Confronting John's Shadows while Basking in Its Lights: A Theological Attempt to Deal with the Fourth Gospel's Ambivalence

Julius-Kei Kato

Abstract: The Gospel according to John has quite a lofty place not only within the Christian scriptures but in the whole of Christian tradition and history. It is difficult, therefore, to confront the fact that, if scrutinized at the historical, theological, and even spiritual levels, one cannot help but take notice of a number of problematic aspects within it. This paper will be an effort to deal with these shadow aspects of John in a constructive way but also point out how the Fourth Gospel is an indispensable and insightful work to understand the Christian tradition.

Keywords: Gospel of John • Problematic Aspects of John • Intuition and Inference • John and History • John and Anti-Jewish Attitudes • John and Conversion

Introduction: Some Basic Questions on John

Although commonly accepted by biblical scholarship as chronologically the last to have been written among the four canonical gospels, the Gospel according to John (also called "the Fourth Gospel" or simply "John") is the one that has most probably exerted the greatest influence on how Christians throughout history have thought about the central figure that lies at the heart of the Christian tradition—Jesus, believed by Christians to be "the Christ." In addition to that, it seems to be the favorite gospel of many (perhaps most?) Christians.[1] The major reason for that seems to be the fact that John is the

[1] New Testament scholar Candida Moss calls it "Everyone's Favorite Gospel." See "Everyone's Favorite Gospel is a Forgery," Candida Moss, last modified March 14, 2020, https://www.thedailybeast.com/everyones-favorite-gospel-the-gospel-of-john-is-a-forgery-according-to-new-research?fbclid=IwAR09UhPS9fPJd0xKbEZmQWGN_WjaWLKLitFfTV1_NGLdoy9fv1l42j-LhEo

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gospel which most clearly links Jesus as closely as possible with God, the Father (YHWH of the Hebrew Bible), arguably even to the point of explicitly ascribing divinity to Jesus. Thus, because the divine status of Jesus became Christianity's most important and character-giving belief, the gospel that proclaims this truth most clearly—namely, John—naturally became the most influential and important among the four canonical gospels.[2]

With such a lofty status, it is often quite difficult in pastoral and educational settings, or indeed, even in Christian academia, to broach the idea that this beloved gospel might contain some—dare we say— "shadows" in it. Unfortunately, the truth is: If we subject the Fourth Gospel to critical analysis, John—in which one major theme is ironically "light"—seems to have quite a few dark shadows indeed.

How do we confront and make sense of these shadow aspects of John, especially if we are in positions of teaching people in communities that honor and esteem the Gospel of John? If the exposure of John's shadow sides might be a big letdown, can we possibly "redeem" John, that is, draw lights from it and, as countless Christians have done through the ages, bask in them to nurture and deepen faith? This article will be an effort to do—shall I call it—a "theological balancing act" between dealing with John's shadows and basking in its lights.[3] As a main resource, it will draw on a number of theological insights put forward by the late systematic theologian Donald Gelpi SJ. Thus, this article is to be

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[2] Cf. Robert Fortna, "The Gospel of John and the Historical Jesus," in *Profiles of Jesus* ed. Roy W. Hoover (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002), 223.

[3] An excellent work that deals with the riddles ("mysteries") of John is Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

considered mainly a theological project geared towards pastoral and pedagogical purposes, rather than a strictly exegetical one.[4]

With the intention of framing our task in this article, let us pose three basic questions at the beginning of our quest. We will try our best to answer them by the end of this study.

> **Question #1**: Examine how Jesus is portrayed in the so-called Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and contrast it with how Jesus is portrayed in John. Why is John's Jesus in certain aspects significantly different from the Synoptics' portrayal of him?
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> **Question #2**: How many times is the term "Jews" used in John? How is it concretely used in these occurrences? Do you not wonder why the "Jews" are often the villains ("bad guys") in John when Jesus, his family, and his earliest disciples were all first century CE Jews themselves?
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> **Question #3**: Last but certainly not least: Why did John, chronologically the last canonical gospel to be written, become arguably the most influential and important gospel for much of Christianity's 2000+ year history, surpassing even the earlier-to-be-written Synoptic Gospels?

Shadows in John?

As hinted to above, when one embarks upon a serious quest to read John honestly and critically *as scripture*,

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[4] Let me state clearly that this essay is intended primarily to inform those in educational and pastoral settings, particularly, to aid lecturers and instructors in dealing with the Gospel of John with their students. Moreover, it is also written in appreciation of and in dialogue with different facets of the late theologian Donald Gelpi's work.

namely, as a source of theological thinking or even as a guide for one's faith and spiritual life, it is not uncommon to reach a point where John's gospel seems to be ambivalent and ambiguous. Why? Because, despite John being one of the most profound, powerful, and influential depictions of the figure of Jesus Christ in Christian history, as mentioned above, if subjected to critical scrutiny at the historical, theological, and even spiritual levels, one will notice a number of seemingly problematic and troubling aspects in and about it. I will call these issues "shadows" here. To Christians, it might seem irreverent to even broach the idea that this beloved gospel might contain some shadows. Unfortunately, as I will show below, one cannot help but acknowledge that it does. How do we confront and make sense of these troubling aspects of John? In the first part of this article, we will try to deal with those shadows while attempting to answer the questions we posed at the beginning. In the second part, I will spell out what—for me—is John's undeniable value for the Christian tradition. Hopefully, that will enable us also to bask in John's brilliant light.

John and History

First and foremost, one must note that the figure of Jesus depicted in John's Gospel has been considered by a significant number of contemporary critical biblical scholars to be more theological than historical. That is to say, in significant ways, the Jesus that is portrayed in the storyline of the Fourth Gospel is more a product of theological reflection about Jesus Christ by an early Christian group probably toward the end of the first century (around the 90s and thereafter) of the Common Era, rather than a faithful historical reflection of the flesh-and-blood carpenter-turned-rabbi/healer from Nazareth who lived in the 20s CE. The Jesus Seminar,

for example, declares that "the second pillar of scholarly wisdom" in historical Jesus studies is "recognizing the synoptic gospels as much closer to the historical Jesus than the Fourth Gospel, which presented a 'spiritual' Jesus."[5]

For the sake of balance though, I will immediately offer two demurrers here about the above statement. First, a too sharply-drawn contrasting approach between John and the Synoptics (such as displayed by the Jesus Seminar in the quote above) should be nuanced with a knowledge of the whole range of scholarly opinions concerning the relation of the Fourth Gospel with the first three.[6] Second, a predominantly skeptical view of the relation between John and history should be complemented by the examination of other studies that probe this theme in a more thorough and critical way. The reason is simple. There are indeed different provable historical factors that are present in John's Gospel. Some examples are: the timeline of Jesus' ministry and some events that happened at the beginning of Jesus' public life, among others.[7]

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[5] Robert Funk, Roy Hoover & the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: What did Jesus Really Say?* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), 3. See also Fortna, "The Gospel of John and the Historical Jesus," 223-30.

[6] See, for example, Paul Anderson, "Why the Gospel of John is Fundamental to Jesus Research," in *Jesus Research: the Gospel of John in Historical Inquiry*, edited by James H. Charlesworth and Jolyon Pruszinski (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2019), 7-46. Also, Wendy North, *What John Knew and What John Wrote: A Study in John and the Synoptics* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 1-16. An exhaustive study of various facets of the relation of John with the Synoptic Gospels is Adelbert Denaux, ed., *John and the Synoptics* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992).

[7] Some good works for reference are the following: Anderson, "Why the Gospel of John is Fundamental to Jesus Research," as well as Paul Anderson, Felix Just and Tom Thatcher, eds., *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views* (Atlanta:

Perhaps a better way of expressing theologically the relation between John and history would be the following: Many aspects of the portrait of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel are probably more a reflection of Jesus as revealed to and/or perceived by some early Christ-followers later on in time (around the 90s CE onwards) *in light of their faith in Jesus' resurrection and other faith experiences*. Not to be forgotten as well is that the image of Jesus in John should be contextualized firmly in the different developments that occurred in Christological thinking that occurred toward the close of the first century and/or the beginning of the second century CE.

John's Retrojective Portrayal of Jesus: A Problem for Contemporary Readers

If we grant that the gospel's author-source (sometimes identified in the text as the "Beloved Disciple" and known conventionally as "John") acted with integrity in crafting a gospel in a manner that was acceptable in his milieu,[8] there can still be grave

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Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), and *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009). Also, Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007). A good survey of Johannine scholarship until 2006 is Gerard S. Sloyan, *What are They Saying about John?,* revised ed. (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2006). For a more recent survey of Johannine scholarship, confer Judith Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer, *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[8] One must not forget though that the notion that ancient Christian writers always acted with integrity (particularly with regard to claiming to speak with the authoritative voice of a past prominent Jesus-follower although in reality not being the person claimed to be) is *not* a universal scholarly consensus, but contested by some scholars. For example, Bart Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the*

reservations as to whether his apparent trademark style (of projecting post-resurrectional themes back [technically called "retrojection"] to the figure of the pre-Easter Jesus in the storyline of the gospel) is a sound way of presenting Jesus to a contemporary audience characterized by historical consciousness. One cannot shake the feeling that John's literary and theological styles, in effect, confuses contemporary readers (who are, of course, not used to such styles) into believing that the pre-Easter Jesus enunciated teachings and acted in ways which in reality—we can argue—should be more properly attributed to the risen Christ or to the exalted 'Christ of faith' that early Christians came to believe in after the historical Jesus' life. This frequently results in making many Christians (who have been heavily influenced by the Johannine picture of Jesus without having a critical historical consciousness regarding the Gospels) semi-Docetists as it were; that is, people who tend to think that Jesus merely appeared human but was, in reality, predominantly divine.

In more technical language, Donald Gelpi accurately and eloquently identified crucial theological problems related to the Johannine literary style just mentioned when he said:

> The *anachronism* of having Jesus during His public ministry discourse on the issues which divided the community of the Beloved Disciple from the synagogue and from the Johannine dissidents *took narrative Christology about as far as it could go as a literary form and probably further than it ought to have gone;* for, what the resulting portrait of Jesus' public ministry gains in doctrinal depth through this literary strategy,

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Name of God—Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who we Think They Are (New York: Oxford, 2012), 119-133.

> it loses proportionally in historical verisimilitude.[9]

In another place, Gelpi remarked:

> One may in this context also conclude that, when the Beloved Disciple chose to endow Jesus' mind with privileged knowledge of the goings on in heaven, he was experiencing the limitations of doing doctrinal theology in a narrative context rather than drawing an historical portrait of Jesus' personal religious experience.[10]

Those remarks from Gelpi and their significance will be clarified further below.

John and Ongoing Conversion

Another more serious theological problem to be addressed concerns the relationship of the Fourth Gospel to what the same Gelpi calls "Christological knowing."[11] In this context, "Christological knowing" refers to the process of being conformed to Jesus Christ in faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. It can, therefore, be another way of describing *the process of conversion* (both initial and ongoing), a task that is frequently presented as a lifelong goal of Christian discipleship. One must also add that conversion, following the theologian Bernard Lonergan's famous hermeneutical principle, should be considered the infallible mark of the authenticity of any

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[9] Donald Gelpi, *Encountering Jesus Christ: Rethinking Christological Faith and Commitment* (Berkeley, Spring Semester 2004), 322. This was a summarized form of Gelpi's Christological trilogy *The Firstborn of Many* made into a reader for use of students. Emphases in the original.

[10] Gelpi, *Encountering Jesus Christ,* 351.

[11] Donald Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many: A Christology for Converting Christians*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 3:23.

doctrine. In other words, any authentic Christian doctrine must necessarily lead to conversion. The evaluation of whether any given teaching enhances true conversion must therefore play a major role in any integral theological enterprise.[12]

If we apply that definition of Christological knowing to the Johannine gospel or—to make it more person-oriented—to the author (whether individual or corporate) of the Fourth Gospel, *we are sometimes left wondering as to how far John himself has really advanced in conversion* when his Gospel has unloving; actually, even shockingly hateful overtones towards the presumed adversaries of his community who are frequently and sweepingly termed simply as "the Jews" (see, for example, John 8:44).

For all the Johannine body of writings' (that is, the Gospel and letters of John) emphasis on love and loving others (see, for example, John 13:34 or 1 John 4:8 among many others), the—dare I suggest—scandalous thing about it is that the love that is frequently mentioned therein, upon deeper historical scrutiny, apparently refers primarily to insiders of the community.[13] To put it bluntly, it is as if John were saying, "Brothers and sisters, love your fellow Jesus-followers. You can dislike and disdain the enemies of our community though."

If that is true, is that not merely reflective of very human tendencies that—to use Donald Gelpi's expressions—"ordinarily leave out enemies, aliens, and

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[12] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 268.

[13] See, for example, Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist, 1979), 132, where he says, "For the author of the Epistles, 'brethren' were those members of the Johannine community who were in communion (*koinonia*) with him and who accepted his interpretation of the Johannine Gospel."

strangers?"[14] How can that conform, then, to a true conversion (or—as Gelpi expressed it—"Christological knowing"), a conversion that should foster "a universalized love which excludes no one in principle and which even includes one's enemies" in fidelity to Jesus' injunction to love [*even*] our enemies (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27)?[15]

At this juncture, it is useful to include a lengthy quote from the late British New Testament scholar Maurice Casey found at the conclusion of a book intriguingly titled, *Is John's Gospel True?*. The points Casey makes, merit our careful attention because they contain practically all the issues which many find problematic about the Fourth Gospel at the level of history and ethical integrity.

Casey states:

> "Pilate said to him, What is Truth?" (John 19:38). The question Pilate never asked has reverberated down the centuries. For most of this time, the Gospel attributed to John has held an honored place in Christian scripture. This position must now be questioned, for two related reasons. One is that much of it is not historically true. The second reason is the more devastating. This Gospel is profoundly anti-Jewish. What is worse, these two points are closely related. The historically inaccurate information contained in this document is a product of the serious quarrel between the Johannine community and the Jewish community. Consequently, it gives an un-Jewish picture of Jesus, and a hostile picture of "the Jews." It follows that this document embodies a basic rejection of the Jewish identity of Jesus and his earliest followers. Consequently, its high Christology cannot be regarded as genuine insight into his real significance. Moreover,

[14] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many*, 3:508.
[15] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many*, 3:503.

> this document's rejection of "the Jews" is not just an abstract error. Present in a sacred text, it is liable to fuel prejudice, and to be acted on. The history of Christian anti-Semitism shows how serious is the prejudice which it can fuel. The fourth Gospel's presentation of Jesus' ministry is therefore not merely inaccurate, but also morally dubious.[16]

This quote, and the general argument of the book from which it is taken, will make it clear that Casey operates on the notion that the Gospel of John should not have an honored status in scripture because it cannot be considered as offering a genuine insight into the true identity of Jesus. His reason? Simply put, the Fourth Gospel's presentation of Jesus is neither historically true nor ethically sound (because of its anti-Jewish character).

It must be noted though that Casey does not apparently subscribe to Jesus' divinity, as is made clear by a remark he makes in an earlier work where he says that if "the standard picture of Jesus as incarnate and divine is too much a part of the churches' identity to be shifted, official Christianity will become increasingly a matter of belief in the impossible."[17] Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the questions about John's gospel that Casey raises should be taken seriously because they are the very same issues that confront Christians whenever they read this Gospel.

The observations about John I have made up to this point, as well as Maurice Casey's remarks have hopefully made it clear that there are indeed "shadows" or problems in the Fourth Gospel for someone who seeks to

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[16] Maurice Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 218.

[17] Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co./Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 178.

read it theologically as scripture. To recap, I have cited three thus far: the problem of the historicity of the Johannine portrait of Jesus; the problem of the retrojection of post-Easter traits to the figure of the pre-Easter Jesus; and the problem of John's hostility towards adversaries vis-à-vis the themes of loving our enemies and continual conversion. With the aim of dealing better with those issues, let me mention two other factors that bring the nature of these problems into sharper focus.

John and the Christian Imagination

The first factor is what we already mentioned earlier as John's immense influence on the Christian imagination. The Fourth Gospel has been part of what Christians believe are divinely inspired writings for most of Christianity's history. Being in the canon does not necessarily mean exercising a dominant influence on the Christian psyche, as some canonical books have arguably exerted only a peripheral influence on the general Christian imagination. However, in the case of John's gospel, it has, without question, played a dominant role in shaping the average Christian's image of Jesus.

The experience of the late New Testament scholar Marcus Borg with the Gospel of John shows that clearly. In his book, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time,* Borg recounts that in the seminary, one of the things that he learned was that "the contrast between the synoptic and Johannine images of Jesus is so great that one of them must be nonhistorical." That discovery, however, shattered a world that Borg had previously believed in fervently:

> Indeed, the linkage between John's gospel and the popular image of Jesus was so strong that I remember becoming angry at John when I first became aware that its account was largely nonhistorical. I saw John as

> containing a distorted image of Jesus, an image I had spent years trying to believe in. I would have been happy to have John excised from the New Testament.[18]

From Borg's experience (which is not rare), we can see clearly to what extent the popular Christian image of Jesus has been and continues to be influenced by John's portrayal of Jesus. John's gospel is held in such reverence in the popular Christian imagination that learning for the first time about the nonhistorical aspects of John's portrayal of Jesus can be an experience akin to "losing one's (Christian) innocence" for many. This may be the reason why some church leaders/teachers feel that it is their duty to defend the overall historicity of John's depiction of Jesus, even though this goes against the opinion of a significant number of critical biblical scholars.

Besides, as scripture, the Gospel of John has been thought of as containing religious truth. "Truth" as a concept may have different shades of meaning, but because the general Western(ized) mentality has been dominated by historical consciousness since the Enlightenment, truth generally includes the notion of "historical truth" for contemporary Western(ized) minds. Consequently, when the historicity of something thought of as containing profound religious truth (for example, the Gospels) is disputed and declared as historically untrue in a public forum, it is not uncommon to have a backlash against such an opinion from more vocal but often uninformed and naïve believers. That is an indication that, to many contemporary believers, disputing historical facticity still generally means disputing the truthful character of something. It still

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[18] Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus & the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (New York: Harper, 1994), 11.

takes some effort for us who have been raised with historical consciousness to wrap our minds around the fact that truth cannot always be equated with historical veracity.

The abovementioned Casey's rejection of John is likewise based largely on—what he considers—John's nonhistorical facets. He maintains that the nonhistorical character of John is proven in that the picture of Jesus therein—a Jesus constantly in conflict with "the Jews"—makes Jesus profoundly non-Jewish or even anti-Jewish. What can be farther from the truth than a non-Jewish Jesus? The simple fact is that Jesus, as well as his earliest disciples, were all *very* Jewish in the wide spectrum of what being Jewish meant in the first century of the Common Era.[19]

It is fair to say that a significant number of Christians reject the abovementioned critical views of John and cling to a more or less literal interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (as if it were a video recording of history). Note though that I am not referring here to what can be called "the fundamentalist mind" (in whatever form it is found), which presents an altogether different problem and must be dealt with first and foremost at the level of fundamental concepts of revelation.[20] Fundamentalists conceive of revelation as truth that can be immutably and eternally enshrined in propositional fixity. In other words, they think that anything considered divinely revealed should be treated as universally valid and has

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[19] On this matter, see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Volume III Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001). See also Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), especially chapter one on Jesus and Judaism.

[20] On this issue vis-à-vis a mainline Christian position on the Bible (Roman Catholicism), see, for example, Ronald D. Witherup, *Biblical Fundamentalism: What Every Catholic Should Know* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001).

no need of interpretation. This author's position is that revelation must be located in the events of—what is commonly known as—salvation *history*; most of all, in the event and person of Jesus Christ. However, historical events and statements *always need interpretation*. Since the notion of revelation as propositional fixity admits of no need for interpretation, it must be treated as fallacious.

Harmonizing John and the Synoptic Gospels

Another factor that exacerbates the problematic character of the Fourth Gospel is the common Christian practice of "harmonizing" John with the Synoptics. Again, I refer to Marcus Borg's autobiographical observations, which illustrate how many Christians think about the four gospels:

> Before becoming aware of all of this (the difference between Jesus in John and Jesus in the synoptic gospels), I had quite unreflectively combined what I heard about the Christ of faith with my image of Jesus as a historical figure…. The picture of Jesus in John is clearly quite different from the picture of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which are collectively known as the synoptic gospels…. In John, Jesus speaks as a divine person…. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus speaks very differently; his message is not about himself or his identity. Like most Christians, *I had simply harmonized these two different images*, and indeed had not really been aware of how different they are. I had assumed that *Jesus talked both as he does in John and as he does in the synoptic gospels*.[21]

However, when one begins to read and compare John

[21] Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time,* 10-11. Emphases added.

and the Synoptics in a critical way, one discovers "the contrast between the Synoptic and Johannine images of Jesus is so great that one of them must be nonhistorical."[22] The common practice of harmonizing John with the Synoptics can, therefore, be quite problematic. Moreover, it can exacerbate the misunderstanding about Jesus' humanity and divinity in the common Christian mind.

Suggestions to Deal with John's Shadow Aspects

Dealing with the Problem of Historicity in John

Let us now deal more systematically with the problems mentioned above, the first of which is the question of John's historicity.

As mentioned, the highly developed Christology of the Fourth Gospel—seen above all in the portrayal of Jesus as somehow more of a divine figure—is an important clue to the common assessment that John's gospel is more concerned with conveying the Johannine community's faith about Jesus Christ, rather than stating historical reminiscences of him.[23] One of the Gospel's major concerns is the identity of Jesus and, concomitantly, we can say that John is deeply concerned about doctrinal matters, mainly, questions on whether readers accept Jesus *as the Son of God, as one with the Father, as "the Word made flesh,"* often interpreted in the historical Christian tradition as "God incarnate on earth." In line with that, one finds the Johannine Jesus constantly trying to clarify to the different people he encounters in the Gospel storyline who he is and what characterizes his

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[22] Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time,* 11.

[23] Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, 16. See also Marcus Borg, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time* (New York: Harper, 2001), 202-4, 217-18.

relationship to the one referred to as YHWH in the tradition of Israel.

As Marcus Borg learned in seminary, a significant amount of critical scholarship has called this Johannine portrayal of Jesus into question from the historical point of view. It must be added that this is not a recent discovery but a notion (maybe more of a consensus among mainline biblical scholars) that has been around in academic circles for quite a long time now. It is safe to say that the Jesus who walked the roads of Palestine two thousand years ago simply *did not overly concern himself* (not as much as John leads us to believe at least) with *explaining explicitly* to his audiences' questions of who he was and what his relationship with the God of Israel consisted of. Practically all scholars are agreed that the historical Jesus' dominant concern was not so much himself as "the reign of God" (Gk., *basileia tou theou*), so much so that the theologian Karl Rahner could aver, "Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, not himself."[24]

I do not want to create a false dichotomy between the theme of "God's Kingdom" and its relationship with the identity of Jesus who proclaimed its coming. My own position is that, yes, the historical Jesus was also concerned about questions regarding the identity of the kingdom's proclaimer (namely, himself) and what role the proclaimer plays in the realization of the kingdom. However, the Synoptic Gospels are closer to history when they present Jesus as more nuanced and subtle in how he made reference to his own role in the kingdom. The Jesus of John, who does not even talk of the "kingdom of God" (there is one exception to this in John 3:3 where the "kingdom of God" is spiritualized) but engages in long discourses about his own identity, is simply wanting in historical verisimilitude. In other words, the flesh-and-

[24] Karl Rahner and W. Thüssin, *Christologie systematisch und exegetisch* (Freiburg: Herder, 1972), 34.

blood Jesus could not have spoken in exactly the way in which it is presented in the Fourth Gospel.

In John, Jesus is—to use Casey's description—"clearly God, pre-existent and incarnate, walking this earth expounding the relationship between himself, the Son, and the Father. Moreover, salvation is dependent on acceptance of himself as the Son – acceptance of the Father is not enough."[25] Such an image of Jesus, which is generally not found (at least not as explicitly as in John) in the Synoptic Gospels, is comprehensible only if one maintains that the portrayal of Jesus in John is mainly (albeit not completely) a secondary and later development. That is, it is an expression of the early Christian communities' developing theological thinking about their growing conviction of the lofty stature of Jesus Christ.

Since John's concern is to proclaim that Jesus should be identified as closely as possible with God, the Father, and divinity itself,[26] he "retrojects" things about Jesus (which were fully revealed to the disciples only in their experience of the resurrection of their rabbi-now-revealed more clearly-as-the-Christ) to the figure of Jesus (before his death) in the Gospel storyline. We can, therefore, say that the figure we find in John's Gospel *is by and large the risen Christ retrojected to the gospel character of Jesus ministering in Palestine before his death*.

Now, this is mind-boggling to contemporary people who have had a historically conscious way of looking at

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[25] Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?,* 30.

[26] "Divinity" here, it must be mentioned, has to be understood critically. John's concern with Jesus' divinity cannot be simply identified with how Jesus' divinity was defined later on in Christian history. A helpful work to consult on this matter through the lens of the theme "Worship of Jesus in Early Christianity" is James D.G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 141-51.

things inculcated in them from a very young age. As seen in Borg's experience mentioned above, John's style of retrojecting the Christ of the paschal mystery to the pre-Easter figure seems quite confusing to the historically conscious mind of the contemporary believer-reader. Let me propose some strategies to deal with this problem.

In the first place, the retrojective style of John's portrayal of Jesus must be thoroughly explained. At the same time, it must be maintained that Jesus, in his ministry, was not some docetic figure who only pretended or seemed to be human. No, he was fully human! Jesus must be presented first—in the words of Gelpi—as a "finite, developing human social experience" (a fully social human being) so as to avoid any docetic and, therefore, fallacious image of Jesus.[27] If we explain Jesus' humanity using, as dominant image, the idea that, in becoming human, God "self-emptied" (a notion that can be found in Phil 2:7 where the Greek word *kenosis* is used to describe Jesus: how although "in the form of God," [he] *self-emptied* to take the form of a "slave," that is, humanity). Using *kenosis* as image then, the Son's humanity could be explained thus: "The *kenosis* of the Son of God means that in everything which concerns Jesus of Nazareth, the Word of God *freely chose to act and suffer strictly within the limits of His finite, developing human experience*."[28]

One can then go on to explain the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus and, in that context, one can now include a presentation of John's portrayal of Jesus *as how some early Christians experienced the resurrected Christ*. Thus, when one reads, for instance, in John's Gospel that Jesus says, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), or "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), one can understand these statements as how some early

[27] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many*, 3:248.
[28] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many*, 3:314. Emphasis added.

Christians attributed these titles to Jesus and *put them in the mouth of the character of Jesus in John's Gospel* in order to express how they experienced him as giving them nourishment or leading them out of darkness into light although these words may not have been statements that go back to the historical Jesus himself. Using Paul Ricoeur's expression, Borg terms this attitude a "postcritical naiveté." In contrast to a precritical naiveté, which believes as literally true all that is written in the Gospels, a reading of the Gospel of John with a postcritical naiveté is aware of the rich symbolism in John's Gospel and does not concern itself so much with whether such an event happened in history or not, whether such words were spoken historically by Jesus or not, but is more intent on discovering what "intrinsic metaphorical meanings (meaningful for our lives today)" are embedded in the different accounts of John's gospel.[29]

John's Hostility towards His Community's Adversaries

The Fourth Gospel has been frequently cited as inimical to the group referred to as *hoi Ioudaioi* (still commonly translated as "the Jews") in this gospel.[30] To illustrate, the term "Jews" is used sixteen times in Mark,

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[29] Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, 17.

[30] *Ioudaioi*. This is a plural form in the Greek (the singular is *ioudaios*) and it is still commonly translated into English as "the Jews." There seems to be a growing movement to stop translating this term as "Jews" and use instead the term "Judeans" which refers to the people of the southern part of Palestine in Jesus's day. Thus, one can avoid a general anti-Jewish sentiment. For a more detailed explanation of the different nuances of *ioudaioi* and the various issues related with translating it, confer Joshua Garroway, "Ioudaios" in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. Second Edition, ed. by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 2017) 596-599.

but a whopping seventy-one times in John, many of them with a negative, hostile meaning. In fact, "the Jews" in John are so identified with unbelieving hostility towards Jesus and his message that Early Christianity scholar Elaine Pagels can claim that John tells Jesus' story as a cosmic conflict between light and darkness, between Jesus' followers and the sinful opposition of the offspring of Satan, the latter being identified with "the Jews" (see John 8:44). In short, the Jews in John—according to the same Pagels—are a symbol of "all evil."[31]

As we have seen above, Casey actually makes John's anti-Jewish character the second major reason for rejecting it as a distortion of the nature of Jesus' person and message. Theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether states that in the Gospel of John, "the philosophical incorporation of anti-Judaic midrash reaches its highest development in the New Testament." According to her, *the proclamation of Jesus as divine demanded, as foil, a group that would reject the claim*. That group is what the Gospel of John calls "the Jews." Rejection of Jesus' messianic claims and his divinity by this group becomes, as it were, "the left hand of Christology."[32] We can understand from that the reason why James Carroll, in his popular history of the relationship of the Church with

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[31] Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage, 1996), 105. This statement has to be tempered by the acknowledgment that not all uses of the term "the Jews" are unilaterally negative in the Fourth Gospel. Indeed, in some cases, there is evidence of a more divided response to Jesus, not excluding an "initially positive response" (see for example, 8:31, 10:19-21, 11:45, 12:9.) as observed by Andrew Lincoln in his *The Gospel according to St. John* (Black's New Testament Commentaries) (New York: Continuum, 2005), 71. See also Paul Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel*, 38-39, to see the whole range of uses (positive, neutral, and negative) of the term "the Jews."

[32] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), 111.

the Jews, has this sobering conclusion: "Christology itself is a source of Christian contempt for the Jews."[33]

Let us endeavor to put the Johannine gospel's relationship to the Jews in a better perspective. The first factor to note is that John's pejorative reference to the enemies of Jesus as "the Jews" *must be firmly set against the background of the Johannine community's difficult relationship with the synagogue*. In the history of Johannine scholarship, many scholars have explained it in the following way: The Johannine community seemed to have been estranged from the Jewish synagogue, its parent institution,[34] at some point in its history, apparently for placing Jesus, identified as "Logos," in a daringly close association with YHWH ("the Father" in John) to the extent that some form of "divinity" or equality with the Father could already be ascribed to him. This was a belief however that had, in the final analysis, put John's community outside of the acceptable parameters of Jewish monotheistic faith.[35] Regarding

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[33] James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2001), 102.

[34] The term *aposunagōgos* (Gk., literally "excluded from the sacred assembly/synagogue" or, more commonly, "excommunicated") is found in John 9:22, 12:42, 16:2.

[35] See for example Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple,* 66-69. See also: Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 82-89; and, more recently, Francis Moloney, "John," in *The Paulist Biblical Commentary,* ed. by José Enrique Aguilar Chiu and others (New York/Mawhah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2018), 1106; also Urban C. Von Wahlde, "John, in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century*, Third Fully Revised Edition, edited by John J. Collins and others (London: T&T Clark, 2022), 1382. This is traditionally called the "expulsion from the synagogue" theory. One must take note though that, more recently, an increasing number of scholars clarify that a simplistic iteration of this theory concerning the Johannine community *does not do justice* to the complexity of the problem of explaining the apparent anti-Jewish passages and sentiments in the Gospel of John. For a more sophisticated nuancing of this phenomenon, consult, for example, Ruth Sheridan, "Johannine

this matter, traditionally called the Johannine community's "expulsion from the synagogue" in Johannine scholarship, Jewish New Testament scholar Adele Reinhartz's balanced and nuanced way of describing it without using the traditional "expulsion from the synagogue" language is worth quoting in full.

> John's harsh statements about "the Jews" should be understood as part of the author's process of self-definition, which required the drawing of a boundary between the followers of Jesus and Jews and Judaism. This distancing may have been particularly important if the ethnic composition of the Johannine community included Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles … This explanation does not excuse the Gospel's hostile rhetoric but it may make it possible for readers to understand the narrative's place in the process by which Christianity became a separate religion, to appreciate the beauty of its language, and to recognize the spiritual power that it continues to have in the lives of many of its Christian readers.[36]

In light of the discussions above, one can see that the term "the Jews" in John has both a historical and symbolic meaning. Historically, it refers to some hostile religious figures with authority within Palestinian Judaism who had a role in the condemnation and death of Jesus. We should keep in mind though that symbolically "the Jews" in John arguably *does not primarily refer to Jewishness but rather to unbelieving hostility* on the part of persons or groups who refuse to

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Sectarianism: A Category Now Defunct?" in *The Origins of John's Gospel*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Hughson T. Ong (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 156. 159, 163.

[36] Adele Reinhartz, "John," in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 2nd fully revised and expanded edition, edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 2017), 173.

believe in what the Johannine community proclaimed about Jesus.[37] Nevertheless, in Christian history, the term has unfortunately invited anti-Jewish sentiments and been the cause of countless terrible acts committed against Jews. *When the original context of its use is firmly kept in mind, it becomes clear that the term does not refer to all Jewish people*. One can even argue that John extends it to include Christian dissidents, as when mention is made, for example in John 8:31, of Jews "who had believed" in Jesus.[38]

Theologically speaking, however, when one attempts to situate this theme of "John and the Jews" in the context of knowing and following Christ and how such a discipleship should help Christians continually in conversion to love others in a more universal way, *one realizes keenly that the Fourth Gospel does seem to have problems in its attitude towards its adversaries*. This is a serious issue that has yet to be resolved in a satisfactory way.

To recap, it seems obvious that in the Johannine community, true faith in Jesus meant that one had also to accept certain doctrinal beliefs about Jesus (his being the "Logos", his being one with the Father, etc.) which were deemed to be correct (=orthodox) teaching. In Gelpi's more technical yet theologically elegant language, in John's community, heterodoxy (incorrect belief) forced the community to realize that "doctrinal beliefs give definite shape to religious practices," that "the deed of faith . . . encompasses not just Christian moral striving

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[37] See Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many,* 3:49.

[38] NRSV translation. See also Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 78-81. A more recent excellent exposition of this theme can be found in Adele Reinhartz, "The Jews of the Fourth Gospel," in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, edited by Judith Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 121-137. The bibliography of this article is particularly noteworthy.

but doctrinal assent as well" and that "Christian orthopraxis expands to include Christian orthodoxy."[39] Even so, the crucial question is: *Does that make hostility towards adversaries, who do not believe what the Johannine community believed, justifiable?* If we say "yes," then the next burning question is: *Is this attitude not the root of the pernicious principle, "Error has no rights"*?

Some Insights from the Social Sciences

These questions could very well be posing interrogatives anachronistically and, therefore, unfairly. Scholars have pointed out that in the Mediterranean world of the early Christians, vigorous debating between individuals or groups with opposing views (which might even appear to contemporary Western[ized] people as an extremely offensive process of insulting one another) was a fairly common cultural practice rooted in the concepts of honor and shame. Those debates/arguments between individuals or groups involved a challenge from a party and a corresponding response by the challenged one. These dynamics were necessary in order to preserve or enhance the honor of one's clan or to avoid shame for one's group of affiliation. The hostility that we find in the Fourth Gospel towards its adversaries might have been a part of such dynamics which seem so offensive to us now but were more acceptable in that world as part of the encounters of daily social life.[40]

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[39] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many*, 3:50-51.

[40] Joseph Plevnik, "Honor/Shame," in *Handbook of Biblical Social Values,* eds. John Pilch and Bruce Malina (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 106-15. See also the sections on Challenge and Riposte in Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 146-51.

Besides, the world of first century Judaism was immensely complex and diversified. There were many groups within Judaism and practically all of them were, as it were, jostling with each other as to which was the best way to live out the covenant with the one God of Israel.[41] The conflicts of the earliest Christian communities (among which can be traced the genesis of the Johannine community) with its opponents (whoever they were) must be seen in this background. Arguments between those who believed in Jesus as the Messiah sent from God and the larger Jewish community which rejected this claim, were, at the earliest stage, intra-Jewish affairs. Seen in the context of the wider Roman Empire, Judaism was a "licit" religion. Being a part of a recognized religion (although Judaism was also marginalized in some ways like the earliest Christian communities), therefore, gave one's group some measure of legitimacy in the empire's overall social structure. John's community should also be situated in this context so that its polemic against its adversaries may be understood better. As Gelpi explains, the harshness with which John addresses its adversaries somehow betrays its deep anxiety and fierce anger at being expelled from a "recognized" religion.[42] We can see then that the small Johannine community was fighting for its survival against the bigger and long recognized institution of the synagogue. In such a fight, harsh polemics on the part of

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[41] For further reading on this matter, I suggest Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament: Practices and Beliefs* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1-18. Also, Hershel Shanks, ed., *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archeological Society, 1992), particularly, 1-39, 125-49, 305-325. A succinct survey can also be found in Stephen L. Harris, "The Diverse World of First-Century Judaism," in *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction,* 7th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2012), 42-66.

[42] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many*, 3:107.

the weakling (originally the Johannine community) *would not have done much real damage* to its named opponents. All that changed, however, when Christianity became the official religion of the post-Constantinian Roman Empire in 380 CE. Words that were once uttered by a small insignificant community against a larger, more established one were now "canonized" as part of the sacred scriptures of a powerful imperial church. Ultimately, this development had deadly consequences for the named adversaries—the Jews.

At this point, I do not think that the theological problem we are treating here (that of John's hostility towards outsiders as being against true Christian discipleship and against Jesus' commandment to love one's enemies [e.g., Luke 6:27]) has been resolved in a satisfactory way. All we have done is put the problem in a better perspective by identifying factors that could help us to understand the existence of such a hostility in John towards his adversaries.

A Melioristic Morality of Ideals

It remains to be seen if this problem can ever be completely solved. No amount of contextualizing can change the fact that in John there is a harshness towards the community's enemies which, to be blunt, goes against true Christian discipleship and, ultimately, against what Jesus commanded to his disciples in Matt 5:44/Luke 6:27 when he says, "Love your enemies." The final card, as it were, that could be drawn from the pack to attempt a solution to this serious problem is what Gelpi terms "a melioristic morality of ideals."[43] That works in the following way.

Jesus makes absolute and ultimate claims that orient

[43] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many,* 2:553-68.

his disciples' consciences. These claims, since they are never perfectly realized in any given human reality, can be said to be "utopian" ideals. A melioristic morality of ideals seeks to mediate between reality and ideal. It refers to the fact that while Jesus never backpedaled with respect to the demanding ideals of the reign of God that he preached and lived himself, he was also constantly aware of and assumed his disciples' imperfections in his relationship with them. Therefore, he never demanded instant perfection either. On the contrary, Jesus dealt patiently and lovingly with human frailty and sinfulness, and he also spurred people on to move patiently and lovingly towards a greater realization (ongoing development) of the demanding ideals of God's reign.

If we apply that to John's gospel and to the problem of its hostility to adversaries, we can see that all the injunctions to love in John are, of course, valid and wonderful expressions of the utopian ideals of God's kingdom which Jesus preached and lived. On the other hand, John's community found itself in adversarial relationships with other groups and, in the process of clarifying its faith vis-à-vis such groups, had unfortunately taken some unloving attitudes towards them. *This was the reality of the Johannine community which fell short of Jesus' command to love even our enemies*. From what has been mentioned about the melioristic morality of ideals, we could read the Fourth Gospel as containing *both ideal and reality*. Christians can make the ideals their own; they should also, however, own the reality expressed in John not only as telling them about the Johannine community's adversarial situations but likewise about their very own present-day conflicts. They can then commit themselves to a *melioristic* achievement of the ideal of love of which the Gospel and letters of John so eloquently express.

"Intuition" and "Inference" Applied to the Gospels

The terms "ambivalence" and "ambiguity" are applied to John in this study because the Fourth Gospel clearly has both shadows and lights. Now that we've identified John's shadow sides, let us move to—what I consider—a bright light found therein.

We begin by describing a conceptual framework that could be useful for our purposes here. Donald Gelpi, who has been our guide in many ways thus far, insightfully reminds us to distinguish between "intuitive" and "inferential" ways of grasping reality. According to what he terms "the metaphysics of experience" (originally from the American philosopher Charles Peirce), the human mind grasps reality both intuitively and inferentially in that order.

Intuition is a kind of knowledge "mediated by perceptions and images." When realities have been grasped intuitively, humans sometimes also proceed to "endow it [the knowledge] with logical precision." That *further endowing of intuitively grasped realities* with logical exactness and rigor refers to inference. Most people, however, "live life largely at the level of intuition and intuitive deliberation and only rarely on the basis of logical inference alone." Whereas intuitive thinking gives us a broad picture of reality; inferential thinking makes us see details of the broad picture with enhanced precision.[44]

When we apply the distinction between intuition and inference to how Jesus Christ has been grasped by Christians from the dawn of Christianity and through its twenty-one centuries of history up to the present day, we realize that the earliest period of Christianity was marked more by an intuitive effort to grasp the person of

[44] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many*, 3:283-84.

Jesus. As time went on, however, a purely intuitive understanding of Jesus was felt to be wanting and various efforts were made for the purpose of endowing this intuitive perception with greater logical precision and clarity.

Intuition's preferred mode of communication can be said to be the narrative form; inference, on the other hand, prefers doctrinal discourse. Applied to the relation between the Synoptic Gospels and John, these "preferred modes" make us understand many key factors which, in turn, help us to explain the particular characteristics of the Synoptics and John. First of all, both the Synoptics and John are primarily narrative Christologies (i.e., they describe Jesus in story form). But the difference between them lies in different emphases which are *rooted in the distinction between intuitive and inferential*. In the Synoptic Gospels, one sees a portrayal of Jesus which is more intuitive in character because it appeals more to the imagination and other intuitive faculties of humans. In John, there is a marked effort *to deal inferentially* with whom Jesus was and what his relationship was with the being known as YHWH in the Jewish Scriptures. Although both the Synoptics and John have doctrinal concerns, the Synoptics focus on Christian practice, while John focuses on and switches the rhetorical emphasis (of the narrative) to the doctrinal context of the figure of Jesus.

John's Enduring Value: Light amidst the Shadows

These differences in focus, emphasis, and narrative strategy are rooted in the particular situations in which the different Christian communities that produced the gospels found themselves. To explain those particular situations is a major task of historical-critical and also social-science based biblical scholarship. In light of

Gelpi's points on intuition and inference applied to John, one can see with fascination a trajectory from the Synoptics (which were composed earlier) to John, which shows how the human mind moves from intuition to inference with regard to a figure who—with his life and message, but especially through the events that Christians refer to as the paschal mystery—made such a great impact on the people who encountered him, either physically or through the action of the divine presence called the Holy Spirit.

When someone has such an impact on others (and, therefore, becomes crucially important for the people impacted), an intense effort is born on the part of those who receive the impact to understand such a powerfully charismatic person—*first intuitively*. Inevitably though, that effort will *gradually be transformed into an inferential search to apprehend this person in a deeper and more precise way*. Therein lies one bright light to be found in John: The Fourth Gospel is an eloquent and powerful witness to the fact that the flesh-and-blood Jesus himself, his memory, and his continuous presence through the Holy Spirit, were all cumulatively such a life-transforming and life-giving event for the early Christians that *narrative/intuitive forms of portraying him were felt to be wanting* at a certain point in their history. Hence, we have the drive to understand this Jesus further in a doctrinal/inferential mode, the beginnings of which we can already see in the Fourth Gospel.

The Gospel of John is one strong proof of how significantly (both the historical and the revered/worshipped-in-faith) Jesus, the Christ, impacted people. Although the Fourth Gospel might not be the best source for information on the historical Jesus (despite having valuable historical nuggets as mentioned above), it is, however, an amazing mirror of the tremendous

significance that Jesus continued to have after his death on generations of people who experienced and believed that he was alive, present, and active among them. In effect, the early Christian communities came to believe that he was the unique way that led to God (John 14:6) and also the perfect embodiment of the Father, so much so that whoever saw Jesus also saw the Father himself (John 12:45).

In light of the above discussions, we have to note though that there are limits to narrative language. Recall that this is the kind of language that is used in the Synoptic Gospels. Narrative language is not enough to express the more profound doctrinal notions that early Christians came to believe about Jesus later on in Christianity's history. At this point we can also see that the Fourth Gospel lies *precisely on the border of intuitive and inferential modes of discourse*. The Fourth Gospel's focus is on doctrinal issues (to express profound *inferential convictions* about Jesus), yet *the medium it uses is still the one preferred by intuitive thinking—narrative*. There lies the rub! Gelpi reminds us, "Narrative Christology eschews logical thinking for intuitive thinking."[45] We have in John, therefore, an originally intuitive tool that he tried to use to convey inferential matters. John raises "a speculative question which narrative theology itself cannot solve."[46] For that reason, the problem of "the communication of traits" (*communicatio idiomatum*,[47] the predication of divine traits to the human Jesus and vice-versa) appear in John, a problem that would take Christianity centuries to resolve. Those are the problems that Gelpi mainly refers

[45] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many*, 3:221.

[46] Gelpi, *The Firstborn of Many*, 3:221. Emphasis added.

[47] J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A & C Black, 1965), 143. See also Richard McBrien, ed., "*communicatio idiomatum*" in *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: Harper, 1995), 336-37.

to when he says that John took "narrative Christology further than it ought to have gone."[48]

There is a corollary to what has been referred to above as the need felt by early Christians to switch to inferential mode in describing Jesus: The content of this inferential mode in its primary stage was not only about Jesus himself. It also involved the one Jesus called "*Abba*" (an intimate Jewish way of addressing one's father), as well as the entity he referred to as "the Breath" (John 20:22, commonly known as "Holy Spirit"). It must be pointed out that the inferential mode of expressing who Jesus was necessarily involved an exposition, mainly through discourse, of Jesus' relationship with the Father and with the Spirit. This is a second major light that can be seen in John: It is a rich source of trinitarian reflection. It is, therefore, no accident that the Christian teaching on the Trinity relies heavily on the Fourth Gospel to provide its scriptural authority.

Concluding Assessment

Here, we are at the end of this study, and it is time to ask: Have we achieved the goals proposed at the outset? At this point, we can say that we are more aware of the different problematic facets of the Fourth Gospel. At the same time, we now have, it is hoped, a better ability to understand and contextualize them. We have also come up with several strategies that provide, if not a perfect resolution to the problems pointed out above, at least partial ones. Furthermore, we are also more appreciative of some lights to be found in John which are not in the Synoptic Gospels. With that new appreciation, we can better link the intuitive New Testament Christological insights with the more inferential Christological thinking

[48] Gelpi, *Encountering Jesus Christ,* 350-51.

that would more and more play a dominant role in post-New Testament times.

Let us recap by giving responses to the queries we posed at the very beginning.

Question #1: Why is John's Jesus in certain aspects significantly different from the Synoptics' portrayal of him?
Lessons Learned: John's Jesus is a radical interpretation of the figure of Jesus that is greatly influenced by things Christians came to believe because of their faith in the glorious, risen Jesus—a figure that, they believed, should be associated as closely as possible with God, the Father. This later, more divinized image of Jesus was "retrojected" to the figure of Jesus living his public life before his death in the Fourth Gospel's storyline.

Question #2: Why is it that the "Jews" are often the villains in John when Jesus, his family, and his earliest disciples were all first century CE Jews themselves?
Lessons Learned: John's community (for whom and probably by whom the gospel was ultimately written) found itself later on in an adversarial relationship with its Jewish compatriots and with the institution of the synagogue. This stormy relationship is the immediate context of the practice in John of identifying "the Jews" with what John's community came to consider one of the greatest sins—non-acceptance of/unbelief in the person of Jesus as the perfect embodiment of God on earth. Again, the Gospel of John retrojects its own conflicts to the figure of Jesus and his adversaries in the Gospel storyline.

Question #3: Why did John, chronologically the last canonical gospel to be written, become arguably the most influential and important gospel for much of Christianity's 2000+ year history, surpassing even the earlier-to-be-written Synoptic Gospels?
Lessons Learned: John's gospel shows us the immense impact Jesus continued to have on succeeding generations of

Christians. The proof is that by the late first century CE, Christians felt that a narrative and intuitive way of describing Jesus was no longer sufficient. A more inferential and doctrinal description of Jesus was also felt to be necessary. John's gospel is one such early expression of this experience. It excels in this quality far above the other canonical gospels. Since John identifies Jesus as closely as possible with God, it played a crucial role in the eventual declaration of Jesus as not only human but also divine, having the same essence as the Father (confer the Nicene Creed). Since this doctrine became the most important one in Christian history, John secured a place for itself as arguably the most important of the canonical gospels.

Acknowledgement

I have written this article in grateful remembrance of the late Donald Gelpi, S.J., who was my professor at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA. Thank you, Don, for showing us, as a teacher and in your scholarly work, how putting the biblical text at the center of the theological task looks like.

About the Author

A proud Filipino-Japanese-Canadian, Julius-Kei Kato is associate professor of Biblical & Religious Studies at King's University College-Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. He holds an SSL (Licentiate in Sacred Scriptures) from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, Italy and a PhD in Systematic and Philosophical Theology (with a focus in Hermeneutics) from the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, USA. He has taught as a visiting professor at the Sophia University and Kwansei Gakuin University in Japan and at the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. He is the author of *How Immigrant Christians Living in Mixed Cultures Interpret Their Religion* (2012), *Religious Language and Asian [North] American Hybridity* (2016), and *Reading the Bible in a Secular Age: The New Testament as Spiritual Ancestry* (2023). Email address: jkato@uwo.ca

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Is there an Anthropocenic Homiletic? Preaching in the midst of the Anthropocene Event

Edward Foley

Abstract: In geological time, the current age is often considered the Anthropocene, a designation that admits the impact of humanity on the planet. While originally deployed as a geological term, the Anthropocene concept has evolved diversely and is now widely accepted and increasingly serves as a bridging concept across disciplines, including theology. This article juxtaposes the Anthropocene "event" with the liturgical and homiletic arenas. While the Anthropocene is often judged to be a sinister moment as symbolized in the contemporary climate crisis, the larger framework of the human impact on our world and its people can be an analogy for positive human engagement and a parallel positive theological anthropology. In that vein, it is argued that the reforms of Vatican II – particularly the liturgical and homiletical developments – were driven by human concerns. Fully human engagement in worship, and by extension in the homily as an integral part of worship, suggests an "Anthropocene imperative" in Roman Catholic preaching: particularly around a positive theological anthropology and deep respect for the natural world that permeates our eucharistic liturgy. The article concludes with pastoral reflections on the preaching implications of this Anthropocene turn.

Keywords: Anthropocene • Event • Liturgy • Nature • Preaching • Theological Anthropology • Vatican II

Introduction

Since the emergence of the geological time scale in the mid-19th century, the current age[1] has been officially

[1] There are multiple frameworks for geological time, which are related but not synonymous: **Age** is a measurement of time which describes an event, such as an Ice Age: **Epoch** is the smallest unit of geological time, which lasts several million years; **Period** is the basic unit of geological time. A period lasts tens of millions of years, which is the time it takes to form one type of rock system; **Era** is composed of two or more periods. One era is hundreds of millions of years in

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designated as the Holocene age. The term is rooted in the work of the Scottish geologist Charles Lyell who in 1833 described the current period as one "tenanted by man,"[2] covering approximately the past 11,700 years of the planet earth; we now recognize that humans existed much longer than this.[3] Lyell's original term for this tenanted period was the "recent age." Even previous to Lyell – particularly from the onset of industrialization – scientists recognized that "the entire face of the Earth bears the imprint of human powers."[4] That impact is now understood to stretch back millennia: human environmental impact dates back to the Paleolithic (about 2.58 million to 11,700 years ago) and subsequent Neolithic ages (from about 12,000 to 6500 years ago).[5]

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duration; **(A)Eon** is composed of two or more eras. This is the largest division of time, lasting hundreds of millions of years https://worldtreasures.org/assets/uploads/documents/Geologic_Time_Periods.pdf. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) do not hold that we are in an Anthropocene epoch, but rather that the Anthropocene is an ongoing geological event https://www.usgs.gov/publications/anthropocene-event-not-epoch. Thus, for the sake of accuracy, we will first employ the language of "Anthropocene Age" in this article as the appropriate geological designation of this moment.

[2] Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology,* vol. 3 (London: John Murray, 1833), 52.

[3] Possibly as early as 315,000 years ago, cf. Jean-Jacques Hublin, A. Ben-Ncer, S. Bailey, *et al.* "New fossils from Jebel Irhoud, Morocco and the pan-African origin of *Homo sapiens,*" *Nature* 546 (2017): 289–292, https://doi.org/10.1038/nature22336

[4] Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière, Supplement 5: Des époques de la nature* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1778), 237 as cited in Helmuth Trischler, "The Anthropocene: A Challenge for the History of Science, Technology, and the Environment," *NTM Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Wissenschaften, Technik und Umwelt* 24 (2016): 309-335, online at https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00048-016-0146-3. Much of the early history here is derived from the Trischler article.

[5] Wolfgang Nentwig, "Human Environmental Impact in the Paleolithic and Neolithic," in *Handbook of Paleoanthropology* III, ed.

In 1867 Paul Gervaise appears to be the first to employ the designation "holocene" for this age.[6] It entered the global lexicon during the Second International Geological Congress in 1885 convening in Bologna. Next a "Holocenian Stage" was formally proposed at the Third International Geological Congress in Berlin in 1885,[7] and in 1968 the term was officially accepted by the Geological Names Committee of the U.S. Geological Survey to replace "recent" as the proper designation of this age.[8] Other terms for this emerging age abounded. In 1873 the Italian geologist Antonio Stoppani proposed that it should be labeled "Anthropozoic."[9] In 1922 the Russian geologist Alexei Pavlov coined the term "Anthropogene" for this geological moment. Other monikers for this age have alternatively emerged as the "Atomic Age," the "Technogene" age, the "Ecozoic" age, and American journalist Andrew Revkin's 1992 proposal of an Anthrocene" age.[10]

The term "Anthropocene" was first used by limnologist Eugene Stoermer in the 1980s. Independently, Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen deployed the term and more than Stoermer was the source of its popularization. At a 2000 conference of the International

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Winfried Henke and Ian Tattersall (Berlin: Springer, 2015), 1881-1900

[6] Paul Gervaise, *Zoologie et Paléontologie Générales,* 2 vols. (Paris: Bertrand, 1867-1869), I:32.

[7] Mike Walker et al., "Formal Ratification of the Subdivision of the Holocene Series/Epoch (Quaternary System/Period)," *Journal of the Geological Society of India* 93 (2019): 135-141, https://doi.org/10.18814/epiiugs/2018/018016

[8] George V. Cohee, "Holocene Replaces Recent in Nomenclature Usage of the U.S. Geological Survey," *AAPG Bulletin* 52:5 (1968): 852, https://doi.org/10.1306/5D25C467-16C1-11D7-8645000102C1865D

[9] Valenti Rull, "The 'Anthropocene': neglects, misconceptions, and possible futures," *EMBO Reports* 18:7 (2017): 1056-1060, doi: https://doi.org/10.15252%2Fembr.201744231

[10] Ibid.

Geosphere-Biosphere Programme in Cuernavaca, Mexico—tired of hearing the Holocene mentioned as the current geological epoch—Crutzen spontaneously shouted that we are living in the Anthropocene.[11] The cocreation of this term is affirmed by the joint authorship by Stoermer and Crutzen of an article in the *Global Change Newsletter* in 2000.[12] This modest two-page publication in an internal newsletter demonstrated that these two scientists had little understanding of the impact of this taxological evolution or they might have shaped a more comprehensive article for publication in a high profile scientific journal.

While originally deployed as a geological term, the Anthropocene concept has "evolved diversely [and] is now widely accepted, and increasingly serves as a bridging concept across disciplines and beyond."[13] An early mapping of publications employing this term in the title, abstract or text body, indicates that – although the disciplines of earth and environmental sciences have contributed the most published items (64%) – the humanities and social sciences make up 24% of these publications.

While such literature searches have not explicitly looked for the conjunction of the Anthropocene and theology, that connection is clearly underway. A recent search of religious databases employing EBSCO yielded over 1400 such entries, with almost 600 qualifying as

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[11] Nicola Davison, "The Anthropocene epoch: Have we entered a new phase of planetary history?," *The Guardian* (30 May 2019), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/30/anthropocene-epoch-have-we-entered-a-new-phase-of-planetary-history

[12] Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene'," *Global Change Newsletter* 41 (2000): 17-18.

[13] Eduardo Brondizio, "Re-conceptualizing the Anthropocene: A call for Collaboration," *Global Environmental Change* 39 (2016): 318-327, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2016.02.006; much of this paragraph relies on this source.

"peer reviewed." While many of these entries fall under the broad category of eco-theology, they also range across other theological disciplines from theological anthropology to spirituality, from biblical studies to ethics.[14] There are also conferences being staged on the intersection of theology and the Anthropocene,[15] as well

[14] A sampling of such publications over the past decade includes: Ernest L. Simmons, "Theology in the Anthropocene," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 53, no. 4 (14 December 2014), 10.1111/dial.12125; Johann-Albrecht Meylahn, "Doing Public Theology in the Anthropocene towards Life-Creating Theology," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36, no. 3 (September 2015): 1–10; Forrest Clingerman, "Place and the Hermeneutics of the Anthropocene," *Worldviews* 20, no.3 (2016): 225–37; Celia Deane-Drummond et al., *Religion in the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2017); A.J. Roberts, "Intersubjectivity in the Anthropocene: Toward an Earthbound Theology," *Open Theology* 4 (2018): 71-83; Sigurd Bergmann, "Theology in the Anthropocene – and Beyond?," in *Contextual Theology: Skills and Practices of Liberating Faith*, ed. Sigurd Bergmann and Mika Vähäkangas (London: Routledge, 2020), 160-180; Eva van Urk, "Public Theology and the Anthropocene: Exploring Human-Animal Relations," *International Journal of Public Theology* 14, no. 2 (7 July 2020): 206-223; Dianne Rayson, *Bonhoeffer and Climate Change Theology and Ethics for the Anthropocene* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021); Ryan LaMothe, *A Radical Political Theology for the Anthropocene Age: Thinking and Being Otherwise* (Portland: Cascade Books, 2021); Ernst M. Conradie, "Some Reflections on Human Identity in the Anthropocene." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77, no. 3 (July 1, 2021): e1–9; Peter Walker and Jonathan Cole, ed., *Theology on a Defiant Earth: Seeking Hope in the Anthropocene* (Washington DC: Roman & Littlefield, 2022); Jan-Olav Henricksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene: Reconsidering Human Agency and its Limits* (Berlin: Springer, 2023).

[15] Previous to the International Academy of Practical Theology's 2023 conference on the theme in Seoul, Korea, there was the "Online International Conference – theology in the Anthropocene [15-17 July 2021]," sponsored by the University of Bonn, Department of Old Catholic Studies and the European Research Network, https://anthropocene.ts-tr.eu/?page_id=59

as graduate courses on this conjunction.[16]

Liturgical Reform, the new Homiletic and the Anthropocene

When placing the Anthropocene in dialogue with the liturgical and homiletic arenas, a definitional distinction offered by the United States Geological Survey is particularly useful:

> Over the course of the last decade the concept of the Anthropocene has become widely established within and beyond the geoscientific literature but its boundaries remain undefined. Formal definition of the Anthropocene as a chrono-stratigraphical series and geochronological epoch following the Holocene, at a fixed horizon and with a precise global start date, has been proposed, but fails to account for the diachronic nature of human impacts on global environmental systems during the late Quaternary. By contrast, defining the Anthropocene as an ongoing geological event more closely reflects the reality of both historical and ongoing human–environment interactions, encapsulating spatial and temporal heterogeneity, as well as diverse social and environmental processes that characterize anthropogenic global changes. Thus, an Anthropocene Event incorporates a substantially wider range of anthropogenic environmental and cultural effects, while at the same time applying more readily in different academic contexts than would be the case with a rigidly defined Anthropocene Series/Epoch.[17]

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[16] E.g., that by the Divinity Faculty of the University of Cambridge, "Facing the Environmental Future: Theology in the Anthropocene," https://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/study-here/mphil/Philosophyofreligion/facing-the-environmental-future-theology-in-the-anthropocene

[17] See note above.

Imaging the Anthropocene as an "event" is useful when relating it to worship and its preaching. In my Roman Catholic tradition, recent dogmatic definitions of the liturgy have stressed its dynamic and active character.[18] While folk easily equate sacraments and their liturgies with a book or a teaching, a consecrated host or a cup of wine, liturgy is first and foremost a verb. David Power famously christened liturgy as an "eventing" of God's grace and human response in verbal and nonverbal languages within a given historical continuum in space and time.[19]

There is even greater ease in understanding the liturgical homily as an event.[20] The performative nature of the homily is not only underscored by the avalanche of literature and digital sources that provide advice for delivering a sermon, but also the magisterial theologizing of no less than Pope Francis. In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis alternately considers the homily an intense and happy experience of the Spirit (no. 136), a consoling encounter with God's word (no. 136), a proclamation (no. 138), a dialogue between God and his people (no. 138), like a mother's conversation (no. 140), a communication of beauty (no. 143), an act of enlightenment (no. 144), and a constituent aspect of the Church's larger call to mission and evangelization (no.

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[18] The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* makes this clear when it teaches "that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his body, which is the church, is a preeminently sacred action. No other action of the church equals its effectiveness by the same title nor to the same degree." *Sacrosanctum concilium,* no. 7 https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html

[19] David Power, *Sacrament: the Language of God's Giving* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 51ff.

[20] See, in particular, the "event" language in the *General Instruction to the Revised Lectionary,* e.g., no. 3.

20). He instructs that we should not only be concerned about the content of a homily, but that the "concern for the way we preach is … a profoundly spiritual concern" (no. 157).[21]

The Anthropocene event is defined not only by the human impact on our physical and social environments but also the growing awareness of that impact. It is only recently that scientists have come to reckon with the impact of hominin evolution on not only the eradication of large-bodies species[22] but also the extinction of megafauna[23] tens of thousands of years ago. Consequently, part of the Anthropocene phenomenon appears to be self-reflection on the human impact on our physical and social environments. This is probably why, even though

> debates are continuing about whether the evidence from the fossil record is sufficient to warrant the conclusion that the Earth has now left the interglacial state called the Holocene and entered a new era, the Anthropocene has already become embedded in public discourse as a way of capturing a significant shift in human-Earth relations and human self-understanding.[24]

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[21] https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

[22] Felisa Smith, "Body size downgrading of mammals over the late Quaternary," *Science* 360:6368 (2018) 310-313, https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aao5987

[23] Christopher Sandom et al., "Global Late Quaternary megafauna extinctions linked to humans, not climate change," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 281:2013325420133254 http://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2013.3254

[24] Maria Antonaccio, "De-moralizing and re-moralizing the Anthropocene," in Celia Deane-Drummond et al., *Religion in the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2017), 121.

The Anthropocene is not simply an age of human impact on the earth, but also an age of awareness about the effects of the human footprint on our environment. Analogously the current "liturgical age" in my tradition is not simply one of reform or retrenchment. Rather, it is one whose reform and/or retrenchment – at least in part – has been triggered by the growing awareness of the "human footprint" in worship and the battalions of enthusiasts or detractors who applaud or reject what might be considered the humanization of the liturgy.

There is no worship free from hominin fingerprints. It is true that other species ritualize. For example, elephants not only appear to mourn their dead, but return to the death sites and caress the remains of their species.[25] It is only hominins, however, that almost 240,000 years ago engaged in burial practices of their dead that included grave goods pointing to possible beliefs in rebirth or afterlife.[26] Some even argue that material evidence suggests that Neanderthals had spiritual stirrings that contributed to their own burial rituals.[27] Whenever and wherever "human rituals" and their ensuing "beliefs" emerged, they were by definition human artifacts.

Since all theology by its very nature is contextual theology,[28] so must all worship – Christian or otherwise

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[25] Shaoni Bhattacharya, "'Elephants may pay homage to dead relatives," *Biology Letters* 2:2 (2005) 26-28, doi:10.1098/rsbl.2005.0400

[26] Will Sullivan, "Ancient human relatives may have buried their dead," *Smithsonian Magazine* (7 June 2023) https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/ancient-human-relatives-may-have-buried-their-dead-180982308/

[27] Ruth Schuste, "Neanderthals turned to faith when confronting death, new evidence suggests," *Haaretz* (2016) https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/2016-12-15/ty-article/did-neanderthals-believe-in-god/0000017f-deea-d3a5-af7f-feeec3e70000

[28] Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2002), 3.

–be similarly contextual. However, just as the scientific awareness of the human impact on our physical environment lags millennia after that impact began, so the theological and liturgical awareness of the human impact on Christian worship patterns and accompanying preaching only emerged millennia after the impact began, i.e., at its origin. Our acknowledgement of that imprint is relatively recent. One stark example suffices: it took Christian scholars well into the late 2nd millennium to reckon with the Jewishness of Jesus and the consequences of his socio-religious location upon emerging Christianity and its worship forms.[29] Previous to this, it is not an understatement to propose that the historical Jesus was "de-Judaized."[30]

The reforms of the Second Vatican Council were driven by human concerns. While framed theologically, this motivation is explicated in vividly experiential terms in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, which notes: "in the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else."[31] Proposing the need for human engagement that is both active and fully conscious and placing that need at the center of universal liturgical reform is unprecedented in the history of Roman Catholicism. Across the globe it sparked the rapid and radical reshaping of Roman Catholic worship.

Preaching was also deeply influenced by this insistence on intelligible human engagement. The theological reasoning undergirding this accessibility move was the insistence that the assembly – with Christ

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[29] One of the first serious works exploring the Jewish roots of Christian worship was Louis Bouyer's *Eucharistie: Théologie et spiritualité de la prière eucharistique* (Paris: Desclée, 1966).

[30] Zev Garber and Kenneth Hanson, *Judaism and Jesus* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), vii.

[31] *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,* no. 14.

and at his initiative – was actually a subject of worship.[32] It is Christ head and members who offer the eucharist. Similarly, since the homily was imagined by Vatican II as an integral part of the liturgy,[33] it also had to be an action of Christ head and members. Theologically this means that the assembly is not an "object" of a preacher's homily but must be an integrated subject in that event.

While the Roman Catholic Church promoted this theology, leading Protestant homileticians provided the strategies for most effectively honoring the assembly as a homiletic subject. Fred Craddock is often credited with inaugurating a "Copernican revolution in homiletics"[34] with his 1971 publication *As One without Authority.*[35] In that work, Craddock introduced an inductive preaching method that places people at the center of the preaching event and allows them to draw their own conclusions. Craddock's revolutionary ideas ushered in what is sometimes called the "new homiletic." This approach created a decidedly weightier human footprint in the pulpit. In this homiletic turn to the subject the assembly in a very real sense is invited into the preaching act. This requires not only taking their sensitivities and prejudices, theologies and political perspectives seriously, but also dictates structuring a homily in such a way that the preaching becomes a shared journey of discovery and encounter by homilist and assembly together, rather than a delivery system for feeding the assembly a preacher's precooked conclusions.[36]

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[32] *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,* no. 7.

[33] *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,* no. 52.

[34] R. L. Eslinger, *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 65.

[35] Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority,* 4th rev. ed. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005).

[36] See, for example, Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980).

Anthropocenic Preaching as a Homiletic Imperative

The reforms of Vatican II have introduced an Anthropocenic imperative into Roman Catholic Worship. This imperative not only insists upon a human "footprint" regarding both the design and performance of liturgy but it also requires that there is a fully human liturgical engagement of the masses that is decidedly self-reflective. As in wider discourse the Anthropocene turn reckons with human beings as "geological agents," so in late 20th century liturgical reforms the baptized are now reckoned as "liturgical agents." While ancient traditions and doctrinal orthodoxy remain important foundations for the ongoing liturgical reform, Vatican II upheld neither of these (nor their many corollaries) as the first validity test for reformed worship. Rather, it is the intentional reception of and the implicit affirmation of worship by the baptized through their participation that is to be considered before all else. The implications of this Anthropocenic imperative in worship and its preaching are multiple. Two in particular will be addressed here: theological anthropology and respect for the natural world.

Theological Anthropology

While anthropology ponders what it means to be human, theological anthropology introduces God into that mix, asking: What does it mean to be human in the presence of God?[37] There is no consensus when answering this question. Responses range widely from that of John Calvin who held that by nature human beings are not

[37] A useful introduction to the breadth this topic from a Roman Catholic perspective is Mary Ann Hinsdale and Stephen Okey, eds., *T & T Handbook of Theological anthropology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2023).

inclined to the love of God but first their own interests,[38] to Karl Rahner who believed that all humans are radically open to God's self-communication.[39] Besides the writings of theologians or magisterial teachings our rituals as well as the legislation and processes directing their reform are similarly embedded with underlying theological anthropologies.[40] Some label this phenomenon a "liturgical anthropology."[41] Since Roman Catholic worship is a patchwork of ancient and new materials, these rites offer mixed messages about their embedded theological anthropologies.[42] At the same time, employing Paul Gilroy's useful frame of "flow,"[43] one could argue that there are dominant anthropological flows in the design and performance of the 1969 reformed eucharistic worship. This is well illustrated when comparing it to the 1570 rite.

There are few studies examining the theological anthropologies embedded in Roman Catholic Worship. One exception is Benedikt Kanemann's apologetic for

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[38] See the second book of his *Institutes,* Chapter 1, https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes/institutes.iv.ii.html

[39] Karl Rahner, *Hearers of the Word* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969).

[40] A recent example of such an exploration is Wilfried Engemann, "How People Are Treated During Worship: Problems of an Implicit Liturgical Anthropology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 21/2 (2017): 259-280, https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2016-0050; also, Benedikt Kranemann, "Anthropologische Spurensuche in der Liturgie," *Heiliger Dienst* 74, no. 3 (2020): 170-177.

[41] See, for example, Joshua Cockayne and Gideon Salter, "Liturgical Anthropology: A Developmental Perspective," *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* 6, no. 1 (2022), doi: https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v6i1.61193

[42] Benedikt Kranemann, "Anthropologische Spurensuche in der Liturgie," *Heiliger Dienst* 74, no. 3 (2020): 172.

[43] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 16 *et passim.*

studying the anthropology of our worship.[44] Most of Kanemann's references, however, do not allude to the Mass but to baptisms, weddings, and funerals instead. There are virtually no serious studies examining the theological anthropologies alternately undergirding the 1570 and 1969 *Missale Romanum*.[45] Nonetheless, one academically as well as experientially familiar with both could credibly posit that the texts and rubrics of the 1570 Missal of Pius V reflects a dominant flow in its theological anthropology that highlight the sinfulness and unworthiness of both priest and assembly.

The Rite of 1570: The sinfulness of the priest in this rite was accentuated by the many personal deprecatory prayers (*apologiae*) he was required to recite during Mass.[46] The opening prayer of the Offertory well illustrates this:

Suscipe, sancta Pater omnipotens aeterne Deus, hanc immaculatam hostiam, quem ego indignus famulus tuus offero tibi, Deo meo vivo et vero, pro innumerabilibus peccatis, et offensionibus, et negligentiis meis, et pro	Accept, O holy Father, almighty and eternal God, this spotless host, which I your unworthy servant, offer to you, my living and true God, for my own countless sins, trans-gressions and failings; for

[44] Kranemann, "Anthropologische Spurensuche in der Liturgie."

[45] One exception here is Lauren Prista's study of collects. While I do not agree with her extensive criticism of the process and resulting prayers in the reformed rite, she does note that the reformed rites do reflect a different theological anthropology, e.g., in her study of the collect for the Second Sunday of Advent, *Collects of the Roman Missals: A comparative Study of the Sundays in Proper Seasons before and after the Second Vatican Council* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 46.

[46] See Joanne Pierce's discussion of sacerdotal apologiae in her "The Evolution of the *Ordo Missae* in the Early Middle Ages," in *Medieval Liturgy: A Book of Essays,* ed. Lizette Larson-Miller (New York-London: Garland Publishing, 1997), 3-24.

omnibus circumstantibus, sed et pro omnibus fidelibus christianis vivis atque defunctis: ut mihi, et illis proficiat ad salute in vitam aeternam. Amen.	all here present and for all faithful Christians, living and dead: that it may avail both me and them unto salvation in everlasting life. Amen.

This vision of unworthiness was amplified by various moral theologians who enumerated the multiple ways a priest could commit serious sin when celebrating Mass.[47] Such positions were broadly based on the instruction *De Defectibus in Celebratione Missarum Occurentibus* printed as part of the introductory materials to the *Missale Romanum* of 1570.[48]

The priest as unworthy supplicant is a recurring theme in the many private deprecatory prayers that mark this Eucharistic rite. Thus, before Communion, the priest privately prays:

Perceptio Corporis tui, Domine Jesu Christe, quod ego indignus sumere praesumo, non mihi proveniat in judicium et condemnationem: sed pro tue pietate prosit mihi ad tutamentum mentis et corporis, et ad medelam percipiendam …	Let not the partaking of your body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I though unworthy, presume to receive, turn to my judgment and condemnation: but through your goodness may it be for me a safeguard and a healing remedy both of soul and body …

[47] See, for example, Alphonsus de Liguori, "The Celebration of Mass," in *The Complete Works: Vol. XII Dignities and duties of the Priest,* ed. Eugene Grimm (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1889), 208-229, https://archive.org/details/alphonsusworks12liguuoft/page/n3/mode/2up

[48] https://media.musicasacra.com/pdf/romanmissal_classical.pdf

Another potent indicator of the underlying theological anthropology here is the dominant place of intercession throughout the rite. The priest and the people, for whom he offers the Mass, are clearly cast in the mode of petitioners. While this supplicant posture is already exemplified by the previously quoted prayer, deeply symbolic of this stance are the opening lines of the Roman Canon:

Te igitur, clementissime Pater, per Jesum Christum Filium tuum Dominum nostrum, supplices rogamus, ac petimus, uti accepta habeas, et benedicas, haec dona, haec munera, haec sancta sacrifice illibata.	Most merciful Father we humbly pray and beseech you, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, that you will be pleased to receive and bless these gifts, these offerings, these holy unblemished sacrifices.

As David Power assesses this prayer, once the opening (*Sanctus*) praise was over, "the priest was occupied with intercessions and offerings."[49]

As for the faithful, their lot is similar to that of the priest: unworthy supplicants and cautious petitioners, under a cloud of impending judgment, needing the protection of the saints. While the Canon of the 1570 rite does refer to "your holy Catholic Church" (*Ecclesia tua sancta catholica*) and God's whole family (*cunctae familiae*), references to the baptized are more often couched in language of servants (*famula*). This assessment is epitomized at the beginning of the invocation of the saints during the Canon when the priest prays:

[49] David Power, "Theology of the Latin Text and Rite," in *A Commentary on the Order of Mass of the Roman Missal*, ed. Edward Foley et al. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011), 259.

Nobis quoque peccatoribus famulis tuis, de multitudine miserationum tuarum sperantibus, partem aliquem et societatum donare digneris …	To us also, your sinful servants, who hope in the multitude of your mercies, vouchsafe to grant some and fellowship …

That text ritually summarizes the church's stance towards the baptized since the early Middle Ages when their self-perception as sinners was so pervasive and their subsequent absence from communion so prevalent that a Church council mandated their confession and communion at least once a year.[50] The assessment of Eamon Duffy is pertinent: writing of late medieval Christianity, he suggests that most Christians hoped for salvation, but thought that only saints went to heaven directly. Consequently, it was purgatory rather than hell that became the focus of Christian fear.[51]

The design and performance of the 1570 eucharistic rite perpetuated the perception of the assembly as a gathering of sinners by reducing the presence of the usually kneeling baptized to an incidental and ritually unnecessary presence. Even if there existed a *schola* that chanted an *introit* or *Gloria*, the rubrics required the priest to recite those texts himself for liceity. In the absence of any acolyte or server, the priest could simply speak all of the responses. This was a relatively widespread practice in my own religious community before Vatican II. While there existed medieval legislation aimed at preventing any such *missa solitaria,* the presence of another was not so much because of their individual value or personal benefit derived from the

[50] Lateran IV, Canon 21 https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/lateran4.asp

[51] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1992), 341.

ritual but to safeguard the "social, plural character which is so distinctively revealed in the liturgy."[52]

Despite the 1903 call of Pope Pius X for the active participation of the faithful in the "sacred mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church,"[53] the assembly was ordinarily treated as "mute spectators." This is confirmed in the 1928 Apostolic Constitution *Divini cultus,* which explicitly instructs against this practice.[54] It is true that the "dialogue Mass" (*Missa recitata*) – famously celebrated by the monks of Maria Laach in 1921[55] – was emerging in the early 20th century. It was not until 1922, however, that the Sacred Congregation of Rites canonically confirmed in a *dubium* issued with multiple cautions[56] that local bishops could

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[52] Joseph Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* trans. Francis Brunner (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1950), I:226; on the following pages Jungmann explores further legislation, especially around the emerging role of the server; also see, Thomas P. Rausch, "Is the Private Mass Traditional?" *Worship* 64 (1990): 237-242.

[53] *Tra le sollecitudini,* introduction, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/es/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19031122_sollecitudini.html

[54] "It is absolutely necessary that the faithful do not attend sacred functions as strangers or silent spectators but, truly understood by the beauty of the liturgy, participate in sacred ceremonies - even in solemn processions where the clergy and pious associations take part - in such a way as to alternate, according to the due norms, their voice to those of the priest and the *schola.* If what is hoped for will occur, it will no longer happen that the people do not respond at all or respond only with a low murmur to the common prayers proposed in the liturgical language or in the vernacular." *Divini Cultus,* no. ix https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/it/bulls/documents/hf_p-xi_bulls_19281220_divini-cultus.html

[55] Keith Pecklers, *The Unread Vision* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 6-7.

[56] Congregatio Sacrorum Rituum, rescript 4375 (4 August 1922), in *Decreta Authentica Congregationis Sacrorum Rituum* (Romae: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1927), appendix II:37, https://cdn.restorethe54.com/media/pdf/decrees-of-the-sacred-congregation-of-rites-part-6-1898.pdf

implement this Dialog Mass. Linguistic confirmation of the erased voice of the faithful is that the entire eucharistic liturgy was offered in the first person singular by the priest.[57]

Together, these textual and ritual parameters of the 1570 rite reveal dominant flows that, rather than lifting up and celebrating, dispraise and even ignore the baptized. In parallel ways, they present an image of the priest who – though at the very center of worship – is equally unworthy and sinful.

The Rite of 1969: Similar to the *Missale Romanum* of 1570, the 1969 *Novus Ordo* of Paul VI is a patchwork construction with multiple theological currents coursing through its rubrics and texts. Nonetheless, the dominant flow through this revision projects a more positive theological anthropology than its predecessor. This is reflective of the documents of Vatican II that generally avoided the negative and juridical language that marked previous councils. Instead, according to John O'Malley, the "style" of Vatican II's documents reflected in its language is distinctive and new: a remarkable shift from judgmental and condemnatory church-speak to a pastoral lexicon of people of God, friendship, cooperation, dialogue, collegiality and holiness.[58] O'Malley contends that these linguistic shifts, threading through all of the Council's documents, indicate a dramatic transformation of a way of being church: from one ready to castigate the world and its inhabitants to being in dialogue with them. Style is a key hermeneutic to the Council and its ritual aftermath.

In the 1969 rite it is difficult to predicate any distinctive theological anthropology of the priest-presider

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[57] Cf. the prayer "*ego indignus famulus tuus offero*" cited above.

[58] John O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 306 *et passim*.

apart from that of the assembly, as this rite makes him one with the assembly in the eucharistic action. Most conspicuous may be the elimination of the vast majority of his private deprecatory prayers.[59]

Another prominent change affecting the status of both priest and people, is the rise of thanksgiving as a dominant prayer mode, counterpointing the more traditional emphasis on petition and offering. In comparison to the previously cited 1570 Offertory prayer, the opening of the 1969 Preparation of the Gifts is completely devoid of petition; instead, it is a prayer of praise and blessing.

Benedictus es, Domine, Deus universi, quia de tua largitate accepimus panem, quem tibi offerimus, fructum terrae et operis manuum hominum, ex quo nobis fiet panis vitae.	Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.

Structurally this prayer no longer sits in an extended "Offertory Rite" but rather in the ritually very modest "Preparation of the Gifts and Table." The essential element of the "offertory" has not been eliminated, but has been greatly reduced, wed to the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection (*anamnesis*) and moved into the Eucharistic Prayer.[60] This further reduces this ordo's emphasis on "offering." This diminished emphasis on intercession and offering is supplanted by modes of

[59] The two that remain are a very abbreviated private prayer at the washing of his hands during the preparation of the gifts (reduced from 7 verses of Psalm 25 to 1).

[60] *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal,* no. 79, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_ordinamento-messale_en.html

praise and thanksgiving, transforming the image of assembly and priest from unworthy penitents to a people who find their dignity in acts of praise and thanksgiving.

In Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church the dignity of the people of God is remarkably considered even before that of the hierarchy.[61] Furthermore, this document recognizes that instead of a company of sinners, the whole of the people of God are called to holiness, and that this Holy People of God – sharing in Christ's prophetic office – are led by the Holy Spirit who enriches them with divine virtues.[62] This magisterial shift towards a more positive theological anthropology regarding the baptized finds sustained resonance in the 1969 *Novus Ordo.*

For example, the eucharistic rite is no longer structured as a "public private Mass" in which the priest is the sole critical actor. Rather, the *Novus Ordo* is decidedly a "we" event in language and rubrics. A lector reads a lection, which the priest does not have to repeat for validity. A cantor chants a responsorial psalm, which similarly does not require clerical duplication. That this is no longer a "public private Mass" is underscored by the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal,* which considers the different forms of celebration in this order: 1) Mass with a Congregation (nos. 115-198), 2) Concelebrated Mass (nos. 199-251), and only then 3) Mass without a Congregation (nos. 152-172).[63]

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[61] Chapter II, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

[62] Ibid., nos. 39 and 12 respectively.

[63] Regarding the latter, Mass without a Congregation is not a solo event, and the instruction presumes that there is minister present to assist and make the responses (no. 209). The Instruction further notes that Mass should not be celebrated without at least one other person present "except for a just and reasonable cause" (no. 254), i.e.,

As for language, the most important indicator of a more positive theological anthropology is the turn to the vernacular. While Latin remains the official language of the rite,[64] O'Malley noted that within a few years of Vatican II, the Mass in its entirety was being celebrated in the vernacular worldwide.[65] This affirms not only the importance of the baptized as subjects in the worship, but also implicitly affirms their linguistic-cultural context as valuable and worthy of being employed in worship.

A second major language change that signals a more positive theological anthropology is the turn from the "I" language to "we" language that honors the assembly as subjects in the liturgical action. The prayer at the Preparation of the Gifts cited above illustrates this shift. There are no first-person singular pronouns or verbs in that text but only three first-person plural nouns and verbs (*accepimus, offerimus, nobis*). By contrast, the 1570 text has three first-person singular pronouns and verbs and does not refer to the assembly as "us" (*nobis*) but rather as "them" (*illis*).

The previously referenced *Nobis quoque peccatoribus* is retained as part of the Roman Canon (now called Eucharistic Prayer I) in the new *Missale Romanum*. Its inclusion underscores the patchwork theologies flowing through this collection of prayers and rubrics. On the other hand, this phrase finds little resonance in the other three Eucharistic prayers promulgated in the Missal of 1969, nor in subsequently approved eucharistic prayers such as those for Reconciliation, Children, and Various Needs and Occasions. Instead, it finds this counterpoint during the anamnesis and offering of Eucharistic Prayer II:

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something beyond the personal preference or devotion of the priest. Chapter IV: The Different Forms of Celebrating Mass.

[64] *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,* no. 36.

[65] O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II,* 140.

Memores igitur mortis et resurrectionis eius, tibi, Domine, panem vitae et calicem salutis offerimus, gratias agentes quia nos dignos habuisti adstare coram te et tibi ministrare.	Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection, we offer you, Lord the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to [stand][66] in your presence and minister to you.[67]

Aside from retaining the Old Roman Canon's *Nobis quoque peccatoribus,* the Missal of 1969 does speak of people's sinfulness but richly couches such in the mercy and faithfulness of God, as in the preface for the Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I:

Qui ad abundantiorem vitam habendam nos incitare non desinis, et, cum sis dives in misericordia, veniam offerre perseveres ac peccatores invitas ad tuae solum indulgentiae fidendum.	For you do not cease to spur us on to possess a more abundant life and, being rich in mercy, you constantly offer pardon and call on sinners to trust in your forgiveness alone.

While there are innumerable other examples, these suffice to illustrate the shift in theological anthropology from the 1570 to the 1969 rite. Admittedly, there are multiple flows through the texts and rubrics of the latter and there is still a recognition that priest and assembly are sinners. At the same time, the reformed rite more clearly raises up the dignity of the baptized who remain beloved of God, even when they do sin, and weds them

[66] While the official translation has "to be in your presence," *astare* is properly translated as "to stand."

[67] The Latin and English texts from the 1969 Missal can easily be found in *A Commentary on the Order of Mass of the Roman Missal*, ed. Edward Foley et al.

inextricably to the actions and dignity of the priest-presider.

Preaching implications

In "The Joy of the Gospel" Pope Francis offers an extended excursus on the homily deeply rooted in the reforms of Vatican II. This exhortation displays a distinctively positive theological anthropology.[68] Francis' instructions on preaching not only presume this affirming turn but provide useful directives for homilizing in that mode, resonant with the theological shifts of the 1969 *Missale Romanum*. Francis' work provides well-considered directives for "Anthropocenic" preaching.

Francis is clear that preaching is not just an exercise of office but an ecclesial mission (no. 15). He is both brave and encyclopedic about what preaching and the homily is and is not to be: not to be dull (no. 11), doctrinal (no. 35), confined (no. 49), abstract (nos. 142 & 157), ugly (cf. nos. 36 and 142), obsessive (no. 49), out of contact with the local context (nos. 29, 45 &143), heartless (no. 139), essentially entertaining (no. 138), judgmental (no. 172), tortured (cf. no. 44), bureaucratic and inhospitable (no. 63), pessimistic (cf. no. 85), ostentatious (no. 95), rigid (no. 45), avuncular (cf. no. 139), self-centered (cf. no. 158), monologic (no. 137), long (no. 138), heartless (no 138), disconnected from God's Word (no. 146), inauthentic (no. 150), negative (no. 159), oppressive (nos. 187ff), and disengaged from society (nos. 238ff).

Shifting to the positive, Francis consistently emphasizes the nature, significance and even primacy of humanity (no. 55) for all evangelization, including preaching. Similarly when speaking of interreligious

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[68] Edward Foley, "The Homily in the context of *Evangelii Gaudium,"* 30.vii.14, http://www.praytellblog.com/index.php/2014/07/30/the-homily-in-the-context-of-evangelii-gaudium/

dialogue, Francis notes that such a dialogue is first of all "a conversation about human existence" (no. 250). The reason for this reverent view of humanity is because each human being is "God's handiwork, his creation. God created each person in his image, and he or she reflects something of God's Glory" (no. 274). The "stranger" or "other" is an encounter with "sacred ground" (no 169). Every human being—each of whom Francis calls our brothers and sisters—are the very "prolongation of the incarnation for each of us" (no. 179). Francis concludes that "every person is immensely holy and deserves our love" (no 274).

In treating the topic of "informal preaching," the Pope notes that the first step in that venture is personal dialogue. This means listening to the joys, hopes, concerns and needs of the others.[69] "Only afterward is it possible to bring up God's word" (no. 128). When considering the homily itself, it is important for the preacher not only to contemplate the word but also "contemplate his people" (no 154). This requires keeping "an ear to the people" and developing the ability to link the "message of a biblical text to a human situation, to an experience which cries out for the light of God's word" (no. 154). Preacher's must adapt their language to that of the people and share in their lives (no. 158) if the preaching and evangelizing are to be effective and authentic. Moreover, the persistent and pervasive use of "heart" language—appearing in some form over 100 times in this document—suggest that the anthropological turn is a fundamental commitment in this evangelizing mission to that most human of sensitivities: empathy.

Highly indicative of preaching implications in the Anthropocene is Francis' characterization of preaching as "a mother's conversation":

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[69] Notice the strong resonance in these words with the opening lines of *Gaudium et Spes*.

> We said that the people of God, by the constant inner working of the Holy Spirit, is constantly evangelizing itself. What are the implications of this principle for preachers? It reminds us that the Church is a mother, and that she preaches in the same way that a mother speaks to her child, knowing that the child trusts that what she is teaching is for his or her benefit, for children know that they are loved. Moreover, a good mother can recognize everything that God is bringing about in her children, she listens to their concerns and learns from them. (no. 140).

Respecting the Natural World

Turning from theological anthropology to respect for nature as central to an Anthropocenic imperative for Roman Catholic preaching might seem contradictory. A foundational presumption giving rise to imagining an Anthropocene Age in the first place is the havoc humans have wrought on the natural world and the ensuing ecological crisis humanity has triggered through thoughtlessness, hubris, and greed. Christianity is often singled out as highly complicit in the destruction of our environment. The biblical roots of this purported cavalier attitude toward nature is found in the creation narrative that reveals "man," created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), as the "crown of creation" (cf. Ps 8:5) and given a divine injunction to rule and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). The deploying of such texts for millennia led to a famous assertion Lyn White in 1967, that "Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen."[70] Christianity does not have the best of track records for respecting the natural world.

While planet earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old, its biosphere – that upper portion of the planet about

[70] Lynn Townsend White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (10 March 1967): 1203-1207.

12 miles thick where life exists – is only 3.5 billion years old.[71] *Homo sapiens* have only populated that biosphere for about 250,000 years or approximately .007% of its existence. While humanity is often conceptualized as separate from nature and external to the biosphere, such a model is no longer viable. As environmental scientist Folke and his colleagues summarize:

> In the twenty-first century, people and planet are truly interwoven and coevolve, shaping the preconditions for civilizations. Our own future on Earth, as part of the biosphere, is at stake. This new reality has major implications for human wellbeing in the face of climate change, loss of biodiversity, and their interplay.[72]

In a parallel vein, there has also been a theological rethinking in light of the rampant anthropocentrism that – as Prof. White so pointedly asserted – has marked Western Christianity. One leading figure was Thomas Berry. Self-identified as a "geologian," his groundbreaking vision of a mutually enhancing human-earth relations was encapsulated in his vision of an "Ecozoic" age, in which humans would recover their orientation to the world.[73] Important in this rethinking are biblical theologians such as Dianne Bergant who have offered alternate readings of the Book of Genesis that has been so often employed to assert humanity's dominion over the earth. In her revisiting of Genesis, Bergant argues that the biblical text does not depict human beings as

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[71] Carl Folke, et al., "Our future in the Anthropocene Biosphere," *Ambio* 50 (2021): 834-869, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13280-021-01544-8

[72] Ibid.

[73] While his bibliography is extensive, a key piece is his *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999).

> …autonomous sovereigns of the natural world who were granted a license to exploit the earth or tyrannize other creatures, as a literal reading has sometimes claimed. Instead, they were issued a mandate which included serious responsibility for the world of which they were a part, and accountability to the creator for the governance of that world. This way of reading the creation narrative challenges any kind of tyrannical, distorted, or misguided anthropocentrism.[74]

Since the end of the 19th century Roman Catholic social teaching has addressed the impact of the industrial revolution on people. The first great move here was Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum,* which focused on the oppression of the working class and the dignity of the individual worker.[75] 20th century Roman Catholic teaching continued this emphasis, with Paul VI instructing that the environment and the integrity of creation received serious attention. In his 1971 apostolic letter *Octogesima adveniens* he warned about the "ill-considered exploitation of nature" in which humanity is becoming "the victim of the degradation."[76] Pope John Paul II placed concern about the environment more firmly in Church teaching, instructing that Christian's responsibility within creation and their duty towards it "are an essential part of their faith" further noting that "the ecological crisis is a moral issue."[77] Subsequently

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[74] Dianne Bergant, "Imago Dei: image or divine, interpreting the Hebrew Bible," in *Ecology and Theology of Nature,* ed. Linda Hogan, João Vila-Chã, Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator (London: SCM Press, 2018), 34-39, https://concilium-vatican2.org/en/original/bergant/

[75] https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

[76] No. 21, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html

[77] World Day of Peace Message (1990), no. 15, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-

Pope Benedict XVI – dubbed the "green Pope" – presented an extensive case for protecting the environment, notable stating "If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation."[78]

The culmination of these developments is Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical "*Laudato* Si': On Care for our Common Home,"[79] strategically released before the 2015 Paris conference on climate change. Among the many notable elements in this encyclical, most important is Francis' emphasis on an "integral ecology." This enhanced ecological view refutes "inadequate presentation[s] of Christian anthropology [which] gave rise to a wrong understanding of the relationship between human beings and the world" (no. 116). Francis' fresh reading of biblical sources such as the creation accounts in Genesis "suggest that human existence is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself" (no. 66). Since "everything is connected" deep communion with nature must be connected to compassion and concern for fellow human beings (no. 91). Thus, "a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (no 49). Here Francis combines concern for nature with his very positive

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ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html

78 https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace.html ; for a more extensive examination of Benedict XVI's advocacy for the environment, see James Schaefer and Tobias Winright, eds., *Celebrating and Advancing Magisterial Discourse on the Ecological Crisis* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2013).

79 https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

theological anthropology, giving new breadth to Folke's assertion that "people and planet are truly interwoven."

As we previously illustrated how the eucharistic rite of the 1969 *Missale Romanum* reveals an increasingly positive theological anthropology, so does that rite demonstrate a deep appreciation of nature.[80] Reverence for creation in the Judeo-Christian tradition – with an awareness that creation itself offers praise and adoration to God – is a more ancient tradition than even that of the eucharist. The Psalms that so regularly punctuate Christian Eucharist are filled with texts about heaven and earth, sun and moon, shining stars and the waters above the heavens praising the Lord (Ps 148). One fulsome passage is from the Book of Daniel in which everything from lighting and whales to birds and snow are summoned to offer cosmic praise to the Creator (Dan 3:57-82). The Psalmists recognizes that entirely independent of human aid, all of creation praises God (Ps 19:1-4). The New Testament also confirms that God is "above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:6), that all creation waits in eager expectation for revelation (Rom 8:19), and that every creature in heaven, on earth and in the sea offers praise and worship "to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb" (Rev 5:13).

Some may be surprised at the many references to creation and ecological resonances reverberating through the ordinary texts, gestures and elements of the Mass. This is rooted in the uninterrupted tradition of Christian worship heartily embracing gifts drawn from the earth: most prominently wheat bread and grape wine, but also the wax of bees, oil from olives, water from the seas, incense from trees and plants, ashes from palms, stone from the earth, and the wood of the cross. More

[80] Much of what follows on the creational aspects of Eucharistic worship is drawn from my *Eucharistic Adoration after Vatican II* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2022).

contextually, where would Northern hemisphere Easter celebrations be without lilies, or Christmas festivals be without sanctuaries bursting with fir trees and poinsettias? Some theologians call this "catholic imagination":[81] a pervasive belief that God is aligned with and consistently revealed in creation. This catholic imagination affirms our deployment of these many splendors of creation in our official eucharistic worship.

More specific are the multiple liturgical texts brimming with ecological references and creational resonance. Joris Geldhof[82] has provided a rich overview of many of these. Among his many examples from *Missale Romanum* is the blessing formula for Christmas, which assert that through the incarnation God has joined earthly and heavenly things. Thus, from a theological perspective, the nativity of the Only-Begotten has cosmic and not simply human ramifications. The second preface from the same feast confirms that Christ's coming in history not only restores the descendants of Adam and Eve but also restores the entirety of creation. The Third Eucharistic Prayer, echoing the Psalmists notes that it is right and just that every creature praise God. Geldhof goes on to recall the insights of the celebrated Jesuit liturgist Joseph Gelineau (d. 2008), peritus at Vatican II. Commenting on the newly created 4th Eucharistic Prayer emerging after that Council, Gelineau observed that this prayer – unlike any other before it – reflected a "cosmic sense."

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[81] Classic here is David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998).

[82] Joris Geldhof, "Fruit of the Earth, Work of Human Hands, Bread of Life: The Ordo Missae on Creation and the world," in *Full of your Glory: Liturgy, cosmos, Creation, e*d. Teresa Berger (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2019), 245-265.

No part of the reformed Mass calibrates eucharistic worship to the created world more than the newly fashioned "Preparation of the gifts and table." As noted above, this freshly shaped ritual moment liturgy does not focus on offering. Instead, this transitional rite from the Liturgy of the Word to the eucharistic prayer is fundamentally marked by praise. Devoid of intercession this benediction brims with praise for the God of all creation who allows the gifts of the earth to be transformed through human collaboration to be the very stuff of the Eucharist. This creational facet is not new in Christian worship. As Teresa Berger has demonstrated, early Christian ritual texts rooted worship *in principio*, i.e., in God's primordial activity in creation."[83]

Preaching Implications

The preaching implications previously enumerated concerning a more positive theological anthropology emerging from the 1969 *Novus Ordo* could be considered largely stylistic. While the preaching vision borrowed from Pope Francis certainly included some instructions concerning the processes involved in constructing a homily (e.g., "keeping an ear to the people) most of his preaching strategies concerned the deployment of language and the delivery of such language (e.g., preaching as "a mother's conversation"). Characterizing these preaching implications as largely stylistic in no way diminishes their import or power. As John O'Malley has famously highlighted, the stylistic changes in the language of Vatican II was one of its key changes modulating the way the Church relates to its adherents and the rest of humanity.

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[83] Teresa Berger, "'All you have created rightly gives you praise': Re-thinking liturgical studies, re-rooting worship in Creation," *Ex Fonte – Journal of Ecumenical Studies in Liturgy* 1 (2022): 5-29, Doi: https://exfonte.org/index.php/exf/article/view/7270

As to preaching strategies related to the Church's respect for and engagement with the natural world, it is content rather than style that requires emphasizing. This does not suggest that the familial tone or respectful style previously accentuated is to be abandoned. Rather, that positive and engaging style needs to be wed to a content that is regularly missing from Roman Catholic preaching, i.e., an engagement with the sciences.[84]

The Roman Catholic Church has had a sometimes contentious relationship with the sciences. A pivotal example of such was the 17th century rejection of the theory of heliocentrism and condemnation of its primary proponent Galileo Galilei. While that landmark case was eventually resolved (over 350 years later),[85] there endures a "Galileo effect" within many church circles, i.e., an undercurrent of at least indifference if not suspicion about the sciences and their impact on human life. While much of Western Europe pushed forward during the Enlightenment with scientific experiments and inquiries that would usher in modernity, there was much resistance to human rationality during this same period within the Roman Catholic Church.[86] These struggles emerged during the Second Vatican Council, especially around the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. That document refreshingly considered

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[84] This assertion was confirmed by a major grant in 2020 from the Templeton Foundation for developing strategies for introducing the sciences into Roman Catholic homiletics. See https://ctu.edu/initiatives/preaching-with-the-sciences/

[85] See https://www.vaticanobservatory.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Galileo_ed._McMullin.pdf

[86] Some of this is brilliantly documented in John McGreevy's brilliant *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2020). McGreevy provides a breathtaking overview of the ongoing conflict between "progress" and "tradition" in the Church, and especially how the powerful Ultramontane movement posed multiple obstacles to the Roman Catholic Church having a fruitful dialogue with the sciences.

the Church as "in" rather than "against" the world. While that document affirmed that the Church has profited from human development and that the sciences profit the Church, there was staunch opposition to this stance by a vocal minority of the Council Fathers. This lingering Galileo effect has reared its head in debates over immunizations (especially for children), climate control, and more recently the COVID pandemic and the vaccines developed in its wake.

A trained chemist, Pope Francis has promoted a positive approach to the sciences. In his *Laudato Si'* he insists that, in response to the climate crisis and the damage we have done to planet earth, "no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out" (no. 63). To that end, Francis even includes therein a chapter on "Religions in Dialogue with Science" (nos. 199-202). This chapter well mirrors the dialogue model of engagement that Ian Barbour proposes in his influential *When Science meets Religion*.[87]

Befriending the sciences as reliable dialogue partners is an important homiletic strategy in this Anthropocene age. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Roman Catholic preachers consistently engage the scriptures and often draw from popular culture or literature in the homiletic

[87] According to Barbour, possible relationships between religion and science can be characterized through 4 models. First is the conflict model, contending that science and religion are in perpetual and principal conflict. Next is the independence model, which holds that science and religion explore separate domains, ask distinct questions and exist in two different worlds. They are not in conflict, but also not in any position to craft a shared conversation; the chasm is too great. The dialogue model assumes that there is common ground between them and proposes their mutual relationship without necessarily being in conflict. Finally, the integration model looks for ways to unify science and theology. See, Ian Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000), 9-38.

moment. However, turning to the sciences for sermonic metaphors or examples appears to be a rare occurrence.

This is not a proposal for sporadic preaching about the current environmental crisis or some other obvious issue at the juncture of religion and science. Such isolated pulpit forays provide little insurance that they will engage the baptized in the homiletic dialogue if a larger framework is missing. Thus, it is important to cultivate a catholic imaginary in the assembly that affirms the interconnectedness of people and planet, theology and science, spirituality and empirical data. This is a homiletic venture consistently connecting a positive theological anthropology with a positive theological cosmology. If nature is repeatedly revealed as "good" in our foundational creation narratives, if animals and mountains are capable of giving God praise, and if the empirical world is a unique and celebrated lens for divine revelation,[88] then it is both appropriate and necessary that preaching in tune with an Anthropocene age consistently and respectfully engages the sciences as a homiletic friend.

Epilogue

There are many labels applied to the current moment in cosmic, geological, and human history. It is the 14th million millennia since the birth of the universe, 1.5 billion years before the earth enters the scorching outer layers of the sun, 90 seconds to midnight on the doomsday clock, a period of postmodernity or late modernity or new modernity, an age of unprecedented polarization, of diminishing institutional religion, retreating Christianity, and more. Such labels, of varying empirical accuracy, are ultimately proverbial in the sense

[88] Quoting Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis speaks of creation is a divine revelation, *Laudato Si'*, no. 85.

that they provide some wisdom for flourishing in the current age.

While the Anthropocene has been proposed as a geological, environmental and even cultural designation for the human present, it too is ultimately proverbial. This is the fundamental reason why the framework has been embraced and debated across so many disciplines. To the extent that one embraces, defines, nuances or reject the designation, so too must one embrace, define, nuance or reject its wisdom implications for living in the current age.

The Anthropocene Age offers much wisdom in what Roman Catholicism and much of Western Christianity considers this era of institutional diminishment, ecclesial tumult, and liturgical reform. In the midst of enormous polarization between a very splintered right and left, between forces of orthodoxy and liberalization, between what might be considered "woke" and "anti-woke" Catholicism, the Anthropocene proposes a path that puts religion in general and Roman Catholicism in particular in a respectful dialogue with the world in the spirit of Vatican II – especially the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World – and in the reformed *Novus Ordo* that evolved in its aftermath.

This does not initiate a new homiletic mode as much as affirm and expand one which emerged in the late 20th century. The turn to the subject, initiated by Fred Craddock, projects an implicitly positive theological anthropology as it presumes the value and dignity of believers in drawing their own conclusions and subsequently in shaping their own journey towards God. Besides a Copernican turn towards the subject (i.e., the baptized and, more importantly, communities of the baptized), the Anthropocene also posits an expanded vision in which the human is integrally wed to the global community, planet earth, and the cosmos. This broadens

the preaching horizon not only to the whole of humanity, but further to the whole of creation even as the universe expands before us. A homiletic approach without at least scientific curiosity if not some strands of scientific commitment is at least compromised and ultimately unable to preach into this emerging reality and consciousness.

The Gospels teach that God had a love affair with the world (John 3:16), long before there existed any religions or churches. An Anthropocene homiletic demands respecting and nurturing that love affair.

About the Author

Edward Foley, Capuchin, is a Roman Catholic priest and member of the Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Franciscan Order. The Duns Scotus Professor Emeritus of Spirituality and Retired Professor of Liturgy and Music at Catholic Theological Union, he was the founding director of the Ecumenical Doctor of Ministry degree jointly offered by Catholic Theological Union, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and McCormick Theological Seminary. An award winning author and celebrated preacher, he has been honored with lifetime achievement awards from national and international organizations and is a recent recipient of a major grant for preaching from the John Templeton Foundation. He also serves his Capuchin community as the Vice-Postulator for the Canonization cause for Blessed Solanus Casey. Email address: foley@ctu.edu

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Polarising Doctrinal Division in the Catholic Church: A Proposal

Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman

Abstract: There are deep divisions and polarization in the Church today among cardinals, bishops, theologians, and the faithful, especially on sexual ethical issues. In this essay, we examine specifically traditionalist and revisionist theological approaches to Church sexual teaching and the implications of each. This essay is inspired by the words of both Popes John Paul II and Francis on the need and legitimacy of ongoing dialogue in charity, especially in a synodal Church. Pope Francis explains in *Amoris laetitia* that in dialogue we are to 'Keep an open mind. Don't get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions but be prepared to change and expand them.' His conclusion might well be directed specifically to traditionalist and revisionist Catholic theological ethicists with their two different ways of thinking about sexual ethics. We explore these two different ways and attempt to promote dialogue in charity in our analysis and evaluation.

Keywords: Dialogue • Experience • Homosexual Acts/Orientation • Revisionists • *Sensus fidelium* • Synodality • Traditionalists

Introduction

Sharp doctrinal division between what we shall call traditionalist and revisionist theologians is now a sad, and damaging, fact in the Catholic Church. We understand a traditionalist to be a Catholic believer who supports and defends Church teaching as absolute; we understand a revisionist to be a Catholic believer who accepts Church teachings as non-absolute and proposes that, when necessary, they should be developed. In this essay, we examine specifically traditionalist and revisionist theological approaches to Church sexual teaching and the implications of each. The essay is inspired by the words of both Popes John Paul II and Francis on the need and legitimacy of ongoing dialogue in

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the Church. In his encyclical, *Ut unum sint*, John Paul speaks of the purpose of dialogue as truth, "sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person," free inquiry in which "people explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth."[1] Francis explains in his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris laetitia,* that in dialogue we are to "Keep an open mind. Don't get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions but be prepared to change and expand them." His conclusion is directed to every participant in every dialogue, but it might well be directed specifically to traditionalist and revisionist Catholic theological ethicists with their two different ways of thinking about sexual ethics: "The unity we seek is not uniformity, but a unity in diversity,"[2] Powerful words that we keep in mind throughout this essay, and we invite our readers also to keep them in mind.

Catholic Sexual Ethics in History

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), we contend, initiated a development in traditional Catholic sexual ethics, and we shall establish this contention as the essay unfolds. Questions about sexual ethics were submitted to the Council's Preparatory Theological Commission presided over by Cardinal Ottaviani, then Prefect of the Holy Office, now the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).[3] Ottaviani interpreted the questions submitted to the Commission as a call to expound the Catholic doctrines on chastity, continence, and the ends of marriage and appointed the Roman moral theologian,

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[1] John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 18.

[2] Francis, *Amoris laetitia*, 139.

[3] *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II. Series Prima (Antopraeparatoria)*, III, 15. Hereafter ADP.

Ermenegildo Lio, to prepare a text *De ordine morali individuali*. By May of 1961 Lio, later a close confidante of Pope Paul VI and the reputed author of his encyclical *Humanae vitae*, had completed a text of eleven chapters vehemently directed against "the errors of the day." It extolled the goodness of chastity and sexuality in marriage, and forbade the separation of sex from marriage, false personalism in sexual matters, artificial contraception, artificial insemination, sterilization, and any transsexuality. The text was transmitted by Ottaviani to the Commission for a discussion that turned out to be heated, particularly on the ends of marriage. With little emendation it was passed on to the Central Preparatory Commission under the title *De castitate, virginitate, matrimonio, familia,* where it was rejected as too negative.

The direction of Lio's argument is established from the beginning of his text. "Although human sex has other qualities, it is primarily ordered to marriage, as sacred scripture teaches."[4] The connection of sex and marriage is solidified in the discussion of the ends of marriage: "Marriage has in itself, independent of the intention of the spouses, its divinely established objective ends. Among which, by divine institution, nature, and the teaching of the Church, the sole primary end is the procreation and education of offspring, even in the case of a marriage that is not fertile." There are other "objective but secondary" ends, such as the mutual help of the spouses and the remedy of concupiscence, and these "are not to be spurned but suitably promoted in charity."[5] The document rejects contemporary theological theories that proclaim that the primary end of marriage is the personal love of the spouses. In support of his positions, Lio offers recent magisterial teachings,

[4] ADP, III, 894.
[5] ADP, III, 909.

particularly Pope Pius XI's *Casti connubii* and Pope Pius XII's talks to Italian midwives.[6] In those talks, Pius XII set out the Catholic position beyond doubt: "Marriage, as a natural institution in virtue of the will of the Creator, does not have as a primary and intimate end the personal perfection of the spouses, but the procreation and nurture of new life. The other ends, in as much as they are intended by nature, are not on the same level as the primary end, and still less are they superior to it, but they are essentially subordinate to it."[7]

The rejection of the personal love of the spouses as the primary end of marriage was directed against those European theologians who had recently been making that proposal. Pius XI's *Casti connubii* (1930) had retrieved and given prime place to an ancient essence of marriage found as far back as Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (5:2, 25-33) and as recently as the Council of Trent,[8] namely, the mutual love of wife and husband. This spousal love, Pius taught, "must have as its primary purpose that man and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting themselves in the interior life, so that through their partnership in life they may advance ever more in virtue, and above all that they may grow in true love toward God and their neighbor [especially each other]." So important is this mutual interior formation of the spouses that "it can, in a very real sense, as the Roman Catechism teaches, be said to be *the chief reason and purpose of matrimony*, if matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper education of the child, but more widely as the blending of [spousal] life as a whole and the mutual interchange and

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[6] ADP, III, 911-918.

[7] Pius XII, Address to midwives on the nature of their profession (1951).

[8] Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Rome: Herder, 1965), 1799.

sharing thereof."[9] In the years immediately prior to Vatican II, two German theologians, Dietrich von Hildebrand and Heribert Doms were making the same point.

"Our epoch," von Hildbrand wrote (think of Germany under Hitler), "is characterized by a terrible anti-personalism, a progressive blindness toward the nature and dignity of the spiritual person." In our epoch, "human life is considered exclusively from a biological point of view and biological principles are the measure by which all human activities are judged."[10] The traditional Catholic theological approach to marriage, rooted in the Council of Trent's doctrine and in Thomas Aquinas' argument that the primary end of human marriage is the procreation of children, an end rooted in the human's *animal nature*.[11] In distinction to this animal, biological approach, von Hildebrand argues that the ultimate end[12] and primary meaning[13] of marriage is the mutual love of the spouses. Doms agreed: "the *immediate* purpose of marriage is the realization of its meaning, the conjugal two-in-oneness."[14]

The church's reaction to these new ideas was a blanket condemnation with no effort to sift wheat from chaff. Already condemned by Ottaviani's Holy Office in 1944,[15] it was predictable that these ideas would be resisted in a Vatican Council in 1961, and they were strenuously resisted. Ottaviani and his supporters,

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[9] Pius XI, *Casti connubii*, in Gerald C. Treacy, ed., *Five Great Encyclicals* (New York: Paulist, 1939), 83-84, emphasis added.

[10] Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Marriage* (London: Longman's Green, 1942), v.

[11] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III (Suppl), 65 1.

[12] Von Hildebrand, *Marriage*, vi.

[13] Von Hildebrand, *Marriage*, 4.

[14] Heribert Doms, *The Meaning of Marriage* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1939), 94-5, emphasis in original.

[15] See Holy Office, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 36 (1944), 103.

however, would lose this battle, in the Preparatory Commission that rejected his *De Castitate* and again in the Council itself in the great debate over Schema XIII that became *Gaudium et spes*. Yves Congar comments in his journal about this great debate. "Franic [a leading ally of Ottaviani and Lio] opposed Häring, who seemed to want to have the Council canonize his position, according to which love is the essential element of marriage…This is the great concerted offensive: Franic, Lio, Tromp – in short, the Holy Office."[16]

When the debate at the Council opened, the Italian cardinals Ottaviani and Ruffini argued in the traditionalist mode that all the Council needed to do was repeat the teachings of Pius XI and Pius XII. Bishop Rudolf Staverman of Djajapura and Cardinal Bernard Alfrink responded in the revisionist mode that marriage, like all human realities, evolves and the church should not be content simply to repeat its past teachings. To do so, Staverman argued, was to allow the Church to lose its ethical voice, something that was already happening. It is time, he added, to listen to lay experts who understood marriage better than any cleric. "Conjugal love is an element of marriage itself and not just a result of marriage…Conjugal love belongs to marriage."[17] Alfrink, a biblical scholar, pointed out that the Hebrew word *dabaq* suggests bodily, sexual union, but that it suggests above all spiritual union which exists in conjugal love."[18] This, he added, is the way modern women and men think, more humanly, more spiritually, and indeed more biblically and theologically. The battle lines were clearly drawn and debated: either Lio's and Ottaviani's traditionalist biological approach to marriage or Alfrink's

[16] Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 552.

[17] ADA, III, 961.

[18] ADA, III, 961.

and Staverman's revisionist interpersonal approach in which conjugal love is of the very essence of marriage. The latter approach began to win in the Preparatory Commission[19] and won, finally, in the Council itself.

Gaudium et spes,[20] into the preliminary stage of which there was inserted a section on marriage, describes marriage as a "communion of love" (GS 47), an "intimate partnership of conjugal life and love" (GS 48). In the face of demands to relegate the mutual love of the spouses to its traditionalist secondary place in marriage, the Council Fathers declared that love to be the very essence of marriage. They asserted that "by its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of children, and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory" (GS 48). Once procreation has been mentioned, we might expect a recitation of the traditionalist hierarchical ends of marriage but, again in spite of insistent Roman voices to the contrary, the Council Fathers rejected any primary end-secondary end dichotomy. To ensure that rejection was clear and could not be fudged, the Preparatory Commission explained that the text just cited "does not suggest [a hierarchy of ends] in any way."[21] Marriage and sexual love "are by their very nature ordained to the generation and education of children," but that "does not make the other ends of marriage of less account," and marriage "is not instituted solely for procreation" (GS 50).

Any doubt about the contemporary Catholic approach to marriage was removed by the publication in 1983 of a revised *Code of Canon Law*, often called the last Council

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[19] See the Commission's votes in ADA, 971-985.

[20] *Gaudium et spes* (1965 c), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (hereafter, GS).

[21] See Bernard Häring, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder, 1969), 5:234.

document. "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring" (Can 1055, 1). Three things are asserted in this Canon. First, it is the matrimonial covenant between the spouses and not Pope Paul VI's "each and every act of sexual intercourse"[22] that is ordered to procreation. Second, there is no specification of either procreation or the partnership of the whole of life being a primary or secondary end of the matrimonial covenant. Third, the interpersonal good of the spouses in marriage is listed prior to the biological good of the procreation of children, which is not to be interpreted as suggesting it is the primary good of marriage, but neither is it to be interpreted as suggesting it is secondary. The Catholic Church revised its Canon Law to bring it into line with its revised, conciliar theology of marriage and sexuality, moving beyond a narrow biological essence of marriage to embrace mutual spousal love and communion in its very essence.

Contemporary Catholic Sexual Ethics

Three methodological shifts were approved by large majorities at Vatican II and thus became official Catholic teaching. The first shift is from a classical to an historically conscious perspective. The second shift is from a sexual anthropology that sees procreation and education of children as the primary end of marriage and sexual intercourse to a sexual anthropology that sees them as equal ends. The third shift is from a focus on sexual *acts* to a focus on "the nature of the human *person* and his acts" (GS 51). All three shifts were hotly debated

[22] Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*, 11.

at the Council, all had passionate supporters and rejectors, and all continue to be sources of serious theological ethical division in the contemporary church.

A classical perspective views human reality as necessary, immutable, universal, and static. The theological method followed, the anthropology formulated, and the ethical norms taught within this perspective are believed to be timeless, universal, and immutable. A historical conscious perspective views human reality as contingent, particular, and changing. The theological method followed, the anthropology formulated, and the ethical norms taught within this perspective are contingent, changeable, and particular, and the acts condemned by these norms are ethically evaluated in terms of a dynamic, changing human understanding. We offer examples of these two perspectives and explain how they continue to influence Catholic theological and sexual ethics today.

In its Constitution on Divine Revelation, Vatican II endorsed historical consciousness and the historical-critical method for reading and interpreting scripture in the "literary forms" of the writer's "time and culture."[23] In spite of this conciliar embrace of historical consciousness and of how scriptural texts are to be read and interpreted, official church teaching continues to use sacred scripture to proof-text and to justify absolute norms condemning particular sexual acts. This reflects the classical consciousness method of the nineteenth-century *Manuals* rather than the twentieth-century historical consciousness of Vatican II. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), for instance, interprets the story of Sodom in Genesis 19:1-29 as a scriptural foundation for the absolute prohibition of homosexual acts. Revisionist theologians, on the contrary, interpret it

[23] *Dei verbum*, 12. See also Pope Pius XII, *Divino afflante spiritu*.

to be about the Torah law of hospitality, that is violated by the homosexual *rape* intended by the heterosexual men of Sodom, with no suggestion that it is violated also by the loving sexual acts of women and men with a homosexual orientation.[24]

Same-sex activity, such as that intended by the men of Sodom, was well-known in the ancient world, but it was the same-sex activity of men assumed to be heterosexual. The terms *homosexuality* and *sexual orientation* as understood in the modern world were entirely unknown. They were introduced only in 1886 by the German psychiatrist, Richard von Krafft-Ebbing.[25] In its discussion of the "problem of homosexuality," the CDF turns to the scripture and asserts that there is "a clear consistency within the sacred scriptures for judging the moral issue of homosexual behavior." The church's teaching on this issue, it continues, is based "on the solid foundation of a constant biblical testimony."[26] Revisionists respond that the Catholic tradition about the morality of homosexual acts is based, not on a solid foundation but on complex historical literary forms that raise questions in informed and enquiring Catholic minds and demand, not assertion, but careful historical analysis.

The church also continues to offer Chapter One of Paul's Letter to the Romans in support of its condemnation of homosexual acts, while historically-conscious revisionists argue that it is Gentile idolatry and the perverted sexual acts of heterosexuals to which

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[24] See Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 214-235.

[25] Richard von Krafft-Ebbing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: eine Klinische- Forenische Studie* (1886).

[26] CDF, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 79 (1987), 545.

it is assumed to lead that are condemned, not the loving acts of women and men with a homosexual orientation.[27] The church officially espouses both the historical-critical method for interpreting scripture and contemporary science to help in the formulation of its teachings (GS 62), but it fails to integrate the implications of those methodological developments into its teaching, and especially into its sexual norms. It continues to cite certain scriptural texts to condemn specific sexual acts, while its own approved hermeneutical method indicates that those texts are not relevant to the sexual acts it is condemning. The emphasis in church sexual teaching continues to be on individual sexual *acts* rather than on human *persons* and their *relationships* that give meaning to those sexual acts.[28]

Two doctrines have controlled the church's approach to sexual ethics since Vatican II. Pope Paul VI taught in his 1968 encyclical, *Humanae vitae*, that "each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life,"[29] and in 1976 the CDF decreed that that to be ethical "every genital act must be within the framework of marriage."[30] The outcome of these teachings, Michel Foucault accurately judges, is that "the conjugal family took custody of [sexuality] and absorbed it into the serious

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[27] See Dale B. Martin, "Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-31," in *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995), 322-355. For a contrary, traditionalist reading, see Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), Chapter 6.

[28] For a discussion of the methodological differences between focusing on acts and focusing on relationships, see Salzman and Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 95-97.

[29] *Humanae vitae*, 11.

[30] CDF, *Persona humana*, VII.

function of procreation."[31] Catholic revisionist theologians have consistently challenged that Catholic teaching over the years since its establishment, and some have suffered serious consequences.

We note the action taken against Father Charles Curran of the Catholic University of America, and other revisionist theologians following the publication in 1968 of the encyclical *Humanae vitae*. Curran authored a statement dissenting from the encyclical's central claim that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the gift of life" (HV VIII). Curran's dissent was later sustained by the Papal Birth Control Commission set up by Pope John XXIII and later enlarged by Pope Paul VI that taught that "human intervention in the process of the marriage act *for reasons drawn from the end of marriage itself* should not always be excluded, provided the criteria of morality are always safeguarded"[32] This position was widely supported by revisionist ethicists, arguing from the perspective of the human person rather than from his acts. We note here for clarity that there have been many books and articles about marital and sexual ethics written by women from a revisionist feminist perspective,[33] some of which have drawn rebuke from the magisterium. There have also been many books

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[31] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction,* vol. I (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 3.

[32] Cited in Clifford Longley, *The Worlock Archive* (London: Chapman, 2000), 233, emphasis added.

[33] Christine Gudorf, *Body, Sex, and Pleasure: Reconstructing Christian Sexual Ethics* (Pilgrim Press: Cleveland, 1995); Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Patricia Beattie Jung and Shannon Jung, *God, Science, Sex, and Gender: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Christian Ethics* (Champaign. IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2006). Again without dialogue the "errors" in this latter book were pointed out.

and articles from a traditionalist perspective in support of Catholic sexual teaching.[34]

Dialogue

Sixty years on from Vatican II, the theological ethical divisions revealed at the Council between traditionalist and revisionist theologians continue to divide the Church, as was most recently revealed at the Synod on the Family. With respect to those divisions, we recall a distinction drawn by Aquinas between *magisterium cathedrae pontificalis*, the pontifical chair, and *magisterium cathedrae magistralis*, the master's chair. From sacramental ordination, the former receives authority to govern; from professional expertise, the latter receives authority to teach. There is, however, no subordination of the one to the other, for "teachers of sacred scripture adhere to the ministry of the word, as do also prelates."[35]

Two extremes are to be avoided, we submit, in the relationship between these two magisteria. On the one hand, there should be no rigid imperialism on the part of the *cathedra pontificalis*, treating theological masters as merely passive mouthpieces for its hierarchical teaching. On the other hand, there should be no claim from the *cathedra magistralis* to absolute autonomy and freedom

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[34] Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus, Vol. 1: Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983); *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. 2: *Living a Christian Life* (Franciscan Herald Press, 1993); John Finnis, *Moral Absolutes: Tradition, Revision, and Truth* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991); Robert George, *Natural Law Theories: Contemporary Essays* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1992); Martin Rhonheimer, *Ethics of Procreation and the Defense of Human Life: Contraception, Artificial Insemination, and Abortion* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010).

[35] Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibetales*, III, 9.

from accountability.[36] There should be rather, the kind of dialogue recommended by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical, *Ut unum sint*: truth, "sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person," free theological inquiry in the course of which "people explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth."[37] This papal statement is taken from Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Freedom,[38] where it is immediately followed by the Council's momentous teaching on the freedom of individual conscience.

"In all his activity, a man [and a woman] is bound to follow his [and her] conscience faithfully in order that he may come to God for whom he was created. It follows that he is not to be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, *especially in matters religious*." This freedom of conscience is critical, the Declaration goes on to explain, because "the exercise of religion consists before all else in those internal, voluntary, and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life toward God."[39] When differences arise about sexual teachings, which in the Catholic tradition are believed to be fallible teachings, there should be an open "dialogue in charity," not mutual condemnation, between the *cathedra pontificalis* and the *cathedra magistralis*. There should be a mutual appreciation of their complementary charisms.[40]

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[36] Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, "Magisterium and Theologians: Steps Toward Dialogue," *Chicago Studies* 17 (1978), 151-158.

[37] John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 18.

[38] *Dignitatis humanae*, 3, emphasis added.

[39] *Dignitatis humanae*, 3.

[40] See International Theological Commission, "The Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology," (1976), https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1975_magist

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines dialogue as "interchange and discussion of ideas, especially when open and frank, as in seeking mutual understanding and harmony." That definition is behind Pope John Paul II's claim that dialogue "is rooted in the nature and dignity of the human person" and is "an indispensable step along the path toward human self-realization."[41] Webster's definition is acceptable and instructive as far as it goes, but it is not the definition of dialogue we advance in this essay. The dialogue we advance is specifically the Christian "dialogue in charity" recommended by Popes John Paul[42] and Francis.[43] This dialogue is not to be confused with debate. Participants in a debate seek to *defend* their version of truth and to convert their opponents to their truth. Participants in a dialogue of charity seek to *explain* "to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order to assist one another in the quest for truth."[44] Both traditionalist and revisionist theologians should listen carefully to this instruction from Pope John Paul and to that which followed from Pope Francis: "Keep an open mind. Don't get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions but be prepared to change and expand them." Francis sees no problem in plural partial truths, judging that "the combination of two different ways of thinking can lead to a synthesis that enriches both." His conclusion is directed to every participant in every dialogue, but it might well be directed specifically to traditionalist and revisionist Catholic theological

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ero-teologia_en.html; Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman, "Theologians and the Magisterium: A Proposal for a Complementarity of Charisms in Dialogue," *Horizons* 36 (2009), 7-31.

[41] John Paul II, *Ut Unum sint*, 28.

[42] John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 17, 51, 60.

[43] Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 305.

[44] John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 18.

ethicists with their two different ways of thinking about sexual ethics. "The unity we seek," Francis explains, "is not uniformity, but a unity in diversity,"[45] powered by irrevocably free, informed consciences.

The demand for dialogue insisted on by John Paul II and Francis follows the demand made by Vatican II's *Decree on Ecumenism* on "all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to participate skillfully in the work of ecumenism." It goes on to say that in the "dialogue between competent experts from different Churches and Communities…each explains the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. Through such dialogue, everyone gains a greater knowledge and more just appreciation of the religious life of both Communions."[46] The Council was speaking of ecumenical dialogue between religious Communions, but it is not difficult to transpose its words to dialogue between traditionalist and revisionist theologians in the Catholic Church. Any possible doubt about the importance and legitimacy of respectful theological dissent, and therefore of the need for dialogue between theologians and the magisterium, was removed in 1983 by the Council's so-called "last document," the revised *Code of Canon Law*. The *Code* clearly states that "in accord with the knowledge, competence and preeminence which they possess, [the Christian faithful] have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church" (Can 212,3). In particular, "those who are engaged in the sacred disciplines [of theology and ethics] enjoy a lawful freedom of inquiry and of prudently expressing their opinions on matters in which they have expertise, while observing a due respect for the

[45] Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 139.
[46] Vatican II, *Decree on Ecumenism*, 4.

magisterium of the Church" (Can 218). It is not exaggerating, we submit, to suggest that dialogue is of the essence of the Catholic Church.

Though we are speaking here specifically of the dialogue in charity between traditionalist and revisionist theologians, Canon 212 §2 insinuates that dialogue is to be extended to include the entire body of the faithful. That body, "anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith which characterizes the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when, from the bishops down to the last member of the laity, it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals."[47] That conciliar doctrine of the infallibility of the entire People of God in matters of faith and morals lies behind all talk of legitimate dialogue in the Church, and supports Pope Francis' insistence on the importance of synodality to the entire People in matters of sexual ethics.

The English word synod is a composite of two Greek words, *syn,* meaning together, and *hodos*, meaning journey or way. *Hodos* is the Greek word used in Jesus' claim to be "the way [*hodos*], the truth, and the life; no one come to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). A Christian synod, therefore, is being on the way with Jesus and with one another, of journeying together, acting together, discerning together. In a synodal Church, the International Theological Commission (ITC) explains, "the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern, and offer advice on taking pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will."[48] A synodal Church, it adds, "is a Church

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[47] *Lumen gentium*, 12.

[48] ITC, "Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church," March, 2018, n. 68 https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html.

of participation and co-responsibility…based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have all received from the Holy Spirit."[49] Synodality involves the whole Church-People of God. It is no more than the practical application of the ancient axiom: "what affects everyone must be discussed and approved by everyone." Pope Francis has no hesitation in affirming that a "synodal Church is a Church that *listens*."[50] We equally have no hesitation in affirming that this listening is not simply unconsciously hearing what someone is saying but a face-to-face conscious hearing, pondering, and discerning of different truths in a dialogue of charity.

There are four universally acknowledged sources of theological and ethical knowledge, the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral, scripture, tradition, science, and human experience. All of these contribute meanings to Catholic sexual ethics and all of them need to be carefully listened to in any dialogue of charity about Catholic sexual ethics to discern the truth in those ethics and whether it might need to be revised. Joseph Selling emphasizes the need to complement tradition, the source prioritized by traditionalist theologians, with the other three sources, and further emphasizes that human experience shows that human sexuality is not reducible to an exclusively biological meaning. Human meaning, he argues, "is the result of personal-social construction that is attributed to experience uniquely by human beings."[51] He cites with approval *Persona humana's* assertion on

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[49] ITC, "Synodality in the Life of the Church," n. 67.

[50] Pope Francis, Speech at the Commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, https/www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/October/documents/papa_francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html. Emphasis added.

[51] Joseph A. Selling, "The 'Meanings' of Human Sexuality," *Louvain Studies* 23 (1998), 32.

the findings of the sciences with respect to human sexuality: "According to contemporary scientific research, the human person is so profoundly affected by sexuality that it must be considered as one of the factors which give to each individual's life the principle traits that distinguish it,…make that person a man or a woman, and thereby condition his or her progress toward maturity and insertion into society.[52]

Reviewing the scientific meanings of human sexuality uncovered by modern psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, and sexologists, Selling concludes that it necessarily includes, among other dimensions, "not only intimacy ('unitive') and fertility ('procreative') but also pleasure, recreation (play), relief, affirmation, receptivity, self-acceptance, forgiveness, reconciliation, gratitude, and, of course, respect."[53] Discerning all those meaning, we point out, is always a historical and contextual task to be carried out by all the competent members of the church.

The anthropologies of revisionist theologians have differing priorities and nuances, but they share five things in common.[54] First, they judge the biological-procreative definition of human sexual dignity primarily offered by traditionalist theologians as overly reductionist. Second, they fully accept John Paul II's invitation to theologians and scientists to search for truth through "critical openness and interchange,"[55] and additionally accept that this process of open dialogue may yield positions that challenge traditionalist definitions of

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[52] *Persona humana*, 1.

[53] Selling, "The 'Meanings' of Human Sexuality," 35.

[54] This paragraph is adapted from Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, *Virtue and Theological Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2018), 160-161.

[55] John Paul II, "The Relationship of Science and Theology: A Letter to Jesuit Father George Coyne," *Origins* 18 (November 1988), 376.

human sexual dignity and the sexual norms deduced from them. Third, they urge more than traditionalist theologians ongoing discernment of the four theological sources, scripture, tradition, science, and experience, and of any selection, interpretation, prioritization, and integration of them into any definition of human and sexual dignity. Fourth, they assign more weight to all of the sources of ethical knowledge than do traditionalist theologians, who assign priority to tradition-as-magisterial-teaching. Fifth, they manifest a greater degree of tentativeness toward the conclusions of both theologians and scientists about human sexual dignity. Sixth, this tentativeness demands that all theological and scientific judgments about human sexual dignity be subjected to confirmation or disconfirmation by the human experience and *sensus fidelium* of the entire body of the faithful.[56]

The Ethical Sense of the Christian People and Homosexual Acts

The third foundation on which the CDF grounds its judgment on the immorality of homosexual acts is "the moral sense of the people." Contemporary data from social scientific research demonstrate that foundation is now open to serious critique. In a 1997 study, James Davidson and his associates describe "how American Catholics approach faith and morals."[57] They found in 1997 that 41% of parishioners agree with the church that homosexual acts are always wrong and that 49% believe that, at least in certain circumstances, the decision to

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[56] See Ted Peters, *Science and Theology: The New Consonance* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999).

[57] James D. Davidson, *et al.*, *The Search for Common Ground: What Unites and Divides Catholic Americans* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1997), 11.

engage in such acts is up to the individual.[58] A 2001 study replicated that figure of 49%, believing the decision to engage in homosexual acts belongs to the individual; only 20% believed it had anything to do with the Magisterium.[59] The authors comment that their data "depicts a trend away from conformity and toward personal autonomy" with respect to sexual issues.[60] That trend was most marked in "Post-Vatican II Catholics," those aged thirty-eight and younger.[61] A study in 2003 by Catholic University's Dean Hoge and his associates documents that this trend away from authority to personal conscience in matters of morality had intensified. He found that 73% of Latino Catholics and 71% of non-Latino Catholics judged that, in ethical matters, the final authority is the individual's *informed conscience*.[62] We underscore *informed* in the previous sentence to underscore that not just any decision of conscience enjoys freedom but only the decision of conscience that is informed by the teaching of the church, the teaching of its theologians, and the teaching of the *sensus fidei* of statistically all Christian believers. The same trend toward the authority of informed individual conscience is well documented in other western countries.[63] A reasonable theological question then

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[58] Davidson, *The Search for Common Ground,* 47.

[59] William V. D'Antonio, *et al*., *American Catholics: Gender, Generation, and Commitment* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2001), 76.

[60] D'Antonio, *American Catholics*, 85.

[61] D'Antonio, *American Catholics*, 84.

[62] Dean R. Hoge, *et al*., *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 59-60.

[63] See Michael Hornsby-Smith, *Roman Catholicism in England: Customary Catholicism and Transformation of Religious Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Timothy J. Buckley, *What Binds Marriage?: Roman Catholic Theology in Practice* (London: Chapman, 1997); John Fulton, ed., *Young Catholics at the New*

arises: does sociological data of this sort tell us anything about magisterial teaching and the faith of the church?

An immediate and crucial answer is that sociological data is not an expression of the belief of the Catholic Church. Nor does it tell us what the church ought to believe and teach, for 50%, and even 100%, of Catholics could be wrong. The empirical data reported above, however, does two important things. It tells us what the beliefs of Catholics actually are with respect to the ethics of homosexual acts and it demonstrates that these beliefs are at serious variance with the beliefs proposed by their church. This data may not tell us anything about the truth of magisterial teaching with respect to the morality of homosexual acts, but it does tell us something about its relevance to the life of the contemporary church. It ought to be neither accepted uncritically nor dismissed out of hand as if it had no relevance to the life of the church. Pope John Paul II teaches that "the church values sociological and statistical research," but immediately adds the proviso that "such research is not to be considered in itself an expression of the *sensus fidei*."[64] The Pope is correct. Empirical research neither expresses nor creates the faith of the church, but it does tell us what Catholic believers actually believe and do not believe, and that experiential reality is a basis for critical reflection on any claim about what the concrete church believes. It is that critical reflection, always required of the church's theologians,[65] we undertake in this essay.

Theologian and sociologist Robin Gill complains that Christian ethicists have been "reluctant to admit that sociology has any constructive role to play in their

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Millennium: The Religion and Morality of Young Adults in Western Countries (Dublin: University College Press, 2000).

[64] *Familiaris consortio*, 5.

[65] See International Theological Commission, "The Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology," Thesis 8, 6.

discipline. It is rare to find a Christian ethicist prepared to examine data about the moral effects of Church-going. Instead, Christian communities have become *far too idealized*."[66] "Christian communities" may be a euphemism for Catholic Magisterium, which tends to talk of the belief of the Church as it has been rather than as it contemporarily is. If, as the Second Vatican Council clearly taught, "the body of the faithful as a whole cannot err in matters of belief,"[67] then their infallibility rests in what they *actually* believe. It is that actual belief that is uncovered by sociological research. Avery Dulles argues that, to determine *sensus fidei*, which has important relevance in this discussion, "we must look not so much at the statistics, as at the quality of the witnesses and the motivation for their assent."[68] We agree. *Sensus fidelium*, believers' connatural capacity to discern the truth into which the Spirit of God is leading the church, must be carefully discerned by all who are competent. John Paul II is correct: a simple head count does not necessarily express the faith of the church. A head count, however, which would include virtually all the faithful, especially virtually all the competent theological faithful, would most certainly manifest the actual faith of the virtually whole Church. All we claim here about the sociological data with respect to the belief of the church about the ethics of homosexual acts is that it may manifest a development which church theologians and magisterium ought to examine carefully.

What is clear from the above investigation of biblical and magisterial teaching on homosexual acts and homosexual relationships is the importance of experience

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[66] Robin Gill, *Churchgoing and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1, emphasis added.

[67] *Lumen gentium*, 12.

[68] Avery Dulles, "*Sensus Fidelium*," *America* (November 1, 1986), 242.

as a source of ethical knowledge. In the dialectic between the four theological sources of ethical knowledge and the ethical assessment of sexual acts and relationships, human experience is foundational, even primary. We concur with Margaret Farley who notes that experience "is an important part of the content of each of the other sources, and it is always a factor in interpreting the others."[69] It provides a socio-historical context for interpreting the other sources of ethical knowledge, and illuminates if, and to what extent, the sources taken individually and as a whole and the normative conclusions that they reach "make sense" and "ring true" in terms of "our deepest capacity for truth and goodness."[70] Furthermore, "given the arguable inconclusiveness of scripture, tradition, and secular disciplines" on the ethics of sexual relationships, "concrete experience becomes a determining source on this issue."[71] Relying upon the historical critical method espoused by Vatican II, we have demonstrated that traditional interpretations of scripture condemning homosexual acts lack conclusive legitimacy. There seems to be a disconnect between the evolving tradition and its use of scripture to condemn the sexual acts of genuine homosexuals on the one hand, and its relatively recent espousal of the historical critical method for interpreting scripture on the other hand. The historical critical method does not support traditional normative conclusions deduced from sacred scripture on this issue. This same historical critical method, when applied to recent magisterial teaching on homosexual acts, reveals another disconnect between what empirical studies convey regarding the experiences of homosexual couples and parents and unsubstantiated magisterial claims to

[69] Farley, *Just Love*, 190.
[70] Farley, *Just Love*, 195-6.
[71] Farley, *Just* Love, 287.

the contrary. Given the entrenched, discriminatory, and hurtful magisterial rhetoric addressing the issue of homosexual and other sexual acts,[72] openness to a revised hermeneutic of the sources of ethical knowledge that might allow for and point toward a revision of magisterial teaching on all sexual acts, we submit, is open for an ongoing and serious dialogue of charity.

Conclusion

On October 7, 1979, we attended a convocation for Catholic theologians at the Catholic University of America. In his speech at that convocation, Pope John Paul II declared that "the church needs her theologians, particularly in this time and age…We desire to listen to you and we are eager to receive the valued assistance of your responsible scholarship…We will never tire of insisting on the eminent role of the university…a place of scientific research in freedom of investigation."[73] Those words of Pope John Paul are the inspiration for the investigation in this essay of the theological and ethical polarization presently so polarizing the Catholic Church and damaging its mission. To heal that polarization, we grant the last words in this essay, as we granted the first words, to Popes John Paul II and Francis. John Paul recommends an open dialogue in which "people explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth."[74] "Don't get bogged down in your

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[72] Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 46.

[73] John Paul II, Address to Catholic Theologians and Scholars at the Catholic University of America, October 7, 1979, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-II/en/speeches/1979/october/documents/hf_jp-II_sp.

[74] John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 18.

own limited ideas and opinions," Francis advises, "but be prepared to change and expand them," for "the unity we seek is not uniformity, but a unity in diversity."[75]

About the Authors

Michael G. Lawler is the Amelia and Emil Graff Professor Emeritus of Catholic Theology at Creighton University. Email address: michaellawler@creighton.edu

Todd A. Salzman is the Amelia and Emil Graff Professor of Catholic Theology at Creighton University. He has co-authored with Lawler the following books: *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (2008), *Sexual Ethics: A Theological Introduction* (2012), *The Church in the Modern World*: Gaudium et spes *Then and Now* (co-author, Eileen Burke-Sullivan, 2014), *Catholic Theological Ethics: Ancient Questions and Contemporary Responses* (2016), *Virtue and Theological Ethics: Toward a Renewed Ethical Method* (2018), and *Pope Francis and the Transformation of Health Care Ethics* (2021). Email address: tsalzman@creighton.edu

[75] Francis, *Amoris laetitia*, 139.

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Facing Ruptures and Entanglements of a Global World: A Contextual Theological View from Germany

Michael Schüßler and Eva Maria Daganato

Abstract: The article reflects on the transformation of German Theology facing ruptures and entanglements of a global world. The first part deals with personal experiences in Manila and the global entanglement of human rights movements with European engagement and theology. This leads to a decolonial "provincialization" of German Theology. This change in the direction of doing theology and in ethical thinking is made clear by the example of the Tübingens Alfons-Auer-Ethic-Award given to the postcolonial scholar Leela Ghandi. Turning to the global Catholic Church, the last part discovers common concerns across the seemingly abyssal line between the North and the South. The theologically relevant lines of conflict apparently run across continents and geographic boundaries. To call the commitment to gender justice, diversity, and synodal power control in the church a Eurocentric luxury issue is thus proving obviously wrong.

Keywords: Decolonial Theology • Postcolonial Ethics • Tübingen • Human Rights Movements • Synodality

Introduction

Writing in Tübingen/Germany for a Journal hosted in Manila is a very honorable but special situation. It has hazards and chances as well. For the last two centuries, modern German-language Theology was famous as one of the most sophisticated and elaborate reflection about Christian tradition. Many scholars wanted or indeed did learn German to read Hegel or Heidegger, Rahner or Küng in their proper language. These times are definitely gone. We suggest, one can read this change with a catholic figure as a "sign of the times". It is part of what Dipesh Chakrabarty famously called the process of

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"Provincializing Europe".[1] Europe no longer being the "pharmacy of the world",[2] means to develop a more realistic view on the role of German Theology in the ruptures and entanglements of a globalized World.[3] Graham Ward puts it well: "after two centuries, Germany is no longer the intellectual powerhouse for theological and philosophical thinking; nor is France the powerhouse for post Second World War radical thinking and critical theory. They cannot speak universally. In fact, the attempt to speak universally leads to fracture and further fracture until we are back with the local and the embodiment of the particular. We are back with why place matters (land, histories, languages) – in every sense of the word 'matters'".[4] This is why it matters, to what kind of questions we theologically turn in our local context. If the local matters for Theology, then the crucial question is: What are the "loci theologici", the places and sources of Theology, where the Gospel is at risk and obtains relevance at the same time?[5]

It is our concern in this paper to show, that in our local context, we cannot help but encounter global entanglement on a daily basis. One cannot watch Qatars Football World Cup 2022 in a German living room without thinking about the workers from the Philippines,

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[1] Cf., Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[2] Cf., Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 188.

[3] Cf., Martin Holbraad, Bruce Kapferer, and Julia F. Sauma, eds., *Ruptures: Anthropologies of Discontinuity in Times of Turmoil* (London: UCL Press 2019).

[4] Graham Ward, "Decolonizing Theology," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3, no. 2 (2017): 561-584, 569.

[5] See for our discipline, from a (not only) protestant perspective: Birgit Weyel, Wilhelm Gräb, Emmanuel Lartey, and Cas Wepener, (eds.), *International Handbook of Practical Theology* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022).

among others, trying to earn money under hard conditions for the family back home or die trying to. And one cannot believe in the biblical God without getting worried, what God's love to every living being and the narrative of his:her greater justice has to do with it in a globalized and planetary world of Anthropocene.[6]

Personal Experiences in Manila

> Where is the voice of the poor in our discourse of God? In my experience, they are the most articulate in terms of their experience. When they are asked to share about their lives, they readily speak of their God experience. If theology is not found there, where is it found?[7]

Daniel Franklin Pilario[8] sees his life's work in inserting the voice of the poor into theological discourse. Therefore he "was looking for a theological method that gives a voice to the poor and their experience in the context of high academic discourse. It should not be abstract. It should listen to their voice."[9]

Pilario positions himself on the margins and tries to do theology out of this context. This core belief was also reflected in his role as Dean of St. Vincent School of

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[6] Cf., Jan Niklas Collet, Judith Gruber, Wietske De Jong-Kumru, Christian Kern, Sebastian Pittl, Stefan Silber, Christian Tauchner, (Eds.), *Doing Climate Justice: Theological Explorations* (Paderborn, Germany: Brill Schöningh, 2023).

[7] "Vincentian Chair Holder is a Voice for Justice," https://www.stjohns.edu/news-media/news/2021-10-05/vincentian-chair-holder-voice-justice, (Oct 5, 2021) [accessed 31 May 2023].

[8] Daniel Franklin Pilario is a member of the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) in the Philippines, a professor and former dean of St. Vincent School of Theology at Adamson University in the Philippines. In 2021 he held the Vincentian Chair of Social Justice at St. John's University in New York. He is the current President of Adamson University.

[9] "Vincentian Chair Holder is a Voice for Justice."

Theology as he structured the curriculum. During his weekend ministry at Payatas dumpsite, he is accompanied by his students. In retrospect, the collected experiences are theologically processed and reflected.

"Back to the rough grounds."[10] – Pilario's motto, which he borrowed from Ludwig Wittgenstein, can be helpful for theology: "The rough grounds – its language, its needs and concerns, its method – are the locus from which all theology should start. It is also the place where all theology ends. For God chose to locate Him/Herself on the rough grounds, among the margins of society! Needless to say, all theologians should have been there and continue to be there before they even say a word."[11]

Eva Maria Daganato[12] searched those rough grounds and found them (of course) outside of the University building. During her visits to the Philippines, she had the chance to get to know different organisations, which are working and fighting for children-, woman- and human rights.

In one of the poorest communities in Manila I [Daganato] joined activities for street kids. Once I observed a young girl. She got food in a take-away box. She opened it, started to smile, sat on the street and started to eat. But she only took a few bites, then she closed the box and ran away. At first, I was confused about this, because she seemed to enjoy the food, until I

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[10] Cf., Daniel Franklin Pilario, *Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis: Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

[11] Kristien Justaert, "Interview with Daniel Franklin Pilario," *Newsletter CLT* 3 (Nov. 2012): 1-4, https://theo.kuleuven.be/en/research/centres/centr_lib/pilario-interview.pdf.

[12] Eva Maria Daganato works as research assistant at the Department for Practical Theology, Catholic Theology Faculty, University of Tübingen. As part of her doctoral thesis she is researching ways to deal with Contemporary Slavery.

realized that she would also share the food with her family at home.

Hapag ng Pag-Asa – Table of Hope

This reminds me of the "Hapag ng Pag-Asa" (Table of Hope), the "Last Supper" by Joey A. Velasco. The painting shows poor children from Metro Manila, all between the ages of 4 and 14. The center of the painting is Jesus who is breaking bread.

> The work rays out a field of energy; it exudes light, suggests transcendence. It was amazing how the audience took it and how it ignites a storm of emotions in people whose life was touched by it. Actually, the picture is pushing the people to act. Whenever someone looks at the faces of the painted, the often-repeated question is: 'How can I help and take part?'[13]

This is, of course, an important and big question – *How can I help and take part?* – which I keep in mind. But looking at the *Table of Hope* it's kind of superficial. The mission Velasco is giving us through his painting is to find our own place at the *Table of Hope.* And the artist also started his way of searching: "I realized, that it was me, who felt a certain feeling of hunger, and that I was eager to take my place at the *Table of Hope*."[14] Velasco found his place in spending time with the kids, he painted: "As I went from being an observer to a real friend, I slowly began to understand who the *Hapag*-kids were."[15]

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[13] Joey A. Velasco, *Das Abendmahl der Straßenkinder: Bilder, Begegnungen, Botschaften,* Forum Religionspädagogik interkulturell, Band 23, (Münster, Lit Verlag 2013), 9.

[14] Ibid., 10.

[15] Ibid., 11.

After I spent some time with the street kids, played with them, visited their families and listened to their stories I understood that I could learn a lot from them and from other people in the Philippines.

The reality of the streets in Manila hit me. When the children played with me, they could forget the toughness of everyday life. But playtime for them was time denied for work since they also had to contribute something for their families. Moreover, they needed time for their school work. With my friends in Manila, we tried to handle this ambivalence by providing solar lights, so the children could still do something for school in the evening.

The street kids are victims of perennial poverty, of the struggle in the streets and they are deemed "losers" in the globalization narrative. Nevertheless, I encountered survivors among them and they do not accept this loser-label. There may be circumstances that they cannot change, but I always felt the spirit of Filipino resilience among them.

Shadows of Globalization

Travelling around the Philippines was an experience not only of Filipino hospitality but also of its abuse by some foreigners. Taking advantage of their critical situation and poverty, sex-tourists would victimize women and children. This negative connection between Germany and the Philippines is obvious when it comes to sex-tourism, but the global intertwining is broader, deeper, and more insidious than the observable.

One example is the Football World Cup 2022 in Qatar, where thousands of migrant workers died due to the inhuman working conditions at stadium

constructions.[16] Men (mostly from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Philippines) left their homes and families to earn money, believing that they could support their families best when they go to work in Qatar. Poverty and lack of opportunities at home pushed them to take this option. The reality in construction sites in Qatar were different from what they had imagined. They were forced to work under great heat without adequate protection. They stayed in unhygienic quarters and their salaries were either delayed or denied (in cases of forced labor). Due to the retention of their passports by their employers, they had no chance to leave their worksites. Ironically, the results of collective labor were golden stadiums and luxurious hotels. The argument that the luxury of the western world countries is built up on the exploitation of millions may be validated here.

Migrants' Rights are Human Rights

According to the Philippine Statistic Authority "the number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) or Filipino workers who worked abroad during the period of April to September 2021 was estimated at 1.83 million."[17] One of the NGOs that deal with migration issues is the Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEA). MMCEA is a rights-based, gender-responsive and culture-sensitive non-government service organization for migrant workers—for both active and

[16] Armani Syed, "Why We May Never Know How Many Migrants Died Erecting the Qatar World Cup," *Time Magazine (*02 Dec 2022), https://time.com/6237677/qatar-migrant-deaths-world-cup/

[17] Philippine Statistic Authority, "2021 Overseas Filipino Workers (Final Results)." Release Date: December 2. 2022, https://psa.gov.ph/content/2021-overseas-filipino-workers-final-results.

returned Overseas Filipino Worker (OFWs) and their immediate families and communities. It is based in Davao City, working in 8 *barangays* and connected with a region-wide network of organizations dealing with OFWs. In 2021 it registered 4000 migrant workers in the 8 partner-*barangays*, mostly women, working as domestic workers in middle east. In the same year, it reported 105 cases of rights violations and socioeconomic issues faced by migrant workers and their left-behind families. In 2022, they had assisted a total of 146 cases.

The social workers of MMCEA also make community-visits where they meet the left-behind families of OFWs or returned migrant workers. Violation against OFWs and abuses are either reported directly to the NGO or to the migration desk at the Barangay Hall. A powerful instrument is social media, especially *Facebook* where OFWs can contact the NGO. When they post pictures and share their abuse-stories, the NGO can be aware of it and help the women to fly back home.

The OFW-domestic workers are not getting much help from their agencies when they experience abuses. Oftentimes, the women have the feeling of being sold out. Particularly at risk are "runaway workers"—women escaping from (sexual) abuse and violation. Since the employers keep their passports and personal documents, they face the risks of becoming illegal aliens. In 2014, the MMCEAI staff heard about "sex for flights" for the first time: runaway domestic workers are forced to have sex with employees in charge of repatriation to get a flight back home.

The directors of the NGO are not disregarding the mental health of their staff. The staff is being confronted with cruel stories daily. One of the social workers shared some of her experiences and strategies on how she is handling the mental load: "When you go back to why, then the how will follow." Thinking about the people

whom she is working with and working for, is giving her strength and energy. When she sees the left-behind children of OFWs, it motivates her to do her best to help. Surely, she is also getting angry with the abusers and is at a loss for answers as to why abuses are committed.

The activism and the strength that emanates from the MMCEAI-staff are admirable. Teachers, social workers, and human right activists put the needs of the marginalized at the center of their work or even at the center of their lives. They take the message of Jesus as their mission—they work and fight for a life to be lived to the full, especially for the marginalized and oppressed. (John 10:10)

Experiences at the "roots" should influence theological theory building. It is important that we remind ourselves, how the reality of suffering worldwide looks like. Leaving the University building to meet people and face different realities can shine back to the University Studies. Reflection on history, especially the history of colonization, helps us to find a self-critical perspective and a greater impetus to commit ourselves to social amelioration.

Decolonizing Theology—Provincializing Tübingen?

This leads us to the hazards of global and intercultural theologies. The knowledge about a liberational approach to global justice and the entanglement of violence, racism, and discrimination cannot lead to only help and to show solidarity with the Global South as "the Other". Avoiding a neocolonizing gesture cannot be accomplished by turning to cure the wounded world with a "White Savior Engagement". This is a lesson we both learned, reflecting experiences in the Philippines (Eva Maria Daganato) and in Brazil (Michael Schüßler) with the turn from traditional Liberation

Theologies to postcolonial and decolonial thinking in Theology.

As Judith Gruber, coordinator of the "Centre for Liberation Theologies" in Leuven, Belgium, said: "The debate about decolonization in Europe […] is often framed by soteriological imaginations. There is the temptation to couch these into regimes of cure, which however, perpetuates colonial arrangements of visibility and participation."[18] But refusing a heroic superior position even in "saving the poor" and facing the wounds of ongoing economic, social, and epistemological violence seems to be the beginning of our decolonization "at home". "When / if Paradise Europe begins to lose the appearance of its innocence, the colonial legacies become an intimate part of its self-understanding. […] Rupturing how Europe sees itself challenges us to reconsider the politics of participating through which we distribute access to representation and resources in racialized ways."[19]

This means to change the direction of learning in theology, in ethical thinking and in imagining the Roman (!) catholic global church. In this process we are at the beginning of a beginning, like Karl Rahner said about Vatican II. This seems to be the case even with Pope Francis a bishop from "the end of the world" leading the church. And it is the case for the former influential theology in Germany. We will deepen this field in two directions. First by showing what Western Theology is about to learn from the (postcolonial) South and second by exploring joint common concerns with Women's / Human Rights in Catholic Church and society.

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[18] Judith Gruber, "Doing Theology with Cultural Studies: Rewriting History - Reimagining Salvation - Decolonizing Theology," *Louvain Studies* 42, no. 2 (2019): 103-123, 118.

[19] Ibid., 119.

Learning from Leela Gandhi, Receiving the Ethic-Award in Tübingen

Since 2015 the Catholic Theological Faculty in Tübingen has been giving the Alfons Auer Ethics Award. In 2022 the award went to the postcolonial scholar Leela Gandhi. Gandhi is related to Mahatma Gandhi and wrote a critical introduction in Postcolonial Theory[20] with a sensibility for the religious dimension of life, with a focus on ethics.

Gandhi made very clear, that postcoloniality refers not so much to the disappearance but to the continuing (after)effect of imperial structures of power and domination in the present: "postcolonial non-injuriousness responds to and calls out the constitutive injuriousness of modern imperialisms, in all their myriad formations: e.g., the industrial imperialisms of the nineteenth-century; the new imperialisms of the twentieth-century […]. […] No less, many postcolonial regimes stand charged with modes of internal colonialism against vulnerable domestic populations (gender, sexual, ethnic and religious minorities included)."[21] The ambivalent injuriousness of late modernity and global capitalism is an inescapable reality. With Achille Mbembe she said pointedly, that the countries of the South are kept alive with people and landscapes until today to the extent that land and people can continue to be put into service for a Western imperial way of life and a global elite.

But one could say: Western ethics, after all, have reacted to this global injustice and formulated theories of modernity critique, development cooperation, and global

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[20] Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction,* 2nd Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

[21] Leela Gandhi, "Problems and Perspectives in Postcolonial Ethics," *ThQ* 203, no. 2 (2023): 4-5 (forthcoming).

justice that oppose various forms of violence. Gandhi describes this as a modern-ascetical "ethic of renunciation", as a "refusal to partake in any benefit that obtains from the colonial-injurious system."[22] The self-critical intention of great European thinkers from Weber and Jaspers to Benjamin and Arendt shows a right direction and can be helpful, according to Gandhi. But her critical-deconstructive interest is directed at how this well-intentioned ethics "works" discursively and epistemically in its practices. And there she expresses the suspicion that the modern ethics of renunciation, critical of colonialism, continues to reproduce destructive patterns of thought. "An ethics of renunciation, I'm suggesting, may well refuse to partake in colonial-injuriousness. Yet, precisely by so doing, by separating itself radically from the perceived contagion of colonialism, by seeking a much too pure and purified form of anticolonialism, it incorporates a constitutive violence within the nonviolence to which it is ultimately committed."[23] It is an epistemic violence of categorical separations: Those who strive for ethical purity devalue life itself.

From this essential insight, Gandhi proposes to place a unifying ethics of surplus alongside the violence-inhibiting ethics of renunciation. This is not so much about the purity of separations, but about the surpluses of multiple affiliations or interconnections in complex structures of oppression. This includes the surplus of often being able to give more than one had thought. It includes the surplus that occurs in the in-between, which Gandhi illustrates in the "ambivalence of double consciousness" by W.E.B du Bois as a U.S. American and as a member of the Black community. "An ethics of surplus, simply put, does not seek to surpass the

[22] Gandhi, "Problems and Perspectives in Postcolonial Ethics," 7.
[23] Ibid., 8.

contradictions of uneven historical life—indeed, of uneven life as such. So doing, it rejects any final perfective settlement of values and scores."[24] In the double negative, this is a beautiful formulation. For it shows that openness to the uncertain and undetermined does not communicate arbitrariness on a meta-level, but rather a thoroughly normative orientation toward the vulnerable dynamics of the living.

Now here is the point: Those who are influenced by the strictness of Kantian thinking or Analytical Philosophy (large parts of Western Theology) will probably find it difficult to discover anything positive in this proposal. If I perceive it correctly, Gandhi's lecture can be read as a postcolonial critique of the global (ethical) thinking in order of western provenance. That was always the attempt to transform a chaotic world of ruptures into an ordered and civilized world of reasons. Leela Gandhi's postcolonial ethics points out that the line between violence and non-violence does not run along the distinction between disorder and order. For it is always a question of who can establish and enforce which kind of order at what cost and with what kind of exclusions. To divide the world into strict and often binary distinctions of race, gender, and (world) religions and thus to open or close chances to live, belongs in any case to the heritage of European thinking. And probably even if this refers to the best traditions of individual human dignity and human rights due to all persons. Leela Gandhi thus enables a kind of enlightenment from the Global South. Nikita Dhawan, postcolonial scholar from India in Germany, once called this "Rescuing the Enlightenment from the Europeans".[25]

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[24] Ibid., 11.

[25] Cf., Nikita Dhawan, "Rescuing the Enlightenment from the Europeans," April 2015, https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/rescuing-the-enlightenment-from-the-europeans/ [accessed 31 May 2023].

The Global South will never go along with that?

Another kind of postcolonial entanglement is visible in recent discussions and discourses inside the Global Catholic Church. In the western parts there is a quite familiar "argument of the global Church", that sounds as follows: Demands for gender justice and normalization of sexual diversity, for genuine participation and synodal control of power in the church, are luxury problems of the secular Western North. The church, however, is growing primarily in the Global South, which is "traditionally deeply religious and conservative": *The Global South will never go along with that!*

But what kind of "Global South" would that be? From a postcolonial point of view would be called the Othering of an imagined reality in the South, in order to refuse necessary developments in catholic order and doctrine ("aggiornamento").

Birgit Meyer, scholar in African Religious Studies, analyzes how processes of Othering use an essentialized North/South dichotomy to stabilize one's own identity – which is still eurocentric, clerical and discriminating parts of catholic doctrine hosted in the Vatican. "Such a stance continues to produce Africa as Europe's eternal Other, with the religious-secular-binary serving as the ground for their separation. An idea of Africa as deeply religious […] or as never secular is wrong not only because it lacks of empirical evidence, but also because it denies Africa coevalness with secular Europe, thereby affirming longstanding exoticizing stereotypes […]"[26]

[26] Birgit Meyer, "What is Religion in Africa? Relational Dynamics in an Entangled World," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 50, no. 1-2 (2020): 156-181, 165.

Nontando Hadebe clarifies,[27] "African theologies emerged from the resistance to the identity crises of being both African and Christian."[28] This is what Leela Gandhi called the In-Between as "ambivalence of double consciousness". Western missional heritage and current catholic doctrine both seem to reinforce a logic of distinct identities, which leads to violence and discrimination. "The genocide in Rwanda is a tragic example of the destructive power of fixed identities. […] Hence, the call of queer theory for fluid, non-binary and diverse identities has the potential to break down the walls that divide groups and confine individuals to a particular collective identity. […] Similarly, the disruption of rigid binary identity categories in the Catholic Church could lead to an inclusive community form which nobody is excluded on basic of their identity."[29]

"The disruption of rigid binary identity categories in the Catholic Church" seems to be a common goal across the discursive West/Rest and North/South-Borders. But who speaks as the universal Catholic Church? Who has which power of definition? What is said but not heard? What can be said, what cannot be said?

One example: Eva Wimmer, a young catholic woman from Austria, was participant in the Vatican Youth Synodal Process 2017-2019. She gave a courageous little

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[27] Just to mention an interesting and somehow meaningful occasion: In 2024 the German-speaking "Association of Pastoral Theology" is celebrating the 250 years anniversary of our academic discipline. We are more than pleased that Nontando Hadebe, who is part of the international advisory board of MST Review journal, agreed to give the keynote lecture for this anniversary: about learning and sharing Practical Theology in global and planetary ruptures together.

[28] Nontando Hadebe, "'Can Anything Good Come from Nazareth? Come and see!': An Invitation to Dialogue Between Queer Theories and African Theologies," *Concilium* issue 5 (2019): 81-90, 87.

[29] Ibid., 88.

speech on the topics of gender justice, women's ordination and sustainability. As she reports on feinschwarz.net, "over 30 women from all over the world came up to me and thanked [...]. Some of these women said that they could not applaud because this could have been seen by the second person of their country of origin, and if this became known at home, it would have far-reaching consequences. [...] The women would be afraid that they themselves would be pressured or abused if they openly brought up something like this. [...] Somewhat pointedly formulated, one could claim that these women not only don't find a place in the church where they can develop and help shape something, but rather that the church structure deprives women of their language."[30]

In 2021 Ute Leimgruber, a colleague and scholar in Practical Theology, published the book *Catholic Women: People from Around the World for a Just Church*. The texts and testimonies make clear that the "world church argument" "does not hold water when it comes to women and human rights in the Catholic Church."[31] Nontando Hadebe writes plainly in her article for the volume: "Oppressive theologies are also partly responsible for the high levels of violence against women around the world. The World Health Organization identifies violence against women as a global health crisis affecting approximately one-third of women."[32] The theological struggle for equal rights for women, she says, is a matter of life and death: "To reiterate: It's about concrete issues, some of them life-threatening, and it's about sustainable

[30] Eva Wimmer, „Im Herzen habe ich gejubelt, in echt konnte ich es leider nicht," 10 Dec 2021, https://www.feinschwarz.net/jugendsynode/.

[31] Ute Leimgruber, ed., *Catholic Women: Menschen aus aller Welt für eine gerechtere Kirche* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2021), 11.

[32] Nontando Hadebe, "Wie wir uns selbst befreien. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians und Catholic Women Speak Network," in Leimgruber, ed., *Catholic Women*, 133-148, 135.

development goals that improve people's social, economic and political status; it's about national and continental agendas that include women as equal citizens and holders of all rights, even when religion and culture hinder it."[33]

The theologically relevan t lines of conflict apparently run across continents and geographic boundaries. To call the commitment to gender justice, diversity, and synodal power control in the church a Eurocentric luxury issue thus proves not only wrong, but downright cynical. Here, with the Othering of the Global South, not only conservative, but in the effects for affected people worldwide also destructive church policy is made. Theologies should give space to the diversity of life instead of adding a few more bars to the cages of stereotypical behavioural expectations with reference to God.

It would be even more important for the emancipatory forces in the global church to continue to network globally. In our German and European context, we assume that this would really mean to change the direction of learning in Theology, in ethical thinking and in imagining the roman catholic global church.

Conclusion

In this article we describe and reflect, how (Practical) Theology in Germany is about to discover a next step of global awareness, that learns from postcolonial and decolonial theory and theology. This means taking a step back behind the problematic idea of universalizing European patterns of ethic and theology. So even western theology is no longer able (or should be at least unable) to start with a universal truth, be it founded by seemingly

[33] Hadebe, "Wie wir uns selbst befreien," 146.

objective academic discourses or by seemingly objective revelation. It means to start with contextuality, with global entanglements and with the various and often brutal ruptures of our times. Trying to do (Practical) Theology in that kind of performativity, the first part reported about the intercultural experience between Germany and the Philippines and the difficulties between a Christian-based motivation to justice and solidarity and the discovery of one's own entanglement in the "shadows of globalization". It seems to be a somehow hard lesson to learn, that in fact giving and helping the so called (and as poor and needy imagined) Global South continues a neocolonial "white saviorism" in many cases. This means the current challenge needs to reach an epistemological level, and that was the point Leela Gandhi made clear in her Tübinger Auer-Award-Lecture. The western attempt to transform a chaotic world of ruptures into an ordered and civilized world of reasons is part of the problem. But you also have to admit, the idea of Decolonizing Western Theology is (with Karl Rahner's dictum) in a state of a beginning.

The last part turned to the role of the global catholic church in entanglements and ruptures. Even if just Pope Francis calls for global and environmental justice, the internal religious and theological structure of the catholic church counters and contradicts in many ways the engagement for fundamental human rights. Perhaps not every topic of the German synodal path has the same urgency in the different local churches. But like the work of Nontando Hadebe and the "Catholic Woman Speak Network" exemplarily shows, some crucial and theologically relevant lines of conflict really run across continents and geographic boundaries. The deconstruction of oppressive theologies and overcoming the silencing of suppressed voices in church and society because of gender, sexuality, race, class, religion or even

"imperfect" bodies seem not to be universalized but in different and hybrid ways a global concern. Facing ruptures and entanglements in a global world is not only an object of theological or ecclesiastical treatment, it changes the Doing Theology: World church solidarity demands a decolonial political theology of the world church that is sensitive to suffering, gender, and at the same time, critical of religion on various local levels.

About the Authors

Michael Schüßler is Full Professor of Practical Theology at the Catholic-Theological Faculty in Tübingen/Germany. He is interested in the transformation of church and society like cultural liquidation, digitalization, and facing the Anthropocene as well as in theological gender studies and decolonial thinking. From 2018-2020 he was dean of the faculty. Since 2021 he is a member of the advisory board platform "Global Encounters" at the University of Tübingen.

Eva Maria Daganato works as a research assistant at the department of Practical Theology at the Catholic-Theological Faculty in Tübingen/Germany. She paused her Theology Studies for one year to volunteer for different NGOs in the Philippines. Afterwards she finished her studies and wrote her master thesis about a postcolonial perspective of religious education. For her doctoral project she is looking for methods to deal with Modern Slavery.

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James Turner Johnson's Reading of Augustine's Just War Reflection and its Relevance to Just Peace Debate

Isaac Vasumu Augustine

Abstract: This article examines Augustine's just war reflections and highlights its significance to contemporary discussions on war, violence, peace, and justice. To demonstrate this, the article first analyzes some of Augustine's insights on war, justice, and peace, and how some classical influences significantly contributed to his reflection on these subjects. Second, by examining James Turner Johnson's reception, interpretation, and expansion of the just war theory (JWT), especially in light of contemporary discussions, the article shows how this ancient thought remains ever new. While indicating the attendant ambiguity that surrounds the JWT, the article argues that the JWT still holds much relevance, especially when it is critically re-engaged in the light of the present day debate on nonviolence and just peace.

Keywords: Augustine • James Turner Johnson • Just War Theory • Justice • Peace

Introduction

One of the issues that has received and continues to receive attention today is the debate on the moral justification for war. Some of these discussions on the JWT seem to point to Augustine either implicitly or explictly. As a result of some of his thoughts on war, there is sometimes the temptation of seeing him as an advocate of war. But critical attention to some of his texts and context would reveal otherwise – he was more a champion of peace[1] and an associative thinker who sought to make sense of the events of his time. That notwithstanding, scholars continue to interpret his

[1] Frederick Russell, "War," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Michigan and Cambridge, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 875-876, esp. 875.

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thoughts on just war with different scholarly lenses – while some look at the historical context within which such an idea emanated, others deal with the moral or ethical perspectives within which the Augustinian concept of just war could be understood. That scholars often analyze his thoughts on war from different perspectives further shows the depth of his theological and philosophical insights.[2] This essay does not seek to rehearse all of these positions. However, one of the scholars who has paid attention to both the historical and ethical aspects of Augustine's thoughts on war is James Turner Johnson, and this partly explains why this essay puts him in a dialogue with Augustine. As it will be subsequently demonstrated, Augustine's 'just war' thought, reflected and broadened in Johnson's analysis, offers profound insights for contemporary 'just peace' debate.

Augustine never wrote a treatise on war in which he treated the topic of just war.[3] Since his thoughts on war were in response to certain events and contexts, some scholars continue to wonder why he is seen as the progenitor of the Christian JWT in the West. All we know about his thoughts on JWT is gleaned from different sections of his corpus, especially *The City of God*, his *Contra Faustum*, the *Heptateuch* and some of his letters and sermons. Christoph Baumgartner contends that Augustine's thoughts on the topic of war, found in "a variety of texts of different genres," have contributed significantly to the development and systematization of

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[2] Alan J. Watt, "Which Approach? Late Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Augustine's Views on War," *The Journal of Church and State* 46, no. 1 (2004): 99-113, esp. 107.

[3] Christoph Baumgartner, "War," in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, eds. Karla Pollmann and Willemien Otten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1889-1894, esp. 1889.

the JWT.[4] It is apt to state that *De Civitate Dei* is one of the writings of Augustine which deals with the topic of war and peace to a certain extent. Regarded "as a *Summa* of his theological and philosophical ideas,"[5] the treatment of just war is not as systematic as one conceives it to be, because Augustine's preoccupation is not the formulation of a theory of just war – *bellum iustum*, but a theological elucidation of the two cities: *Civitas Dei* (*The City of God*) and *Civitas terrena* (*The Earthly City*). Meanwhile, one of the earliest treatments of warfare and killing is found in Augustine's early *De Libero Arbitrio*.[6] Though, war or killing is not justified here, the emphasis is on whether it is possible to kill without ever committing sin.

This article answers the following question: How does Augustine's just war thinking contribute to contemporary debate on just war and just peace? To answer this question, the essay first analyzes some of Augustine's insights on war, justice, and peace. Second, by examining James Turner Johnson's reception, interpretation, and expansion of the JWT, especially in light of contemporary discussions, the article shows how this ancient thought remains ever new. It demonstrates how the traditional concepts of *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello* (and the recent *ius post bellum*) continue to be of great interest to contemporary just war debates. While indicating the ambiguity that surrounds the JWT, the article argues that the JWT still holds much relevance, especially when it is critically re-engaged in the light of the present-day debate on nonviolence and just peace.

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[4] Baumgartner, "War," in *The Oxford Guide*, 1889.

[5] Andrej Zwitter and Michael Hoelzl, "Augustine on War and Peace," *Peace Review* 26, no. 3 (2014): 317-324, esp. 319.

[6] Nico Vorster, "Just War and Virtue: Revisiting Augustine and Thomas Aquinas," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 34, no. 1 (2015): 55-68.

Peace and Justice in Augustine's Just War Reflection

Peace and justice are key elements that undergird Augustine's reflections on war. He sees peace as the deepest desire of all human beings in their earthly affairs.[7] Paraphrasing Augustine, Donald X. Burt captures this when he states: "the driving force of all human action is the desire for happiness, and no one can be happy without peace."[8] Augustine considers peace as something which comes as a gift from God, and not as a result of human wisdom or ingenuity.[9] Underlining the indispensable role of peace in human affairs, especially in war-making, Augustine observes:

> Anyone who, with me, makes even a cursory examination of human affairs and our common human nature will realize how sweet peace is. For, just as there is no one who does not wish to have joy, neither is there anyone who does not wish to have peace. In fact, even those who want war want nothing other than victory; what they desire, then, in waging war is to achieve peace with glory… It is with the aim of peace, therefore, that wars are waged, even when they are waged by men who are eager to exercise the martial virtues in command and in battle. It is plain, then, that peace is the desired end of war. For everyone seeks peace, even in making war, but no one seeks war by making peace.[10]

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[7] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 11; William Babcock, trans. *The City of God*: *A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City Press, 2012), 364.

[8] Donald X. Burt, "Peace," in *Augustine* through *the Ages*, 629-632, esp. 629.

[9] Burt, "Peace," 629.

[10] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIX, 12; Babcock, trans. *The City of God*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, 365.

Enjoying true or perfect peace in this world is for Augustine, not possible. True peace for him, can only be found at the end of time, and in the heavenly city where both humans and angels will rejoice eternally in and with God.[11] Hence, those who wage war only do that for the sake of temporal peace, which Augustine calls a transient good in contradistinction to the heavenly peace, found only in God**.** This concept of peace which Augustine delineates at length, has an integral connection with his reflection on just war, because he always acknowledges that even wars that are justly waged can hardly ever bring about an enduring peace. The cause of this, he repeats again, is the dent of original sin.

In his reflections on JWT, Augustine, like Ambrose, relied largely on Cicero's concepts. However, Augustine, unlike Cicero, gave his JWT a spiritual undertone, even while still adapting some elements from Cicero.[12] In what follows, the JWT of Augustine is examined under three main subheadings (just cause, right intention, and legitimate authority). However, Augustine never codified these criteria himself.[13]

Just Cause

One of the features that runs through Augustine's JWT is just cause. In making just cause a criterion for going to war, Augustine understands justice alongside the concept of order or the "order of love" (*ordo amoris*). This understanding of justice evokes a sense of both

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Watt, "Which Approach? Late Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Augustine's Views on War," 107. See also Alex Bellamy, *Just Wars: From Cicero to Iraq* (Malden: Polity, 2006), 44. Bellamy here points to the continuous influence of Cicero in the codification of the criteria and reasons for going to war.

[13] Russell, "War," 876.

individual and collective obligation which enhances the promotion of the wellbeing of the state and of citizens. Augustine, like Cicero, held the strong conviction that a state has the duty to protect itself and its citizens from both internal and external aggressors. This led him to believe that a state has a just cause to declare war in the interest of peace, and for the sake of its own people.[14] A just and reasonable cause must be established sequel to the use of violence against a state, and this has to be adhered to for as long as the war lasts.[15] It is the desire for justice that impels the state to use its machinery to quell the aggression of both internal and external enemies. Speaking about just cause as a criterion for going to war, Augustine declares:

> But the wise man, they say, will wage just wars. Surely, however, if he remembers that he is a human being, it is far more true that he will grieve at being faced with the necessity of waging just wars. If they were not just, he would not have to wage them, and so there would be no wars for the wise man. For it is the iniquity of the opposing side that imposes on the wise man the obligation of waging just wars; and this iniquity should certainly be lamented by human beings, even if no necessity of waging wars arises from it, for the very reason that it is the iniquity of human beings. Let everyone, therefore, who reflects with sorrow on such vast, horrendous, such savage evils as these, acknowledge our misery.[16]

It is obvious that wisdom and right judgment serve as prerequisites in the waging of wars. Augustine points out that the Romans themselves had a just cause for waging

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[14] John Mark Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the* Theory *of Just War* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 62.

[15] Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War*, 45.

[16] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIX, 7; Babcock, trans. *The City of God*, 362.

so many wars, and "they were compelled to resist the savage incursions of their enemies, and this due not to any avid desire for human glory but rather to the necessity of defending life and liberty."[17] Since the injustice from the opposing side, imposes on a state the obligation to wage war, as Augustine holds, the state against which the war is waged equally deserves some kind of justice because the revenging party might further commit another kind of injustice in its vengeance. This will create a circle of injustices whereby both the offender and the offended will be asking for justice. Little wonder, Augustine underlined the difficulty of upholding justice and the impossibility of practicing absolute justice in the *civitas terrena* (earthy city).

Meanwhile, Augustine justifies the use of violence to seek redress if and only if no other means suffices,[18] and admits of "compensation beyond that which would result merely from a return to the *status quo ante bellum*."[19] This compensation has both a material and a moral dimension which must not be abused by the revenging party, otherwise it would contravene the laid down norms for making just wars. This means that, Augustine's first preoccupation whenever an injustice is done to another is not the contemplation of revenge, but peaceful engagement through dialogue, restitution, and restoration. This attitude of peaceful engagement through dialogue also dominated Augustine's thoughts in his controversy with the Donatists before he later approved of the use of coercion to suppress religious dissidents. It is pertinent to note that in his just war reflections, Augustine never distinguished between defensive and offensive wars as it

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[17] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* III, 10; Babcock, trans. *The City of God*, 78.

[18] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIX,7; Babcock, trans. *The City of God*, 362.

[19] Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War*, 45.

is often done in contemporary just war debates. He sees wars as defensive and punitive actions of a commonwealth, *necessarily* undertaken for the preservation of the moral order and justice.[20]

Legitimate Authority

The criterion of just cause is linked to legitimate authority. According to Augustine, a just war is to be carried out by a competent authority.[21] This right is exercised by the political sovereign who is empowered by God, and wages 'just' wars for the benefit of his or her people. Soldiers have the obligation to heed to the command and instruction of a legitimate authority under whom they serve. Killing by a soldier in obedience to a legitimate authority is not to be seen as a case of murder because he is carrying out the instruction of the sovereign for the good of the society. If, however, a soldier refuses to carry out such an instruction in the service of his state and in obedience to a legitimate authority, he is to be charged for mutiny and dereliction of his duties.[22] However, Augustine believes that a soldier may not be obliged to obey the instruction of a sovereign if such an instruction or command does not aim at the common good. Commenting on the place of authority in any act of "just" war-making, Augustine in one of his famous replies to Faustus notes:

> For it makes a difference for which causes and under what authority people undertake the waging of war. But the natural order which aims at the peace of

[20] Ibid., 47.

[21] Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* XXII, 75; Roland Teske, trans. *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City Press, 2007), 352.

[22] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* I, 26; William Babcock, trans. *The City of God*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, 28.

> mortals, demands that the authority and the decision to undertake war rest with the ruler, while soldiers have the duty of carrying out the commands of war for the common peace and safety."[23]

However, for a war to be justified, according to Augustine, it must also have the right intention – not to harm as such (even though this is inevitable in war), but to right wrongs and restore peace.

As stated *ab initio*, Augustine's just war reflections were influenced by his interpretation of the Old Testament in order to refute the claims of his Manichean opponents who saw war as going against the pacific injunctions of the New Testament.[24] The Manicheans completely rejected the God of the Old Testament whom they saw as warlike and hostile. Meanwhile, Augustine maintains that the intention is always of fundamental importance.

Right Intention

This criterion is seen as the main driving wheel of the other two criteria enunciated above.[25] The sole intention for which a nation should go to war, Augustine argues, is ultimately for peace. If war is carried out without any lustful desires, such a war can be an act of love.[26] However, if it is carried out for the purpose of territorial

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[23] Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* XXII, 75; Roland Teske, trans. *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, 352.

[24] Russell, "War," in *Augustine through the Ages*, 875.

[25] These tripartite criteria of the *ius ad bellum* of Augustine could be likened to a triangle which consists of three different lines, in which the absence of one line makes it not a triangle but a different thing entirely. In like manner, therefore, the absence of one of the three criteria of the just war theory offered by Augustine, renders a war problematic.

[26] Baumgartner, "War," in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, 1889.

expansion, fame or other worldly gains, such a war cannot be regarded as an act of love because it lacks the right intention.[27] Writing about right intention, Augustine notes:

> If, however, they think that God could not have commanded the waging of war because the Lord Jesus Christ later said, *I tell you not to resist evil, but if anyone strikes you on your right cheek, offer him your left as well* (Mt 5:39), let them understand that this disposition lies not in the body but in the heart. For in the heart is found the holy chamber of the virtue that also dwelled in those righteous men of old, our fathers.[28]

In the above statement, Augustine gives a central role to the human heart which embodies every kind of virtue and vice. He gives a special place to virtue which is found in the chamber of the human heart, and which impels people to practice true love even in the face of provocation or war. Hence, even if a sovereign leader considers waging a war, the right intention which springs from the recesses of the heart should guide one's action. This intention should be nothing but love for the other, and for peace.

In his letter to Boniface,[29] a Christian army general, Augustine states in his counsel what constitutes right intention. He suggests that every just war should always aim at peace. This is shown in the connection Augustine makes between *bellum* and *pax*, and the expression *sed bellum geritur, ut pax adquiratur* (but war is waged so

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[27] Baumgartner, "War," in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, 1889.

[28] Augustine, *Contra Faustum* Manichaeum XXII, 76; Roland Teske, trans. Answer to Faustus, a Manichean, 351.

[29] See *epistula* 185, also known as *De Correctione Donatistarum* (On the Correction of the Donatists) in Augustine's *Retractationes*.

that peace may be obtained).[30] This implies that any war fought for selfish reasons or intent is a perversion of right intention. Thus, having the right to go to war (*ius ad bellum*) does not translate into following the right conduct in war (*ius in bello*), because one may have the right to wage war, and may as well not follow the 'code of conduct' in war. He, in his letter to Boniface, maintains that "agreements should be kept, even with one's enemies, and that mercy should be shown."[31] In his close textual analysis of Augustine's just war thoughts, Mattox considers Augustine to be the pioneer figure in the just war tradition to explore what has come to be known today as 'the doctrine of military necessity,' which allows soldiers to *proportionately* use some violent means to restore peace.[32]

Although, war is a sad reality and an evil practice, Augustine maintains that the real evil is "the desire to do harm, cruelty in taking vengeance, a mind that is without peace and incapable of peace, fierceness in rebellion, the lust for domination, and anything else of the sort…"[33] He considers Moses' wars in the Old Testament as a righteous retribution, noting that Moses was moved not by cruelty but by charity.[34] Furthermore, Augustine notes that even if the injustice suffered by Rome from its neighbors constituted a just cause for taking a military action, "the justice of the cause did not, in and of itself,"[35] imply that Rome had the right intention. He detests the brutality with which gladiators fought and the ovation

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[30] Berit Van Neste, "Cicero and St. Augustine's Just War Theory: Classical Influences on a Christian Idea," (2006). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*.

[31] Augustine, *epistula* 185,14.

[32] Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War*, 61.

[33] Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, XXII, 74; Roland Teske, trans. *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, 351.

[34] Russell, "War," in *Augustine through the Ages*, 875.

[35] Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War*, 55.

which they received from the people and its senate; and so, he says, "it is better to pay the penalty for any inaction than to seek glory in arms of this sort."[36] He laments the wars of the Romans against the Albans which made both Rome and Alba suffer mutual losses as allies. Here, it is necessary as both Cicero and Augustine have argued, that the *status quo ante bellum* (situation of things before war) be strictly maintained by giving a deep thought to the criterion of right intention.

Thus, the *ius ad bellum* and the *ius in bello* criteria are intertwined in Augustine's reflections on just war, because the latter always reveals something of the former. Hence, it goes without saying that, every just war that is fought must first have the right intention, just cause, the wisdom of a competent leader and must be carried out in love, without lustful intents and desires.

Having analyzed Augustine's just war ideas in the preceding sections, the next section examines the significance of Johnson's just war reflection in contemporary just war thinking.

Johnson's Insights and Considerations

James Turner Johnson is one of the influential contemporary scholars on the JWT. The just war idea for him, is a "historical, moral tradition,"[37] which evolved through the blending of critical reflections on human historical experiences and moral systems.[38] In his discussion of what constitutes a just war, and how a just war is to be waged, he explores the concepts of *ius ad*

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[36] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, III, 14; William Babcock, trans. *The City of God*, 84.

[37] James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War: A Moral and Historical Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 19.

[38] Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War*, 19.

bellum (right to engage in war) and *ius in bello* (good conduct in war) – concepts that are said to be typically Augustinian, though they are not found *expressis verbis* in Augustine's oeuvre.

Johnson believes that there are some missing links in the JWT which have been deemphasized in different epochs of scholarship. Although he does not arrogate to himself the task of reclaiming these missing links, he nevertheless, looks to historians and theologians for the reconstruction of a modest JWT through dialogical engagement at all levels.[39]

Johnson's thesis is quite compelling. If society continues to see the JWT as a kind of an unbreakable moral code which has been canonized right from antiquity, the proclivity towards war may linger. In tracing the historical background of the JWT, Johnson mentions that the tradition, as it is known today underwent a series of developments and emanated from multiple sources.[40] First, it came from a "specifically Christian religious tradition," grounded in Augustine's reflections, and eventually codified in theology and canon law.[41] The second source was the "chivalric tradition, with roots in older ideals of warriorhood."[42] Third, it emanated from the Roman law, especially the concepts of *ius naturale* (natural right) and *ius gentium* (right of nations).[43] These sources further developed and interacted with the political experience of societies in the art of governance. It is therefore, inappropriate to think

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[39] James Turner Johnson, *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War: Religious and Secular Concepts 1200-1740* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 6.

[40] James Turner Johnson, "Maintaining the Protection of Non-Combatants," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 4 (2000): 421-448, esp. 424.

[41] Johnson, *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War*, 6.

[42] Ibid., 8.

[43] Ibid.

of the JWT as emanating solely from the Christian religious tradition. It is more reasonable to see it as a result of an interaction of sources and traditions. This explains the reason why Johnson prefers to speak of the just war as *a tradition* rather than a doctrine.[44]

According to Johnson, the strength of the classic JWT lies in the fact that it was a "product of secular and religious forces," blended together.[45] We shall, in what follows, examine Johnson's insights on just war under two main subheadings: *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello*.

Ius ad bellum Criteria

According to Johnson, the essential parts of the classic JWT are classified into two main groups, namely, the *ius ad bellum* and the *ius in bello*, respectively.[46] The *ius ad bellum* requirements in the just war debate refer to those criteria which must be fulfilled before any military engagement is permitted. In grounding his exploration on an existing historical trajectory, Johnson asserts that Francisco de Vitoria (1483- 1546) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) who are regarded as chief proponents of the JWT in the early modern period "inherited a conception of just war with a fully developed *ius ad bellum* centered around the requirements of sovereign authority, just cause, right intention, and the aim of peace."[47] The *ius in bello* which takes into account noncombatant immunity and proportionality was likewise seen as complementary to the *ius ad bellum*

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[44] James Turner Johnson, *Can Modern War Be Just?* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 12.

[45] Johnson, *Ideology, and the Limitation of War*, 26.

[46] Johnson, *Can Modern War be Just?*, 18.

[47] James Turner Johnson, "Paul Ramsey and the Recovery of the Just War Idea," *Journal of Military Ethics* 1, no. 2 (2002): 136-144, esp. 141.

requirements.[48] A unified doctrine which delineates the concepts of *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello* came towards the end of the Middle Ages.[49] Johnson sees the three main conditions of the *ius ad bellum* as traceable to Augustine, Aquinas, and canon law, and the two parts of the *ius in bello* as emanating from the chivalric code of fighting wars. While this may be the case, however, fragmentary elements of *ius in bello* are also found in Augustine. Hence, it could be argued that both the *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello* are apparently intermixed in Augustine, albeit not in a systematic way.

In the thoughts of Johnson, the *ius ad bellum* criteria are indispensable prerequisites that always dominate discussions on just war both within national and international circles. He avows that "the whole structure of the *ius ad bellum* of just war tradition has to do with specifying the terms under which those in political power are authorized to resort to force for good…"[50] Johnson enumerates just cause, right authority, right intent, proportionality, the end of peace and last resort,[51] as coming under the *ius ad bellum* criteria. He believes that some criteria in the classic JWT are more important than others, and should be given more priority in any just war debate.[52] To stress the hierarchy of some of the *ius ad bellum* criteria, Johnson divides the criteria into 'deontological' and 'prudential.' He maintains that the deontological criteria rank higher than the prudential criteria.[53] This is because for him, the deontological

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[48] Johnson, *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War*, 26.

[49] Ibid., 32.

[50] James Turner Johnson, *Morality and Contemporary Warfare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 35.

[51] Johnson, *Can Modern War Be Just*? 18.

[52] Nahed Artoul Zehr, "James Turner Johnson and the 'Classic' Just War Tradition," *Journal of Military Ethics* 8, no. 3 (2009):190-201, esp. 198.

[53] Johnson, *Morality and Contemporary Warfare*, 41.

criteria are the "requirements that are found in classic just war thought,"[54] while the prudential criteria are meant to be principles that govern societies in the art of statecraft.[55] Although, Johnson recognizes the role of the prudential criteria, he nevertheless insists that their importance proceeds from, and depends on, the deontological criteria.[56] This implies that it is impossible to think about the prudential criteria without having first considered the deontological criteria. The deontological criteria lay the foundation on which classic or contemporary just war debate is carried out.

In one of his most recent books titled, *The War to Oust Saddam Hussein: Just War and the New Face of Conflict*, published in 2005, Johnson lists four deontological *ius ad bellum* criteria: sovereign authority, just cause, right intention and the end of peace. Similarly, he mentions proportionality, reasonable hope of success, and last resort as recently added prudential *ius ad bellum* criteria. Thus, Johnson argues, "the aim of a just war is not simply to end the fighting, for peace without justice is no peace at all. Rather just war tradition requires a peace with justice…"[57] Similarly, the conduct of war must be carried out according to the *ius in bello* criteria.

Ius In Bello Criteria

It is difficult to think of fulfilling the conditions resulting in war without also taking into account the

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[54] James Turner Johnson, *The War to Oust Saddam Hussein: Just War and the New Face of Conflict* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 36.

[55] Johnson, *The War to Oust Saddam Hussein*, 36.

[56] Zehr, "James Turner Johnson and the 'Classic' Just War Tradition," 194.

[57] John Turner Johnson, "The Just War Idea: The State of the Question," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23, no. 1 (2006):167-195, esp. 172.

conditions to be followed in the execution of such a war. One is the flipside of the other. In looking for an established authority on the idea of *ius in bello* within which noncombatant immunity is considered in the late Middle Ages, Johnson argues that one should rather look to the treatise *De Treuga et Pace* (Of Truces and Peace), added to the code of canon law during the pontificate of Pope Gregory IX in the thirteenth century.[58] In this assertion, Johnson does not, however, undermine the significance of the systematization of the JWT in the writings of both Gratian and Aquinas. Although there exist traces of the *ius in bello* in both Gratian and Aquinas, nevertheless the treatise *De Treuga et Pace*[59] expanded this notion more. Mention is made here of the classes of persons, goods, and animals that are to be protected in any event of war.[60] These ideas underwent further development and codification into the contemporary idea of proportionality and noncombatant immunity.

Similarly, Johnson traces the evolution of the *ius in bello* condition(s) to Augustine's proscription of evil intentions in war. Here, proportionality and discrimination are considered as twin principles which must be strictly adhered to in any war that is adjudged to be just.[61] Again, both Vitoria and Suarez distinguished between guilt and innocence among those who live under the situation of war in their *ius in bello* enunciations.[62]

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[58] Johnson, *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War*, 43.

[59] The above Latin title means, "Of Truces and Peace." It was a peaceful and a nonviolent movement led by the Catholic Church in the Middles Ages after the collapse of the Carolingian rule. The Latin phrase is also written as *Pax et Treuga Dei* (The Peace and Truce of God). For a detailed and an in-depth explication of this phrase, see Clifford R. Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[60] Johnson, *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War*, 44

[61] Ibid., 195.

[62] Ibid., 197.

Johnson believes that making this distinction is important because of the little space that has been given to these concepts in the history of international law. According to him, the *ius in bello* otherwise known as law of war, is an integral component of the JWT which mainly deals with "the restraint or limiting of war once begun."[63]

Historically, the *ius in bello* consisted in the two forms of customary restraints, namely the extent of harm done and the weapons used.[64] However, further development among contemporary moralists has codified the *ius in bello* criteria into two: discrimination or noncombatant immunity and proportionality of means.[65]

From the above analysis of Johnson's position, it is obvious that the JWT still remains a relevant topic for debate in our contemporary world that is threatened by war – with the present being the Russian-Ukrainian and the Israeli-Palestinian wars. While the foregoing discussion has demonstrated that both Augustine's and Johnson's ideas on JWT have contributed considerably to contemporary just war debate, the next section highlights some points of convergence or divergence between Augustine and Johnson.

Augustine and Johnson: Some Points of Reference

In the preceding analyses, we discussed both Augustine's and Johnson's reflections on the JWT. Looking at Augustine has enabled us to saunter into the world of some contemporary scholars who have in one way or another, maintained some traces of Augustine's insights. In this section, we would look at some points of

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[63] Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War*, xxiii.

[64] For more on this, see Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War*, 19-40.

[65] See Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War*, 327-366.

reference, convergence, and divergence between Johnson's position on the one hand and Augustine's position on the other.

Augustine, as hitherto stated, drew upon several sources not only in his reflection on just war but in the whole of his theological and philosophical thinking. Understanding his thought-pattern becomes more fruitful when these sources which influenced him are seen as interacting with the circumstances in which he found himself. From his controversy with the Donatists, for example, his ideas on the use of coercion underwent constant metamorphosis in response to the situation at his time.

The question then arises: Why is Augustine always regarded as one of the founders of the JWT, if he really never wrote a single tract on war? This question may be answered at two levels: first, the level of textual evidence and, second, Augustine's reception history (which depends on the availability of textual evidence). First, we need to rely on available textual evidence. We may, on the level of textual evidence, say that since some sections of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, *Contra Faustum*, *Heptateuchum*, letters, sermons, and other writings bear some of his thoughts on just war, one may posit that Augustine could indeed be referred to as one of the exponents of the JWT. Mattox holds this view and asserts that Augustine is one of the founders of the western JWT, which has considerable impact on contemporary just war thinking.[66] He does this by examining some of Augustine's texts. Second, we need to go back to the beginning of Augustine's reception history, especially within the Christian circle. Though it sounds somewhat simplistic, the impact of most of Augustine's writings in almost every sphere of Christian life may have

[66] Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War*, 81.

contributed to labelling him as one of the founders of the Christian JWT. What this implies is that, scholars who came after him studied and combed some portions of his writings, sermons and letters where traces of just war are found and then began to name him as one of the theorists of just war.

Meanwhile, Johnson reminds his readers that his elucidation on war is never at variance with classical understanding. He maintains that he is committed to the classical JWT, and to the limitation of war in societies and communities. This commitment has made him to lean heavily on the position of Augustine and the insights of Aquinas, Vitoria, Suarez, Grotius, and the like. Be that as it may, Johnson has in our contemporary milieu given the JWT a facelift, with little or no distortion of the principles and criteria. His delineation of the *ius ad bellum* deontological and prudential criteria as well as the *ius in bello* deserves attention and commendation. We see in this excursus that when Johnson is placed side by side with Augustine, a lot of points of interest emerge: the restraint of war, the instrumentality of justice in peaceful coexistence, and the objective of peace in war. The question then remains: How do these just war ideas impact on the present quest for just peace and nonviolence? The next section attempts to answer this question by pointing to some contemporary voices.

Nonviolence and Just Peace: The Present Quest

As we recognize the tension that exists between pacifists and just war theorists today, we as well realize the quest for nonviolence and peace. This section looks at how nonviolence works in preventing the outbreak of war or violent conflicts, and maintains a plea for (just) peace (an ethics of peace) in a world that has known so much violence.

In looking at some of the pitfalls of the JWT and its attendant abuses, Johan Verstraeten maintains a plea for an ethics of peace which has long-term benefits and provides a fertile ground for justice and nonviolent actions. Acknowledging the great efforts made in recent peace studies on the necessity for peace building, he contends that classic JWT seems to pay little or no attention to the restoration of peace.[67] He argues that, "a neglect of the logic of peace building can lead to precipitous decisions to wage wars that are more an obstacle than a contribution to peace."[68] Peace is therefore of the essence. Little wonder then, peace efforts and initiatives at national, regional and international levels are gaining more grounds and momentum. People of diverse faith convictions, states, private and public individuals, and people from all walks of life are all keying into this peace initiative. This has led Adrian Pabst to maintain that there is a need for a theological-interactive imperative "to shift the focus away from the justice of war towards the justice of peace."[69]

Oliver O'Donovan sees the pursuit of peace within the Christian eschatological framework as an unfolding reality that is linked to the desire for justice. He avers that "any quest for peace that is not linked to a quest for justice will be illusory."[70] For there to be just and sustainable peace in society, Peter C. Phan calls for an "interreligious spirituality of peacemaking and recon-

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[67] Johan Verstraeten, "From Just War to Ethics of Conflict Resolution: A Critique of Just-War Thinking in the Light of the War in Iraq," *Ethical Perspectives* 11, no. 2 (2004): 99-110, esp. 104.

[68] Verstraeten, "From Just War to Ethics of Conflict Resolution," 107.

[69] Adrian Pabst, "Can There Be a Just War Without a Just Peace?" *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1018 (2007): 722-738, esp. 727.

[70] Oliver O'Donovan, *Peace and Certainty: A Theological Essay on Deterrence* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 116.

ciliation."[71] With this interest and commitment towards building peace, Jennifer J. Llewellyn and Daniel Philpott lay an emphasis on reconciliation and restorative justice. For them, reconciliation and restorative justice are practical approaches in the building of a sustainable peace.[72] A peacebuilding initiative is not only a corrective means of combating the savagery of violence in the world but an initiative of deploying concrete ways of dealing with the multiple layers of evil in the world.[73] According to John Howard Yoder, "one of the most original cultural products of our century is our awareness of the power of organized nonviolent resistance as an instrument in the struggle for justice."[74] Being a pacifist, he strongly believes that the struggle for justice can only be won through nonviolent action and engagement. But this is not without its own challenges.

In berating America's invasion of Iraq, Matthew Hassan Kukah argues that the world has lost so much to war as a result of the abuses which warmongers have

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[71] Peter C. Phan, "Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, Peacebuilding: An Interreligious Spirituality for Just Peace," in Peter C. Chan and Douglas Irvin-Erickson, eds., *Violence, Religion, Peacemaking: Contributions of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 21-60, esp. 48.

[72] Jennifer J. Llewellyn and Daniel Philpott, "Restorative Justice and Reconciliation: Twin Frameworks for Peacebuilding," in *Restorative Justice, Reconciliation, and Peacebuilding*, eds., Jennifer J. Llewellyn and Daniel Philpott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14-36, esp.18.

[73] Lisa Sowle Cahill, "A Theology of Peace-building," in *Peace-building: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis*, eds., Robert J. Schreiter, R. Scott Appleby, and Gerard F. Powers (Mary Knoll: Orbis Books, 2010), 289-314, esp. 304.

[74] John Howard Yoder, *Nonviolence: A Brief History*, eds., Paul Martens, Matthew Porter and Myles Werntz (Baylor: Baylor University Press, 2010), 17. For a theology of nonviolence and peace, see James Douglass, *The Nonviolent Cross: A Theology of Revolution and Peace* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2006).

always attached to the JWT.[75] He calls for "more humane ways of resolving conflicts than resort to war."[76] What Kukah is hinting at is the deployment of practical peacemaking and reconciliatory efforts that serve the interest of peace and justice. Rather than finding reasons to justify the indiscriminate use of firearms, we should instead find reasons to promote and build peace. We shall return to this much later in our conclusion. Also, in spite of the dangers that go with active nonviolent resistance, the gains that result from it surpass the resort to violence by both sides.[77]

With the inundation in violence and wars across the world, especially the Russian-Ukrainian war and the Israeli-Palestinian war, series of calls and initiatives for just peace and nonviolence have been made by several international bodies and groups. The International Peace Research Association (IPRA) is one of these associations of like-minded persons who are concerned about the ravages of war, and the need for peace in all climes of the world. The United Nations (UN) is not left out in this struggle. Pax Christi International (PCI) and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (PCJP) have also called for a "return to gospel nonviolence." Rather than lay so much emphasis on just war criteria, Pax Christi International invites the Catholic Church to make a

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[75] Matthew Hassan Kukah, "The Just War Theory and the Morality of the Iraq War," *Unpublished Paper* (London: House of Lords, 2004), 26.

[76] Kukah, "The Just War Theory and the Morality of the Iraq War," 26.

[77] Gene Sharp, *How Nonviolent Struggle Works* (Boston: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2013), 51; see also Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 2005), 78-89.

radical shift towards "a Just Peace approach based on Gospel nonviolence."[78] This remains a work in progress.

The church, represented by the Holy See has always been at the forefront of promoting and espousing justice, reconciliation, and world peace. This is seen in its Catholic Social Teachings (CST), World Day for Peace Messages, and in a number of encyclicals.[79] In an address to the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Pope Francis criticizes the monstrosity of war and calls it "the negation of all rights and a dramatic assault on the environment."[80] Again, he cautions, "If we want true integral human development for all, we must work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and peoples."[81] Francis questions the traditional language of the JWT and its predisposition to put forward arguments for engaging in war.[82] Francis' position "implies increased attention to the *ius post bellum*" criterion, which emphasizes committed peacebuilding initiatives.[83]

A Critique of the Just War Theory

Despite the centuries of relevance which the JWT has had and continues to have, several criticisms have been leveled against it. Even though it is not our intention to

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[78] Marie Dennis, ed., *Choosing Peace: The Catholic Church Returns to Gospel Nonviolence* (Mary knoll: Orbis Books, 2018), 25.

[79] Among others, see the following: *Populorum progressio*, *Pacem in terris*, and *Fratelli tutti*.

[80] Pope Francis, *Address to the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations*, New York (25 September 2015): *AAS* 107 (2015), 1041.

[81] Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti* (Vatican: Associazione Amici del Papa, 2020), no. 257.

[82] Drew Christiansen, "*Fratelli tutti* and the Responsibility to Protect," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 18, no. 1 (2021): 5-14, esp. 13.

[83] Christiansen, "Fratelli tutti and the Responsibility to Protect,"1.

underline and elucidate all of these criticisms here, we shall look at few of what others have called the blind spots of the JWT. One of the first critiques leveled against the JWT is that it is too complex to explore. Two, it is often wrongly alluded to in initiating war. In his assessment and critique of the JWT in the light of the war in Iraq, Verstraeten maintains that apart from the many abuses and complexities that surround the JWT, a lacuna for 'post-war ethics' still exists.[84] This is because, the classical JWT does not explicitly define what *ius post bellum* entails and how this fits into contemporary just war debate. The challenge today is how to promote peace and reconciliation in the aftermath of war, and this is the gap that contemporary post-war ethics needs to fill. Similarly, Gerard F. Powers argues that the JWT is "radically incomplete apart from an ethic of peacebuilding," and sees it as "the missing dimension of a Catholic ethic of war and peace."[85]

The notion of peace being proposed by the JWT still needs further and deeper clarification.[86] A number of other related goods such as human rights and international peace needs to be highlighted to make clearer the notion of peace.[87] This is because the JWT is not simply concerned with "national self-defense."[88] It

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[84] Verstraeten, "From Just War to Ethics of Conflict Resolution," 108.

[85] Gerard F. Powers, "From an Ethics of War to an Ethics of Peacebuilding," in *From Just War to Modern Peace Ethics*, eds., Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven and William A. Barbieri (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2012), 275-312, esp. 289.

[86] James G. Murphy, *War's Ends: Human Rights, International Order, and the Ethics of Peace* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 22; see also Mark Evans, ed., *Just War: A Reappraisal* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 88; Simon Chesterman, *Just War or Just Peace? Humanitarian Intervention and International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 41.

[87] Murphy, *War's Ends*, 22.

[88] Ibid., 33.

has everything to do with international good. Kukah, who considers himself to be on the borderline between pacifism and JWT, has maintained that the justifications that are often adduced for engaging in war "are literally impossible for us to meet."[89] He believes that "presumption against war is the most sensible option to take in discussing the issue of the just war theory…"[90] More so, apart from contending that the use of the just war language hampers the development of nonviolent strategies and initiatives,[91] many peace activists and nonviolent campaign experts believe that the constant allusion to the JWT has continued to give impetus to those who subscribe to it to support war instead of opposing it. They believe that "the dominance of the just war framework," remains a major obstacle to the ethics of nonviolent practices and strategies.[92] The critics maintain that with the massive destruction and bloodbath that characterize modern wars, it would be unfair to make a demarcation between either just or unjust wars, for all wars are evil. Some of the criteria such as proportionality and noncombatant immunity are replete with lots of abuses, which lead to more tension and violence. Others believe that the JWT is at odds with the gospel way of life and deflects from Jesus' injunction on nonviolence which does not condone recourse to the use of military force.[93] In the same vein, Gerald

[89] Kukah, "The Just War Theory and the Morality of the Iraq War," 1.

[90] Ibid., 5.

[91] Dennis, *Choosing Peace*, 18.

[92] Ibid., 203.

[93] Peter Steinfels, "The War against Just War: Enough Already," *Commonweal* 144, no. 4 (2017):15-20, esp. 17. Steinfels believes that apart from condemning war in its entirety, Christians need to return to the gospel path of peace and nonviolence – the path that leads to human development and flourishing. This commitment, he further

Schlabach avows that one of the major criticisms against the JWT lies in its overlooking of other promising and alternative approaches to attaining peace.[94] By paying much attention to the just war teaching, he argues, "the Church has paid a huge opportunity cost, to the detriment of its own nonviolent practice."[95]

Notwithstanding many of these criticisms that have been put forward against the JWT, some positive values can be cultivated from it through a reinterpretation of its principles to pave a way for just peace and active peacemaking. It is against this backdrop that the next section outlines the significance of Augustine's just war reflection to contemporary just peace debate.

The Significance of Augustine's Just War Theory to Contemporary Just Peace Debate

Augustine's ideas are rooted in the historical context of his time. His "openness to transcendence"[96] continues to reveal to us that there is a rapport between the past, present and future. In drawing inspiration from his wellspring of ideas, we continue to recover his significance for our times.

Many centuries have passed since Augustine and other leading thinkers formulated what is traditionally called the JWT. As Johnson affirms, the tradition evolved from both ecclesial quarters and state practices. Little wonder, then, the JWT has found its way into catholic

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argues, should be shared by all people of goodwill across religions, cultures, nations, races and languages.

[94] Gerald W. Schlabach, "Just War? Enough Already," *Commonweal* 144, no. 4 (2017): 11-14, esp. 12.

[95] Schlabach, "Just War? Enough Already," 12.

[96] Anthony Dupont, "Augustine's Relevance for Contemporary Religious Education: A Deconstructive and Constructive Reading of Augustine," Universidad Catolica de Valencia "San Vicente Martir" *Edetania* 48, no. 3 (2015): 61-79, esp. 74.

teaching, politics and international law practice across the world. Even though we do accept and realize the many abuses, challenges and complexities which go with the JWT, its validity and relevance nonetheless continue to remain. Meanwhile, as a result of the abuses which accompany the JWT, some people are calling for a war against the JWT, an abolition sort of. It can therefore not be gainsaid that in spite of all these abuses, the JWT has always and will always stand in defense of the restraint of war, given the reality of war in human existence. For instance, with the massive infrastructural damage and civilian casualties recorded in the Russian-Ukrainian war and the Israeli-Palestinian war, the just war criteria of discrimination (noncombatant immunity) and proportionality become all the more *relevant*. In spite of the divergent approaches of pacifism and the JWT, both teachings could be deployed into the development of a more pragmatic ethic of just peace. This is because both of them have as their main objective in the bringing forth of a peaceful society. There is need for a dialogue of complementarity. If for example, we take the criterion of last resort under the JWT, we would discover, upon careful examination that the criterion implies the use of nonviolence, a position which is held by the pacifists who reject the just war criteria.

Furthermore, the JWT has helped in the formulation of what has come to be known as "military ethics" or "rules of engagement" which guide the way military personnel or soldiers conduct themselves in war.[97] The *ius in bello* criteria have also proved helpful in restraining some actors in war, and in prohibiting the weapons systems or stockpiling of weapons. The JWT still has and will continue to have significance in human society for a number of reasons. The eventual development of the JWT

[97] Dennis, *Choosing Peace*, 212.

with its constant reinterpretation is primarily targeted at the curtailing, and not the total eradication, of war. This is what we have argued within Augustine's trajectory of the JWT. In his anthropological-theological interpretation of human existence, Augustine believes that human nature has been tainted by original sin and so, many vices, including war will continue to exert themselves on humanity. In highlighting the significance of Augustine's JWT, the words of Mattox are worthy of mention here:

> …the merits of Augustine's theory, with its emphasis on the rightly intended maintenance of justice and order through the sole instrumentality of duly recognized agents of legitimate states, its absolute prohibition against the infliction of unnecessary harm to combatants and non-combatants alike, and its aim of a speedy restoration of a just peace, are of such enduring value to humankind as to warrant their continued contemplation.[98]

A compelling example of how the JWT has proved relevant just as in other war scenarios in the past is the question of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the *right* of the Ukrainian people to defend themselves against such an external aggression. This is also the case in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis has demonstrated that, in spite of the complexity that undergirds the JWT, its relevance in the contemporary quest for just peace, peacemaking, restoration, reconciliation and active nonviolent initiatives continues to remain strong.

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[98] Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War*, 177.

Perhaps, rather than use the 'just war language,' which always sees the possibility of using some military action, a better practical-ethical language, predicated on nonviolence and peacemaking could be developed in the years ahead. Thus, it is not the question of abandoning or completely rejecting the JWT in favor of nonviolence but of drawing inspiration from many sources with a view to finding the best practical approach for creating peace, love, and harmony across the world. Ethicists, moral theologians, governments, lawyers, and indeed people from all walks of life have to brace up to this challenge. How then are we to see Augustine? We must read and understand Augustine as a thinker of his own time, who was confronted with the challenges of his context. Though similar challenges of wars and violent conflicts continue to besiege us today, we must reread him with a view to finding inspiration on dealing with these maladies. However, we should be circumspect in trying to canonize all his thoughts. He was not infallible and his teachings are not unalterable.

Looking at the relevance of the JWT tradition, we have similarly seen how some contemporary voices, especially Johnson and the like, have continued to expand and reinterpret it. This article has shown that the JWT carries within itself a lot of values and wisdom predicated on peace which need to be re-invented. With the global clarion call for just peace and peacemaking, a lot more energy and wisdom need to be deployed into creating a humane and sustainably peaceful society. In addition to the plethora of abuses it has been subjected to, the JWT has sometimes been used to uncritically legitimize war, a situation that is at odds with the reflections of Augustine who saw war as a stern necessity occasioned by original sin. Thus, Augustine was more a personage of peace than of war. His reflection thereof

offers us insights for greater commitment to peacebuilding in our contemporary world.

About the Author

Isaac Vasumu Augustine is a Catholic priest from Nigeria. He obtained a Master's Degree in Theology and Religious Studies, and a PhD in Theology from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven), Belgium. He currently teaches at Veritas (Catholic) University in Abuja, Nigeria. Email address: Zikyvas@gmail.com

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