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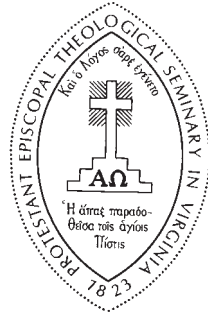


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ON THE COVER

Men and Women in Marriage represents a valuable contribution which richly repays the careful study called for by the archbishops” (see “Why Ignore Wisdom?” p. 8).



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THE LIVING CHURCH

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LIVING CHURCH Partners

We are grateful to the Rt. Rev. and Mrs. D. Bruce MacPherson [p. 33] and to the Diocese of Western Louisiana [p. 35] whose generous support helped make this issue possible.

The Living Church is published by the Living Church Foundation. Our historic mission in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion is to seek and serve the Catholic and evangelical faith of the one Church, to the end of visible Christian unity throughout the world.

GTS Dean-elect Stresses Growth

The man confirmed May 14 to lead The General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church believes the school must educate clergy who can help congregations grow, and that requires teaching what works.

Trustees approved the Rev. Kurt H. Dunkle, former rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Orange Park, Florida, to take the reins as General's dean and president on July 1. The trustees' executive committee nominated Dunkle in February, announcing then that the trustees would vote in May.

Dunkle foresees a larger role for successful church leaders and New York congregations in helping form priests who know how to evangelize — or, as he calls it, to do effective Christian marketing.

"Churches that talk about Jesus and use his name [outside of the liturgy] are not shrinking," Dunkle said. "There has been far too little emphasis on our need to grow numbers of people in our church. ... It's important that we look around in the Episcopal Church and see what is working, analyze it, figure out

how to replicate that, and train people to go out there and do that."

Dunkle's pragmatism reflects his background. Unlike many top seminary administrators, he does not hail from academe. First trained in law, he practiced as a commercial litigation attorney in Jacksonville, Florida. He later attended General. He graduated in 2004, and then served as canon to the ordinary for the Episcopal Diocese of Florida, where he focused on managing clergy and congregational conflict. He touts how he helped Grace Episcopal Church reverse declining membership numbers, increase its ministries, and boost average Sunday attendance to nearly 200.

"I like taking things that need lots of work and growing them," Dunkle said. "I think that's what God is calling me to do at General."

Dunkle, 51, comes to General at a time when Episcopal seminaries are struggling to make ends meet, especially in high-priced settings like lower Manhattan. Though the school has recently retired debts in part by selling real estate, it still runs an



General Theological Seminary photo

The Rev. Kurt H. Dunkle, dean-elect of General Theological Seminary, in the seminary's chapel.

operating deficit in excess of \$1 million a year, Dunkle said.

Dunkle aims to boost revenues through fundraising and working with organizations attracted to the school's location in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. The Desmond Tutu Conference Center, for instance, now hosts a hotel that provides "an enormous source of revenue for General Seminary," he said.

The new dean foresees adding more dimensions to education. Expect, for instance, more visits to campus from church leaders who will impart their experience in congregational growth.

What's more, Dunkle hopes to make third-year seminary education more practical and affordable. He foresees students working closely with some of the 400 Episcopal congregations within commuting distance of General, earning stipends and honing skills that will make them in-demand as priests.

"General Seminary," he said, "will be the primary place where people learn in the Episcopal Church how to grow churches — urban, rural, suburban; all the myriad types of churches that we embrace in our denomination."

*G. Jeffrey MacDonald
TLC Correspondent*

N.C. Priest Chosen in Michigan



Houglund

The Diocese of Western Michigan has elected a priest from the Diocese of North Carolina as its ninth bishop.

The Rev. Wayne M. Houglund, Jr. was one of four nominees. He has been rector of St. Luke's Church in Salisbury since 2005.

The four nominees included two priests of the diocese — the Rev. Jennifer Adams, rector of Grace Church, Holland, and the Rev. William Spaid, canon to the ordinary — and the Rev. Canon Angela Shep-

herd, canon for mission in the Diocese of Maryland.

Numbers shifted among the nominees so much that it took eight ballots, and the withdrawal of Spaid and Shepherd, to settle the election.

In the diocese's election booklet Houglund explained the atypical spelling of his Christian name: "It is my great-great-great grandmother's maiden name and is Welsh for wagon maker — one who makes a way to carry the heavy stuff of life. I like my name and strive to live into it in helping others carry the heavy stuff of life by making a way for God."

\$10 Million Gift to Chicago

With construction on a \$12 million renovation and upgrade of St. James Commons nearing completion, the Diocese of Chicago announced on April 25 that it would make further improvements to the downtown complex, which currently includes St. James Cathedral, the diocesan offices, Episcopal Charities and Community Services and, Episcopal Service Corps.

Funding for the new construction, to be called the Nicholas Center, will come from a \$10 million gift the diocese will share with Living Compass Faith and Wellness. The center, expected to open in 2014, will be home to overnight retreats and programs that foster the health and wellness of Episcopal leaders and the vitality of congregations. The \$10 million gift is from Milwaukee-based investment adviser Ab Nicholas and his wife, Nancy.

The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey D. Lee, Bishop of Chicago, announced the gift and new project at an evening dedication of the Pepper Family Plaza at St. James Commons.

“What we focus on grows,” Bishop Lee said. “We need to focus on the health and wellness of our church leaders and the vitality of our congregations so we can do God’s work of feeding the hungry, advocating for the oppressed, and testifying to the power of the risen Christ in our lives and our world. This generous gift from Ab and Nancy Nicholas and our exciting partnership with the Living Compass Faith and Wellness Initiative makes possible outward and visible signs of the interior heart and soul renovation work that is our job as Christians.”

Living Compass, led by the Rev. Scott Stoner and Holly Hughes Stoner, longtime associates of Mr. Nicholas, provides resources, coaching, and training to help church leaders, families, and teenagers gain balance and wholeness in their lives. It is located in Glendale, Wisconsin, a northwest-

(Continued on next page)

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Diocese of Chicago photo

The renovations at St. James Commons in Chicago include a large labyrinth in Pepper Plaza.

(Continued from previous page)
 ern suburb of Milwaukee.

“Nancy and I are excited to join with and support the exciting energy that is already present in both the Diocese of Chicago and the Living Compass Faith and Wellness Initiative,” said Nicholas, a lifelong Episcopalian and founder of Nicholas Co. Inc., a Milwaukee-based investment advisory firm that manages the Nicholas mutual funds. “In my life in the business world I have seen that effective leadership makes all the difference. I believe it is the same in the church. We are delighted that the Nicholas Center will be a place and a program that will resource the leaders of the church.”

In 2011, the Diocese of Chicago launched a capital campaign to under-

take \$12 million in significant and essential renovations to the diocesan center located at 65 E. Huron St. The campaign has raised \$8 million toward that goal. Of the new \$10 million gift, \$1 million has been allocated to the current campaign goal. The remaining \$9 million will pay for renovations at St. James Commons and ministry with Living Compass that were beyond the scope of the original plan for the renovation.

St. James Commons also includes the Pepper Family Plaza, made possible by a \$3.2 million gift from Richard and Roxelyn Pepper. The \$10 million and \$3.2 million gifts represent the largest two contributions in the history of the 178-year-old diocese.

Steve Waring

Bishop Stanton Retiring in 2014

The Rt. Rev. James M. Stanton, Bishop of Dallas since 1993, announced May 14 that he will retire in a year. “I have come to the place where I believe it is time to relinquish the responsibilities of the Bishop Diocesan, and permit the Diocese to consider and chart its future mission under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,” Bishop Stanton wrote to Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori.

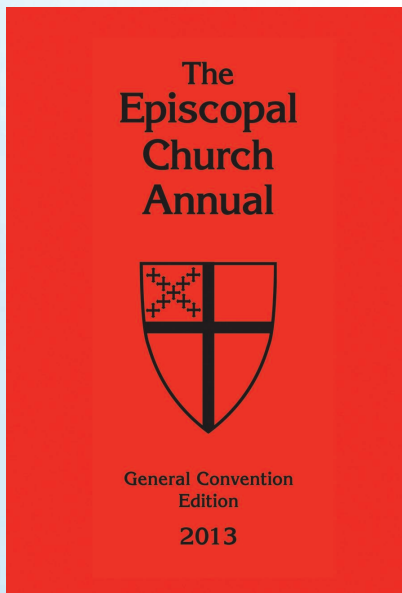
Stanton has not called for the dio-

cese to elect a bishop coadjutor. Instead, he has recommended that the standing committee call his bishop suffragan, the Rt. Rev. Paul E. Lambert, to serve as ecclesiastical authority for an interim period.

“Diocesan leadership will need time to consult and pray together in order to discern what their needs are,” he said in an interview that is posted on the diocesan website. “There is no need to rush.”

More news on page 31

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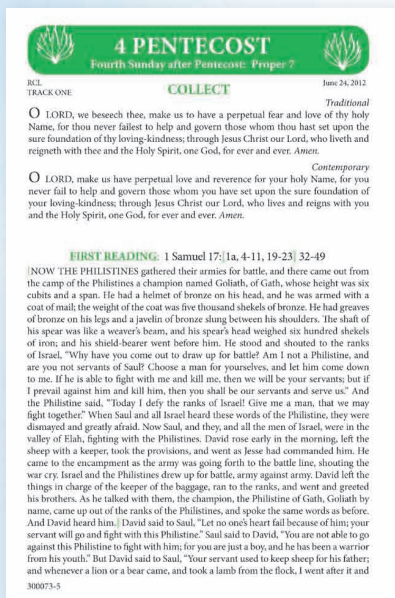
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Why Ignore Wisdom?

The Church
of England on
*Men and Women
in Marriage*

CHRISTIAN
MARRIAGE
First in a Series

By Andrew Goddard

No recent report from the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission has caused as much media confusion and engendered such vehement repudiation and anger as *Men and Women in Marriage*, published April 10. Some erroneously claimed the church was now more flexible on blessing gay partnerships but the press release made clear this was false. It quoted the commission's chairman, the Bishop of Coventry, stating "the document is clear that public forms of blessing belong to marriage alone." The *Church Times*, in a short, dismissive comment, advised that "the kindest thing to do with the new report *Men and Women in Marriage* is to ignore it."

These responses show just how volatile this subject is in the Church of England and how difficult many find it to engage in constructive theological discussion. Despite some weaknesses, the six-part, 50-paragraph document represents a valuable contribution which richly repays the careful study called for by the archbishops. The rapid campaign to sideline and silence it by opponents is an illuminating and worrying sign of where things may be headed in the Church of England.

The Central Claim

A common complaint has been that the document does not reflect the diversity of views among Anglicans on the subject of marriage. This fails to understand its clearly stated purpose. Aware of government plans to redefine marriage in English law to include same-sex couples, last year the commission requested and was authorised to produce a summary of the Church of England's understanding of marriage and in particular its doctrine that marriage is between a man and a woman. Its report complements the Church of England submission to the government consultation which opposed "equal marriage" (to a similar outcry from the usual suspects) but with limited theological rationale.

As the report's first part makes clear, the document is therefore not a contribution to wider debates on human sexuality. That will appear from a group under Sir Joseph Pilling, which will submit its crucial report to the House of Bishops by the end of

this year. Indeed, sensitivity about not encroaching on that report has weakened this one, which simply expounds the definition of marriage found in various Church of England documents. It does so to help Christians in publicly defending marriage and to correct misunderstandings of marriage liable to have harmful consequences. It is especially defending the claim that "the sexual differentiation of men and women is a gift of God" (para 3, citing Gen. 1:27-28). Rather than condemn and dismiss it for not setting out the views of those who reject church teaching, critics need to refute this central claim or show why it is no longer essential to the church's teaching on marriage.

Unwrapping God's Gift

Claiming Christ's authority (Matt. 19), paragraphs 5-12 defend the teaching that "marriage is a gift of God in creation." Its discussion has been widely criticised for failing to explore the diverse and changing forms of marriage in human history and culture. This misses the point and fails to acknowledge that the report refers to these but refuses to reduce mar-

Marriage is "an expression of the human nature which God has willed for us and which we share." Those who reject this argument have so far failed to clarify their alternative.

riage to a developing cultural phenomenon. Rather, marriage is "an expression of the human nature which God has willed for us and which we share" (6).

Those who reject this argument have so far failed to clarify their alternative. Are they rejecting the view that marriage is a divine gift in creation, presumably in favour of a progressive, historicist view in which transcending biology is the next stage in our growing enlightenment and *gnosis*? Or are they offering an alternative and incompatible account of our divinely given human nature?

The report emphasises a number of areas which

(Continued on next page)

Why Ignore Wisdom?

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those seeking to make marriage blind to sexual difference seem to eliminate: “the natural, and especially the biological, terms of human existence” (10), “the distinctive form of nature we humans are given” (11) and how we enhance “the bond between the sexes culturally” (11). It does so because it believes we need “a society in which men and women relate well to each other” and men and women are “equally and differently human” (12). This claim about the significance of sexual difference is an important one, which the report sadly fails to illustrate or fully defend.

Supporting Society

The report highlights the relationship of marriage to wider society in the third section (13-20), quoting Jeremy Taylor that marriage “is only one form of society, but a central one” (13). Whether married or not, all “have a stake in the health of marriage as a factor in the health of society” (15). That health requires the integration of three strands which it highlights as “structural elements” with “a central place” (18): marriage outside the close family circle (exogamy), permanence, and “an exclusive commitment of one man and one woman” (17). Although societies can accept compromises here these “have tended to be of limited scope” (19). This offers a helpful, succinct summary of marriage and its importance as a “flexible and supportive social institution” (16).

Marriage and Children

The particular concern is “the principle of union between one man and one woman” (21) and here the document relates partnership to parenthood. Appealing to the 1930 Lambeth Conference, it claims “we are (potentially or actually) parents as we are wife and husband, not parents on the one hand and husband or wife on the other” (22). This is because, in committing our sex’s procreative power exclusively to one person of the opposite sex, we are opening ourselves to parenthood through the marriage partnership. The question of infertile couples is noted in a comment that this opening to parenthood “may be true even of a couple who ... have no prospect of actually having children” (21). The questions of how, when, and why it may be true for such couples is, however, regrettably left unexplored.

One reason for same-sex marriage being attractive to many is that we tend to emphasise marriage as “a relationship between persons,” but the report insists that we cannot detach this from our biological differentiation. This means “marriage is more personal, not less, as the partners come to it in receptiveness of what only the opposite sex can bring to their own” (26). Here again the document would be strengthened by saying more as to what “only the opposite sex can bring” and by explaining how the claim that “persons are not asexual, but are either male or female” responds to the reality of those who are intersex.

The fifth and longest section (27-40) appeals to the longstanding and respected tradition stemming from Augustine of the “three ends” of marriage: offspring, faithfulness, and sacramental union. It briefly and helpfully expounds each, rejecting narrow interpretations, to show the cooperation of human nature and human freedom. The good of offspring, for example, is about children’s nurture and development, not just biological reproduction, and relies “in different ways on the complementary gifts of men and women” (35).

Pastoral Accommodation

The final section explores the relation of state and church to marriage, arguing that marriages are made not by church or state but by “God’s providence working through the public promises of the couples themselves” (41). The church fulfils its mission by teaching the Gospel both in doctrine (by “proclaiming God’s goodness in creation and redemption”) and by “giving pastoral help to those who seek to engage with the challenges of life responsibly” (45). The report is clear that “the truth about God and his works” is “the basis for concrete practical engagements” (46) but these engagements may require “a degree of flexibility” faced with “hard circumstances or exceptional conditions” (47), what the Christian moral tradition calls “casuistry.”

This leads to another important and misrepresented argument: that pastoral wisdom may make “accommodations for specific conditions” (49). So, while upholding marriage’s permanence, further marriage after a divorce may be allowed as an exceptional act. This leads to the only reference to same-sex partnerships where the report makes no

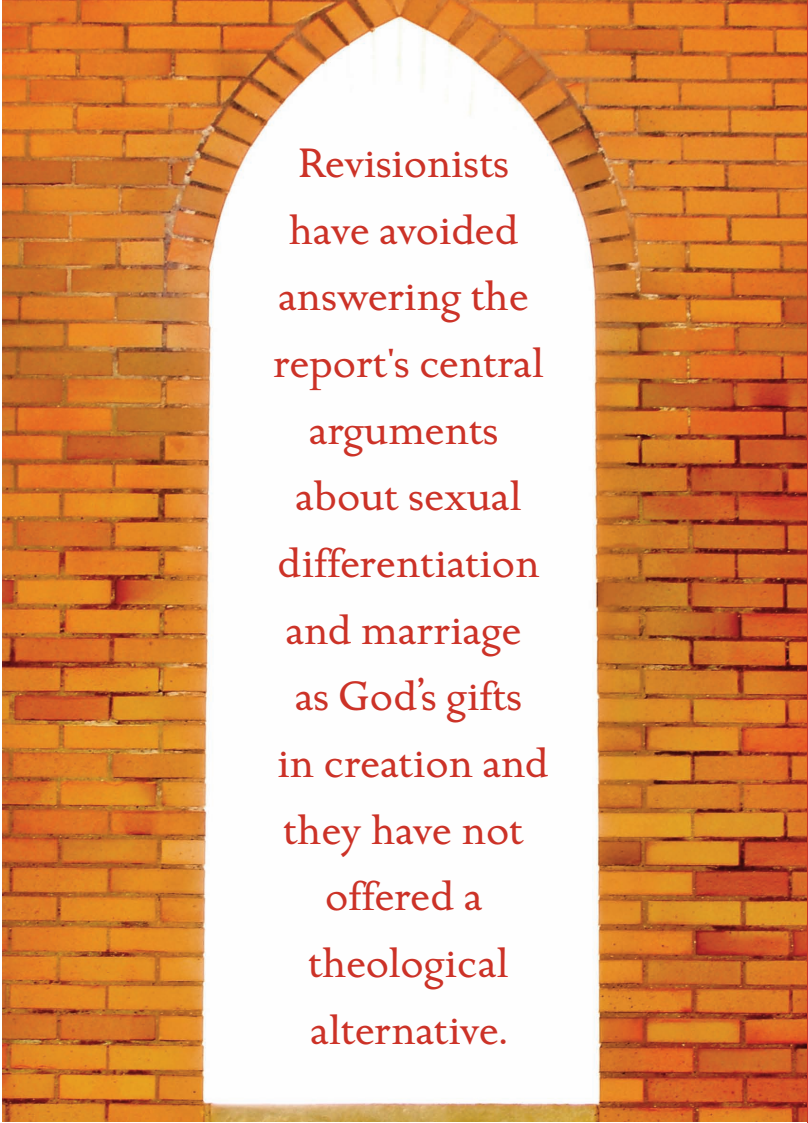
new statement but simply refers to the advice on pastoral practice found in the 2005 statement from the bishops on civil partnerships. That advice about providing pastorally sensitive responses to requests for prayer is cited as an example of “pastoral accommodation.” The test for such accommodations is clearly stated. They do not amount to “redefining marriage from the ground up which [the church] cannot do.” They should “proclaim the form of life given by God’s creative goodness and bring those in difficult positions into closer approximation to it” (49).

The final paragraph has been much criticised but simply stresses the importance of the church upholding its doctrine of marriage as God’s gift in creation and seeking only wise and limited accommodations (rather than redefining marriage). Humans cannot destroy God’s gift but misunderstanding it will distort our behaviour and is liable to produce “frustration and disappointment” and make “the path to fulfilment, in marriage and in other relationships, more difficult to find” (50).

Conclusion

Some criticisms levelled at the document are justified. It is not perfect. It bears marks of relatively hurried production by a group of academic scholars. It has weaknesses arising from the political reality that the drafting group included members sceptical or hostile to arguments that could have strengthened its case. It also faced the challenge of having to appeal to arguments within Christian tradition for sexual differentiation being essential to marriage. This, however, is a view which the tradition has never had to defend before because for two thousand years Christians have understood the witness of creation and Scripture to have been so clear. While criticising it, revisionists have avoided answering its central arguments about sexual differentiation and marriage as God’s gifts in creation and they have not offered a theological alternative.

One weakness not raised by its initial critics is that the document does not explain that those seeking to redefine marriage must offer a better biblical



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and theological account. By seeking to be positive and to avoid debates about homosexuality the report fails to make clear that the first and major hurdle facing those challenging the doctrine that marriage is between one man and one woman is that they are proposing marriage embrace a pattern of sexual relationship Scripture never commends and always identifies as sin.

Despite its weaknesses, the report offers in short compass a clear defence of Anglican and wider Christian teaching. That is why it has been so traduced by those supporting “men and men” and “women and women” in marriage. Supporters of Christian teaching should therefore welcome and build on it to demonstrate the overwhelmingly high ground — in Scripture and tradition — of a vision of “men and women in marriage” and to challenge critics to offer a theological rationale for their alternative and innovative definition. ■

The Rev. Andrew Goddard is associate director of the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics and tutor in Christian ethics at Trinity College, Bristol. A similar version of this piece was published at fulcrum-anglican.org.uk.



Unapologetic Stewardship

By Jeffrey Bullock

Several weeks ago I spent time with an old friend and former parishioner. We laughed about some of the funny things that had happened while serving together, spoke with affection about people now lost to us, and enjoyed our memories; except for one memory, of the man who had once served as the lay leader of the annual stewardship campaign. I asked my former parishioner what he thought had gone wrong.

In many ways, he remembered the particulars of the campaign as going quite well. Meetings were capably scheduled and well-attended, and all deadlines were met. Even the financial goal that the stewardship committee set was achieved. What my friend unhappily remembered was the lay leader's disposition: he treated the church and its work like a business. "I wanted people to see that the church was like any other institution: the more you invested in it, the more was returned to you," the fellow had said. But, my friend countered, "the church just can't be measured by Return on Investment. We have to have another kind of purpose for stewardship."

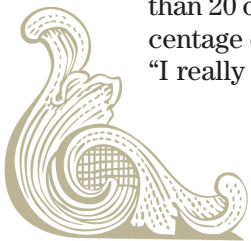
When we set out developing financial support for the church, how shall we go about it? Another friend, a priest in charge of a church, complained that year after year we go out and tell people about our Sunday School and youth programs, our excellent outreach to the needy, and other social ministries. But in truth, the priest said, every member knows that all those programs represent less than 20 or 25 percent of our budget. The largest percentage of the budget pays for utilities and salaries. "I really don't like to talk about money as it is, and

it's even harder when what we're really talking about is this building and my salary," he said. "And worse yet, every member of the church knows we will be back next year with the same kind of budget, asking for just that much more money. It's a bad game and I don't like it!"

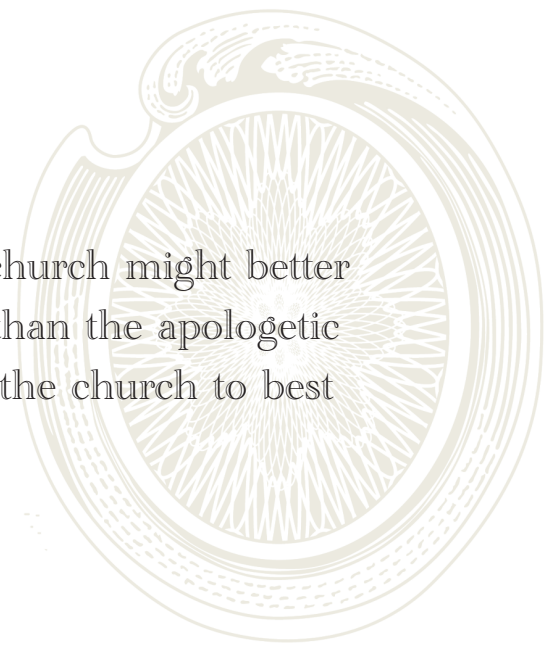
These two people, a layman and a priest, pretty much sum up the contemporary faults of church stewardship. We know the church is not a business, even if we sometimes ruefully describe it that way. The church does not produce widgets and therefore cannot increase production or charge more to achieve a larger budget. And as the priest pointed out, some clergy who do not even like to talk and think about money find themselves in a position that seems terribly self-serving. What's to be done?

Many church leaders have sought in the past decades to reposition stewardship in the life of the church. For example — and this is a worthy commitment — we have sought to have people understand the "stewardship of all creation." With this emphasis, members can reassess their commitments of "time, talent and treasure," both to the church and to the larger world. That's a good thing and this kind of mindfulness can lead to everything from better understanding of our use of the environment to considering how best to apportion our time between family and vocation. But as one wry layman suggested, serving up stewardship in this fashion can "feel like giving a pill to a dog by hiding it in the cheese." We see the big picture, but where's the work of the church? Where's the church's budget?

One successful program involves a Celebration Sunday. Members gather to turn in their pledges and celebrate with a free meal. While this is a laudable and often very successful way to raise a budget,



Is it possible, even likely, that an unapologetic church might better thrive in such an agnostic environment rather than the apologetic church that seeks to justify itself by comparing the church to best business practices or international NGOs?



stewardship programs like these depend on the natural human response to reciprocity — we'll give as we have received — and the social pressure applied by the gathered members. But you'll quickly notice the problem, like that of the “stewardship of all creation”: where is the church? Do we understand the essential point that the church is the center of our lives?

The time has come to practice unapologetic stewardship. That is, we should ask the members of the parish to support the church because the church is the church, and therefore the only institution that works the way it does. We know what the church is *not* when we consider other options. We are neither a food court for Sundays, nor an international NGO, nor the Rotarians meeting on the Sabbath. We are the church and only the church, with all that is embraced by that term. Therefore we as the church alone are responsible for worship, for preserving and energizing our tradition, for the formation of our members as lifelong Christians, raising up generous hearts and minds. No secular institution bears any of those particular and critical responsibilities.

Unapologetic stewardship may seem wrong-headed as the church faces stiff winds of declining numbers. Pundits in the popular press are now discussing the disappearance of “religion” altogether as “nones” increase. But let's stop and reflect. Is it possible, even likely, that an unapologetic church might better thrive in such an agnostic environment rather than the apologetic church that seeks to justify itself by comparing the church to best business practices or international NGOs? Might a church that's unapologetically faithful to its mission fare better?

To be sure, after generations of justifying the

church's stewardship apologetically, changing the message will not be easy and may even be threatening. And yet at the same time, a campaign for unapologetic stewardship might reenergize our churches.

Once I asked a group of gifted and committed lay people: What does the church do that no one else does? They answered Christian formation first and then charity. Excellent, I said, but there's one more thing we do that absolutely no other institution undertakes. What is that? They were stumped. When I gently reminded them that the church alone provides worship, they laughed. “Of course, that's it!” But we can forget, and apologize for the fact, that the church and its staff serve as the principal stewards of our living tradition, its history, and its future.

Some argue that the church should travel lightly through this world. And right they are if our staff and buildings are viewed as ends in themselves. In fact, however, they provide the place and means for worship and prayer, study and reflection, memorializing and marrying, and much else that is critical to the spiritual life of the community, from AA to exhibits, fairs, feeding, and fellowship. We must not apologize for the church that provides this, but proclaim her!

The season for stewardship may be months away for some churches, which makes this a critical time to reflect on our purpose. We are here for ministry, for worship and formation, and for training generous Christians. In claiming — reclaiming and proclaiming — that ministry, we may revitalize our own faith, as well. ■

The Rev. Jeffrey Bullock is canon theologian in the Diocese of Arizona.





Above: Muslim girls from Houston's Third Ward at Jerusalem Peacebuilders Camp at Camp Allen in Texas.

Left: Peacebuilder campers in Vermont.

Photos courtesy of Jerusalem Peacebuilders

Camp Teen Accords

Praying together in nature points to common ground

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald

In Middle East peacemaking, grassroots activists have looked past religious differences and sought common ground elsewhere, such as in parents' desire to provide a healthy, secure future for their children. But a different model is now gaining momentum as it builds on a bold premise: religious particularities are an asset, not a liability, and deserve serious attention in peacemaking.

That model informs Jerusalem Peacebuilders, a growing network of camps for Israeli and American teens. What began two years ago in Brattleboro, Vermont, will spread this summer to Camp Allen Conference and Retreat Center in Navasota, Texas. Teens at both sites are encouraged to be as faithful as they wish to their religions, and to learn what their traditions have teach about peaceful coexistence.

"If you don't understand the other

person's religion then you don't understand what's at the heart of his or her being," said the Rev. Nicholas Porter, rector of Trinity Church in Southport, Connecticut, who founded and directs Jerusalem Peacebuilders with his wife, Dorothy.

Jerusalem Peacebuilders is affiliated with Kids4Peace International (K4P), a Seattle-based sponsor of year-round camps in Jerusalem and the United States. So popular is K4P programming that three Jerusalem families apply for every one spot available, according to the Rev. Joshua Thomas, K4P's executive director.

"We're in a time of great growth," Thomas said. "We're continuing to expand, to add more first-year camps for 12-year-olds to enter the program, and also more follow-up experiences all the way across the adolescent years."

Participation in K4P has climbed

from an annual average of 50 teens in the past decade to 200 in 2012. By 2018, the group plans to have 1,200 enrolled participants in yearly activities, Thomas said.

The allure needs explaining. Jerusalem-area families do not see these K4P programs as tickets to carefree fun, privilege, or prestige. On the contrary, involvement often comes with social costs. It means taking part in Jerusalem gatherings that defy insular social norms.

One Jewish woman in Israel told Porter: "We all pay a price to participate in this program. Our families and our friends all think we're freaks. We don't get invited to the same parties anymore. Our neighbors aren't friendly. Some of us don't get the job promotions that we wanted. Our kids don't always get to make the friends they wanted because people think they're like traitors. But by adding the stages on to

the camp system, you give us hope for a different life.”

For kids growing up amid Jerusalem's tensions, these programs can be a staple of life for as many as four years. Twice a month during the school year, K4P brings the same group of kids together across religious and ethnic lines for activities and dialogue in Jerusalem. Then in the summer, some will go a step further by traveling (sometimes with financial assistance) to the United States for a camp experience in a natural setting far removed from the social and political pressures of home.

Until this year, camps were offered for only the youngest and oldest kids in the program. At age 12 or so, kids attend camps in Ashville, Atlanta, Boston, or Burlington (Vermont). Those who show greatest promise and stay with the Jerusalem programming through age 15 are invited to attend Porter's Leadership Camp at Acer Farm in Brattleboro.

Now gaps are being filled in to allow for annual U.S. camp experiences. As many as 48 of those who completed a first-year camp last year will progress to Camp Allen this year when they're 13. In 2014, Camp Allen will start accommodating 14-year-olds.

By the time they're 15 and ready for Leadership Camp at Acer Farm, participants will have had three prior years of camp experiences — perhaps enough to form lifelong habits of mind and heart, organizers hope.

Teens who've done the Leadership Camp say they've learned to question some conventional wisdom. That was the case for Jiries Elias, a Palestinian Christian who attended the camp last year.

“I thought that there was no reason to fight and that everything can work peacefully without wars or bombings,” Elias said. “It created a very strong relationship between me and the others.”

Expanded camping reinforces the programs' bold approach of emphasizing faith. Encouraging teens to un-

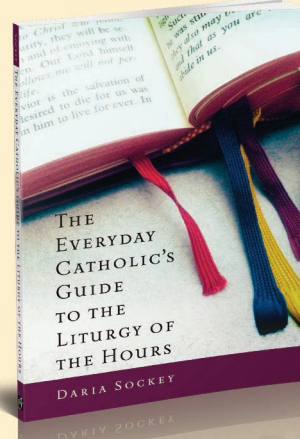
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(Continued from previous page)

derstand and own their religious identities equips them, organizers say, for the hard work of understanding and respecting people they have often been taught to fear.

Even before the first day of camp begins, respect for faith is a focus. For the next two years, enrollments at first-year K4P summer programs will be scaled back to reflect the inability of many Muslims to attend since the holy month of Ramadan falls during summer.

When Leadership Camp convenes at Acer Farm, participants are encouraged to be as observant as they wish. They pray together three times a day, observing their respective traditions. They make a point to listen to one another's prayers. No one is expected to utter the prayers of someone else's tradition.

Meanwhile, as the Leadership Camp prepares to grow from 12 to 24 campers in 2014, worship spaces are being built for each of the three Abrahamic traditions. A Russian Orthodox-style chapel, built last summer, provides space for Christian worship. But it has also become a meditative sanctuary where Muslim and Jewish campers go on their own, sometimes after dinner, for private prayer and listening for God.

"Jerusalem Peacebuilders puts into practice the assertion that 'three families can become one' for the purposes of peacebuilding and living together in peace," said Victoria Hood, an Acer Farm donor and volunteer who uses art and poetry to help campers explore what peace looks like.

On one level, practicing faith overtly lets teens be true to themselves, Porter said, before engaging in difficult conversations. Discussions can stir up strong feelings about whose cultures have killed innocents or told lies. They might rehearse what they've heard about Jews or Palestinians, Muslims or Israelis. Emotions can be inflamed, but knowing one's faith and religious

identity are respected can help keep everyone at the table.

"We've had conversations about martyrdom and sacrifice, as well as what their religions teach about peace and violence," Thomas said. "We don't ask anyone to leave any parts of their faiths, traditions, or beliefs behind, but rather to bring them and learn from each other in a respectful way."

On another level, being prayerful and open about faith helps participants access all that their respective traditions have to offer for peace-making. Christians will explain how practicing forgiveness is central to their understanding of what it means to be faithful. Articulating that principle can sometimes help these young Christians apply it in relationships new and old.

"Each one of these Abrahamic faiths has as its prime imperative a moral life and love," said Porter. "That's the ground we work on. How do we do that? Very simply, the whole camp is run like a family. We give these kids the chance to operate like one family: God's family."

The idea for a peacemaking camp in Brattleboro took root in Porter's mind after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Having served as curate at St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem a decade earlier, he felt 9/11 brought new urgency to the timeless call for Holy Land peacemaking.

He acted on his idea after his mother died in 2009. Pondering her mortality and her son's hopeful vision, a friend urged him to get on with his long-percolating dream to dedicate some of his family's 200 acres in Vermont for the cause of Holy Land peace. He and Dorothy resolved to take the plunge and, 10 years after 9/11, the camp opened its doors.

For Jerusalem Peacebuilders, success involves nurturing promise, wherever it might be hiding out. Some kids come from privileged backgrounds, others from disadvan-

tage. All have a role to play in peace-making, Porter said.

Past generations of peacemakers used to think children from influential families have the best chance to make a difference when they inherit power, but no more. Such kids also have a stake in preserving the status quo, Porter said, and therefore often are not likely to push for meaningful social change.

Kids who do best in peacebuilding tend to be those with capacities to hear and seriously consider new narratives about themselves and about others, Porter said. In this process, each participant's respective faith tradition has vast repositories of guidance to offer. It might consist of Muslim teachings on hospitality for strangers, or Jewish traditions of respecting immigrants and the needy. The program aims to make the most of insights from their religious backgrounds by encouraging young people to identify and claim them.

"We try to help Palestinians and Israelis reclaim attitudes and behaviors about crossing boundaries," Porter said. "We help them take risks that they can't take on their own." This happens, he adds for example, as they consider how their populations used to be less ethnically concentrated than they are today.

The hope behind the camp is ultimately to influence far more than a few dozen young people each year. Scale matters, and the Leadership Camp at Acer Farm only begins to address the challenge. Yet because the model is replicable, there's hope it can help break cycles of violence in the region.

"We don't need one or two of these camps," Porter said. "We need 2,000 of these."

G. Jeffrey MacDonald, a TLC correspondent, is the author of Thieves in the Temple: The Christian Church and the Selling of the American Soul (Basic, 2010).

Emerging Church or Church: Emerging?

Review by Andrew Petiprin

John F. Alexander, who died in 2001, was ahead of his time in his ecclesial thinking. Just as the mainline denominations (and the whole notion of *going to church*) were finally losing their grip on decades of institutional perpetuation, Alexander was pleading with fellow Christians who had tried every flavor of Protestantism: Help figure out what it means to *be church* now.

Twelve years after his death, *Being Church*, Alexander's series of meditations on Christian community, has finally appeared; but his influence had been felt for years by the New Monastic and Emerging Church movements. In the foreword to *Being Church*, Emerging Church guru Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove describes Alexander's work as a "manifesto of hope" — the reflections of a former fundamentalist turned liberal activist who died rethinking everything except his desire to belong to Jesus Christ the Lord. *Being Church*, although far from perfect, is an intermittently inspiring vision of what that might look like.

To Alexander, who was a part of San Francisco's Church of the Sojourners, American Protestant churches are inherently selfish and anti-gospel. They are transient affinity groups whose roots lie in the "extra-biblical and rotten" soil of Rousseau and Jefferson instead of ancient Israel and the people of Christ (p. 44). Church is a weekly visit to an often distant building where we spend time among others like us.

In place of sacrifice and obedience we value as sacrosanct what Alexander calls FIRE (Freedom, Individualism, Rights, and Equality). None of this is particularly new; but what is different in Alexander's writings is the weight on his shoulders, the burden of the cross which he puts on his readers, about the need to do something to break out of the present re-

ality. Why, he asks, do we so willingly punch a clock for work and yet treat church as a spare time activity? How can members of a Christian community so easily move to another city for a job, forsaking their commitments to their brothers and sisters in Christ?

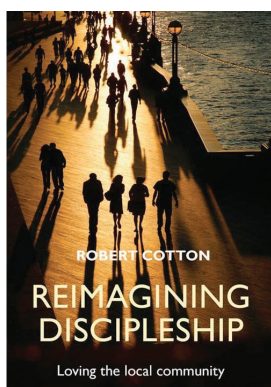
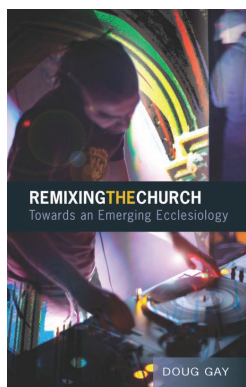
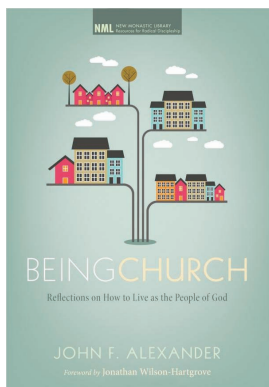
To a culture that thinks of church as a place (and one which could just as easily be some *other* place) Alexander writes: "We have to turn church into the crossroad of life ... the way of the cross ... a full-time occupation" (p. 30). Church should be nothing less than "lying awake at night trying to figure out how to help your brothers and sisters ... grow into 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'" (p. 79). If jobs get in the way, quit them and find the bare minimum employment to allow time and energy for your Christian assembly.

Sunday morning mainline Protestantism, home churches, the megachurch's small-group movement, and parachurch organizations have all, to varying degrees, missed the mark. Only something like life in intentional Christian community (still with flaws) captures the potential for truly being church. Alexander muses admiringly both about Anabaptist communities and monastics.

Despite the latter, he places no emphasis whatsoever on sacraments — which, however, his disciples have happily discovered and appropriated. He abhors clericalism and puts great faith in the extremely dubious claims that "in the early church spontaneous groups of Christians made their decisions informally" (p. 238) and that forms of Christian community must be flexible precisely because "they aren't given by God" (p. 151).

Thus he brazenly re-evaluates Christian history and concludes that the Reformation did not go nearly far

(Continued on next page)



Being Church

Reflections on How to Live as the People of God

By **John F. Alexander**. Cascade. Pp. 266. \$25

Remixing the Church

Towards an Emerging Ecclesiology

By **Doug Gay**. SCM. Pp. 224. \$30

Reimagining Discipleship

Loving the Local Community

By **Robert Cotton**. SPCK. Pp. 160. \$29.95

BOOKS

(Continued from previous page)

enough; and yet he almost painfully acknowledges the one remaining avenue to authentic Christian community that he has not tried: the Catholic faith. He concludes in one unguarded moment that undoes much of what he says elsewhere: “The logic of what I’m saying is to become Catholic” (p. 132).

We are left to wonder whether, had he lived longer, Alexander might have made the leap to the intimate, glorious ideal of orthodoxy. For a sacramental Christian reading *Being Church*, there is a strange absence not only of the holy mysteries but of worship in general. Indeed, this deficiency feels like the missing piece to Alexander’s puzzle throughout.

If Alexander’s book imagines a total restart — no buildings, no clergy hierarchy, no denominations — two recent books from the United Kingdom invite us to rethink being church from within the establishment. *Remixing the Church* by Church of Scotland

Parish churches no longer count large numbers of worshipers on their electoral rolls, but they exist to be the church for the community outside.

minister Doug Gay and *Reimagining Discipleship* by Anglican priest Robert Cotton pick up where Alexander leaves off.

Gay’s book lays out a clear five-point strategy for shaping his own part of the body of Christ for the future: auditing, retrieving, unbundling, supplementing, and remixing. Ultimately he expresses hope that his own Reformed tradition could submit itself to a facelift that is part smoky monastery and part Apple Store.

His conclusion is to strive for a more sacramental way of being church while not insisting on it as an absolutely necessary part of discipleship. He says of other bodies (among them the Roman Catholic Church): “I accept and affirm their ecclesiality” (p. 112). He prays they will do the same for him as a part

of what he calls “the Church: Emerging” (his preferred term to Emerging or Emergent Church), which will necessarily be for some a way station towards “the gravitational pull of an episcopal communion” (p. 113). For others it will be a comfortable home in which to wander with integrity permanently. The former seems to be proving true; the latter is uncertain.

Robert Cotton’s work is more pragmatic, with some fine ideas that lead unhappily to a familiar liberal Protestant destination. In some ways Cotton offers a valuable addition to Alexander’s incomplete vision: Namely, he reminds us that for centuries parish churches in England have been at the crossroads of the lives of people deeply connected in community. Buildings and institutions have long mattered for good reason. Cotton encourages today’s parish church to be quasi-monastic in its offering of the work of prayer on behalf of each neighborhood or village.

Parish churches no longer count large numbers of worshipers on their electoral rolls, but they exist to be the church for the community outside. He modifies the notion of “belonging without believing” to something more like “belonging without attending” (p. 51), a vision that could not be more different from Alexander’s.

Cotton is interested in churches that sustain themselves for the sake of community well-being, rather than ones that worry much (if at all) about bringing people to the font and the rail. His way of reimagining discipleship is therefore to propose a Christian vocation for far fewer people than the Great Commission might suggest. This is no problem for Cotton, since he tells us “we must keep confidence in a theology that does not limit salvation to those inside the Church” (p. 12).

Among these three books Alexander’s stands out as the most valuable by far, and he offers a final word of humility about what lies ahead: “God has done all that matters; we can relax” (p. 256). Indeed. And for some of us, works like these are reminders that we are not called to reinvent the wheel. What (re-)emerges from our explorations is the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, whose immutable creeds, sacraments, and three-fold order of ordained ministry bind together local communities the world over — communities striving, at least ideally, to be church in this and every age. ■

The Rev. Andrew Petiprin is rector of St. Mary of the Angels Church in Orlando, Florida.

From Strength to Strength?

Review by David Hart Nelson

The *Heart of a Pastor: A Life of Edmond Lee Browning* by Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook is a thorough, workmanlike, albeit reverential biography. Kujawa-Holbrook does an excellent job of setting out the facts of Edmond Browning's life. For those seeking a narrative of Browning's life, a more meticulous source is hard to imagine. The thoroughness and inclusiveness of her research are impressive. In particular, Kujawa-Holbrook's knack of seasoning her narrative with data from interviews with people who encountered Browning at all stages of his life endows her biography with verisimilitude and color.

The stories of Browning's youth in Corpus Christi, Texas, his undergraduate and seminary training in Sewanee, Tennessee, his marriage to his indispensable helpmeet Patti, and the early days of his ministry back home in Texas are well told. The circuitous path of service that led Browning and his family from Texas to Okinawa to West Germany to New York to Hawaii, and then ultimately to 815 Second Avenue as presiding bishop, are fully detailed as well.

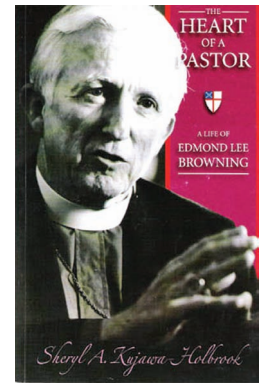
Kujawa-Holbrook has written a celebration of a faithful and event-filled life. What she has not written is a critical biography. Examples of objective evaluation are few. Hence, the *Life* is far from a balanced assessment of Browning the man, priest, and bishop. *The Heart of a Pastor* is an authorized biography, after all, so perhaps Kujawa-Holbrook's resolutely positive tone toward her subject is to be expected. Certainly, Kujawa-Holbrook describes the conflicts and controversies that arose during Browning's tenure; however, she is rarely critical of the manner in which the presiding bishop responded to them. *The Heart of a Pastor* is by no means a portrait in the Cromwellian style. The "warts and all" aspects of Browning's life are almost entirely missing, and accurate historical analysis requires them. Kujawa-Holbrook's approach has, therefore, created a historical re-enactment, but little more.

As an example, the nadir of Browning's tenure as presiding bishop was surely the discovery that Ellen F. Cooke, the Episcopal Church's treasurer, had embezzled millions of dollars from the church. Mrs. Cooke was seemingly aided in her misdeeds by a general lack of oversight. Browning failed to deal with Cooke's bullying, uncollaborative manner head-on by confronting her firmly and directly about the stewardship of her office. Yet while granting that the Cooke affair was indeed a low point, Kujawa-Holbrook manages to turn

this calamity to Browning's advantage, concluding that the presiding bishop's actions in the wake of the discovery of Cooke's misdeeds "provided some of his finest moments" (p. 199). The result is that this significant failure of Browning's tenure as presiding bishop is immediately transmuted into a celebration of his leadership.

Kujawa-Holbrook writes from a distinctly progressive point of view that mirrors that of her subject. In the wake of Browning's own progressivism, his tenure as presiding bishop was marked by numerous controversies. Kujawa-Holbrook, however, takes Browning's side in nearly all of them. Even his critics grant that Browning is a good man with a big heart. But is he as saintly as Kujawa-Holbrook portrays him? Was his tenure as presiding bishop as effective and successful as the biography suggests? The answers to those questions will have to await a more objective treatment of Browning's life and career. ■

David Hart Nelson is a lawyer in Charlottesville, Virginia.



The Heart of a Pastor
A Life of Edmond Lee Browning
By **Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook**.
Forward Movement. Pp. 448. \$19.95

Walk in Light

Review by Calvin Lane

“Whoever follows me does not walk in darkness.” These words begin a text published more often and likely read more widely than any other text save for the Bible itself. Appearing in more than 6,000 editions by the year 1900, *The Imitation of Christ* has been an unsurpassed source for comfort, renewal, and practical guidance for the bracing enterprise of Christian life. Moreover, it has been appreciated by Roman Catholic and Protestant readers alike, as well as by non-Christians.

Father John-Julian, OJN, has thus provided a wonderful resource in this volume in the Paraclete Giants series. The book is also a timely contribution, as contemporary Christians navigating a noisy culture oversaturated with media will benefit from the practical mysticism — that act of walking beyond the darkness

(Continued on page 26)

Sestina for James, at his Baptism

I did not ask, my son, of your theology,
When at the feast I brought you to the font.
The only thing at hand was that dichotomy
Between the works of darkness and the Trinity,
Amidst the soaring verses of the choir
Who sang the love of him to whom our loves aspire.

That love, whose form the stars aspire
To show, in subtle ways with natural theology
Beyond the arts of polyphonic choir,
Was there before the matter of the font
Within the eternal rest, ecstatic Trinity
Which holds the whole's existence in dichotomy

Above the void, the soul's dichotomy
Of nought and ought—analogy aspires
To show the reason of the Trinity
Within the bounds of man's undead theology
As if he *were* before he knew the font.
Creation's not the celebrant, but sits in choir.

And yet, we move within the sacred choir
Of nothing's great ascent in that dichotomy
Between the *felix culpa* and the font,
Upon that cosmic stage where we aspire
To be the beings wrought in our theology,
And fall again to grace, from grace in Trinity.

O grace, whose grammar only Trinity
Of persons knows, and without which the choir
Would sing their dissonant theology
Alone to self and its dichotomies
That over all things and through all aspire
To conquer by inclusion what the font

Should cure: such fruit of nothing bring we to the font
That it may die. A fruit of love, o Trinity,
Prepare, that in my hands should land the Spirit's house:
The latest wing of that celestial human choir
Whose voices raise the tone of our dichotomy
To render thanks for this our whole theogony.

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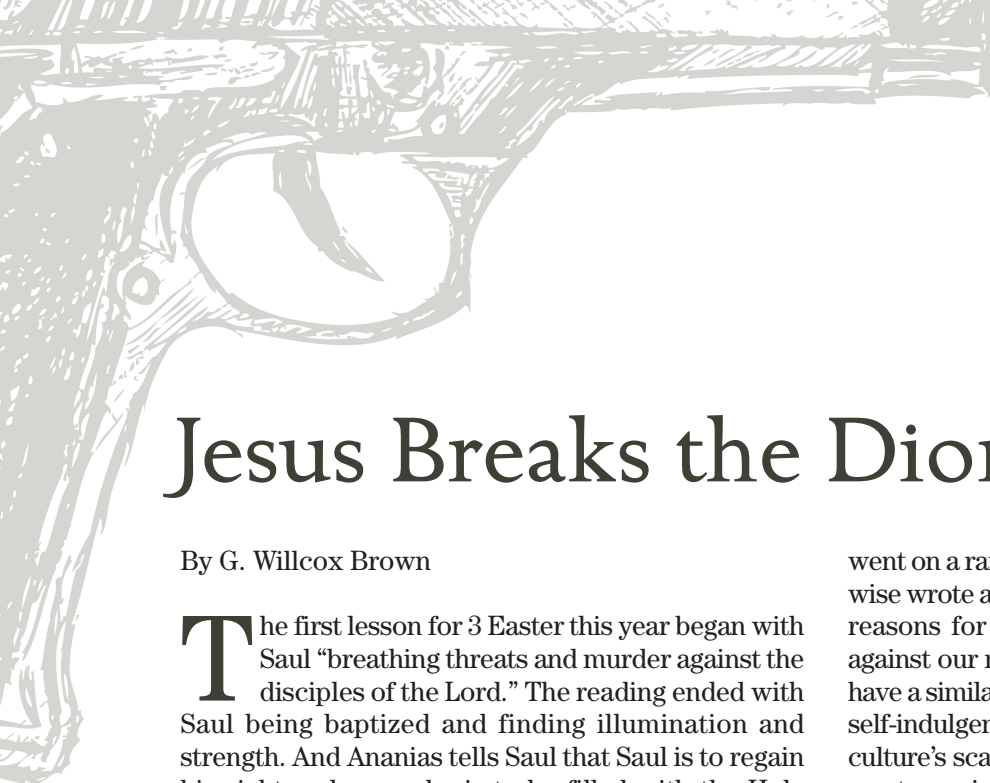
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Jesus Breaks the Dionysian Cycle

By G. Willcox Brown

The first lesson for 3 Easter this year began with Saul “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” The reading ended with Saul being baptized and finding illumination and strength. And Ananias tells Saul that Saul is to regain his sight and more: he is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and with strength.

Here we see in the beginning a man filled with threats and murder, seeking to bind the disciples of Jesus. In the beginning we see Saul under the dominion of Satan, whom Jesus says “was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). Let us remember that the Hebrew word for *Satan* means accuser. At the end of the reading we see Saul filled with the Holy Spirit, the giver of life. The Greek word for *Holy Spirit* (*parakletos*) means Advocate. In the beginning Saul is under the dominion of the Accuser, who brings murder; and in the end he is filled with the divine Advocate, who brings life.

We are in the midst of a national discourse on gun control, the catalyst for which was yet another horrendous massacre — this time, appallingly, at an elementary school in Sandy Hook, Connecticut. But of course before Sandy Hook, it was in Aurora, Colorado, and Virginia Tech University, and Columbine High School. These things seem incomprehensible to us as a society, perhaps because of the undiluted nature of the evil perpetrated but also, and more significantly, because our society has become disconnected from the gospel and deaf to its message.

In many of these mass murders, the murderers leave behind rambling manifestos, attempting to articulate a justification, or at least an explanation of their actions. This was famously the case with Seung-Hui Cho, the perpetrator of the Virginia Tech massacre; with Christopher Dorner, the rogue Los Angeles police officer who

went on a rampage in February. Osama Bin Laden likewise wrote a “letter to America” in 2002, explaining the reasons for the violence al-Qaida was perpetrating against our nation. The letters written by these killers have a similar theme. Most of them decry the libidinous self-indulgence and hypocrisy of our culture, and our culture’s scapegoating and neglect of the weakest and most marginal members of our society.

Reading these letters, a Christian with a modicum of seriousness about the faith is struck by the truth of much of their contents. Our culture *is* libidinous and self-indulgent; it *is* dominated by pleasure-seeking to the exclusion of much else. And we *do* neglect

and scapegoat the weak and those on the margins — the loners and weirdoes, the people who don’t fit in — those who, for one reason or another, fail to exemplify or celebrate the dominant values of the larger group. I well remember these people at my college. They didn’t get bids from fraternities; they weren’t invited to parties; they were sometimes openly ridiculed; they often sat alone in the dining hall. After awhile, usually after a year or so, they would give up trying to fit in, and their desire to be accepted would be displaced by a more or less intense animus for the values of the community from which they were excluded, and for the community itself.

American culture at large is increasingly Dionysian. We have come to understand a healthy society to be one in which the pleasure-seeking of its members is formally ordered and facilitated. It has become a cliché to say “It’s a free country” as a retort to those who question instances of one’s pleasure-seeking. As a society we have embraced the notion that no one should interfere with the gratification of our passions. As often as not, this translates into our thinking that no one, not even the most helpless, should interfere with what our founding documents called “the pursuit of happiness.” No one must interfere: not the uncool, the unrich, the non-native, and



FROM THE PULPIT



Bbjeter/Creative Commons photo

A makeshift memorial near Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

especially not the unborn.

There is an irony in the manifestos often left behind by these mass murderers. The irony is that precisely because they are in one way or another excluded from our culture, they are able in a sense to see it from the outside, in a clearer light perhaps than we are able to see it from within. It should go without saying that this does not absolve them of their actions — who can forgive sins but God alone? — and of course it is also not to say that their victims are individually hedonists. The rampaging of the perpetrators tends to be pretty indiscriminate. They are perpetrators of horrendous and heartbreaking evil. Nonetheless, as a culture, and to an indeterminate degree, we share in their guilt. There is blood on our society's hands, and on ours as individual members of it — because we hold up, or at best we tolerate — Dionysian values, and we exclude from our company those who are unable or unwilling to join the festival.

The 19th-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was a proponent of Dionysian values; he advocated giving free reign to passion. Indeed, shortly before his death, he went insane and began signing his letters “Yours sincerely, Dionysus.” Nietzsche saw Christianity as a kind of slavery that stifles passion and prohibits people from flourishing, by constraining their freedom to do what they want to do. Nietzsche seemed to feel this personally, and he advocated a metaphorical devotion to the pagan god Dionysus, whose followers in antiquity would worship at wild parties, with drunkenness, ecstatic dancing, and lewd sexuality. The festivals would end with the ritual slaughter of a sacrificial victim, often an an-

imal, but in the myths also sometimes a human, and indeed sometimes (it was said) Dionysus himself. The god would then be reborn endlessly to perpetuate his cult of passion and ecstasy.

As with much of pagan mythology, there is a keen insight about human nature in the story of the cult of Dionysus, an insight that Nietzsche understood and embraced, but which we as a culture do not seem to see. The insight is this: the lust for violence is an integral component of the unbridled reign of

human passion. Violence and murder are inevitably entailed by servitude to our appetitive desires.

We can see this in the domestic abuse that often accompanies chemical addiction; we can see it perhaps on a geopolitical level in our nation's addiction to oil and the wars we think we must fight over it; and we can see it in an excruciating way in the mass murders perpetrated seemingly more and more frequently. The government of the passions sustains itself by violence and murder. And societies or communities that construe their self-purpose as guarding liberty in the base sense of protecting an individual's right to gratify his lusts — these kinds of societies are doomed to contend with murder. The god demands a sacrifice. And indeed in America: as our social ethics have become increasingly libertine, so have we seen a dramatic increase in these horrendous murders, and in violent crime generally.

So what is the answer? It may not surprise you to hear me say it: the answer is Jesus, and him crucified. There are striking similarities between the story of Dionysus and the story of Jesus. Both are gods who are murdered and who return to life so that their followers can flourish. But there are striking dissimilarities too. For one thing, the myth of Dionysus was just that: a myth. Even pagans in antiquity understood this. Pagan myths were stories that explained the human condition — they were really allegories about invisible and impersonal gods, stories the efficacy of which was found through their ritual enactment.

In Christianity, on the other hand, while we do find
(Continued on next page)



FROM THE PULPIT

Jesus Breaks the Dionysian Cycle

(Continued from previous page)

similar typologies, similar allegories, we are not dealing with a *mere* allegory. Our God is a real, historical person, who had flesh and blood — and this is a fact emphasized in the cycle of gospel readings after Easter. The founding myth of Christianity *really happened*. Whereas the pagan stories found their power through ritual reenactment, *our* ritual reenactments have power in (and only in) the historical veracity of the myth that really happened. For us, the dynamic is reversed: the myth of Dionysus became real through its ritual; our ritual is real because of the reality of the myth.

Most significantly, however, our God is not a god who enables the gratification of our lusts through an endless cycle of being murdered and reborn. Rather Christ dies once for all, to bring about our flourishing by delivering us from slavery to our lusts. And we return again and again to our ritual — the sacraments — to *access* that once-for-all gift of deliverance and life, the gift which Jesus himself *is*, not merely on some distant and intangible Olympus, but in our world, on a hill outside Jerusalem, in the most holy sacrament of the altar, and in the hearts of all his faithful people.

The night before Jesus died he said, “Now is the judgment of this world.” Because the work he was about to do was undertaken precisely to end, once for all, the cycle of human bondage to carnal desire with its foundation in vengeance and murder and the ritual placation of demons. This was something only

a god could do, and not just any god, not Dionysus — only the Lord of lords could do it, the King of kings, the God of gods. And this shows what Jesus meant when he said, “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34) — the sword that is the judgment and the destruction of secular culture — a “sword that no human being can fail to dread or resent even though” (or perhaps because? [see René Girard, “Dionysus vs. the Crucified,” MLN, 99/4]) it represents God’s love for us, and is the overthrowing of the powers that bind us in darkness. To some degree we’ve all fallen in love with our captors.

If we are to be honest, we have two choices: Dionysus or the Crucified. With Dionysus we get the gratification of our carnal appetites and the will to power, but (as Nietzsche understood), we must also embrace the violence and murder on which the whole system is built. As a culture, if we choose Dionysus, we must be prepared for more and more Sandy Hooks and Auroras and Columbines and Virginia Techs. *Or* we can choose the Crucified; we can submit our lives to him and find in *his* government a life transformed by the power of the only *true* God, who not only is alive but who *is life itself*. In him alone, as St. Paul bears witness in Acts, in Christ alone, crucified and risen, are we delivered from threats and murder; in Christ alone will we find illumination, strength, and *life* abundant.

G. Willcox Brown, SSC, is rector of Holy Cross Church, Dallas.

American culture at large is increasingly Dionysian. We have come to understand a healthy society to be one in which the pleasure-seeking of its members is formally ordered and facilitated.





He heavens declare the glorie of
God : and the firmament shew-
eth his handy work.
2 One day telleth another :
and one night certifieth ano-
ther.
3 There is neither speech
nor language: but their voices are heard among
them.

Joyce Meyer the Augustinian

An Anglican friend urged me to check out Joyce Meyer on TV, to explore something of the populist magisterium enjoyed by one of the world’s most influential Christian (nondenominational charismatic) teachers — not as some smug or otherwise cynical errand of intellectual or inter-eclesial elitism, “seeing just how bad it really is,” but rather to find for myself something of the good there. Though Meyer has been criticized for her corporate jet and multiple homes, and her organization challenged for less than satisfactory financial transparency, Joyce Meyer Ministry is engaged in an impressive array of humanitarian aid around the world, detailed on her website (joycemeyer.org), and her signature program, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, is broadcast in 61 different languages on over 1,000 television and radio stations.

I readily agreed to watch the program, though I can’t say my heart leapt at the invitation — anticipating, as I was, a somewhat annoying trudge through half-baked teaching that would require separating the wheat from the chaff. Several months later, I was a fan. And I’d like to note some of the consistent themes in Joyce’s teaching redolent of a classic, “catholic” faith and discipline that we might term *Augustinian*.

• *Rule of life.* Meyer maintains a rigorous daily discipline of prayer and Bible study — every morning, often for several hours. As a result, 37 years into her ministry (she is 69, a mother of four, married to her husband, Dave, for 46 years), she has deeply digested Scripture — all of it, and especially St. Paul, as a kind of culmination of scriptural teaching, drawing together the Old Testament and Jesus in a single sweep of providence. Without benefit of college or seminary education, Joyce has nonetheless spent most of her adult life studying and teaching the Bible, showing forth thereby the tenacious progress in the spiritual life human beings are capable of simply by turning the whole of their minds and spirits over to God in an act of self-offering. With such conversion, as a daily discipline over many years, comes a mature habit of hope, our minds fixed on the Lord in joyful obedience, even and especially amid the humble and tiring tasks of day to day life: taking care of children, doing chores, listening to and loving a spouse. The result is a sustainedly theological way of thinking — approaching problems the way Jesus did: by speaking Scripture back to the Fa-

ther, “saying things that agree with God’s word,” in praise and petition both. This is Christian fervency, in the mode of surrender, the end of which is joyful faith (Rom. 4:20). This is holiness.

• *Divine primacy.* In a classically evangelical — and catholic — mode, Meyer gets fired up about grace, not in a dryly doctrinal manner, set up as a straw man *contra* “works,” but because God in his love reaches out and rescues. On this count we can know him personally, and know *about* him and his character, above all through the revealed truth of Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit. To be justified — “saved” — means that we are living “in Christ”: our lives are hid in him, and the Holy Spirit dwells in us and will answer when we cry out. This is Christian confidence, like Abraham, hoping in faith when all human reason for hope is gone: “I believe that it will be exactly as God has told me that it will be” (see Rom. 4:18; cf. James 1:5-6).

• *Humility.* From this follows a keen sense of dependence on God; “I can do *nothing* without God who strengthens me.” And Joyce gets endless mileage from the teaching in all of Scripture that God works especially through our weakness (1 Cor. 1);



Photo from joycemeyer.org

Joyce’s teaching evinces a classic, “catholic” faith and discipline that we might term *Augustinian*.

that he lifts up the lowly (Magnificat); that he calls precisely the shepherd boy (David), the man who cannot speak (Moses), the frightened prophet (Elijah, hiding in a cave). God tracks us down, sets us back on our feet, and says: Bear true witness to me, ring out your joy, for your sins have been put away and forgotten; and *in* my son — following his example of humility (Phil. 2) — you can do “all things.” But do not “think of yourself more highly than you ought to think” (Rom. 12:3).

• *Contentment.* Related is that classic, desert discipline of *apatheia* — a certain holy passivity with respect to the world around which is out of our control. Here Joyce goes to town on our maturing in Christ and reflecting the fruit of the Spirit, including peace,

(Continued on next page)

Joyce Meyer the Augustinian

(Continued from previous page)

patience, and self-control. She is merciless on Christians who gossip, who are angry with one another or persist in unforgiveness, who stoke arguments and division, and a prime target of her teaching is pride and self-righteousness. She is big on quickly confessing our sin to one another and reconciling, lest Satan get a foothold. And she urges use of Scripture in this way — following our Lord's example by *talking back* to Satan when tempted in the desert. "Set your mind and keep it set," says Joyce, echoing Paul; and then renew and "gird up the loins of your mind." Indeed, decide to do what God has told you to do: "Go forward" (Ex. 14:15)!

• *Works of mercy.* With the freedom of the Christian comes a willed discipline of love of others, especially the poor and the poor in spirit, "living beyond our feelings." This is courage; "for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7) — *a sound mind*, in Joyce's preferred translation.

Is this the fullness of Christian truth? Probably not. I'd like to see more about the continuity — apostolicity — of the Church down the ages; a deeper wrestling with the people of God in Scripture, ordered around God's faithfulness to Israel; more about the Church's worship. But it's a good chunk of the gospel, reliably delivered, and it inspires in me a desire to love and trust the Lord more surely and devotedly, and to bend my mind to the question of holy discipleship.

"Don't you give up," says Joyce, "because God is faithful. *God is faithful.*" Amen, sister.

Thank you, Joyce Meyer, for your good example. May the Lord continue to bless your ministry, and draw many to himself through it.

Christopher Wells

BOOKS

Walk in Light

(Continued from page 19)

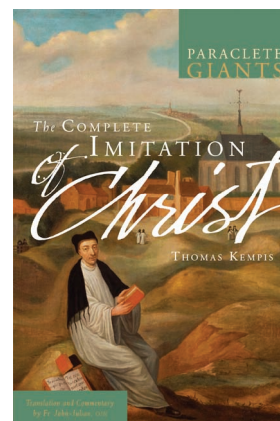
— found here in the *Imitation*.

This edition is, in the first instance, a careful if not assiduous translation of the text itself. This alone is a fine accomplishment given its varied history. Produced among the Brethren of the Common Life in the 14th and 15th centuries, *The Imitation of Christ* is likely the work of multiple authors. The *Devotio Moderna* (New Piety), the ascetical discipline of the Brothers, encouraged them to keep books of *raparia* or adages and maxims which had aided their personal prayer life and which could in turn be shared with the community. Much of the *Imitation* was likely collected from these anthologies.

Significant portions may also come from the 14th-century founder of the Congregations of the Common Life, Gerard Groote. The primary author, and ultimately editor, of the work was however the Augustinian Canon Thomas Hamerken (c. 1380-1471), better known as Thomas Kempis. As John-Julian highlights in his introduction, the book incorporates a wide range of literary styles and the Latin can be described as, at moments, elementary, elegant, and irregular.

Moreover, there is good evidence that portions of the text were originally composed in Flemish and translated (with difficulty) into Latin. Portions of the four books of the *Imitation* circulated among a number of readers in the early 15th century and often these were in varied arrangements — for example, the portion on the Blessed Sacrament has appeared in Book III and Book IV.

On this question and others John-Julian tends to honor Thomas's own autographed codex from 1441 and the first printed edition from 1471. Recognizing that all translation is interpretation and that this particular work obviously required an exceptional degree of patience, the present volume must be judged a fantastic resource. Moreover, John-Julian provides the English reader with an accommodating set of



The Complete Imitation of Christ

By **Thomas Kempis**. Translation
and commentary by **Fr. John-Julian**.
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symbols indicating which elements of the text rhyme in the Latin.

This volume, though, is also accompanied by a clear introduction to the historical context, an impressive bibliography, and a delightful appendix of facts about the readership. It is in this latter portion that we learn of the influence the text had on readers as diverse as Ignatius of Loyola, Vincent Van Gough, and Bill Clinton. Perhaps the most enjoyable element — and certainly the most notable beyond the translation itself — is the commentary on the left verso pages corresponding with the text of the *Imitation* on the right recto pages. Here we have references to Scripture, the Fathers, further historical context, and classical literature. John-Julian enlivens the text with this colorful running thread of remarks.

On balance, this work is meant for the same kind of readers who benefited from the *raparia*, those maxims shared among the early followers of the *Devotio Moderna*: women and men who, now as then, seek the *Imitatio*'s practical mysticism, a way of walking not in darkness but in the light. On this count, Fr. John-Julian's edition will be a welcome addition to any Christian library. ■

The Rev. Calvin Lane is affiliate professor of Church history at Nashotah House Theological Seminary and priest-in-charge of St. Mary's Church in Franklin, Louisiana.

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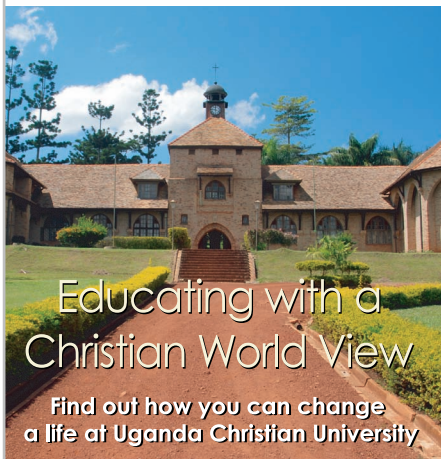
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LETTERS

Bonhoeffer Biographies

Sue Careless reported that Eric Metaxas has written “the first major [Bonhoeffer] biography in 40 years” [TLC, March 3].

In 2000 Victoria Barnett revised Eberhard Bethge’s definitive 1970 English version biography, which was an abridged version of the 1967 German edition. Barnett’s revision is a considerable development, as it brings to light the complete German original in English.

Then Ferdinand Schlingensiepen published his biography of Bonhoeffer: initially in German in 2006 and then in English in 2010.

*The Rev. Canon James Harris
Dean of Studies
Theological Education, Formation,
and Training
Anglican Diocese of Cape Town*

Due Credit to TABS

I am grateful to G. Jeffrey MacDonald for his fine article, “Episcopal Schools Go Global” [TLC, April 14], but I should like to offer one correction. The recruiting fairs and trips mentioned in the article are the excellent work of the Association of Boarding Schools (TABS), of which many Episcopal schools are members.

*The Rev. Daniel R. Heischman
Executive Director
National Association of Episcopal
Schools
New York*

eral refused us entrance because we were married.

We enrolled as a married couple at Berkeley Divinity School at Yale in the class of 1952. I got a first-class theological education. In looking back at my ordination as a deacon in June 1952 I would recommend still more emphasis on basic courses. Some time spent in course on summer projects was largely wasted due to guided discussion among student participants.

While at Berkeley I witnessed a school growth from near 25 to 125 students, including many returning veterans like me.

*The Rev. Bayard Hancock
Campton, New Hampshire*

Seminaries Served Veterans

I write in response to Dean George Sumner’s “Ten Theses for Seminaries” [TLC, April 14]. I was drafted into the Army in February 1943, married a hometown girl in 1945, and graduated from Hobart College in 1949. My wife and I then visited several Episcopal seminaries, seeking admission for the fall term 1949. Sev-

An Analogy Too Far?

I believe Fr. Steven R. Ford’s article “Uganda’s Lesson of Inclusion” [TLC, April 28] is tragically flawed (but aren’t we all). I object most strongly to his appalling hyperbole in comparing the dictatorship of Amin and Obote to the Episcopal Church’s gov-

ernance in recent years: “As I contemplate Uganda’s recent experience, I’m struck by its very broad similarities to that of the Episcopal Church.” This is both insulting and devastating to his argument.

Fr. Ford looks at Uganda’s history in independence, sees vision marred by authoritarian and tyrannical leadership, and believes that Uganda has recaptured some of that initial vision by way of renewed inclusion of those ousted under former regimes. He believes there is a lesson there for the Episcopal Church, that we too need to find ways to include those who fled or were forced out by authoritarian misuse of leadership. His are all interesting and debatable points and his conclusion may well be an appropriate challenge to future leadership in the Episcopal Church.

Left at that the article would be provocative and encourage further conversation. However, the comparison of the dictatorships of Uganda’s recent past and the current state of the Episcopal Church reduces my interest in further dialogue to almost zero. Believing that this was not Fr. Ford’s or THE LIVING CHURCH’S intent, I suggest you back off the implications in this comparison.

*The Rev. Canon Mark Harris
Lewes, Delaware*

The Rev. Steven R. Ford replies:
I am grateful for Canon Harris’s thoughtful comments on my recent article. I welcome the opportunity to respond to them.

The historic strength of the Episcopal Church, it seems to me, is its tradition of comprehensiveness. Wide variations in opinion and practice have been not only tolerated but even celebrated. Christian love and mutual respect have bound us together. As such, we’ve been a kind of icon of what a reunited Christianity might look like.

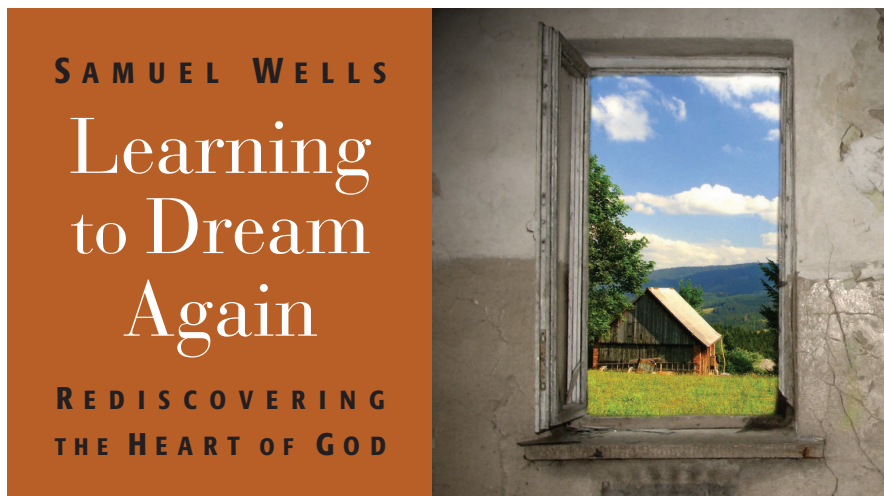
I’m sensing that this historic com-

prehensiveness, however, has gradually morphed into an enforceable dogma we call inclusiveness. We seem collectively to have come to the opinion that those who are not inclusive (in our very narrow sense) no longer need to be included in the life of the Body.

Is this in some sense tyranny? For most Episcopalians it certainly isn’t.

Those whom we depose and sue and cast out, however, might well think of it as being akin to what John Adams once called “tyranny of the majority.”

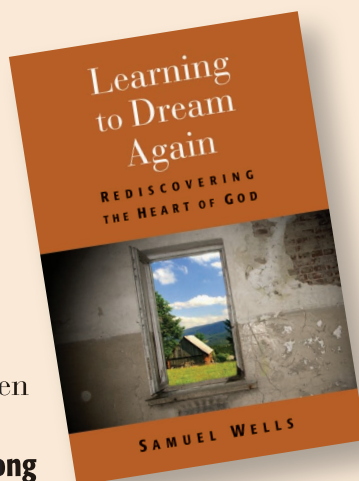
I am open to being persuaded that my views are wrong. My intention is to stimulate honest discussion of what I see as an increasingly important issue in our life together.



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— **Thomas G. Long**



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Chicago Thrives

First Person

By Christopher Epting

One of the joys of my retirement is serving as Assisting Bishop in the Diocese of Chicago. Since 2012 I have helped with Sunday visitations, led occasional retreats and quiet days, attended certain events and meetings, and represented the diocese on the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, a venerable interfaith organization.

Whenever we read letters or correspondence about the “decline” of the Episcopal Church, Bishop Jeffrey Lee and I shake our heads and confess that such gloom and doom does not remotely correspond with our experiences week by week in this fine diocese. Long grounded in a progressive Anglo-Catholic history, the liturgical life of most congregations is carefully planned and reverently celebrated. Contemporary rites and music are well integrated into the worship experience of most congregations.

As one committed for more than 40 years to the renewal of the diaconate as a “full and equal order” of ministry, I have been gratified to discover that in congregations where there is no deacon, members of the

deacons’ community have volunteered to assist in the liturgical ministry of the congregation on the occasion of the bishop’s visitation.

I have visited very few congregations (large or small, urban, suburban, or rural) which are not involved in some significant way in the surrounding community. This involvement runs the gamut from the arts and music, to feeding programs and other forms of social witness, to ecumenical and interfaith engagement. Hundreds of people have processed from St. James Episcopal Cathedral through the streets of Chicago expressing grief and outrage at the continuing incidents of gun violence across the city in a wide-ranging effort called CROSSwalk.

A two-year learning initiative for clergy and lay leaders called Thrive (not coincidentally also the name of a colorful new diocesan magazine) brings together committed leaders who want to strengthen the overall health of their congregations. Drawing on the latest studies in leadership development and congregational vitality, Thrive provides teams of four, currently from 20 congregations, with a combination of experiential learning, reflection, and worship to energize these committed church leaders, parishes, and mis-

sions. The pilot program will be expanded in the future.

One of the parishes involved in Thrive is St. John’s, Kewanee, formerly of the Diocese of Quincy. On June 8 both diocesan conventions, Chicago and Quincy, voted to reunite. Originally formed out of the “mother diocese” of Chicago, Quincy has been racked in recent years by internal conflict and schism, leaving both remnants in a weakened condition. Both dioceses entered into a period of discernment and decided that Quincy returning to Chicago was the best option available to them and, by all accounts, their congregations have been warmly welcomed and resources extended to them even as they bring the courage of their witness and the missionary zeal of their heritage to the Diocese of Chicago.

Finally, in 2011 Chicago launched a capital campaign to undertake \$12 million in significant renovations to the diocesan center at 65 East Huron Street in Chicago. The campaign has raised \$8 million toward that goal and, at the dedication of the new space in April 2013, Bishop Lee announced an additional \$10 million gift from Ab and Nancy Nicholas which will be shared with the Living Compass Faith and Wellness Center and create the Nicholas Center at St. James Commons in downtown Chicago, expected to open in 2014. The center will be home to overnight retreats and programs that foster the health and wellness of Episcopal leaders and the vitality of congregations [p. 5].

In the words of our diocesan motto, the Diocese of Chicago joyfully continues to “grow the church, form the faithful, and change the world,” one day at a time! ■

The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting has served previously as Bishop of Iowa and the Presiding Bishop’s deputy for ecumenical and interfaith relations.

Bishop Chien Dies at 72

The Rt. Rev. John C. T. Chien, the first native bishop of Taiwan, died March 5. He was 72. Chien was born into a modest farming family in Gou-Bei Village, Dalin, Chia-Yi, southern Taiwan. He first encountered Christianity as an undergraduate economics student at Tunghai University, Taichung, where he attended Bible studies led by the Rev. William A. Buell.

Chien's decision to pursue ordination initially disturbed his parents, because as the eldest of six children he was expected to become the main breadwinner of the family. His parents later came to support his decision, and during the following years virtually all of Chien's family became Christians, even establishing a mission station in their Gou-Bei home with regular weekly services.

Chien first served at St. Andrew's Church, Cha-ting (1967-69), and then at Grace Church, Tainan (1969-73). He completed a Master of Sacred Theology degree in 1974 through Virginia Theological Seminary.

Upon his return from the United States he served as rector of Good Shepherd Church, Taipei (1975-85) followed by a year (1985-6) at Selly Oak College in Birmingham, U.K., then returning to Taiwan as dean of St. John's Cathedral, Taipei (1986-87). He was ordained and consecrated as bishop of the Taiwan Episcopal Church on March 25, 1988.

He is survived by his wife, Grace, three children, and five grandchildren.

Correction

Since 2009, the Episcopal Church has given \$80,000 to the Diocese of Nevada to develop Hispanic/Latino ministries at two Las Vegas congregations ["Praying to Padre Nuestro," May 26]. The documentary *Latino Hispanic Ministry: Transforming the Church in Nevada* shows the ministry practiced in those congregations.



Chien

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Appointments

The Rev. **Stephen Cuff** is rector of All Saints', 610 4th St., Portsmouth, Ohio 45662.

The Rev. **Kathleen Cullen** is priest-in-charge of St. Andrew's, 102 N. Main St., Manchester, NH 03102.

The Rev. **Jon C. Graves** is rector of Trinity, 520 11th St., Huntington, WV 25701.

The Rev. **Gary Goldacker** is priest-in-charge of Christ Church Cathedral, 318 E 4th St., Cincinnati, OH 45202.

The Rev. **Lisa Graves** is rector of St. John's, 3000 Washington Blvd, Huntington, WV 25701.

The Rev. **Elizabeth Papazoglakis** is rector of St. John's, Massena, NY 13662.

The Rev. **Thomas Papazoglakis** is rector of St. Mark's, Malone, NY 12953.

The Rev. **J. Barry Vaughn** is rector of Christ Church, 2000 S Maryland Pkwy., Las Vegas, NV 89104.

Retirements

The Rev. **Martin Bayang**, as vicar of All Saints', Grants, NM.

The Rev. Susan Crawford, as rector of

St. James', Greenville, MS.

The Rev. Canon **Colin P. Kelly III**, as rector of Trinity on the Hill, Los Alamos, NM.

The Rev. Canon **Carole J. McGowan**, as canon for ecumenical affairs in the Diocese of the Rio Grande and rector of St. Thomas', Albuquerque, NM.

The Rev. Canon **James Hanisian**, as vice president of ministry and compliance at Episcopal Retirement Homes, Cincinnati, OH.

The Rev. **Brian C. Taylor**, as rector of St. Michael and All Angels, Albuquerque, NM.

Deaths

The Rev. **Roger Michael Christopher Gentile** died Jan. 18 in New York City. He was 62.

Born in Teaneck, NJ, he was a graduate of Rutgers University and General Theological Seminary. He was an associate at the Church of St. Ignatius of Antioch, New York, 1981-82, and was on the staff of General Theological Seminary, 2008-10. He was preceded in death by his parents, Salvatore and Katherine Gentile, and is sur-

vived by his sisters Veronica Board, Katherine Murphy and Barbara Krajick.

The Rev. Canon **Fernando Catalino Gómez**, a longtime priest of the Diocese of Los Angeles and a native of Cuba, died Jan. 19. He was 75.

Born in Guantanamo, he was a graduate of Union Seminary in Matanzas, Cuba. He was ordained deacon in 1962 and priest in 1963. He served several congregations in Cuba before assisting in 1969-70 on the staff of the Anglican cathedral in Madrid. He was a worker priest in charge of Hispanic ministry at Messiah Church, Santa Ana, 1970-71, associate rector of the Congregation of St. Athanasius, Echo Park, 1971-77; and vicar, La Magdalena Church, Glendale, 1977-2002.

Canon Gómez's ministry spanned 50 years and included strategic leadership in bilingual and Hispanic contexts and the Cursillo movement. While serving at La Magdalena he was director of Casa Rusack, a Latino ministry center started in the 1980s and later combined with other diocesan programs. He was also a volunteer chaplain in the Los Angeles Men's Central Jail. In 1993 he was named an honorary canon of the Cathedral Center by the Rt. Rev. Frederick H. Borsch.

He is survived by Adela, his wife of 50 years; a son, Antonio; and a daughter, Monica.

Barbara C. Miller, a longtime nurse who was ordained to the diaconate in 1991, died Jan. 15. She was 77.

Born in Medford, MA, she was a graduate of the New England Deaconess Hospital School of Nursing, Boston. She was a registered nurse from 1956 until the birth of her first child. She returned to nursing in 1970 and developed the student health care program at Husson College in Bangor, ME. She was a certified hospice nurse in Middletown, CT, 1981-94. She served as a deacon at St. Stephen's Church, E. Had-dam, CT, 1991-95, and at St. Andrew's Church, Readfield, ME, 1996-98.

She is survived by John Preston Miller, her husband of 56 years; a daughter, Robin Johnson, of Waterville; sons Geoffrey Miller of Blue Hill, ME, Chris Miller of Hermon, ME, and Peter Miller of Lewiston, ME; six grandchildren; a great-grandchild; and a brother, Roger Crouse.

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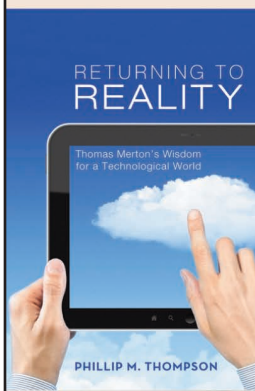
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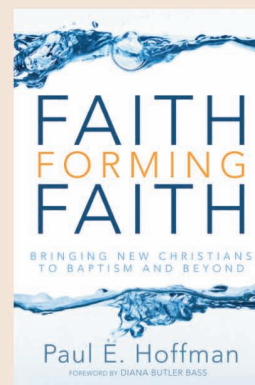
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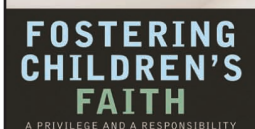
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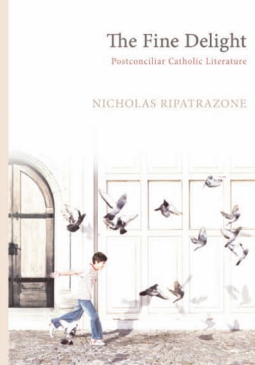
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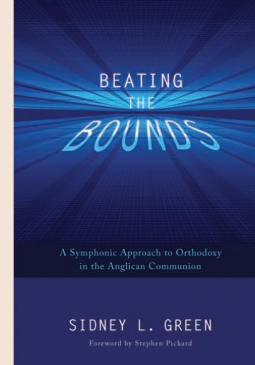
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First reading and psalm: 1 Kings 17:8-16 (17-24) • Ps. 146
Alternate: 1 Kings 17:17-24 • Ps. 30 • Gal. 1:11-24 • Luke 7:11-17

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Death is sometimes the natural end of a long and good life, the poignant still moment of completion when what is mortal is taken up by what is immortal. "Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended" (Deut. 34:7-8).

When the death of children was common, when plague, pestilence, and famine took the vulnerable and weak in great numbers, people found a way, even then, to move on, to mourn for a season, and then walk again among the living. In the worst of times, mourners had but moments to feel and express the depth of their sorrow. Babies of a few days, children of a few years, passed in and out of life. The grass withers and the flower fades: a beautiful metaphor if not for our children. This is not a completion, not a celebration, not a longing for a distant reunion. This is the great thief, the enemy who, seeking someone to devour, grasps at the crib of the innocent.

The Lord God speaks to Elijah, as surely the Lord God speaks to us. But speaking, the Lord addresses a whole context, an entire situation, shifting circumstances and changing demands. In a time of famine the Lord leads Elijah to Zaraphath, to live there and to seek from a widow his daily food. The story gets strange. She is desperately poor, having only a handful of meal, a jug of oil, a few sticks for fire. She wants to eat and die with her son. But the man of God wants everything: water and a little cake. At first she protests but then gives in and, as a reward, her supplies remain and she is able to feed herself, her son, and her household. But the son who is saved soon dies. The prophet acts, taking the boy from his mother, carrying him to the upper chamber where he lodged,

stretching his body over the child three times, as if, in the Trinitarian name, to warm his cooling flesh. Remarkably, "the life of the child came into him again, and he revived" (1 Kings 17:22). Are we consoled? Are we afraid to be honest? Is our reading real?

Jesus went to a city called Nain. "As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out" (Luke 7:12). Jesus approached the mother and said to her, "Do not weep." Then he came forward and touched the bier saying, "Young man, I say to you, rise" (7:14). The young man sat up and began to speak! Whatever our hopes for the dead, this is not one of them. We may plead and hope against hope for the sick and the ailing, but death is by definition the end. Why then the wound of this healing? In the Paschal mystery of these strange stories, life is passing to death, and death is coming to life in the return of the dead to the living. "Jesus gave him to his mother" (7:15).

Only loss will teach this lesson, the bitter lesson of the dead living as an undying presence in a broken heart. Among those who weep this night, some will think and feel, "my child is alive" (1 Kings 17:23).

Look It Up

Read Ps. 30. Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes (very slowly) in the *mourning*.

Think About It

How do I know the dead live? "I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12).

The Source

Ahab is not without justification. Naboth's vineyard is near the king's home; the king wants a vegetable garden, and what the king wants the king should get. How dare Naboth appeal to an ancestral inheritance? And yet the appeal has force, stopping the king in his quest, trapping him in a resentful and sullen state. Depression sets in as he refuses food and turns his face to the wall. But how long can power endure such an insult and remain powerful? Jezebel is furious with her husband and outraged at this affront to his power, and hers. She orchestrates the death of Naboth and then says to Ahab, "Go, take possession of the vineyard" (1 Kings 21:15). All would be well but for the apocalyptic "word of the Lord" which came to Elijah the Tishbite. In the end, Ahab's blood is a warm libation to the tongues of dogs. God is not mocked.

Is David to be blamed for his optic nerve and the neurosis of desire? Bathsheba is beautiful and David is a man, the king. Pinning the pregnancy on Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, proves impossible, so David arranges his death in battle. Kill the husband, take the wife, and celebrate human coniving. It might have worked, but for "the word of the Lord," spoken in a parable to the king, who, though up to his neck in guilt, could not, at least publicly, avoid judgment against egregious wrong. David's anger was kindled against the illustrated man, not knowing, or at least not admitting, that *he was the man*. What happened? It was terrible. The Lord struck the child, the story says. The moral? Well, what is the moral? Arrange not the death of the innocent lest the angel of death pass not over but through you.

We hear only "a woman in the city, who was a sinner," and then draw, perhaps, our own perverted and dramatic conclusion. What we know of her is limited. She was a sinner who had shown great love. Whatever her

sin, it was publicly known and therefore an offense to the Pharisee with whom Jesus shared a meal. The extravagance of her sin is not, however, the real heart of the story, but rather her outpouring affection. Weeping, she washes the feet of Jesus and dries them with her hair. Jesus says, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50). Who saved whom? Did *her faith* save her? We are told just that and that is just what we are to believe. Washing and drying his feet, she herself becomes clean. Now look again and trace the movement of her heart, the ache of her tears, the fingers that find his venerable feet. Who or what moves her, prompts her, calls her to this act of devotion?

The stories of Ahab and David tell us something we need to hear. "You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, and evil cannot dwell with you" (Ps. 5:4). "Great are the tribulations of the wicked" (Ps. 32:10). The woman in the gospel story is a sinner, as are all the others, except Jesus, including the Pharisee, no matter how deep his denial. God is not mocked. Light shines in the darkness. If we could get to the flesh and blood of this woman, the marrow of her being, we would find not her, but *him*: "it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Look It Up

Read Gal. 2:18. Do not try to build again what has been torn down.

Think About It

Both Greek and Latin consider faith as "leaning into." That into which you lean is God, and that which pushes you is God. The resistance? Our ancient enemy.



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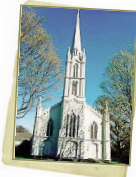
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