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THIS ISSUE | November 30, 2014

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Catherine Kapikian of Wesley Theological Seminary says that community-engaged needlepoint for churches is “the work of the people” (see “Stitchers Enrich Church Beauty,” p. 8).

Craig Stapert/Washington National Cathedral photo



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We are grateful to St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Houston [p. 27], and the Church of St. Michael & St. George, St. Louis [p. 28], whose generous support helped make this issue possible.

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Winning Haitians' Trust

For more than four decades, New York City's only Haitian Episcopal congregation has been a small, close-knit ethnic community that takes good care of its own. But now the Haitian Congregation of the Good Samaritan is reaching out to Haitians across the metropolitan area with help from a priest unlike any other in its history.

When the Rev. Sam Owen accepted the call to Good Samaritan two years ago, he became the church's first non-Haitian priest. He's also its first white leader, a notable distinction for a black congregation that meets in a largely black Bronx neighborhood.

Winning trust has taken time. But a few key steps have paid off and opened doors to the Haitian diaspora in the Big Apple.

"What's important to me is building bridges between race and class and culture," Owen said. "That's one of the reasons that Haiti is so important to me."

Owen, a 54-year-old former businessman who left a health-care management career to follow a call to ministry, said Good Samaritan parishioners were wary at first and unsure of his motives.

A native of North Carolina, he now comes to the Bronx each day from another world just 30 minutes away. He lives in Greenwich, Connecticut, one of the wealthiest communities in the country, with his wife, the Rev. Jenny Owen, who is assistant rector at Christ Church, Greenwich. During his candidacy, some on the vestry had trouble imagining him in the Bronx pulpit, even though he came recommended by the bishop.

"I didn't think it was going to work," said Gisele Isidore, who served on the vestry during the discernment process. "We didn't have the same culture. ...



Photo courtesy of the Haitian Congregation of the Good Samaritan

The Rev. Sam Owen and the Haitian Congregation of the Good Samaritan in the Bronx

We always used to have a Haitian priest."

But after much prayer, she said, "God gave me my light to see it could work."

Old-fashioned pastoral care has gone a long way to build ties between the flock and its shepherd. Sensing some "standoffishness" at first, Owen called a congregational meeting within his first six weeks to clear the air.

"I stood up and said, 'I know this is hard for you all, and it's hard for me too,'" Owen recalled. "I said, 'We're all adjusting to this. Give me a chance because I'm really, really clear that God has called me to be here.'"

Since then, Owen has traveled all over the city, often accompanied by a layman from the congregation, to visit parishioners in their homes. The congregation has been impressed.

"This is the first thing that Haitians like: when the priest comes to their house, sits down, and talks with them," Isidore said. "He's doing this a lot."

Owen has put in time elsewhere as well. Since 2006, he's been making mission trips to Haiti, where he first began to feel God's call to serve among Haitians. Last year, he led Good Samaritan's first mission trip to Haiti, where a team helped build a church. Owen is

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fluent in Creole and is learning French. These languages help him communicate in a congregation whose elders speak little or no English.

Worship services, which begin at 2:30 p.m., blend high-church Anglicanism with Pentecostal exuberance. Worshipers smell incense and hear bells rung at the altar, but that does not hinder them from dancing, shouting, and waving hands in the air. After two hours of worship, everyone stays for dinner.

The congregation is a mission of the Diocese of New York and has never had its own building. It currently uses space at St. Luke's Church in the Bronx and gives half its collections to the diocese, which pays Owen's salary.

Worship is a blend of high-church Anglicanism and Pentecostal exuberance.

Humor has helped the relationship grow. Owen once used the wrong Creole term during a healing prayer; he meant to ask for good health but instead petitioned the Lord for good smell.

"People heard about that and they laughed and laughed and laughed," he said. "They howled. It made me more human."

Having a child has not hurt. The congregation loves the Owens' first child, who arrived soon after his father began serving the mission.

Owen is now one of the congregation's key ambassadors to the 250,000 Haitians who live in New York City, as well as the millions who live in Haiti. He invites local Haitian communities to join Good Samaritan for special occasions. Some have visited and keep coming back, and average Sunday attendance is up from 50 to 65.

Seven of GTS 8 Return to Work

Seven of eight professors of General Theological Seminary reached an agreement to return to their work in early November.

The seminary's board of trustees, dean, and faculty issued a joint statement about the agreement on November 6.

Those parties "reached an agreement regarding the immediate issues which have led to heated debates within and without the walls of the nation's oldest Episcopal seminary," the statement said. "The resolution involves an ongoing process of reconciliation, a reinstatement of all of the returning faculty members on a provisional basis, and a reaffirmation of the responsibilities of the board of trustees and the dean."

The Very Rev. Kurt H. Dunkle, dean and president, later wrote that Joshua Davis chose not to return to his work as assistant professor of systematic theology.

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center of Illinois will work with the seminary for long-term reconciliation.

Six Primates Seek New Congress

What began as a meeting of three bishops has expanded through six years to a larger, communiqué-issuing gathering that includes six primates and three bishops. The fifth Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue issued a 950-word communiqué on October 28 that invoked the Anglican Congress of 1963 and expressed hope that another such congress will convene within the next two years.

"We confessed that one thing we have in common is that we all have needs, not the least of which is our profound need for each other," said

(Continued on next page)

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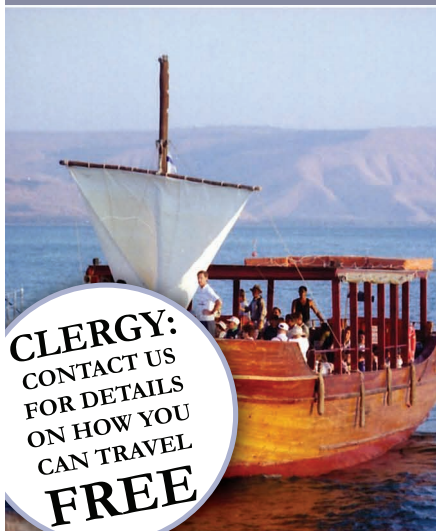
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TLC Advertising Manager Dies at 53

Thomas Williamson Parker, advertising manager of TLC for 13 years, died November 7 after a prolonged struggle with cancer. He was 53.

Parker was a native of Milwaukee and a graduate of Southern Methodist University. Before joining TLC he worked for Entercom Radio in Milwaukee and for Second Harvest of Chicago. For years he was a territory account manager for General Mills.

"Tom cherished the time he spent with his boys as Scout leader, Tai Kwon Do dad, and homework chairman," said an obituary prepared by his family. "Love of music was a huge part of Tom's life. Tom and Elizabeth had their first date at a Hootie and the Blowfish concert, and thereafter enjoyed many happy hours front and center at concerts of their favorite bands."

"Tom Parker was an extraordinary person," said David Kalvelage, retired executive editor of TLC, who hired Parker in 2001. "His offbeat sense of humor was a gift to his coworkers, and he maintained it even as his condition worsened. Tom was able to balance work and parenthood and find time for a huge amount of



Parker

interests. He will be greatly missed by TLC's family."

"Tom was a faithful friend, a servant, and a stalwart team player. Ever with a hint of mischief, he delivered on his commitments and had the back of his colleagues," said Christopher Wells, editor of TLC. "Rarely have I known someone of such loyalty and uncontrived compassion. We miss him sorely."

He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth Fellenbaum Parker; sons Hatton and Ian; his mother, Sophie Nash Riddick Parker; his twin brother, the Rev. Charles W. Parker III; sisters Porter Parker Hutto and Caroline Parker Robertson; and five nephews.

Six Primates Seek New Congress

(Continued from previous page)
the document, signed by Albert Chama, Archbishop of Central Africa; Jacob Chimeledya, Archbishop of Tanzania; Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town; Bernard Ntahoturi, Archbishop of Burundi; and Daniel Sarfo, Archbishop of West Africa. Bishops from the Western Hemisphere included Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori; Stacy F. Sauls, chief operating officer of the Episcopal Church; Mary Gray-Reeves, Bishop of El Camino Real; Ogé Beauvoir, Bishop Suffragan of Haiti; and Clifton Daniel III, Bishop Provisional of Pennsylvania.

The archbishops and bishops added:

"Over our time together, we found ourselves referring repeatedly to the spirit of the Anglican Congress of 1963, which contributed greatly to the transformation of our understanding of mission in the Anglican Communion. It gave us the language of mutual responsibility and interdependence in the body of Christ and helped lead us to understand ourselves as partners in mission rather than in categories of givers and receivers. In that same spirit, and with eagerness to share the blessings we have received in these days, we ex-

press our fervent and urgent hope that another Anglican Congress might be held in the next two years, and encourage the active leadership of all who might help to make it a reality for the good of God's mission to heal and reconcile the world."

The Presiding Bishop alluded to the communiqué on October 27, before its release, while discussing an Executive Council resolution that gives thanks for improving relations between the Episcopal Church and the broader Anglican Communion.

She said in a conference call that the Episcopal Church has partnerships in every Anglican province, and that those relationships are deeper now. The partnerships reflect mutual relationships, she said, rather than those of dependents and providers.

The consultation met October 8-10 at General Theological Seminary, early in the days of the seminary's public conflict with eight faculty members. Bishop Gray-Reeves, alone among the current group, has been part of the consultation since its first meeting in Advent of 2008. This year's communiqué is the most action-oriented statement issued by the group to date. In 2011 the consultation held a four-day meeting that welcomed 19 bishops to Dar es Salaam.

On a related front, Archbishop Eliud Wabukala of Kenya, chairman of the GAFCON Primates' Council, has characterized the delay of a new Lambeth Conference as a diminishment of the Anglican Communion's instruments of unity.

"The recent news that Lambeth 2018 has been postponed, perhaps indefinitely, is the latest sign that the old institutions of the Communion no longer command confidence. We must remember that the fundamental reason for this is doctrinal. We are divided because the Faith is threatened by unbiblical teaching," Wabukala wrote in his October pastoral letter to GAFCON members.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said that the next Primates' Meeting will determine when the Lambeth Conference will convene, but that it is unlikely to meet in 2018.

Douglas LeBlanc

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Stitchers Enrich Church Beauty

Washington National Cathedral is a treasure trove of stone carvings, but it is also home to more than 1,500 needlepoint seat cushions, kneelers, and wall hangings. On Oct. 18, 134 people gathered in the cathedral for a symposium to learn more about the design, craft, preservation, and restoration of fine needlework. The symposium was held in conjunction with a needlework exhibit in the South Transept.

“This has been a long time in the making; this turnout is enormously gratifying,” said the Very Rev. Gary Hall, cathedral dean.

“We are many things to many people, but primarily we are a sacred space,” he added. “The adornment of that sacred space says a lot about who we are.”

In 1954, the Very Rev. Francis B. Sayre, Jr. — dean of the cathedral from 1951 to 1978 — suggested adding religious needlepoint to the stone building after he saw fine needlework in Europe. Sayre remarked on “those touches of color and quiet evidence of care which brings warmth and love to cold stone.” His vision led to the formation of the cathedral’s volunteer needlepoint committee.

Each piece of needlepoint in the cathedral is unique, involving the combination of a professional artistic designer and a volunteer stitcher. Some stitchers, like Nancy Hussey, have done many pieces across decades; she proudly showed TLC a scrapbook with photos and clippings of the stitched works she has provided to the cathedral for 30 years. While most of the needlepoint in the cathedral depicts traditional themes, the space window exedra cushion uses contemporary cosmic imagery derived from the cathedral’s famed Space Window; it shows the blue Earth as it would appear from the moon. The stitcher took more than three years to complete this cushion.



Craig Stapert/Washington National Cathedral photos
Virginia Cretella Mars, symposium chairman, works with workshop participant Michelle Martin.

Needlework has a life expectancy of more than 100 years, and no cathedral piece is ever discarded. Prominently displayed at the symposium was a long, horizontal “Sea to Shining Sea” piece of needlework that suffered severe water damage. The cost to restore it is \$5,000. The price to repair a standard kneeler in one of the cathedral’s chapels is \$1,000; the cost to repair one of the diocesan cushions in the great choir is \$1,200. A project to restore these cushions started in 2013. Restoration is a mul-

tistep process, including evaluating what the piece needs, disassembling the cushion or kneeler, placing an inset (if needed), cleaning, blocking, and reassembly. If a cushion or kneeler needlepoint piece cannot be restored completely, sometimes it can be made into a wall hanging.

Indeed, like all the artwork in the cathedral, fine needlepoint requires regular restoration and preservation, said invited speaker Nancy Lukoskie, owner of Fancywork Finishing in Easton, Maryland. Lukoskie appren-



Washingtonian David Bender gives a demonstration in Washington National Cathedral's South Transept.

enced the look of early American needlework pieces, as did the death of George Washington." The Moravians were especially known for their exquisite needlework.

Invited speaker Catherine Kapikian, founder and director emeritus of the Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., described her work commissioning communities to stitch large-scale ecclesiastical needlepoint works for specific religious sites. Author of *Art in Service of the Sacred*, Kapikian designed the Gerald R. Ford presidential kneeler for Washington National Cathedral, along with many other works for churches and synagogues throughout the country.

In a contemporary version of traditional quilting circles, stitchers in communities come together to help create the works she designs that will hang in their places of worship, Kapikian said. "It's wonderful for the community to be engaged in the chaos of creation," she said. "Engagement like this is so therapeutic on so many levels."

Community-engaged stitching becomes "the work of the people," Kapikian said, citing a woman stitcher with advanced cancer who wanted to keep working as long as she could. Kapikian showed slides of very different works she had designed for a contemporary Lutheran church, an Episcopal church, a Methodist church, a retirement community chapel, the University of Maryland Chapel, and a chapel at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. She said designing includes making a complex full-scale drawing or model with color directions for the entire piece.

"My fingers are itching to start stitching," one participant in the symposium said. Proceeds from the per-person ticket price of \$125, along with donations from symposium patrons, will be used to benefit preservation of Washington National Cathedral's needlework.

Peggy Eastman

ticed under the cathedral's altar guild as well as with an established company, June Bug Enterprises, that specialized in finishing needlework for the cathedral.

Lukoskie described finishing the canticle (song) cushions in the great choir, and a special needlepoint project she helped bring to fruition for Beauvoir, the cathedral's elementary school for preschoolers and children through third grade. Beauvoir children wanted to donate a bench cushion to the Children's Chapel, known for its baby animal needlework; Lukoskie helped to design the cushion, with the guidance of the children, and one of the Beauvoir teachers volunteered to do the stitching.

Invited speaker Kimberley Ivey, curator of textiles and historic interiors at Colonial Williamsburg, described how the art and craft of fine needlework developed in the United States, building on a heritage of stitching in Great Britain.

"Decorative needlework was one method in which the founding mothers could contribute to their homes,"

she said. It was a way women could express themselves creatively in a socially acceptable manner at a time when women stayed home. "These women were true artists, and they deserve to be recognized as artists."

For example, she said, in addition to seat cushions, women stitched intricate needlework for fireplace screens, which were designed to protect their complexions from the flames as they sat by the fire. Much colonial stitching, including artwork by Martha Washington, was produced in the 17th and 18th centuries.

From the beginnings of its history "needlework has been intricately linked to religion," Ivey said. Schoolgirls worked samplers, and Old Testament stories such as Solomon and Sheba and the sacrifice of Isaac were popular themes.

"A female's hands were rarely idle," Ivey said. Asked by TLC when American women began stitching for churches, she said that trend began in the 19th century. But even before women stitched expressly for churches, "religious affiliations influ-



William Stringfellow

Wikimedia Commons photo

Listen to Stringfellow

I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

—1 Cor. 2:2

By J. Scott Jackson

The eminent Jewish and Christian leaders who had gathered to discuss racial justice likely did not expect to hear such a bracing sermon from a 34-year-old New York attorney. Still, this would be a defining vocational moment for the activist lawyer and Episcopal lay theologian William Stringfellow. In January 1963, nearly a thousand religious leaders, Paul Tillich and Martin Luther King, Jr., among them, had gathered in Chicago for the National Conference on Religion and Race. Their main task was to forge a “statement of conscience” on the proper role of civil disobedience in the cause of racial equality. Esteemed Rabbi Abraham Heschel had offered his keynote address; Stringfellow gave a brief response (see *Pillar of Fire*, pp. 21-22, 29-30; *Alien in a Strange Land*, pp. 182-92; *Essential Writings* [EW], pp. 177-80).

Instead of an unqualified endorsement of the cause, though, the young theologian offered a stinging indictment of religious leaders for dithering with words when decisive actions were necessary. He predicted that a racial apocalypse was at hand in the United States that not even the best humanitarian ideals of its religious elites could forestall. “The truth is — I fear — that this

conference is too little, too late, and too lily white,” he told the stunned audience (*EW*, p. 177). Despite victories to come, civil and voting rights legislation especially, the further radicalization of the black power struggle in the late 1960s would bear out some of the truth of this prophecy.

By 1963 Stringfellow had already earned notoriety through his post-war leadership in the student Christian and ecumenical movements. Moreover, he had observed the effects of racism and poverty firsthand. For five years he had practiced street law in East Harlem, living on a block *The New York Times* had dubbed one of the worst in the city (see the especially harrowing *My People is the Enemy*). In 1956, fresh out of Harvard Law School, the New England native had eschewed more lucrative prospects of private practice in Massachusetts to settle in New York at the invitation of the East Harlem Protestant Parish, an experimental urban ministry, closely tied to Union Theological Seminary, working for justice in the neighborhood. Fifteen months later, Stringfellow parted ways very publicly with the Group Ministry of the parish over practical and theological issues (*Alien*, pp. 74-86). Nonetheless, Stringfellow had remained in the neighborhood, agitating politically and practicing law and advocacy among the poor and oppressed until 1962.

A cradle Episcopalian from a working-class family, he loved the sacramental life of the church and he strove for the renewal of Christian social witness, but he was not afraid to call out religious believers for their complicity with the fallen principalities and ideologies of post-war North America. Stringfellow's first book, *A Private and Public Faith* (1962), stood as a withering critique of the solipsism, spiritual complacency, and political apathy of North American Protestants. Soon thereafter, the young lawyer impressed an audience at the University of Chicago, where he sat on a panel of aspiring academics and clerics conversing with Karl Barth during the Swiss theologian's whirlwind tour of the United States (*Alien*, pp. 167-82). Barth, known to be a critic of Western Cold War policies, had foresworn criticizing the United States during the forum. At one point, after Stringfellow had raised pointed questions about churches and the powers that be, Barth admonished the audience, "Listen to this man" (*Alien*, pp. 173-74).

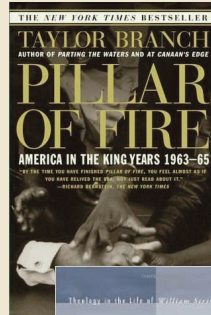
Now, at the 1963 conference in Chicago, Stringfellow was again taking a confrontational tack. In his view, the time for conscientious statements of intent was past. A time of reckoning and vengeance was at hand, both in the Jim Crow South and in the racially stratified Northern cities. Having so far absented themselves from the front lines of the racial crisis, white religious leaders would find that African Americans were taking matters into their own hands, likely without the same commitments to nonviolence that guided the mainstream civil rights movement of the early 1960s. Such impassioned rhetoricians as Malcolm X and James Baldwin would provide the prophetic vision for the movement to come.

And Stringfellow's talk moved beyond social criticism, into layers of biblical and theological analysis. Religious leaders suffered, he said, from a failure to grapple with the spiritual depths of racial hatred and from a deficient doctrine of creation. "This conference, finally, represents a mentality which stupidly supposes that there is power and efficacy in individual action," he wrote. "From the point of view of either biblical religion [Judaism and Christianity] the monstrous American heresy is in thinking that the whole drama of history takes place between God and human beings" (*EW*, p. 179).

Stringfellow's work to date had set the stage for these cryptic insights, which he would deepen

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Books Discussed in This Essay

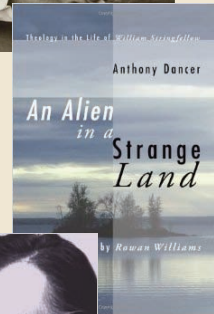


Pillar of Fire

America in the King Years, 1963-1965

By **Taylor Branch**.

Simon & Schuster, 1998.

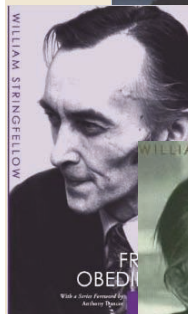


An Alien in a Strange Land

Theology in the Life of William Stringfellow

By **Anthony Dancer**.

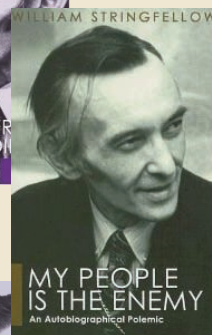
Cascade, 2011.



Free in Obedience

By **William Stringfellow**.

Seabury Press, 1964.



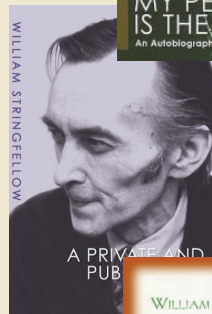
My People Is the Enemy

An Autobiographical Polemic

By **William Stringfellow**.

Holt, Rhinehart

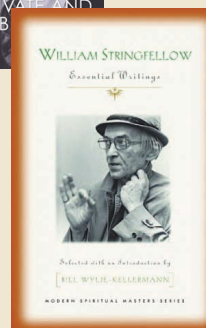
and Winston, 1964.



A Private and Public Faith

By **William Stringfellow**.

Eerdmans, 1962.



William Stringfellow

Essential Writings

Edited by **Bill**

Wylie-Kellermann.

Orbis, 2013.

Listen to Stringfellow

(Continued from previous page)

and elaborate over the next two decades. Through his post-war meetings with anti-Nazi resisters in Europe and through his practice of street law and many other personal encounters, Stringfellow had become convinced that North American moral theology suffered from a major lacuna. For it failed to grasp the radical and all-pervasive agency of the images, institutions, and ideologies that New Testament writers, in a symbolic first-century idiom, had named principalities and powers, or angelic and demonic forces (see the programmatic *Free in Obedience*, ch. 3).

As he wrote, the drama of history takes place amongst God and human beings and the principalities and powers, the great institutions and ideologies active in the world. It is the corruption and shallowness of humanism which beguiles Jew or Christian into believing that human beings are masters of institution or ideology. (*EW*, p. 179)

A key strategy of the civil rights movement in the early 1960s was moral suasion: to prick the consciences of the general public and legislatures to support policies of integration and legal equality. Stringfellow supported King's nonviolent tactics aimed toward achieving integration and legal protections for racial

which human beings have little or no control, but which works its awful influence over their lives" (*EW*, p. 179).

As Stringfellow would explain in later writings, myriad principalities and powers vie with each other for dominance. The powers are legion, but their ultimate master is death, the penultimate moral power in creation subordinate only to the living Word of God. Christ met and defeated the demonic character of these powers at the cross. Stringfellow strongly implies that the crucifixion itself would be reenacted mimetically in the impending racial crisis.

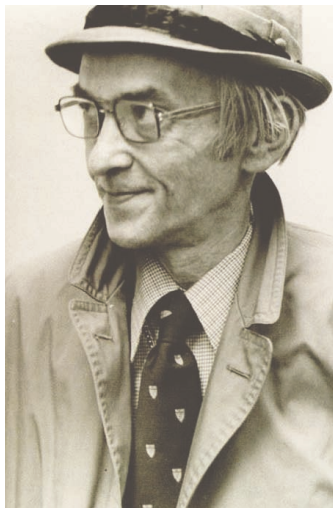
Given the interfaith character of the civil rights movement, Stringfellow's ethical prescription for racial oppression was shocking. The hope of humankind rested not in some humanistic notion of equality but, rather, in an eschatological solidarity through baptism in the crucified Christ. He writes: "The issue is the unity of all humankind wrought by God in the life and work of Christ. Baptism is the sacrament of that unity of all people in God" (*EW*, p. 179).

Did this mean, as a practical matter, that Stringfellow expected Jews, Muslims, and others to convert to Christianity as a prerequisite for common social action? Probably not. Stringfellow viewed baptism as the sacrament of the unity "not of all *Christians*, but of all humanity," explains Wylie-Kellermann. That is, "baptism alters our relationship to all of humanity — ultimately to all of creation" (*EW*, p. 23). In this way, fighting racism is not extrinsic to the gospel but encompassed within its universal purview. Like Barth, Stringfellow founds his commitment to a broad universality in the particularities of Christian faith, setting him on a different course from that of pluralistic approaches to theology and ethics.

Partly for this reason, Stringfellow's stridency remains difficult to assimilate 50 years on, and yet his voice is

needed. Despite myriad changes in society and laws that bespeak progress, racism appears as a fallen principality that won't quite yield to consciousness-raising or to legislative and judicial fiat. Let us hear Stringfellow's prophecy again in the 21st century.

J. Scott Jackson is a writer and independent scholar living in Northampton, Massachusetts.



Stringfellow's stridency remains difficult to assimilate 50 years on, and yet his voice is needed.

equality, and he represented clients involved in various protests (*Alien*, p. 188). Still, Stringfellow emphasized, such efforts do not displace a fundamental solidarity in bondage that all human beings share under the fallen principalities. Stringfellow's vision is radically apocalyptic: "[R]acism is not an evil in human hearts or minds; racism is a principality, a demonic power, a representative, image, and embodiment of death, over

Hope for Humility

Review by Jonathan Canary

Advent this year finds me meditating on our human incapacity to salvage (in theological language, “save”) ourselves — or even to fathom what any true salvation must look like. Even in the ordinary give-and-take of human relationships and endeavors, our efforts are never *quite* adequate. There is always a whiff of failure: that faint but ineradicable taste of mortality.

And so it must be in a fallen world, if we are to have any hope of salvation at all. It is only when we come to the end of ourselves that the door opens. “The garden is the only place there is, but you will not find it / Until you have looked for it everywhere and found nowhere that is not a desert.” Failure demands our attention to a crucial truth: “Nothing can save us that is possible.” These lines are from the beginning of W.H. Auden’s Christmas Oratorio, *For the Time Being*, his attempt to capture the redeeming catastrophe of the Incarnation. The opening passage, appropriately enough, is “Advent” — the season of our yearning, and the ache of our own inadequacy.

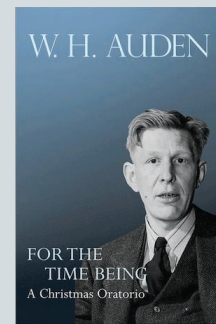
The rest of the poem follows a biblical narrative, although the method is not so much that of the modern scholar as of the medieval mystery play. The familiar figures of the Christmas story are here, but surrounded by modern accoutrements and speaking a 20th-century poetical tongue. Auden does not dismiss history, but he wants to avoid the trap of “historicity” as one more technique to distance ourselves from the immediate and personal threat and promise of Christmas. The Savior’s birth is a specific and singular historical event, but it is not just something that happened once, safely far away, off there somewhere. This is something that has happened, and contin-

ues to happen, to *us*. And a response is demanded.

He captures this crisis in “The Temptation of St. Joseph,” drawing our attention to an often-neglected figure in the Nativity story. (Alan Jacobs’s excellent introduction explains how this section of the poem both expresses and transcends Auden’s own relational struggle.) In St. Joseph’s story we see the devotion of human love put to the test as Divine Love approaches. What it demands is a heartbreaking surrender: humility to accept the salvation God sends, rather than the one we had dreamed or expected. “To choose what is difficult all one’s days / As it if were easy, that is faith. / Joseph, praise.”

As Auden makes clear, all human efforts to attain salvation are potential avenues of escape from the stark demands of Incarnate Love. In his poem, the magi give voice to philosophy, culture, and high abstraction: the pleasures and sorrows of the mind. The shepherds represent the ordinary everyday life of the “working classes”: physical labor and pleasure and pain. At the manger, shepherds and magi in turn describe their efforts — and ultimate failure — to escape the Love that redeems and draws both near. St. Simeon and King Herod each wrestle at length with this same confrontation, and their own response to the event that overturns and renews everything. (King Herod as a modern politician offers an intriguing angle on the events of Matthew 2.)

Nor does Auden allow us to forget that we, too, must respond to Jesus’ arrival. Any retelling of the story, including the poem, stands as a challenge and rebuke to *us*. The Narrator’s closing speech is painfully honest: “Once again / As in previous years we have seen the actual Vision and failed / To do more than entertain



For the Time Being

A Christmas Oratorio

By **W.H. Auden**.

Edited and with an introduction

by **Alan Jacobs**. Princeton.

Pp. 136. \$19.95

it as an agreeable / Possibility.” And yet we cannot escape. Our human efforts are exposed in all their paltry inadequacy. Salvation has arrived. “We can repress the joy, but the guilt remains conscious; / Remembering the stable where for once in our lives / Everything became a You and nothing was an It.”

While the quality is occasionally inconsistent, there are some remarkably poignant and powerful passages. At his best Auden was a first-rate poet, and this work deserves its place alongside his better-known short works. But this is more than simply a noteworthy entry in the annals of 20th-century literature. As with the work of T.S. Eliot or Charles Williams (both of whose influence may be seen in Auden’s poem), this “Christmas Oratorio” is a source for meditation, and for prayer — using the forms of poetry to draw the heart to devotional response. Not just during Advent and Christmas, but “for the time being,” it is for all of us who need to be confronted once again by the devastating and jubilating arrival of salvation in the birth of Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Rev. Jonathan Canary is curate at St. Columba Church in Fresno, California.

Kenotic Obedience

Review by Jon Adamson

John Behr's *Becoming Human* is a richly sparse book. Its tiny, slim shape conceals a weighty depth of meditations. Its pages are arrestingly white, populated by small plots of text, a block quote, or an illustrative icon. The very whiteness and sparsity give the work the life of an icon: heavenly light shining through matter, an image of the divine and the human. This composition gives the book an orientation toward its end, namely, how we can become, in Jesus Christ, living human beings.

Behr is no stranger to this Christian anthropology. His 2006 work, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death*, covered much the same ground in a scholarly fashion. Here, the footnotes disappear and the text becomes plain, urgent, and intimate. He structures the work to give space for St. Irenaeus of Lyons, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Maximus the Confessor, and Apostles to speak as dying men and ardent lovers. One's attention is held, straining to hear their precious, haunting words. As lovers, as dying men, they speak with the voice of Christ in whose image they are made.

These saints find their voice on the verge of their breath being taken away (cf. Psalm 104). Facing martyrdom, St. Ignatius writes: "Suffer me, my brethren; hinder me not from living, do not wish me to die." Of course, he means the opposite, that is, do not find a way to get me out of martyrdom by appealing to Roman officials. For in dying he "shall become a human being," following, as he says, the "example of the Passion of my God."

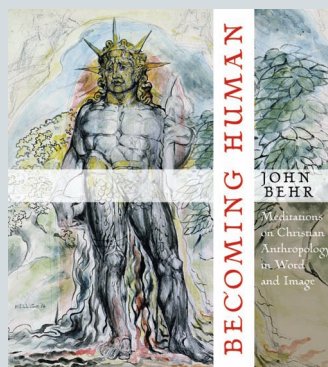
This is true for St. Ignatius and for us, Behr argues, because of Jesus Christ. As Jesus destroyed death by the way that he died, "we can actively use death as the beginning of a new mode of life, a birth into existence as

a human being." This active use of death in our everyday existence is what the Apostle Paul describes to the Galatians as the travail he experiences until Christ is formed in them.

This destroying of death by death "is of such paramount importance," Behr states, "that one risks using too many words to emphasize it." Thus, Behr economically compresses the whole of Scripture within a few short pages. References from the Torah,

It is news spoken and shown in death — "the only thing that all men and women have in common from the beginning of the world onwards, throughout all regions and cultures of the world," Behr observes. And since it is given in this universal language, it remains for each of us to respond, as St. John the Baptist did: "I must decrease, so that he might increase," thus declaring "Let it be" to our own deaths.

Behr is able to handle all this talk



Becoming Human

Meditations on Christian Anthropology in Word and Image

By John Behr.

St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

Pp. 136. \$26

major and minor Prophets, the Psalms, Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation cascade into one another, creating an illusion of reading many more words. It is as if the book is bigger on the inside, filled to overflowing.

This full emptiness is revealed in disappearance, as on the road to Emmaus, still traversed by the Church, according to Behr. God communicates himself by opening the Scriptures and breaking the bread, and calls us to human life thereby. The Incarnation is to be "lived as an ever-contemporary reality." No historical distance separates us from the love of Christ. This is Good News!

of death without a hint of morbidity. There is no darkness to *Becoming Human*, only light: the light of the Gospel illuminating God's purposes for his "project" of creating human beings. Death is not the end, although it will certainly meet us and bring us to become clay. God is the end — our perfection, the One whom we will be like when we see him. Kenotic obedience is before us always, because Jesus is always coming to us. With death and life ahead, Behr asks, finally: "Are we ready, now, to live?"

Jon Adamson is administrator for the Diocese of Northern Indiana.

Pentecost and Moral Agency

By Jordan Hylden

Oliver O'Donovan has poured an ocean of learning and a lifetime of reflection into the tiniest thimbleful of prose, a mere 138 pages. With three sentences, he defines the field of Christian ethics, and with another four he narrates its history. Two sentences are enough to tell you of the relation between philosophy and theology, and ten words apiece will suffice for the Bible and ethics and the nature of moral thinking. I exaggerate, but only somewhat. This is a book to read at least twice, and slowly. O'Donovan here is after the first things of Christian ethics, all of them, in no more space than absolutely necessary.

It is an induction, he tells us, not an introduction, for you cannot be introduced to ethics: you are always already doing it. What you must do is wake up to what you are doing, and then grow in awareness and aptitude. What we wake up to is that we are *selves* in a *world of time*. We are moral agents, not brute beasts or calculators; we possess freedom, intelligence, and responsibility. We do not create moral order for ourselves but rather encounter it, as we run up against the contours of the world God has made. And we awake now, at this particular time and place, where we are free to do what we can, and where what we do makes a difference. Ethics goes off the rails when it forgets these things: into a "mere problem-solving," when we forget the difference our actions make for us as moral agents; into a mode that "parts company with the conditions of nature" when we suppose that we can create our very own bespoke world; or into idealism, when we lose sight of what can actually be done here and now.

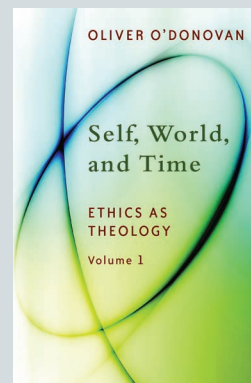
This is ethics: three poles of practical reason. But if we stare too intently

we find that it melts into air. Neither self, world, nor time contain their meaning and coherence in themselves, but instead "each has its coherence from something presumed, something that besets it behind and before." As such, "ethics opens up towards theology" if you think about it long enough. O'Donovan gives us "ethics as theology" — carefully put, rather than an ethics swallowed up into dogmatics or a free-standing philosophical treatise. Ethics proper as an intellectual discipline has its own work to do, "testing and proving" arguments for "adequacy to their context and for internal coherence." But ethics cannot ground itself: it must appeal to authoritative moral teaching, and this is always by definition a *disclosure* from above. Philosophical ethics can clarify alternatives, but cannot resolve them: on philosophical grounds, ethics must be done theologically. Christian ethics, or moral theology, is ethics placed inside the "wider convictions of Christian existence," drawing upon "theological description" of God and the world with which our moral actions have to do.

So ethics can discover the fact of its dependence and call out to God, and then theology has the task of articulating what God is doing in a world to which "redemption has drawn near." Theology situates ethics within "the narrative of a God who, having made us as agents, now redeems and perfects us," a God who *renews* our moral agency as we are *converted*.

O'Donovan self-consciously writes this book, the first of a proposed trilogy, in conversation with his *Resurrection and Moral Order* of nearly 30 years ago. He does not take back his earlier book's emphasis on objective moral order, in view of our "civilization's forgetfulness of created order."

For O'Donovan, "the neo-ortho-



Self, World, and Time

Ethics as Theology, Volume 1
An Induction

By **Oliver O'Donovan**.

Eerdmans. Pp. 138. \$25

doxy that put Christ at the center without putting him *at the center of the created world* gave birth to an Ethics that danced like an angel on the head of a needle." Even so, he has now come to think that "Pentecost and Moral Agency" deserve more emphasis. We must also speak of "the subjective renewal of agency and its opening to the forward calling of God," and so of the Holy Spirit and of prayer. These are not, O'Donovan cautions, alternatives from which we may choose according to taste, or moments we follow in sequence: moral order for the backward-looking conservatives, and new creation for the progressive radicals. Instead, the resurrection speaks both of creation restored *and* of the creature led forward into new creation.

Ethics studied as theology must then place itself within the narrative of salvation and become an evangelical ethics, an evangelical practical reason, which orders self, world, and time to "Christ the center of the world, the bridegroom of the self, the turning-point of past and future." Only here is our fallen world restored, our freedom to act renewed, and our time rescued from futility and unintelligibility. O'Donovan finds this renewal in the great Pauline triad, which he insists should be numbered as faith, love, and hope. Faith comes first, anchoring the moral life "in an awareness of self and responsibility, for agency is disoriented and uncertain until we grasp

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BOOKS

(Continued from previous page)

hold of God's work." Love is preeminent but comes next, "rejoicing in the world as God's creation and its history as the stage of God's self-disclosure." And hope looks ahead, focusing our awareness of time for "the works prepared for us to walk in" and assuring us that God himself will take up our works into his own, as we wait for the promised Kingdom, without which Qoheleth's counsels of futility in the face of death would be quite true.

There is much more wisdom here. Brief sections on the interpretation of Scripture, the relationship between freedom and authority, the communal nature of moral reasoning, the work of practical reason, and others are among the most illuminating treatments of such issues I have come across. It is probably fair to say, as other reviewers have noted, that reading O'Donovan is something like flying around the world at 30,000 feet but never landing. One does wish for a touchdown now and then, to clarify things for the poor reader who may not be accustomed to such rarified air. It would probably be a benefit, as Luke Bretherton has suggested, to say more about the "social, economic, and political conditions necessary to engage in the kinds of disciplined reflection and deliberation O'Donovan exhorts us to undertake," and the social position from which one does this. But I would not say that this vitiates his project, that he merely declaims from Mt. Olympus. Every Christian makes assumptions about the first things of Christian ethics, but very few have thought about them as rigorously as O'Donovan, with as much immersion in the Scriptures and the tradition. Few better "inductions" to that task exist than this book.

The Rev. Jordan Hylden, a board member of the Living Church Foundation, is a doctoral candidate in theology and ethics at Duke University Divinity School.



© Marie-Lan Nguyen /Wikimedia Commons photo

The Cyrus Cylinder, discovered by archaeologists in 1879, is regarded by many as the first known charter of human rights.

CATHOLIC VOICES

Take Justice Seriously, for Love's Sake

By Donn Mitchell

“**M**y soul stood erect, exultant, envisioning a new world where the light of justice for every individual will be unclouded.”

With those words in a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, Helen Keller described her reaction on December 10, 1948, when the United Nations proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, naming as humanity's highest aspiration “the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want.” Keller, who overcame deafness and blindness to become one of the nation's leading public intellectuals and a tireless campaigner for justice, understood the implications of what had been achieved.

The declaration is to date the world's most widely agreed statement of how human beings should treat each other. It recognizes and defines a broader range of rights and duties than those

mentioned in the Magna Carta, the American Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. And it calls on “every individual and every organ of society” to promote respect for the rights it recognizes. It has been endorsed by all the world's major religions and in the past six decades has been affirmed once by the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church and four times by the Lambeth Conference.

December 10 is Human Rights Day across the world, as it has been since 1950. Occurring in the middle of Advent, when the Church recalls humanity's longing to be delivered from the bondage of sin and injustice, the observance may prompt reflection on how cultivating respect for human dignity helps us prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight what long was crooked, to make the rougher places plain.

As my ethics professor, the late Bev-

erly Harrison, once said: “Justice is the minimal face of love.” In a very real sense, by taking justice seriously, we take love seriously.

The first article of the declaration asserts: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” Episcopalians should have no difficulty connecting this assertion to our understanding of Christian duty. In our baptismal vows, we are asked: “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”

This emphasis on human dignity distinguishes the declaration from all previous human rights charters, according to Mary Ann Glendon, a Harvard law professor and former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. In *A World Made New*, she notes that the document sees the individual as in-

(Continued on next page)

CATHOLIC VOICES Take Justice Seriously, for Love's Sake



Eleanor Roosevelt in 1949 with a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

©National Archives/Franklin D. Roosevelt Library photo

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herently relational. It addresses family, community, and employment relationships in ways that the American Bill of Rights and its precursors do not. And unlike earlier charters, it is not structured as a claim against government but as a claim on all human beings and social institutions, including government, churches, and civil society.

The declaration recognizes all of these rights as inherent. It does not “grant” or “confer” them, nor does Human Rights Day commemorate the beginning of human rights.

The Book of Ezra tells us that “the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and

also put it in writing.” This proclamation, inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform on a clay cylinder discovered by archaeologists in 1879, is regarded by many as the first known charter of human rights because it sets out a policy of religious toleration and promotes the material well-being of conquered peoples. A replica of the cylinder commands a place of honor at the United Nations in New York.

Legal historian Harold Berman argues that contemporary human rights discourse is not limited to fostering tolerance but is predicated on the idea that there is a higher law to which all human law must answer. It is today’s version of the divine law of medieval Europe and the natural rights of the

Enlightenment, he says. While concepts of higher law are found in other world religions, modern human rights covenants, he argues, strongly resemble their medieval European precursors — the Peace of God and Truce of God movements of the Cluniac monasteries. Beginning in the late 11th century, the monks of Cluny encouraged whole towns to swear oaths to uphold certain human rights ideals, such as refraining from acts of violence against Jews.

According to Berman, the oaths became crucial to the founding of cities and guilds and informed the shape and tone of legislation promulgated by dukes, kings, and emperors.

The upheavals of the Renaissance

The economic and social covenant identifies housing and health care as human rights, along with social security, a living wage, equal pay for equal work, and the right to form trade unions.

and Reformation challenged accepted patterns of authority and created new categories of rich and poor, majorities and minorities. As nation-states evolved as the dominant polity, human rights were written into charters, constitutions, and treaties.

The emancipation and suffrage struggles of the 19th century refined these concepts further. Finally, in the aftermath of the First World War, human rights found their way into international law through such instruments as the Treaty for the Protection of Minorities of 1919.

But the ultimate failure of these mechanisms to prevent the world's most extensive genocide led to demands for a more comprehensive framework as the founding of the United Nations began.

Proponents recognized a meaningful commitment to human rights would require some agreement about what such rights actually are. To that end, the United Nations created a Commission on Human Rights in 1946, led by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, a member of Church of the Incarnation, New York City; St. James, Hyde Park, New York; and St. Thomas, Washington, D.C.

Frightened by the magnitude of the task, she wrote to her daughter Anna: "tho' the responsibility seems great, I'll just do my best and trust in God." She asked her daughter to pray that she would be "really useful on this job for I feel very inadequate."

Glendon says the declaration "transformed the language and texture of international relations, gave legitimacy to anti-colonial movements, inspired a new form of ac-

tivism, and helped bring down totalitarian regimes."

What does the declaration mean in a world of injustice and abuse? Surprisingly, it has come to mean considerably more than lofty sentiment.

Through the U.N.'s developing multinational treaties, known as covenants, all principles of the declaration have been written into international law. A total of 250 covenants have been developed, but the two most significant are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. By 1976, these two covenants had gained sufficient ratifications to become enforceable under international law. Together with the declaration, they are known as the International Bill of Rights.

In ratifying these covenants, the parties promise that, over time, they will bring their domestic law into compliance with the principles of the treaty, and sanctions can be imposed if they do not.

Almost all nations of the world have ratified both covenants, including some with notably poor track records, such as Cambodia, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Sudan, and Uganda. The major holdouts are China, which has not ratified civil and political rights, and the United States, which has not ratified economic, social, and cultural rights. The first covenant guarantees, among other things, freedom of speech and religion, trial by jury and the presumption of innocence, and freedom from discrimination of all kinds, and from torture, genocide, and slavery. The economic and social covenant identifies housing and health care as human rights, along with social security, a living wage, equal pay for equal work, and the right to form trade unions. It also calls for paid holidays and protection against unemployment.

Anyone who has followed American politics for the past 30 years can readily understand why there has been no

attempt in the Senate to ratify the economic and social covenant since 1989. Even though many of these protections are provided in specific legislation, they are subject to repeal, amendment, and frustration in ways that constitutional rights are not.

An example of frustration is the growing use of "independent contractors" for routine work, which has left millions of Americans without paid holidays or unemployment insurance. The rise of "union-free" consultants and aggressive union-busting tactics has reduced the number of unionized workers to the lowest level since the early 20th century. The result has been 30 years of downward pressure on wages and less cash flowing into the Social Security system.

Americans have recently recognized that economic inequality has grown, so the time would seem right for the Church to press for ratification of the economic and social covenant. But can we do so with integrity? While Episcopalians have taken conscientious and canonical action to eliminate discrimination within the church, our track record on employment issues has never been as good as that of other churches. Recent developments suggest it may be getting worse. The Task Force for Reimagining the Episcopal Church has recommended converting program officers at 815 to independent contractors, and General Theological Seminary has recently attempted to dismiss 80 percent of its professors after they went on strike.

If our church seeks to be a credible witness on human rights, it must apply these principles to its internal life. Only then can our common soul stand erect.

Donn Mitchell teaches religion and ethics at Berkeley College in New York. He is writing a book about Frances Perkins and the religious dimension of the New Deal, portions of which appear at AnglicanExaminer.com.



The main gate at Buchenwald Wikimedia Commons photo

CATHOLIC VOICES

Voices of Buchenwald

By Alexander H. “Sandy” Webb II

Could this be Buchenwald? The cobblestone access road was lush and green. The sky was blue, with a beautiful view of the valley below. Could this be the place where more than 240,000 Jews, Gypsies, and other perceived enemies of the Third Reich once lived in slavery? “If these trees could talk,” Elie Wiesel said five years ago, drawing on his ex-

perience as a survivor of Buchenwald’s horrors (quoted in remarks by President Obama, June 5, 2009; 1.usa.gov/lusrcW6).

In fact, the grounds were eerily quiet. I journeyed alone for more than an hour, trying to hear the voices of inmates amid the ruins. What did they want me to know? I heard nothing until arriving at the site where Dietrich Bonhoeffer was held before his martyrdom at Flossenbürg. His voice rang

clearly in my ear: Grace must never be cheap.

In *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937), Bonhoeffer distinguishes cheap from costly grace. The former requires nothing of us, but “comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart.” The latter, however, “is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.”

I met other martyrs that day. In the

bunker — a solitary confinement wing where disobedient inmates were tortured — hung photographs of inmates who had died there. Two were dressed as I was, in black shirts and white clerical collars. These pastors were sent to the bunker for refusing to stop offering words of hope to their fellow inmates. They died in the posture of Christ — chained to the wall with arms outstretched. They died in the spirit of Christ, shining with a light so bright that even the 20th century's greatest darkness could not overcome it.

Whence comes the strength of the martyrs? The martyrs' convictions seem superhuman, but they were normal people whose circumstances led them to a point beyond which their spirits could not go.

I may never reach such a crossroad, but I have much to learn from the men whose spirits I met at Buchenwald: halfhearted devotion is insufficient. God demands that which we are least willing to surrender — privilege, control, and our very lives.

As I walked up the hill and out of the camp for the last time, my heart was full of rage and my spirit moved to vengeance. How radical it must have seemed in 1948 when Secretary of State George Marshall proposed the redevelopment of Europe, rather than its annihilation.

Can God forgive the ones who tortured and enslaved so many others, who crucified clergy for proclaiming words of hope? Though my heart has no room to forgive the perpetrators of such horrific evil, the heart of God is different in kind. These misguided, deluded, anti-Semitic soldiers were and are God's creatures, and the forgiveness of my sins is inexorably linked to the forgiveness of theirs. *All* sin is borne by the one who had no sin, who sets the high standard of discipleship.

What wondrous love it is that calls us out of the City of Man, that entirely

human land where offense is repaid with vengeance, into the City of God, where the laws of love and forgiveness reign. Wondrous love shows mercy in the face of instinctual hate and fear.

Later that evening, in the comfort and safety of our hotel dining room, I reflected with our pilgrims on the problem of evil, in the light of Revelation 21.

After all warfare and violence has ended, a New Jerusalem will descend from the sky, crushing the whole of this sin-riddled world. In that New Jerusalem, God says: "Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. ... I am the

Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (vv. 4, 6). Evil may win the battle, but God wins the war.

You do not tour a *Konzentrationslager*. You behold its evil and struggle to place your hope in the incarnation of love.

Peace now reigns at this site of genocide, as a monument to the cost of discipleship and a call to courageous people to oppose horror. The lush life encircling the Buchenwald Memorial signals ultimate victory. Evil is real, but love will prevail.

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Reading Radner part 3

The seventh and eighth chapters of Ephraim Radner's *Brutal Unity* press further into "the spiritual politics of the Christian Church" with special attention to *conscience* as a category and a problem. THE LIVING CHURCH published an excerpt from chapter seven, Radner's account of Henri of Navarre's "sacrifice of conscience" (Oct. 7, 2012), with further reflections on the theme by the Rev. Sam Keyes (Sept. 7, 2014). Society, including the society of the Church, depends upon the steady reconfiguration of the self as given to others, not as carefully cordoned off in would-be inviolability.

Chapter eight ranges across a broad political, social-scientific, and generally anthropological terrain under the heading "solidarity," in order to turn up various treasures for theological valuation and application. Here, as elsewhere, Radner the Catholic bids secular learning come without fear of taint: Hobbes, second-language acquisition, marriage as reality construction. Grace perfects nature by pressing its truth into a more satisfying service; the queen will have pleasure in your beauty, therefore do her honor (cf. Ps. 45:12). In this case, the disparate truths are turned to the cause of Christian ecclesiality in order to engage, and begin to overcome, longstanding divisions.

Some interesting points from chapter eight, and then chapter nine:

1. Radner's Christian theory of conscience takes St. Paul to emphasize "the individual's moral opacity," which relativizes conscience (so 1 Cor. 4:1-4, following Stendahl). Indeed, Paul urges a giving up of conscience for the goals of peace (Rom.

14:19). Understood in this way, conscience is not "a capacity, let alone a content or a demand," but "the inescapable process of learning in the world, which reveals the self in relation to others." That is, the process discloses "the reality of love," and its historical form in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Intentionality and self-abandonment paradoxically combine (all from pp. 378-79).

2. Radner works this out in the instance of *solidarity*, a secular term of recent French origin that 20th-century Christian leaders appropriated "to express the most basic purpose and calling of the human race in relationship with God" (p. 382; cf. p. 388ff.). What is it? A virtuous response to the moral and social fact of interdependence; that is, as Pope John Paul II wrote in 1987, "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good ... because we are all really responsible for all" (p. 389). Ultimately, John Paul's exemplary instances of solidarity were the "place-taking" martyrs Peter Claver and Maximilian Kolbe (p. 395; cf. p. 415). And this of course bears an ecclesial lesson, developed well by liberation theologian Jon Sobrino, notwithstanding what Radner calls his inadequate Marxism and "Protestant contingent ecclesiology." In Radner's important summary:

Christian unity is historically given through the actual practice of our self-giving to particular persons to whom we are called by God's own redemptive purposes. Unity as solidarity, in other words, is bound to people, to whom God drives us, as it were, not for our security but for

their well-being, whose guarantee is given by God's own promises to them to which we attach ourselves, however "other" this may appear to all our expectations. And in the letting go of this self-security..., unity is given in a movement across boundaries, so that the reality of God's own "strange" act can be made visible, apprehended, and finally somehow engaged. One learns to be "one" by learning to be other than oneself. The dividing realities of class or wealth, properly understood as whole worlds, are rightly seen as requiring abandonment, so that local loyalties... are necessarily exchanged for the sake of being able to place oneself literally "next to" another. (pp. 395-96; cf. p. 412)

And this example serves as a kind of proof of the thesis of the book: due to the "incapacity" of Christian agreement (chs. 1-3), the safety valve of "proceduralist consensus" helped fend off violence (chs. 4-6), the successes and failures of which have led, and still lead, the world to stumble (back) into the gospel and paradoxically help the Church re-learn its own language (chs. 7-8) (p. 380). A duly chastened Church may take up solidarity as "an essential tool for the theological articulation of consensus and unity in terms of the sacrifice that knowledge and love entails" (p. 382).

3. Chapter nine serves as a review in part but also an illuminating advance, aimed at resolution. How, for instance, to think of "solidarity and consensus: are they the same?" (p. 405). Both have a role to play and they are intrinsically related, though the former digs deeper into the heart

of the Christian mystery. With Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, we can state the point in terms of *justice*: we need procedural rules; and, when they fail, we need to press on prophetically, determined to love “the enemy, the unjust neighbor, the victim.” In fact, all procedural commitment is “contested, peaceless, often restrictedly violent,” with a theatrical “unity.” At its core, though, is the hope for something more, which Christians identify with “the act of God in Christ.” Applied to the Church, her very “life depends upon the convergence of the two spheres,” in a perfect unity that is “given only in Christ” but may be integrated “in the form of Christian solidarity” through acts of creaturely self-giving (pp. 421-22). In this way, again, solidarity proves capable of capturing the sacrificial center of the gospel, which Radner describes as the “unilateral asymmetry of self-giving,” that is, the rightful claim of “the Other” upon us apart from any reciprocity (pp. 412-13, borrowing again from Levinas, here contra Martin Buber).

4. With this thesis in focus, Radner recurs again to politics, through which the sociality and order of the Church as a visible body are determined and lived. Individual sanctity, after all, must issue in love, affording no escape from conflict, as tempting as it is to retreat. And what of wider counsel and accountability? Here, for the first time in *Brutal Unity*, Radner tells something of the story of his experience of “the painful center of unity” as a young missionary priest in Burundi, set down at once amidst the extraordinary holiness of many Christians and at the same time

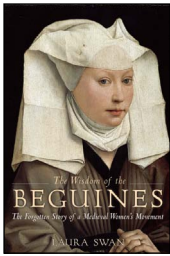
“enormous political turmoil ... filled with violence and deception of the deepest and cruelest and most imbedded kind,” in which all of the churches were “horribly complicit” (pp. 422-23). How to rehabilitate *unity* post-genocide, the more when young Christians, amid “an explosion of new churches, bypassing many of the older ones,” prefer to turn from the past to focus on a hoped-for, non-political future? “Perhaps there are similarities here to feelings about Christian ecclesial life shared among young people in America,” muses Radner. “For what there is of the past is often bitter to the taste, and this includes ideals that were never achieved” (p. 426).

5. What if, in fact, division and unity are “in a sense the same thing, only lived in different ways?” Here Radner articulates, with startling originality, one of the chief gains of his study. Jesus himself states clearly that he came not to bring peace but rather division, even as he prays that all may be one, as if to say: “I would unify the very world I divide, that they may see the oneness I bring.” Is Christ divided, therefore? No! And ... yes, in a way, “whose inescapability is itself murderous.” Christ falls to the ground in Gethsemane, like a grain of wheat (see John 12:24); and, as Simeon says, “this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34). In creating, God divides light and darkness, and in Leviticus love is separative, that is, “love is that which gives life to something outside itself.” *What then is unity?* It is not something, writes Radner, that can “cleanse itself of division.” But a unity that can defeat death is one,

A unity that can
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one, that turns
and faces its own
genesis, as it were;
it stoops and
assumes its
contours.”

“and only one, that turns and faces its own genesis, as it were; it stoops and assumes its contours.” Hence the one new man of Ephesians 2 is wrought “in one body through the cross,” drawing even those who were far off near “in the blood of Christ” (2: 16, 13). These are ecclesiological statements, according to Scripture, which teaches that “the very shape and lineaments of division and unity are necessarily given in the body of Jesus and the shape of his body’s submission in life, death, and resurrection” (all from pp. 427-29). Christians following after their Lord walk this edge of unity that is “the persecuting blade that has always cut and sculpted the

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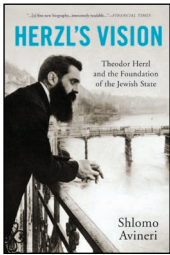


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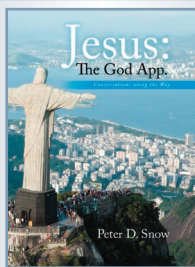
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(Continued from previous page)
figure of Christian testimony We are called to be one, but our life depends upon the sharp edge of division. Give me peace, through your sword, O Lord!" (p. 432).

6. Such a passional ecclesiology would teach the divided churches to cherish first of all "the divine movement of God's own incarnate solidarity," within which protective feints at autonomy make little sense, save as rebellion. Rather than seeking to shore up an abstract "unity in diversity" among the churches, we might rather aim at unity in subjection — submission and abandonment — whereby our divisions may be "exposed and torn down, just as the Son of Man has exposed himself to the smiters, so bearing all things (Isa. 53; 1 Pet. 2:24; Matt. 8:17)" (pp. 433-35). The 1961 meeting of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi provides a certain precedent here in its vision of "a death and rebirth of many forms of church life as we have known them [N]othing less costly can finally suffice."

7. To be sure, such a vocation presumes a steadfast "search for procedural regularity and justice," both within and without the Church. As Radner says, we, who are so often godless Christian sinners, must follow our Lord who gave himself to the godless: "the divided to the divided" (pp. 436-37). In the Church, this means serving her order, and presupposing it. Our work will have less to do with "dialogue," however, than with the solidarity of sacrificial love, which has an "essentially disruptive and nonconformist character" (pp. 438-39). Likewise, in secular contexts, we face an "inescapable demand" for "procedural regulation and fallibilist consensualism" (p. 441); and, as these strategies inevitably founder under pressure of opportunism, renewed resentment, and justification for future violence, something else and more is needed: a "witness, which passes out beyond the shadows and figures of political

life into the fullness of solidarity ... that can, from a practical point of view, save politics from its human demise. Natural solidarities engage processes, while Christian solidarity enacts its form beyond the claims of such processes while suffering their intransigence" (p. 441; cf. pp. 439-40).

8. What might this look like? Radner offers his own pointed questions:

When Jehovah's Witnesses are arrested, where are the Catholic bishops? And vice versa. Who prays with whom? Who gives money to build whose church? What sacramental presence is provided by whom to the other and, in so doing, giving up what personal obligations? Upholding the claims of the smallest groups, violating political distinction, avoiding lawsuits, keeping bridges open to those who have accused and left the Church. The acquiescence to procedural engagement must give way, at least here at the center of the Church's life of witness, to the self-offering of all a church constitutes to that which denies or to those who deny its value. (p. 442)

In this way, individual Christians, as well as churches, may help to construct "concrete Catholicity" rather than subverting it (p. 442).

9. There is more. Radner's explication of the four marks of the Church makes for breathtaking spiritual reading; with Rowan Williams, he applies them to Jesus "truly" and to the Church "only as she lives in and through him" (p. 443). *Brutal Unity* delivers a lucid, 20-page conclusion, susceptible of ready comprehension, especially if one has worked through the preceding study. It almost might have been the introduction, but one can imagine that Radner wanted to incentivize the road ahead as a way of formation and transformation. Traveling upon it, pilgrims are sure to see something of "the shape, meaning, and passage of unity itself" (p. 468).

Christopher Wells

PEOPLE & PLACES

Deaths

The Rt. Rev. **J. Mark Dyer** died November 11 at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria. He was 84.



Dyer

Dyer was born in Manchester, New Hampshire. He served in the U.S. Navy Fleet Air Force, Carrier Air Group Seven from 1950 to 1954, including combat service in Korea. He was professed as a Benedictine monk of St. Anselm Abbey near Manchester in July 1960, and ordained a Roman Catholic priest there in 1963.

Dyer entered the Anglican Church of Canada in 1969. He was received as a priest of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Massachusetts in 1971, where he served on the diocesan staff and later as rector of Christ Church in South Hamilton from 1978 to 1982.

Dyer was consecrated a bishop in 1982, following his June election as bishop coadjutor of the Diocese of Bethlehem. He was installed as the seventh bishop of Bethlehem in December 1983 and served until 1995, when he resigned to accept a call to become professor of systematic theology and director of spiritual formation at Virginia Theological Seminary, a position he assumed in 1996.

Three Archbishops of Canterbury — Robert Runcie, George Carey, and Rowan Williams — gave Dyer significant assignments during their tenures.

Dyer served on the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission and as Anglican chair of the international Anglican-Orthodox Commission charged with carrying on doctrinal discussions between the worldwide Anglican Communion and the Orthodox Church.

In 1970, Dyer married the Rev. Marie Elizabeth Dyer, who died in 1999. In 2004 he married Amelia J. Gearey Dyer, James Maxwell Professor of Christian Education and Pastoral Theology, and director of the ministry resident program at Virginia Theological Seminary.

Bishop Dyer is survived by his children John and Jennifer Dyer; stepchildren Robyn and Amanda Gearey; two grandchildren, Sam and Ava Wandler; and his wife. He is also survived by a sister, Patricia Cashin.

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He Comes Again

“Peace, break thee off; look where it comes again” (Hamlet, I,i). So the dead king appears, so death walks, so the end comes. What now is to be done with this news that the foundations have opened and the tormented dead take their place among the living? What past crimes haunt the present, what deeds done in secret spread a sickness unto death! All hell is breaking loose; it is, it has, and more is to come. A price is to be paid in blood and treasure, again and again.

Having returned to a land bereft of its sacred foundations, dry and lifeless like a valley of bones, the pilgrims look to an end, but not an end in death’s striding, death’s invocation of yet more blood. Rather, they ask, they demand, they lament in telling the heavens to divide. The firmament’s fabric is torn, the hills shiver, fires kindle, the glory of God goes out “so that all the nations might tremble at your presence” (Isa. 64: 2). The vision they await is beyond all knowing: “From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him” (Isa. 64:4). They expect something and someone not of this world to break in, to ride down upon the winds and to take root in Earth’s soil and flower forth in human hearts. Look where it comes! Look — life itself!

Jesus speaks: “In those days, after that suffering.” Thus he speaks to every time and place. And he sees reflected in the heavens signs of his own arrival. “The Sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. They will see ‘the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory’” (Mark 13:24-26). *Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.* The Eternal Word camps in human community, but not simply as the fruit of that community void of divine grace. The Word is the unmade intelligence of the Father, the ordering and

renewing presence from beyond heaven and earth.

He comes in creating and ordering all things, he comes as voice to prophets, he comes as the written law, he comes in the forming of a people and nation, he comes as judgment, he comes as a call to renew the temple, he comes as the people’s expectancy. In the fullness of time he comes as the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth. He comes in what he says and does, in parabolic word and perplexing deeds. He comes in his suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and a thousand million Spirit-filled comings in sacraments, and rites, and signs, and times, and moments, and tears. He comes in the unearned blessings of love and life. But he comes mysteriously as the one beyond this world who is the world’s very being, our meaning, and our life.

Our war-torn and anxious world seeks not from us a happy denial, but a deep hope that waits and works from the promise of God’s arrival in his Son from moment to moment. This is why, before turning to Paul’s criticism of the people in Corinth, his commendation of their gifts is to be taken as entirely sincere. They are gifted because the Gift has come. “I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind” (1 Cor. 1:4).

Look It Up

Read Mark 13:27. Keep awake.

Think About It

Look you. He comes.

O Comfort My People

Some may see and wish to lay emphasis upon the violent drama of Advent, the crushing arrival of a sudden end. "The heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed" (2 Pet. 3:10). Wars already fought show this prediction not as a metaphor but a literal truth, and the threat of such destruction continues as a fact of modern life. The question is raised: "Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord" (2 Pet. 3:11-12). Earnestly desiring a new heaven and a new earth, have we denied our citizenship, spurned our responsibility, and turned against all natural affections? God forbid. Now is the moment to pursue a life of holiness and godliness. Now is the time to "strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish" (2 Pet. 3:14). News of the end should bind the heart to the present.

It's not the end of the world, but the people sitting in Hematology/Oncology, my new friends, have, it must be admitted, a significant challenge. But there is no talk of death, no wallowing in serious ponderings about the brevity of life. Instead, there is a respectful quiet, gestures of kindness, and the occasional laugh. In other words, when death is really there, its defeat is most notable in the courage and dignity and, even, lightness of spirit shared, and, of course, the underground current of sorrow and loss. There are exceptions, but those who talk profoundly of death likely have never courted this barren truth. So the emphasis might be where it belongs: the present moment, all its joys and sorrows, and the hope of comfort.

Meet the real Jesus. "The earliest pictures of Christ, those of the Shepherd and the Teacher, are veiled, symbolic figures, only recognizable to the

initiated. ... He is usually shown as a young man dressed in a short tunic which leaves one shoulder bare (*tunica exomis*) and carrying a sheep on his shoulders (motif from St. John). He is generally surrounded by his flock and stands amid the praying souls (*orantes*), quiet and gentle, in the garden of his paradise" (*Atlas of the Christian World*, 1959, p. 44).

In other words, he knows just how to walk into Hematology/Oncology. He speaks quietly and tenderly, he is among the *orantes* who sit in silence, or whisper, or laugh, or weep. He knows that all the people are grass. They know it too. One man says, "I'd like to get back on my bike (Harley), but my left leg is nearly useless right now." Jesus agrees, but only with his body, not a word. But, of course, the word made flesh, who in both life and death is ever present, stands forever (Isa. 40:8).

Jesus prepares the way, sending for-bearers (the Old Testament) and new bearers (the Church) to help our weakened rider. He straightens the path, lifts up the valley, brings low the mountain. It is not a life-and-death trail of hairpin turns and treacherous cliffs. A smooth and simple way prepared, Jesus speaks: "See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him (Isa. 40:10). Ride for all the freedom you feel; ride for the life in you; ride, if you must, in heart and sorrow. Go, because the going is without end. Comfort, O comfort my people!"

Look It Up

Read Isaiah 40:10. Lower your voice.

Think About It

If they know death, leave death alone! Comfort.



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For more information about our worship services in the Anglican evangelical and orthodox tradition, Christian education for the entire family, or our Children's and Student Ministries, visit stmartinsepiscopal.org.

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Witness and Subject

John is sent that all might believe not *in him* but *through him*. Eschewing eschatological titles that risk drawing attention away from his essential role, he asserts, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord'" (John 1:23). Lifting up his voice, he shows himself to be a witness to the light, the true light that is coming into the world. "He himself was not the light, but came to testify to the light" (John 1:8). The translation "to testify" is unfortunate. It obscures an important alliteration; the noun "witness" is closely related to the verb "to witness." Behind both one hears the Greek word for "martyr." John gives himself entirely as a martyr to his role as witness. He is the witness who has come to bear witness to "the one who is coming" (John 1:27).

It is quite possible to see in John's title *Witness* and his action as one who *witnesses* a description of every Christian disciple in relation to the subject of faith, Christ our Lord. "What *martyria* and *martyrein* are may best be seen if we take as literally as possible the *peri* and genitive with which John's Gospel often denotes the object of witness. Witness is truly and in the best sense speaking *about* a subject, describing it exactly and fully, pointing to it, confirming and repeating it, and all in such a way that the subject remains itself and speaks for itself, that it is not in any way absorbed in human speech or shouted down and overpowered by it. ... As we come to faith, we cannot bypass or leap over the witness, the prophet, the apostle" (Karl Barth, *Witness to the Word*, p. 52). In this sense John the Baptist represents both every individual disciple and the Church itself as living witness to the Word. The Witness, confident in his calling, remains nonetheless humble. "He is not the light, but came to bear witness to the light."

John bears witness to Jesus, the eternal Word of the Father. Jesus

comes among us, enters all that we are, wraps us in his enfolding arms, and vests us with baptismal innocence and new life. So the Witness must witness to the arrival of *joy*. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isa. 61:10). Reject not this description. This is who we are in Christ. How can this be? Listen again: "He has clothed me with the garments of salvation." It is God's work, not ours. But the work accomplished is ours entirely. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Having put on Christ, a transformation begins, our habitual and actual sanctification, which, though adding nothing to the foundation of faith, is the necessary effect of imputed righteousness (see Richard Hooker's treatise on justification). We grow; we change. The Lord causes us to grow and, mysteriously, this growth occurs in the intersection of human freedom and divine providence. "For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations" (Isa. 61:11).

We are not the light. We bear witness to the light. And yet the light shines in our hearts, radiates in our deeds.

Look It Up

Read Canticle 15 (the Magnificat).

Think About It

My soul is "my whole being."



Darkness to Light

The Church of St. Michael and St. George outside of St. Louis is never more alive than in the season of Advent when the music takes on an added poignancy alongside the thought-provoking preaching of the Gospel. Advent begins with the Great Litany, sung in a procession recalling the journey of the Israelites through the desert in search of God's Promised Land. A candlelight service of Advent Lessons and Carols is sung on the Second



Sunday of Advent; salvation history is recounted as the metaphorical procession — from darkness to light — leading us to the true Light, Jesus Christ. The traditional Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols is sung on the afternoon of the Fourth Sunday of Advent as the story of Christ's birth is told. The season culminates on Christmas Eve. Advent is our way of being reoriented to the strange new world of the Gospel and remade in the likeness of Christ.

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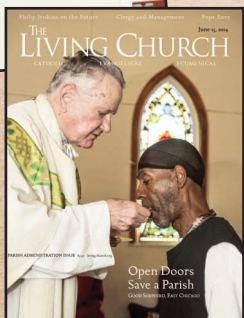
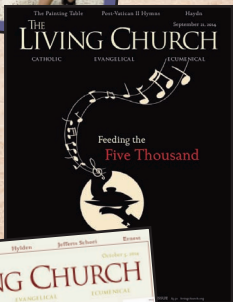
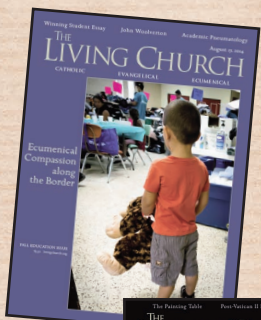
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