the predominant atheistic voices being heard now are those of the New Atheists who are as full of venom as the most rigid fundamentalist.

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<sup>38</sup> Anthony J. Carroll, “The Church and the World: Disjunctions and Conjunctions,” in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, p. 201.

<sup>39</sup> Ronald Dworkin, “Religion without God,” *The New York Review of Books* (April 4, 2013).

<sup>40</sup> Dworkin, “Religion without God.”

<sup>41</sup> Kimberly Winston, “Atheists, the Next Generation: Unbelief Moves Further into the Mainstream,” *Publishers Weekly*, April 12, 2013, [http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-article/56789-atheists-the-next-generation-unbelief-moves-further-into-the-news/religion/mainstream.html?utm\\_source=MegaList&utm\\_campaign=c1a610204b-UA-15906914-1&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-article/56789-atheists-the-next-generation-unbelief-moves-further-into-the-news/religion/mainstream.html?utm_source=MegaList&utm_campaign=c1a610204b-UA-15906914-1&utm_medium=email).

Stedman feels that both atheists and those of faith need to put their “faith” in each other and find ways to “overcome the false dichotomies that keep us apart.” He says that “after learning the necessity of engagement the hard way, I’ve uncovered an essential truth—the fellowship I had been seeking all along was already around me: a diverse community defined by shared values rather than shared identity.”<sup>42</sup> Stedman argues that atheists should join in interfaith dialogue<sup>43</sup> for four reasons: 1) they are outnumbered (the pragmatic approach); 2) they want to end religious extremism and other forms of suffering and oppression (the shared-values approach); 3) they have a lot to learn (the educational approach); and 4) they have a bad reputation and are discriminated against (the necessity approach).<sup>44</sup> Organizations like Free Thought Exchange are implicitly “bridging the gap between those of faith and those without.” Their manifesto states they are

about learning how to work and live agreeably and peacefully alongside those with different beliefs.... Our goal is never to debate or convert anyone to our way of thinking but to simply demonstrate to each-other that although we have different world-views, we are good moral individuals, who share many core values. There are many misconceptions we have about one another so we believe it’s time to open a respectful friendly dialog. Whether you are a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist, or an Atheist, we all share a common goal—to bring peace and prosperity to ourselves and our fellowman.

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<sup>42</sup> Stedman, *Faithist*, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Stedman remarks, “I fully acknowledge that the language of ‘interfaith’ is imperfect, clunky, and can feel exclusive to many nonreligious people. But I think we should participate in interfaith efforts anyway. Interfaith is currently the most-recognized term to describe activities that bring the religious and nonreligious together for dialogue and common work.” *Faithist*, p. 174.

<sup>44</sup> When I began thinking about this issue four years ago, I could find little literature. In the last few months, there has been a barrage of writing—almost every day there is some item in *Religion News Service* (<http://www.religionnews.com/>) or some notice of a book or article where non-believers are coming out with ways to be accepted as those of good will. A search on November 29, 2013 of *Religion News Service* brings up “Grateful without God: A Secular Thanksgiving,” “Do Atheists Need Their Own Church?” “Got Faith: A Manual for Creating Atheists...,” “Free Thought Exchange Brings Atheists to Church for Dialogue” all in the past two weeks. The blog, *The Immanent Frame* (<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/category/here-there/>), had a post on “Secularism and Secularity at the AAR” that included mention of topics such as “Religious ‘Nones’: Understanding the Unaffiliated,” “Memorializing the Secular: Martyrs, Mourners...,” “How Religion Speaks to the Secular.”

We all hope for a better future regardless of our creed. In a world filled with intolerance it is time for us to make a difference. It is time for us all, regardless of belief, to raise up and unite as a culture and show love to one another.<sup>45</sup>

The actor and writer Rainn Wilson describes how he came back to faith after reading books of the world's great religions, saying he found "faith in a time of lack of faith."

At this moment in history, there is a great movement once again toward secular humanism and against God and religion. This is completely understandable considering the hypocrisy of religion and the horrors that have been committed in its name. Religion in this day and age seems to be rote superstition seeped in dutiful dogma.

There are debates on TV, the Internet, and in books, proving or disproving God. It feels oddly like the debates that happened a hundred years ago when Marxism and Leninism were being wrestled with around the world. The odd thing to me is that the "anti-God" coalition seems as angry, reactionary, and judgmental as the "religious" side of the debate. It's all quite funny. No one is ever going to convince anyone else to change his or her beliefs (or disbelief). Especially through "debate."<sup>46</sup>

## CHALLENGES FOR THE CHURCH

Challenges that are raised for the Church are several (depending on definition of Church): 1) distrust of secularists will need to be overcome and the view adopted that they are dialogue partners, not conversion material; 2) the hierarchical Church will have to see laypeople as being as fully called to service as are the clergy, not as derivative of clergy; 3) there is no centralization of organizations for non-believers; and 4) the Church will have to accept that secularists may convert some Christians to the secular life. However, there is equally the possibility that secularists who are looking for something more meaningful might find this in Christianity.

It has already been discussed that Church documents such as *Nostra Aetate* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* make it clear that secularists are to be dialogue partners and that Christians should work together with non-

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<sup>45</sup> "Free Thought Exchange," <http://www.freethoughtexchange.com/>.

<sup>46</sup> Rainn Wilson, *Soul Pancake* (New York: Hyperion, 2010), p. xiv. See also the "Soul Pancake" website, <http://soulpancake.com/>.

believers to promote the good in ordinary life. Where this dialogue and hoped-for reconciliation is to be carried out can have both private and public implications. For example, Poupard calls the individual to “step out of the sanctuary and enter the market place, to show off, without grotesque publicity, the joy of belief, and the importance of faith for the reality of life.”<sup>47</sup> Wherever the reconciliation is to take place, it is clear that the Church, at least in its documents, proposes that laypeople are fully equipped to be leaders through their baptismal call.

In dialogue, both sides hear each other with respect: Christians can posit their reasons for faith in Christ; non-believers can offer why they do not believe. On the Church’s side, *Gaudium et spes* clearly expects this: “While rejecting atheism, root and branch, the Church sincerely professes that all, believers and unbelievers alike, ought to work for the rightful betterment of this world in which all alike live; such an ideal cannot be realized, however, apart from sincere and prudent dialogue” and goes on to “courteously” invite atheists to consider the Gospel with an open mind. (*GS*, no. 21) Catholics are exhorted to, “Respect and love. This ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them.” (*GS*, no. 28)

The New York Times Bestseller, *Soul Pancake*, describes its goal to provide “a place to decide if they really are atheists or Lutherans or secular humanists or if that’s just an inherited belief structure handed down from the outside world.”<sup>48</sup> In the chapter, God and Religion, one of the challenges is “Don’t knock it ‘til you try it,” encouraging people to visit various places of worship in their cities, saying, “. . . can you say with 100% conviction that you’re opposed to something if you haven’t actually tried it?”<sup>49</sup> It is certain that non-believers expect dialogue to impact people’s lives, to have the potential to sway the other—one hopes that the witness of the full life one finds in Spirit is engaging for secularists when they dialogue with Catholics.

The second challenge is one the Church must take seriously. Lay people are increasingly looking for ways to express their desire to live their vocation with respect of the hierarchy, living in the fullness promised them at Vatican II. All laypeople must be engaged, “it is [not] a

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<sup>47</sup> Poupard, *Where is Your God?*, p. 37. Organizations, such as Catholic education and cultural heritage are also called out to participate in the dialogue and these are places where the dialogue could be fostered.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson, *Soul Pancake*, p. xi.

<sup>49</sup> Wilson, *Soul Pancake*, p. 137.

specialized activity to be entrusted to a few experts.”<sup>50</sup> In *Lumen Gentium*, they were promised their important role in ordinary life:

They must assist each other to live holier lives even in their daily occupations. In this way the world may be permeated by the spirit of Christ and it may more effectively fulfill its purpose in justice, charity and peace. The laity have the principal role in the overall fulfillment of this duty. Therefore, by their competence in secular training and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them vigorously contribute their effort, so that created goods may be perfected by human labor, technical skill and civic culture for the benefit of all men according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word. (*LG*, no. 36)

What could be a space for this pluralist vision? According to Edward Hahnenberg, “The old binary opposition of belief and unbelief has faded in front of a multifaceted appreciation of plurality and perspective. Duality has given way to difference.”<sup>51</sup> This is nowhere more noticeable when one starts naming organizations of non-believers or secularists that currently exist; there is no centralization or little authority that Christians can appeal to. All kinds of organizations abound where there might be dialogue. The American Ethical Union, identifies itself as a “religious” organization, but does not demand any belief in a divine being or absolute truth. They put their faith in the “unique worth of each individual, we act to elicit the best in others and in ourselves; our faith is in the human capacity to create a better world.” The American Humanist Society has over 160 local chapters and affirms “the idea that you can be good without a belief in a god.” The mission of the Center for Inquiry “is to foster a secular society based on science, reason, freedom of inquiry, and humanist values.” The Council for Secular Humanism is an advocacy organization to help those you seek to live a “non-religious lifestance.” Though some of these organizations oppose a belief in a divine being, they also profess a strong belief in religious freedom and do not seek to abridge the human right to freedom of religion. The National Secular Society hopes to bring together religious and non-religious. Free Thought Exchange exists to bring secularists into conversation with churches in local communities. Some of these groups are looking to the Church to provide a model. Some have Sunday Schools and a movement that is growing, The Sunday Assembly states that it is “a godless congregation

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<sup>50</sup> Poupard, *Where Is Your God?*, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Edward Hahnenberg, “Lay? Ministry? Christian Mission in a Pluralistic World,” *Annual Publication of the College Theology Society* 54 (2008), p. 212.

that celebrates life. Our motto: live better, help often, wonder more. Our mission: to help everyone find and fulfill their full potential.”<sup>52</sup>

For the average Christian, the place of connection will be their workplace, the places where they do works of social justice, and even homes. Wherever they come into contact with secularists to do good is the place where this dialogue can take place.

Secularists may convert Christians to secularism. Since this is already happening at a fast pace, it seems that its continuation is likely. The Church must act on its words to provide meaning to a person’s life by embracing the full ministry of laypeople and to try to help Christians incorporate what they feel as a personal responsibility to the world through their work as part of their Christian lives (as well as solve many of the problems on the list for many lapsed Catholics). Though this is a risk, the Gospel demands that Christians meet others to bring their witness of new life and there is equally the possibility that secularists who are looking for something more meaningful might find this in Christianity.

“The divine economy makes use of the rebel to fulfil the design of the Creator.”<sup>53</sup> Taylor makes the point that “If the Samaritan had followed the demands of sacred social boundaries, he would never have stopped to help the wounded Jew. It is plain that the Kingdom involves another kind of solidarity altogether, one which would bring us into a network of agape.”<sup>54</sup> He goes on to say, that “What Vatican rule-makers and secularist ideologies unite in not being able to see, is that there are more ways of being a Catholic Christian than either have yet imagined... But as long as this monolithic image dominates the Christian message as vehicle of the Catholic Church will not be easy to hear in the wide zone of the Age of Authenticity.”<sup>55</sup> Chris Stedman, on the atheist side, laments the rise of “New Atheism” and its hostile stance toward anyone of belief, the “confrontationalists” who want to see the wholesale demise of religion with as rigid a stance as any Christian fundamentalist. Adam Kirsch, in a review in *The New Yorker*, described the situation: “religion and secularism often face off in our culture as megaphone-wielding opponents, each braying out the sins and shortcomings of the other.... The contest between religious and secular world views can’t be resolved by force of argument, because both offer a vision of reality and human life

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<sup>52</sup> “The Sunday Assembly,” <http://sundayassembly.com/>. Many of these assemblies in the US, UK, and Australia sound much like “Theology on Tap,” <http://www.renewtot.org>, the popular meetings of young people, usually held in bars, started in the Archdiocese of Chicago to hear lectures and discuss theology.

<sup>53</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), p. 218.

<sup>54</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 158.

<sup>55</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 504.

that is, on its own terms, coherent and convincing. The problem, always, is whether to accept the terms.”<sup>56</sup>

Anthony J. Carroll provides a table of “Four Disjunctions” in his essay, “The Church and the World: Disjunctions and Conjunctions” in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*. He clarifies that atheists can be as much on the “possession” side, while warning against a strict categorization and urges us to see them as “transversal attitudes which cut through all of us.”<sup>57</sup> “Paradoxically scientific naturalists and exclusivist Catholics share the same attitudinal structures of exclusivism that function to close down rather than to promote dialogue and debate.”

<b>GOSPEL AS A GIFT OR AS A POSSESSION</b>	
<i>Gospel as Gift</i>	<i>Gospel as Possession</i>
1a. Seekers of a spiritual path	1b. Residers in a fixed tradition
2a. Assent to teaching church	2b. Obedience to authoritarian church
3a. Historical realization of human dignity	3b. Non-historical morality
4a. Plural spiritualities and the secular	4b. Single spirituality

**Figure 1:** Table of Four Disjunctions

For the atheist Stedman’s part, he sees the need to “promote critical thinking, education, religious liberty, compassion, and pluralism, and to fight tribalism, xenophobia, and fanaticism,”<sup>58</sup> a point of view much more analogous to those who possess “Gospel as Gift.”<sup>59</sup>

In “A Catholic Modernity,” Taylor talks about a “new way of understanding” that many believers have come to.

Spelled out in propositions, it would read something like this: (1) that for us life, flourishing, and driving back the frontiers of death and suffering are of supreme value; (2) that this wasn’t always so, it wasn’t so for our ancestors, or for people in other earlier civilizations: (3) that one of the things that stopped it from being so in the past was precisely a sense, inculcated by religion, that there were higher goals; and (4)

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<sup>56</sup> Adam Kirsch, “Faith Healing: A Poet Confronts Illness and God,” *The New Yorker* (May 6, 2013), p. 80.

<sup>57</sup> Carroll, “The Church and the World,” pp. 201-2.

<sup>58</sup> Stedman, *Faithist*, p. 153.

<sup>59</sup> Carroll, “The Church and the World,” p. 209.

that we have arrived at (1) by a critique and overcoming of (this kind of ) religion.<sup>60</sup>

Mary Frohlich describes as her understanding of Taylor's project: "self-consciously situated within the theological and Church context, as an effort to discover how our wisdom traditions can reclaim an effective evangelical presence within this postmodern reality. I think Taylor is challenging us to consider the possibility that, to achieve this, just staying on the familiar territory of the re-visioning of our traditions from within themselves will not be sufficient.... However, Taylor is warning us that we have to pay careful attention to how we affirm and express our commitment to the transcendent God as an essential dimension of our engagement in these endeavors. Our spiritualities *are* theological; we *do* understand spirit in terms of 'Spirit.'"<sup>61</sup> "Engaging dialogue and credible witness can raise the desire to enter into the mystery of the faith. Such is the invitation to set out on the pathway of Jesus: 'Come and See' (Jn 1:38)."<sup>62</sup> Kirsch says that, "To argue for faith, at least in the twenty-first century, is already to lose the argument. What believers can give nonbelievers is an account of what it means to live in faith—not a polemic but a description, a confession, a kind of poem."<sup>63</sup> Though the Church "agrees to recognize the world as ... free, autonomous, sovereign, and in a certain sense, self-sufficient,"<sup>64</sup> Catholics can declaim the words of *Laborem exercens*, "Let the Christian who listens to the word of the living God, uniting work with prayer, know the place that his work has not only in *earthly progress* but also in *the development of the Kingdom of God*, to which we are all called through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the word of the Gospel" (*LE*, no. 27) and explain how this calling gives them the ability to bring sincerity, hospitality, generosity, kindness, and other virtues to their workplace and service opportunities.

Dworkin's final thoughts from *Religion without God* were a prayer:

I close this chapter with a hope; indeed, if you won't object, a prayer. In this book I suggest that people share a fundamental religious impulse that has manifested itself in various convictions and emotions. For most of the history,

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<sup>60</sup> Taylor, "A Catholic Modernity," p. 176.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Frohlich, "Reflection on Schreier's Proposed 'Three Meanings of Spirituality,'" (unpublished paper, Catholic Theological Union Plural Spiritualities Project, 10/22 Reflection), pp. 2-3.

<sup>62</sup> Poupard, *Where is Your God?*, p. 37.

<sup>63</sup> Adam Kirsch, "Faith Healing," p. 80.

<sup>64</sup> Paul VI, *General Audience*, April 23, 1969, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P6LAYMAN.HTM>.

that impulse has generated two kinds of convictions: a belief in an intelligent supernatural force—a god—and a set of profound ethical and moral convictions. These two kinds of belief are both consequences of the more fundamental attitude, but they are independent of one another. Atheists can therefore accept theists as full partners in their deepest religious ambitions. Theists can accept that atheists have the same grounds for moral and political conviction as they do. Both parties may come to accept that what they now take to be a wholly unbridgeable gap is only an esoteric kind of scientific disagreement with no moral or political implications. Or at least many more of them can. Is that too much to hope? Probably.

Christians and non-believers of goodwill must have faith and optimism that this dialogue will bear fruit. This dialogue, including those of all faiths and those of no faith, must not stop at dialogue, but as Patel points out, “This discourse is necessary, but perhaps not sufficient, however to address the problem of interreligious conflict and the challenge of religious diversity.” He states that it is “by engaging with others to build the common good together through common action,” that we will find those who “share our hope for society.”<sup>65</sup> All laypeople must be engaged, “it is [not] a specialized activity to be entrusted to a few experts.”<sup>66</sup>

There are several ways that a conversation between the two groups might yield fruit. A shared vision (though partial) of the value of work could bring people, Christians, those of other religions, and secularists, into some reconciliation through a recognition of this vision and help to build trust between these groups. But one necessity is to retain respect for the others’ differentness. Patel points out three “components necessary to a vibrant, pluralist community.” The first two can be accomplished through sharing this vision of work—“1) Respect for particular identities (religious and other) of different persons and groups; and 2) Intentional, mutually appreciative and enriching relationships between diverse individuals and communities.”<sup>67</sup> Just as Catholics do not present a monolith, neither must Christians engage secularism as a monolith—every person one meets has his or her own story of how they arrived at how to live as a non-believer.

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<sup>65</sup> Patel, “Appendix I: Toward Action,” in *Hearing the Call across Traditions*, p. 286.

<sup>66</sup> Poupard, *Where Is Your God?*, p. 29.

<sup>67</sup> Adam Davis, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Hearing the Call across Traditions*, p. 3.

In creating these places of public discourse where people of goodwill can come from both sides to dialogue, those who share this vision could bring reform to areas of life (work and societal) that are in need of justice. How can this be accomplished? Jointly people of this group who find relationship through their vocations could help establish Patel's third component, "Active partnerships across lines of difference that promote common action for the common good of all groups."<sup>68</sup>

Christians and secular seekers can form alliances where they share values in businesses where shareholder profits are the primary goal, these people could advocate together for justice for the wage-earners and consumers. In work life where there is a lack of ethical treatment of employees, these secularists and believers could advocate for an ethical workplace. *Laborem exercens* states that, "Movements of solidarity in the sphere of work—a solidarity that must never mean being closed to dialogue and collaboration with others—can be necessary also with reference to the condition of social groups that were not previously included in such movements but which live in changing social systems." (*LE*, no. 8) For Christians and others who find their vocation in working in social justice services, joining with secular forces could bring even greater aid to those in need. It is not without meaning that the Church's office to deal with social issues, such as work, is the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace. (*LE*, no. 2)

For Pope Francis, the goal is peace. In his first Christmas address, he said, "And I also invite non-believers to desire peace with that yearning that makes the heart grow; all united, either by prayer or by desire. But all of us for peace."<sup>69</sup> This papal outreach, only one of several by the new pope, shows a new vision of how the Church can work with non-believers of all sorts.

Whatever can be accomplished in this sphere, Catholics are called to be witness, as a "perfect citizen of the world, a positive and constructive element," the emancipated faithful, with freedom and responsibility in the domain of temporal reality."<sup>70</sup> This is where the vocations of "ordinary life" can meet with others of goodwill in dialogue to bring the reign of justice and peace.

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<sup>68</sup> Patel, *Hearing the Call across Traditions*, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi, Christmas Day 2013*, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/urbi/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131225\\_urbi-et-orbi-natale.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/urbi/documents/papa-francesco_20131225_urbi-et-orbi-natale.html).

<sup>70</sup> Paul VI, *General Audience*, April 23, 1969.



## CHAPTER VIII

# VARIETIES OF RITUAL AND SPIRITUALITY

RICHARD FRAGOMENI AND GILBERT OSTDIEK

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the relationship between ritual and spirituality. Ritual creates and enacts the space wherein people can come together, and explore and express shared meaning and value. Two such situations will be considered here. The first focuses on two long-standing traditions of celebrating Good Friday, in both the official liturgy of the Church and the practices of popular religion within the same Roman Catholic community. The second looks at the wide-spread emergence of the contemporary phenomenon called disaster ritual, whereby secular, pluralist societies try to find ways of corporate action in the face of social catastrophes. The two situations will present significant contrasts in thinking about the relationship between ritual and spirituality, and show how ritual can encompass the complexities of meaning that emerge both in the existential realities of life, and the rich texture of Christian faith.

### SECTION I: GOOD FRIDAY RITUALS

In the wake of Vatican II, devotions and practices of popular religion were commonly relegated to a lesser status in Roman Catholic life and thought. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* had subordinated them to official church liturgy, noting that

these devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some fashion derived from it, and lead the people to it, since, in fact, *the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses any of them.*<sup>1</sup>

They were often called “para-liturgy” and thought to be of little concern to theology.

The present Roman pontiff, Francis, suggests an alternate way to view and value popular piety. One wonders if he has not been culturally

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<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, December 4, 1963, no. 13, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html) [accessed January 10, 2014]. Emphasis added.

inspired by the power of popular religion and its deep spirituality when he speaks of its importance for the new evangelization.

Expressions of popular piety have much to teach us; for those who are capable of reading them, they are a *locus theologicus* which demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization.<sup>2</sup>

Taking its cue from the pope's insight, the first section of this chapter engages the plurality of meanings and spiritualities that are evoked when a common religious memory/narrative is recounted and celebrated in two different ritual patterns. Specifically, the memory of the passion of Christ as celebrated 1) in the official Roman Rite of Good Friday: *Celebratio Passionis Domini*, and 2) in the popular religious commemoration of Good Friday during the nighttime procession of the *Cristo Morto* in the streets of Gubbio, Italy.

This section of the chapter first employs a descriptive method, recounting the experiences of Good Friday, 2000.<sup>3</sup> It then offers an analysis and concludes with some thoughts about the similarities and differences in what each ritual offers for a spirituality of Christian living.

### *Description*

*Assisi: The Cathedral of Saint Rufino—Holy Thursday.* It was the end of Lent; I was looking to make a retreat. I decided that Italy would make a great place of prayer. Arriving on the Monday of Holy Week, I found my way from the Milan airport to Assisi. I thought that Umbria, the home of St. Francis, would create the ambience of prayer and offer powerful opportunities of for the beauty of the liturgy and the landscape to inspire.

The story begins on Holy Thursday. That Thursday evening found me at the cathedral in Assisi, San Rufino. The liturgy was done in the finest of styles: ministry, word, song, silence, processions, environment, all interconnected within the hearts of a burgeoning assembly, standing room only.

The most interesting addition to the Roman rite, which was so elegantly celebrated by the Bishop and his entourage, came at the

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<sup>2</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation, November 54, 2013, no. 122. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/apost\\_exhortations/documents/pa-pa/francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium\\_en.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/pa-pa/francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf) [accessed January 10, 2014]. See nos. 122-126 for his fuller reflection on popular religion, and especially no. 90 for a compelling description of it.

<sup>3</sup> An eye-witness account of the events by Richard Fragomeni.

conclusion. After the deposition of the ciborium on the altar of repose, in a beautifully decorated altar/tabernacle in a side chapel, elegantly adorned with flowers and fresh green garland, the ministers of the liturgy, with the Bishop at their head, approached another side altar. The uniqueness of this altar was the wall crucifix hanging above it. The cross was about fifteen feet high, with the corpus of the crucified One, life size, at least six feet.

When the ministers arrived at the foot of this crucifix, I was astounded at what happened next. The master of ceremonies climbed on top of the altar, where a tall extension ladder had been placed at the side of the crucifix. He climbed the ladder and began removing the nails that affixed the corpus to the cross. I had no idea what was happening. The congregation began singing a kind of dirge, expressing its affection and love to the crucified Lord.

When the nails in hands and feet had been removed, the master of ceremonies gently took the corpus down from the cross. The arms of the corpus were lowered to the sides of the body, as if it were a mannequin, and then I knew. This was Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus taking the body of Jesus down from the cross and placing it on a bier. And that is what occurred. The corpus was wrapped in a gossamer-like shroud and placed on a bier at the center of the cathedral. Candles were placed around the dead Christ. Then the wake began.

What I observed next was fascinating. When the ritual of the deposition of the dead Christ was completed, the congregation hurried to the bier and lamentation songs began which were similar to those that would be heard the following day in Gubbio. People stood and knelt around the reposed body of Christ, touching it, singing to it, praying silently around it. When I left three hours later, this was continuing. Perhaps it would go into the night? When I returned the next morning, around 8:00 a.m., it was still happening.

Meanwhile, back in the side chapel, where the Eucharistic species had been reposed, there were some devotees who prayed silently in adoration, as directed by the rubrics of Holy Thursday, that adoration before the Blessed Sacrament could continue for a suitable time during the night. The difference of activity between what was happening in the side chapel and around the bier piqued my interest and raised questions. But, this was only the beginning.

*Gubbio: The Next Day—Good Friday.* Good Friday afternoon I travelled to Gubbio, where I was told a medieval pageant of the burial of Christ was celebrated each year in the night hours. But before participating in the night ritual, I decided to attend the Roman liturgy of the passion of Christ at the cathedral. It was to begin at 3:00 p.m. and the local bishop was to preside.

I arrived early, wanting to get a good seat. Soon I was to realize that my early arrival was not necessary, because when the solemn rite began and the bishop, with a group of six altar servers and a master of ceremonies, entered and prostrated themselves, as is the rubric, there were about eight of us in the assembly, seven elderly women and I.

The rite was celebrated without music, either live or recorded. All the prayers were recited perfectly from the Italian *Messale Romano*. The bishop offered no homily whatsoever and the ritual was completed in less than an hour. As someone who studies ritual and savors the beauty of the Good Friday Roman Rite, I was, frankly, unmoved and a bit annoyed. I had arrived early for this?

When darkness had come in Gubbio, around 7:00 in the evening, I found myself in the Church of Santa Croce, on one of the main streets, where a great crowd of people had assembled. There, at the heart of the chapel was an image of the dead Christ, reposing on a bier, candles around it, with guards in full Italian military regalia watching over it. The statue was remarkably like the one I had seen in Assisi the night before. I approached it, venerated it, and I was given a small holy card photo of the corpus, fully extended on the cross, as it must be displayed all year, except today. After I returned to my place in the chapel, it was but minutes before the annual procession with this image was to begin.

Before my eyes, a significantly large group of men, dressed in white robes with hoods that covered their faces, reminiscent of those worn by the KKK, and red crosses stitched onto the front of their robes, processed in, silently. About eight of them approached the bier. Then, with reverent precision, as if they had done this for centuries—and they and their ancestors actually had, since this Good Friday rite dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century—they placed the bier on their shoulders and the procession began. I heard a roar as we left the chapel, because outside, another group of men, also dressed in robes and hoods, began to sing: *Miserere mei, Domine ... Miserere mei, Deus*, psalm chants that are used in the Tenebrae services of Good Friday. The all-male chorus repeated the theme over and over, singing in harmonic drones that were hypnotic to me. These men also played rattling instruments, which I later found out are called “battistrangole.” I had never heard anything like this before. The closest parallel was the singing at a Taizé service, but even that paled in comparison to this gut-wrenching moaning for mercy and the rattling noises that seemed to express regret for the death of Jesus.

I found my way right next to the bier. The streets were filled with people. As we processed, more and more people appeared and stood along the way, holding candles. I noticed that on some of the streets braziers were lighted and flaming strongly.

Then, something unexpected happened. Turning a corner about an hour into the slow moving procession, we encountered another

procession. This other procession also moved slowly, led by similarly dressed men, singing and carrying a standing statue of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was regally dressed in black, hands extending out and a tearful expression carved into her face. No doubt, this was another antique image carried from the past.

The two processions seemed about to meet. And they did. The singing swelled and the songs merged, as the image of the dead Christ came face to face with the image of his mother. There was a moment of silence and the singing started once more as both processions joined.

The now hybrid procession of mother and son continued to move slowly in song and rattle. I noticed that the distant hills surrounding Gubbio were ablaze and the night was clear. I also noticed that we were now on the way to a destination: the Church of Saint Dominic, a large building, where, surprisingly, the bishop, whom I had encountered that afternoon, greeted the procession. He was standing on the front steps and led the procession into the Church.

The hybrid procession entered. The singing and rattling filled the acoustically perfect church, and an amazing sound covered the assembly. By now, we had been processing for nearly three hours, and, no one seemed tired or harried. It took nearly another half hour to crowd the Church. The place was packed and it was obvious to me, from my concern about fire codes, that there was no interest for any of that in Umbria on Good Friday night. I was on the stairs leading into the sanctuary, and looking back through the open doors of the Church, I saw the crowd spilling out down the steps and into the piazza. The crowd was too numerous to count.

At some point, the bier of the dead Christ had been placed in front of the altar table. It rested on its own platform. The sorrowful Mary was placed next to it and a song to her erupted from the crowd. When the song ended, the bishop, dressed in his choir garb, climbed the high pulpit. The assembly fell silent and he spoke.

His discourse/sermon was insightful. He acknowledged the ritual and the dedication of those who organized it. He spoke of the story of the death of Jesus, offering details from the passion narratives of the Gospels. Then, with a twist, he suggested that as the body of the dead Christ was carried around the city, so, too, must the community of Christians be willing to carry the burdens and wounds of others, in the city and around the world. He gave a few examples of this, such as direct services of charity to the poor as well as the need for systemic change that would usher in a new justice to those in need.

When the preaching ended, the community again sang and the procession was ended. The statues of the dead Christ and Mary were kept where they had been placed, and many from the assembly came forward to pay their respects to the images. It reminded me of a wake, where

visitors approach the casket, greet the deceased and pay their respects to the family.

I remained a while, watching the devotion, and then left the Church. On my way back to Assisi, I noticed that the entire route was punctuated with bonfires. And, as I went up the hill to Assisi, the whole city was also ablaze. I found out that Assisi had also held a similar procession using the image of the dead Christ which I had witnessed being taken down from the cross the night before.

*What Had just Happened?* There are several observations that can be made concerning the dynamics and meaning of the religious rituals described above.

(a) Both the Holy Thursday Eucharist in Assisi and the Good Friday Celebration of the Lord's Passion in Gubbio, the official liturgies of the Roman Church, were complemented and accented by rituals of popular devotion.

On Holy Thursday, the processional transference of the Eucharist to the altar of reposition for the solemn adoration of the faithful, until midnight, was followed by the deposition of the image of the crucified Christ and the reposition of this image on a bier for veneration that was to continue through the night. On Good Friday, the Bishop of Gubbio gathered in the cathedral with a small assembly of the baptized to conduct with simple elegance the veneration of the cross, to be followed that evening by the popular devotion of a procession that included the whole city in a fire-lit march with the dead Christ and his mother.

(b) Examining the Good Friday rituals in Gubbio, one sees that the same narrative enlivened both the official liturgy and the popular devotional practices: the memorial of the death and burial of Jesus. However, there were significant differences in the ritual elements<sup>4</sup> and in how this narrative was proclaimed:

- The ritual spaces differed substantially. The cathedral, with only a few in attendance, and the streets of Gubbio, crowded with marchers moving into the Church of Saint Dominic.

- The primary object used in the Cathedral liturgy was a small crucifix for veneration. In the streets, a life-sized image of the crucified was adjusted to become a corpse of a dead Christ, accompanied by his mother.

- The cathedral liturgy was celebrated in the mid-afternoon and lasted for about an hour. The night procession began at sunset and continued for nearly three hours. It continued after the end of the bishop's

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 26-38.

preaching, as the devotees continued to venerate the bier of the dead Christ.

- During the Cathedral celebration in the afternoon there was no music. The liturgy was done with only the spoken voice. The evening procession was an unending dirge of penitential psalms, with rattles, drones and the harmonies of male voices.

- The official rite was a primarily celebrant-centered activity. While the acolytes, assistants and readers participated in the liturgy, the major personage was the bishop. The assembly had little if anything to say or do. On the other hand, the popular religiosity of the procession was thoroughly the work of the entire crowd. From the ministers who carried the images of Christ and his mother, to the singers, the crowd lining the streets and waving white cloths, to those hanging from the windows and those lighting candles and bonfires, the ritual was alive with the active participation of the people.

- The ritual action in the cathedral was localized movement, centering at the ambo, the cross and the altar. The perambulatory nature of the evening event made it alive with serpentine movement, the lighting of fires and the waving of cloths, concluding with the affectionate veneration of the image of the dead Christ.

(c) Examining the official Good Friday ritual as it was celebrated in Gubbio, one learns that several things are clear. First, to judge by the attendance, it was not seen by the Catholics of the city as the essential celebration of the passion of Christ.

Second, while it certainly was performed with ritual accuracy, except for the fact that there was no preaching as prescribed by the rite, it completely lacked a sense of participation by the community.

Third, the rite, as presented in the official books, accents the passion of Christ as triumphant victory. Vesture in red is called for by the rubrics.<sup>5</sup> The passion narrative from the Gospel of John is proclaimed, in which Christ is exalted on the cross and dies victoriously over the powers of darkness, breathing the Spirit upon his mother and the beloved disciple.

Fourth, the rite calls for a solemn adoration of the cross. The ritual of adoration begins with a lifting up of the cross as a type of exaltation. The cross, without an image of the Crucified, can be unveiled or simply introduced into the assembly, as it is raised three times, acclaiming:

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<sup>5</sup> See 346b in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal: "The color red is used on Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion and on Friday of Holy Week (Good Friday), on Pentecost Sunday, on celebrations of the Lord's Passion, on the 'birthday' feast days of Apostles and Evangelists, and on celebrations of Martyr Saints." This was a change from the 1962 *Missal* usage for Good Friday, which required vestments of black and purple.

“Behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the world.”<sup>6</sup> In Gubbio, it was a cross on which the image of the Crucified was affixed.<sup>7</sup> The members of the assembly, coming forward in procession to perform some expression of veneration, followed this exaltation. We came forward in silence, following after the bishop and the ministers of the liturgy. The cathedral liturgy ended with the required offering of Communion, as the consecrated hosts were brought forward from the altar of reservation to the table where the communion service concluded the rite. The resurrection of Christ was announced in the act of sharing in the living presence of the One who is champion of the underworld.

(d) The Good Friday street ritual, on the other hand, was not so much an exaltation of the cross or an anticipation of Easter, as it was a grand funeral march. The tenor of the procession, with its sounds of dirge and rattling, costuming, the slow movement, as well as the bonfires, all suggested that someone important was dead. Somehow, the night procession lingered in sorrow, as the image of La Dolorosa was brought forward and mother encountered her dead son, and everyone wept.

The preaching of the bishop at the close of the street procession accented the depth of the sorrow at the death of Jesus. In turn, he positioned this obvious sorrow for Christ and his mother into the living of Christian life in Gubbio and beyond: to embrace the wounded in the world is to embrace the dead Christ.

Throughout the nearly three hours of the procession some of the bystanders joined at the end of the movement, making the procession longer and longer, making it serpentine and a kind of line dance, in which all were invited to mourn the death of a royal personage who had impacted their lives. One is reminded of the opening scene in the film, *Evita*, where the endless procession carrying the body of Eva Peron ends up at the steps of the cathedral in Buenos Aires.

It would be an interesting historical study to reconstruct the origins of the Good Friday procession in Gubbio. Did a funeral procession of a dignitary precede the funeral procession of the dead Christ? Or vice versa? Did they arise at the same time? Whatever might be the case, on that Good Friday the participants were involved in a burial ritual, a ritual of mourning, and a ritual of a grieving mother embracing her dead child. It was far from being a ritual of exaltation and of an anticipated joy at the

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<sup>6</sup> The Italian is: “Ecco il legno della Croce, al quale fu appeso il Cristo, Salvatore del mondo.” The Italian *Messale* adds the title: il Christo, the Christ, which is neither in the Latin original nor in the English version.

<sup>7</sup> The pastoral question of whether or not to use a cross with or without a corpus for the Good Friday ritual is debated. See Patrick Regan, “Veneration of the Cross,” *Worship* 52:1 (1978), pp. 2-12.

Resurrection. In any case, the procession seems to be a royal cortege<sup>8</sup> escorting the monarch to his burial chamber, followed by his mother and the community.

*Analysis: A Heuristic for Understanding*

When one asks the question of what spiritualities may be at work in these two ritual celebrations of the passion of Christ, as well as the question of the compatibilities and disjunctions of these spiritualities, a heuristic is helpful.

In an article entitled “Is the Easter Vigil a Rite of Passage?”<sup>9</sup> Anthonius Scheer distinguishes between the *pascha-passio* and the *pascha-transitus* approaches of the early Christian communities’ interpretation of the passion of Christ. Scheer’s distinctions help in understand the two different ways in which the suffering and death of Christ was and continues to be understood, especially as it was celebrated in the annual commemoration of the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. The annual celebration gradually shifted from being a unitive commemoration lasting one night to a series of consecutive celebrations, arranged in an historical ordering of the events, as we now celebrate the Easter Triduum. Scheer claims that most probably the early communities held these two approaches together in creative tension, before such a series of celebrations developed. Scheer defines the *pascha-passio* tradition thus:

The *pascha-passio* tradition points more explicitly and directly to the suffering Lord who, precisely in and through this suffering, reaches resurrection. It is precisely death which contains the germ of life.... The *pascha-passio* tradition hides a powerful and profound spirituality of the cross which summarizes the whole of the Lord’s saving activity in his *passio*, a favorite idea of Saint Paul.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Franciscan publication, *The Geste of the Great King*, compiled by Laurent Gallant, OFM and Andre Cirino, OFM (New York: The Franciscan Institute, Saint Bonaventure University, 2001), is a reconstruction of the Office of the Passion attributed to St. Francis, to be prayed during Holy Week. In this prayer book and accompanying CD, the death and passion of Christ are celebrated as an opportunity to both mourn and rejoice in praise.

<sup>9</sup> Anthonius Scheer, “Is the Easter Vigil a Rite of Passage?” transl. by Theo Westow, in *Liturgy and Human Passage*, Concilium no. 112, ed. David Power and Luis Maldonado (New York: Seabury, 1979), pp. 50-61.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

In this first approach, the accent is on the suffering of the Lord and on the experience of the presence of God specifically within the suffering. In this context, the resurrection becomes the declaration of the victory of the suffering and death of Christ, or the victorious experience of life in the midst of death ... light in darkness, hope amid hopelessness.

Scheer defines *pascha-transitus* as:

... an evolving movement from a starting-point to a terminus: from evil to good, from darkness to light, from death to life. Here the passing is central, and consequently the enabling of this passage. This view presupposes two poles, and man is understood to have to move from one to another, and not the other way around. Whereas the *pascha-passio* tradition understood the resurrection as inherent in the death of Jesus, the *pascha-transitus* tradition understands the resurrection as the anti-pole of death, and one has to achieve this *transitus* in order to truly share in the saving mystery of the Lord. The Easter celebration is then the sharing in the *transitus* of the Lord, and the important point is that one reaches indeed the other side, like the Lord.<sup>11</sup>

In this second approach, then, the suffering and death of Christ are but the portal through which one must pass in order to find glory, rather than the suffering and death itself being the manifestation of the glorious victory of life in death.<sup>12</sup>

Employing this heuristic, we can engage these two approaches to help us understand the possible perspectives and spiritualities brought forward by the two Gubbio Good Friday rituals.

(a) The cathedral rite, engaging the patterns of the *Roman Missal* for Good Friday, including the red vesture, the exaltation and adoration of the cross/crucifix, and concluding in the sharing of Holy Communion, could be understood as a proclamation of the passion and death of Christ as a *transitus*. In this sense, one approaches the altar to receive the living presence of the Risen Christ through the portal of the cross, which is the necessary condition for moving over to the glory found in the other side of time and space, in the heart of the One whose glorified body is shared.

Since there was no preaching at the cathedral rite, the possibility of acknowledging the experience of the *pascha-passio* was not spoken. Without the preaching, the official rite seemed to invite the participants to

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> See David N. Power's use of Scheer's definitions in *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of the Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1984), pp. 154-158.

pass over through the cross to a communion with Christ, since the exaltation and veneration of the cross happened immediately before the communion service. This hope of such a communion was in turn extended to multiple arenas of life, as the universal intercessions, made shortly before, interceded for all, including the pope, leaders of local governments, all religious peoples and even atheists. The prayer was that all would come to know Christ and find in the cross the gate to salvation.

(b) The night procession of the Dead Christ was also done in faith, narrating the passion story differently. The ritual portrayed a deep affection and empathy for the suffering Christ and his mother. Walking with the images of both, the vast community sang out its sorrow and lamentations, in what seemed to be a popular devotion centered around a sense that in their own daily deaths and sufferings the glory of Christ's presence was not only understood, but somehow deeply felt and known. The veneration of the dead Christ, the touching of his bier, the reaching out of hands to the image of the sorrowful Mary seemed to indicate a profound awareness of the hope that Christ and Mary could give in the present age, as the suffering of the participants in the procession was given new meaning and dignity in the presence and hope of Christ's *passio*. The bishop's preaching extended the empathy toward Christ and his mother to solidarity with others. He explicitly predicated the attending to the dead Christ and a walking with him and his mother as a way of attending to others who are suffering and in pain. In this way, the community would become the living glory of God, the proclamation of Christ's resurrection within their own experience of suffering as well as in compassionate works of touching others who suffer and of reaching out, raising the questions of justice to the systems that promote sufferings in larger cycles of oppression.

### *Similarities and Differences*

It is the claim of this section of the chapter that the two Gubbio rites of Good Friday are each engaged in the celebration of the passion of Christ. However, each seemingly accentuates distinct approaches to its meaning and to the significance of this meaning for the lived experience of the community. This lived experience, impacting both the imagination and activity of the Christian, is one way of speaking about spirituality. These two distinct approaches to the passion of Christ, which seem to be operating in the Gubbio rituals, manifest both similarity and difference in the spiritualities they embody.

Both the *passio* and the *transitus* traditions find their similarity in the roots in the interpretation of the narratives of the passion of Christ found in the scriptural narratives. Both have roots in the development of the early church's understanding of the meaning of the passion for life.

Both acknowledge the importance of the passion in the living out of the Christian life. Both seem to offer hope in their own way.

But there are also differences. The *transitus* approach, which seems to be at the heart of the cathedral rite, draws the participants into a world where the glory of Christ lies somewhere beyond the world of suffering and pain. Pointing to life's issues as portals to joy beyond death, one could easily espouse an other-worldly spirituality, bearing with life as a way to move on and through to another world. The image of God and the understanding of the after-life would be interesting imaginings to explore. This is not to say, however, that with a *passio*-centered homily, the present *Roman Missal's* celebration of Good Friday could not be given a different twist, a different imagination.

The *passio* approach inspires a different imagining and thus a different inspiration for living. The Good Friday procession of popular religiosity evoked a sense of entry with the dead Christ and his mother into the mystery of human suffering and finitude. This companionship of Christ into suffering reveals that the glory of God is known here, in this time and space continuum, and in present life situations. This sense of meaning given to human finitude allows the Christian and the community to enter into a deep communion with all who suffer, in all the forms of suffering that are part of the human condition. Suffering is not to be endured, but embraced as a motivation to reveal the glory of God, whether in personal actions or in the community deliberations of justice and mercy.

If one were to determine which of these two approaches and spiritualities were more subjectively appealing to that group of devotees in Gubbio, and if one were to look at the attendance at each of these two celebrations as the indicator, it is clear that the street ritual of popular devotion, echoing the hopes and suffering of the people for centuries, was the experience of choice ... even for the bishop, who preached only at the street ritual, with an enthusiasm to speak with the same passion.

And a set of final questions: can the spirituality embodied in celebrations of popular religion serve to invigorate that of the Church celebrations if they are taken as conjunctive rather than disjunctive? And what might this conjunctive reading teach us about how popular religion and devotional ritual might enhance the more "official" spiritualities presented in the Church's ritual action? Popular forms are born and develop over time. If church leaders and scholars are able to discern the deeper existential meanings at work in them, they can both more effectively bridge the "disjunctions" that emerge in the course of human events, as well as give us new insight into long-standing liturgical and spiritual traditions that are part of the Church's great heritage.

## SECTION II. DISASTER RITUAL

### *Introduction*

The previous section has considered the case of two forms of ritualizing rooted in a common narrative, the death of Christ. One was a traditional, official ritual which celebrates that narrative. The other, also a product of long-standing tradition, celebrated that narrative in practices of popular religion rather than in an official church rite. The question under study was whether and to what extent those forms of celebration embodied and expressed similar or differing spiritualities rooted in the same narrative.

Disaster rituals present a different set of questions. A preliminary question is how to define 'disaster.' One extensive study of disaster ritual<sup>13</sup> surveys the various ways in which it can be described and settles on three characteristics:

(a) There is major, extensive destruction and human suffering. In addition to damage and human suffering, generally in the form of the loss of human life, large scale, magnitude, impact and infamy are central....

(b) Closely connected to (a), the calamity, the great misfortune, is collective in nature. It does not involve the individual [only], but always the larger group.

(c) Third, it involves a sudden, unexpected occurrence. A disaster is instantaneous in nature, and not chronic in nature.<sup>14</sup>

Our focus here is on disasters that are sudden and unexpected, involve great loss of life, and arouse in people a sense of loss of security, massive preoccupation with the disaster for a variety of reasons, and an impulse to reach out to help the victims and remedy the situation. Typical cases would be airplane crashes, mass shootings in schools and workplaces, and massive terrorist attacks. Responses to earthquakes, tsunamis, and similar "natural disasters" normally follow a somewhat different pattern.

A second question is whether and in what sense the response to such disasters can be characterized as ritual. Here, too, there is a wide range in how ritual is understood.<sup>15</sup> Depending on how one defines ritual, this second question is particularly pressing for two main forms of

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<sup>13</sup> P. Post, R. L. Grimes, A. Nugteren, P. Petersson, and H. Zondag, *Disaster Ritual: Explorations of an Emerging Ritual Repertoire*, Liturgia Condenda, no. 15 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 20-28. Hereafter *Disaster Ritual*.

<sup>14</sup> *Disaster Ritual*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., *Disaster Ritual*, pp. 28-44.

“ritualizing” that quickly mark disasters. The first is the immediate spontaneous creation of “shrines” to mark the spot. Typically these shrines include placing things such as flowers, ribbons, stuffed animals, candles, pictures, and messages. These “rituals” display an “emerging ritual repertoire”<sup>16</sup> which is resourced in great measure by the images people have seen on various forms of media. Such spontaneous forms of ritualizing with their emerging repertoire would be examples of what Ronald Grimes has called “nascent” or “emerging ritual.”<sup>17</sup> The second form of ritualizing occurs a short time later in public memorial services. The question is less acute here. Though they are also “emerging rituals,” these services are more formal and intentionally planned than the spontaneous shrine ritualizing, and they tend to adopt elements and patterns of public ritualizing around death that are specific to local cultural and religious contexts. Answers to the question of whether disaster rituals are ritual need to remain tentative as well.

The third question is even more difficult to answer with anything approaching finality. Some scholars hold that there is a “tendency to sacrality” in disaster ritual.<sup>18</sup> Does this imply that they embody and express “spirituality”? If so, what is that spirituality and how can it be described?

Questions two and three will be the main focus of the remainder of this section. They will be approached not to provide answers, but to open avenues for further inquiry and reflection. Before proceeding, authorial context should be acknowledged. The authors are North American, Euro-American liturgists. We bring a twofold assumption from the field of liturgy, namely, that ritual typically embodies and expresses spirituality, and that spirituality normally finds bodily expression.<sup>19</sup> Those

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<sup>16</sup> *Disaster Ritual*, subtitle.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings*, 58-74; *Reading, Writing, and Ritualizing: Ritual in Fictive, Liturgical, and Public Places* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1993), pp. 23-37.

<sup>18</sup> *Disaster Ritual*, pp. 44-45, 261-262.

<sup>19</sup> An interesting test case would be the phenomenon of those professing to be “spiritual but not religious.” Are ritual expressions—such as bodily posture, gestures, use of texts, chant, dedicated times and spaces—a recurring repertoire, whether for individuals or groups of these seekers? One research scholar reports that the “large majority” of research subjects identified themselves as both religious and spiritual, and she recommends recognizing that “both have institutional producers.” In this light, might one not expect to find ritualizing activity among seekers, and even to find that some elements of that ritualizing activity are borrowed from religion and incorporated into seeker spirituality? See Nancy T. Ammerman, “Spiritual but Not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52:2 (2013), pp. 258-278, here at 275-276. For a summary of his research on this issue, see

assumptions form a backdrop for examining disaster ritual.<sup>20</sup>

“Ritual”?

*Overall pattern.* Disaster rituals in some European countries<sup>21</sup> show a quite consistent overall pattern. It is composed of the following elements which occur in chronological sequence.<sup>22</sup>

- Spontaneous shrines, quickly created at or near the site of the disaster.
- Public memorial services, usually held within a week.
- Burial services for individual victims, celebrated according to local religious or civil traditions.
- Erection of permanent monuments after some length of time.
- Dedicatory and anniversary celebrations at the monuments; individual visits to the monuments may occur later as well.

These same elements can be found in disaster rituals in North America, though the pattern may not be followed as consistently as it is in the European countries.<sup>23</sup>

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Wade Clark Roof, “Religion and Spirituality: Toward an Integrated Analysis,” in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michelle Dillon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 137-148, esp. 146-148. Roof notes that “dweller” (religious) and “seeker” (spiritual) orientations may co-exist or alternate in the same person, that there is a dialectical relationship between them.

<sup>20</sup> In addition, this section is based on available literature, rather than on narration of a personal experience.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., Netherlands, Norway, Sweden.

<sup>22</sup> This description is drawn from *Disaster Ritual*; Lars J. Danbolt and Hans Stifoss-Hanssen, “Public Disaster Ritual,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 25:2 (2011), pp. 25-36; and Albertina Nugteren, “Public Ritual Behaviour after the Bijlmer Plane Crash in 1992: A *Fundgrube* for Mourning Rituals after Disasters?” in *Die Modernen Ritual Studies als Herausforderung für die Liturgiewissenschaft—Modern Ritual Studies as a Challenge for Liturgical Studies*, Liturgia Condenda, no. 20, ed. B. Kranemann and P. Post (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), pp. 263-271.

<sup>23</sup> Differences in the public response to disasters are also noted by Uri Friedman, “Comparing How Norway and the U.S. Respond to Terror,” <http://www.thewire.com/global/2011/07/comparing-how-norway-and-us-respond-terror/40467/> [accessed January 10, 2014]. Friedman contrasts the Norwegian response of commitment to greater openness, tolerance, and love rather than hatred after the 22 July 2011 bombing and shooting attacks in Norway to the American desire for vengeance against terrorists after 9/11 that accompanied the response of narrow-minded patriotism and solidarity.

*Emerging ritual repertoire.* A striking feature of disaster rituals is the emergence of a growing ritual repertoire that is becoming common in Europe and North America. This repertoire includes many common practices, particularly in the creation of spontaneous shrines.

*Actions and objects.* These include: 1) visiting the sites, whether spontaneous shrines or monuments erected later, in person, in groups, or via media; 2) placing flowers, ribbons, stuffed animals, messages at the shrines; 3) lighting candles there; and 4) placing pictures and memorabilia there. Each of these actions raises the questions why? what do they mean?

*Words.* Words are shared at the shrines both by posting condolences, memories, and other texts (poetic, biblical), and in conversations among those who visit the shrine.

*Light.* People gather for candle-light vigils at the spontaneous shrines. These evening/nighttime vigils are particularly evocative for the powerful symbolic interplay of darkness and light, as in liturgical vigils.

*Sound.* At times there is song during the vigils. Singing, as well as instrumental music, is a common feature at memorial services, as in so many human rituals. Within the aural range one should also include the observance of silence.

*Litanies.* Names of the victims are often proclaimed aloud at memorial services, and the dedication of monuments commonly includes the proclamation and/or inscription of the names of victims.<sup>24</sup> A litany of remembrance.

*Movement.* There is individual or group movement to and from shrines as people visit them. Memorial services usually involve a ceremonial entrance of dignitaries and, at times, bereaved families. Silent processions from the disaster site (or another staging place) to the site of the memorial service are a standard European feature.<sup>25</sup> Processions, less common in North America, are typically accompanied by song or instrumental music rather than silence.

*Space.* Disaster rituals also make use of ritual spaces. Shrines commonly spring up at or near the site of the disaster. Though shrines are by nature temporary, these places may be marked by commemorative plaques, and they often become the places where permanent monuments are erected. In both cases, there is a certain dedicatory “hallowing” of the space by setting it aside. Memorial services normally do not establish new ritual places. They borrow existing religious or public gathering places already suited for such services. Shrines and monuments, by contrast, do establish dedicated ritual spaces, places of remembrance, whether

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<sup>24</sup> E.g., at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington and the National 9/11 Memorial in New York.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Post, “Silent Procession: Ritual-Liturgical Perspectives of an Emerging Popular Dutch Ritual,” *Studia Liturgica* 12:2 (2002), pp. 89-97.

temporary or permanent. Spatial configuration of the monuments is also suggestive—they may rise up from the earth or be a gash or empty hole in the earth, to evoke and express a variety of human emotions.<sup>26</sup>

This repertoire matches quite well the categories Ronald Grimes identifies as the focus for the field study of ritual. In a chapter entitled “Mapping the Field of Ritual” he lists the following: ritual space, ritual objects, ritual time, ritual sound and language, ritual identity, and ritual actions.<sup>27</sup> Disaster rituals incorporate almost all of these elements.

*Reflections on ritual.* What is ritual? Definitions differ among the various social sciences which study ritual.<sup>28</sup> Authors commonly list a number of qualities characteristic of ritual. Rituals are bundles of symbolic actions; they tend to be formalized, patterned, and repetitive; they are collective and easily become institutionalized; they express and embody a group’s shared narrative and values, and thus they form and maintain the group’s identity and a sense of belonging.<sup>29</sup>

Such qualities are marks of established, mature rituals, that is, recurring rituals that are effective and meaningful for the participants. But rituals have a lifespan. As scholars have long noted, mature rituals can decline and become empty routine or die out altogether. Only recently has it also been noted that rituals can be born and grow into maturity.<sup>30</sup> In talking about “nascent” or “emerging” ritual, Grimes develops a “soft” definition that suffices for our purposes. He writes: “[r]itualizing transpires as animated persons enact formative gestures in the face of receptivity during crucial times in founded places.”<sup>31</sup> The emerging ritual

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<sup>26</sup> As in the Vietnam and 9/11 memorials. Regarding the conflicting emotions evoked there, see: Marita Sturken, “The Aesthetics of Absence: Rebuilding Ground Zero,” *American Ethnologist* 31:3, August 2004, p. 122; Elizabeth Wolfson, “The ‘Black Gash of Shame’: Revisiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Controversy,” <http://www.art21.org/texts/the-culture-wars-redux/essay-the-black-gash-of-shame-revisiting-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial> [accessed August 22, 2013]. For further commentary on fashioning “sacred spaces” in disaster rituals, see Kenneth Foote, “Shadowed Ground, Sacred Space: Reflections on Violence, Tragedy, Memorials and Public Commemorative Rituals,” in *Holy Ground: Re-inventing Ritual Space in Modern Western Culture*, Liturgia Condenda, no. 24, ed. Paul Post and Anne L. Molendijk (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), pp. 93-118.

<sup>27</sup> Grimes, *Beginnings*, pp. 24-39.

<sup>28</sup> For a topical survey, see [Mitchell N.], “Lexicon: Rite / Ritual / Ritualizing / Ritualization,” *Liturgy Digest* 1:1 (Spring 1993), pp. 100-111.

<sup>29</sup> For a more extensive list of such qualities, see Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> See footnote 17 for references to Grimes, a leader in this understanding.

<sup>31</sup> For a full explanation. see *Beginnings*, pp. 60-71.

repertoire in disaster rituals fits well into that definition; disaster ritual can rightly be thought of as nascent or emerging ritual.

A second question: does ritual have meaning? Here, too, scholars do not agree. Some hold that rituals have no intrinsic, universal meaning, that they simply privilege a certain form of action and differentiate it from ordinary actions of that kind.<sup>32</sup> Other scholars, particularly those writing in the context of worship, hold that rituals do indeed convey meaning. Social processes of constructing meaning draw on the iconic potential of the ritual symbols, the remembered experience of the ritualizing community, and the human instinct to ritualize as a way to address the sense of incompleteness and uncertainty being experienced. What is the source of this meaning? Graham Hughes hypothesizes that “[h]uman beings construct meanings (a meaningful world) from the meanings culturally available to them.”<sup>33</sup>

A related question: how does ritual communicate meaning? We tend to think of meaning as primarily conceptual, noetic, in the mind. Ritual does not simply express meaning in a linguistic sense. Rather, ritual *does* meaning. Theodore Jennings has written that ritual is its own form of knowing.<sup>34</sup> This implies that rituals are *meaning-full*. Their meaning not only remains unexpressed in fully explanatory words; it exceeds what can ever be put into words. Rituals “narrate” a larger story.

Narrative is a way of assembling life experiences into a story; shared narratives do the same for the life of a group. Ritual is a form of story-telling. It lacks the conciseness of conceptual discourse, but it has the power to draw listeners in and enables them to identify with it. Robert Bellah argues that narrative is one of the building blocks from which ritual springs.<sup>35</sup> Narrative and ritual are linked. Meaning-full ritualizing, then,

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<sup>32</sup> E.g., Frits Staal, “The Meaninglessness of Ritual,” *Numen* 26 (1979) pp. 1-22 [reprinted in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, ed. Ronald L. Grimes (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), pp. 483-494]; Catherine Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” *Worship* 63:1 (1989), p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> Graham Hughes, *Worship as Meaning: A Liturgical Theology for Late Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 7, p. 17, p. 219. See also Martin D. Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship: The Ethnography of Worship in Four Christian Congregations in Manchester* (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham Press, 1999), pp. 199-219.

<sup>34</sup> Theodore W. Jennings, “On Ritual Knowledge,” *Journal of Religion* 62:2 (1982), pp. 111-127, reprinted in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, pp. 324-344.

<sup>35</sup> Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 32-43. Major themes of that work are summarized in his “The Roots of Society and Culture,” in Dillon, ed., *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, pp. 31-44.

rehearses the group's story in ritual enactment and invites participants to place their lives within that narrative.<sup>36</sup>

The last few paragraphs suggest that the emerging disaster rituals construct meaning from the stock of resources available to participants. Think for a moment of how disaster rituals seem to instinctively borrow the processual and stational pattern of rituals that have surrounded death so constantly throughout human history. One can see here what Charles Taylor calls the attempt in a secular age "to find new forms of collective ritual."<sup>37</sup> Think also of how many "loan" gestures and symbols drawn from contemporary religious and civil ritual are found in those rituals.<sup>38</sup> And what is the narrative these elements are rooted in? A tentative reading suggests a number of possible strands: an in-born human sense of the tragedy of violent, undeserved death, especially if premature, of an awakened sense of human solidarity and belonging in the face of disasters, of an in-built imperative to help others who suffer and are in need of consolation, of the need to honor the dead. The reaffirmation of such solidarity manifested in disaster rituals reactivates and rehearses for a brief period shared views and values about human life in the common narrative.<sup>39</sup>

*"Tendency to Sacrality"?*

*Preliminary reflections.* As noted earlier, liturgists are wont to assume a connection between religious ritual and spirituality. In contrast, the commonly heard phrase, "spiritual but not religious," affirms the possibility of a split between them. Ammerman argues against adopting

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<sup>36</sup> Regarding questions of ritual authority and leadership, it suffices to note that these are exercised freely by the participants at the spontaneous shrines. Memorial services and construction and dedication of monuments temporarily borrow some institutionalized forms of ritual authority and leadership.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 613—614.

<sup>38</sup> See the discussion in Albertina Nugteren, "Collective/Public Ritual Behaviour after Disasters: An Emerging Manifestation of Civil Religion?" (CESNUR 2001), [www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/nugteren.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/nugteren.htm). Accessed 8/22/2013 [accessed August 22, 2013]. See also *Disaster Ritual*, pp. 260-261.

<sup>39</sup> Witness the fading of that sense of solidarity in the aftermath of 9/11 and Sandy Hook. For a fuller reflection on the American narrative surrounding death, its strengths and weaknesses, see Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Re-inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), chapter 4.

such a bi-polar opposition in studying religion.<sup>40</sup> Grimes, too, challenges that split.

The Western tendency to split things apart and set them in opposition has plagued all three ideas. We need interlocking, rather than polarized, conceptions of religion, spirituality, and ritual. By *ritual* I mean *sequences of ordinary action rendered special by virtue of their condensation, elevation, or stylization*. By *spirituality* I intend *practiced attentiveness aimed at nurturing a sense of the interdependence of all beings sacred and all things ordinary*. And by *religion* I mean *spirituality sustained as a tradition or organized into an institution*. Defined in this way, religion, spirituality, and ritual are neither synonyms nor archenemies.<sup>41</sup>

If one rephrases Grimes' three interlocking conceptions as sacrality (for religion), spirituality, and ritual, the question is then to what extent disaster ritual entails sacrality. On the face of it disaster ritual is secular and does not constitute a practice of organized religion. 'Sacrality' is derived from the Latin verb *sacro/sacrare*, "to declare or set apart as sacred; to consecrate, dedicate, or devote to a divinity."<sup>42</sup> In relating sacrality to disaster ritual Post *et al.* affirm "that there is a non-specific, basic sacrality rooted in man and culture. Rituals are in many respects closely connected with this sacred dimension, but in particular with the sacrality of place, time, persons, things and objects."<sup>43</sup> Does disaster ritual implicitly give voice to such a basic sacrality, a "sense of the interdependence of all beings" that need not be theistic?

*Tendencies to sacrality?* A remarkable feature of disaster ritualizing is that it frequently borrows ritual elements from religious contexts. Such "loan" symbols and practices include:

- Use of candles, flowers, cross, biblical texts, and prayers;
- Processions and processional pathways;<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See note 19 above, Ammerman, "Spiritual but Not Religious," pp. 258-278.

<sup>41</sup> *Deeply into the Bone*, pp. 70-71. Emphasis original.

<sup>42</sup> Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=sacro&fromdoc=Perseus%Atext%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059> [accessed October 8, 2013].

<sup>43</sup> *Disaster Ritual*, p. 44.

<sup>44</sup> Particularly the silent processions common in the Netherlands. See *Disaster Ritual*, pp. 156-175.

- Demarcation of dedicated spaces for shrines and monuments;
- Use of church buildings for memorial services, and
- Participation of religious leaders in those services.<sup>45</sup>

Such borrowing from religion can be taken as a first intimation that a sense of sacrality may well color disaster rituals by association.<sup>46</sup> Whether consciously or not, people assemble ritual elements that help them to confront the disaster, to make a connection to something deeper, to find meaning beyond the bare, brutal facts of the disaster. Disaster rituals seem to provide people “hallowed ground” on which to face that question.

All life cycle moments disrupt normal life and structures of a society. They call for adaptation and change in the *status quo*. The rites of passage which mark those moments call the group to public reflexivity as it negotiates the upheaval of change.<sup>47</sup> This upheaval is especially acute in the case of disasters. The group is confronted with massive, unanticipated destruction and death, with the radical contingency of human life.<sup>48</sup> The certainties of life no longer hold, and people desperately try to make some sense of what has happened, to fit it into a larger pattern of meaning, to reconstruct a shattered world of meaning as best they can. That ritualizing struggle to fit the pieces back together into a larger coherent narrative might tentatively be seen as a “sacred” quest.

*Intimations of spirituality?* If the answer to the previous question must remain tentative, that is even more the case here. A first issue to face

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<sup>45</sup> E.g., the use of churches in Norway. See Lars J. Danbolt and Hans Stifoss-Hanssen, “Public Disaster Ritual in the Local Community: A Study of Norwegian Cases,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 25:2 (2011), p. 25-36.

<sup>46</sup> What is important is not the borrowed elements themselves, but deciphering how and why they are used. Arie L. Molendijk, “The Notion of the Sacred,” in *Holy Ground*, pp. 88-89, writes: “No doubt, research will show that some elements (such as candles, inscriptions and flowers) are frequently associated with “the sacred” and used to sacralize, but these are not in themselves things which make a spot, a person or a deed sacred. Something becomes sacred by the elusive act of making it sacred (in one way or another). Thus, from a theoretical point of view, the performance is the essential and most interesting aspect of the sacred.” He later adds: “The only thing we know for sure is that in order to be sacred the sacred has to be demarcated, set apart in a special way, usually by some form of ritualization.” See his article for fuller discussion of ‘the sacred,’ *ibid.*, pp. 55-89.

<sup>47</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Victor Turner, “Are There Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual, and Drama?” in *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience*, ed. Edith L. B. Turner (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1985), pp. 291-301.

<sup>48</sup> *Disaster Ritual*, p. 44.

is the great diversity in defining spirituality.<sup>49</sup> A common thread running through many such definitions is the idea of self-transcendence, going beyond oneself to relate to a larger reality. That thread seems intriguing in a number of ways.

A striking feature of disaster rituals is how they draw people out of isolation—to grieve loss together, to console one another, to comfort those who have suffered the greatest loss, to reach out and help in whatever way they can, to discern causes and determine remedies. An amazing sense of solidarity reigns for a time, often placed in bold relief by an all too quick return to “normal” life centered more on individuals than on the whole of society. The heightened socio-centric sense of solidarity fades as people revert to a more ego-centric individualistic sense typical of much of Euro-American society. The post-disaster period is a time of societal liminality. It puts distinct roles and status incumbencies on hold and for the moment recovers a sense of shared, undifferentiated humanity, of what Victor Turner calls “*communitas*” often experienced during a time of liminality.<sup>50</sup>

Disaster ritual also offers a dedicated time and space for “public reflexivity.”<sup>51</sup> The time of heightened solidarity, however brief, surfaces a deeper awareness that people are interdependent. They again become aware that humans ought to reach out to help one another in times of need. Liminality also invites corporate introspection on the deeper question of the meaning and goal of human life. The shock of “unfinished lives” cannot help but raise that question.<sup>52</sup> Those who have died can no longer write the conclusion of their life story; that task is left to those who mourn their deaths and by reflecting on their lives become, in effect, their biographers.<sup>53</sup> To borrow a phrase from Grimes, stories around death rituals are not ritual myths, but “passage narratives.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See the discussion of defining spirituality in the Introduction to this volume.

<sup>50</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), pp. 94-130.

<sup>51</sup> Turner, *On the Edge*, p. 216, p. 294.

<sup>52</sup> Grimes notes that “death raises questions about the nature of reality and the constitution of self” [*Deeply into the Bone*, p. 251], to which we might also add about the constitution of society.

<sup>53</sup> See Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Wedding Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), pp. 97-122.

<sup>54</sup> *Deeply into the Bone*, p. 9. For further discussion of the role of narrative in the origin of religion, see: Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution*, chapters 1-4; Terrence Deacon and Tyrone Cashman, “The Role of Symbolic Capacity in the Origins of Religion,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3:4

In sum, in light of the above paragraphs, it just might be possible to think of disaster rituals with their tendencies to sacrality as a form of corporate self-transcendence. In that context might it not also embody a generic sense of “spirituality”?

*Disaster rituals and Catholic ritual practice/spirituality*

The reflections on disaster ritual offered here do not pretend to be a definitive analysis. Rather, they are meant to serve as questions for further probing. Nevertheless, it might for the moment be worth setting disaster ritual alongside Catholic ritual practice and spirituality.

First, there are ritual similarities. The emerging ritual repertoire incorporates the same ritual “languages” of word, gesture/symbolic action, time, and place. There is active participation, whether by being present in person or through media. There is a processional quality, similar to stational liturgy, with movement from the disaster site to the place of the memorial service to the later site of the memorial. Disaster ritualizing marks a passage over space and time, as do funeral rites. Just as with religious funeral rites, one would expect to find a mixture of different kinds of meanings—personal, public, and official.<sup>55</sup> Official meaning is less prominent in disaster ritual.

Second, there are also significant ritual differences. Disaster ritual is overtly secular rather than religious. It is public on a scale not ordinarily matched by church funerals. While church funerals are highly scripted, disaster ritual is unscripted at shrines and at best loosely scripted in memorial services. Church funerals follow a set traditional pattern in contrast to the more diffuse shape of disaster rituals. Ritual leadership is clearly set down for church funerals; it is more *ad hoc* in memorial services. Finally, ritual authority is institutionally pre-established for church funerals; it is exercised more spontaneously and collectively in disaster rituals, notably by participants at the shrines created at disaster sites.

Third, to whatever extent and however implicitly disaster rituals may embody a “spirituality,” it is not in conflict with the spirituality embedded in Roman Catholic funeral rites. Rather, the disaster ritual usually accommodates the celebration of church funerals within its larger

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(2009), <http://anthropology.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/Deacon%20Cash-%20Religion%20reprint%202009.pdf> [accessed August 22, 2013].

<sup>55</sup> This understanding emerged in a three-year field study of funeral rites of commendation and farewell carried out by members of the Ritual Seminar of the North American Academy of Liturgy. See: Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Liturgical Theology: A Task and a Method,” *Worship* 62:1 (1988), p. 6; also Stringer, *Perception*, p. 75.

pattern. Disaster ritual can in fact make a potential contribution in cases that involve the death of Catholics. The Roman Catholic *Order of Christian Funerals* (OCF) is stational. The rites occur in stages which accompany the deceased and the mourners from deathbed to vigil (wake) to funeral to interment. In a sense, the OCF is a condensed version of the longer processional movement through time and space found in disaster rituals. They offer the Church an opportunity to draw the ecclesial funeral rites into harmony with and possibly creative adaptation to the larger movement of disaster ritual. This would serve to link OCF to the wider social/public context. This might even include tailoring All Souls celebrations to connect with annual commemorations at disaster monuments.

### **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The Good Friday scenario studied in section one of this chapter clearly suggests that the spiritualities embodied in official rites and in practices of popular religion around the same narrative, though different, are not inimical. Rather, the Church can be enriched by this variety, and official church liturgy has much to learn from expressions of popular piety. The second scenario studied in section two, disaster ritual, likewise shows that Roman Catholic spirituality is not antithetical to the varieties of ritualized spiritual expression that may spring up around and in relation to the human situations which Catholic liturgical rites also address. In both cases, Catholic spirituality stands to gain much from this variety.

## CHAPTER IX

# THE PERENNIAL SPIRITUALITY OF JESUS ACCORDING TO LUKE

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Interest in the topic of spirituality has significantly proliferated in recent years. Newsstands and bookstores are filled with all sorts of items on spirituality, from self-help books to yoga videos. Anything with the word “spirituality” written on it seems to sell quickly. A simple Google search of the word “spirituality” produced over ninety-four million hits. Workshops and talks on the topic of spirituality often fill up the halls of conferences and retreat centers. People are obviously seeking various ways to satisfy their spiritual hunger. For Christians who are living under the effects of globalization and a plethora of “plural spiritualities,” Christian spirituality is a perennial resource to live in the modern world because it offers hope and provides essential meaning, direction, and connection (rather than disjunction).

In the midst of the many spiritual paths and proposals on offer, Christianity brings a host of spiritual traditions to the discussion. But perhaps the most powerful and compelling are the stories of Jesus that are given in the New Testament. The four Gospels each give distinctive insights into the way of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> These stories reveal in their narrative form, the values, ideals and hopes of Jesus, as well as explore the obstacles and challenges he faced. As narratives, they invite those who hear them to join in the journey into a deeper, more meaningful life. Through the centuries, the Gospel stories have inspired many people well beyond the bounds of institutional Christianity, and they continue to do so today. In view of that long-standing and ongoing appeal, one can speak of the spirituality that is proposed here as “perennial,” in the sense that it emerges again each season and speaks in ever new ways to the human heart. Among the four evangelists, I found Luke’s expression of Jesus’ spirituality most relevant and challenging for our day and age. In this chapter, therefore, I will focus on Luke’s spirituality of Jesus exemplified in his two-volume-work, namely, Luke-Acts. I will zero in on five core elements of Jesus’ spirituality: Spirit-filled; prayer and worship; social justice; compassion; and joy, food and hospitality. From these spiritual characteristics, I hope to demonstrate that the Lukan spirituality of Jesus is not exclusively

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Bowe, *Biblical Foundations of Spirituality: Touching a Finger to the Flame* (New York: Sheed & Ward Book, 2003), pp. 130-131.

Christocentric but encompasses a myriad of theological and spiritual topics including: morality, how we live together, ecology, human destiny, and the meaning of God. Ethics and social justice are also integrally related to spirituality. The Christian vocation to live a holy and spiritual life has personal, institutional, and world implications. Everyday decisions are connected with spiritual practices and disciplines. The single-minded love of God and love of neighbor are two sides of the same coin. Challenged by the effects of secularism, globalization and economic inequality,<sup>2</sup> the abiding spirituality of Jesus offers a way forward for anyone regardless of his or her religious traditions. Let us begin with Luke's core element of life in the Spirit.

### **SPIRIT-FILLED**

The Spirit plays a central role in Luke-Acts. References to the Spirit are numerous. The word "Holy Spirit" (*pneuma hagion*) appears thirteen times in the Gospel and forty-one times in Acts, which is more than half of the total number of occurrences in the whole New Testament.<sup>3</sup> But more than just an impressive statistic, Luke is surely the theologian of the Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Luke consistently shows that Jesus' life and the origins of Christianity are not accidental but guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit is the foundation for the spiritual life of Jesus and the early church, the Spirit too should be the guiding force and inspiration for every believer.

The action of the Holy Spirit is clearly present in the birth and infancy narratives (Luke 1-2). The angel Gabriel announces that even before his birth John the Baptist will be "filled with the Holy Spirit" (1:15), will act "with the spirit and power" (1:17) and will grow and become "strong in spirit" (1:80). Elizabeth, who is "filled with the Holy Spirit" (1:41), cries out in exultation and joy and blesses Mary and the child in her womb (1:42-45). In her song of praise (the *Magnificat*), Mary

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<sup>2</sup> I am particularly inspired by Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation called, *Evangelii Gaudium* ("The Joy of the Gospel"). In it, Pope Francis criticizes the economic inequality existing in the world and urges the rich to share with the poor. The themes of social justice, joy, mission, and social inclusion are noticeably similar to the five core themes covered in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Noticeably the "Holy Spirit" (*pneuma hagion*) appears only 12 times all together in Matthew, Mark, and John. References to the word *pneuma* ("spirit, breath, wind") are found 106 times in Luke-Acts while Matthew, Mark, and John use the term 66 times. For a breakdown of the statistics, see Felix Just's website on "The Holy Spirit in Luke/Acts": <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/LukeActs-Spirit.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Marguerat, *First Christian Historian*, trans. Ken McKinney (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), pp. 109-128.

proclaims, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (1:67). After the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zechariah is “filled with the Holy Spirit” (1:67) and utters a prophetic canticle (1:68-80). There are two other righteous individuals whose lives are deeply rooted in the Spirit. Luke says that the “Holy Spirit” rests on the old man Simeon who happens to be righteous (2:25). The Holy Spirit even reveals to him that he would not die before seeing the Messiah (2:26). So one day, the Spirit guides him to the temple, where he encounters the infant Jesus and his parents and then blesses God in praise (2:29-32). Similarly Anna, an old widow and a prophetess, who worships night and day with fasting and prayer, is guided by the Spirit to the temple to prophesy about the infant Jesus as the promised redeemer (2:38).

The presence of the Holy Spirit permeates the entire life and ministry of Jesus. In the annunciation, the angel Gabriel tells Mary how she will conceive Jesus: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you” (1:35). Just as it is by the Spirit that Jesus is conceived, it is also by the Spirit “in bodily form like a dove” that he is anointed after baptism (3:22). Before beginning his public ministry, Jesus—“full of the Holy Spirit”—is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness (4:1). After resisting the devil’s temptations in the desert, Jesus returns to Galilee “filled with the power of the Spirit” (4:14). He then enters the synagogue at Nazareth, his hometown, and reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor” (4:18). These are Jesus’ first words as an adult in the Gospel of Luke whereby Jesus himself rather than the narrator or God acknowledges that he is imbued with the Spirit of God. Jesus obediently carries out God’s mission and will as the prophet of liberation and justice to the very end. Before his passion, Jesus prays to fulfill his Father’s will and not his own (22:42). As Jesus is dying on the cross, he utters his final words: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (23:46). From the moment of his conception to his very last breath on the cross, Jesus is filled with and guided by the Spirit.<sup>5</sup> His spirituality is profoundly rooted in the Spirit of God, inspiring him to mission.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus makes a lot of references to the role of the Holy Spirit in his teaching. After the seventy disciples return from their mission, Jesus

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<sup>5</sup> For Marcus Borg, Jesus, who was like other Jewish mystics, was fundamentally a “Spirit-filled person” whose life and mission were marked by an intense experiential relationship to the Spirit. See Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), especially pp. 39-51.

<sup>6</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 68-92.

rejoices “in the Holy Spirit” and gives praise to God for hiding things from the wise but revealing them to infants (10:21). So important is the Holy Spirit that Jesus warns his opponents, “whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven” (12:10). In his teaching about how to pray, Jesus assures his disciples that the Spirit is conferred through prayer saying, “If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” (11:13). Jesus tells his disciples not to worry if they are arrested or put on trial, for the “Holy Spirit will teach” them what they ought to say (12:12). Realizing the power of the Spirit, Jesus promises several times to pour out the Holy Spirit upon his disciples (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8). Since the Spirit is an essential prerequisite for witness, the disciples dare not to begin without it; they must wait (1:4) and pray (1:14; 2:1) for it. However, once the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost (2:1-4), fulfilling the promise made by John the Baptist (Luke 3:16) and by Jesus (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:5, 8), the universal mission of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles began a domino effect that could not be stopped or hindered (Acts 4:31; 5:42; 12:24; 16:5; 28:31).

From beginning to end and along every step of the way, Luke shows that the Holy Spirit directs and guides the Church to carry out the work of salvation. Just as Jesus’ whole life was “filled with the Holy Spirit,”<sup>7</sup> Luke—in Acts—continues to show that it was the same Spirit that gave birth to the Church (Acts 2:1-4), inspired a community of believers to “share all things in common” (2:44) and united them in “one heart and mind” (4:32). Furthermore, it is through the empowerment of the Spirit that the apostles as well as other women and men were able to boldly give witness to the risen Christ as the Messiah.<sup>8</sup> The Spirit often speaks to the apostles and prophets; the Spirit also leads and guides the decisions and actions of the Christian leaders.<sup>9</sup> Testing or opposing the Holy Spirit has dire consequences (5:1-11; 7:51). Unmistakably, the age of the Church is the age of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is both the catalyst and the guiding force of the Church’s missionary enterprise. The Spirit sometimes acted like a leading character, constantly abiding, inaugurating, speaking, ordering, forbidding, redirecting, inciting actions, and comforting. There are approximately seventy references to the Holy Spirit in Acts, which are more than are found in Mark, Matthew, and John combined. It is not without cause that John Chrysostom (4<sup>th</sup> century CE) called the book of Acts “the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.”

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 1:35; 3:22; 4:14, 18; 23:46.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 2:14-41; 3:11-26; 4:8-12; 7:2-53; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 17:22-31.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:1-4; 15:28; 16:6-7; 19:21; 20:22-23; 21:11.

Luke's core element of life as a disciple is profoundly rooted in the Spirit. Luke consistently demonstrates that Jesus' life and the origins and mission of the Church did not happen purely by chance but were divinely guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit is the foundation for the spiritual life of Jesus and the early church, the Spirit should be the guiding force and inspiration for every believer. The fruits of a life lived in the Spirit will lead one to strive to do God's will and experience his presence in joy (Luke 10:21; Acts 9:31; 13:52) and in peace (Acts 9:31). One way to grow in relationship with the Spirit and discover God's will is through prayer and worship, which is Luke's second core element of a life in the Spirit.

## **PRAYER AND WORSHIP**

Prayer has always been and continues to be an important Christian and general religious staple and practice.<sup>10</sup> All four of the gospels devote time and space to the subject of prayer; however, the gospel of Luke has more to say about prayer than the other three gospels.<sup>11</sup> For Luke, Jesus devotes much time both in prayer and teaching his disciples to pray, so much so that some even call Luke "the evangelist of prayer."<sup>12</sup>

Luke depicts Jesus as a person who prayed frequently, especially at crucial moments in his life. Before beginning his ministry, he withdrew into the desert to pray and fast for forty days and nights (4:1-13). At baptism, while he was praying, the heavens opened above him, and the Spirit descended upon him. Only Luke links prayer with the descent of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism (3:21). Luke noted that Jesus "often retired to deserted places and prayed" (5:16). To respond to the strain of so many who flocked to him, Jesus needed to retreat to quiet places to be in communion with God and "recharge" his human energy. Jesus' retreating to pray, which is situated after the healing of the leper and just prior to his first major conflict with the scribes and Pharisees, accentuates both the regularity of Jesus' prayer life and Jesus' desire to spend time with God before he faces any sort of opposition. Before choosing the Twelve, Jesus spent the whole night in prayer (6:12). By recording this, Luke wishes to

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<sup>10</sup> See Robert J. Karris, *Prayer and the New Testament: Jesus and His Communities at Worship* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2000), and Longenecker, ed., *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Stephen C. Barton, *Spirituality of the Gospels* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), pp. 87-91.

<sup>12</sup> VanThanh Nguyen, *Stories of Early Christianity: Creative Retelling of Faith and History* (Ligouri, MO: Ligouri, 2013), p. 17. Much of the material from this section is taken from Nguyen's book, pp. 16-22. Karris refers to Luke as a "narrative theologian of prayer" (*Prayer and the New Testament*, p. 80).

highlight the momentous decision Jesus was about to make. Consequently, in prayer Jesus was able to recognize the mystery of these human beings who were unperceptive and fragile, yet to accept them as they were and what they could become despite their obvious weaknesses and flaws.

Before asking his disciples the question concerning his true identity, namely, “Who do people say that I am?” only Luke reports that Jesus was praying in seclusion (9:18). On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus also prayed to the Father (9:28-29). As he was praying, Jesus’ appearance was changed. His clothes became dazzling white. Everything in him became visible, transparent to God’s splendor. In prayer, Jesus recognized his divine quality. His true self appeared, and his authentic being also became evident to his disciples. It is noted that this is the only time that others actually saw Jesus praying. Before Peter’s triple denial, Jesus made a priestly intercession for Peter so that his “faith may never fail” and that he in turn may strengthen others (22:32).

Luke also shows us the human side of Jesus when he struggled to accept God’s will in the garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus knelt before his Father and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me. Yet not my will but yours be done” (22:42). Jesus struggled to understand God’s way and therefore found it difficult to submit to God’s will. But in prayer, Jesus was able to overcome his fear and learned what God required of him. More importantly, in prayer he was able to put himself at God’s disposal and to surrender to God’s will as a perfectly obedient son. In and through prayer, Jesus mustered the strength to carry his cross, without becoming bitter or hardened. Interestingly, however, Jesus still needed an angel to strengthen him (22:43).

Jesus’ prayer came to a climax on the cross. On the cross he prayed for those who were crucifying him saying, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” (23:34). At the most agonizing moment of his life, Jesus turned to the Father and prayed for his enemies as he died on the cross. In prayer he was able to love and forgive even his murderers. He puts into practice what he teaches saying, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (6:27-28). Finally, Jesus’ last breath was a prayer, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (23:36). Jesus’ last words actually came from Psalm 31, which pious Jews would use to express complete trust and confidence in God’s protection. Jesus’ endearing address to his Father as “Abba” (Daddy or Papa)<sup>13</sup> shows that, even in

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<sup>13</sup> It is noted by New Testament scholars that Jesus’ departure from a more formal address “Father,” to calling God in a more intimate and informal address “Abba,” (Papa) is rare and unconventional. Nevertheless it is believed to be one

death, he dared to call God his loving Father in whom he found comfort, love and security. Moreover, Jesus' prayer to God as "Abba" also revealed his sense of sonship, specifically, as an obedient son who was most conscious of God's care and protection. Dunn observes:

In short, we can say with some confidence that Jesus experienced an intimate relation of sonship in prayer: he found God characteristically to be "Father"; and this sense of God was so real, so loving, so compelling, that whenever he turned to God it was the cry "Abba" that came most naturally to his lips.<sup>14</sup>

Besides practicing prayer in his own life, Jesus also taught others why one should pray as well as how one ought to pray. There are five main passages, which taken together offer a paradigm for prayer. The two parables about being persistent in prayer, namely, the Parable of the Friend at Midnight (11:5-8) and the Parable of the Unjust Judge (18:1-8), teach one *how* to pray. The Lord's prayer (11:1-4) teaches one *what* to pray. And in the Watchful Prayer (21:36), Jesus teaches *why* one should pray persistently and always be on the watch.

Given the importance of prayer, it is interesting to note that Luke, a literary genius, opens and closes his gospel with instances of prayer and worship. While Zechariah is in the Holy of Holies, the full assembly of people was praying outside (1:10). The last verse of the Luke's Gospel, which recalls what was said in the beginning and serves as a bracket or a literary *inclusio*,<sup>15</sup> describes the scene of Jesus' followers in the temple constantly praising and worshipping God (24:53). Luke also uniquely records several characters praying in his Gospel: Zechariah's Canticle (1:68-79); Mary's *Magnificat* (1:46-55); and Simeon's prayer of thanksgiving (2:26-32).

Since Jesus is a model of prayer, the disciples are to imitate him in order to avoid temptation and to overcome opposition. Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, records many direct and deliberate

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of the most reliable traditions of the historical Jesus. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision*, p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, p. 26. For a detailed comprehensive study of God as Father, see Diane G. Chen, *God as Father in Luke-Acts*, Studies in Biblical Literature Series 92 (New York: Sheed & Ward Book, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> *Inclusio* is a literary device based on a concentric principle, also known as bracketing or an envelope structure, which consists of creating a frame by placing similar material at the beginning and end of a section. A good example of an inclusion is found in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. The section concerning the law or the prophets starts and ends with the expression "the law and the prophets" (Matt 5:17 and 7:12).

motifs of prayer parallel to those found in the Gospel. Jesus prays at his baptism and receives the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21); the apostles and their companions pray (Acts 1:14) before the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Peter and John pray for the Samaritans that they too may receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15). After the two apostles lay hands on them, the Holy Spirit descends (Acts 8:17). Jesus prays before choosing the Twelve (Luke 6:12); the early church prays before selecting Matthias (Acts 1:24). Jesus prays for his murderers on the cross (Luke 21:34); Stephen, the first Christian martyr, cries out in a loud voice before dying, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60).

There are many instances in Acts where the community turned to prayer for deliverance (12:12; 16:25), physical healing (9:40; 28:8), forgiveness (7:60; 8:22), and missionary purposes (13:2-3). When the Church was persecuted by Herod Agrippa, executing James the son of Zebedee and imprisoning Peter, the Church resorted to prayer (12:1-5). Peter and the Church prayed for the raising of Dorcas from death (9:40). Paul too prayed for the healing of Publius' father who had been suffering from intermittent attacks of gastric fever (28:8). The newly appointed elders in the Churches at Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch were commended by prayer and fasting (14:23).

Luke wants to point out that appointments to the various tasks in ministry must be bound up with prayer. The acceptance of Gentiles into the plan of God is closely linked with prayer. In the watershed story of the inclusion of the Gentile mission, namely, the story of Peter and Cornelius, the motif of prayer runs deep at several levels. Cornelius is not only described as a god-fearer who is devout and has given alms to the Jewish people but also one who "constantly prayed to God" (10:2). His prayers and generosity are said to have risen "in God's sight" (10:4). On the following day, while praying at mid-day, Peter received a vision, which ultimately led him to go to the house of the Gentile centurion to proclaim the good news to Cornelius and his household (10:9-33). While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Gentiles and they spoke in tongues glorifying God (10:45-46). Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, knows well that his whole missionary endeavor, particularly the mission to the Gentiles, is the work of God's grace and divine purpose, which the Church can only accept and embrace through prayer (14:24-28). Paul turned to prayer to find strength in times of danger and distress. On his way to Jerusalem, Paul had a rendezvous with the Ephesian elders and warned them of the imminent dangers. Luke reports that "After this discourse, Paul knelt down with them all and prayed. They began to weep without restraint, throwing their arms around him and kissing him, for they were deeply distressed to hear that they would never see his face again" (20:36-38). In prayer, the apostle and the elders found comfort and consolation. Similarly, after spending seven days with the disciples in

Tyre, the disciples there grew fond of Paul and tried to prevent him from going up to Jerusalem. Luke records that “All of them—wives and children included—came out of the city to see us off, and we knelt down on the beach and prayed” (21:5).

The book of Acts presents the Church and its members regularly engaging in prayer, whether it be in the Temple, in private homes and roof-tops, in the fields, or on the beach. One could pray at set times or at any time really, even at odd hours of the day or night. Luke clearly shows that prayer is a vital aspect of the life for the Church and its believers. We have seen that Jesus not only taught about prayer, but he particularly gave examples and set the standard for his followers. Dunn is correct to say, “For Jesus prayer was something of first importance. It was the well from which he drew his strength and conviction.”<sup>16</sup> In prayer Jesus certainly came into contact with his true self and his mission. Prayer helped him to discover God’s will and gave him the strength to face his task. It gave him the clarity to be able to speak rightly about God and the determination to continue in preaching and building up the Kingdom of God. Just as the early Christian disciples followed the example and teaching of Jesus to be diligent in prayer, believers today should also seek to emulate Jesus in every way possible. Stephen Barton writes:

The portrayal of Jesus as a person of prayer, habitually in deep communion with the Father, especially at points of moment or decision or testing in his life, and giving his disciples an example to follow, is an indelible part of Luke’s gospel narrative. There can be no doubt that it is so because Luke wants to encourage in his readers also a spirituality of prayerfulness, of openness to God at all times. This way, a sense of the presence of God will grow, apostasy in time of temptation and trial will be avoided, and God will be able to guide [God’s] people unerringly along the Christian Way as [God] works out [God’s] saving purpose in history.<sup>17</sup>

The challenge for people today who are constantly in motion is to be still in prayer. If prayer was the well or font from which Jesus and the early disciples drew their strength and conviction for action, we do well to foster a healthy spirituality of prayer. Allow me to conclude with Karris’ challenging words: “Luke’s narrative theology of prayer will force us out of cozy ecclesiastical confines onto the streets of justice. Take. Read. Enjoy and pray. Act.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, p. 37.

<sup>17</sup> Barton, *Spirituality of the Gospels*, p. 90.

<sup>18</sup> Karris, *Prayer and the New Testament*, p. 81.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

One reliable portrait of Jesus that is well attested in all four Gospels is Jesus as a prophet.<sup>19</sup> Among the four Gospels, however, Luke provides the finest presentation of Jesus as a prophet,<sup>20</sup> but not just any prophet, rather a prophet who was committed to social reform.<sup>21</sup> Jesus' homecoming and inaugural address in the synagogue at Nazareth (4:16-21) summarizes his mission agenda for the justice of the reign of God. Choosing a combination of words from the prophet Isaiah (61:1-2 and 58:6), Jesus declared:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
and to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:16-18; *NRSV*)

The quotation from Isaiah defines the character and activity of Jesus' prophetic social reform, especially favoring the poor and the marginal. Furthermore, Jesus' reference to the Jubilee legislation—namely the economic and social reform that includes release of slaves, interest-free loans, debt release, and the restoration of land to the original owner—was a utopian vision and never really practiced in Israel's history.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>19</sup> Many scholars consider Jesus as a Jewish eschatological prophet who was expecting God's imminent intervention in history to restore Israel and establish God's reign. Some most influential works are: Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (Rev. ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1968); E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993); John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (4 vols; New York: Doubleday 1991, 1994, 2001, 2009); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Robert F. O'Toole, *Luke's Presentation of Jesus: A Christology*, (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico), pp. 29-54. See also Johnson, "Christology in Luke-Acts."

<sup>21</sup> Several scholars saw Jesus as a Jewish social prophet, promoting a peasant social revolution. See Richard Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987); R. David Kaylor, *Jesus the Prophet: His Vision of the Kingdom on Earth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994); William R. Herzog II, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> The Jubilee year legislation in Leviticus 25 was meant to bring about a time of restitution and restoration for all Israel. On the anniversary of the 7x7th year or the 50<sup>th</sup> year, debts were forgiven, and land returned to original owners.

Jesus sought to inaugurate the Jubilee year or at least saw that his prophetic mission and ministry fulfill the vision and hope of the Jubilee legislation of Leviticus 25.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, Jesus concludes his inaugural address boldly stating, “Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

True to his prophetic proclamation, Jesus was deeply sympathetic toward the poor. The response that Jesus gave to the messengers of John the Baptist summarizes his healing and preaching ministry: “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them” (7:22). Peculiar only to Luke’s version of the beatitudes, Jesus declared blessing upon those who are “poor,” (6:20) for the kingdom of God is theirs. Corresponding to the beatitudes of the poor and the suffering, Jesus also issued a series of woes against the rich and the powerful, assuring that their fortune and fate will soon be reversed (6:24-26). Jesus taught a series of parables warning about the unnecessary accumulation of wealth and neglect of the needy, for example, the Rich Fool (12:13-21), the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31), and the Unjust Steward (18:1-8). In the parable of the Great Banquet (14:16-24), God’s invitation is rejected by the rich but accepted by the poor. Noticeably, only in Luke the “great banquet” is to be celebrated with “the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind” (14:21).

Jesus’ concern for the poor is clear, and his warnings against the accumulation of wealth and possessions by the rich are acute. Jesus said, “No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (16:13). Jesus’ disciples are expected to renounce all their possessions (14:33); otherwise, they cannot be his disciples. The tax collector named Levi is a model disciple who had left “everything behind” to follow Jesus (5:27).<sup>24</sup> Other exemplary models are: the Galilean women who generously distributed their resources (8:1-3); the Good Samaritan (10:10-36); and Zacchaeus the tax collector who after having encountered Jesus gave away half of his possessions to the poor and returned four times what he had extorted (19:1-10). In contrast, however, the “rich man” refused Jesus’ invitation to discipleship because he could not meet the

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According to Tiede, this program or vision remained a hope rather than a practice. See David L. Tiede, *Luke* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament; Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988) 107.

<sup>23</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, “The Gospel of Luke,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, vols. IX, (Nashville, Abingdon Press), p. 106.

<sup>24</sup> The calling story of Levi is also found in Matthew 9:9 and Mark 2:14; however, the detail about “leaving everything behind” is only found in Luke’s Gospel.

radical demand to sell everything (literally “all”) and give to the poor (18:18-23). Jesus acknowledged the challenge by saying, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (18:24-25).

From his portrayal of Jesus, it is clear that Luke has great affinity for the poor and the needy.<sup>25</sup> References concerning the poor and warnings against the rich are numerous in his Gospel and Acts.<sup>26</sup> Luke was aware of the social injustice around him and sought to eradicate it. His advice to the rich and powerful is: “Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise” (3:11). Luke shows that the Church responded appropriately by forming a community where everyone’s needs are met (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35) and by constantly offering aid to the needy (Acts 6:1; 20:35; 24:17). For Luke there is a close link between spirituality and the sharing one’s resources with the poor. One’s salvation even depended upon how one shares one’s resources with them, for Jesus said, “What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit oneself” (9:25). The following characters clearly did not heed the advice of Jesus: the rich fool (12:16-21), the rich man who dressed in purple garments and dined sumptuously everyday (16:19-31), the rich young official (18:18-25), Judas (22:5; Acts 1:16-18), Ananias and Sapphria (Acts 5:1-11), and Simon the Magician (Acts 8:9-24). For Luke, greed and possessiveness that ignore the poor is considered a social sin. Consequently, Luke promotes a spirituality of “proper use of one’s possessions through mutual

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<sup>25</sup> See S. John Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts* (JSNT Supplement Series 144; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Already in the infancy narratives, Luke shows a special interest in the *anawim* (people without money and power). In the “Magnificat,” Mary gives praises to God for putting down the mighty from their thrones, filling the hungry with good things, and sending the rich away empty (1:51-53). The first announcement and witness of Jesus’ birth were shepherds, who were considered people on the margin of society (2:8-14). For other references, see Luke 2:24-26; 12:13-21; 14:33; 16:9; 18:22-25; 3:11-14; 8:2-3; 10:30-37; 12:13-21; 16:1-13, 19-31; 19:1-10.

sharing and almsgiving.<sup>27</sup> His frequent references to and care for the poor give us good reason to accurately call him “the evangelist of the poor.”<sup>28</sup>

Luke also addressed and criticized other social injustices perpetrated by religious and political institutions of his time. Luke noted the abuse of power and authority by corrupt judges and political figures (Luke 18:1-8; Acts 24:24-27). He spoke against imprisonment without trial (Acts 4:1-3; 16:37) and excessive punishment for what is not even considered a criminal offence (Luke 23:13-25; Acts 5:40-41). In this sense, Luke was especially critical of the Roman justice system. In the passion narrative, Luke went out of his way to show that Jesus was completely innocent. Although Jesus was tried four times and declared innocent three times (22:66—23:13), yet he was put to death. Noticeable, at the foot of the cross, the Roman centurion even acknowledged that Jesus was “innocent beyond doubt” (Luke 23:47). Likewise, Paul was tried four times and declared innocent three times; nevertheless he was still incarcerated (23:1—26:32). In summary, for Jesus as well as for Luke, there is a close link between spirituality and commitment to social justice. They are two sides on the same coin! Doohan correctly states: “The absence of concrete aid in justice jeopardizes repentance and response to the Lord’s call (Luke 16:19-31; 20:47). Conversion and social justice are part of self-dedication to God (Luke 11:41; 12:32-34; 19:8).”<sup>29</sup>

## COMPASSION

Compassion is a divine quality and the heart of justice! Carol Dempsey says, “As a virtue, compassion is a sign of new life and a testament to the presence of the reign of God.”<sup>30</sup> In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is the perfect embodiment of compassion. He treated everyone he encountered with “compassion” or “mercy.” Compassion was an outstanding feature of Jesus’ personality and spirituality. Jesus was often moved with compassion for those who suffered. He deeply sympathized

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<sup>27</sup> John R. Donahue, *What Does the Lord Require? A Bibliographical Essay on the Bible and Social Justice* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000), p. 52. For a detailed study of the motif of stewardship and almsgiving in Luke-Acts, see: Kyoung-jin Kim, *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke’s Theology* (JSNT Supplement Series 155; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sharing Possessions: What Faith Demands* (Second Edition; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Herman Hendrickx, *Social Justice in the Bible* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications), p. 85.

<sup>29</sup> Leonard Doohan, *Luke: The Perennial Spirituality* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Company, 1985), p. 143.

<sup>30</sup> Carol Dempsey, *Justice: A Biblical Perspective*, (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press), p. 88.

with their pain and sorrow. Interestingly, “to feel compassion” (*splagchnizomai*) in Greek literally means, “to be moved in the inward parts,” for example in the liver or kidneys.<sup>31</sup> There are many instances in Luke’s Gospel when Jesus was moved with compassion or pity. For example, when Jesus saw the widow mourning for the loss of her only son, Jesus was moved with compassion for her and restored the young man to life (7:13). In his parables, Jesus explicitly said that the Samaritan (10:33) and the father of the prodigal son (15:20) were moved with compassion.

The theme and message of God’s merciful love permeates Jesus’ teaching and healing ministry. He specifically taught his disciples to be compassionate as God is compassionate (6:36).<sup>32</sup> As a compassionate savior, Jesus offered salvation to everyone, whether Jews, Samaritans, or Gentiles. Luke recounts the life of Jesus in the Gospel and the history of the Church in Acts as a single story of “salvation.” The term “salvation,” especially its verbal form *sōzō* (“to save”), occurs frequently in his two volume narratives, which contain the term more than any other New Testament writings.<sup>33</sup> Luke uniquely presents Jesus as the Savior (Luke 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23) who offered salvation to all people. In his repeated use of the word “today,” Luke stresses salvation as a reality to be experienced here and now.<sup>34</sup> In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus especially reached out to the following groups of people:

- Women and children (1:26-56; 2:36-38; 7:11-17, 36-50; 8:2, 42-48; 10:38-42; 21:1-4; 23:27-31; 23:55—24:11)
- The poor (1:53; 4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 19:8; 21:2-3)
- Tax collectors (5:27-32; 7:34; 15:1-2; 18:9-14; 19:1-10 [cf. 3:12])
- Gentiles (2:32; 3:23-38; 4:24-27; 7:1-10; 24:47)
- Samaritans (9:51-56; 10:29-37; 17:11-19).

The outcasts of society clearly had a very special place in his mission. Jesus faithfully lived up to his mission, namely, to seek and save the lost (19:10). Even as he was dying on the cross, Jesus offered salvation to the repentant thief (23:42-43). There is one notable section of Luke’s Gospel

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<sup>31</sup> See Thayer’s Greek Lexicon: <http://biblesuite.com/greek/4697.htm> [accessed November 24, 2013].

<sup>32</sup> Unlike Luke, Matthew uses the word “perfect” instead of “mercy” (Matt 5:48).

<sup>33</sup> Mark Allan Powell, “Salvation in Luke-Acts,” *Word & World* 12:1 (1992), pp. 5-10. The verb *sōzō* occurs in Luke 6:9; 7:50; 8:12, 36, 48, 50; 9:24; 13:23; 17:19; 18:26, 42; 19:10; 23:35, 37, 39.

<sup>34</sup> Luke 2:11; 4:21; 19:10; 23:43.

that is worth mentioning in this regard. Chapter 15, which is peculiar to Luke, consists of three “lost” parables: the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son. This cluster of parables is generally called, the “parables of mercy,” for through them Jesus showed the depth, length and height of God’s great mercy and love for repentant sinners.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37) exemplifies the spirituality of compassion toward a neighbor. In response to a lawyer’s question, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus answered by relating the story of a certain man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell victim to thieves. Religious devotees, a Jewish priest and a Levite, passed by with indifference, but an unknown Samaritan came by, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion (*splagchnizomai*). The Samaritan attended to the man’s wounds and provided for all his needs at his own expense. Jesus then asked the lawyer, “Which one of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” And the lawyer answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise” (10:37).

Compassion is a core component of Christian spirituality, for any spirituality that is not founded upon love and mercy is shallow and fails to provide an authentic sign of discipleship. To seek to follow Jesus is to imitate him by practicing the corporal works of mercy. Noticeably, Marcus Borg’s central historical characteristic of Jesus is compassion. Borg writes, “For Jesus, compassion was the central quality of God and the central moral quality of a life centered in God.”<sup>35</sup> Borg correctly pointed out that the “politic of compassion” rather than the “politic of holiness” should be the ethos of the community that truly mirrors the spirit of Jesus Christ and quality of God.<sup>36</sup> However, advocating a politic of compassion is unpopular and therefore continues to be a challenge for the Church and the world today.

## **JOY, FOOD AND HOSPITALITY**

John Henry Newman once said, “The chief grace of primitive Christianity was joy!”<sup>37</sup> If joy was such an important characteristic of the early Christians, why do most people today see faith as only a serious business? For many Christians, smiling has no place in church or community and no place in their spirituality. Such a view is mistaken, of

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<sup>35</sup> Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 56.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-61. Also see Borg’s earlier work titled, *Jesus A New Vision*.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/subjects/sermon19.html> [accessed on November 24, 2013].

course, for one of the hallmarks of our Christian faith is joy! Teilhard de Chardin wrote, “Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.”<sup>38</sup> Pope Francis declared in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: “The Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.”<sup>39</sup>

We might ask, then, why do we not smile more in church? Why is there a strain of gloom in Christianity and in our own spirituality? Why, for example, do the pictures of Jesus almost never show him smiling? After all, Jesus was someone who knew how to have a good time. He worked his first miracle at a wedding reception. He frequently dined in people’s homes. Jesus was incredibly approachable. People of both genders and all ages flocked to him, including little children. And, as we know, most children (as well as adults) are naturally drawn to happy, upbeat individuals. Joy was a major theme of Jesus’ parables, while his principle image for the kingdom of God was a festive party.

The Gospel of Luke particularly accentuates the motif of joy, even more so than the other Gospels. Luke stresses the great joy around the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. The angel promised Zechariah the gift of “joy and gladness” (1:14). Gladness and rejoicing are repeated at the birth of his son (1:58). The baby John “leaps for joy” in Elizabeth’s womb (1:41-44). Mary’s song of praise begins with “my spirit rejoices” (1:47). Joy issues into praise for Zechariah (1:64, 48), Simeon, (2:28), and Anna (2:38). Jesus’ birth is “good news of great joy” (2:10). The angels and the shepherds both respond by “praising God” (2:13, 20). The motif of joy is found throughout Luke’s gospel, in his teaching (10:21; 15:5, 7, 23, 24, 29, 32) and his resurrection (24:41, 52-53). Stephen Barton notes, “So dominant is this mood in Luke that his gospel has become known as ‘the gospel of joy’.”<sup>40</sup>

Joy is connected with food, in which Luke seems to have a strong interest. The prominent “food motif” is found not only in the Gospel but also in Acts. Luke mentions nineteen meals, thirteen of which are peculiar to his Gospel. Jesus frequently is portrayed as being present at meals (5:29; 7:36; 14:1; 22:14; 24:30), and he gets criticized for eating too much (7:34; 5:33) and for eating with the wrong people (for example, tax collectors and sinners, 5:30; 15:1-2). Banquets also figure prominently in his parables and teaching, as he offers what, on the surface, appear to be

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<sup>38</sup> <http://blog.gaiam.com/quotes/authors/pierre-teilhard-de-chardin> [accessed on November 24, 2013].

<sup>39</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Barton, *Spirituality of the Gospels*, p. 74. Some examples of joy found in the life of the Church are: Acts 2:46; 8:4-8, 39; 13:48, 52; 16:34; 15:2.

instructions in social etiquette (7:44-46; 12:35-37; 14:7-24; 22:26-27).<sup>41</sup> What might be the purpose of such a theme? In a general sense, meals are often depicted as occasions for healing (9:11-17), fellowship (13:29), forgiveness (7:36-50), prophetic teaching (11:37-54), and reconciliation (15:23; 24:30-35). It is noted by many biblical scholars that in Luke, Jesus was either “going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.”<sup>42</sup> We also know that Christians in the early church met regularly for meals (Acts 2:42, 46).

Food and meals are almost always connected with gratitude. A true Christian is one who never forgets to count his or her blessings, particularly what God has done for them. Gratitude is indeed a Christian virtue.<sup>43</sup> A life of thanksgiving is a life of prayer. The word “Eucharist” comes from the Greek verb *eucharisteo*, which means, “to give thanks.” Eucharist is essentially an act of thanksgiving for Christ’s sacrificial love. The theme of gratitude and thanksgiving is central to Paul’s spirituality. Christians ought to give thanks for who God is and what God has done in and through his Son, Jesus Christ. The phrases “be thankful” or “give thanks” occur frequently throughout Paul’s letters. Christians are urged to “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thes 5:18), “give thanks always to God the Father for everything” (Eph 5:20), and present prayers and petitions “with thanksgiving” to God (Phil 4:6). To live lives of thanksgiving means acknowledging God’s blessings and generosity, which at the same time provide a model for how Christians are to relate with each other.

In the Gospel of Luke, genuine gratitude often leads to generous offering of hospitality or sharing of table fellowship.<sup>44</sup> Having been cured of her fever, Simon’s mother-in-law “got up immediately and waited on them” (4:39). After responding to Jesus’ call to follow him, “Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house” (5:29). Having met Jesus face to face, Zacchaeus the tax collector not only invited Jesus into his house and offered him hospitality, but promised to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay four times over anyone from whom he had extorted money (19:8). In the three “lost and found” parables, each one of those who found what was lost responded with a feast or banquet celebrating with neighbors and friends: the Lost Sheep (15:6); the Lost Coin (15:9); and the Lost Son (15:23). On the road to Emmaus, the two disciples invited

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<sup>41</sup> For a detailed treatment of food and food imagery in Luke’s parables, see Karris, *Eating*, pp. 55-64.

<sup>42</sup> Robert J. Karris, *Eating Your Way through Luke’s Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), p. 14. For a complete picture of the theme of food in Luke’s Gospel, see Karris, *Eating*, pp. 16-39.

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed treatment, see Nguyen, *Stories*, pp. 75-79.

<sup>44</sup> Nguyen, *Stories*, pp. 78-79.

the stranger for lodging and an evening meal, because he had opened up the Scriptures to them and comforted them along the way (24:29).<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the book of Acts records several examples of genuine expressions of gratitude whereby new converts offered hospitality and/or shared table-fellowship: Cornelius (10:49; 11:3); Lydia (16:15); Eutyclus (20:11); and Publius (28:10). These early Christians actually practiced what Jesus taught: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

### A LASTING SIGNIFICANCE FOR ALL TIME

It is time to address the perennial question: What motivated Luke to write a spirituality of Jesus that is so distinct, pertinent, and challenging? For many, Luke’s presentation of Jesus is a hallmark of Christian spirituality. It could serve as the definitive way of exercising discipleship in the world and therefore normative for *imitatio Christi*. According to Luke’s understanding, a disciple is one who follows after Jesus, exemplified in the action of Simon of Cyrene who carries the cross “behind Jesus” (23:26). Jesus is the norm and “the way”<sup>46</sup> for the disciples to emulate. Charles Talbert keenly observes, “As a pioneer, the Lukan Jesus has opened a way for life to be lived from cradle to the grave and beyond. It is a developing way but with certain set components. Those who belong to him walk the way he has opened, energized by the same power-Spirit that led him.”<sup>47</sup> To understand and appreciate the relevance of Luke’s description of Jesus’ spirituality, we need to briefly examine the historical backgrounds of Luke-Acts, particularly its authorship and the “life-setting” (*Sitz im Leben*) of the readers.

The author of Luke and Acts has often been identified as “the beloved physician,” who was a traveling companion of Paul (Col 4:14; Phlm 24; 2 Tim 4:11),<sup>48</sup> a tradition dating back to the second century. While we might not know for sure the real identity of its author, for convenience sake we shall call him Luke, as he has been traditionally named. Luke’s two-volume-work clearly shows that he was a skillful storyteller who was well educated both in the Greek language and its literary styles. While fully immersed in the Hellenistic culture and

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<sup>45</sup> Other passages depicting Jesus as guest, host, and teacher at meals are: Luke 7:36-50; 9:10-17; 11:37-54; 14:1-14. See Karris, *Eating*, pp. 41-53.

<sup>46</sup> Christianity is described in Acts as “the way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

<sup>47</sup> Charles H. Talbert, “The Way of the Lukan Jesus,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 9 (1982), p. 247.

<sup>48</sup> The “we-passages” in Acts (16:8-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16) might indicate that Luke was a companion of Paul on his missionary journeys.

environment, he was also very knowledgeable of the Jewish Scriptures and traditions. Judging from the information found in Luke-Acts, the author was probably a second generation Hellenistic Christian Jew. He composed the Gospel around 80-85 CE and Acts perhaps between 85-90 CE.

The social setting and theological issues of his audience seemed to correspond well with the situation and circumstances of the Macedonian believers found in Paul's letters to the Corinthians, Philippians and Thessalonians.<sup>49</sup> Living and writing only several decades after Paul's mission and establishment of believing communities, Luke lamented the fact that the Christians of his day were waning in their spiritual fervor and falling short of the zeal of the Church's heydays. With the delay of the *Parousia* or the Second Coming of Christ, the believers were becoming complacent in their preparation and anticipation of His arrival. Luke seemed concerned that the Spirit of Jesus was no longer being visually present in the behavior of the believing community. Perhaps the wealth and power of the Empire had lulled the Christians into accommodating their faith and practices to the point they were unable to resist the imperial attraction. One concrete example is that some members of his community had become rich and were not willing to share their resources according to the spirit of Jesus in the Gospel and of the early community in Acts. Both the Gospel and Acts seemed to address the recurrent issues of poverty caused by amassing of wealth and possessions and the lack of generous almsgiving and genuine fellowship.

Motivated by numerous factors, Luke wrote Luke-Acts to inspire, challenge, and invite Christians of his day and also in our own time to remain rooted in the Christian heritage. In the absence of Jesus, Luke wanted to encourage Christians to continue to live in the presence and power of Jesus' Spirit. In this sense, Luke's spirituality is very Christ-centered. For Luke, the Spirit of Jesus is clearly at work in the world, evidenced in the testimonies of the believers and in the mission of the Church. In an environment that offered many religious cults and practices, Luke called Christians to embrace a spirituality that places Jesus at the center of their lives. He reminded Christians to constantly pray and worship together in order to overcome life's temptations and distress.

As one can see, Luke's spirituality of Jesus is dynamic and might be more relevant in this day and age than ever before. In a world that is hungry for personal spirituality, Luke offered a spirituality that is grounded in the life of Jesus in communion with the Father and His Spirit. Consequently, it is not an individualistic and disjointed spirituality; rather

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<sup>49</sup> See George V. Shillington, *An Introduction to the Study of Luke-Acts*, T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies Series (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), p. 14.

it is, for Christians, Trinitarian—interdependent and consubstantial. There is also a strong sense of the corporate and ecclesial responsibility in Luke's spirituality. Christians are reminded to care for the poor and the underprivileged and to oppose all types of injustice in the world. For Luke, there is an inescapably ethical and practical dimension to spirituality.<sup>50</sup> Spirituality is part and parcel of everyday life; it deals with “what we wear, with whom we eat, how we spend our money, and what we do with out time.”<sup>51</sup> Authentic and healthy spirituality seeks to improve every aspect of one's life as well as one's neighbor's. As such, Christians are to act with compassion and to serve in the spirit of joy and generosity. Compassion, joy, and hospitality are marks of an authentic Christian. Luke's spirituality is never exclusive but rather inclusive and universal. Salvation is offered to all. While the kingdom of God is already here, Luke pointed out that it is not fully realized, emphasizing the “already-but-not-yet” eschatology. Luke's spirituality of Jesus is inspiring, transformative, and practical. It is indeed a perennial spirituality for all time!

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<sup>50</sup> William Spohn (connects the ethics of virtue, spirituality and discipleship as a paradigm of Christian transformation witnessed in the New Testament. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2006), pp. 27-49.

<sup>51</sup> James L. Resseguie, *Spiritual Landscape: Images of the Spiritual Life in the Gospel of Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), pp. 2-3.

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# **THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY**

## **PURPOSE**

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

## **PROJECTS**

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Colombia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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