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Anna Meyer photo

### ON THE COVER

Merely a decade ago, the Episcopal Church had 11 seminaries that offered residential theological formation. Today, while nine such seminaries remain, only five still offer residential theological formation. See page 12.



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# Albany Elects Advocate of Same-Sex Marriage

By Kirk Petersen

After a dramatic day of voting, a strong supporter of same-sex marriage was elected to become the 10th Bishop of Albany — succeeding a bishop whose uncompromising opposition led to the end of his ministry in the Episcopal Church.

The Rev. Jeremiah Williamson, currently the rector of Grace and St. Stephen's in Colorado Springs, Colorado, prevailed on the fourth ballot after a series of votes that revealed a sharp split between clergy and laity. If bishops and standing committees grant consent, he will take leadership of a diocese that has been roiled in conflict for the past five years.

"I believe God has called us together to be one body, to spread the gospel of Jesus, to witness to the power of love to transcend our differences, to hold our hearts together," Williams told the convention by video link. "I believe that God has called us together to dream with our God into the future. I am so excited to hear your stories, to build trust, to allow our relationship to blossom."

Through the first three ballots, Williamson led among the laity, first in a plurality and then in increasing majorities, and ultimately he received just under three-quarters of the lay vote. The Rev. Scott Garno — the most conservative of the four candidates — led in the clergy vote on each of the first three ballots, topping out at 50 percent on the third. But on the fourth ballot, with the slate narrowed to two candidates, one of Garno's clerical supporters apparently switched sides. Williamson received 56 votes to Garno's 54, or 51 percent to 49 percent, and was declared the bishop-elect.

Garno, the rector of St. Stephen's in Delmar, New York, is well-known among the Albany clergy. He served as president of the Standing Committee, which became the ecclesiastical



Williamson

authority of the diocese after the resignation of Bishop William H. Love in early 2021. A church court found that Love violated his vow of obedience by refusing to accept a change in church policy on same-sex marriage. He now serves as a bishop in the Anglican Church in North America.

Williamson and Garno were the two candidates at the opposite ends of the spectrum on the issue of same-sex marriage. All four candidates pledged to adhere to the church's policy, adopted in 2018 via Resolution B012, that same-sex marriage rites must be made available in every diocese where the practice is legal under secular law.

Garno, the only candidate who explicitly stated the traditional doctrine that marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman, nevertheless said he would not stand in the way of same-sex marriages in the diocese. Williamson was the only candidate who explicitly supported same-sex marriage, and said he had personally blessed two such unions.

The clergy in the Diocese of Albany, as a group, appear to be considerably more conservative than the laity — even after the departure of some clergy in the wake of Love's resignation. This is the opposite of the apparent pattern in the church's domestic dioceses as a whole, in which more than 90 percent

of bishops diocesan support same-sex marriage.

The consecration is scheduled for February 24, 2024.

The Diocese of Albany is one of six dioceses in the state of New York, comprising more than 100 parishes and missions spread across an area larger than the state of Massachusetts.

## Ayala Harris Says Bishop Made 'Unwanted Contact'

By Kirk Petersen

Julia Ayala Harris alleges that her former bishop made inappropriate contact of a sexual nature immediately after her 2022 election as president of the House of Deputies, prompting her to file a formal complaint through the church's Title IV disciplinary process for clergy.

The Rt. Rev. Edward Konieczny denies it. "There was absolutely no sexual misconduct or inappropriate verbal comments in this matter," he said in a September 13 letter to the House of Bishops.

Ayala Harris has been a communicant in the Diocese of Oklahoma for many years, and Konieczny stepped down as Bishop of Oklahoma in 2020. The two served together from 2015 to 2022 on the Executive Council.

On August 30, Ayala Harris announced in a letter to the House of Deputies that a retired bishop had made "unwanted and non-consensual physical contact" with her, along with "inappropriate verbal statements," in a manner that prompted her to file a formal complaint. She said this occurred as she was waiting to be introduced to the House of Bishops right after her election. When asked by TLC if the contact was sexual in nature, she gave a one-word response through her spokesperson: "Yes."

Ayala Harris did not name the

retired bishop in her letter, and declined to do so in response to media inquiries. Konieczny was identified as the bishop in question on TLC's website on September 5, and he initially was unable to comment because of a pastoral direction.

He issued his denial after the restriction was removed. In response, Ayala Harris said by email, "I unequivocally stand by my statements."

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry "chose to recuse himself in this Title IV matter to protect the integrity of the process, and close professional relationships factored into that decision," said Public Affairs Officer Amanda Skofstad.

Curry designated the Rt. Rev. Dena Harrison, a former suffragan bishop of Texas and member of the Disciplinary Board for Bishops, to oversee the Title IV case.

On the evening of September 5, Bishop Curry announced a proposal for examining the church's discipline.

Curry asked the Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Con-

stitution, and Canons to take these steps:

1. Review how the church has done the work of ecclesiastical discipline for bishops over the years and to outline the evolution of this work;
2. Listen to the concerns and hopes of the laity, clergy, and bishops of this church;
3. Identify what has worked and what needs improvement;
4. Recommend to the General Convention needed canonical and procedural changes in ecclesiastical discipline of bishops;
5. Identify funding needed to engage this work.

Ayala Harris, 42, is the youngest person in modern times, and the first Latina, to be elected president of the House of Deputies, the second-ranking officer of the church. In her letter to the House of Deputies, she wrote: "I was physically overpowered and lost bodily autonomy by a retired bishop waiting for my arrival to greet our colleagues in the House of Bishops."

Konieczny, 68, widely known as

"Bishop Ed" because of the difficulty of pronouncing his last name, stands well over six feet tall. He is a former police officer, and has served as an informal bodyguard for Curry at many events.

In 2018, the Executive Council elected Konieczny to serve as the Episcopal Church's bishop member of the Anglican Consultative Council, one of the four Instruments of Communion of the global Anglican Communion. At that time, in addition to Executive Council, Konieczny served as a member of the presiding bishop's Council of Advice and as vice president of Province VII; and had served as co-chair of the Joint Nominating Committee for the Election of the Presiding Bishop.

Title IV proceedings are intended to be confidential, but the burden of confidentiality falls unevenly, as the church has no means of imposing discipline on people who are not ordained.

Ayala Harris said she spoke out publicly after being dissatisfied with the

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outcome of the year-long Title IV disciplinary process. “Despite all the evidence, including three eyewitnesses to the incident, the church attorney assigned to this matter has chosen to refer it for a pastoral response instead of discipline,” she wrote, calling it “an obvious abuse of discretion by the church attorney.”

Ayala Harris’s revelation touched off a tsunami of responses and support during Labor Day weekend. As TLC first reported September 1, a group of female bishops circulated a letter to the House of Bishops saying: “We are angered by and deeply concerned about the perception — or the reality — that bishops get a free pass on behavioral issues.”

The letter was drafted by Province VIII bishops who self-selected through an email discussion, and was sent to Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry initially with the signatures of 29 bishops. One of the organizers, Bishop Susan Brown Snook of San Diego, told TLC: “We want the church to know we are not looking the other way.”

The number of signatures had grown to 55 by the time the letter was posted on Facebook on the evening of September 3. The vast majority of the signatories are current bishops diocesan, who collectively lead about half of the Episcopal Church’s dioceses.

On September 4, Labor Day, an ad hoc group of priests and others circulated an open letter telling Ayala Harris that she has “taken a great risk and

shown great courage and love in making visible that which was meant to remain hidden.” The letter challenged the House of Bishops to make “a direct and public response to the report that the second-ranking officer in our Church — a lay Latina woman of color — was publicly assaulted at the doorway to your House, by a member of your House.”

The letter from the bishops begins: “We are aware of several recent high-profile cases in which bishops were accused of improper behavior, and many in the church believe those bishops received few or no consequences.” The letter does not identify specific cases, but in addition to the allegations against Konieczny, two other bishops this year have faced or been threatened with disciplinary investigations under Title IV.

An earlier case that did lead to sanctions against a bishop also generated controversy, because of a perception that the process was more supportive of the bishop than of the dioceses he led. The Rt. Rev. Wayne M. Hougland Jr., bishop of the dioceses of Eastern Michigan and Western Michigan, was suspended for a year in 2020 after admitting adultery. He resigned near the end of his suspension, but in the meantime the dioceses were responsible for his benefits and 60 percent of his salary, while also bearing the expense of a part-time provisional bishop.

The Hougland episode led the 2022 General Convention to order a review of the Office of Pastoral Development, resulting in a separation of two functions of the office: bishop discipline

and pastoral support for bishops. In August, the Rev. Barbara Kempf began a new role as intake officer for bishop discipline, working closely with Bishop Todd Ousley, head of the Office of Pastoral Development, but reporting to Curry.

Kempf is both a priest and an attorney. She has served as an administrative law judge and state health department legal investigator, and as Title IV intake officer for the Diocese of Indianapolis.

## GSFA Opens Secretariat, Plans Cairo Assembly

By Mark Michael

Archbishop Justin Badi Arama of South Sudan announced September 1 that the Global South Fellowship of Anglicans has opened a secretariat in Cairo and is convening a meeting of traditionalist Anglican leaders in October to plan for the body’s first assembly, which will gather in Cairo on June 11-13, 2024.

“Our calling is to fulfill in our generation the role of ‘the holy remnant’ in Scripture,” Badi wrote. “The holy remnant sought to be faithful to the Lord and his word when national Israel went astray and broke covenantal faithfulness with the God who established her. Likewise, we will maintain visual differentiation from those in our Communion whom we believe to have departed from the historic faith.”

The GSFA has existed as an informal fellowship of Anglican leaders since 1994, but was relaunched as a

## Bishop Singh Resigns

After conversation with the two presidents of dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan, Bishop Prince Singh has resigned. The dioceses announced the decision on the morning of September 8 — a day after the Church Center announced that Singh had been restricted from ordained ministry.

“Our Standing Committee Presidents have met with Bishop Singh and reached a mutual decision: it is time for him to step down as our bishop provisional, allowing him to focus on the next phase of the Title IV process,

his family, and his personal well-being, and allowing our dioceses to step ahead in forward-thinking mission together, focused on our collective ministry and ongoing discernment,” the announcement said. “The bishop’s resignation is effective as of today.”

Bishop Singh said his resignation is not an admission of guilt. His grown sons and his former wife have accused him of subjecting them to violence throughout the sons’ childhoods. From the beginning, the bishop has disputed their allegations and expressed confidence that he has not violated Title IV.

covenantal fellowship in 2019, when it adopted a covenantal structure for its life, focused on a shared commitment to traditional teaching and practice, and a greater degree of mutual accountability. The June 2024 assembly will be the first formal gathering of the body's members as a covenantal fellowship.

The group issued a series of statements during the 2022 Lambeth Conference, criticizing the decennial gathering's failure to clearly endorse Lambeth Resolution I.10, which defines homosexual conduct as sinful and rejects same-sex unions. GSFA leaders urged bishops attending the conference to differentiate themselves from Western progressives by refraining from receiving the Eucharist.

In a statement issued last February, the GSFA said its bishops were "no longer able to recognize the present Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rt. Hon. & Most Revd. Justin Welby, as the 'first among equals' leader of the global Communion" because of the Church of England's decision to prepare liturgies for blessing same-sex unions.

The GSFA primates will gather with other invited leaders who share their theological commitments on October 17-19 "to consult together on how we

can shape our common life, as orthodox provinces, dioceses and networks, as a 're-set' Communion, marked by reform and renewal." This body will make specific plans for the June 2024 assembly.

Those gathering for the October meeting, Badi said, will also share in a service of dedication for the group's new office in Cairo, which is staffed by Miranda Mounir, who was appointed as Cairo operations manager on August 1. Mounir leads a staff team of six that will make arrangements for the assembly.

Badi's letter also invites provinces, dioceses, and networks that share the GSFA's commitments to apply for membership. Eleven provinces, he notes, have already become regular members: Alexandria, Anglican Church in Brazil, the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), Bangladesh, Chile, Congo, Myanmar, South East Asia, South Sudan, and Uganda. Nine of these provinces are in communion with the See of Canterbury, but two (the Anglican Church in Brazil and the ACNA) are not.

Associate membership, Badi said, is for dioceses and networks of traditionalist Anglicans within progressive provinces, while parachurch ministries can apply for mission partner status.

## Australians May Codify an Indigenous Voice

By Robyn Douglass  
Correspondent

Australians will vote October 14 on whether to establish an Indigenous Voice in Parliament. Voting is compulsory, so it's something all Anglican Australians have a stake in.

The plan is to set up a body of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to provide advice to the government on any matters that concern Australia's First Nations people. The Voice (voice.gov.au) is not a third house of parliament, but it will be enshrined in the Constitution if it wins a majority of affirmative votes and prevails in a majority of states (four of six).

The Voice was proposed by a convention of Aboriginal people in central Australia in 2017, which produced

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the Uluru Statement from the Heart (ulurustatement.org). It's a single page that sets out three goals for the nation: to fix Aboriginal people's place in the Constitution, a Makaratta Commission (understood as truth-telling about the past), and a treaty.

When Australia was settled by the English in 1788, it was described as *terra nullius* — empty land. That fiction was overturned by the High Court in 1992, but there has never been a treaty with any of the (roughly) 250 Indigenous nations, which make up about 3 percent of Australia's 25.7 million people.

Australian Indigenous people are disadvantaged in many ways, despite years of often well-intentioned support. All governments have pledged to support closing the gap (closingthegap.gov.au) between Indigenous people's lives and the rest of the population.

But changing the Constitution is a tall order, and seldom successful. The discussion has become increasingly bitter. The Anglican Church of Australia's General Synod supported the Voice proposal as far back as 2017, and affirmed it again by its standing committee in April. Australian bishops reiterated their support for the Statement from the Heart when they met in March, and are urging people to think, talk, and pray about it.

The Diocese of Sydney, known for its conservatism, stopped short of telling people how to vote, but at its September 2022 meeting passed a motion encouraging discussions in churches and urging people to "give generous consideration to the case to vote Yes."

The Voice would comment on practical matters, as the Rev. Canon Glenn Loughrey, a Wiradjuri man in the comfortable Melbourne suburb of Glen Iris, told TLC.

"Remembering First Peoples think communally, this gives us a seat at the table on matters that concern us

— education, incarceration, stolen children, education, housing, living conditions, health, and more. It is not a quick fix but will, over time, begin to address these issues as we see the results of dialogue and listening on both sides," he said. Elders use the metaphor of seven generations, Canon Loughrey added.

A Voice would begin to right the wrongs of two centuries, said the Ven. Peter Sandeman, archdeacon for social justice in South Australia. He told TLC that the church, more than many institutions, has reflected on its part in the colonial enterprise.

"The role the church played in the dispossession of Aboriginal people of their traditional lands is clear. It's not all bad — there are some bright spots — but overall, the church, particularly the Church of England as the established church of the colonial power, went along with it," he said.

"When the dominant thesis was that the Aboriginal people were a lesser race, the churches stood up against that

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on the basis that all are made in the image of God, but unfortunately the church then resorted to running the missions and, as such, became complicit in the colonial project.

“The Aboriginal community is asking for justice and seeking peace and reconciliation with the wider community,” he said. “Our role as the church is to apply the deep wisdom and the teachings that we are called to be reconciled with our brothers and sisters.”

Australia’s Aboriginal bishop, Chris McLeod, who also serves as dean of St. Peter’s Cathedral in Adelaide, says the church is at its best while listening to the voiceless.

“That’s one of our central callings, to be followers of Jesus and to live in the way that Jesus lived alongside those who are oppressed, poor, and outcast,” the soft-spoken Gurindji man said.

“Makaratta means coming together after a time of struggle,” he told TLC. “That’s a positive thing; it’s about reconciliation, really, and I think people get very fearful of the idea of treaty. The treaty really means coming to an agreement of how we are going to live together, dealing with the issues of the past in what would be a fair and just way to live together now.”

He believes churches have much to offer in their consultative decision-making, because they are used to coming together to discuss contentious issues.

Canon Loughrey said that as the Voice has support from 80 percent of Indigenous people, a yes vote would say that “the rest of Australia wishes to include and respect us; we are both seen and heard and therefore exist as real people, not as *persona nullius* [empty bodies].”

“If the answer is yes, I believe each of us will walk just a little straighter and speak more confident that others will listen,” he said.

If the vote fails, Bishop McLeod fears a more divided, more polarized community. And while Australians mostly ignore God, there must be space for us to “be still and pray and



McLeod

listen — not for the obvious,” he said.

It’s a point Sandeman endorsed: “Although Australia is one of the more secular Western societies — compared with the United States and England, for example — we still have a capacity, like the prophets calling the nation to a better way of being.”

## Ark. Bishop-Elect’s Mother Made Vestments for Him

By Kirk Petersen

John Harmon knew at the age of 11 that he wanted to become a priest. He wanted it so badly that his mother, a seamstress, made him a set of vestments.

At 17, he fled his native Liberia during a brutal civil war — a conflict that claimed the lives of his father and older brother.

As a priest in the United States, he cofounded the Episcopal Service Corps with a \$5 million grant from Trinity Church Wall Street.

And on August 19, he was elected the 14th Bishop of Arkansas. If bishops and standing committees grant consent, he will be consecrated January 6, 2024, in Little Rock.

Harmon, who has been rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., since 2000, is slated to become the second Black bishop in the Diocese of Arkansas. In 1918, Edward Thomas Demby was elected “Bishop Suffragan for Colored Work” for Arkansas and the Province of the Southwest.

Demby died before Harmon was born, but he is partly responsible for Harmon’s decision to run for bishop. “Arkansas, in my thinking, is the place where the Episcopal Church planted the seeds of hope for justice and racial reconciliation,” he said, noting that Demby was the first Black bishop consecrated for a diocese in the United States. (Black bishops were consecrated earlier in Haiti and Liberia.)

There’s another reason he ran in Arkansas. As a seminarian, he came to believe it is more important to revitalize existing churches than to build new ones, “and Arkansas was very clear in its profile that they wanted to strengthen small congregations.”

Missionaries established the Episcopal Church in Liberia in 1836, and it became independent of the U.S.-based church in 1979. Harmon was born into a devout Episcopal household, and his father led the family in Morning Prayer every day. He learned to read from the Bible, the 1928 prayer book, and the 1940 Hymnal. (When he got

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to college, a professor complained that his writing style was archaic.)

Harmon was the youngest of his family, 10 years younger than his sister, and his biological brothers were out of the home. “But my family raised other children ... who were seeking a better life or education experience,” and there were never fewer than 10 children in the home. In addition to his mother’s work as a seamstress, his father was a goldsmith, making jewelry and gold crowns for teeth.

“I kept telling my mother I wanted to be a priest. And I thought at one point she got really frustrated with me, saying I was too young to even be thinking that way,” he said. “Two months after my 11th birthday, she took me to the new rector, who had just come from EDS, Episcopal Divinity School. It was a Saturday in February, and she said to him, ‘My son wants to be a priest.’ And she left me there.”



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In addition to being rector of St. Mark’s, in Cape Palmas, the rector served three other churches part time. So Harmon became his acolyte, traveling with him to another church after the service at St. Mark’s.

The early 1980s was a grim period in his life. His mother died from illness in 1980, around the time Master Sergeant Samuel Doe overthrew the Liberian government in a bloody military coup. Harmon was nearing military age. His siblings feared for his life, and arranged for him to move to New Jersey in 1982 at age 17. The violence in Liberia continued for 14 years, and Harmon’s father and brother were both killed in the conflict. His father was “killed and mutilated — that’s what I was told,” Harmon said, adding that coming to the United States “was life-saving.”

In America, Harmon continued telling anybody who would listen that he wanted to be a priest. He persuaded the late John Shelby Spong, the Bishop of Newark, to meet with him while he was still in high school. “And in that meeting, he just interrupted and said, ‘Do you mind going to college in the South, in Virginia?’ I said, ‘No, I don’t mind,’” Harmon recalled.

Spong was on the board of St. Paul’s College, a historically Black school in Lawrenceville, Virginia, that later closed. Harmon had established himself as a standout high school soccer player, and Spong picked up the phone, called the college president, and said: “I have a young man here who is a scholar athlete,” Harmon said. “And so I got admitted to college before I even applied.”

After college he was admitted to both Yale Divinity School and Virginia Theological Seminary. Yale offered more scholarship money, and two weeks before he was headed to Yale, he got a call from Charles Vaché, the Bishop of Southern Virginia. “We need Black priests, and I want you to go to Virginia,” the bishop told him.

Vaché ordained him as a deacon in 1991 and as a priest in 1992, and Harmon spent the rest of the decade serving churches in Norfolk and Petersburg, Virginia, before taking his current role in the nation’s capital in 2000.



Harmon: “I kept telling my mother I wanted to be a priest. And I thought at one point she got really frustrated with me, saying I was too young to even be thinking that way.”

Harmon had been inspired by the idea of monastic life, and while in Petersburg he started a program providing housing for college students in exchange for work in service to the church. “And then when I came to Washington, we just formalized that in an intense way,” and attracted \$5 million in funding from Trinity Wall Street to launch the Episcopal Service Corps (ESC). The generous grant enabled ESC to establish groups of “young adults living in intentional community, serving their neighborhoods, sharing in faith formation, and discerning vocational direction,” as the group’s website says.

“We gave \$50,000 to any church organization in the Episcopal Church that wanted to start one of these programs. That’s how it grew,” Harmon said. There are more than a dozen independent ESC programs in communities around the country.

He still remembers something his mother had told him at the age of 11: “Don’t get so busy doing church work that you forget to do the work of God.”

Harmon was elected on the third ballot from a slate of two candidates. The other candidate was the Rev. Mary Vano, rector of St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church in Little Rock. The Rt. Rev. Larry R. Benfield has been Bishop of Arkansas since 2007, and will retire in January 2024.

## Episcopal Journal & Café Cannot Afford to Continue

By Kirk Petersen

*Episcopal Journal & Café*, which was formed by a merger of two publications in 2022, announced its closing on August 15.

“The economics of online publications, and a former print one, are challenging and the decision has been made to stop updating the site and ultimately archive it,” editor Solange De Santis announced on the site. The closure marks the end of one of the few independent sources of news about the Episcopal Church.

“The *Journal* covered this very big church as an independent publication,” De Santis told TLC. “It is not easy for a religious publication to be unsubsidized by a denomination, for instance. So we had a small staff, all freelancers. We didn’t have actual employees. And it’s a difficult job to cover this church with a small staff.”

*Episcopal Journal* emerged as a print publication in 2010 from the ashes of *Episcopal Life*, an official publication of the church launched in 1990. *Episcopal Life* was shuttered in 2009 in a dramatic wave of cost-cutting that saw 40 positions eliminated at the church headquarters. The *Journal* was launched by Jerry Hames, a former editor of *Episcopal Life*. De Santis, editor of *Episcopal Life* when it closed, joined the *Journal* and took over from Hames in 2012.

The *Journal* was marketed to dioceses for use as a supplement to diocesan print publications. “However, in the intervening years, fewer and fewer dioceses were maintaining print publications in newspaper format,” De Santis wrote via email to Episcopal Communicators, an independent organization of communicators for dioceses, congregations, and parishes throughout the Episcopal Church.

*Episcopal Café*, always an online publication, was launched in 2007 by Jim Naughton, who at the time was canon for communications for the

Diocese of Washington. The *Café* was an advocate for progressive causes at a time when many conservatives were leaving the church in the wake of the 2003 consecration of Gene Robinson as an openly gay bishop.

The two publications merged in May

2022, and the combined publication transitioned to exclusively online after its September 2022 issue. With the closure, the two main remaining sources of news and information about the Episcopal Church are Episcopal News Service and THE LIVING CHURCH. □

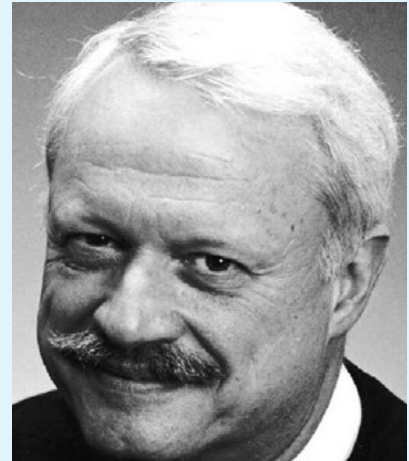
## RIP: ‘Green Bishop’ Bud Cederholm, 1944-2023

By Mark Michael

The Rt. Rev. Roy F. (Bud) Cederholm, who served as suffragan bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts from 2001 to 2011, died August 27 at 79.

Working with Bishop Thomas Shaw, Cederholm was responsible for congregational development in the Boston-based diocese, one of the Episcopal Church’s largest. He led the diocese’s popular family camp for years, played his guitar during parish visitations, and as “the Green Bishop” was a passionate advocate for environmental stewardship.

The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Mello, who spent his ministry in the Diocese of Massachusetts before becom-



Cederholm

ing Bishop of Connecticut in 2022, remembered on Facebook, “Bishop Cederholm played a significant role in my formation as a priest, exercised his episcopal ministry with grace, humility, and joy and was a model Red Sox fan. For all of these reasons, and so many more, he will be sorely missed.”

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Anna Meyer photo

Students in General Seminary's hybrid M.Div. program learn in chapel.

# The Future of Anglican Theological Education: An Educators' Discussion

*This discussion is excerpted from a series of articles that appeared in July on Covenant, the weblog of THE LIVING CHURCH.*

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## A Dean's Diagnosis

By Garwood Anderson

To imagine the future of theological education in the Anglican world is to engage in a combination of prognostication and prescription. We begin with the symptoms, focused on Anglican bodies in North America, especially in the United States. The breaking news is the sharp decline in residential seminary formation programs and the abrupt rise of distance programs and local formation for future clergy. Merely a decade ago, the Episcopal Church had 11 seminaries that offered residential theological formation. Today, while nine such seminaries remain, only five still offer residential theological formation.

Higher education is expensive, especially full-time residential formation — expensive to both the providing insti-

tutions and to their students. Small, boutique institutions, if lacking a large endowment, typically run with skeleton staffs, live with deferred maintenance, and still run perpetual deficits, nonetheless. Even much larger institutions have recently looked to downsizing programs and staffing and to property sales to secure their futures. Seminaries of all kinds and sizes are taking a beating. Anglicans are not alone in this regard.

The changing demographics of seminarians is yet another factor. The time is long past when it could simply be assumed that the bishop's directive to pack up and move to seminary was non-negotiable. Today, seminarians are quite often from a two-career household, and students and senders more frequently engage in a negotiation that will work for both partners, increasingly choosing a local

or remote option over one requiring relocation.

Moreover, if the local parish “job market” is increasingly bivocational, part time, or non-stipendiary, it is thought hard to justify three years and all the expense. Even called persons with willing hearts may not be able to make the math work out.

### Practical Prescriptions

Here are some prescriptions under the heading of these.

#### *1. Remote, distributed, and accessible theological education is here to stay, but it is not the future.*

If there were two takeaways from the remote experiences we shared through the COVID pandemic, they were that it was heartening how much fellowship, worship, and learning could be done through remote technologies — and that it still just wasn’t the same, and for all kinds of reasons. Screens and speakers are not bodies with eyes and ears and dimensionality. The little timing hitches — “No, you go” — and the not-quite-synchronous body language cues, five senses reduced to two, and those two distracted — it wasn’t the same. It wasn’t the same because it is not the same. I know almost no one who at the end of it said, “Let’s do more of that whenever we can.”

#### *2. There’s residential and there’s residential*

That having been said, *residential* is a slippery word. Neither seminaries nor our accreditors draw any formal distinction between a truly residential seminary formation experience and classroom instruction that just happens to take place in person. A seminary could be fundamentally a commuter enterprise, part time, or even a choose-your-adventure experience, and if the classes are in person, it can be counted as residential. But this is a far cry from on-campus housing, shared meals, a fulsome chapel participation, and navigating a non-negotiable social existence.

#### *3. Most Episcopal or Anglican seminaries will not survive as proprietary seminaries of a single ecclesial body.*

The Episcopal Church is not raising up enough seminarians to supply our current seminaries with enough students to remain viable. This was a point made emphatically by Chris Meinzer, vice president of the Association of Theological Schools, to the deans of the Episcopal seminaries at our 2018 meetings. Only a few of us, he said, with scads of data to back up the assertion, are likely to survive if our only pool of students comes from the Episcopal Church alone. Five years later, he looks like a prophet.

#### *4. The Anglican studies programs embedded in non-Anglican seminaries are arguably the most sustainable business model, but if this comes at the expense of the Anglican seminaries, it will prove costly.*

A good case can be made that Anglican programs or institutions embedded in larger seminaries or divinity schools is a promising model for the future. Yale, Duke, Candler, Princeton, among others, enjoy strong faculties across theological disciplines and the financial and prestige resources that are the envy of the smaller stand-alone alternatives. Theoretically, this could be the best of all possible worlds.

At the same time, for all the scholarly and administrative resources, it is unlikely that such institutions can finally match the tradition-specific formation characteristic of the bonded, liturgical, and peculiar communities. For starters, the offerings of the “Anglican studies” curricula typically pale in comparison to the thoroughly Anglican alternatives. A survey of websites or catalogs will show that in liturgics, Anglican history, polity, ascetical theology, sacramental theology, and so on, the offerings are not comparable.

### Philosophical Prescriptions

Let us now consider the bigger picture.

#### *1. The way forward is to think backward.*

By “backward” I don’t mean a return to mythical good old days so much as starting with the end in mind. One affliction of all higher ed, possibly seminaries more than anywhere else, is that the point of reference is typically what we have done in the recent past, what we are doing now, and what we now need to do to catch up, keep up, or otherwise secure a future. This is a hamster wheel — starting with givens often followed by half-measures.

The future shape of theological education is a question that ought not be answered exclusively by what we think is possible or where we see things heading, but by what we want for the church. Sadly, many are envisioning a future for the church and for theological education whereby we meet each other at the nadir of both. It is important to know the trends, but it may be more important to defy them.

(Continued on next page)



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Most Episcopal seminaries have eliminated requirements in biblical languages, while also having limited coursework in biblical studies, have a minimal expectation for systematic and historical theology, and have little more than the bare essentials in liturgical training.



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If, instead of what we expect, we ask what we want, the answer should be an orthodox and learned clergy, composed of holy and virtuous persons, applying wisdom and skill to advance the mission of the church. So, learned, virtuous, and skillful clergy are the order of the day and perhaps always have or should have been.

If that seems uncontroversial, I would hope so, but it could be noted that these characteristics are not found abundantly in this combination, and seminaries increasingly find more barriers toward their fulfillment than might have once been the case. As for a learned clergy, expectations

have decreased as we have shortened the path through the M.Div. Most Episcopal seminaries have reduced the M.Div. to the Association of Theological Schools' minimum of 72 credits, and have eliminated requirements in biblical languages, while also having limited coursework in biblical studies, have a minimal expectation for systematic and historical theology, and have little more than the bare essentials in liturgical training.

**2. Let's take paths of more resistance.**


While remote education and local formation should be viewed as commendably adaptive to changing circumstances, they can also be a sign of hopelessness or fatalism. Rather than valorizing convenience, accessibility, and business opportunity, we should acknowledge these paths of least resistance for the temptation they are. Perhaps we should strive toward a different target: how, acknowledging circumstances, can we together do the best, rather than the easiest, for everyone?

**3. Decline is opportunity.**

When I was considering coming to Nashotah House from a very large and prospering evangelical seminary, which has continued to flourish and grow, I discussed the decision with a sagacious evangelical friend whose advice was to "sell high, buy low." Not an Episcopalian himself, he discerned that for all its regrettable decline and even while segments of the church despise their birthright, the bones were good. There was an opportunity, not for personal gain, but for the kingdom of God.

Not underestimating the misery of decline — urban or ecclesial — the point is straightforward. The losses suffered by the Episcopal Church, even the self-inflicted wounds of recent decades, are an opportunity for those who have the eyes to discern it. And the raising up and propulsion of theologically sound, morally virtuous, skilled disciples for the next generations of clergy leadership is, or should be, this tradition's most urgent priority. It remains for our seminaries and our churches to answer the call.

*Garwood Anderson is dean of Nashotah House Theological Seminary.*



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## Commendable Effort, Troubling Trends

By Kirk Smith

I was fortunate after my retirement to have the privilege of spending the last few years working at four of our esteemed Episcopal seminaries: General, Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, Virginia Theological Seminary, and the Church Divinity School of the Pacific. This experience has profoundly influenced my perception of the purpose and approach to theological education within the Episcopal Church.

Medieval church history has always been my academic passion, and it was the subject I taught at each institution. In the course of four years, I served as a visiting instructor (both in person and online) for a semester at each school, except for CDSP, where I held the position of interim dean this past year.

I observed much that instilled my confidence in the future of the church. Students from increasingly diverse backgrounds showed immense dedication and made significant personal and familial sacrifices to attend seminary. Faculty members, for the most part, have moved away from the academic mentality that prioritizes publication over teaching, focusing instead on equipping their students with practical skills for priestly and chaplaincy roles. Despite limited budgets and aging infrastructure, staff made commendable efforts to offer support.

While acknowledging the possibility that my perspective may be outdated and knowing that I need to speak in generalities (to protect the innocent), I need to point to several troubling trends:

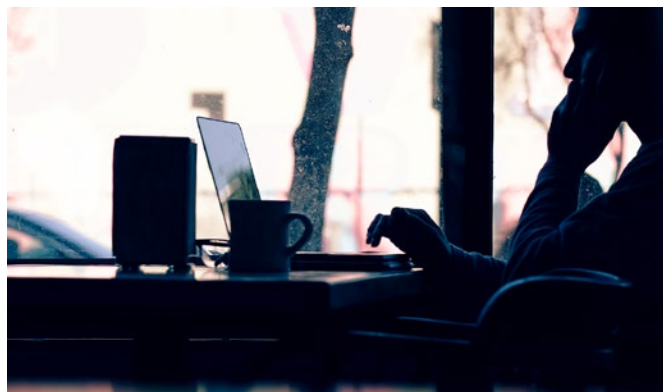
**1. *The concept of a “core curriculum,” encompassing subjects such as Scripture, theology, and liturgics (as defined by the canons), has largely become a thing of the past.***

Although these subjects are taught (sort of), the real energy and enthusiasm seem to be reserved for “elective” classes that often align with current cultural debates. For instance, during my time, three of the four seminaries did not have a full-time faculty member dedicated to teaching the New Testament. As someone who identifies as a progressive both theologically and socially, I nevertheless felt that the elective offerings in areas of hot-button cultural issues were disproportionately emphasized.

I found Clinical Pastoral Education to be a time-consuming endeavor that has strayed far from its original purpose of exposing students to the ethical and emotional challenges of working in a hospital. The infrastructure surrounding it has expanded beyond measure, placing excessive demands on students and financing an organization with no accountability to either the larger church or the seminary.

**2. *Many individuals pursue seminary education for the wrong reasons.***

Seminary is not a place to “find myself,” or “get closer to God,” two common responses when I asked students why they chose to enroll. Parishes and diocesan commissions on ministry must take greater responsibility in selection.



Hannah Wei/Unsplash

There appears to be a temptation to “promote” individuals who may not be suitable for ministry up the discernment chain. The seminary, often dependent on the tuition income generated by students, is motivated to ensure their graduation. The crash doesn’t come until these graduates assume their first positions in parishes.

**3. *Online education is here to stay; embrace it.***

Debating the superiority of residential versus online programs is futile. The Association of Theological Schools, the accrediting body for seminaries (Episcopal and others), no longer distinguishes between them, and neither should we. Online education provides an easier on ramp for underrepresented groups to engage in theological learning, aligning with our church’s goal of more diverse leadership.

**4. *While seminaries value their intellectual freedom, they need the support of the larger church, alumni, and benefactors.***

Much is said about the significance of theological education for the church’s well-being, yet the external financial contributions remain meager. Most dioceses and parishes provide no financial underwriting to seminaries, even to their nearest school, while alumni participation hovers around a mere 15 percent, which is considerably lower than most colleges and universities.

I firmly believe that theological education has a promising future, but we are only just beginning to envision what that might look like. First, it will involve a greater number of laypeople than ever before, and many of our schools even now offer robust and accessible programs for the laity both in person and online. Second, technology will play an extensive and indispensable role in education.

Last, while the traditional intellectual canon of Scripture, theology, and liturgy remains invaluable, seminary curricula need to incorporate and learn from the experiences of individuals outside academia. During my time in seminary classrooms years ago, I acquired knowledge of Greek, but I also learned profound lessons from a Navajo grandmother about valuing creation.

*The Rt. Rev. Dr. Kirk Smith is the retired Bishop of Arizona, which he served from 2004 to 2019. He and his wife, Laura, live in Sedona, Arizona.*

## Online Education Isn't Formation

By Hannah W. Matis

I have been engaged in online teaching in a variety of forms since I entered graduate school 20 years ago; throughout my nine years teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary, I taught both online courses and in-person courses with online components. And like virtually all faculty and clergy I know, my teaching and service moved online during the COVID pandemic, while we had to make do as best we could.

In one fell swoop, online seminary promises to eliminate many of the challenges faced by residential seminary education: the necessity of asking seminarians (and faculty and staff) to move with their families, the expense of maintaining residential institutions with nationally recognized accreditation, and on a more general level the promise of more “practical” and “applied” learning. But online education is not the same thing as formation.

It is very easy and natural for online education in particular to become piecemeal, and very difficult to make all the different bits join up in a disciplinarily cohesive whole — particularly when faculty with different disciplinary and academic backgrounds are living in different states and have little personal contact with one another beyond the odd Zoom meeting (and most Zoom meetings are very odd). In sacrificing residential seminary formation for the sake of cost-effective “education,” the Episcopal Church, always a regional and diverse body, risks losing one of its most effective organs for creating and maintaining its identity as a denomination.

Simultaneously one of the most beautiful and most difficult things about seminary education, from a faculty perspective, is that it is almost never what any of us actually got our Ph.D. in: as faculty, we come to seminary with a highly specialized training that, as teachers and colleagues, we have to broaden, adjust, and adapt to the needs of our students and the wider church, alongside our fellow faculty.

In the classroom and out of it, students inevitably learn from one another as well as from faculty — one of the reasons that most residential seminaries rely on cohort learning. Seminarians come from a bewildering variety of backgrounds — one of the reasons I most enjoy teaching them. With one another, they learn, not least, that the Episcopal Church is diverse and complicated and contains multitudes of different experiences different than the one they know or take for granted.

Residential seminary at its best offers both necessary challenge and support, neither of which can exist in the same way in an online experience, even at its best. Seminar-

ies can be stressful and challenging communities in which to live, but a seminarian who is a good citizen of a residential seminary community and who participates regularly in a field education placement site by and large has had a taste, if only a taste, of what it means to be in a visible position of authority and responsibility in a parish church.

For many of our younger seminarians in particular, the persona they must necessarily create to do effective ministry grows and develops as they watch their mentors and one another do the job, grounded in the core disciplines of their shared academic formation. The parish priests I know who have worked in the parish for 30 years and more — often without recognition, promotion, or honor from the



Anna Meyer photo

General Seminary hybrid M.Div. students engage in classroom discussion.

wider church — have survived and continued to do ministry by being connected people, and in part, by building networks and relationships with fellow clergy.

In a world desperate for meaningful connection and community, these are the people who can model, and form in turn, the Christ-centered communities in which we find our God-given end. How can we expect them, the ministers of the gospel, to do that if we don't allow them the experience and the formation in the first place?

*Hannah W. Matis is associate dean of academic affairs at the University of the South's School of Theology.*





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# Saint Francis and the Embodiment of Grace

By Dennis Raverty

The recent exhibition *Saint Francis of Assisi*, organized by the National Gallery in London, brought together painting, sculpture, and other media, including contemporary works, from various collections around the world that portrayed the life of this most popular of saints. It offered a rare opportunity to compare representations of Francis chronologically and cross-culturally through the eight centuries since his death.

Francis modeled a fully embodied approach to the spiritual life, by imitation of Christ's poverty and suffering and ultimately by the physical marks of the stigmata on his body. Franciscans looked upon their founder's scarred body as something like a sacrament, which led to an early interest in depicting the saint more realistically. Franciscan piety aimed at the heart, by showing the saints as people of their own times, fellow pilgrims of the spiritual life.

Francis conceived of the world not only as the site of temptation and corruption, but as a rich garden abounding in God's grace. Some of his followers, like Bonaventure, later developed a complex understanding of the natural world as a place where divine mysteries are revealed. Similarly, the discovery and codification of the laws of perspective in the 15th century seemed to be a sign of the rational order underlying our perception of the world.

This combination of factors made Francis of Assisi perhaps the most widely depicted medieval person and contributed to a broader shift toward more representational art during the late Gothic and Renaissance periods in Italy, including an increasing sense of corporality. These developments will be traced here by briefly examining the evolution of figural style in depictions of the saint over the course of the three centuries between the death of the saint and the end of the Renaissance.

Among the earliest images of Francis in Italian art is a haunting painting by an anonymous artist from the late 13th century in the collection of the Vatican museums, which was not in the London exhibit (fig. 1). Executed in a style influenced by Byzantine icon painting, the figure of the saint, silhouetted against a gold background, is expressively distorted and highly abstracted; his enlarged eyes, long and slender nose, and small mouth resemble representations of Christ. This is not surprising because the saint was often referred to as the *alter Christos* and the "mirror" of Christ.

Figure 1: "Saint Francis of Assisi," Anonymous (13th century)

Vatican Museums





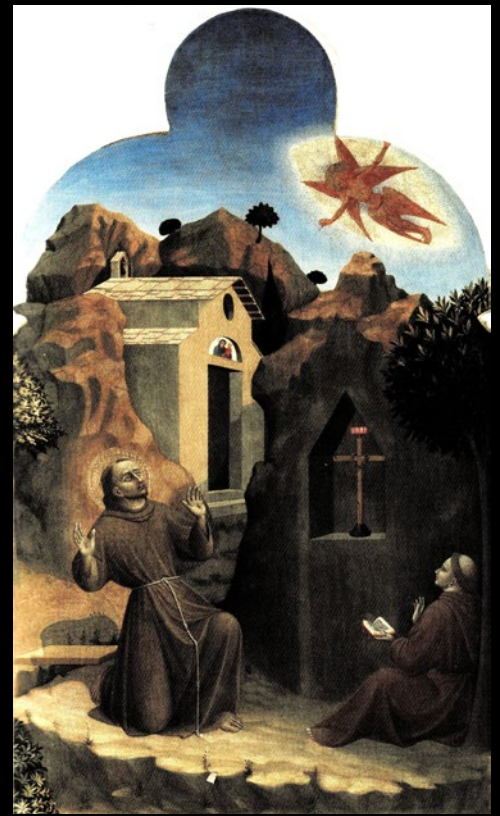
Church of Santa Croce, Florence

Figure 2: "He Preaches to the Saracens in the Sultan's Presence," The Bardi Altarpiece, Coppo di Marcovaldo (1245-1250)



The Louvre

Figure 3: "Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata," Giotto di Bondone (1295-1300)



National Gallery, London

Figure 4: "The Stigmatization of Saint Francis," Stefano di Giovanni (1437-1444)

The folds in his garments fall in geometric patterns that seem almost independent of the body underneath; the knotted rope that girds him drops straight down as if against a flat surface. Even the book he holds is rendered in what almost seems to be reverse perspective. Francis is portrayed here as a disembodied, spiritualized being floating weightlessly in a spatially ambiguous, highly indeterminate field of gold. His feet never touch the ground. The saint appears to be not of this world.

A similarly disembodied compression of space can also be seen in a detail from the Bardi Saint Francis panel attributed to Coppo di Marcovaldo from around the same time (fig. 2). Here, the saint preaches before the sultan and his Islamic courtiers, who are represented as a field of same-size heads one above the other — even the sultan, enthroned on the right, as well as Francis and his companion on the left, are disembodied, schematic, and flat.

In stark contrast is the work of groundbreaking 14th-century painter Giotto di Bondone, in which Francis is shown with substantial weight and fully occupying illusionistic, three-dimensional space (fig. 3). The subject is a vision the saint experienced late in his life of a seraphic, winged, crucified Christ. It was during this vision that the saint is said to have received the stigmata, the bleeding wounds in his hands, feet, and side, the outward, physical sign of his mystical union with the body of Christ.

The weight and volume of his robust torso and limbs is evident in the strong modeling and consistent light source

from the upper right, the saint's garments falling in irregular folds that clearly reveal the masses of the body underneath. Moreover, the figure is shown in a landscape with a hermit's hut and a small chapel, but these are not shown in proportion to the size of the saint, and the trees found here and there dotting the rocky landscape indicate a natural environment, yet the gold background betrays the flatness of the panel. It is as if the saint, asserting an almost sculptural solidity, inhabits the shallow space of a stage set or architectural niche. Despite having considerable gravitas, he casts no shadow.

In a composition inspired by Giotto from the early 15th century (fig. 4) by Stefano di Giovanni (known as Sassetta), the saint and his companion occupy a more realistic space informed by the use of linear perspective. A blue sky replaces the gold leaf background of the earlier painting, and the landscape, while still somewhat schematic, is much more believable, partly because the architecture is in proportion to the figures.

Yet despite its greater spatial plausibility, the artist has trouble positioning the winged figure in relationship to Saint Francis; the vision seems to be behind him in the sky like a cloud, even though the saint casts a shadow as if the vision were in front of him. This placement of the vision in space was not a problem for Giotto. Perspectival volume and three-dimensional spatial illusion increase naturalism but bring their own problems.

(Continued on next page)



The Frick Collection, New York

Figure 5: “Saint Francis in Ecstasy,” Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1480)

(Continued from previous page)

Giovanni Bellini’s *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* embodies both the Franciscan sense of poverty and its attitude toward nature, not only in the style and subject matter but also in its pristine, jewel-like oil glazing techniques (fig. 5). It was painted sometime in the last few decades of the 15th century, during the genesis of the High Renaissance in Italy.

It represents Francis alone at the mouth of his cave retreat. Having just stepped outside, he witnesses the early dawn as if it were an unexpected miracle. In the background we see the charming hilltop town of Assisi in central Italy from which he came. In Bellini’s version we do not witness the vision as in the earlier treatments. The saint’s hands bear the marks of the stigmata, but not yet his feet, as if the miracle were still in progress.

There is a nuanced coloristic dialogue between the warm amber underpainting and the cool gray-blue and brown transparent glazes he layers over this in articulating the main features of the landscape. But because cool colors typ-

ically seem to recede while warm colors appear to push forward, the muted yellow-orange underpainting almost gives the effect of the light coming from *behind* the picture, softly illuminating the entire landscape and echoing the gentle light of the emergent dawn.

The attentiveness Bellini shows to every detail is typical of Netherlandish painting, but is somewhat rare in Italian art, in which the landscape setting is often minimal — just enough of a background to situate the figures in a believable space. Bellini’s landscape, however, is rendered in all its marvelous, minute, rich, naturalistic detail. And this truth to reality, with each leaf and blade of grass so lovingly rendered with all its imperfections, embodies the Franciscan reverence for nature that Bellini shares with the saint.

It was customary during the Italian Renaissance to idealize forms as a way of indicating the presence of divine grace. Images of Christ, his mother, and the saints would all resemble the idealized gods of the ancient Greco-Roman world, like Apollo and Aphrodite. Bellini’s St. Fran-



Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Conn.

Figure 6: “Saint Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy,” Caravaggio (ca. 1595)

cis is a homely man of small stature, with a crooked nose and a balding pate, hardly the Adonis we might reasonably expect from an Italian master. But this lack of idealization is also in keeping with Franciscan humility. The modest saint as he is represented here is remarkably unbeautiful — not dominating the landscape but living harmoniously within nature’s bounty as brother and fellow creature.

In Bellini’s hands, not only the diminutive, homely saint, but also the animals, birds, plants, and even the sun are radiant, and the “poor,” commonplace materials used in making the picture — wood, oil, pigments, varnish (but not gold) — are transformed sacramentally, so the painting becomes a sort of “incarnational” witness revealing the graced potential not only in Francis, but in all living things.

During the last decade of the 16th century, the young Michelangelo Merisi, known as Caravaggio (who would soon invent the Baroque style), painted his version of Francis receiving the stigmata (fig. 6). Here Francis is shown in a landscape at night swooning after his miraculous vision

in the arms of a winged angel rendered on a disproportionately large scale, yet with a gentle, youthful, almost feminine face. In the background, barely visible, is the saint’s companion, who has built a small fire against the last rays of the setting sun.

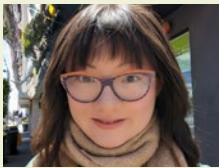
We feel the full weight of the saint as he collapses and his eyes roll back in his head deliriously. His coarse garments accentuate his heaviness, and contrast with the angel’s sheer radiant clothing. All of it is spotlighted for us as if it were a scene from an opera. The artist substitutes his own face for that of the saint in this painting, indicating that not only Christ, not only Francis as the *alter Christus*, but also the artist and by implication all of us, are likewise called to partake in this mystical union with the incarnate body of Christ.

*Dr. Dennis Raverty recently retired as associate professor of art history at New Jersey City University and specializes in art of the 19th and 20th centuries.*



## This Year's Winners

# Student Essays in Christian Wisdom



Zou



King



Greenham Hancock



Chiam

TLC is pleased to present the winning entry in its 14th annual Student Essays in Christian Wisdom competition. Submissions came from Anglican and Episcopal students of theology from around the world. This year, Aussies swept the awards, with first place and two third-place winners.

The first-place essay is by Bei-En Zou, who serves as a lay Anglican preacher in Melbourne. Her theological interests include the Church Fathers, medieval mysticism, and the theology of Scripture.

Second place went to Maxine King for “Margery Kemp’s Strange ‘Forme of Levyngs’ and Lay Vocations.” Maxine is an enthusiastic lay person and cantor in the Episcopal Church and a student of theology at Virginia Theological Seminary. Another essay by her won honorable mention last year.

In a first-ever tie, third place went to two recipients: Cara Greenham Hancock for “What Is the Significance of the Cross in St. John’s Gospel, and How Is It Depicted?” and Jef Fri Chiam for “The Function of the ‘Enjoy Life’ Passages in the Book of Ecclesiastes.”

Cara is a final-year master of divinity student at Trinity College Theological School, Victoria, Australia, and an aspirant in the Anglican Church of Australia. She works in parish ministry in a lay capacity.

Jef Fri is a second-year student at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, New South Wales, Australia. He is married to Lydia, and they share an interest in missions in Malaysia. He enjoys reading and playing basketball, and is a longtime supporter of the Los Angeles Lakers.

The second- and third-place essays are available on TLC’s blog at [covenant.livingchurch.org](https://covenant.livingchurch.org).

We’re deeply grateful to our judges:

- Dr. Abigail Woolley Cutter (assistant professor of theology at King University in Bristol, Tennessee);
- Neil Dhingra (doctoral student in education at the University of Maryland);
- Dr. Hannah Matis (associate dean for academic affairs and associate professor of Church history at the University of the South’s School of Theology);
- The Rev. Dr. Brandt Montgomery (chaplain of Saint James School, Hagerstown, and vicar of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Boonsboro, Maryland).



Lawrence Lew, OP/Flickr

St. Athanasius (seen trampling down Heresy on the ceiling on Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome) wrote in his letter to Marcellinus that while “all scripture of ours — both ancient and new — is inspired by God and profitable for teaching,” the Book of Psalms “possesses a winning exactitude for those who are prayerful.”

## Songs in the Desert: Psalmody and the Desert Fathers

By Bei-En Zou

In both the Eastern and Western Church, a musical revival exploded from the Psalms in the last half of the fourth century. As historian James McKinnon put it, “Nothing quite like it has been observed either before or after in the history of Christianity or Judaism.”<sup>1</sup> Scripture infused the lives of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, and none more so than the Book of Psalms. In its liturgical use, the Psalms not only gave shape to the external life of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, but also governed and guided their internal life. In the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Athanasius’s *Letter to Marcellinus*, and the later and more systematized theology of Evagrius Ponticus, the Psalms were acknowledged as unique among the Scriptures, offering both didactic and therapeutic support to the abbas and ammas. Despite its ancient context, the Desert Fathers’

use of psalmody continues to offer contemporary believers practical and powerful ways to engage with God through Scripture.

The Psalms were intrinsic to the worship of the Desert Fathers, both in their liturgical assembly and their private devotion.<sup>2</sup> In liturgical practice, psalmody, the chanting of Psalms, comprised the canonical hours of the daily monastic office.<sup>3</sup> The Psalms were also chanted at *synaxis*, the weekly public gatherings where Scripture was recited.<sup>4</sup> Psalmody therefore gave structure to the waking hours of the monks. Psalmody as an internal spiritual practice was recommended by virtually all the Desert Fathers.<sup>5</sup> Epiphanius declared that “the true monk should have prayer and psalmody continually in his heart.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Theodore of Enaton argued that “if God reproaches us for carelessness in our prayers and infidelities in our psalmody, we cannot

(Continued on next page)

1. James W. McKinnon, “The Fourth-Century Origin of the Gradual.” *Early Music History* 7 (1987): 91-106. Cited also in Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 49.
2. Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in Evagrius Ponticus*, 49.
3. According to the Abba of Rome, Arsenius recited the 12 Psalms morning and evening (Abba of Rome 1, in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, The Alphabetical Collection*. Translated by Benedicta Ward, Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1975, 209).
4. Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert*, 117.
5. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in Evagrius Ponticus*, 49.
6. Epiphanius 3 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, The Alphabetical Collection*. Translated by Benedicta Ward (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1975), 57.



Maestro dell'Osservanza

St. Anthony the Great in the Wilderness, ca. 1435

(Continued from previous page)

be saved.”<sup>7</sup>

Such concentrated focus on the recitation of Psalms — both as the words of monks’ prayers and as a way of generating personal prayer — reflects the monks’ perception of the uniqueness of the Psalms among all Scripture. For the monks, the words of the Psalms possessed such immediacy and directness that they are capable of being spoken as one’s own words, and, conversely, reflected the state of one’s own soul, as in a mirror. Athanasius, in his letter to Marcellinus, states that while “all scripture of ours — both ancient and new — is inspired by God and profitable for teaching,” the Book of Psalms “possesses a winning exactitude for those who are prayerful.”<sup>8</sup> The Book of Psalms is like a garden, Athanasius adds, as it contains and recapitulates the themes found in the other books of the Bible, but “also exhibits things of its own that it gives in song along with them.”<sup>9</sup> These things consisted of the emotions of the soul:

... these words become like a mirror to the person singing them, so that he might perceive himself and the emotions of his soul, and thus affected, he might recite them.<sup>10</sup>

Further, the one who recites the Psalms

utters the rest as his own words, and each sing them as if they were written concerning him, and he accepts them and recites them not as if another were speaking, nor as if speaking about someone else. But he handles them as if he is speaking about himself. And then things spoken are such that he lifts them up to God as himself acting and speaking them from himself.<sup>11</sup>

The interaction between the Psalms and the reciter and listener represented a profound inter-dwelling: the text gains entry into the heart, but simultaneously, “the heart comes to inhabit the text as the interpreter seeks to experience, through imagination and action, the world of the text.”<sup>12</sup> Thus the Book of Psalms represents a didactic workbook for the soul, and yet goes beyond to transform the very identity of the user.

For the Desert Fathers, the soul is under constant attack, as demons wage spiritual war on believers. The demons deploy *logismoi*, tempting thoughts that distract the monks from a single-minded focus on God. The Psalms act as a weapon against this demonic onslaught, by driving out *logismoi* and replacing them with better thoughts. Against the *logismoi* of the demons, the monks are counselled by the Fathers to refute or contradict them by throwing verses of the Psalms at them, in a type of spiritual contest. Evagrius co-opts the Psalms in his *antirrhesis* technique of deploying Bible verses against sinful thoughts; deliberately contradicting the thoughts of temptation verbally:

Do not immediately pray when you are tempted; first find some words with anger to the one pressing you ... you will confuse and banish the ideas that come from your enemies.<sup>13</sup>

Such an *antirrhesis* is essential, for “when your souls are acted upon by tempting thoughts, prayer cannot be pure.”<sup>14</sup> *Antirrhesis* with Scripture must precede true, pure prayer.

Such battles with demons, notes Douglas Burton-Christie, are reflective of the “profound psychological challenges” facing the monks in their life in the desert.<sup>15</sup> The most dangerous of all challenges for the monks was *accidie*. In fight-

7. Theodore of Enaton 3 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, The Alphabetical Collection*. Translated by Benedicta Ward (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1975), 79.

8. Athanasius 2 in *Letter to Marcellinus*, translated by Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 101.

9. Ibid, 102.

10. Athanasius 12, in *Letter to Marcellinus*, translated by Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 111.

11. Athanasius 11, *Letter to Marcellinus*, translated by Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 110.

12. Rebecca Harden Weaver, “Access to Scripture: Experiencing the Text,” *Interpretations* 52, no. 4 (1998): 367.

13. Evagrius Ponticus, *Praktikos* 42, quoted in Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in Evagrius Ponticus*, 133.

14. Evagrius Ponticus 72 in *De Oratione*, quoted in Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in Evagrius Ponticus*, 151.

15. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert*, 124.



ing against the noonday listlessness, the Desert Fathers and Mothers counselled the active reciting of Psalms. Amma Syncletica identifies *accidie* as “grief that comes from the enemy, full of mockery,” and says that “this spirit must be cast out, mainly by prayer and psalmody.”<sup>16</sup> In a saying of the Desert Fathers, a brother seeks counsel from Abba Heraclides, because he has found himself “prey to *accidie*.”<sup>17</sup> His remedy was to stand up and sing many psalms.<sup>18</sup>

Psalmody reordered the thoughts of the monks, sharpening their spiritual vision by drawing together disparate thoughts toward a single-minded focus on God. From the *Sayings*, there is a story concerning John the Dwarf, that

when he returned from the harvest or when he had been with some of the old men, he gave himself to prayer, meditation, and psalmody, until his thoughts were re-established in their previous order.<sup>19</sup>

Athanasius notes that the Book of Psalms “teaches not only not to disregard passion, but also how one must heal passion through speaking and acting.”<sup>20</sup> For the Desert Fathers, the body, with its energy and passion, was not to be dismissed, but acknowledged and subdued to the greater goal of the soul’s pursuit of God.

Psalmody was effective in the healing of past wounds, by remaking and replacing the memory of the monks. In the *Sayings*, the story is told of Macarius observing Satan on the road, whose task was to “stir up the memories of the brethren.”<sup>21</sup> Memories of the struggle to live holy lives, of past times of moral failures, or of their former life, would assail the monks and tempt them to depression. In meditating on the Psalms, mulling over a few select verses in their cells, the monks received healing and encouragement. Meditation for the Desert Fathers was an oral phenomenon that not only occupied the memory of the monk but created a new storehouse of thoughts.<sup>22</sup> Evagrius Ponticus highlights this meditative function of psalmody in *Peri Logismon* 17:

And if, weary from our toil, a certain *acedia* overtakes us we should climb up a little onto the rock of knowledge and converse with the psalter (cf. Ps 48:5) plucking with the virtues the strings of knowledge: let us again tend our sheep as they pasture below Mount Sinai, so that the God of our fathers may also call to us out of the bush (cf. Exod. 3:1-6) and grant us the logoi of the signs and the wonders (cf. Exod. 7:9, 11:9-10).<sup>23</sup>

16. Amma Syncletica 27 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, translated by Benedicta Ward (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1975), 235.

17. Heraclides 1 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, translated by Benedicta Ward (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1975), 72.

18. Ibid

19. John the Dwarf, 35 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, translated by Benedicta Ward (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1975), 92.

20. Athanasius 10 in *Letter to Marcellinus*, translated by Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 108.

21. Macarius the Great 3 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, translated by Benedicta Ward (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1975), 126.

22. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert*, 125.

23. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer*, 151.

24. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer*, 151

25. Athanasius 6 in *Letter to Marcellinus*, translated by Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 105.

26. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer*, 152.

Evagrius envisages the Book of Psalms as a mediating point of “an oscillating movement from ascetical toil into contemplative knowledge and back again into ascetical practice.”<sup>24</sup> The Book of Psalms is represented as a rock of knowledge, that is, Christ himself.<sup>25</sup> The Psalms are a place of refuge, a comforting, resting place that enables us to hear and converse with Father and Son, before the inevitable return to the pasture of asceticism.<sup>26</sup> These images of the Psalms as verdant land echo Athanasius’s metaphor of the Psalms as a lush garden.

The Book of Psalms played an essential part in the life and understanding of the Desert Fathers. The chanting of the Psalms ordered the prayers and meditations of the monks, both within a collective liturgical context as well as in private devotion. The Psalms provided meaning in the monks’ ongoing quest for salvation and holiness: exposing the heart of the monks, but also transforming their emotional landscape; protecting and comforting them during times of struggle and anxiety; and leading them to deeper



Menologion of Basil II

Syncletica of Alexandria identifies *accidie* as “grief that comes from the enemy, full of mockery,” and says that “this spirit must be cast out, mainly by prayer and psalmody.”

union with God. While we live in a world vastly different to that of the Desert Fathers, our own experiences of being assailed by external distractions and internal despondency seem all too similar to those experienced by the Fathers. For us in our busy, noisy, self-sufficient society, the examples of the Desert Fathers challenge us to seek healing from the Scriptures, and to allow the Psalms in particular to mold our internal emotional world and personal narrative. The ancient method of meditation on psalmody may yet provide powerful and profound engagement — individually and communally — with God in the midst of barrenness. □



CATHOLIC VOICES

## Roman Catholicism Aims for a ‘Synodal Church’

By Martin Browne

In 2025, churches will mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, which promulgated the creed professed to this day by the vast majority of Christians worldwide. Such general councils have been comparatively rare, and churches differ greatly in the number they accept as truly ecumenical. It was not until 1965, during the Second Vatican Council, that a permanent synodal structure, the Synod of Bishops, was established “for the universal Church.”

Moved and inspired by the experience of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI wanted to create a structure that would allow the conciliar experience of close cooperation between pope and bishops to continue after the council concluded. The synod is permanent in the sense of having a permanent office and secretariat in Rome, but the membership varies from assembly to assembly, depending on the topic. Since 1967, 18 General Assemblies and 11 Special Assemblies have met.

The next General Assembly of the Synod will begin with the celebration of Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on October 4 and will continue for three weeks. Will it be different from previous General Assemblies? Yes, very much so. Perhaps the most important difference, one that informs many others, is that this synod is envisaged as a *process* more than an *event*. In fact, as a new kind of synod, this one is perhaps more about the process than about any one issue facing the Church. In fact, it is often spoken of as “the Synod on Synodality.”

In his speech to open the synod, Pope Francis urged Catholics to see it as a graced time, providing an opportunity to move “not occasionally but structurally towards a ‘synodal Church,’ an open square where all can feel at home and participate.” He further called for the synod to

embody a “listening Church” and a “Church of closeness.”

During the two-year period leading up to this October’s General Assembly of the Synod, substantial time was devoted to engaging in the kind of listening the pope recommended. From October 2021 to April 2022, dioceses and other local churches were asked to engage in “listening and discerning.”

Extensive resources were provided to assist the local and national phases, explaining the purpose and suggesting methods for these meetings. Materials stressed that while this was a major consultation of the people of God, it was not simply a data-gathering exercise but an experience of communal — ecclesial — discernment.

The General Secretariat convened bishops, clergy, theologians, and other faithful to prepare a working document for the “continental” stage of the synod, which was published in October 2022. A series of seven continental assemblies met from January to March 2023. The General Secretariat eventually published the working document for the assembly — the *Instrumentum Laboris* — in June 2023.

Synod organizers, taking the pope’s lead, have been at pains to avoid hearing only from the usual suspects. They strived to include the young, the poor, the lapsed or disaffected, and others who could be considered at the margins. This intentionally inclusive impulse extended to those outside the visible communion of the Catholic Church.

In October 2021, cardinals Mario Grech and Kurt Koch wrote a joint letter to all episcopal conferences, asking for significant ecumenical involvement in the synod, pointing out that both synodality and ecumenism involve walking together. This point has a particular relevance in the context of dialogue between Catholics and

Anglicans/Episcopalians.

The most striking ecumenical aspect of the synod is a prayer vigil scheduled for St. Peter's Square on September 30. Both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the secretary general of the Anglican Communion plan to attend. It would be hard to overstate the uniqueness of this vigil.

An ecumenical event with such high-level participation from so many different traditions, coming together to pray alongside the Bishop of Rome for God's blessing on a Roman Catholic synod, is unprecedented.

The Mass to close the assembly on October 29 does not conclude the synod. Members will have a year to reflect on the experience, share their experiences in various local contexts, and (most important), listen to the responses they receive before returning to Rome for a second assembly in October 2024.

Much of Western media coverage of the synod concentrates, understandably, on key and potentially divisive topics that came up in various preparatory phases, such as women's ordination and the Church's ministry to LGBT people. Some conservative Catholics are fearful, lest the synod undermine or replace important Church teachings. Many more liberal Catholics seem to expect a similar outcome, but with relish rather than horror.

Radical upheaval is most unlikely. This is a synod, not a Third Vatican Council, and dis-

cernment is not the same as making doctrine by poll. Issues that featured strongly in the preparatory phases will be discussed. While they will attract attention, they are not the heart of the agenda for change behind this multi-year synodal journey.

The kind of difference that Pope Francis is

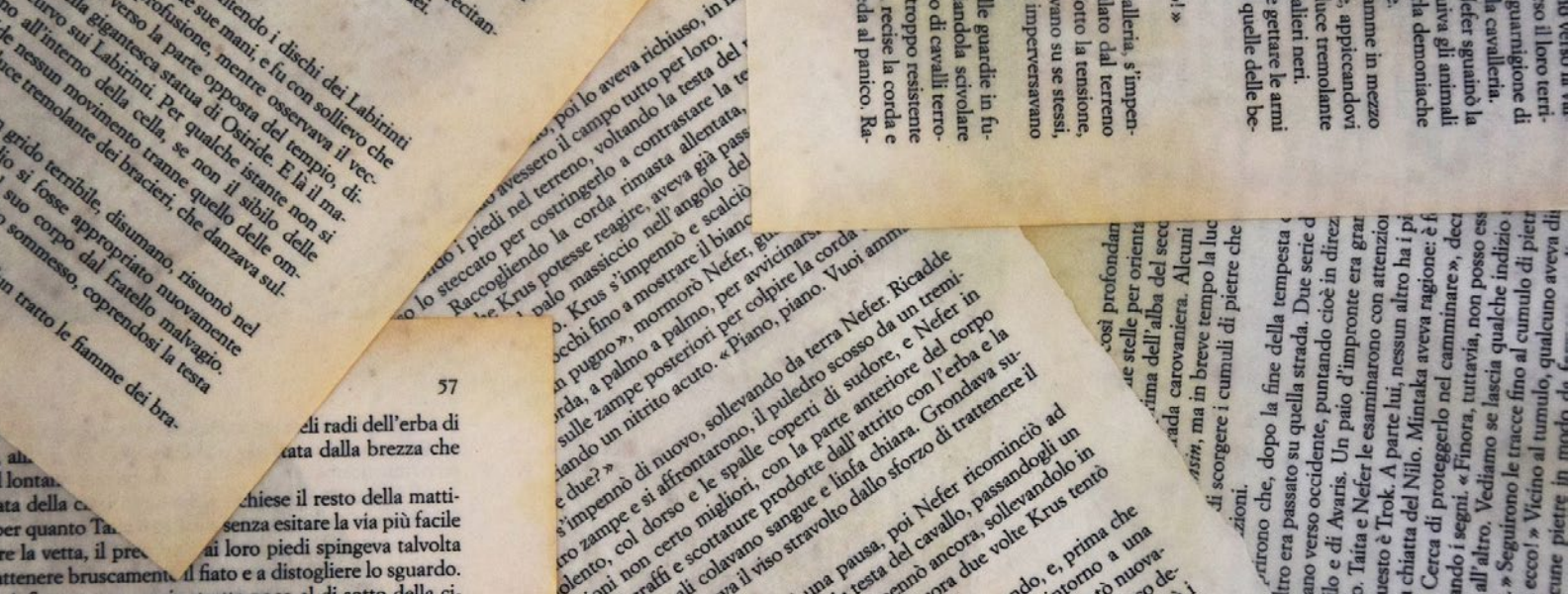


Vatican News

Pope Francis presides at Mass for the opening of the 2021 Synod of Bishops at St. Peter's Basilica.

trying to enact in this synod is not doctrinal change, but the embodiment of ecclesial synodality. Time will tell if the process over these three years has been sufficiently robust to send that message into the hearts and minds of Catholics around the world.

*The Rev. Martin Browne, OSB, is responsible for Anglican relations at the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity.*



Marisa\_Sias/pixabay

## COVENANT

# Christian Teaching in a Post-Literate Society

By Abigail Woolley Cutter

*This essay was first published August 3 on Covenant, the weblog of THE LIVING CHURCH.*

Readers of *Covenant*, it's safe to say, read many other things as well — not only essays, news stories, and meditations, but perhaps also commentaries, spiritual writings, books of theology and history, some science and technology as the mood strikes, and fiction and poetry to expand the soul.

Whatever and however much you read, you have likely long ago accepted a few premises:

- The spiritual and intellectual worlds are real.
- Spiritual realities and ideas profoundly affect the concrete world of politics, economics, relationships, and art.
- The written word is a vital tool in working with these important ideas — not only by putting us within reach of conversation partners far from us in time and space, but also by allowing us to consider ideas with more complexity than we could if we were formed only through speech.

Those of us who hold these assumptions are courting a special kind of culture shock now. While the centrality of literacy to American society (and beyond) has been on the decline for several decades, it has quickened in just the last 12 years. About 21 percent of American adults are now functionally illiterate, with 54 percent below a sixth-grade reading level. In 2022, 42 percent of students who took the ACT — a record high — failed to meet any of its college readiness benchmarks; only 22 percent met all four.

While some learning loss can be attributed to the COVID pandemic, last year's low scores are not an anomaly, but the fifth consecutive year of decline in average scores. Schol-

ars dispute how literacy should be measured, and whether we can really speak of a problematic decline; what they all seem to admit is that text-based reading levels have been on the decline since about the 1970s.

What the ACT board's report does not mean, however, is that a lower percentage of applicants are being accepted to college; rather, colleges are under financial pressure to recruit and accept as many students as they can. The result is that more students are entering college without the levels of literacy they need for mature learning.

My last two years' experience of teaching in a non-selective college forced me to grapple with the meaning of these trends. Most students I taught had never come to feel at home in the world of texts. Instead, they were uncomfortable strangers, eager to leave the unpleasant experience as quickly as possible. They could recognize and understand basic words, but they needed me to define vocabulary like *conscientious*, *duress*, and *utility*.

Sentence-level reading comprehension was a challenge, which made paragraph-level comprehension beyond the reach of most — let alone the ability to see relationships between paragraphs well enough to follow an argument. (The texts I'm thinking of include popular books on religion, ethics, and culture written at the level you'd find in *The Atlantic*.) Because my first-year students were simply not equipped to read effectively on their own — and, discouraged, often didn't try — it was impossible to host meaningful discussions on assigned readings. My teaching became dramatically more successful when I began reading the assigned texts aloud with students in class. Doing so, however, showed me that only a small minority could read aloud fluently.



A Christian life need not be tied to high levels of literacy, so if we are teaching Christianity we must teach prayer, holy living, and the Church's worship along with the Bible and other books.



Yet more challenging to me has been the realization that behind students' inability to read, there often lies a failure to believe in texts' power to compel. I noted how commonly students simply sweep good arguments to the side: not feeling obliged to claim that an author is either wrong or right, students might come to grasp an idea and accept that it is well done, but never consider their thinking implicated in it. Ideas contained in written language, it seems, simply don't pertain to them. Written ideas are a fantasy world to which one would need to opt in.

For someone like me, with a vocation to Christian teaching, this shift in the social importance of reading poses deeply challenging questions. On a personal level: of what real use is our training in the great written conversation, and to whom? On a societal level: how does a culture change when it becomes less socially important to exchange ideas, patiently, in text form? What is the historical norm for literacy, anyway? If we go back to lower levels of literacy, does it really matter? And on a theological level: is something more than nostalgia at stake for Christians when fewer people believe reading really matters?

While my understanding of and response to these changes must always be in progress, I am confident of a few things now. When people don't read well or don't value reading, it's not that they have ever knowingly chosen a decadent way of living. They simply haven't experienced reading as a centerpiece of life's fullness.

We also do well to recognize that, whatever else is on the line, much is at stake for those of us who are at home in texts. We must acknowledge the heartache of finding that our painstaking investment in texts and old conversations may not be widely valued, and that things near to our heart are ignored by many. In other words, underlying all our arguments about the importance of books and history are probably feelings of irrelevance and loneliness. If we are charged with teaching, but we haven't addressed our experience of personal loss, it will affect our teaching, and not for the better.

We must make the values of learning more explicit: design our teaching to focus on the themes of crafting good questions, reading actively, caring about more than what is directly marketable, cultivating practices of truth-seeking in a community, and exercising good conversational skills.

The pedagogical challenge of stripping down assumptions compels us to think more clearly about the role of lit-

eracy in human history. What kind of people does it make us, and why do we need it? We know that the first advent of writing in any society enables new social forms, so it is only natural to see changes in the function of reading and writing as a sign of civilization-level change as well. But then again, we will have to admit that, even amid civilization, most humans in history have been illiterate. To the extent that we break from our highly literate forebears, therefore, we are not out of fellowship with the entire human past, or even the Christian past.

The culture from which we are departing is epitomized by the exceptionally literate 19th century in America. This — as Neil Postman details in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* — was an environment in which many ordinary people could handle long and complex spoken arguments, like the all-day Lincoln-Douglas debates, because they were so accustomed to following them on the page. This culture of advanced literacy goes back to the early modern literary tradition in England, which owes in part to the serendipitous coming together of Protestant theology with the arrival of the printing press. The idea that everyone could and should read, and might have texts available to read, is a modern (albeit early modern) idea. This realization should give us a bit more humility, not to mention a calmer outlook when we face change.

A Christian life need not be tied to high levels of literacy, so if we are teaching Christianity we must teach prayer, holy living, and the Church's worship along with the Bible and other books. Yet Christianity fosters a special relationship to reading and writing. This is not only because of the Bible and our thoughtful responses to it, but also because of our close ties to Christians of other times and places. It is a genuinely Christian instinct to advocate for the continued, widespread, and careful use of reading and writing.

We should accept the literary culture's loss of status as perhaps spiritually good for us — a chastening, a separating of our chaff from our wheat, and a disciplinary pruning. It should make us humble and realistic about the gifts we offer. But let us keep reading, pondering, discussing, and teaching texts. When we do, we find it easier to understand how invisible things are still powerful and real. Everything can depend on what you cannot see.

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Virginia Theological Seminary

William Sachs and Wanjiru Gitau document how mission has dominated Virginia Seminary's vision of its purpose, but, perhaps more importantly, they also emphasize how the very meaning of mission has changed over time.

# Committed to Mission

## Becoming Cosmopolitan

Unfolding Two Centuries of Mission at Virginia Theological Seminary  
By William A. Sachs and Wanjiru M. Gitau  
Pickwick Publications, pp. xv + 242, \$33

By John L. Kater

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Virginia Theological Seminary. Rather than producing an updated history of the type that marks many such occasions, William Sachs and Wanjiru Gitau have chosen to mark the event by focusing on what they define as the primary aspect of the seminary's identity: its commitment to mission.

In doing so, they have produced an eminently readable volume, the significance of which goes far beyond the narrow confines of one American seminary. *Becoming Cosmopolitan* offers a detailed analysis of the ways that mission has been understood and practiced in multiple contexts and historical periods, using carefully chosen moments in the seminary's history to illustrate its thesis.

That thesis is rooted in Virginia Seminary's foundational narrative, which notes the urgency of mission in

the aftermath of the American Revolution. The authors consider that its establishment reflected both the evangelical movement in England and the effects of the Second Great Awakening in the United States: "the core of evangelical faith," they write, "has been the need for each person to be born again, and evangelical Episcopalians readily endorsed this principle. The spiritual new birth would remake one's heart and mind, and then the momentous process of rebuilding one's life would begin."

One of the seminary's early faculty members also noted the importance of "its situation in the South, and its accommodation to the habits and manners of that section," which included the presence of numbers of enslaved people on its campus and, as the authors point out, seriously compromised the understanding of the gospel in ways with which later generations would need to wrestle.

Sachs and Gitau document how mission has dominated the seminary's vision of its purpose, but, perhaps more importantly, they also emphasize how the very meaning of mission has changed over time. Early efforts at mission not only focused on indi-

vidual conversion to Christianity; they also assumed that Christian faith was something that missionaries had to give to those whose very survival depended on it.

Such a concept inevitably lent itself to unexamined assumptions of superiority and alliances with colonialism and empire. The 19th century's commitment to "the evangelization of the world in this generation" went far beyond individual conversion; it also imagined the creation of a worldwide Christian civilization that would bring the enterprise of mission to fruition. That the dreamed-of civilization reflected Western culture compromised the gospel in many ways, not least by leaving racism and imperialism largely unexamined.

But the authors consider that the most significant change in the understanding of mission that has shaped VTS in recent decades has been the awareness that true mission demands what they call *cosmopolitanism*. "The cosmopolitan outlook," they write, "has been described as a demand for attachment to distant and different people. ... It was a value that centered on the cultivation of mutual obligations that need not be deterred by

distance but would lead increasingly outward.” Such an attitude requires “a cultural sensitivity and a capacity to adapt,” which not only challenges assumptions of superiority but assumes the priority of relationship in which mutual learning occurs.

Sachs and Gitau consider that the growth of a cosmopolitan sensibility toward mission can be discerned in the gradual awakening to the sinfulness of slavery and racism, the growing realization that missionaries need not always be “in charge,” and in the complex development of enculturated Anglican expressions in other parts of the world. Christian missionary attachment to Western ideas of “progress” (to be overseen by the missionaries) has been replaced by a recognition that mission does not mean taking the gospel to those who need it, but mutual exploration of God’s presence in every time and place. This perception was spelled out in the concept of “missio Dei” and in the document

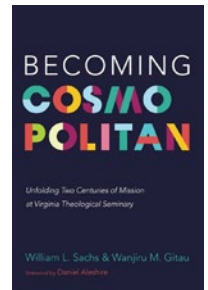
“Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ,” produced by the Toronto Anglican Congress in 1963.

The last chapters of *Becoming Cosmopolitan* highlight ways in which this new understanding of the nature of mission has changed the seminary’s life while holding fast to mission as its defining purpose. They note the establishment of the Center for Anglican Communion Studies, the diversification of both faculty and student body, efforts at reparations for the descendants of enslaved people at the seminary, and initiatives on interreligious dialogue and reconciliation, as well as the seminary’s openness to theological diversity as reflected in the decision to lift “the absolute ban, under all circumstances, on the admission of non-celibate gay and lesbian persons.”

All these enterprises are, they affirm, a sign that the seminary’s traditional emphasis on mission continues to shape its life; however, a reference to

tradition “cannot presume a static quality. Tradition must be lived, it must adapt and change if it, and the institution in which it is rooted, are to thrive.”

Graduates of VTS will, of course, be particularly interested in the authors’ analysis of how the seminary’s primary identity continues its heritage while critiquing and moving beyond its past. But other readers will find this book interesting, not only for its window into our church’s past but for a creative and promising way of thinking about mission in ways that enrich our understanding and motivate us toward the future.



*The Rev. Dr. John L. Kater is professor emeritus of ministry development at Church Divinity School of the Pacific and associate professor of the practice of ministry at Ming Hua Theological College in Hong Kong.*

## A Heroic Educator’s Memoir

### St. Andrew’s

Not Just Another School

By William S. Wade

Amazon Kindle Direct, pp. 404, \$29.95

Review by Patrick Gahan

**H**eroic is seldom a term used to describe the Episcopal Church. *Reverent, welcoming, and comprehensive* rise to the surface, but rarely *heroic*. For that reason, William S. Wade’s *St. Andrew’s: Not Just Another School* is essential reading for those who love the Episcopal Church and have been formed within it.

Wade chronicles the founding of St. Andrew’s by the Episcopal Order of the Holy Cross (OHC) in the foothills of the Tennessee Appalachians. This occurred years before President Roosevelt’s Tennessee Valley Authority brought electricity and paved roads to the region. The intrepid monks subse-

quently directed the school through two world wars, the Great Depression, and the burgeoning disenchantment that swept across the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

The fledgling monastic community would establish St. Andrew’s just east of Sewanee in 1905, a mere 21 years after OHC was founded with a handful of brothers. The monks would plant their new school over 900 miles from their headquarters in West Park, New York, which is more astonishing given that the order would establish the Kent School in Connecticut in 1906 and commit to extensive ministry in the struggling West African nation of Liberia beginning in 1921. Scrupulously searching the archives in West Park and Sewanee, Wade gives voice to these enterprising monks, whose fervor led them to deeply love and care for the mountain people.

Fueled with that devotion, OHC

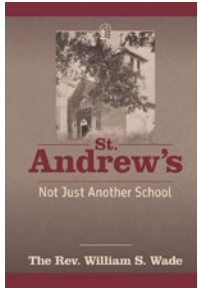
created St. Andrew’s with the dual goal of establishing a preaching and teaching hub in the Southern states and to evangelize and educate the “barefoot boys” of Appalachia. Little thought was given to preparing the impoverished students for college. After World War II, however, the monks expanded their mission to include boys from struggling families in the surrounding Southern cities and prepare about half of them for higher education.

I am among the rare company of living St. Andrew’s graduates, numbering only several hundred at most, which makes me fear the larger church may ignore Wade’s account. That would be a critical oversight. As we emerge from COVID lockdowns to face increasing public indifference about matters of faith, if not avowed hostility regarding the Christian Church, the story of OHC’s audacious

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vision to bring the true catholic faith to that once isolated region of the Cumberland Plateau may restore the ardor of our communion.



To that point, many of the monks who served St. Andrew's had previously ministered in Liberia, which preserved the school's missionary spirit throughout its 76-year history, a spirit that drove St. Andrew's to become the first Southern private school to racially integrate. In 1969, I arrived at St. Andrew's as a 14-year-old freshman from Birmingham, Alabama.

My provincial, segregated worldview crumbled when I discovered that many, if not most, of the leading scholars in my new school were Black. During all four years of my high school career, David Lenior, a Black

student from Atlanta, tutored me in mathematics. My college admission was due in no small part to his copious intellect and enduring patience with me.

Not even the monks' dogged valor could hold back the torrent of social and economic changes that flooded America in the last third of the 20th century. The landscape of private education dramatically changed, and the composition of monastic orders changed considerably, as well. As a result, OHC left the Kent School in 1943, and 28 years later it would relinquish control of St. Andrew's.

The monks, however, had made an indelible mark on the mountain community, and under the leadership of the Rev. Franklin Martin, St. Andrew's continued to educate boys and eventually girls, too, in the rich catholic faith of the Episcopal Church. In 1981, after Fr. Martin's retirement, St.

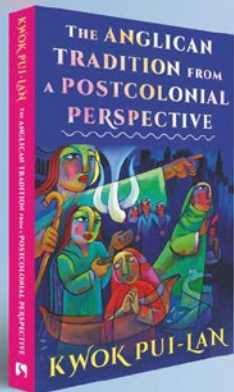
Andrew's, Sewanee Academy, and St. Mary's School (shuttered by the Community of St. Mary in 1968) merged to form St. Andrew's-Sewanee School.

William Wade kept not one but three historic schools alive at Sewanee. One could argue that he brought St. Mary's back from the dead. Furthermore, he never forgot OHC's commitment to the children of Appalachia, and worked assiduously to bring them to St. Andrew's-Sewanee. Finally, he pressed further by educating Lakota-Sioux children alongside children from the Bronx in his inventive and highly altruistic Summer Ascent program.

St. Andrew's-Sewanee flourished under Wade's 27 years of committed and creative leadership. Because of his heroism, the school "on the Mountain" flourishes still.

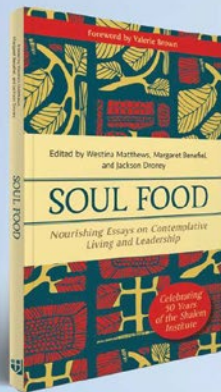
*The Rev. Patrick Gahan is rector of Christ Episcopal Church, San Antonio.*

# New this Fall



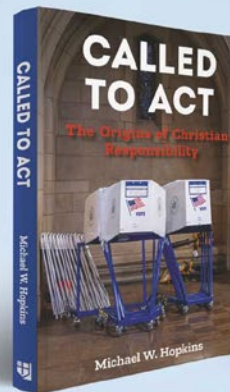
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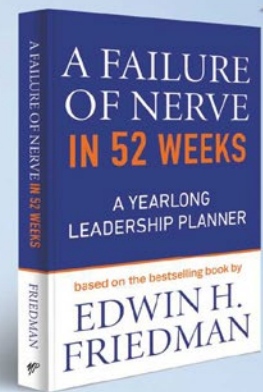
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# Newly Accessible Medieval Worlds

## Pilgrims

By Matthew Kneale  
Atlantic Books, pp. 352, \$15.95

## Revelations

By Mary Sharratt  
Mariner Books, pp. 320, \$16.99

Review by Hannah Matis

Not so very long ago, you couldn't get scholars, or novelists for that matter, to touch the late Middle Ages. In the language of Barbara Tuchman's ubiquitous 1978 monograph on the 14th century, the Middle Ages were "calamitous": plague-ridden, depressing, religious, the end of an era. Why go there when the glowing scientific advances of the Renaissance beckon from just around the corner?

To be sure, the religious and political landscape of late medieval Europe had more than its fair share of darkness, but it was also a time of immense structural changes that underlay the religious and political transformations of the 16th century. Urbanization in London and East Anglia intimately connected England with the Low Countries, Germany, and Italy; war forged dynastic connections between England and France, Spain and Portugal, and even with Czech Bohemia. A courtier like Chaucer, as Marion Turner's new biography attests, really got around, as did many of the pilgrims he wrote about, such as his indomitable Wife of Bath, who traveled as far as Jerusalem. This era also witnessed a concomitant explosion of writing in the vernacular — in middle English, in middle Dutch, in various German dialects, in French — by ordinary people. The vast majority of this is religious and devotional in character, but incorporates along the way a wealth of detail, much of it previously inaccessible to histori-

ans, about the nature and rhythms of ordinary life. For the novelist, the lilt of middle English is just different enough to our ears to be exotic, just similar enough emotionally to land.

The late Hilary Mantel's trilogy of novels about Thomas Cromwell, beginning with *Wolf Hall* in 2009, arguably reignited our interest in historical fiction as a genre; not least, the blockbuster success of *Hamnet*, by veteran novelist Maggie O'Farrell, ensures more books in the genre will find a market, perhaps, than in times past. On the heels of a pandemic during which comparisons with the Black Death were ubiquitous, and in the midst of the climate crisis, we are perhaps more in a mood to identify with the anxieties of the late medieval world than ever before. The vivid, slightly sham-bolic nature of late medieval religion likewise offers an appealing, inclusive alternative to our grimly polarized society. In particular, pilgrimage in all its forms retains its seemingly universal appeal for the spiritual but not religious, as well as offering to the novelist bountiful opportunities for sly social observation.

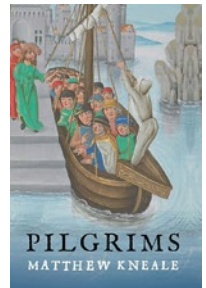
Matthew Kneale's *Pilgrims* goes full, broad Chaucer, following a ragtag group who have, for various and not entirely religious motivations, found themselves on pilgrimage to Rome. Each chapter is written from a different character's point of view, from the beggar boy haunted by visions of his cat in purgatory all the way up the social scale to the formidable young noblewoman who has sued her way to financial independence via several terrible lovers but cannot manage to get a divorce from her first husband. Significantly, however, the prologue begins the story with the violent backlash against the Jews that accompanied Simon de Montfort's rebellion against King Edward in the 1260s, described in terms of claustrophobic

intimacy. Insider or outsider, in this story you cannot escape your neighbors. While it is publicized as a comic novel, I found *Pilgrims* more poignant than funny, very definitely a story in which we are all in the same boat together.

Though it is almost a century too soon, one of Kneale's characters, Matilda Froome, bears a marked resemblance to perhaps the best known of all late medieval pilgrims, the Norwich housewife, Margery Kempe. Point for point, Kneale includes all the potent components of Margery's life, recounted in what is sometimes called the first autobiography in English, the medieval equivalent of keeping up with the Joneses: brewing, repeated childbirth, visions and conversion, constant weeping, pilgrimage to Rome (alienating all her fellow pilgrims along the way), probable mental illness, and her quirk of referring to herself as "your creature."

In *Revelations*, Mary Sharratt makes a much more serious and comprehensive effort to fill out the details of Margery's remarkable life. From the beginning, Sharratt draws out one of the most familiar encounters in all late medieval English literature: the moment, in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, in which Margery pays a call on the anchorite Julian of Norwich, the author of *Revelations of Divine Love*. As a student of mine once remarked, if their writing styles are anything to go by, the meeting must have resembled a terrier trying to play with a Great Dane; for better or worse, Margery never had a scrap of Dame Julian's poise. In Sharratt's interpretation, however, Margery's life, follow-

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ing that encounter, represents a kind of special embassy, even ordination “consecrated by Julian, secretly carrying her book out into the great world.”

For Kneale’s pilgrims, the pilgrimage is the excuse for life to happen along the way; Sharratt is much more interested in the particular religious moment in which Margery found herself — specifically, in the drama between Margery’s efforts to preach and proclaim her visions and her complicated relationship with religious authority. Sharratt invents, dra-

matically but not improbably, Margery’s arrest and trial at York Minster for Lollard heresy. The followers of John Wycliffe, colloquially “Lollards,” are often referred to as pre- or proto-reformers by later historians. They represent, however, many of the most broadly shared concerns of devout medieval laypeople, including their critique of the clergy, that Jan Hus and Martin Luther would later refashion in new forms. Sharratt’s instinct is to connect Margery, not only to the Lollards but also to the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and to the

beguines, devout laywomen from the Low Countries. In Sharratt’s hands, Margery becomes the emissary and apostle of these groups, while, unlike Kneale, she downplays the absurd, tragicomic aspects of *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Both novels demonstrate, however, the ebullient life to be encountered in the worlds of the late Middle Ages.

*Hannah W. Matis is the associate dean for academic affairs and an associate professor of church history at the University of the South’s School of Theology.*

## A Biography as Dashing as its Subject

### Super-Infinite

The Transformations of John Donne  
By Katherine Rundell  
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, pp. 352, \$30

Review by Drew Nathaniel Keane

Readers will find Katherine Rundell’s *Super-Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne* a stimulating and accessible account of his life that spurns any artificial separation between the poet and the divine, the swashbuckling Jack and the staid dean of St. Paul’s. Rundell’s account, winner of the 2022 Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction, leans into the paradoxes.

The definitive biography of John Donne is R.C. Bald’s 1970 *John Donne: A Life* (revised 1986). Rundell tells us it “forms the bedrock of this [and] every other account of Donne’s life since.” Though “spectacularly detailed,” it is a dry tome unlikely to interest non-scholars. Since the 20th-century revival of interest in John Donne (1572-1631), many scholars have been as troubled by the heterogeneity they found in him as Dr. Johnson was (who criticized Donne’s

verse for yoking together heterogeneous ideas by violence).

As a result, we tended to see fragmented engagement with Donne — only the erotic verse, only the religious verse, only the prose, only the sermons, and so on. Led by John Carey’s 1981 *John Donne: Life, Mind, and Art*, scholars have rightly rejected that misleading fragmentation. Rundell credits this “electric piece of literary criticism” as an inspiration for her career.

Recent works have brought this reassessment out of the academy, like Ramie Targoff’s *John Donne, Body and Soul* and John Stubbs’s *John Donne: The Reformed Soul*, both published in 2008. Rundell’s work follows in the footsteps of Carey, Targoff, and Stubbs with a popular-level — though no less perceptive — distillation that was a joy to read.

What distinguishes this book from Targoff and Stubbs is both its swift pace and delightful style, capturing something of Donne’s ludic wit. She proceeds chronologically, which is trickier than one might expect. Much of his work circulated in manuscripts among friends and was copied out over and again, often preventing us from pinpointing when particular texts were written. While not hiding the uncertainty of dating, Rundell

weaves sensitive analysis of Donne’s poetry and prose throughout without getting bogged down.

She achieves speed without superficiality by treating certain words Donne uses very frequently as thematic highways that both connect the corners of his life and corpus and allow for easy movement between them. *Love* (the most-used), *infinity*, and words with the prefix “trans” (hence the subtitle) provide thematic unity. Hidden within them lies another word that figures prominently in the account: *Possibility*.

She delights in the many indeterminate possibilities of her subject: the many gaps in our records of Donne’s life, the multiple meanings in his fecund writing, his continual self-reinvention, the thorny question(s) regarding his religious conversion, the encounters with others’ minds and bodies, and, most of all, with the Wholly Other, the heart-battering three-personed God. She connects the indeterminate possibilities of his life with a quality of his work: “he saw the chaos and the potential of us. We are, he believed, creatures transformable.”

Donne was a precocious, Jesuit-educated great-great-nephew of Sir Thomas More who became the most popular Protestant preacher in any London pulpit. He briefly turned pirate



“

Humanizing her subject, Rundell shatters Isaac Walton’s ‘stained-glass saint,’ though without animosity. That foreign country — the past — comes to life through her selection of contextualizing details. The description of the ‘rowdy,’ ‘moving, rustling, eating’ audiences of one-to-three hour Renaissance sermons will surely elicit tittering.

”

with Sir Walter Raleigh, plundering Spanish ships of their New World plunder. Though piracy proved less profitable than he might have hoped, he was imprinted with a passion for “exploration, discovery, and fresh territory.”

Donne, “the greatest writer of desire in the English language,” was briefly imprisoned for eloping with 16-year-old Anne More, but he was likely not a Casanova — “he wrote the early swaggering erotic poetry for which he is so famous for a small coterie of male friends.” Despite the unabashed sexuality of his verse, he preached that “marriage is but a continual fornication sealed with an oath.”

This stern Protestant preacher also wrote the first full-length defense of suicide in English, *Biathanatos*, admitting, “with painstaking precision, how often [he] dreamed of killing himself.” The same hand *in extremis* created a “relentlessly beautiful” prose reflection on death, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, including perhaps his most familiar passage, “No man is an island.”

Humanizing her subject, Rundell shatters Isaac Walton’s “stained-glass saint,” though without animosity. That foreign country — the past — comes to life through her selection of contextualizing details. The description of the “rowdy,” “moving, rustling, eating” audiences of one-to-three hour Renaissance sermons will surely elicit tittering.

Sometimes the selection of detail is quite timely, such as the description of a London plague outbreak of 1593,

when “street officials wielded three-foot-long marshal wands, to swat at people who weren’t maintaining social distancing.” Occasionally this familiarization may, for academic readers, bring to mind Michael Goulder’s observation that “all descriptions carry the peril of anachronism.” An example is her use of *Roman Catholic* and *Anglican*, labels that suggest a kind of religious pluralism familiar to us but incompatible with the world-picture of Renaissance England.

Donne held rotteness and wonder, Rundell explains, “ever in front of him: a kind of duck-rabbit of the human condition” — “Our nature is

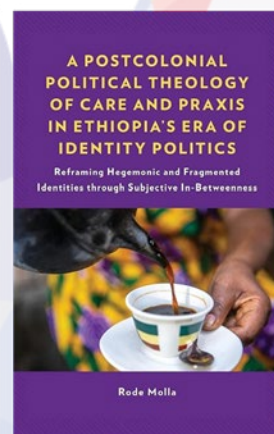
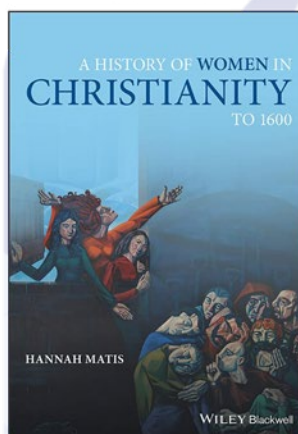
meteoric ... we respect (because we partake so) both earth and heaven; for as our bodies glorified shall be capable of spiritual joy, so our souls, demerged into those bodies, are allowed to partake earthly pleasure.”

Rundell’s work is not only an engaging *vita* but, as she says, “an act of evangelism.” She argues that, from 400 years’ distance, Donne’s work offers “ways of reckoning with the grimly and majestically improbable problem of being alive” and “still has the power to be transformative.”

*Dr. Drew Nathaniel Keane teaches English at Georgia Southern University.*

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# The Spiritual Dynamo of the 20th Century?

## God in Gotham

The Miracle of Religion in Modern Manhattan

By Jon Butler

The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pp. 308, \$19.95

Review by R. William Franklin

**G**od in Gotham tells the story of how religion flourished in Manhattan in the age of modernization, from the 1880s to the 1960s. After a golden age of suburbanization and prosperity, we now experience a long, slow numerical decline. Today there are 1.5 million Episcopalians in the United States. There are more Girl Scouts — 2.4 million — than there are Episcopalians.

Theological education is in disarray: Some of our venerable seminaries have closed, merged, or moved online, and we struggle with what to teach, whom to teach, where, and how. We ask our clergy to be entrepreneurs, community organizers, online content producers, and technical experts.

Jon Butler's *God in Gotham* asks a single question: "How did religion confront modernity in what, by 1925, was the world's largest city?" Gilded-Age Manhattan became a center of religious dynamism in response to fears that traditional faith practice might not survive amid chaotic and frightening change as immigration, industrialization, and urban anonymity tore at the fabric of religious community.

By sticking closely to a study of classic European-derived mainline Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Judaism that dominated Manhattan religion from the 1880s to the 1960s, *God in Gotham* portrays a city

where people of faith eagerly engaged modernity, where immigrants were welcomed, not shunned. Butler argues that modern Manhattan actually gave rise to a new urban religious landscape of unparalleled breadth and popularity, rather than a crippled, old-fashioned religion of exclusion.

Butler further argues that Manhattan's post-1880 religious development had a strong effect on the post-World War II pattern of suburban religion. Urban emigrants to the suburbs instigated a religious revival that extended from the late 1940s to the 1970s. Without the widespread influence of the Manhattan model, suburban religion would likely have failed.

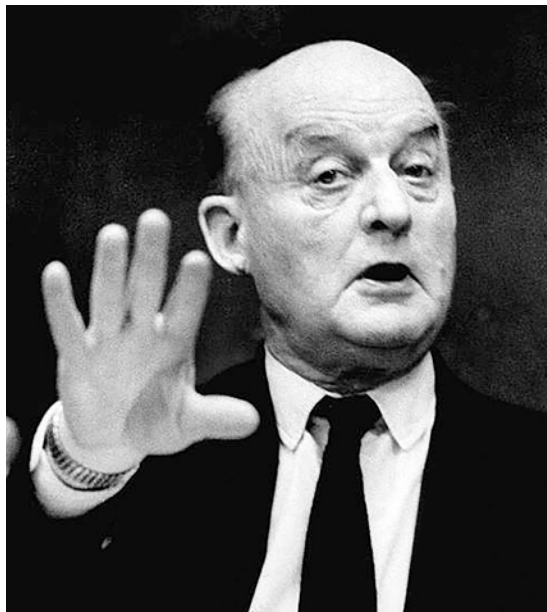
How does Butler make the case

corporations around boards, systematic financial practices, and formal stewardship campaigns. Fundraising supported Roman Catholic charities, which in turn supported popular institutions — hospitals, orphanages, schools, and colleges.

New York Jews directed funding to popular causes, philanthropy, and women's issues. Harlem's massive mainstream parishes and its storefront congregations testified to the triumphs of modern urban religion as something new, focused on social justice and civil rights. Tools of modernity were integrated into all of these institutions to advance their goals — advertising, psychology, and new building materials and construction techniques that could accommodate increasing numbers of worshipers and modernize existing sacred spaces.

The fifth chapter, "God's Urban Hot-house," is a wonderful review of the intellectual power of religion in Manhattan during this period. Manhattan stimulated an outpouring of individual and institutional theological and spiritual creativity unsurpassed in any other 20th-century American locale. Thinkers were attracted by Manhattan's formidable seminaries and universities. No single "Manhattan Theology" emerged, but most leaned liberal.

Butler offers exquisite portraits of Manhattan intellectuals who shaped the future of religion. Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary was famous as preacher and teacher, but above all for his 1932 classic *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, with its renewed emphasis on original sin, which furthered the Neo-Orthodox Movement in Protestantism. Paul Tillich, also of Union, with his fusion of psychology and Christian theology, found an enormous audience in Protestant America. Jacques Maritain, the best-known Catholic intellectual of the period, produced the classic *Christianity and Democracy*.



Levan Ramishvili /Flickr

Reinhold Niebuhr speaks at New York's Union Theological Seminary in 1959.

that Manhattan became a spiritual dynamo in the 20th century? His principal argument is the centrality of institutions in the religious experience of Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Jews. Twentieth-century Manhattan became a center for the application of modern business methods to Protestant parishes, designed like secular

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin founded the Catholic Worker movement. Norman Vincent Peale, senior pastor of Marble Collegiate Church, was best known for his 1952 book *The Power of Positive Thinking*. In politics, he was persuasive as an opponent of electing a Roman Catholic as U.S. president, but not enough to prevent John F. Kennedy's victory. The 45th president of the United States, Donald Trump, came under his influence as a parishioner while a young man. (Peale presided at the wedding of Trump and his first wife, Ivana.)

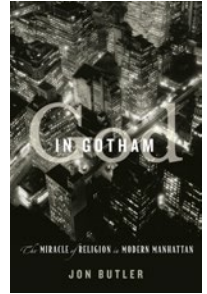
I close with one caveat. Butler omits the strong influence of the Episcopal

Church in Manhattan. He ignores the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a great example of significant Manhattan religion and a perfect architectural symbol of his theme. Begun in 1892, it is the world's sixth-largest church, and its architect, Ralph Adams Cram, was highly influential in adapting the Gothic style to modern churches, not only in Manhattan but throughout the United States.

Finally, Episcopal intellectuals are excluded. There is no mention of H. Boone Porter, professor of liturgics at General Theological Seminary, a key scholar involved in the revision of the Book of Common Prayer

(1979), an important agent of religious modernization. Porter was a major force in the renewal of the Episcopal Church from 1997 to 1990 as editor of *THE LIVING CHURCH*. His absence, like that of St. John the Divine, is a significant omission from this otherwise splendid study.

*The Rt. Rev. R. William Franklin is an assisting bishop of the Diocese of Long Island and a faculty member of Union Theological Seminary.*



## A Historian's Safari

### Journeys of the Mind

A Life in History

By Peter Brown

Princeton, pp. 736, \$45

Review by Lawrence N. Crumb

Peter Brown's *Journeys of the Mind* is really two books in one: the autobiography of a distinguished historian, and a guided tour of the development of his intellectual interests and their application during his long career.

The autobiography takes Brown from his childhood in the Protestant minority of Catholic (and neutral) Ireland of the 1940s to the Oxford of the 1950s and 1960s and on, by way of UC-Berkeley and a MacArthur Fellowship, to Princeton University, where he is now professor emeritus.

Pre-war trips to Sudan, where his father worked for the railroads; schoolteachers from Hungary and the Channel Islands; and medieval architecture and stained-glass windows all contributed to broadening his outlook, both geographically and temporally. By the time he took his degree at Oxford, he had settled on late antiquity as his field of specialization.

Late antiquity is the period ca. A.D. 200-700 in the history of the Western world, including Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Northern Africa. It had long been considered unimportant, but Brown was among the first to recognize vitality in the West, as well as a flourishing Byzantine Empire and a nascent Islam in the East. It was the study of St. Augustine of Hippo and his age, as a special topic for the Oxford undergraduate exams, that sealed his interest, piqued by one source's statement that "Roman civilization did not die a natural death; it was murdered."

The names of his teachers and colleagues will be mostly unfamiliar to the non-specialist reader, but some may be recognized from undergraduate studies. Although long, the book is easy to read, with peculiarities of British usage explained and titles and quotes in other languages translated into English. Passages from his letters home give a contemporary feel to the early years.

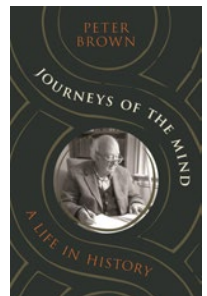
This is not a book for everyone, but it will be of interest to many for different reasons. For those who have lived in Oxford, it will be the pleasure of revisiting familiar places. For those with an interest in St. Augustine and Patristics, it will be learning of his

conclusion that there was continuity, not a complete break, between classical culture and the thought of the early Christian writers, plus his reassessment of Augustine the man, after writing a biography, based on later discoveries.

His trip to Iran on the eve of the revolution, and meetings there with Armenian Christians, a community of Zoroastrians, and Muslims, will be of interest for a variety of reasons. For those with an interest in the history of ideas, it will be a fascinating safari through territory that is often unfamiliar but always interesting.

Brown provides several examples of the "Oxford friendship" phenomenon; and throughout the book, there is continuous evidence that the most important ingredient in scholarship is the personal relations among the scholars.

*The Rev. Lawrence N. Crumb is vicar of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Cottage Grove, Oregon, and associate professor emeritus (library), University of Oregon. This is his 17th book review for TLC, beginning in 1980.*



## SUNDAY'S READINGS

### 20 PENTECOST, OCT. 15

Ex. 32:1-14 or Isa. 25:1-9  
Ps. 106:1-6, 19-23 or Ps. 23  
Phil. 4:1-9 • Matthew 22:1-14

### On High

When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus replied, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Holy Eucharist I, p. 324, BCP).

The first and great commandment is a total and absolute commitment of love toward the source of all being. The object, though the word *object* is not quite right, of this love is no contingent or temporal thing. Rather, the heart, soul, and mind are called to ascend above all created beings until they rest in a presence that can seem strangely like an absence. “Who is like the LORD our God, who sits enthroned on high?” asks the Psalmist (Ps. 113:5). God is “enthroned” above all creation, and yet he warrants and elicits our love because, in love and mercy, “God stoops to behold the heavens and the earth” (Ps. 113:6).

Seeing God present in the world, it is almost inevitable that we may see things as gods. Indeed, there is a deep human need to fixate on something as the object of adoration. An old story illustrates this. “When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, ‘Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ Aaron said to them, ‘Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’ So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to

Aaron. He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD.’ They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel” (Ex. 32:1-6).

Unable to bear the absence of Moses and the apparent absence of God, “They made a calf at Horeb and worshiped a cast image. They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass” (Ps. 106:19-20). St. Paul describes it this way: “Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles” (Rom. 1:23). They had forgotten how to reverence things properly by acknowledging that they are not God, though they are a manifestation of the mind of God. They are because God wills their being; in this way, everything may be a sacramental sign without depriving God of full honor, our wholehearted praise, and all the treasure of our love.

Jesus tells a story about a wedding feast. A king gives a banquet for his son. Those who were invited would not come. Some made light of it. Hearing the invitation, some returned to their farm work, some to their business. Finally, after the king sent emissaries into the main street to invite everyone, some came. These contemplatives ascend toward love, leaving everything for the joy of a wedding banquet hosted by the king of love.

**LOOK IT UP:** Genesis 1 and 2

**THINK ABOUT IT:** God is “all loves excelling.”

### 21 PENTECOST, OCT. 22

Ex. 33:12-23 or Isa. 45:1-7  
Ps. 99 or Ps. 96:1-9, (10-13)  
1 Thess. 1:1-10 • Matt. 22:15-22

### Yearning, Seeing

Having bowed to the golden calf, the Israelites turn away from the mystery of the one true God, who is not seen with fleshly eyes, enthroned invisibly upon the cherubim, the God Who Is, high above all peoples, great and awesome — that than which nothing greater can be conceived: Being itself! God passes judgment: “I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are” (Ex. 32:9). God’s wrath is averted only after Moses stands in the breach: “Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people” (Ex. 32:12). God, then, promises that Moses and the people will enter the Promised Land, assisted by a ministering angel. And yet, strangely, God says, “I will not go up among you” (Ex. 33:3).

Moses cannot countenance the thought of proceeding without the presence of God. Neither can we. Without the attending presence of God, the grace that precedes and follows us, that envelops our being, we would fall instantly into nothingness. Finally, the Lord says, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Ex. 33:14). Moses asks for a sign of God’s presence, saying, “Show me your glory, I pray” (Ex. 33:18). The Lord responds, “See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen” (Ex. 33:21-23).

We cannot see the full glory of God because he exceeds all that we can ask or imagine. Though ineffable and deeply mysterious, God reveals a measure of divine glory fitted to our capacity, showing, we might say, a divine

(Continued on next page)

afterglow. God deigns to be seen in part, but this is no small thing. Standing in the cleft of the rock, Moses feels the God of the whole cosmos passing by, near and powerful.

Moses does and does not get what he wants. He does not see the full glory of God, the divine essence. Rather, Moses sees enough to be satisfied, yet is not sated because there is always more of God to know, seek, and love. Gregory of Nyssa puts it this way in *The Life of Moses*: “This truly is the vision of God: never to be satisfied in the desire to see him. But one must always, by looking at what he can see, rekindle his desire to see more” (p. 116).

Something similar is suggested in the dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees and Herodians. They ask a question about paying the Roman tax, hoping to entrap Jesus. Responding, Jesus does not divide the world into two equal realms, the secular and sacred, the earthly city and heavenly city. Rather, saying that we must “give to God the things that are God’s,” Jesus leaves nothing outside the scope of God’s sovereign authority. To be sure, Jesus allows the tax to be paid, though suggesting it is a mere nothing, an image on a coin. What is owed to God is absolutely everything, because “all things come of thee” (1 Chron. 29:14, KJV). In a sense, “giving to God the things that are God’s” is the same endless quest we observe in Moses’ desire to see God.

The spiritual journey of longing and yearning and loving never ends.

**LOOK IT UP:** 1 Thessalonians 1:10

**THINK ABOUT IT:** To wait for the Son from heaven is always to wait for some new gift.

## 22 PENTECOST, OCT. 29

Deut. 34:1-12 or Lev. 19:1-2, 15-18  
Ps. 90:1-6, 13-17 or Ps. 1  
1 Thess. 2:1-8 • Matt. 22:34-36

### The Law Teaches

**W**hat does it mean to love God? What does it mean to love your neighbor?

To love God is to offer oneself as a complete and total self-oblation: heart, soul, and mind: the heart being the inward person and seat of emotion, the soul signifying a vital life force, and the mind indicating rational perception and reflection. In sum, God is loved by the whole person. Love, however, cannot be love unless it is freely given.

St. Augustine is a great teacher on this point. Commenting on John 6:44 (“No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me”), Augustine insists that *drawn* could never mean a violation or overthrow of the will (to be forced). “Do not think that you are drawn unwilling,” he says (*Commentary on St. John*, tract 26:4-6). “You are drawn perhaps a little by the will, but also by desire. What is it to be drawn by desire? *Delight in the Lord and he will give to you the petitions of your heart.* There is a certain desire of the heart to which the celestial bread is sweet. Indeed, it is right of the poet to say, ‘Every person is drawn by his own desire’ (Virgil, Ec. 2), not necessity, but desire, not obligation, but delight — how much stronger we ought to say that a person is drawn to Christ, who delights in the truth, delights in blessedness, delights in justice, delights in eternal life, all of which is Christ?” (my translation). Going toward God and giving oneself to him is the consummation of every blessing. In a sense — an example among others Augustine uses — to be drawn is to fall in love. To love in this way is to expand one’s horizons infinitely, evermore toward one’s good.

What does it mean to love one’s neighbor? This too is a matter of self-giving, although it is carefully gauged in reference to our neighbor’s

needs and our needs. This love is deeply relational and contextual and is always being adjusted. What does the moment require? What builds up the human community? There is, indeed, very much we can do for each other in fostering a more humane life. Strikingly and rightly, Scripture often highlights not so much what we should do, but what we should avoid. Namely, we are not to hurt our neighbor.

The text from Leviticus addresses certain prohibitions in the cause of social cohesion and justice. “You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the LORD. You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” With the exception of one positive command, to reprove, all the commands are negative and, in a sense, intensified by the statement, “I am the LORD!” Before all else, we are not to hurt or harm one another.

Speaking of God’s transcendence, it is often said that he is “wholly other.” There is transcendence — an otherness — encountered also in every human being because every person is an infinite mystery with infinite depths, bearing a vocation toward divine communion. There is an inviolable dignity to the human person that cries out against abuse.

**LOOK IT UP:** Leviticus 19:1

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Reverence God and your neighbor as holy.

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23 PENTECOST, NOV. 5

Josh. 3:7-17 or Mic. 3:5-12

Ps. 107:1-7, 33-37 or Ps. 43

1 Thess. 2:9-13 • Matt. 23:1-12

Do Justice

Deuteronomy describes in detail Moses' vision of the Promised Land: "Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan [the distant north], all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh [northwest], all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea [the Mediterranean], the Negeb [to the south], and the Plain — that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees — as far as Zoar [the south end of the Dead Sea]" (Deut. 34:1-3). But he would not enter it: "Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the LORD's command" (Deut. 34:5).

The children of Israel wept 30 days for this terrible loss. It was, at least in part, overcome by the promise of a new leader, one who would be like Moses. "Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the LORD had commanded Moses" (Deut. 34:9). "The LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they may know that I will be with you as I was with Moses" (Josh. 3:7). The Hebrew people were a political and religious community, and they could not live, nor can we, without leadership — Moses, then Joshua, then the judges, then the kings. Forms of leadership and governance may change, but political structure and legitimate authority will always be necessary.

Because leadership involves the exercise of power, it is a grave responsibility and carries inherent risks. To whom much is given, much will be required. How easily this maxim is forgotten, and so leadership must either police itself by internal correction or face prophetic judgment from

the outside.

In the eighth century B.C., amid political turmoil and corruption, a number of prophets arose to champion the cause of pure worship and justice, and their special ire was directed against leaders who enriched themselves by pouring out the blood of the poor. The prophet Micah speaks in dramatic and harsh terms: "I am filled with power, with the spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob and chiefs of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert iniquity, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with wrong! Its rulers give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for a price, its prophets give oracles for money; yet they lean upon the LORD and say, 'Surely the LORD is with us! No harm shall come upon us'" (Mic. 3:9-11). Judgment will come. "For the needy will not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever" (Ps. 9:18).

Addressing the religious leaders of his day, Jesus indicts them not for what they teach but for their failure to follow it and for the impossible burdens they place upon the people. "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them" (Matt. 23:2-4).

Political and religious leaders might well ask at the beginning of every day, "Am I doing my duty? Am I concerned especially for the weak, the vulnerable, and the poor?"

**LOOK IT UP:** Psalm 43:3

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Send me your light and your truth, that they may lead me.



## 24 PENTECOST, NOV. 12

Josh. 24:1-3a, 14-25 or Wis. 6:12-16  
or Amos 5:18-24  
Ps. 78:1-7 or Wis. 6:17-20 or Ps. 70  
1 Thess. 4:13-18 • Matt. 25:1-13

### Repeat and Learn

It has been said that repetition is the mother of all learning. To state the obvious, this principle is put into practice through liturgical worship, in which actions are repeated and words reiterated. Moreover, the liturgy has within it concise and memorable summations of our faith: the Summary of the Law, the Lord's Prayer, the Nicene Creed, the Eucharistic Prayer. Occasionally, the appointed readings function in a similar way, stating all that we believe in a few telling lines.

Joshua, addressing the people as they prepare to enter the Promised Land, reminds them of an old story. "Long ago your ancestors — Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor — lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:2-3, 14).

Hearing these words, the people offered their wholehearted consent, to which we may add our own. "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us all along the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we have passed" (Josh. 24:16-17). We have been grafted into this story. Christ has liberated us from the false gods of this age and set us on a path toward the New Jerusalem, and in the time of our pilgrimage, Christ is with us, in us, protecting us.

In Christ, we are set free, and we live in the exuberant hope of new and

eternal life. Can we state this simply and clearly? To use the words of St. Paul, "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:14-18).

This is our hope — to be with the Lord forever and ever! As we wait, we do so as wise bridesmaids. We light our lamps and carry an extra supply of oil. We are vigilant, alert, and hopeful.

The Christian life is a universe. We cannot hold it all before our attention, and thus we need brief reminders that are easily learned and repeated: (1) We are the people God has called and set free from the false gods of this age. (2) We will rise with Christ in the joy of everlasting life. (3) We persevere in hope, being vigilant and alert. Prayerfully, we tell the same story over and over again!

**LOOK IT UP:** Psalm 78:3-4

**THINK ABOUT IT:** We will *recount* to generations to come.

## 25 PENTECOST, NOV. 19

Jdg. 4:1-7 or Zeph. 1:7, 12-18  
Ps. 123 or Ps. 90:1-8 (9-11), 12  
1 Thess. 5:1-11 or Matt. 25:14-30

### Fear God Rightly

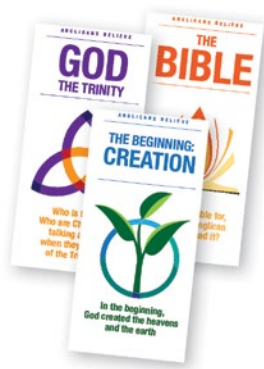
We hear terrifying words of judgment, words of warning against a people who have forsaken God and turned to the gods of the nations. For a very long time, paganism has infiltrated and nearly usurped the true faith of the Hebrew people. The prophet Zephaniah intervenes, and though his words are harsh, they are not altogether unwelcome. It is as if the people know that the time of judgment is at hand. "Be silent before the LORD God! For the day of the LORD is at hand" (Zeph. 1:7).

The prophet piles one violent image upon another. "The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring such distress upon the people that they shall walk like the blind; because they have sinned against the LORD, their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung" (Zeph. 1:14-17).

In distinctly Christian language, we might say much the same thing using the words of St. Paul: "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:1-2). Or, to quote the Nicene Creed, "He will come to come to judge the living and the dead."

Zephaniah prophesied in a specified moment of crisis, but in a sense he highlights the crisis of every moment. Judgment is felt in the

(Continued on next page)



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(Continued from previous page)

brevity of human life, the frailty of all things. In the words of the Psalter, “You sweep us away like a dream; we fade away suddenly like the grass. In the morning it is green and flourishes; in the evening it is dried up and withered” (Ps. 90:5-6). The time is short, and time is precious. All of this is a call to be alert and vigilant. “So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober” (1 Thess. 5:6). The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, yet a wrong understanding of fear will destroy our lives and distort our faith. St. Paul pointedly asserts, “God has not destined us for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him” (1 Thess. 5:9-10).

A wrong fear of God is well illus-

trated in the parable of the talents. The servant to whom one talent was given so feared the master that he hid the talent in the ground, hoping only to return what he was given. That is, he didn’t use the talent as it ought to be used: invested. A correct understanding of reverence toward the master is to use the talents appropriately by investing them and accepting the risk involved. To fear and reverence the Lord is to know that the time is short and that everything one receives is to be used well and appropriately to the glory of God and for the good of others.

**LOOK IT UP:** Matthew 25:15

**THINK ABOUT IT:** You receive according to your ability. Therefore, in the time you have, use what you receive wisely.

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The Rev. Canon **Adam Young** is canon missionary at Cathedral Church of the Advent, Birmingham, Ala.

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### Priesthood

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Central New York: **Joseph Hannah** (rector, Grace, Baldwinsville)

Long Island: **Carlos Holmes Rendon Agudelo, Zachary Daniel Baker, Elliot Thomas Conrad**

Southwest Florida: **Alicia Anderson Gomes** (chaplain, St. Mary's School, Tampa)

### Retirements

The Rev. **Barbara Ambrose** as deacon at St. Andrew's, Oregon Hill, Richmond, Va.

Canon **Stephen F. Hutchinson** as executive director of Episcopal Community Services of Utah

The Rev. Canon **Betsy Smith Ivey** as the Diocese of Pennsylvania's canon for growth and support

The Rev. **Peter Rodgers** as vicar of St. Andrew's, Antelope, Calif.

The Rev. **Kirby Smith** as priest in charge of All Saints, Vista, Calif.

The Rev. Deacon **Brian Wright** as the Diocese of Olympia's missionary for veterans' ministry

## OBITUARIES



The Rev. Dr. **Daniel Page Northway**, who was a child psychiatrist before becoming a priest, died August 3 at 81.

He was a native of Oneida, New York, and grew up in Pompano Beach, Florida.

A family obituary says that at age 8, he wrote to his bishop for advice on becoming a priest. The bishop wrote back that he should first finish the third grade.

Northway was twice a graduate of the University of Miami: first as an undergraduate, then as a medical student. After finishing medical school, he moved to Kansas to begin building his career as a board-certified psychiatrist. He completed a residency in general psychiatry and a fellowship in child psychiatry at the Menninger Foundation, and trained at the Topeka Institute of Psychoanalysis. He became the director of children and adolescent services at Topeka State Hospital in 1980 and entered private practice in 1982.

He later attended seminary at Sewanee: The University of the South. He was ordained deacon in 1988 and priest one year later. He served as priest for "a thousand Sundays" in the Diocese of Kansas.

He is survived by his wife, Kathryn Northway; two sisters; an aunt; two daughters; and three grandchildren.

**Dr. Anne Long Wheeler Rowthorn**, a prolific writer on ecology and spirituality, died July 28 at age 84.

She was a native of Boston and was a graduate of Wheelock College, Columbia University, and New York University. She married Jeffrey Rowthorn in 1963, after they met while serving as camp counselors in California. Bishop Rowthorn's episcopal ministry took



them from Connecticut to Paris and back again.

Her time as a teacher at the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota gave her a decades-long appreciation of Lakota spirituality. She remained close friends with many of her students.

During the Niobrara Convocation in 2018, tribe members wrapped a traditional quilt around her.

Her books included *Earth and All the Stars*, *Song of the Universe*, *The Liberation of the Laity*, *The Wisdom of John Muir*, and *Your Daily Life Is Your Temple*. With her husband, she wrote *God's Good Earth* and a final joint book, *Liturgies of Lament*, which is forthcoming.

She is survived by Bishop Rowthorn; her brother; a daughter; two sons; and seven grandchildren.

The Rev. **Jacqueline Tyndale Watt**, a deacon who cared for the poor and worked as a chaplain at a prominent children's hospital, died July 10 at 87.



She was a native of Asheville, North Carolina, and was a graduate of Sewanee: The University of the South and the University of Georgia, with further study at Candler School of Theology. She was ordained deacon in 1993. She served as deacon at Holy Innocents Church, Atlanta, from 1993 to 2009.

As chaplain at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, she initiated and developed a hospital host home that later became a Ronald

McDonald House.

She spent a decade working in the intensive care unit, said her colleague Sheila Vahey in a report by Mark Woolsey of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. "She was amazing in how she could bring down the tone in the room and just concentrate on the total family and total care," Vahey said.

She is survived by three children, seven grandchildren, and several great-grandchildren.

### Other Deaths

The Rev. **Richard Irvine Heyward Belser**, August 11

The Rev. **Richard Wilson Bennet**, August 1

The Rev. Dr. **Michael Kenneth Bice**, August 4

The Rev. **John A. Bower**, July 30

The Rev. **Nan Elizabeth Chandler**, August 12

The Rev. **Johnnie Manly Davis Jr.**, August 1

The Rev. **John Michael DiLeo**, August 23

The Rev. **Frederick Fausak**, July 29

The Rev. **Frank Geer**, July 19

The Rev. **Daniel C. Hall**, August 21

The Rev. **Sarah Herring**, May 10

The Rev. **James Lodwick**, August 9

The Rev. Dr. **David St. George**, July 23

The Rev. **Iain Michael Stanford**, July 10

The Rev. **Davette Lois Turk**, July 19

The Rev. **Richard Francis Van Wely**, August 13

The Rev. **James G. Wilson**, July 26

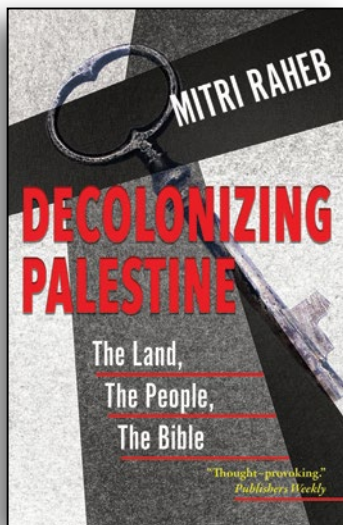
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