Touchstone

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DIVERGENT CONVICTIONS AND CONTRASTING LOYALTIES

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Reviews

EDITORIAL

To Will One Thing

The division of loyalties is a perennial problem. Collectively and singly, we direct our affinity and allegiance in multiple directions. The "sandwich generation" struggles to care for both children and aging parents; those with blended families or hybrid identities sort out their sense of self at every turn; congregations look to both future and past for clues about how to live and serve; denominations process both heritage and current cultural shifts in order to pursue mission faithfully. Personally, locally, nationally, internationally, I have noticed tensions like these over and over. They seem to be endemic to the human condition.

Even at the everyday level we are often "torn." We are committed to good health but just can't resist that delicious piece of cake. Entertainment and duty crowd each other out in the calendar of activities. A colleague told me recently about noticing the disappearance of physical newspaper-reading among train travellers in favour of catching up on the news via tablets and other handheld screens. Such a shift in technology is minor compared to the complexity of two (or more) nation-communities brokering their desire for peace and, at the same time, their mutual murderous hatred for each other, even after thousands of years of sharing the same geographical space. And our inward lives are complex, too, as we so often long for one thing, yet live toward another. Paul knew all about that dynamic: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Romans 7:15).

Over against this, we are called to a purity of heart and singleness of purpose: still another layer of contradiction for most of us. In the midst of her fretfulness, Jesus advises Martha, Mary's sister, "you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing" (Luke 10:41-42). Even Curly, Jack Palance's cowboy character in *City Slickers* (dir. Ron Underwood, 1991), told the city dwellers that the secret of life was "one thing." What is this enigmatic "one thing"?

Love is surely the highest calling. This particular "one thing" makes such a difference in real life, on the ground, where we actually live. Love heals, repairs, encourages, sustains. To love is to desire the full flourishing of others. To love is to make room in our hearts. To love is to follow in Jesus' way. To love is to give without counting the cost. It sounds good and right and even simple. Yet it is anything but simple. It is profoundly difficult to love at all times.

While living temporarily as a monk among the Trappists of New York State, Henri Nouwen took seven months away from his life as a priest and professor to contemplate his vocation and that of the world before God. Toward the end of the very personal and vulnerable journals he kept during this time, Nouwen wrote of his desire to serve Jesus truly, and of how difficult that was for him:

> When I was a young child, my mother taught me the simple prayer: "All for you, dear Jesus." A simple prayer indeed but hard to realize. I discovered that, in fact, my life was more like the prayer, "Let us share things, Jesus, some for you and some for me." The commitment to serve the Lord and him alone is hard to fulfill. Still, that is the mark of sanctity. My life has always been a sort of compromise. . . I will never be happy unless I am totally, unconditionally committed to him. To be single-minded, to "will one thing," that is my goal and desire. Then also I can let go of the many pains and confusions that are the result of a divided mind. By allowing the Lord to be in the center, life becomes simpler, more unified, and more focused.[1]

Faced with the many divided loyalties that claim our attention and affection, we cannot live naïvely and suppose they will just go away. This moment in history will not allow us that luxury. Even the cloistered life of a monastery will not make things easier, as Nouwen discovered.

In this number of *Touchstone*, we encounter a variety of expressions of this experience of divided loyalties. Mark Toulouse

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[1] Henri Nouwen, "Sunday, December 22" in *The Genesee Diary: Report from a Trappist Monastery* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 186-87.

wrestles with the historic and contemporary views of the public role and life of God's people. The ways in which the public Christian (or Church) strive toward, or reflect, the Kingdom of God are quite different. Toulouse helps us to see how very ancient these tensions are.

Peter Wyatt, *Touchstone's* editor, examines the (so-called) New Atheism, and its critique of faith in a supernatural or transcendent deity in the wake of the "Death of God" theologies of a generation ago. Christian convictions about God's providence and God's intimacy with creation collide squarely with these perspectives.

Hannah Arendt's complex and rich world of thought is Alan Davies' focus, profiling this great Jewish agnostic in light of the influence of Christian theology (notably Augustine) upon her work. Arendt's work, offered in the years following Europe's totalitarian nightmare, is significant for us not least because of the emergence of "proto-totalitarian" elements in contemporary society.

Don Schweitzer takes us through the nature of doubt and rational inquiry in his examination of Jesus' resurrection. Despite its "incredible" status, the resurrection continues to provide power in a world that desires—or rather needs—justice and hope. (Let me also offer warm thanks on all our behalf to Don Schweitzer, who has served as editor of this number in Peter Wyatt's stead.)

Christine Jerrett's thoughtful reflections on our baptismal identity and practices ("From the Heart") and Sharon Copeman's splendid profile of Jean MacDonald are "must-reads," and a robust series of book reviews concludes this number.

So what shall we make of these many divided loyalties that fill our world, our minds, our churches, our hearts? Søren Kierkegaard, the nineteenth-century Danish theologian-philosopher, strove with inner conflict and knew it is part of what it means to be human. In a prayerful rendering of a section from his book, *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing*, we overhear Kierkegaard's longing for God's strength to provide unity:

Father in Heaven, what are we without you?
What is all that we know, vast accumulation though it be,

but a chipped fragment if we do not know you?
What is all our striving?
Could it ever encompass a world,
but a half-finished work
if we do not know you?
You, the One who is one thing and who is all.

So may you give
to the intellect, wisdom to comprehend that one thing;
to the heart, sincerity to receive this and this only;
to the will, purity that wills only one thing.
In prosperity, may you grant perseverance to will one thing;
amid distraction, collectedness to will one thing;
in suffering, patience to will one thing.

You that gives both the beginning and the completion,
may you early, at the dawn of the day,
give to the young the resolution to will one thing.
As the day wanes, may you give to the old
a renewed remembrance of that first resolution
that the first may be like the last
and the last like the first
in possession of a life that has willed only one thing,
to know God.[2]

The knowledge of God is a step along the way to overcoming our divisions; to love God, and to love all that God loves, is its fulfillment.

Robert C. Fennell
Chair of the Editorial Board

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, "To Will One Thing." http://www.deeper-devotion.net/will-one-thing.html. Accessed 1 September 2014.

Public Christian or Public Church—or Both?
by Mark G. Toulouse

From the beginning of Christianity, Christians have been divided about the question of how their faith relates to politics or public life. Most Christians tend to regard this matter in an absolute fashion, as if Christianity has one correct perspective on this question. Of course, the Christian and "correct" way is always the perspective one personally holds. Any other way of looking at it is simply not appropriately Christian. Yet Christian history, when carefully examined, reveals at least two Christian approaches to religion and politics. Both are rooted in different theological understandings of the kingdom of God.[1] Even though these two perspectives have often been at odds with one another, each possesses a distinguished past within Christian history. Today, these two different approaches to faith and public life still hold within the Christian community, and each is often misrepresented and misunderstood by the proponents of the other. For the purposes of clarifying these two positions, I have named them "Public Christian" and "Public Church."[2] The differences between them are best defined by describing their development historically and theologically.

The Public Christian

Throughout Christian history, some have emphasized the first task of the

[1] The term "kingdom of God" is considered by many Christians today to be problematic. This is true for at least two reasons. First, it is a masculine term, denoting masculine reign of a king. Second, the term carries imperial, or colonial, implications, given the history of western imperialism, which is often associated with Christianity and justified, in many cases, using Christian theology. Yet, for the purposes of this essay, especially given that the historical sources utilized refer to the "kingdom of God" as a key Christian and theological concept, this term, rather than some alternative form, such as "kindom" of God, which would not have been known to these historical figures, will be used here.

[2] A much larger treatment of these two types of approaches to faith and public life, complete with extensive examples of each, are found in chapters 5 (Public Christian) and 6 (Public Church) of my book, *God In Public: Four Ways American Public Life and Christianity Relate* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006). The book also treats two other types of approaches to public life that are incompatible with Christian theology (Iconic Faith and Priestly Faith).

church is to tend to salvation rather than politics. For these Christians, the church has no place in politics. Holding this particular perspective did not mean, however, that one believed that individuals should not be active in politics. They accepted the role a Christian assumed in public life (the Public Christian) but the church had to stay out of public affairs. To gain a sense of the theological tradition that defines this Christian stance, one must begin with an examination of Augustine's theological influence. That influence has not always ended the way Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Africa (386-430), might have preferred, but his work has influenced many Christians.

Historically, when Christians have thought about faith and politics, they have often couched their reflections in the language of two cities, the "city of God" and the "city of man" or the earthly city.[3] Augustine's *City of God* helped to secure this language in the church. But the talk of two cities actually exists within Scripture and is found especially in Revelation. In this apocalyptic book, the new Jerusalem, descending from heaven (Rev. 21:2, 10) is depicted as the city of God (Rev. 3:12), "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In these passages, the earthly city is represented at its worst in the city of Babylon, "a dwelling place of demons" (18:2), and is destroyed. Gerard O'Daly points out the possibility that these passages are influenced by "the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, in particular their dualism, and the antithesis between this world or age and the one to come."[4]

According to Johannes van Oort, Augustine combines several aspects of existing tradition and brings them to bear in creating an understanding among Christians that these two cities are opposed to one another throughout human history, from creation to the end of time. Christian tradition describes how evil developed as a result of fallen angels, led by Satan, himself an angel, who fell away from the good. For Augustine, Satan was "under God's jurisdiction" and defeat of evil

[3] The language of the time used "city of man." For the purposes of this essay, I will replace this term by using "earthly city."

[4] Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 54.

would certainly occur at the end of history.[5] But this was God's business, not ours. Unlike Eusebius, who celebrated the Christian empire, Augustine did not believe God used emperors to destroy evil. After all, God allowed not only Constantine to rule; God had also allowed all the persecuting emperors to have their day in the sun. Augustine believed such turns of events should teach Christians that neither earthly kingdoms nor Christian rulers were going to solve the world's problems or bring in the Kingdom of God.[6]

Augustine lived from 354 to 430. One needs to remember that Augustine wrote the *City of God* after Constantine, a Christian, had gained control of the Roman empire. Perhaps for this reason, Augustine was not predisposed to condemn important and necessary activities related to the social sphere. Augustine could go so far as to laud the benefit of Christian leaders who "could protect the church by suppressing its rivals."[7] He also recognized that wars must be fought to provide for the social needs of human beings under the care of government. Such things pertain to states, not to the church.[8] Augustine argued that the earthly city is never the heavenly city, no matter who rules, or how completely the ruler or the people connect the city with Christianity.

One can note, therefore, that there are several themes in Augustine's book relevant to the discussion of the relationship between Christian faith and politics. Augustine makes it clear that politics is never the first priority of the church. The church exists for God, and for the worship of God. Further, Augustine stresses that the Christian is, as a result of regeneration, an "alien" or "stranger" in the world. The Christian's true home is not in this world, but in the city of God, far away from this world. Yet, the two cities, Augustine argued, are

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[5] See Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 225-226. See especially his chapter dealing with potential sources for Augustine's work, 199-359.

[6] *Ibid*., see p. 154 for an elaboration of Augustine's thinking in this regard.

[7] See Peter Brown on this point, in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 44; further, see his essay on Augustine and religious coercion, 260-278

[8] *The City of God*, Book xxii, 6, 816-818.

"entangled together in this world, and intermixed until the last judgment effect their separation."[9]

For Augustine, the church is the city of God within history.[10] Therefore the distinctions between church and world are sharp and irreconcilable. Christians may travel through, but not become too attached to this world. Christians have work to do in the world to make it a better place, but it is not their final home.[11]

What kind of theological legacy has Augustine left for Christians? Martin Luther adopted Augustine's theology substantially.[12] First, God reigns over both cities, whether recognized or not. Second, the city of God is never to be equated with the earthly city. In fact, in Augustine, though not the case as much for Luther, the two cities, though "entangled" are in complete antipathy with one another, throughout all history. They serve entirely different ends. Third, the church's primary task is to worship God. He understood the church in light of its idealized state as the eschatological church; in this way, the church should live based on its future condition as completely at home in the city of God, not really concerned with matters related to the earthly city. Fourth, love of anything in this world (country, spouse, children, self, democracy, creation itself), for the Christian, must always be secondary to the love

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[9] *Ibid*, Book i, 35, 38.

[10] The distinction between the "city of God within history" and the "city of God" should not be lost on the reader. The city of God is the broader concept, which includes not only the church, but also the angelic beings as well. Further, Augustine knows there are some in the church on earth who are not really Christian, and who will not actually see the eschatological city of God. See van Oort, 128.

[11] H. Richard Niebuhr uses Augustine to illustrate Christ as "transformer of culture." I see Augustine's understanding of the irreconcilable nature of the relationship between the city of God and the "city of man" ultimately causing many Christians who followed him to develop an inability to relate meaningfully the work of the church to the transformation of the public life they shared. Niebuhr, *Christ & Culture*, 206f.

[12] Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should be Obeyed," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 663. Luther's treatise is found on pp. 655-703. The point of this paragraph is made well in Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); see especially pp. 151-159. Lohse has emphasized how Luther's treatment of the distinction between the two kingdoms and governments is related to Luther's historical situation. In his view, one cannot systematize it too concretely as part of some concrete, highly organized "two-kingdoms doctrine."

one has for God. Fifth, Augustine makes no distinction between Christian empires and other empires; all are in fact representative of the earthly city that stands in antipathy to the heavenly city. Sixth, no empire is the city of God; all earthly kingdoms are temporal and ultimately bound for destruction. Seventh, the city of God, even as it exists fragmentarily within history as the church, draws its citizens from all nations, all languages, and all cultures. Finally, Augustine's view of human history is apocalyptic. Human beings cannot save themselves. Human history is the story of the sin of humanity and its consequences. Its public life contains no permanent justice or ultimate good.

For these reasons, Christians who have been influenced by Augustine and his theological legacy, whether they themselves recognize it or not, tend to emphasize the nature of two separate kingdoms. They believe the kingdom of this world, or the earthly city, stands in complete antipathy to the kingdom of heaven, or the city of God. This means the church has little to do with politics, unless politics threatens the ability to worship "the one supreme and true God." These Christians recognize, however, that the church lives "entangled" in this world. Thus, the church's best form of service is to be an example of the kind of community that is promised within the kingdom of God, the kind of community that awaits all Christians after history ends. The church, therefore, does not act politically except as a witness to the truths associated with faith.

These modern Public Christians, however, also bring their theological understanding into politics on a daily basis. Their faith informs their vote, their vocational goals and aspirations, their everyday life in the world. Augustine recognizes that Christians might be politicians, even emperors. Luther particularly stresses the message of Romans 13 that Christians are subject to the governing authorities because there is no authority unless it comes from God. Christians work responsibly to cooperate in the welfare of neighbours and the keeping of the peace. They join political action groups and political parties. In this Christian approach to politics, individual Christians respond to politics as individuals, not as church. During the past fifty years, many Christians who identify themselves as "evangelical" have represented

this theological understanding well in relationship to politics.[13]

The Public Church

While some Christians have emphasized this separation of the kingdom of God from the kingdom of this world, others have taken quite a different view. Many Christians have emphasized the need for the church to act within history in light of an eschatological vision, an understanding of the ultimate purposes of God for creation. What does the kingdom of God value and how can the church help the world to move in that direction? This has sometimes led to too much optimism about what human beings can actually accomplish. But that has not always been the case, especially when theologians have maintained an emphasis on the initiative of God. H. Richard Niebuhr compared Martin Luther's understanding of the kingdom of God with that of John Calvin. Like Luther, Calvin emphasized that all authority associated with the kingdom belonged to God. However, as Niebuhr put it, "he was more acutely aware than Luther had been both of the necessity of restraining evil and of the danger which lay in giving human agencies unlimited powers of restraint." Calvin feared that both church and state could attempt to lay up too much power for themselves. Each must be subject to the kingdom of God, which transcended both of them.[14]

Calvin, like Luther, stressed distinctions between the kingdom and the world. But he denounced "certain fanatics" who "shout and boast" that Christians "have died through Christ to the elements of this world." Instead, Calvin argued that the "spiritual government" of God "is already initiating in us upon earth certain beginnings of the Heavenly Kingdom." He placed certain obligations upon civil government that

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[13] There are evangelicals emerging today in America, particularly those identified with the *Sojourners* community and the work of Jim Wallis, who often look more like Public Church than Public Christian. This is also true of many evangelical Christians associated with The United Church of Canada during much of the twentieth century. Many had evangelical leanings theologically and progressive understandings of the church's role in politics. See especially Phyllis Airhart, *The Church with the Soul of a Nation* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2014).

[14] See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1937), 38-39.

related to religion. This is why Calvin believed magistrates had a "calling," "the most sacred and by far the most honorable of all callings in the whole life of mortal men."[15]

What is important for our purposes here is not Calvin's granting to government the right to protect true religion against false ideas. Subsequent history has clearly revealed the attendant problems associated with that idea. In fact, the struggles in Calvin's Geneva after 1541 illustrate well those problems. Struggles between magistrates and ministers, riots, the execution of Michael Servetus, the break with Swiss Protestants—all these things revealed that the transformation of Geneva into a "Calvinist camp" was not entirely without consequence or a glaring lack of Christian character.[16] What is important is Calvin's theological belief that all aspects of human life fall under the purview of the kingdom of God. God has not written off the civil affairs of human beings, or any other aspect of human existence. As Niebuhr put it, Calvinism

> resolutely refused to give up any part of human life as beyond hope of redemption. Not economics, nor politics, nor church, nor the physical life could be regarded as merely temporal in significance, as not involved in corruption or beyond need of restoration to the harmony of God's kingdom. . .Calvinism insisted with the thoroughness of the Hebrew prophets that God was king over every creature.[17]

This theological approach expects the church to pay attention to all aspects of human life, and to seek actively, in every area of human life, the values and ideals associated with God. In this way, Calvin reintroduced an idea largely abandoned in medieval Christianity. The medieval church had adjusted to the long delay of Christ's return by

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[15] These quotations come from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book IV, chapter XX dealing with "civil government." These sections of the Institutes are contained in *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), 472-477.

[16] For a quick summary of the story of some of these struggles, see William G. Naphy, "Calvin and Geneva," in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 309-322.

[17] Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God in America*, 39-40.

spiritualizing the kingdom of God. Medieval Christianity deferred true happiness and justice until the end of time. With this kind of theological understanding, one has a difficult time challenging the contemporary *status quo*. Calvin's theology clearly hailed an understanding of the kingdom of God that had immediate relevance. "Justification was now to be apprehended; assurance of salvation was now to be received; the rule of Christ was now to become effective."[18] There is no theology of distinction between kingdoms located here that expects the world to carry on business as usual. Instead, for Calvin, God expects the world to change to reflect more adequately God's love for all creation.

This theological shift represented in Calvin is, in some ways, a recovery of the message found in the New Testament gospels and in the Old Testament prophets. As the gospel writers recorded the sayings of Jesus, they presented a strand of theology claiming that the kingdom of God had established a foothold on earth. The kingdom of God is not merely future, but is somehow present.[19] For Jesus, the kingdom of God contained some element of understanding, and expectation, that human life on earth, in all its features, would be redeemed. This included a belief that the activity of God had already somehow assured the defeat of evil and reclaiming of creation. Jesus, when understood in this way, stands in the line of the prophets of Israel.

The prophets brought a new emphasis to Israel. They preached a God who was not only present in past events, but who was also active currently, working in contemporary events in Israel. They proclaimed that God is active now to bring redemption in the future. God acted in history in the past, is entering history in the present, and will always enter history on Israel's behalf. Through this activity, God is challenging Israel in the present. The prophets refocused Israel's concern with salvation from past to future in a way that profoundly affects the present. This is not history moving toward a preordained climax, as is true of an

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[18] Ibid., 26.

[19] See, for example, Matt. 5:3, 10; 11:11-12 (Luke. 16:16); 12:28; 13:24f, 38f; 21:31; 23:13; Mark 10:14; Luke 17:21. These passages are all listed by C.J. Cadoux as examples of a "present" kingdom. See Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1925), 12, n.1.

apocalyptic approach. But rather, as with Jesus, the emphasis is "upon the sudden and unexpected manner of God's in-breaking into history and human experience and upon the responsibility. . .to be prepared to respond to this crisis."[20]

The reign of God contains a "proleptic" edge. People who experience the kingdom of God must respond to it. In this sense, the future represented in justice complete in God is anticipated in ways that assume its current presence (*as if* it is already accomplished, even though it is not). It becomes a part of contemporary experience. Christians must forgive as they are forgiven; they must love as they are loved. The activity of God, both within history and that which is expected, demands human response.

There is another dimension in the Bible, found both within the gospels and especially in the writings of Paul that must be taken into account. It is clear that early Christians, living within the clear example of Jesus, were not all that interested in working to resolve questions of social justice. Jesus did not demand a thorough reform of society as a result of his understanding of the kingdom of God. Early Christians thought the return of Jesus, and the end, was near. But the end did not come. While ethics and values of the kingdom are not easily transformed into a blueprint plan for civil government or society, many in the church had developed a clear concern for social justice by the time of Augustine.

Basil the Great (329 or 330-379), the oldest of the so-called Cappadocian fathers, for example, served as the Archbishop of Caesarea from 370 until his death. His friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, and his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, were the other two Cappadocian theologians so important to the life of early Eastern Christianity. Basil wrote of the necessity of desire as one of the "nonrational faculties" that, when properly directed, serves as a motivation for love of God and neighbor. He also spoke of *thumos*, perhaps translated as passion or assertiveness, as a "nonrational faculty" that seeks justice and the

[20] These understandings of the prophets and of Jesus are analyzed in Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 160-185; see 178.

rejection of evil. In his work, he emphasized human connectedness and interdependence, and urged Christians and communities to order their lives by orienting themselves to values associated with the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus. Christians who lived in this proleptic fashion could seek the reform of the entire society to reflect priorities associated with God's kingdom, especially love of God and neighbor.[21]

Even earlier than Basil in the east, some Christians in the west dealt somewhat differently in the late-second or early-third century with the delay of the return of Christ than Augustine would in the fourth century.[22] Earlier Christians recognized they were primarily oriented toward heaven, just like Augustine would be in his time, but they did not develop an elaborate theology that pitted the kingdom of heaven against the kingdom of this world. Instead, these Christians began to see the delay of Christ meant living with the reality of being "in the world" even though they believed they could no longer be "of it." But since they could not escape it, they might as well address some of its problems. Many Christians in both east and west, therefore, developed the notion that the church, not just individual Christians, must seek justice by attending to matters affecting social and cultural political realities.

Conclusion

Where do Public Christians and Public Church differ? First, Public Christians place priority on the church and its members to stand as witnesses both to God's salvation and to authentic human life in the world. The church must, as its primary mission, bring lost individuals to Christ. It represents the concerns of the "city of God" as an example for the human city, but should not, as church, join the political fray to try to

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[21] See the wonderful little volume edited by Nonna Verna Harrison, *St. Basil the Great: On the Human Condition* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005). This paragraph on Basil the Great depends heavily on Harrison's introduction, where she emphasizes Basil's concern for social justice; see pp. 22-29. This book, part of the "Popular Patristics Series," contains excerpts from Basil. For Basil's emphasis on love of God and neighbor, see Long Rules, pp. 117-118, and 120.

[22] See, for example, *The Epistle to Diognetus* in *Readings in Church History: From Pentecost to the Protestant Revolt*, ed. Colman J. Barry, Volume One (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1960), 37-43.

accomplish social change. The Public Church, on the other hand, expects the church to engage public life, especially wherever political realities exploit human beings or deny them justice. In contrast to Public Christians, the Public Church declares the mission of the church includes the use of political wisdom, effective methods, and critical reason to establish a greater degree of relative justice in politics. The adjective "relative" is important here. Christians should recognize that absolute justice is impossible in our world. The best human beings can accomplish is an approximation of justice.

Second, where Public Christians largely understand sin as resulting from the activities of individuals, and work to redeem individuals, the Public Church also emphasizes that human beings exist within a context where sin is systemic in nature. Evil resides within systems as well as within individuals. This means that judgment falls upon societies and the collective institutions created by politics. The Public Church recognizes that social groups and institutions can sponsor and embody evil. The church cannot afford to ignore its concern for justice in these contexts. Both Christians and church are obliged, therefore, to work toward social redemption as well as individual redemption.

Third, the Public Church's approach to public life is essentially prophetic, defined by the way these Christians traditionally have asserted the unity of God's kingdom and have acted upon this assumption either *as if* present (even though affirmed as eschatological) or as already somehow begun (from creation, or through the work of Christ). What I mean by the phrase "the unity of God's kingdom" is that these Christians believe strongly in God's care and concern for the world, and all that it means to be in the world. For them, there is not a "kingdom of this world" that stands over against the "kingdom of God." Instead, God's concern encompasses all of creation, including those forces within it that, for the time being, stand in opposition to it. Those forces do not constitute a kingdom or a city over against, or separate from, the kingdom of God. Rather, they exist within it. This contrasts with a view of the kingdom of God among Public Christians that stresses its otherworldliness, the spiritual over the material. Christians in the Public Church believe God is concerned with all aspects of what it

means to be human. For them, it is not always easy to categorize what is purely a secular or a political concern from what is mostly a religious concern.

The point here is to recognize that there are two clear strands of thought regarding the relationship between faith and politics, both equally Christian, within the history of Christianity. Though they differ considerably from one another, they do share some commonalities. Those who represent a Public Church understanding share with Public Christians a deeply rooted belief that God acts in history and that Christian people ought to recognize transcendent purposes in history, those things that lie at the heart of Christian identity. To borrow Paul Tillich's phrase, when Christian faith meets public life, it should actively represent the "principle of prophetic protest." In Tillich's words, this principle is "to be expressed in every situation as a contradiction to man's permanent attempts to give absolute validity to his own thinking and acting." "It is," Tillich writes, "prophetic judgment against religious pride, ecclesiastical arrogance, and secular sufficiency and their destructive consequences."[23]

In line with classical Christian tradition, the political work of Christians, whether as Public Christians or as Public Church, at its best has reminded all sides of an issue that human beings are finite and ultimately responsible for their actions in the world. When they are true to their theological beliefs, Christians who articulate this faith in the political arena include themselves as part of the company of those who could be wrong, and as among those who are to be judged. In addition, this kind of faith sets forth a vision of a biblical God before whom everyone in the world is related as the human family of God. This faith does not speak in its own behalf, or in the behalf of the *status quo*, or in behalf of Christians only; rather it raises a compelling voice for those who do not have the power or means to speak for themselves.

When Christians truly stand in a Public Christian or a Public Church orientation to politics, they represent a strand of Christian

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[23] Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, The Abridged Edition, 1957), 230, 163.

understanding and theological concern not primarily rooted in cultural identities. They do not speak as Christians who are primarily concerned with national or denominational politics. They don't speak or act primarily as New Democrats, Liberals, or Progressive Conservatives, or as Republicans or Democrats, or even as Presbyterians or Baptists or Catholics. Rather they speak as Christians who believe in the meaning of the gospel. They also believe that the gospel carries with it implications for how human beings, in all their individual and social relationships, treat one another and the created order. Thus, when they speak or act in politics, they seek to move political life toward a greater realization of both the fulfillment of creation and the kind of justice found in the Hebrew Bible and Christian gospel. Christians, whether acting as individuals or as church, should stop arguing about who possesses the "only" Christian perspective and, instead, seek in their own Christian ways a shared community life that reflects both the gift of God's love and the claim of God's concern for justice, not only as these pertain to human beings, but also as they relate to the whole of God's creation.

The New Atheism
by Peter Wyatt

Atheism is hardly a new phenomenon. In the first verse of both Psalm 14 and 53 we read: "Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.'"[1] Atheism is also implied in the questions of the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus: "God either wishes to take away evils, and is unable or he is able and unwilling; or he is neither willing nor able; or he is both willing and able . . . If he is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source are evils? Or why does he not remove them?"[2] In the high Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas observed that there are two main reasons for doubting the existence of God—the reality of evil and the fact that there are other explanations for the existence of the world than that of a divine creation.[3] These two considerations still appear to provide the strongest arguments against faith in a transcendent deity today.

Atheism also may take several forms as is evident in the case of "protest atheism," a protest against evil and undeserved suffering. The classic instance is Dostoevsky's character, Ivan, in *The Brothers Karamazov.* Ivan relates the incident of a young child, torn apart by hunting dogs, to his believing brother, saying of his admission to the experience of life: "It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha. I merely most respectfully return Him the ticket."[4]

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[1] The second half of the verse makes abundantly clear that the God denied by the atheist is not just any god, but a God who requires just relations: "They are corrupt; they commit abominable acts; there is no one who does good." The folly of the atheist consists not so much in denying the existence of God as in denying the existence of a God before whom he will be held accountable for his conduct. "It is not intelligence or a lack thereof that leads a person to reject belief in God. It is a lack of righteousness . . . Many people do not object to the idea of Creator as long as that Creator minds his own business and leaves them alone."*Gotquestions.org/fool-heart-no-God.* Accessed 23 July 2014.

[2] Quoted by John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper&Row, 1977), 5.

[3] *Summa theologiae,* Ia,ii.3.

[4] In his section on "The Theology of the Cross and Atheism," Jurgen Moltmann has a helpful discussion of the positions of Dostoevsky, Albert Camus and Max Horkheimer, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 219-227.

To speak of a *new* atheism in the twenty-first century, then, is something of an overstatement. There is novelty in the arguments of the contemporary writing atheists, but it is doubtful whether these arguments are genuinely new.

Dawkins, Harris and Hitchens

The public face of atheism today is shaped by widely read bestsellers from a triad of proponents—Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Sam Harris (*The End of Faith*) and the late Christopher Hitchens (*God is not Great*). Judging from the growth of secularist societies and "Sunday assemblies" (spiritual gatherings for atheists—at the sacred hour) in urban contexts, their influence is significant. Even in village communities one can meet individuals who openly profess atheism. And, of course, the United Church has at least one minister who is "post-Christian," denying the importance of faith in a transcendent God for living the Christian life.

Perhaps Dawkins' book has had the greatest impact, no doubt partly because he is a professor of evolutionary biology at Oxford. In *The God Delusion* he seeks to discredit the three traditional arguments for the existence of God: ontological, cosmological and teleological (from design). In particular he tackles the cosmological argument in its currently compelling expression, namely, that there must be an ultimate intelligent cause of a world that has been so finely-tuned that human life could evolve. He maintains that the existence of a God capable of such a *tour de force* must be a surpassingly complex entity that itself requires explanation. (Who or what made God?) An infinite regression would then unfold, as each succeeding explanation logically would require another. Dawkins also presents a naturalistic account of the origin of religion, maintaining that religion arises from the trusting gullibility of children at the hands of their parents' spiritual instruction.[5] The novel aspect of Dawkins' argument is the use of the concept of the "meme." (The meme is a unit of cultural imitation that is passed down the generations, competing in a process of natural selection, against other

[5] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam Books, 2006), 174-7.

memes.) He asserts that the religions are virus-like memes that multiply by infecting human minds, particularly those of children.[6] Nothing particularly new in all of this.

Sam Harris joins Dawkins in castigating religions for their imbecility and violence. The terrorist acts of 9/11 pushed him to begin to write the text that eventually became *The End of Faith.* In it he argues that the heinous acts of religious extremists are not betrayals of a religion's authentic spirit, but faithful reflections of the bigotry and violence found in its sacred texts. He calls on religious moderates to wake up, accusing them of thwarting serious critique of religious extremism in their defence of mutual toleration among religions. He saves his worst broadsides for Islam: "We are at war with Islam . . . We are at war with precisely the vision of life that is prescribed to all Muslims in the Koran . . ."[7] Remarkably, Harris ends his book with a chapter espousing Eastern spirituality and meditation, expounding one Buddhist teaching as a "rigorously empirical document."[8] He observes that "at the core of every religion lies an undeniable claim about the human condition: that it is possible to have one's experience of the world radically transformed."[9] But he maintains that "empirical mysticism" has not arisen in Judaism, Christianity and Islam because the search for truth has been compromised by the addition of the convictions of faith.[10]

In *God is not Great*, the late Christopher Hitchens also adopts an attitude of contempt for the persistence of those who continue to practise "god-worship." His fundamental argument is that the great religions arose at a time when humans knew only a fraction of all that is known today about the origins of life and human nature.[11] Hitchens amasses a cornucopia of negative images of religion, some deeply distressing

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[6] Dawkins, 191.
[7] Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (W.W. Norton, 2004), 109.
[8] Harris, 217.
[9] Harris, 204.
[10] Harris, 215.
[11] Christopher Hitchens, *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), 63ff.

indeed. But he paints with a very broad brush, including all people of faith with the stroke that covers fundamentalists and extremists. With only straw men to knock down, he wins every argument. To give a single example, he describes eschatology as a "death cult," its practitioners brooding "incessantly on the passing away of all things."[12] He makes no reference to beliefs about the eschaton as the culmination of creation or the fulfilment of the Kingdom.

As influential as these present-day writers seem to be, their arguments may not be any more destructive to faith than an undergraduate education in philosophy or biology. Indeed, one might be forgiven for thinking that the arguments of the writing atheists are but an updating of Bertrand Russell's famous 1927 lecture, "Why I am not a Christian."[13] The reason these contemporary writings are not more effective may be that they are written by outsiders to the life of faith, and so do not touch the core of faith—and hence its vulnerability. Seeking to dismantle the arguments for the existence of God yet again seems futile—since believers do not depend on them. Compelling critiques of faith usually arise from those within the household of faith or from those who have recently left it.

The Death of God Theologies

Such, it seems to me, were the nineteen-sixties theologies of the "Death of God," when William Hamilton, Thomas Altizer and Paul van Buren were arguing that God had "died in our time." (The Jewish theologian, Richard Rubenstein, also joined the chorus in recoil from the experience of the Holocaust, or *Shoah*.) What made and still makes their witness compelling is the fact that they were all theologians—and Barthian ones at that. While continuing to uphold the centrality of Jesus for Christian faith, they rejected the relevance of the concept of God for faith and of faith in a transcendent deity. It is interesting to note that in their use of concepts like "post-modern" and "post-Christian" they seem to have been ahead of the North American theological curve.

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[12] Hitchens, 282.

[13] Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Topics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957).

In 1966 Hamilton and Altizer published *Radical Theology and the Death of God*, generating enough notoriety that Hamilton was featured in a *Time* cover story, an issue that also contained a very amusing obituary for God. Hamilton lost his chair of theology at Colgate Rochester Divinity School, but all three of the death-of-God protagonists have had significant academic careers since the controversy of the sixties, notably Hamilton as an interpreter of Herman Melville, and van Buren as a leading exponent of Christian-Jewish dialogue. Meanwhile, the death-of-God movement seemed to wither and finally die. But perhaps its full impact was only delayed. One could "connect the dots" between the sixties radicals and today's post-Christian "worship" assemblies that are essentially community-building exercises and ethical encouragements.

To speak of the death of God, of course, was a patent absurdity. How could One who, by definition, is eternal die? What, then, did the radicals mean? The sixties marked a pivotal point in Western culture and saw the blossoming of a deepened sense of human autonomy and freedom, ranging from militant peace movements to the triumph of rock music to sexual liberation to celebrations of the "secular city." Theologically, Bonhoeffer's provocative but ambiguous phrases about a human "coming of age" and a "religionless Christianity" were taken up and understood by writers like Hamilton as adumbrations of the end of Christian theism, if not of the death of God.[14]

Certainly the death announced by Hamilton and the others was more than the death of a concept of God. It was more than the recognition that we can no longer think of God as an objective reality of our faith-knowledge, i.e., as the God of theism, as contrasted, e.g., with Tillich's "ground of being." What seems to have died for the radical theologians is a sense of God's presence in the world:

> It is really that we do not know, do not adore, do not possess, do not believe in God. It is not just that a capacity has dried

[14] For a finely balanced interpretation of Bonhoeffer's meaning, see Wendy Fletcher, "Bonhoeffer: A Post-colonial Ecclesiology for the Canadian Context," *Touchstone*, Vol. 31, No. 1.

> up within us; we do not take all this as a statement about our frail psyches; we take it as a statement about the world and we try to convince others. God is dead. We are not talking about the absence of the experience of God; we are talking about the experience of the absence of God.[15]

Experience of the living God had died, as Altizer was to put it, "in our time, in our history, in our existence." Empirical data indicate that what was being expressed theologically was an accurate reflection of what many people were experiencing. Beginning with the sixties and its cultural shifts, membership in the mainline Protestant churches of North America began to decline, and, with each succeeding census, the percentage of Canadians indicating "no religion" has kept increasing. Not to mention the membership downdraft of the United Church in particular. A plausible explanation of the decline, at least in part, is the experienced loss of relationship with a transcendent deity.

Accompanying this loss of a transcendent God, however, was the positive celebration of humanity's coming of age and of a new freedom from heavenly guidance and decree. For Hamilton, Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity" was a rejection of "any system of thought or action in which God or the gods serve as fulfillers of needs or solvers of problems."[16] While the legacy of the Reformation in nineteenth century liberalism might be the liberated religious personality, and the legacy in mid twentieth-century neo-orthodoxy the discovery of the righteous God, Hamilton understood the Reformation legacy in his day to be a move "from the cloister to the world," and a shift from theology to ethics. This "kind of picture of faith . . . is not even a means of apprehending God at all. This faith is more like a place, a being with or standing beside the neighbor. Faith has almost collapsed into love . . ."[17]

This reference to a "kind of picture of faith" draws attention to the distinction that the radical theologians of the sixties drew between outright atheism and the "death of God." Today the distinction between a

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[15] William Hamilton, "The Death of God Theologies Today," in Thomas Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 28.
[16] Altizer and Hamilton, 40.
[17] Altizer and Hamilton, 36f.

simple denial of the existence of God and an acknowledgement of the continuing power of the spiritual (under empty but still evocative religious symbols) is likely to be found under the banner of the "post-theistic" or "post-Christian." The existence of non-theistic congregations that seem to carry out almost all the rituals of the Christian church—singing hymns, offering prayers, having sermons preached, observing sacraments, taking up the offering, etc.—is an indication that there is a longing in the human spirit that requires religious expression, even in the void left by the dismissal of the Holy Other. And, of course, even a critic of religion like Dawkins attends services of his parish church as a "cultural Christian." He says that it's a part of community life like attending a cricket match.

The God of Providence

The theologies of the death of God seem to me to be based on experience of a particular loss, namely, that of the God who providentially guides our lives. Earlier I asserted that effective critiques of faith usually come from within the household of faith, not from outside. In the case of the sixties radicals, their description of the experience of the absence of God is highly suggestive of a loss of the God who watches over the world, guiding the unfolding of history and of individual lives. In other words, it is not the God who is Creator of the cosmos whose absence they feel, but the God who faithfully tends the cosmos created.

The absence of the providential God generates not only a sense of loss on the part of former believers, but also a question about the assigning of responsibility to work for the well-being of our personal lives, our societies and our planet. If God is not active in caring for, and mending the world, then full responsibility falls on humanity for its own future on Earth. There is no divine partner with whom we can share in meeting the challenges and no hope of ultimate eschatological redemption.

For believers, the questions of divine providence and human responsibility coincide in the single matter of intercessory prayer. When we pray about environmental degradation, religiously fuelled terrorism,

the wars that scar the surface of the globe, the cancer that stalks a friend or family member, the marriage that is failing, and so on, what do we expect of God and what do we expect of ourselves as a result of coming before God?

Calvin believed that prayer is the chief exercise of the Christian faith; nothing expresses more clearly than prayer believers' dependence upon, and trust in, God. Christians always will pray—in praise, in confession, in thanksgiving, in meditation and in intercession. These forms of prayer all arise out of the relationship of communion that believers have with God, but intercessory prayer presents a special challenge to the understanding. It is not easy to say exactly what we expect to happen because of intercessory prayer. Is it only what a post-Christian assembly might expect—the heartening experience of fellow feeling and concern? Or do we expect that God will respond to our prayer not only by speaking to our spirits in guidance, and consolation, but also by acting to make a supernatural difference in a personal struggle or an international crisis? Faith believes the latter and we may pray in that spirit; but sometimes we draw back wondering whether expecting a supernatural intervention is not naïve. The more rational our piety, the more doubts may arise for us.

Such doubts may not affect faith in God the Creator, since there are rational grounds for believing that the universe cannot have taken shape without design and a Designer. (The fine-tuning of the conditions for life on earth to allow the emergence of humanity is so precise as to render the notion of an accidental occurrence as irrational.) But such doubts may lead us in a deistic direction if we conclude that the Creator does not sustain and guide the creation with personal care. It is noteworthy that Calvin insisted on God's work in providence, in upholding and directing the creation, as integral to the work of creation. "To make God a momentary Creator who once for all finished his work would be cold and barren, and we must differ from profane men especially in that we see the presence of divine power shining as much in the continuing state of the universe as in its inception."[18]

[18] *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), I.xvi.1 (197).

Yet our daily lives do not seem to be guided by the continual reach of a divine hand. Each day most of us make decisions about matters great and small without spending much time in thinking about God's will, or seeking God's guidance in prayer. We are an active, busy people. There are deterministic psychologists who tell us that all that we do is pre-determined by genetic structure and prior experience, but few of us are likely to believe them—or how then would we ever undertake to act? We must live with at least the illusion of free will. In common experience, we see our lives determined only by the choices that we make, given the set of conditions in which we find ourselves, including the occurrence of contingent (chance) events.

Calvin (and many of our forebears) did not hesitate to affirm that all events in the world and in our personal lives are directed by an all-determining God. However, he did not think of humans as puppets, affirming that humans willingly choose to do all that they do—however determined those choices may be by God. He also affirmed that God generally acts through secondary means or instruments, rather than directly. From this perspective, a popular contemporary verse—"God has no hands but our hands/ To do his work today"—is not asserting that we are called to act in God's stead, but that God's way of working in the world is to use willing human agents. It is God, not the active disciple, who is mending the world—through the loving service of faithful disciples and others.

To pray in intercession for others, then, is to seek to align ourselves with God's healing purposes and to make ourselves available as instruments in God's hands. God may act directly (supernaturally) in ways that we cannot imagine (to heal, to convert, even to affect history's course) and we should not close ourselves to this possibility. But our expectancy in coming to intercessory prayer should be based on the belief that God works in the world chiefly through instrumentality.

In the case of providence, as in many matters of faith, the proof is in the pudding. No one can coerce another to believe or disbelieve in a provident God through force of argument. Those who believe have entered into the practice of faith, undertaking its disciplines of praise, prayer and learning. "We walk by faith not sight." Christians attest the

presence of a God who cares, and, as they are ever more deeply converted to Christ, turn themselves to the light and away from the violence of deformed religion.

The Bible's witness to a God who numbers the hairs on our heads and sees the fall of the sparrow is vital to faith—and perhaps to reason also. For instance, how is it possible for the Creator to be less than the creature? If the existence of human creatures is crowned by the capacity for inter-personal relationships, how could the Creator of humans not be capable of such relationship? The God who is the awesome God of creation must also be the God who wishes intimacy with human creatures.

Conclusion

Bill Hamilton came to lecture at the Toronto School of Theology shortly after the publication of *Radical Theology and the Death of God.* Then a philosophy undergraduate, I was among the throng who gathered to hear him. Early in the question period following the lecture, a diminutive nun rose to ask him about his argument for the continuing centrality of Jesus for Christians even after the supposed death of God. "If Jesus is central to our faith, what do you make of the fact that he was so committed to his heavenly Father?" At that point Hamilton doffed his jacket and rolled up his sleeves. Now he was going to have to go to work. But the question of that sister—who asked it wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove—remains unanswerable. The utter devotion of the Son of man to the God of all creation must be a stone of stumbling for those who asserted the death of God then and for those who assert the unimportance of belief in God now. Moreover, it seems inconceivable that those who claim to be disciples of Jesus would presume to patronize him by explaining away his belief in a transcendent God as part of a primitive worldview needing to be overcome.

HANNAH ARENDT AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

by Alan Davies

Last summer I went to see the German film, *Hannah Arendt*, a vivid portrait of the late German Jewish philosopher remembered for her searching examination of the moral and political deformities of the twentieth century. I was a graduate student at Union Theological Seminary in New York from 1959-64, and one of my regrets to this day is that I missed an opportunity to hear Hannah Arendt lecture at Columbia University because of some now-forgotten rival event. However, I have long been immersed in her writings, especially *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, a great but idiosyncratic work that has become a modern classic, along with *The Human Condition* and her most controversial book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. As with all original thinkers, her ideas provoked and still provoke strong reactions, especially her famous (some would say infamous) depiction of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi bureaucrat who orchestrated mass murder, as an embodiment of the "banality of evil," a phrase that has almost become a defining precept. Evil, in fact, especially its modern configurations, is one of her central themes. Since she was a philosopher rather than a theologian, her views were framed in secular rather than religious terms; however, she studied Augustine and Kierkegaard intensively during her student days (Berlin, Marburg and Heidelberg) and became a personal *confrère* of Paul Tillich in New York. She also once studied under Rudolf Bultmann and on occasion liked to cite the New Testament.

Arendt, as the Catholic theologian, Mary Joanna Leddy, once noted,[1] belongs to a select group of philosophers whose thought arose out of some historical trauma, in her case the rise of Nazi Germany and the destruction of the European Jews (other examples are Augustine and the fall of Rome, Hegel and the French Revolution, Marx and the Paris commune). She was, as one biographer declared, "catastrophe-minded."[2]

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[1] Mary Joanna Leddy, "Arendt and the Problematic of Evil," *Continuum* (vol. 1/no. 1/autumn 1990), 53.

[2] Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love Of The World* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1982), 299.

She was also both an existentialist and a phenomenologist, or an adherent of that school of philosophy that seeks to understand how things (phenomena)—the objects of our consciousness—present themselves in the temporal and spatial world in which we live. Since consciousness is never empty, since we are always conscious of something, the structure of our awareness forms a rich tableau for investigation and reflection. Personal experience, therefore, is paramount; both the particular encounters of our lives and the larger forces that encompass them reveal hidden truths about human existence itself and its mysterious ground. The dark phenomenon now called 'totalitarianism' (a term coined in Italy in 1923) burst violently onto the historical stage in the mid-twentieth century. According to Arendt, it was *sui generis*, both discontinuous with all older forms of political tyranny and, in metaphorical terms, an interruption of the flow of time, a rupture between past and future. It had, of course, roots in the past, notably in the phenomena of antisemitism, imperialism, race-thinking, the growth of bureaucracy (i.e., the 'rule of nobody'), the advent of mass man and statelessness (Arendt's own personal situation after her flight from Germany in 1933)—all features of the modern age and all proto-totalitarian elements and signs of impending danger. But the essence of totalitarianism is more than their sum total.

In Arendt's analysis, the totalitarian state aims at nothing less than the total subservience of its subjects to the inexorable laws of either nature (race) or history (dialectical materialism), rendering its subjects utterly superfluous and fodder for destruction by one means or another: killing squads, gas chambers, gulags, etc. Its twin pillars are ideology and terror. Ideology is an idea that has been elevated into a Truth, or, as she maintains, the logic of an idea expressed in its most extreme and intolerant form. Terror is more than simple fear; it is the ruling principle of the new type of state that grinds humanity, especially the moral aspects of our humanity, into dust and nothingness. No one escapes its deadly talons, not even the totalitarians themselves. Here her notion of evil comes into play, first defined as radical evil after Immanuel Kant, later as extreme evil because, in her words, only goodness can be radical, and finally as evil in the mould of mundane banality. Was

Eichmann, the Nazi agent of terror, a sadistic anti-semitic monster, "Bluebeard in the dock," as the prosecution at his trial portrayed him? Or was he rather an obedient servant of an omnipotent leader, doing his duty as (in Kantian terms) he understood the categorical imperative of his oath of allegiance? Did he personify what she described as the "dazed" and "tranquilized" functional behaviour of a "society of jobholders" in which all human individuality has been effectively buried in the "life-process of the species?"[3] Was he in some sense Everyman? If so, we have reached the final stage of a civilization on the verge of losing its soul.

At this point, we touch on Christian theology. In the case of Kant, his concept of radical evil may have had its intellectual origins in the pietism of his youth and the orthodox doctrine of original sin. In the case of Arendt, her concept of the banality of evil may have had its intellectual origins in Augustine's age-old contrast between *caritas* and *cupiditas* which she scrutinized in her doctoral dissertation at Heidelberg under the aegis of Karl Jaspers.[4] For what is *cupiditas* but the human will ensnared in worldliness, an ancient version of what modern *Existenz* philosophers (notably Martin Heidegger, Arendt's other significant philosophical mentor) labeled as *das Man*, meaning 'the they' or the inauthentic person who thinks and speaks only in clichés.[5] Seen in this light, Augustine's misdirected love becomes a "routinized habit,"[6] a kind of non-radical everyday form of evil easily transposed from the age of the Caesars to the age of Hitler. Was it merely a coincidence that

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[3] Arendt, *The Human Condition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 294. A more sinister view of Eichmann is suggested by an account of a wartime conversation with the Swedish diplomat, Raoul Wallenberg. See John Bierman, *Righteous Gentile* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1981), 90-100.

[4] So it has been suggested by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott & Judith Chelius Stark in "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," *Love and St. Augustine* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 120.

[5] "We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they . . . take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as they shrink back; we find 'shocking' what they find shocking."
Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 164.

[6] Scott & Stark, op. cit., 144.

Arendt's early academic interest in the Roman philosopher-theologian of the early church was stirred afresh around the time of the Eichmann trial (1961)? In any case, Augustine seems to have been her ancient tutor as Heidegger and Jaspers were her modern tutors, supplying her with a rich fund of ideas from which she never ceased to draw. Indeed, her "old friend" actually may have saved her from the worst of Heidegger, her original preceptor and, incidentally, illicit lover: not the Heideggerian "being-toward-death" but the Augustinian power of memory supplies our lives with their true focus and unity.[7] Memory and time are clearly interwoven, and linear time, which Augustine discovered in the Bible, introduces the element of novelty—the new birth, the new day, the new order of things (*novus ordo saeclorum*)—into our consciousness of the world. "Beginning . . . is the supreme capacity of man," Arendt declared, then cited her great patristic authority, "'that a beginning be made, man was created'" (Augustine, *City of God* XII, 20).[8] This motif became a cardinal principle in her political thought.

Augustine was not her only inspiration. There was also Jesus of Nazareth, who introduced the truly novel and truly radical action of forgiveness into human affairs, thereby ending the endless cycle of vengeance and its "relentless automatism."[9] For Arendt the figure of the Christian messiah seems to have been a source of some fascination. She was, of course, not a Christian but a secular Jew whose personal views were most probably agnostic in character, although a strong chord of sympathy for religious belief can be detected in her various writings, notably in her no small admiration for Pope John XXIII, that genuinely good man who as a papal *nuncio* had once saved Jewish lives and who later unexpectedly found himself on the throne of the fisherman.[10] She was not an atheist, since, in her words, atheists are "fools" who pretend to know what no mortal can possibly know, and Arendt was no fool.[11]

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[7] Ibid., 124-125.
[8] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland & New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 479. "*Initium ut esset homo creatus est*."
[9] *The Human Condition*, 216.
[10] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 57f.
[11] Ibid., 67.

The "faculty of forgiving," as she describes it, is an essential component of the human condition without which we would be locked forever into a frozen past, unable to escape its condemnations. We cannot forgive ourselves; only others can forgive us and thereby save us from the consequences of our deeds. Jesus, her exposition continues, freed us from the proverbial "sword of Damocles," and, for this reason, quite apart from his role in Christian dogma, must be regarded as a profound innovator in the sphere of human freedom, equivalent to Socrates in the sphere of human thought. The Christian symbol of natality, expressed in the glad tidings of the gospels—"Unto us a child is born!"—signifies better than anything else the miraculous possibility of a new and better earth.[12] A new and better earth, which must be understood in political terms, is the pervasive passion of her entire intellectual corpus, which takes as its subject both the modern loss of the world (or "world alienation"[13]) and a prescription for its recovery.

In simple terms, the latter is achieved when men and women overcome their solitary instincts—the self that is preoccupied only with itself—and will to live together as a community of neighbours, or, as Arendt liked to say, as a plurality. Following Platonic and Neo-Platonic antecedents, historic Christianity made the crucial error of elevating contemplation above action, which caused the church to become more interested in saving souls than in saving the world. It further compounded this error by incorporating Plato's peculiar tale of impending reward and punishment in the afterlife (the *Er*-myth) into its official theology as heaven and hell.[14] Not only was this eschatological dualism utterly foreign to the spirit and teachings of Jesus himself, but it also infused the religion founded in his name with a metaphysical fear that changed the spiritual body of Christ into a coercive temporal authority.[15] This in turn damaged its capacity to create the kind of humane and moral community required by love, for contemplatives, in

[12] *The Human Condition*, 222-223.
[13] "World alienation, and not self-alienation as Marx thought, has been the hallmark of the modern age." Ibid., 231.
[14] *The Republic*, Book X.
[15] *Between Past and Future*, 132,133.

Arendt's opinion, tend to be political authoritarians. In any case, the rulers of Christendom looked down on the *vita activa* or the life of action that assigns priority to the human will, that wondrous faculty discovered by the apostle Paul, along with a wondrous freedom unknown to the Greeks, Romans and Hebrews.[16] Augustine was the first philosopher of the will (Paul does not count as a philosopher), followed in the Middle Ages by Duns Scotus, who defended the primacy of the will in opposition to Thomas Aquinas, who defended the primacy of the intellect. Since the will is the mental organ that relates to the future, it is also the part of the psyche that deals with the new and the novel. As such, it enables us to refashion the world anew if we join it to love, for, as Augustine clearly understood, the human will "finds its redemption in being transformed into Love."[17] This was almost certainly Arendt's conviction as well.[18]

She had eminent Christian friends, especially in her New York days. Tillich, of course, was one, and the two German *émigrés* on occasion exchanged letters and opinions in a familiar vein, notably with regard to anti-semitism and the fate of the Jews at Nazi hands during the war years.[19] They do not seem to have particularly influenced each other, although they must have been acquainted with each other's books. On Tillich's death in 1965, she wrote movingly (to Jaspers) of his "authentic Christianity," and of his never speaking ill even of his enemies.[20] Another eminent Christian friend of her later years was the poet, W.H.

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[16] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 68. See also *Between Past and Future*, 158. "Only when the early Christians, and especially Paul, discovered a kind of freedom which had no relation to politics, could the concept of freedom enter the history of philosophy."

[17] *The Life of the Mind*, Book 2, 104. "Men do not become just by knowing what is just but by loving justice."

[18] According to another biographer, a "vision of Christian 'unworldliness' haunted the corners of (Arendt's) mind, and played its part in her private life." See Derwent May, *Hannah Arendt* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1986), 116.

[19] Some of their correspondence is now in print. See "Hannah Arendt —Paul Tillich. Briefwechsel," Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte (Vol.9/issue 1) 131-156. They were actually old acquaintances, having met in Frankfort circa 1930, where Arendt heard Tillich lecture.

[20] "Er war im Grunde dumm, ohne jedes Urteilsvermögen, aber gerade dies hing auf kuriose Weise mit einer echten 'Christlichkeit' zusammen." Ibid., 130.

Auden, whose "great good sense" arose from the "protective shield" of his Christian orthodoxy, protective because, in her words, it supplied him with a refuge from the "countless follies of the age."[21] Surprisingly, however, since they were both in a sense latter-day Augustinians, she never, as far I can determine, referred to Reinhold Niebuhr or to his similar and equally passionate concern with the political realm and its moral dilemmas. Nor can I, as a former student, recall any mention of Arendt in Niebuhr's lectures, which dealt with so many of the same themes and topics. Did two such high profile members of the New York intellectual world during the same era not know each other? Or did they for some unknown reason choose to ignore each other? The puzzle remains.

Almost forty years have passed since Arendt's sudden and untimely death, and, like the other giants of her generation, she has more and more become a figure from a vanished epoch, *to wit*, the troubled twentieth century. Her stature, however, has not diminished, as the score of new critical studies on her political philosophy published each year serves as ample testimony. Exceptional minds are never really dated, and Arendt, even when wrong, did possess an exceptional mind. Nor is her portrait of the totalitarian state dated, regardless of any conceptual flaws and historical errors detected by her critics—she has many critics.[22] It remains relevant and compelling, despite the eclipse of its most terrible incarnations, Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. Were she alive today, she would probably point to contemporary North Korea as a classic manifestation. She would also probably denounce the massive American electronic surveillance of its citizens exposed by Edward Snowden as proto-totalitarian. For Christians, her books ring with power, even if they are far from easy to read (she wrote English as if it were German). As a corollary to her investigation into the nature of evil, she bequeathed her posthumous readers an invaluable lesson in the art of thinking that I, for one, take very much to heart. Thinking, she believed, constitutes an inner Socratic dialogue between the psyche and itself, a debate in which

[21] Arendt, "Remembering Wystan H. Auden," *W.H.Auden: A Tribute*, ed. Stephen Spender (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974), 185.

[22] Emil Fackenheim once told me that he thought her analysis was "too neat."

I constantly question myself, challenging my own fixed ideas, considering and reconsidering everything that presents itself to my consciousness. True thinking is dialectical, not ideological; it is integral to the health of that inner *daemon* that tells me when I am right and when I am wrong: my conscience. In religious terms, Christians, especially Christians of a mystical bent, have long identified this inner voice with the voice of God. If I am preserved from personal evil by a ceaseless and soundless "dialogue of me with myself,"[23] the same dialectic must govern the ideas that I hold and the values that I affirm, especially my religious ideas and values. Is not theology itself a constant exercise in critical thinking? Once our treasured beliefs take an ideological turn—Truth—our faith hardens into fanaticism, with consequences all too easily illustrated in the so called modern "clash of civilizations." An ideological component exists in all religion and all religions, insofar as they all make truth claims. However, the great religions all possess a capacity for reform, that is to say, for protesting against themselves: a "Protestant principle," as Tillich would have said.[24] This saves them, and particularly saves the Christian church, from banality.

[23] *The Life of the Mind*, Book 1, 31.

[24] Tillich's contrast between the "Catholic substance" and the "Protestant principle" is too famous to require documentation.

DIVERGENT CONVICTIONS AND CONTRASTING LOYALTIES AROUND JESUS' RESURRECTION

by Don Schweitzer

Jesus' resurrection is central to the New Testament and Christian faith. Faith in it is characterized by divergent convictions and contrasting loyalties, and usually accompanied by doubt. In Canada at present, some of these contrasting loyalties exacerbate doubt about Jesus' resurrection. This doubt can be a burden to faith. It can also be a blessing to those belonging to a church that wants to be a truth-seeking community. What follows will explore some general and historically specific reasons for these divergent convictions and contrasting loyalties, and how doubt arising from these can be a blessing in disguise.

"but some doubted:" Matthew 28:17

In the resurrection narratives concluding the gospels, people frequently respond to Jesus' resurrection with amazement and fear or joy and disbelief. The disciples' response in Matthew 28:17 is typical. When they saw the risen Christ, "they worshipped him, but some doubted." The Greek word translated as "doubt" here is synonymous with being divided between two opinions.[1] It suggests that one's thoughts run "in two directions."[2] In Matthew 14:22-33 Jesus is portrayed as addressing the disciples' doubts. But in 28:16-20 he commissions the doubting disciples along with the others. Subsequent generations of Christians are meant to see their own experiences of faith described here.[3] In Matthew's perspective, doubt can and should be addressed, but one should not try to banish it. Christians never fully understand Jesus' resurrection and their faith in it is never completely certain. Instead, they "are constantly on the way to understanding; at one and the same time they have faith and little faith."[4] Christians are not called to be free of doubt, but to follow Jesus in the face of it.

This tendency to have divergent thoughts about Jesus' resurrection while believing in it stems from its transcendent yet unverifiable nature.

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[1] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28* (Hermeneia) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 623.
[2] Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 322.
[3] Luz, *Matthew*, 640.
[4] Ibid.

In Jesus' time, some Jewish groups like the Pharisees expected a general resurrection at the end of history. Yet Jesus is claimed to have been resurrected in the midst of history. No one expected this. Jesus' resurrection was interpreted as a proleptic appearance of the eschaton within history and proclaimed as beginning a new age of salvation.[5] Yet history rolls on much as before. The contrast between Jesus' resurrection and what is generally experienced is a first source of doubt about it. This contrast is reflected in the mixed responses of the women and disciples to Jesus' resurrection. Portraying these mixed responses is one way by which the Easter narratives acknowledge that what they proclaim gives rise to doubt, while still insisting on its truth.[6] In acknowledging this, these narratives portray divergent convictions as intrinsic to faith in Jesus' resurrection. They insist that a) Jesus is risen and b) that the world's redemption remains incomplete. The tension between these divergent convictions creates doubt. It also gives rise to the church's mission, through which it participates in Jesus' resurrection.

The "fragmentary, contradictory, incoherent,"[7] nature of the Easter narratives and the differences between these and other early traditions about Jesus' resurrection can be a second source of doubt about it. The various Easter traditions cannot be harmonized into one account. Evidently, from very early on, there were a variety of different traditions about Jesus' resurrection regarding where he appeared, how and to whom.[8] Still there is a unity to the Easter narratives.[9] All speak of the same event despite their differences. Some of these differences are due to

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[5] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man.* 2nd edition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968/1977), 106-8.

[6] Michael Welker, "Resurrection and the Reign of God," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* Supplementary Issue No. 3 (1994), 5-8.

[7] William Placher, *Jesus the Savior* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 167.

[8] Paul lists the risen Jesus as appearing first to Peter, then to the twelve, then to more than five hundred "of the brothers," then to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, to himself (1 Cor. 15:5-8). This list includes appearances which the gospels lack (those to the more than five hundred, to James and to Paul) and omits others, to Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-17), to the women (Matt. 28:9), which the gospels include. The accounts concluding the gospels also differ in numerous details, such as which women went to the tomb, when they went and what they saw. In Matthew and Mark, the risen Christ appears to his disciples in Galilee; in Luke, in Jerusalem; in John, in both.

[9] Xavier Leon Dufour, *Resurrection and the Message of Easter* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974), 100.

historical recollection being fused with differing theological interpretations. This has happened to such an extent that the historical details underlying these traditions are difficult to discern.[10] These different interpretations indicate that Jesus' resurrection cannot be grasped easily and concisely, or from only one perspective. It has an excess of overlapping and sometimes contradictory meanings through its relationships to his cross, his ministry, God and the future. No one interpretation can capture them all.

Doubt can also arise from the differences between the way Jesus' resurrection is understood in the New Testament and the technical rationality pervasive in North Atlantic societies. The spectacular successes of the natural sciences in the last three centuries have established their empirical methods for understanding reality as a paradigm for gaining knowledge. Jesus' resurrection cannot be grasped objectively by empirical inquiry. Its transcendent nature means that it "can only be understood in metaphoric and mythic categories."[11] Though "reality is not exhausted by the totality of scientific statements that count as true according to current empirical scientific standards,"[12] the perceived difference between scientific standards and the way Jesus' resurrection is understood creates doubt about it.

The difficulty in comprehending Jesus' resurrection, the differences between religious and scientific knowledge, and the tension between Jesus' resurrection and the unredeemed world means that Jesus' resurrection remains "permanently controversial."[13] As well, belief in Jesus' resurrection is based partly on Biblical and other forms of testimony. As the validity of these testimonies rests on a number of inferences and cannot be demonstrated empirically, they always remain open to question.[14] Finally, faith in Jesus' resurrection is a self-involving ultimate concern through which people respond to revelation of the infinite God in Jesus Christ. As the infinite can never be fully received by

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[10] James D.G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making Vol. I: Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 865.

[11] Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1984), 318.

[12] Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008), 153.

[13] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 114.

[14] Philip Clayton and Steven Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 129.

the finite, there is always an element of uncertainty to faith in Jesus' resurrection, as there is in every ultimate concern.[15]

However, faith in Jesus' resurrection is also based on its disclosive power, the way it moves one, disclosing a possibility for life that has convicting power. The experience of this disclosive power can be described theologically as "being possessed by the Spirit of the resurrection."[16] Faith in Jesus' resurrection rests on Biblical and other testimony, and on experience of the Holy Spirit. From this experience of the Holy Spirit, which may be overwhelming or rather faint, comes faith's conviction, which enables one to accept the uncertainty of doubt and live one's faith in spite of it.

Jesus' resurrection also creates contrasting loyalties. It creates hope for life beyond death and calls the faithful to look beyond the present to the eschatological future. Yet by portraying Jesus' resurrection as including his body, the gospels promise an eschatological future for creation. Because the gospels locate the risen Christ in the hungry, the sick, the naked, the stranger and the prisoner (Matt. 25: 31-45), faith in Jesus' resurrection becomes an impetus for social concern, solidarity with the marginalized and love for others. In both these ways, Jesus' resurrection motivates faithfulness to the earth.

Faith has a twofold relation to Jesus' resurrection that creates another set of contrasting loyalties. Faith is based on an understanding of Jesus' resurrection, which it holds to be true in spite of contrasting experiences and doubts. But as faith's understanding is always partial, it includes an impetus to seek an ever fuller understanding of what it believes. Thus faith involves loyalty to what it believes to be true, and loyalty to seeking the truth about what it believes. In the secular ethos of many North Atlantic societies these last two contrasting loyalties can seem to be diametrically opposed.

Contemporary social factors that amplify doubt about Jesus' resurrection

Many North Atlantic countries have a secular ethos in which faith in Jesus' resurrection is constantly questioned and is frequently on the

[15] Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1957), 16.
[16] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), 218.

defensive. This secular ethos is not external to Christians living in these countries. Every society has a symbol system expressive of its underlying values. These symbol systems have an objective reality and generate a corresponding mindset in a society's members.[17] Christians living in countries like Canada thus tend to be 'formed' into the secularized ethos they inhabit. They do not live by one story. No one does.[18] Instead, we live at the intersection and in the intertwinement of several stories or meta-narratives; that of being a Christian, that of belonging to a secular society, that of being Canadian, etc. Indian Christian theologians are described as having a dual loyalty: to Indian culture, largely shaped by Hinduism, and to Christian beliefs.[19] Christians in North Atlantic societies also have a dual loyalty: to the values and assumptions of their secular cultures, and to the gospel.

Around 1500 CE, faith in God was a fundamental assumption of civic life, reinforced by social conventions in many Western societies.[20] A key development in the long and complicated journey from this social setting to today's secularity was the rise of the Enlightenment in the 1700s, with its emphasis on testing the truth claims of tradition and thinking for one's self. This gave rise to modern historical inquiry and historical Biblical criticism. The Easter message proclaims Jesus' resurrection as an eschatological event involving a unique interaction between God and history. It makes historical claims—e.g. that the risen Christ appeared to certain people. The critical investigation of truth claims is considered a duty[21] in North Atlantic societies following the Enlightenment. This particular way of seeking truth should not be considered foreign to Christian faith. As Christian theology seeks the truth in the service of the church as a truth-seeking community, some Christian theologians have to take up the questions and concerns of historical

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[17] Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 128-9.

[18] Gregory Baum, *Essays in Critical Theology* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1994), 58-9. As Baum notes, instincts for natural preservation also interact with the stories people live by to shape their thought and behaviour.

[19] Raimon Pannikar, "Can Theology Be Transcultural?" *Pluralism and Oppression*, ed. Paul Knitter (The College Theology Society/ Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 15.

[20] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 13-14.

[21] Bernard Barber, *Intellectual Pursuits: Toward an Understanding of Culture* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Co., 1998), 117.

inquiry in relation to Jesus' resurrection.

Historical inquiry typically uses two criteria to assess the historicity of events reported from the past. One is critical and the other constructive. The critical criterion requires that past events be similar to the historian's own experience.[22] For an event to be accepted as historical, "it must be located within time and space and must be analogous to other events within the human world."[23] This makes it difficult to affirm the historicity of Jesus' resurrection in relation to the worldview characteristic of secular North Atlantic societies. Here human beings are seen to form societies for their mutual benefit and the protection of their human rights. With the aid of knowledge gained from the natural sciences and experience, they employ technology to utilize natural resources for their perceived advantage. The world is perceived here as an impersonal order, which humanity explores through scientific methods.[24] Critically investigating truth claims typically means that reality "is summoned, as it were,"[25] to conform to this worldview. What does not fit with it is dismissed as unreal. What the resurrection accounts describe is too unique, too unlike what is generally experienced by most people, to be integrated into this worldview.[26] As a result, many North Atlantic Christians experience the Easter message as a compelling source of joy, hope and meaning in life. Yet they cannot fully reconcile it with the secular mindset described above, which informs much of their daily life.

A second general criterion for historical inquiry is that of constructive or imaginative interpolation. This involves postulating as historical what is not stated but still implied by the accepted evidence.[27] In order to give a coherent account of events, a historian must interpolate or imagine what is presupposed by their sources. This second criterion follows from the first, that past events be similar to the historian's own experience. For example, if historical sources describe a person as driving the Trans-Canada highway from Calgary to Winnipeg, the historian must

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[22] R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1946), 239-40.
[23] Francis Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 31.
[24] This description is drawn from Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 294, 171.
[25] Ibid., 286.
[26] Gerd Theissen and Annete Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 504.
[27] Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 240.

postulate that they drove through Saskatchewan. Although the sources do not state this, by analogy to contemporary experience, they imply it. Without this kind of imaginative construction there can be no coherent account of history.[28] This second criterion leads to the conclusion that the historian has to posit something between the death of Jesus and the rise of faith in his resurrection that precipitated the change in his disciples.[29] The "objectivity of this event can never be verified."[30] Still, by this second criterion something must be presupposed.

In some respects the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection is fairly strong. Although Paul says little about what he saw, he writes as a first hand witness to an appearance of the risen Christ and he lists other groups and individuals who had similar experiences (1 Cor. 15: 5-8). This list and the appearance narratives have some disagreements on who saw the risen Jesus and where, but there is no doubt that Jesus' followers and others like Paul had experiences that convinced them of Jesus' resurrection.[31] They could have been mistaken, but these traditions stem from the experiences of various groups and individuals. It is unlikely that all would have made the same mistake. Historical inquiry into Jesus' resurrection thus arrives at mixed results:

> What is historically accessible are the facts of the execution of Jesus and the first disciples' proclamation of Jesus. The historian is faced with an unknown X about what took place between the death of Jesus and the early Christian proclamation. The New Testament testimonies of what took place provide for many Christians the most consistent narrative accounts that explain the emergence of the Christian faith in Jesus despite the shock of his death on the cross. But these narrative accounts propose an event that transcends normal expectations and they lack analogies in our everyday experience.[32]

This leaves the historian with an enigma and the Christian with

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[28] Ibid., 241.
[29] Martin Dibelius, *Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, n.d.), 141-44; Reginald Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 169.
[30] Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), 69.
[31] E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1993), 279.
[32] Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology*, 33.

contrasting loyalties, to the gospel and to the secular values and assumptions of daily life. This secular ethos amplifies the doubts intrinsic to faith in Jesus' resurrection. It fragilizes this faith,[33] making it seem questionable and irrational in comparison to the creeds of secular humanism.

Other observations

However, a few other observations should be noted. First, the New Testament witnesses agree with modern historiography that Jesus' resurrection is not analogous to other historical events. They proclaim it to be unique. But there are experiences of the Holy Spirit that are analogous to what is experienced in relation to Jesus' resurrection.[34] Jesus' resurrection is not an isolated curiosity, but part of a unique defining instance for experiences of the Spirit that are found throughout history. While it is unique, it is not completely without analogy to people's experience.

Second, the Easter message resonates in one respect with the ethos of contemporary secular societies. These societies have unprecedentedly high moral standards of universal justice and compassion.[35] These standards, often flouted in practice, are invoked in public discourse and frequently motivate the actions of government and citizens. Such standards need strong moral sources to sustain them.[36] Jesus' resurrection is this kind of moral source. As such it resonates with this aspect of the ethos of secular North Atlantic societies and is not simply foreign to it. Furthermore, the message of Jesus' resurrection and the symbol of the reign of God are able to communicate a vision of justice and hope as "collectively binding ideals" in ways that secular reason cannot.[37]

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[33] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 595. As Taylor puts it elsewhere, the "modern Christian consciousness thus lives in a tension, that may feel at times like a dilemma, between what it draws from the development of modern humanism, and its attachment to the central mysteries of Christian faith," 655.

[34] Jürgen Moltmann, "Towards the Next Step in the Dialogue," in *The Future of Hope*, ed. Frederick Herzog (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 163.

[35] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 515.

[36] Ibid., 515-16. Taylor defines a moral source as "a something the love of which empowers us to do and be good," Ibid., 93.

[37] Jürgen Habermas, "An Awareness of What is Missing," in *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, Jürgen Habermas et al., (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), 19.

Without the inspiration such symbols provide to work for the overcoming of suffering and evil, secular reason is in danger of losing its emancipatory intent, becoming cynical in outlook and restricted in its moral concern.[38] For many people, faith in Jesus' resurrection helps undergird the commendable practices and performances of their daily lives. This strengthens their loyalty to it. Thus the secular ethos of North Atlantic societies also has divided loyalties around Jesus' resurrection. It remains opaque to secular reason, yet it is part of secular reason's formative heritage[39] and provides the kind of moral stimulus needed to maintain these societies' emancipatory commitments and humanitarian ideals.

The conflict between the secular ideals of North Atlantic societies and faith in Jesus' resurrection, often presented as reason versus faith, is more a conflict of faith against faith.[40] Reason and knowledge are always permeated by belief, even in mundane matters. Reason can test and correct beliefs, but the reasoning that tests some beliefs is always based on others. Knowledge and belief can never be finally separated.[41] When a belief becomes a matter of ultimate concern, then it becomes faith. The ideals of secular North Atlantic societies rest on a vision of history and the human condition that is ultimately a matter of faith. This faith has been fragilized by the horrors of the twentieth century, by the environmental crisis and the failure of secular societies like Canada's to elect governments that will respond adequately to it. Christian faith is also fragilized by these realities. But as Jesus' cross symbolizes all that destroys life, Jesus' resurrection can be a source of transcendent hope in relation to this.

The struggle for legitimacy amongst secular and religious faiths in most North Atlantic cultures is presently a "three-cornered . . . battle."[42] Secular humanists deride religious faith as prone to violence, as diverting people away from activities that foster human life, and as irrational and

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[38] Ibid., 18-19.
[39] Ibid., 17-18.
[40] Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 26.
[41] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), 705-6. As Lonergan notes, "One does not simply know that England is an island. Nor does one merely believe it," 706.
[42] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 636.

superstitious. But secular humanists that do this often overlook how religious faith frequently motivates people to exemplify the virtues that secularists advocate.[43] A third group, the anti-humanists, criticize secular humanism for flattening life and robbing it of lofty goals that give life meaning.[44] Anti-humanists also criticize the transcendence of love that faith in Jesus' resurrection proclaims. In this three-cornered debate, each "faith" is able to critique and fragilize the other, but none can win an all-out victory. They can also learn through dialogue with each other. In this unstable situation, much depends on how faith in Jesus' resurrection is interpreted and lived out. Still, in the secular ethos of many North Atlantic societies, in the face of criticism that understands truth only in empirical terms and in the presence of other religions, many Christians have a "reflexive stance"[45] towards Jesus' resurrection. While they have faith in it, they also tend to have doubts about it, and a critical stance towards claims of this kind. Such doubt can burden faith in Jesus' resurrection. But it can also help deliver it from a spiritual and social malaise identified by Martin Luther and recent sociologists.

The self curved in upon itself

Lecturing on Romans 5:4, Luther concludes that "if God did not test us by tribulation, no man [sic] could possibly be saved."[46] According to Luther,

> [t]his is so because, due to original sin, our nature is so curved in upon itself at its deepest levels that it not only bends the best gifts of God toward itself in order to enjoy them . . . , nay, rather, "uses" God in order to obtain them, but it does not even know that, in this wicked, twisted, crooked way, it seeks everything, including God, only for itself.[47]

Here Luther argues that, as a result of original sin, people have an innate tendency to become closed in upon themselves; insulated from their environment, others and God, so that they only relate to these in ways that

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[43] Jeffrey Stout, "2007 Presidential Address: The Folly of Secularism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76/3 (September 2008), 533-44.
[44] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 369-74.
[45] Ibid., 680.
[46] Martin Luther, *Luther: Lectures on Romans*, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 159.
[47] Ibid.

serve their distorted sense of self-interest.

The mixed responses in the Easter narratives of fear and amazement or worship and doubt to Jesus' resurrection indicates that coming to believe in it typically transforms or breaks open one's world view, directly countering this tendency to become curved in upon one's self. Yet this tendency remains present in every person and community. It can lead to receiving Jesus' resurrection as a source of official optimism,[48] shielding one from one's own mortality and finitude, while screening out the destructive effects of one's social ethos and worldview. The church or self, curved in upon itself, uses Jesus' resurrection to reinforce its self-enclosure, rather than receiving it as empowerment to follow Jesus' way of the cross.

Sociologists use the term self-referentiality to describe a condition similar to being curved in upon one's self. North Atlantic societies are functionally differentiated into various systems, each guided by its own terms of reference.[49] Law, education, health care, waste disposal, commerce, sports, religion, etc.: each forms a system within the whole of society. These systems tend to be self-guiding, concerned with pursuing their own goals and maintaining their own structures. Society benefits from this functional differentiation, but it has a detrimental side effect. Each system tends to become self-referential, focused on the "priorities attached to their respective agendas and orders of business,"[50] often in relative ignorance of, and even hostility to, other systems and the good of society as a whole. As Luther observes, people are often unaware that they have become self-enclosed. The same holds true for societies and social systems.

The self-referentiality of social systems can be broken open by risks to society that are of such magnitude that they force social groups and systems to communicate and cooperate with each other in order to survive.[51] Luther also argues that the self-enclosed person can be broken open to receive God's grace. In Luther's view this happens when a person is brought by suffering and despair to look beyond themselves to seek

[48] Douglas J. Hall, "The Theology of Hope in an Officially Optimistic Society," *Religion in Life* 40 (1971), 376-90.
[49] Niklas Luhmann, *Ecological Communication* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).
[50] Ulrich Beck, *Power in the Global Age* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005), 104.
[51] Ibid.

help in God alone.[52] Luther argues that God's great goodness "inflicts tribulation, trial and trouble"[53] upon people after they come to have faith in order to prevent their ungodly nature from rushing in, seizing the gifts of the Spirit and using them in the service of their distorted self-interests. This argument of Luther's needs nuancing. People can be opened to God through suffering, but suffering does not always have this effect upon a person, particularly suffering that results from violent abuse. There is suffering that breaks open one's self-referentiality and suffering that destroys one's self. Unfortunately Luther does not distinguish here between the two. Nor does he note that people's self-referentiality can also be broken open by experiences of beauty, by dialogue with others or by witnessing the suffering of others. Still, his analysis suggests how doubt can be a hidden benefit to faith in Jesus' resurrection.

Divergent Convictions, Divided Loyalties and Doubt

When faith becomes self-referential, doubt can break it open. Doubt can lead one to test one's truth claims and re-examine previous judgments. It can open one to hear others' perspectives and lead one to a new and sometimes better understanding of the divergent convictions entailed by faith in Jesus' resurrection. Doubt that leads to dialogue can deepen faith and prevent it from becoming self-referential.

The learning processes that doubt triggers can also reverberate back towards the sources of doubt, leading to a revised estimation of their validity. Jesus' resurrection gains shape, direction and communicative power as a moral source through interpretation. Such interpretation is never fully certain or complete.[54] The same is true for articulations of the aspirations of a Nietzschean anti-humanism or a secular humanism. As critiques from these orientations or others inspire doubt about Jesus' resurrection, this may trigger a learning process that reverberates back upon them, uncovering in these "gaps where mystery intrudes, where the claims to truth are not fully grounded, where seeming refutation or contradictions lie half visible."[55] Doubt that triggers such learning

[52] Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 160-1.
[53] Ibid., 160.
[54] Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 299.
[55] Ibid.

processes can ultimately strengthen both faith's conviction and its humility.

The divergent nature of the convictions intrinsic to Jesus' resurrection can work against the human tendency to become self-enclosed. Jesus' resurrection promises a radically different future and calls one to seek it. The tension between what is quantifiable and apparent in the present, and what is experienced and hoped for in faith, can be a dialectical tension in which these divergent convictions test and correct each other, so that one does not become self-enclosed around either, but remains open. Faith in Jesus' resurrection needs to be grounded and nurtured by participation in the worship and life of a Christian community. It also needs to be in dialogue with others so that it doesn't become self-referential. Faith in Jesus' resurrection can only be properly articulated through dialogue with the world.

Some North Atlantic Christians experience as intolerable the contrast between the secular ethos in which they live and the message of Jesus' resurrection and have sought to resolve it, either by arguing for the truth of the Bible or Christian doctrines over against other forms of knowledge and experience, or by trying to accommodate Christian faith to "the dominant scientific, philosophical, historical and moral ideas"[56] of their culture. The first approach mistakenly presents the Bible or church teaching as a direct source of scientific or historical knowledge and remains in open conflict with these. It represents a kind of religious self-referentiality.

The second approach, that of liberal theology, has made lasting contributions to Christian thought.[57] If relevance is defined as interpreting the gospel so that it is acceptable to religion's cultured despisers, liberal theology has sometimes succeeded in making the gospel relevant. But seeking to overcome doubt by integrating Christian faith into the secular ethos of North Atlantic societies robs the gospel of its power to criticize and disrupt the self-referentiality of these societies.[58] The desire to understand the world as a unified whole can lead to the collapse of differences in one's worldview.[59] In the case of liberal theology, it has

[56] Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), 76.
[57] Ibid., 76-8.
[58] Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, 234.
[59] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster

typically led to the collapse of the radical otherness of the reign of God and the promise of Jesus' resurrection into the relative good of a society still in need of redemption, so that the former is unable to offer a radical critique of the latter and the latter becomes idolized. If relevance is defined as interpreting the gospel so as to illuminate a society's sinful structures and promise "rescue and transformation,"[60] liberal theology has frequently failed to be relevant.

Doubt inevitably accompanies faith in Jesus' resurrection, but needn't overwhelm it. When accepted as part of the burden of faith, it can help the church remain a truth-seeking community. Doubt and mission both arise from the tension between Jesus' resurrection and the unredeemed nature of the world. Each is intrinsic to the life of a church that is open to the world without becoming accommodated to it.

John Knox Press, 2005), 39.

[60] Gregory Baum, *Truth and Relevance* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 4.

FROM THE HEART— ABOUT THE HEART OF THE MATTER

"A BAPTIZED AND BAPTIZING COMMUNITY"

by Christine Jerrett

My earliest memory is my baptism. I was four years old and we were living in Elliot Lake, Ontario. In my memory, I am standing between my parents and there is something black in front of me (which I now presume was the minister's robe). We moved away from Elliot Lake shortly after that, so I never knew the congregation that had promised to nurture me into Christian discipleship. And they did not know me.

Twenty-three years later, in 1982, I was ordained by London Conference of The United Church of Canada. After the worship service, each ordinand or commissionand was assigned a place in a reception hall where the ordinand/commissionand could greet friends and family. As I was standing in my spot, two people whom I did not know approached me. They congratulated me on my ordination and then explained, "We are delegates from Elliot Lake. We do not know anyone who was ordained or commissioned, so we are going around greeting all of you." I told them that I had been baptized in a United Church in Elliot Lake and asked which church they were from. My mother confirmed that they belonged to the congregation into which I had been baptized. "Will you take a message back to your congregation for me?" I asked. "Will you please tell them that what they did twenty-three years ago has borne its fruit in my life and has led me to this event and this day?"

Over thirty-two years of ordered ministry, I have seen many changes in the practice and understanding of baptism in the United Church. On my first couple of pastoral charges, baptism was still a very common "rite of passage." Many people asked for their children to be baptized (or "done") because that was the culturally expected thing to do. Some of them were active in the congregation; many were not, and they were not seen again until their next child was born. Inevitably, some people in the congregation would express their discomfort with making promises that they could not keep because they never saw the child again. The Session would discuss the matter, wondering how to bring some integrity to its practice of baptism, but, in the end, would be reluctant to turn anyone away.

Baptism, as it is often practised in The United Church of Canada, highlights the tensions between divergent convictions and divided loyalties. Baptism is about celebrating God's unconditional love and welcome of all people; but it is also about being part of a community that is committed to living out the gospel of Jesus Christ with each other. It is about proclaiming the grace of Jesus Christ which nobody deserves; and it is also about making a commitment to follow in Jesus' Way. In an effort to convey to the parents who wanted their children baptized both the glorious riches of God's love and the deep commitments to Christian community, I would conduct "baptism classes." Members of the congregation would come to the classes and talk about the difference baptism had made for them. I sent the new parents to the homes of some of the most faith-filled people in the congregation to talk together about what a life lived in Christian community looked like. I invited the parents to consider what their promise to raise their children as Christians would mean for them.

I do not know what effect those efforts had. Some parents became part of the worshipping community; some we never saw again. What I do know is that, over the years, the nature of the requests for baptism began to shift. Why did they want their child baptized? At first, many parents did not know the answer to that question. Getting your child baptized was just what a family did. Some parents were able to articulate that they wanted baptism for their children because they wanted their children to benefit from the moral education that the church offered. Then, more and more frequently, the answers changed. I would hear more often, "Because my mother/grandmother wants it." Then, even that motivation began to fade. Fewer parents were asking for baptism. However, those who still did ask, often spoke of feeling that something holy had occurred in the birth of their child; they were awed at the responsibility they now carried; they wanted somehow to acknowledge that God was a part of this and that they needed God to help them. They figured the church was a place that would know about the things of God.

At the same time, another trend was beginning to emerge: more adults were beginning to ask for baptism for themselves. Some of them had been in the church their whole lives but, for a variety of reasons, had not been baptized as children. Others had not been a part of the Christian

community for many years (or ever) but faith had found them as adults. Baptism was a public expression of their commitment to a Christian life.

In the meantime, the practice of baptism was beginning to have an increasingly prominent role in the life of the congregations I was serving. Worship services in which we would be baptizing someone became opportunities for all of us to renew the promises of baptism. Worship on the first Sunday in January would include a version of John Wesley's "Covenant Renewal Service." The baptism services themselves became richer: the symbols more robust; the actions more participatory, reflecting the communal nature of baptism. In sermons, I would speak more frequently about the implications of being a baptized and baptizing people for daily living. The assurance of pardon would sometimes happen at the baptismal font. While I scooped water from the font, I would remind us that we all live by the grace and mercy of God. Saying the prayers of the people at the font would remind us that, in baptism, we are made priests for the world, carrying the cries and groans of creation to God in prayer.

Some people were puzzled. In the minds of many people in the church, baptism is a one-time event, usually involving babies. One year, it was announced in the bulletin that for several weeks, the worship services would focus on baptism. Each Sunday, we considered a different aspect of baptism: God bathing us in God's love and our response of gratitude and faith; daily dying and being raised to new life in Christ; being a community that lives by grace and is learning to forgive and repent; receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit who is making new beginnings where none seem possible, bringing life out of death; being anointed—recruited—for God's mission of healing and reconciling a broken world. At the end of the series, one woman said, "I get it now. At the beginning, I wondered, 'Where's she going to get all those babies to baptize?'"

Why reclaim the church's traditional identity as a baptized and baptizing community? Why return baptism to its central role in the life of Christ's followers? Because the church is being pushed to the margins of society. The cultural supports that once assisted the church in making Christian disciples have disappeared. When the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon, they had to develop ways to be a people who lived as a minority in a culture that threatened their life. So, too, the Christian faith community is finding that it must be more intentional about nurturing and

training disciples of Jesus. In such a time as this, we find ourselves returning to core questions of identity and purpose: Who are we? Whose are we? What are we called to be and to do?

Giving answers to those questions is challenging because the context in which we struggle with them is constantly changing. We are navigating uncharted waters. In the face of declining numbers and finances, churches are pressured to be and do many things.

Yet, when we gather around the font, we remember that we are those who have been claimed by a gracious God who makes outrageous promises and keeps them. We are those who have been signed by the cross of Christ, committed to living in the world shaped by Jesus' suffering love. We are those who have been given the Holy Spirit who is transforming the church into a community of radical hope and risky righteousness—a sign, witness and foretaste of the power and presence of God in the world.

I used to think that, when people who had little or no connection with the church asked to have their children baptized, my task was to try to convince them to have some integrity about the promises they were going to make. In particular, I wanted them to "really mean it" when they promised to raise their children in the church. At some point, I stopped worrying about that so much. I still explained to them what they would be promising. However, I realized that, as important as those promises are, they are not the most important ones. The most important, most decisive, promises of baptism are the ones God makes. Let us proclaim those promises as creatively, boldly, compellingly as we can. Then, the most critical thing a congregation can do to bring integrity to its services of baptism is to be a community that is living in deep, radical trust in the promise-making God. None of us knows what God will make of our efforts to be faithful in these challenging times. We do know or, rather, we can trust, that all we do and all that we are is immersed in the grace that comes to us in and through baptism.

PROFILE

JEAN MACDONALD

by Sharon Copeman

Introduction

Jean Macdonald, a long-time missionary with the Women's Missionary Society, was a spirited woman. She loved life. She had a passion for learning. She worked hard, led with enthusiasm and bore a positive attitude. Her faith was deep and abiding. She served God in everything she did, notably in thirty years of dedicated witness to the people of Japan, serving as a missionary with the Women's Missionary Society of The United Church of Canada.

Biography

Jean and her twin brother, Allister, were born on April 5, 1917 in Bredenbury, Saskatchewan, the middle pair of six children. Jean was such a tiny baby that the doctor told her parents that they should put her aside, because it was unlikely that she would be there by morning. She proved him wrong! Jean's tiny stature housed an immense spirit. She was strong and determined not only to live but to live in a way that would make a difference for others.

As a nine year-old, Jean heard a visiting missionary from China speak. The missionary's words planted a seed in Jean's young mind and heart, but in the dry dust bowl of the 1930s the seed simply lay dormant, waiting for the opportunity to germinate. Meanwhile Jean worked to help provide for her family. Beginning in 1934, at age seventeen, Jean worked as a bookkeeper for the Rural Municipal Office in Cactus Lake, SK. In 1939 she moved to Ottawa and worked as an auditor for the Canadian government. She was a capable, enthusiastic, energetic and dedicated worker.

Jean's twin brother, Allister, enlisted as a soldier during the Second World War. He contracted tuberculosis and his illness affected her deeply. She wanted to do more with her life and that dormant seed planted in her

nine year-old heart began to sprout and grow. Jean began her studies at the University of Toronto. Allister died in a sanatorium in Hamilton, as she was preparing to write her final exams at The United Church Training School. In 1950 Jean received her MA in Christian Education from Columbia University in New York. This prepared her to begin her missionary work, a goal which was not without detractors. Her father wasn't a fan of Jean's intention to become a missionary—he couldn't understand why a person would give up a good government job. But give it up she did.

Jean's original aspiration was to go to China like the missionary she had met in her youth. However, as she said, "The Communists got there before me." She was commissioned instead in Montreal by the Women's Missionary Society for service in Japan. Beginning with the Methodists, the WMS had been supporting mission work in Japan since the 1860s. All of the Canadian personnel had been forced to leave during the war and the WMS was eager to re-establish a Canadian presence in this post-war period when Japan was in cultural and economic turmoil. To prepare for her work, Jean went to the Graduate School of Far Eastern Studies at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut in 1950-51 to learn Japanese.

Docking in Yokohama on August 3, 1951, Jean continued in her language development and began her work as an evangelistic missionary in Nagano Province. It was to be her life's work and calling to teach English to Japanese children and their mothers/parents, and to offer continuing education to her maturing students. Reading Jean's own writing about her work it is clear that her first love was the people. Her passion was to share the good news of the gospel and God's love, as revealed in the life and stories of Jesus, with the people who were hers to teach and nurture in the Christian faith. The Christian church in Japan was a tiny minority within Japan, and the Biblical stories of those first century Christians seemed to speak deep truth to Jean's hearers as she shared the stories.

On her first furlough in 1955-56, Jean completed her second year of theological studies at New College, University of Edinburgh. She would return to Scotland many times, tracing her roots in a country she loved. As often happened in missionary life, after a year's absence, Jean found herself assigned to a very different type of work as the English Secretary

for the World Council of Christian Education Convention. With Jean's background in Christian Education, her proven ability to learn and the attention to detail honed in bookkeeping, she was a natural for the position. The World Convention on Christian Education was to be held in Tokyo in 1958 and she was asked to work with the preparation committee and be the liaison officer between the committee and overseas delegates. Traveling throughout Japan from north to south, to visit churches, schools, government offices, large corporations and small businesses was all part of her work seeking understanding and support—both physical and financial. It was a huge, complicated and all-consuming responsibility. Jean did it well.

Her report of that event gives evidence of Jean's abilities and the value she placed on service to people in the name of Christ, offered in very practical ways. It speaks of the challenges the small Japanese church faced in hosting this large international meeting, which involved delegates arriving by both ship and plane. The convention began on August 6th, the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Jean described the stirring effects of dedicated Christians from throughout Asia, including 5,500 children who were billeted in Tokyo homes, participating and bringing their unique cultural gifts to a land that they had experienced as an aggressor and invader. While the main part of the convention occurred in Tokyo, deputation teams were sent out to different parts of Japan to share the spirit of the World Convention and speak on different aspects of Christian Education. It was an opportunity for fellowship and for the delegates to see Japan in its "natural setting." Jean wrote: "Many delegates from Asia were able to return home with a different feeling about Japan. Wounds of long standing had a chance to begin to heal and the hospitality of Christians was a never-ending source of admiration and appreciation." As the convention concluded, Jean mused, "We cannot tell how God will use the seed that was sown, but we must now set ourselves the task to nurture it that it may grow and bear fruit. We have been on the mountaintop and now we must go down to the plains as we see more clearly the task which lies before us."

After the World Convention, Jean settled into nine years of evangelistic work in Suwa City and the southern end of Nagano Province. Toward the end of that term, in 1967, she came down with hepatitis and

was ill for some months, continuing convalescence on her furlough. Following the furlough, in 1968 she went to Machida City in the suburbs of Tokyo, again as an evangelistic missionary. There she taught English and held Bible classes for children, mothers, university students and student nurses. In 1973, she became assistant to the Japan Treasurer of the Japan North American Commission on Cooperative Mission (JNAC) while continuing to teach English and Bible Classes.

Of her time in Japan, Jean notes that she saw many changes as the country emerged from the devastating post-war period. These comments from her report home in 1960 provide an insight into life in Japan:

> While in Canada [because of my mother's illness] the superficiality of much of life and the terrific emphasis on materialism shocked me. Young people in high school with so much freedom and money, but without a comparable sense of their responsibility for and to society came as a surprise to me too . . . [In the rural Chino Church] all the older church members have known persecution [during the war], and out of this has come a sense of Christian fellowship and a depth of faith which I have never seen elsewhere.

Just being present among the people of Japan was an important purpose of Jean's missionary work. In 1980 she wrote, "It has been an opportunity for the children [in my church school classes] to get to know a foreigner and not feel they are that much different from themselves."

Jean knew that winding up over thirty years of Japanese living was going to take work. She hoped that her Japanese friends would come and visit. She returned to Canada in 1981 and retired in 1982, but the adjustment to feeling at home back in Canada took many more years. When asked why a prairie girl settled in Vancouver, Jean was quick to respond, "For the climate, and because it was closest to Japan!" Shortly after settling down in Vancouver, Jean met Judy Langdon, initially through the Association of Professional Church Workers, and they became close friends. When Judy took an interest in purchasing a condominium overlooking English Bay, Jean agreed to join her in the venture. They shared a home until Jean's death.

Retirement didn't mean stopping for Jean—she was always busy, and always seemed to have a long list of things to do. Her work as

President and then corresponding secretary with the Vancouver School of Theology Women's Auxiliary drew on her computer and creative skills. She created and sent out beautiful cards, writing her own thoughtful messages. She was also a very active member of her local congregation. In 1983, when the World Council of Churches met at the University of British Columbia, Jean took on a big role with the registration team, enjoying her immersion in the thick of things.

Jean loved to travel: to England and Scotland, to Methodist Conferences at Swanwick, to her father's birthplace of Leicester. She loved to cruise. She loved traveling by car. It was on a car trip to Edmonton with Judy in 2007 that she suffered a mild stroke in Salmon Arm, and further tests revealed she had dementia as well. Not being one to focus on herself, though, Jean refused to end that car trip. Arthritis and weakness meant that by 2009 she required a wheelchair. But it didn't keep her down as she participated in several organized run/walks in her chair.

Family and friends were important to Jean—her birth family, the family she and Judy became, and the many long-standing friendships she developed both in Canada and Japan. In 2000, she received as a gift a booklet, "A woman from the land of the maple leaf", made by her Japanese friends, Mrs. Naoko Hanaoka, Mrs. Nakanori, and Mrs. Sato. In the front leaf of the booklet, Jean noted that "I am now living in Canada, but my heart will always be in Japan." Jean died July 4, 2012 and was remembered with great regard and fondness in a memorial service August 21, 2012.

Significant Contributions

Jean Macdonald participated in global mission at a time when long-standing recipients of colonial missions were beginning to take up leadership in their own contexts and in the world. The delegates who attended the World Convention in Tokyo in 1958 were not colonial mission personnel, but indigenous Christians from around the world, including Tonga, Borneo, Sarawak, South Korea, the Philippines, and Chile. Jean helped the United Church make the transition from a "sending" church to a church that worked in partnership and mutuality in mission. By the time she left Japan, the United Church had rethought and

reshaped its vision for global mission. Jean had gently ridden that wave of change in her years of service.

Jean had a strong and abiding faith in God and God's involvement in her life and her work. When she prepared to leave Japan in 1980, Jean told the gathering of her friends and students, her congregation:

> During all of my years in Japan, regardless of my stumbling and faltering Japanese, God has continued to open new doors. Remembering all that God has provided for me through the years is a very humbling exercise. I have received so much and have been able to do so little. Perhaps just being a living example of how God gives so much to those who have nothing to give in return may help others to accept God's love and in faith, be able to go where He leads. I can assure you that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and He will always provide in abundance all that is needful in his sight.

As I read her closing words to that congregation I believe Jean would want to say that her most significant contribution was to bring the good news of God's sustaining love to a people and a nation being reborn in the aftermath of the horror of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Jean spoke of the privilege of working in "first century" Japanese churches where believers and seekers faced all the problems of those first century Christians two thousand years ago.

This profile draws heavily on a biography written by Caryn Douglas, February 2013 which can be found at www.ducc.ca, *and from the eulogy delivered by Edith Kirkpatrick at Jean's funeral, with additional information from email correspondence with Judy Langdon and from* Missionaries at Work *(1960) and* Missionaries Reporting *(1959), publications of the Women's Missionary Society.*

BOOK REVIEWS

Blessed are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint

Sallie McFague. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. Pp. 215.

Eco-feminist author and Distinguished Theologian in Residence at Vancouver School of Theology, Sallie McFague investigates the connections of religion with economics and ecology. Given the twin planetary crises of climate change and unjust financial distribution, she believes that the religions must be major players if the collapse of civilization is to be avoided in the decades ahead. As a Christian she bases her theological/ethical approach in *kenosis* ("self-emptying," cf. Phil. 2.5-11). What is required, if humanity and life on the planet is to survive, is a "conversion" away from the culture of consumerism to a widespread ethic of restraint. The world's religions (though she is mainly addressing Christians) must present a "radical alternative to the good life for people and planet" (xi).

Alarmed by mainstream climate science, she celebrates the natural world, in which everything is mutually dependent, and living beings live off each other in a symbiosis of restraint, sharing and sacrifice. In view of the present unprecedented challenge, she is doubtful whether humanity will survive, since what is needed is not minor adjustment, but a major paradigm shift of humanity away from words like limitless, expansion, and growth, and toward restraint, sharing, and limits. She knows that human beings do not change easily.

About half the book is dedicated to the stories of three Christian "saints," as exemplars of the kenotic life. John Woolman (1720-1772), American Quaker, grocer and itinerant minister, envisaging a society of universal love, singlemindedly opposed slavery. He lived in radical self-denial, "under the cross," in solidarity with slaves, but also Aboriginals and working people, pointing to the inter-dependence of all creatures: one should love God "in all his visible manifestations," including "all animal sensible creatures" (43). Preaching against slavery, he walked great distances rather than use horses cared for by slave boys, wore only white clothing to oppose the delivery of dyes using slave labour, and rejected every form of luxury, since he believed that luxury always has

some connection with evil and violence.

Simone Weil (1909-1943) was a French, Jewish-born Christian Platonist philosopher. She was a teacher and trade union activist and participant in the French resistance. Though highly educated, she chose a life of manual labour in an auto factory and on farms. She regarded self-emptying love as the centre of all God's acts: creation, incarnation and crucifixion. Valuing friendship as the highest form of love, she believed that in friendship we image the original, perfect friendship of the Trinity. Following Jesus, she insisted, implies a kenosis of ego, and deep personal attention, to God, and to the affliction of others. Her understanding of the self-emptying of God in Christ led to solidarity with undernourished workers in occupied Europe: she refused to eat more than was available to workers. Seriously malnourished, she died of tuberculosis. Though devoted to Christ, she protested Catholic exclusivism, saying "the love of those things outside Christianity keeps me outside of the church."

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) lived and worked in Chicago and New York before, during and after the Great Depression. A journalist, she travelled widely, enjoyed several love affairs, embraced all the joys of bodily life, mothered a child and was politically active for the labour movement. Converted to Catholicism at 30, she became a devotee of St. Francis of Assisi. Founder of the Catholic Worker movement, campaigner on behalf of the working class and the very poor, she embraced voluntary poverty, sharing crowded sleeping quarters in her own hospitality houses. Devoted to prayer and daily mass, Day patterned her life on God's kenosis in the cross of Christ: "We must see the face of Christ in a sick, unwashed, lice-ridden old woman . . . We are not told to love up to the limit of reason, prudence or personal safety, but to love unreasonably, foolishly, profligately, unto the Cross, unto death . . ." (71).

These accounts of McFague's "saints" are awe-inspiring. One may doubt, though, whether such extraordinary individuals are helpful models for ordinary Christian saints, who must raise families, maintain employment, compete in business, and who naturally seek a measure of pleasure and happiness. McFague knows that such uncompromising devotion "is not in the cards for most of us" (106), but believes that we all must move in these directions, practising kenotic self-restraint if our unsustainable consumerism is to be reversed. Her reflections highlight the

need for Christian ethicists to offer guidance on how a kenotic life can be lived practicably in the present time of troubles.

In her final chapter, McFague carries forward her earlier incarnational theology (*The Body of God, 1993*). In her panentheistic vision, God in Christ discloses God's incarnation in the whole cosmos. One may question, though, whether this semi-divinization of the physical universe, and tendency to idealize the natural world, is truly radical. We find here no feminist ethic of legitimate self-care; we find no resurrection, and no eschatological hope. She also wishes to draw upon the theology of the social Trinity, of which she writes eloquently; but it is questionable whether she provides the requisite christology to undergird such a trinitarian doctrine.

This is a richly provocative, challenging volume, and an excellent educational tool.

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Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African
Lamin Sanneh. Foreword by Kelefa Sanneh. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. Pp. 276.

What sets a heart and intellect free from the limits imposed by a childhood fraught with limitations, so that the creature may wander, if not fly, to some greater view of the world and a glimpse of divine wonder? Perhaps something so simple as the autobiography of Helen Keller.

Lamin Sanneh, the highly respected professor of World Christianity at Yale University, presents us with a sketch of his fascinating life's journey. The book braids together the strands of this journey as a child of little status in a little-known Gambian town to the role of a renowned scholar in a major university; from indoctrination into a fearful and rigid form of theological reciprocity, to a joyful Roman Catholic Christianity; from a mind encumbered by the limitations of seeing all life-events as "God's will" whether good or bad, happenstance or imposed, to a sense of grace and gratitude to God.

Whichever strand of his life Sanneh presents, his narrative is not a

direct line. It consists of lyrical layers interspersed with fragments of poetry, Christian scripture and the Qur'an such that one may be lost in the beauty and miss the line of narrative. It is apparent that he is describing his life journey as one from darkness to light. As a young child whose gifts and abilities went unnoticed, evident not least in the fact that he had taught himself to read in English (a suspect occupation in his Muslim home), Sanneh recalls kicking at a pile of trash and uncovering a ruined copy of Keller's autobiography. With his intellect already ignited at age eight, Sanneh devoured the book. Keller's life story sowed within him the seeds of a life much different from the one that had been handed to him by fate, among which was the epiphany that suffering, though part of the world, could be overcome.

Sanneh's starting point in his religious conversion came later in life. As an educated Muslim highly critical of Christianity, Sanneh nevertheless found himself dissatisfied when considering the problem of suffering in the context of the Islamic teachings with which he had been raised. He remains steadfastly respectful of Islam throughout his writing: "Islam had not repelled me; only the gospel attracted me" (103). This dissatisfaction brought him to a place that too few Christians ever understand at all: the cross of the crucified God. Still, in a world where Christianity is constantly vilified for an exaggerated obsession with converting others, Sanneh found it almost impossible to convert in spite of having experienced an obvious "circumcision of the heart." If it were not so sad, his account of being shifted from missionary to missionary in his quest would be almost laughable. Imbued with Keller's life motto, *nil desperandum*, Sanneh persisted until he was privately, almost secretly, baptized by a reluctant Methodist minister.

His intellectual growth is similarly recounted, though in less detail. Most notably, he gives us a brief peek into his high esteem for "World Christianity," a term that Sanneh employs to describe the growth and dynamism of Christianity in a "Third World" context broader than its historical Western manifestations, one that is, to some extent, independent of the denominations from which they arose. That growth and dynamism risks its own foundations of faith in order to seek expression through local vernacular, thus preserving languages that might otherwise disappear (Ch. 13).

From beginning to end, Sanneh continuously defers any credit for his miraculous journey to the many people who supported and encouraged him throughout his life, including the comparative religion professor, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, a notable figure in the missiological history of The United Church of Canada.

This book is probably not a text for academic study, but just as Sanneh was inspired and strengthened by a chance encounter with Helen Keller's own words, the reader may be inspired and strengthened by Sanneh's kindness, generosity and resolve in braiding together the strands of his life for all to see. It is an important book for all who struggle with understanding the Christian journey of faith in a world that takes so much of it for granted.

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***Asylum-Seeking Migration and Church*.**
Susanna Snyder. Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2012. Pp.310.

A global phenomenon of migration, refugee, and asylum seeking has increasingly become one of the most pressing issues of public policy politically, economically, and socially in so-called 'Global North' countries in which asylum seekers look for a safe place, protection of human rights, and support for a better life. Churches in "established communities" (11) vary in their attitudes toward those seeking sanctuary, from supportive, to indifferent, to hostile. This book offers not only an extensive discussion of the experience of asylum-seeking but also transformative and insightful theological reflection on the issue.

Snyder explores the current engagement with asylum seekers of the churches in the United Kingdom, with the aim of improving and encouraging the Christian ministry of hospitality. Situating this research within the field of Practical Theology or Performative Theology, Snyder has sought to make this study both performative in method and liberating

in substance by using a praxis-based methodology, "the action-reflection cycle" (18), which is composed of understanding a current practice, cultural/contextual analysis on the issue, theological reflection, and revised actions for emancipatory goals. She begins by investigating and categorizing churches' current engagements with asylum seekers into four different "encounters" (35): encounters of grassroots service, with the powers, in worship, and in theology. The second part of the book provides an interdisciplinary discussion and analysis on the global dynamics of migration and the response of fear within established populations. A number of factors of the global phenomenon of migration are discussed: "push factors" such as in-country conflict and underlying fault lines, "pull factors" such as personal choice and circumstances, and "intervening factors" from Western countries, transnational kin network and migration industry. The author also discusses the fear of established populations and governments which view those seeking asylum as threats to national identity or security as well as competition for economic and welfare resources.

In the third part, Snyder offers a biblical and theological reflection. She argues that Christian tradition and biblical scriptures are full of stories of the wandering stranger, at risk on the road, and that two responses, the "ecology of fear" (118) and the "ecology of faith" (163) co-exist in the Bible and Christian history. She explores biblical passages from Ezra-Nehemiah which seem to show hostility toward strangers, such as foreign women who married Israelites. It is noted that tensions between returnees and the "peoples of land" over power, land, and religious and ethnic identity must have played a role in the exclusion of strangers. Snyder also suggests that the stories of Ruth and the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30) provide examples of "strangers" who become sources of transformative challenge, growth, and new life. The ecology of faith is also demonstrated by "hosts," such as Boaz and Jesus, who courageously opened themselves to being challenged and taking risk and embracing the "other" as an opportunity for growth and transformation.

Particularly insightful is that the ecology of faith allows the stranger (Ruth, the Syro-Phoenician woman, or asylum seekers) to remain complex, multidimensional, and ambiguous as real human beings, rather

than being over-romanticized as strangers conceived solely in a positive model. For instance, Snyder notes that Ruth is described simultaneously as submissive and self-motivated; and the Syro-Phoenician woman as privileged and marginalized at the same time. By attending to this, the author warns of the danger of relapsing into paternalism (including implicit or explicit expectation of assimilation) or exploitation (including a utilitarian perspective on potential benefits brought about by strangers) in terms of one's approach to immigrants.

Having explored the global dynamics of migration, asylum seekers' experience and the biblical narratives, Snyder presents recommendations for improving churches' activities and efforts towards supporting those seeking asylum. This book is remarkably relevant to the Christian ministry involved in issues around asylum seeking, immigration, and multiculturalism. It provides both a transformative call to living out the ecology of faith and a useful insight for understanding fear of and hostility toward the "other." If present trends continue, the issues it examines will become ever more relevant.

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Waiting for Gospel: An Appeal to the Dispirited Remnants of Protestant "Establishment"

Douglas John Hall. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012. Pp. 195.

In a time of forgetting, the Gospel reveals vision. In a time of recurring fundamentalism, the Gospel unbinds law with grace. In a time of intense individualism, the Gospel proclaims the universality of *compassion*, expressed in Christ: the "suffering" (*passio*) of God "with" (*com*) the world.

Compiled by their author, Douglas John Hall, *Waiting for Gospel* is a compelling and accessible collection of essays addressing the contemporary Church's sense of loss and longing with a profound and agile theological perspective.

In the first part of this collection, *The Mystery and Meaning of Gospel*, Hall contends that the present state of the Church is the result of

two significant moments in its history—its 4th century incorporation within Constantine's Roman empire, and the religious skepticism and institutional decline that took hold in the 19th and 20th centuries. The former imbued the Church with a triumphalism that perverted the Gospel. The latter, while beginning to free the Gospel from privilege, resulted in two different, but equally tragic, responses in the West: hand-wringing preoccupation with the death of the Church, and various fundamentalisms, each asserting possession of certain truth while inevitably referring to an old morality.

Being, or having been, one of society's institutions, the Church's response to the post-institutional anxiety of this age is somewhat compromised. For Hall, only a rediscovered Gospel can speak to deep spiritual longing, and theology is part of our attempt to interpret and communicate the Gospel message for the current situation.

The centrepiece of this collection is its second part, *The Basics of Gospel*. Here, Hall describes a *theologia crucis*, a theology of the Cross. Seeking to avoid the perils of both substitutionary atonement and triumphalist theologies, Hall argues that the Cross ultimately reveals "God [who] suffers with the world" (83). The Cross expresses God's compassion and solidarity with the world, and concern for the world's future.

Revisiting Tillich, Hall describes faith in this understanding of salvation as the antidote to two polar, modern conditions: the forceful assertion of independence, and submission to an imposed set of doctrinal beliefs. As a response to God's grace, faith does not claim finality for itself, but draws the individual out of self-concern into relationship with the community (101). Neither individualism nor triumphalism can follow the Way of the Cross.

For a world skeptical of religion and scornful of fantastical claims, the Cross continues to direct our gaze to the earthly, other-minded Christ, who suffers with the marginalized and oppressed. Quoting Eugene Borowitz, Hall underscores that the Cross invites "secular society to accept significant failure without becoming paralyzed . . . and to reach for forgiveness without mitigating our sense of responsibility . . ." (132).

In the final section, *The Law Within Gospel*, Hall's essays focus on the ethics of a Church reinvigorated by the Gospel call to compassion and

solidarity. He skillfully describes a prophetic faith that clashes with empire, not simply out of righteous indignation, but out of concern for the suffering created (at least in part) by victimization. He offers that ecumenical dialogue is nurtured by hospitality that does not abbreviate, but cherishes, the identity of participants. Following Bonhoeffer, Hall reminds that, as participants in God's world, suffering is not simply our own, but is shared by all Creation.

The last chapter of this collection feels a bit awkwardly added on, but nonetheless is offered as a case study of the modern church struggling to be relevant. In *A Latter-Day Kierkegaardian Attends a Mega-Church,* Hall is critical not only of mega-churches, but of any church where the obsession with individual salvation trumps humility and community; where folksiness mutes complexity; where sentiment replaces theology. All these come under fire.

Yet, in Hall's voice, these are not curmudgeonly protestations, but the cautions of a theologian who believes that the Gospel is more profound than this, who believes that the world longs for more. Not only the dispirited remnant of the Protestant establishment, but all people are "waiting for Gospel"; longing to know the God who suffers with them. At a time when the Spirit is working through an emptying Church, the Gospel offers not certainty, but solidarity, compassion, and hope.

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***Truth and Relevance: Catholic Theology in French Quebec since the Quiet Revolution*.**
Gregory Baum. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014.

This beautifully written and insightful book presents an overview and in-depth study of French-speaking Roman Catholic theology in Quebec since the Quiet Revolution began in 1960. Baum sets the context for this by describing how the Quiet Revolution a) led French Canadians to think of Quebec as their nation and b) triggered a remarkable secularization that required the Roman Catholic Church to re-think its place in Quebec

society. Vatican II encouraged Roman Catholic theologians in Quebec to relate the gospel to their context and church leaders to act prophetically. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the inroads of neo-liberalism made Quebec more individualistic, focused on consumption, and widened the gap between rich and poor. These transitions mean that Roman Catholic theology in Quebec is characterized by both "rupture," a break with its past, and fidelity, the continued attempt to relate the gospel to its context, now that of a culturally unique secularized society.

Following this introduction, Baum devotes chapters to the thought of Fernand Dumont (1927-1997) and Jacques Grand'Maison (b.1931), two important Roman Catholic thinkers whose thought embodies the rupture and fidelity described above. Both embraced the Quiet Revolution. Dumont, an outstanding theoretician, argued that the gospel must be understood through dialogue with other voices in society. The church should relate the gospel critically to its context and bear witness to its meaning through solidarity with movements for peace and justice, and concern for the common good. It is insufficient to seek only an abstract understanding of the gospel's truth. What matters more is its relevance, how it addresses concrete issues in the present. The secularization of Quebec did not shake Dumont's faith in Christianity, but it did lead him to call for a more open church that enables dialogue amongst its members.

Grand'Maison, a more practical theologian, developed a socially critical approach to theology similar to the political theologies being developed then in Germany by Johann Baptist Metz and Dorothee Soelle. He called for an active church that would be a prophetic minority in Quebec, rooted in worship and meditative prayer, addressing social sins through witness and service. Dumont and Grand'Maison embraced the pluralism and minority status of the Roman Catholic Church in the new Quebec, but resisted neo-liberalism's individualism and shallowness.

Chapter 5 begins with the observation that when "Christians are unhappy with their Church, they turn to Jesus to find enlightenment" (88). It surveys a broad range of contemporary francophone theologians and biblical scholars, most of whom are critical of the institutional church and find in Jesus a guide and empowerment to be more fully human. Chapter 6 is devoted to theologians and ethicists who focus on social justice. It begins with an overview of the option for the poor. It examines critical

responses to neo-liberalism and how the struggle for social justice has become intertwined with environmental concern. These chapters impart a sense of the breadth of approaches and positions current in francophone Roman Catholic theology in Quebec.

Chapter 7 studies the development and themes of francophone Roman Catholic feminist theology. As in previous chapters, Baum finds here an emphasis on a panentheistic understanding of God "as a mystery present in human life" (140) that empowers people to love others, recognize and resist evil. Baum notes that feminist theology "has become very rich in Quebec" (138) and helps all believers to better understand the gospel.

The dramatic decline in the number of Roman Catholics attending worship in Quebec led to the Dumont Commission in 1968 and the Larochelle Report in 1992. Chapter 8 examines these, and then some lingering cultural influences that Roman Catholicism continues to have in Quebec. Chapter 9 examines the role of the Magisterium, the teaching office of the church. Key to Baum's analysis here is the recognition that a cultural context always shapes the understanding of doctrine. When a culture changes dramatically, former doctrinal understandings no longer carry conviction with many believers and must be reformulated through dialogue with believers and cultural analysis. Chapter 10 examines how the Roman Catholic Church and francophone theologians in Quebec have responded to religious and cultural pluralism. Baum examines how Quebec bishops have negotiated the tension between dialogue with others and proclaiming the gospel, and between protecting the distinctive culture of Quebec while remaining respectful of cultural differences.

For Anglophone clergy, educated lay people, theological students and theologians in Canada, this book provides an important and illuminating window on a world of theology and church that is next door yet all but invisible to many of us.

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