THEOLOGICAL
LIBRARIANSHIP

An open access journal publishing essays, columns, critical reviews, bibliographic essays, and peer-reviewed articles on various aspects of theological librarianship and its contribution to theological education.

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Journal information

The purposes of *Theological Librarianship* are: to foster the professional development of theological librarians and to contribute to and enrich the profession of theological librarianship.

TL publishes essays, columns, critical reviews, bibliographic essays, and peer-reviewed articles on all aspects of professional librarianship, within the context of a religious/theological library colle ction encompassing interactions with faculty and administrators engaged in religious/theological education. The primary intended audience includes: professional librarians in colleges, universities, and theological seminaries and others with an interest in theological librarianship

Further information, including Author Guidelines and instructions on how to submit manuscripts, is available at the journal web site www.theolib.org.

Achieving Literary Liftoff

Ideas are among our most valuable commodities. When they are in short supply, our options and our optimism are always compromised.

This applies to writing as directly as it does to any other dimension of our work. For example, I might have the *urge* to write, and even the time and the energy. But these aren't much use if I have little idea of *what to write about*. No less a writer than George Bernard Shaw (allegedly) observed that, "You say something better if you have something to say."

While this is very true, it is far from being a hopeless or intractable situation. Here is one area where we as editors can be of some help. Let me explain:

1) If you'd like to write, but don't quite know where to begin, a *review* is an excellent option. With a review, the topic and the task are taken care of for you. At the same time, the discipline of reviewing — considering what a reference work's objectives are, and thoughtfully assessing whether they are achieved — is not only useful to a broader readership but is an excellent way of building confidence as a writer.

2) If you've had "something" in mind for a while, but aren't certain that it amounts to an idea, or is worth writing about, we editors are very good people to talk to. We can help you shape and develop what you've been thinking about, developing the right structure and placing it in the genre to which it is best suited.

Most of all, we want you to succeed in your writing, and are quite happy to begin wherever you are, and help you get where you want to go. Writing for our vocational community is a rewarding experience. We'd be honored to have you join our ranks of writers.

And now, a word about transitions:

First, with our January 2014 issue, there's been a change in the makeup of our Editorial Board. Melody Layton McMahon has been an energetic contributor and collaborator on *TL* almost since the journal's outset. With many other projects and responsibilities to consider, she has decided to step aside. We extend our deepest thanks for all of Melody's contributions. At the same time, with this present issue we are pleased to welcome Miranda H. Bennett as our new Critical Reviews Editor. Miranda has significant experience within the ATLA community, and we are already enjoying working with her. Thanks also to all the other fine candidates who expressed an interest in this *TL* opportunity. It is most encouraging to have had such a talented group to discuss the position with.

Second, we'll be changing our publication schedule slightly (from January/July to March/October). Our next issue after this one will be published on 15 March 2015.

This revised schedule will shift our publication dates away from times of the year that are especially demanding for ATLA staff, who play an important part in the production of *TL*.

Thanks for reading.

DRS

PROFILES: *Peter De Klerk (1927-1997): Bibliographer Extraordinaire*

by Lugene L. Schemper

In 1973 Peter De Klerk made a presentation at the ATLA Annual Conference held at Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He advocated that ATLA "initiate a more scholarly publication with a broader scope and a wider circulation" than that of its current *Newsletter*. He proposed that ATLA publish a professional journal to disseminate studies in theological librarianship.[1] Forty-one years later he would no doubt be delighted to see the journal *Theological Librarianship* in its seventh year of publication. He might be surprised, but not disappointed, that the breadth of its distribution is accomplished solely in a digital format. His library world was primarily a world of print, although in the last decade of his work he began to use and appreciate the impressive electronic tools coming over the horizon.

Peter's early years were spent in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, where he was born in 1927 and where he received his early education. As an adolescent he experienced the trauma of the Nazi occupation of that city. In 1945 he attempted to enlist in the Royal Dutch Navy, though any thoughts of a military career ended when his application was rejected because he could not measure up to its standards for eyesight. Three years later he graduated from the Royal School of Landscape Architecture in Boskoop, the Netherlands. In the meantime he also studied in Gouda and received a government certificate in floral design.

As a young man he saw opportunity in North America, and emigrated to Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1951. In his local congregation of the Christian Reformed Church of North America his involvement in youth work and an interest in theology led him to begin study for the Christian ministry. He graduated from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1956, and continued his study at Calvin Theological Seminary. After working for several years in Toronto, he enrolled at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, where he received his M.Div. degree in 1963. Further study brought him to Emory University, where he received his M.Ln. degree in 1968, and where he worked as a cataloging librarian at the Pitts Theological Library of Candler School of Theology from 1967 to 1969.

In 1969 he accepted a position as Theological Librarian for Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary and as head of the Theological Division of Hekman Library (a joint college and seminary library) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1971 he was also appointed as curator of the Calvinism Collection of the library, which in 1983 became the H. H. Meeter Center for Calvin Studies. As theological librarian he saw himself as a servant of the church and its seminary. One of his faculty colleagues, John Stek, remarked that "his office and its overflow may not have been a model for others, but all who sought Peter's help in mining the library's resources…benefited from his sure sense of where to dig." His master's thesis at Emory was entitled "A Study of the Reading Interests of Ministers of the Christian Reformed Church," and he continued a lifelong interest in serving not only his local academic community but also pastors with bibliographic needs. That interest was international in scope. From 1976 until 1995 Peter served as a member of his denominational Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad. In this work he was instrumental in distributing many books and periodicals to numerous theological libraries and academic institutions in developing countries. This included travel to some of those countries in Africa as library consultant.

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[1] Peter De Klerk, "Does ATLA Need a Journal," *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 27 (January 1, 1973): 97–98.

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As theological librarian at Calvin he worked hard to develop the range and depth of the library's theological holdings. One particular area of bibliographic interest was John Calvin. His pursuit of Calvin bibliography is legendary. Whenever he travelled in the United States, he would visit theological or university libraries and check their holdings on Calvin and Calvinism against a case of 4x6 cards in shoeboxes, noting special or unique items that he found. On international trips he would do the same, but with a more modest paper file. He notes that "while attending an ATLA Conference, you might enjoy some free time or a concert or a tourist trap, but you probably would find me near the card catalog of the library with my shoeboxes, adding cards to my file."[2] A colleague tells me that in the mid-1980s a high-school-age nephew was visiting Peter from the Netherlands for the summer. Peter invited my colleague's high-school son to accompany them on a six-week road trip in his Volkswagen bus. The three of them travelled across the country from Grand Rapids to San Francisco, back across to the East Coast, and back again to the Midwest. The two young men soon found out (to their dismay) that this was not to be a trip interrupted by frequent excursions to Disneyland, national parks, ocean beaches, or other tourist attractions, but was primarily focused on zigzagging across the country, visiting a host of large university libraries as well as small theological libraries in dogged pursuit of Calvin bibliography.

On the basis of this bibliographic research he built up a massive collection of books, monographs, pamphlets, and dissertations by and about John Calvin and early Calvinism, including many works by and about Calvin's closest associates, such as William Farel, Theodore Beza, Martin Bucer, and Pierre Viret. The goal that he established for the H. H. Meeter Center was to collect exhaustively in the area of John Calvin. This included all books written by and about Calvin, in all editions and in any language. As part of this work he developed a "Calvin Article File" containing copies of articles and essays published about John Calvin. At the time of his retirement this file contained over 12,000 items (it currently contains approximately 23,000 items, and its bibliographic contents can be accessed through the Calvinism Resources Database [http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/card]). For 24 years, from 1972 until 1995, Peter published an annual Calvin Bibliography in the fall issue of the *Calvin Theological Journal*. This work has kept the scholarly world informed about Calvin studies throughout the world, and continues to be published annually in the *Calvin Theological Journal* by Peter's successor at the Meeter Center, Paul Fields.

Peter's bibliographic work extended beyond John Calvin. He compiled an exhaustive *Bibliography of the Writings of the Professors of Calvin Theological Seminary* (1980), as well as bibliographies of Henry Stob, Ford Lewis Battles, A. C. Van Raalte, Willem van 't Spijker, W. H. Neuser, Cornelis Augustijn, and others. Most of these appeared as chapters in collected works and festschrifts. As a member of the Calvin Studies Society, he regularly edited collections of the papers presented at their colloquia held biennially throughout the United States.

As an immigrant from the Netherlands, Peter had an interest in the Dutch immigrant experience in North America. His research in this area focused on a disastrous episode of Dutch immigration to Colorado in the late nineteenth century, and also the migration of various Dutch-American immigrant colonies to Texas early in the twentieth century. This research took him to state and national archives throughout the U.S. (again, in his Volkswagen home on wheels), the Netherlands, and South Africa. The results of this research have been published in various local history publications as well as the *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*.

Peter was a member of ATLA from 1968 until his death in 1997. He hosted the Thirtieth Annual Conference of ATLA in Grand Rapids, Michigan, as part of the 1976 centennial celebration of Calvin College and Seminary. He served on the Publications Committee from 1977 to 1981. He was a member of the ATLA Board of Directors from 1983 to 1986. In 1980 he served as co-editor of *Essays on Theological Librarianship: Presented to Calvin Henry Schmitt*, published by ATLA.

In the late 1990s an international group of Calvin scholars prepared a festschrift for Peter to be presented to him on his seventieth birthday. When Peter got wind of the project his bibliographical inclinations (or obsessions) moved him to volunteer to prepare a bibliography of his published works. In the festschrift, entitled *Calvin's Books*,[3] the editors gave Peter a tribute worthy of the envy and aspirations of any librarian: "Peter De Klerk is the expert in the field of the

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[2] Peter De Klerk, "Developing the Calvinism Collection," *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 35 (January 1, 1981): 10–15.

[3] Wilhelm H. Neuser, Herman J. Selderhuis, and W. van 't Spijker, *Calvin's Books: Festschrift Dedicated to Peter De Klerk on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (Heerenveen: J. J. Groen & Zoon, 1997).

countless number of books and contributions which appeared on John Calvin. This knowledge he made available to anyone who consulted him, often with great personal effort . . . . With a gift from their hands and hearts they would like to gladly and sincerely thank him for his permanent helpfulness and warm friendship." In early 1997 Peter experienced a sudden illness and died on March 18, a month shy of his seventieth birthday. The volume became not only a tribute, but also a commemorative work, with the revised preface noting, "We remember Peter as a diligent scholar, a faithful friend, and a brother in the Lord."

WEB REVIEW: *The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA)* *http://www.thearda.com*

by Shaneé Yvette Murrain

The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) is an essential access point for quantitative data sets on religion. Founded as the American Religion Data Archive in 1997 and going online in 1998, the initial archive was targeted at researchers interested in American religion. The target audience and data collection have greatly expanded since 1998, now including American and international collections and developing features for educators, journalists, religious congregations, and researchers. The site, which is freely accessible, aggregates data from a wide variety of sources, covering a range of subjects, from congregational statistics to basic religious profiles for countries worldwide. Data included in the ARDA are submitted by the foremost religion scholars and research centers in the United States, including the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), Pew Research Center, Portraits of American Life Study (PALS), National Studies of Youth and Religion (NSYR), and U.S. Census Bureau Research Data Center. Users can view reports, maps, and charts, or download raw data files for analysis with statistical software. While some international data sets are available, the greatest strength of the ARDA is its collections of data on religion in the United States.

The search feature is excellent and provides intuitive results. For example, a basic search of "Quakers" returned results organized by relevance ranking, listing matches in each of the primary resource categories. Included in the results were religious membership reports for all 50 states, citations of both "Quakers" and "Friends" from the Sociology of Religion Searchable Bibliographic Database, and denominational profiles (Evangelical Friends Alliance, Friends General Conference, Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church). Latest available map data reported from 2000 do seem a bit dated, however.

Each report in the archive begins with brief biographical and historical information about the denomination, data sources, important variables in data collection, and notes about how members are counted. The data source on Quakers, for example, comes from the 2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study (RCMS), a county-by-county enumeration of religious bodies in the United States published (since 1990) by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB). The study is an update of the 1952, 1971, and 1980 studies originally done by the National Council of Churches and the Glenmary Research Center. The county-level detail of the ASARB study expands the U.S. Census Research Data Center's national-level detail.

The top of the ARDA homepage features an image menu with four featured "research centers": *The Learning Center, Religion Research Hub, The Press Room*, and *Congregational Resource Center*. The navigation tabs with drop-down menus across the top of the page are duplicated in the main body of the page including lists of links and multiple search boxes. While this duplication provides alternative means of getting around and discovering resources, the visual clutter can be a bit overwhelming, detracting from the overall appeal of the site.

One can browse ARDA files by category, alphabetically, view the newest additions, most popular files, or search for a file. Selecting a report entitled "Cross-National Socio-Economic and Religion Data, 2005" from the Cross-National section under the International Surveys and Data category includes a preview of the survey results. The funding source, collection and sampling procedures, principal investigators, and variable information are outlined in addition to an option to search the entire report by phrase or keyword. Users are required to agree to conditions of usage and copyright before downloading data files.

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One exceptional feature of the archive is the "Question Bank," which allows users to develop their own questionnaires. Users can also create categories for maintaining groups of questions for future use. Of special interest for the study of American religion are the denominational family trees under the "Religious Groups" tab. The most recent membership data and quick fact information for a "family member" (highlighted in red) appears in a new dialog window when selected.

Interactive GIS Maps provide demographic and geographic information on religious groups and congregations across the United States by ZIP code, address, or other place of interest. Users are able to customize reports on religious adherence data down to the county level to reveal relationships, beliefs, and membership trends over a particular time span. The ARDA's interactive GIS maps are powered by Social Explorer, an online research tool distributed by Oxford University Press. (*Social Explorer* was named "Outstanding Reference Source" by the ALA's Reference and User Services Association [RUSA] in 2010.) In addition to visually interpreted population densities and quantities, users are able to download variable details and reports from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research.

As alluded to earlier, one criticism of the ARDA is the site's usability and visual inconsistency. Though the ARDA immediately demonstrates its value to the user, the site is plagued by imbalanced images, text, and multiple and varied points of entry that can be overwhelming to the first-time user. The site lacks a sense of professional cohesiveness, organization, and intuitive navigation one would expect from a modern website. Another disappointing aspect of the ARDA is its limited international data. Though useful, currently available content tends to be limited to country and regional profiles, encyclopedic descriptions of religious groups, and maps on various social and political indicators.

Despite these criticisms, the time spent getting familiar with and using the ARDA is well worth the reward of discovering standardized data that are transparent and well cited, especially for the study of religion in the United States. The data archive assists users with collecting quantitative data providing a context for placing such questions as prevalence, growth/decline, and intensity of religious belief. The numbers reported in ARDA profiles, maps, and reports constitute broad cultural categories, demographic characteristics, social and political views, and beliefs and practices, which undergird the importance of sources for theological research, teaching, and service.

DIKTUON: *Providing Library Services in the Cloud: New Benefits Realized, New Skills Required*

by Robin Hartman

In December 2010, Hope International University in Fullerton, California, signed up as an early adopter with OCLC's WorldShare Management Services (WMS.) Not yet a buzz word in library circles, "the cloud" was just making its way to my attention as I was thinking about whether to try to repair or purchase a new ILS server. The concept of having a server hosted off-site was not new — I had considered that option with Voyager many years before. But now OCLC was offering to take away the burden of ownership, and by mid-June 2011 we were live and "in the cloud" with WMS.

The "cloud" is a term commonly applied to the Internet, and cloud computing refers to software, platforms, or services provided over a network connection that may have been previously installed on a local computer. Think, for example, of e-mail you access through a web browser (e.g., Gmail) versus e-mail you access via client software loaded onto your PC (e.g., Microsoft Outlook).

Benefits of Moving to "the Cloud"

We were attracted to WorldShare because it held out the promise of solving some real problems, streamlining some of our workflows, and saving us money. With this new approach, we would be sharing the costs of technical expertise and hardware with other libraries around the world. We did not have to dip into our tight capital expenditures budget for a new server. (That certainly made our Information Systems Department happy!) Further, with the exception of a one-time implementation fee the first year, the annual cost of WMS was nearly equal to what we had been previously paying for annual maintenance on our old ILS and other individualized OCLC services (e.g., cataloging, and resource sharing) that were now included with WMS. From a cost perspective it was not a hard sell to administration.

The only software needed locally is a web browser. This does away with the need to install, maintain, upgrade, and troubleshoot incompatibility issues with third-party client software on staff computers. We can easily move computer workstations around the library without the complication of making sure settings preferences move with each specific user. And we do not have to base our decisions about staff computer purchases on the timing or requirements of ILS upgrades. Technically speaking, circulation is no longer limited to the Circulation Desk, or even to the library. We could start thinking outside of the box. For example, non-library staff at our remote campus could be empowered to check out books to students when they received them from us rather than before we sent them out, solving the problem of remote students claiming they never received the books checked out to them.

We have been more productive and proactive than we could have been with the traditional ILS model. Streamlined technical services workflows have freed us up to concentrate on other projects, such as updating our website or implementing a number of innovative student-centered services. The benefits of moving to the cloud seem clear.

A Leap of Faith

In spite of the benefits, outsourcing mission-critical operations such as circulation and acquisitions can feel like a leap of faith. It is odd to think about all the connections that need to be maintained between our circulation desks and those server farms far far away. But like the first couple of steps in a twelve-step program, we had to admit that our system had become unmanageable. We came to believe that only a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. We

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made the decision to turn our needs over to an organization with greater expertise, and to join a larger cooperative environment where our priorities were shared by others.

We realized that offering library services "by faith" is not entirely new. For example, when we pay for subscription databases, or receive remotely hosted resources that we "own" but don't house within our local networks, we trust that these services will provide us with ongoing and reliable access. We are becoming more accustomed (and perhaps more comfortable) putting trust in these kinds of contractual arrangements and uptime guarantees. Vendors have an obligation to us as paying customers, and their reputations are on the line. It also helps to know we are not doing this alone. A growing community of libraries has put their services in the cloud. As of this writing, nearly 200 libraries are "live" with WorldShare, with another 90 currently working on their migrations.

Needed: New Staff Skills and Aptitudes

Recently, we had the opportunity to initiate a search to fill a Systems and Technical Services Librarian position which had been open off and on for five years. (I had occupied this position before leaving it to become the library director.) With our ILS in the cloud there was no need to find a librarian who could wrangle a UNIX system on local hardware. Instead of spending time on the care and feeding of a server (which was dedicated to a shrinking percentage of our resources), we could concentrate on more relevant student-centered services.

A lot had changed in five years. As I reviewed the job description I reflected on the set of skills and aptitudes that would be absolutely necessary to continue moving us forward in the cloud. The person should possess the theoretical and professional underpinnings of modern librarianship, but also have up-to-date familiarity with information technology, web development, or computer science — competencies outside of "traditional" librarianship. Successfully making the cloud work in a library setting requires excellent communication skills, the ability to troubleshoot problems logically, and possession of character traits such as intuition, initiative, and tenacity.

Being able to take advantage of the many benefits of cloud-based technologies requires the integration of resources. The person must have a basic understanding of how cloud services work and are interconnected. This means not only maintaining links but also assuring the integrity of relationships between systems that are not within our local control. Once a problem is understood, the person needs to determine the right questions to ask of the appropriate support services — whether that is a vendor help desk or a local network administrator. Initiative and tenacity is often required to pursue the myriad avenues of assistance required to get unrelated entities to see how their products interact in our environment.

Because this person is also the bridge between the underlying technological infrastructure and our user interfaces, he or she must have the ability to understand the problem, as it were, from a reference and instruction perspective. A complaint such as "Hey, this doesn't work like it used to!" has to be broken down into manageable and intelligible pieces. Although instruction is not a part of the job description *per se*, being able to convey technical concepts in an easily understood manner to a variety of constituents — from new freshmen students to long-time faculty — is vital.

I am pleased to report that we successfully filled our Systems and Technical Services Librarian position. As of this writing the new person as been on the job for about two months. She indeed brings the skills and aptitudes needed to help us effectively use and develop cloud-based services like WorldShare in our library.

Conclusion

When signing up as an early adopter, we knew there would be some bugs to work through. Three years later, I had hoped for a more mature product. For instance, I would like to see a simpler way to get routine reports. OCLC has been quite transparent with their road maps to enhancements. When something is announced for a particular release date, it typically happens as planned. And they seem to make a concerted effort to gather input from WMS subscribers regarding our priorities for implementing anticipated new features. Further, in three years we have had all of fifteen minutes downtime due to forces outside of our control. The same could not be said about our previous three years with Voyager.

Providing and maintaining library services in the cloud may just require a fresh look at S.R. Ranganthan's laws of library science. Just as the transition from print to electronic resources causes us to rethink research strategies, and new discovery tools compel us to reconsider metadata requirements, transferring ownership of connection processes to the cloud challenges some of our assumptions. Libraries are for people. We will use any technology that serves the purpose of connecting our users with the information they need. Libraries ensure that metadata has integrity, networks are reliable, and users are empowered to discover and access information resources when they need them. Libraries are also concerned with saving the time of the user. Resource sharing with the cloud is an efficient means for libraries with limited resources to effectively meet this goal in today's information economy. As people continue to change their methods of learning and communicating, the library must continue to be a growing organism. For now, the library as an organism looks something like a cloud.

A Case for Slow Reading

Our century, which began and has developed under the insignia of industrial civilization, first invented the machine and then took it as its life model.

We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast Life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods.

To be worthy of the name, Homo sapiens should rid himself of speed before it reduces him to a species in danger of extinction.

A firm defense of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of the Fast Life.

May suitable doses of guaranteed sensual pleasure and slow, long-lasting enjoyment preserve us from the contagion of the multitude who mistake frenzy for efficiency. …[1]

Thus begins the Slow Food Manifesto, which was approved at the founding conference of the International Slow Food Movement in Paris in 1989.[2] Founder Carlo Petrini would later write that his movement "is not just a question of opposing slow to fast, but rather of highlighting more important dichotomies, like carefulness and carelessness or attentiveness and haste."[3]

The insidious "fast life virus" is not only a concern of foodies reflecting on how we too often consume calories. It also correlates to the way many people today receive and process information. Or so it seems to me as I reflect upon the way those around me treat the 21st century's information smorgasbord.

Recently Clay Johnson made a similar connection in his new book *The Information Diet: A Case for Conscious Consumption*.[4] Johnson suggests that the small nuggets of information served up most (in)famously by our online social networks are the mental equivalent of trans fats. They often provide short-term satisfaction, yet leave us craving more and more. And ultimately they result in an epidemic of mental unfitness; one that Johnson maintains is every bit as threatening to our future as physical obesity.

To extend this metaphor even further, there are increasing discussions about the *biological* impact of the way we consume information. Much of this research was popularized by Nicholas Carr in his book: *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains*. He claims we are physically adapting to the constant barrage of information bits and bytes that endanger our capacity for sustained attention. Carr argues, "The Net's cacophony of stimuli short-circuits both conscious and unconscious thought, preventing our minds from thinking either deeply or creatively. Our brains turn into simple signal-processing units, quickly shepherding information into consciousness and then back out again."[5] Or, as the Slow Food people said, "We first invented the machine and then took it as our life model."[6]

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[1] Carl Petrini, *Slow Food: The Case for Taste* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2001), xxiii.

[2] Petrini, xxiii.

[3] Petini, 33.

[4] Clay A. *Johnson, The Information Diet: A Case for Conscious Consumption* (Sebastopol, Ca.: O'Reilly Media, 2012).

[5] Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 119.

[6] Petrini, xxiii.

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The present essay will make a case for "slow reading". What I'm calling slow reading (and others call "deep reading") requires us to pay attention to a text and read and re-read with care. Slow reading starts on page one and carries through to the end of the book. It requires us both to seek out quiet places and to engage in conversation. Slow reading takes a keen interest in structure and allusion. It can follow lengthy arguments and narratives. It is not characterized by skimming or browsing. Slow reading does not necessarily require lengthy reading sessions but it does require focus and attention. It is not primarily pragmatic; its objective is not merely to harvest quotes or data. In these respects it deliberately challenges some of the common assumptions of our age. David Ulin writes of this practice in *The Lost Art of Reading*:

> Reading, after all, is an act of resistance in a landscape of distraction, a matter of engagement in a society that seems to want nothing more than for us to disengage. It connects us at the deepest levels; it is slow, rather than fast. That is its beauty and its challenge…[7]

Taking my cue from the Slow Food movement (in its resistance to the ascendancy of speed by celebrating the taste, the pleasure, the beauty of "slow"), I will try to apply such principles to reading. First, I will explore how information, like food, came to be thought of as a commodity, and argue that we need a new narrative that connects careful reading to human flourishing. Second, I will argue that just as the Slow Food movement needed to educate people on the taste and flavors of non-industrial food, we need to help inculcate skills that will open up to those we serve the pleasure of reading. Third, I will conclude by arguing that we need to cultivate a "reading culture" to counter the myth that reading is dead, and to welcome young people who are tired of merely *using* books and want to slow down and *read* them.[8]

What is Information?

The case for slow food starts with exploring the meaning of food. It refuses to reduce eating to simply acquiring the necessary calories and nutrients. Food is also about time and place; it is about friends and family; it is about pleasure. Likewise the case for slow reading must start by looking at the meaning of information. Is it just about acquiring new facts? Why do we read and why might it matter how we read?

Information as a Mathematical Concept

James Gleick recently wrote a large book called *The Information: a History, a Theory, a Flood*.[9] It traces the evolution of human communication, from African drums to the alphabet, printing press, and ultimately Wikipedia. According to Gleick the word "information" as we use it today is of relatively recent coinage. It was first used in the modern sense by Ralph Hartly in 1927.[10] Engineer Hartly and his Bell Labs colleague Harry Nyquist were working on "the speed of transmission of intelligence" on telegraph and telephone wires during the 1920s and they wanted some quantifiable item that would be inclusive enough to cover the dots and dashes of the telegraph and spoken words of the telephone. They chose the term information. Hartley defined the amount of information mathematically as the number of symbols transmitted as a log of the possible symbols. Thus a Morse code dot carries less information than an English letter, which in turn is less information than a Chinese character because of the expanding number of possible symbols.[11]

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[7] David L. Ulin, *The Lost Art of Reading: Why Books Matter in a Distracted Time* (Seattle, Wa.: Sasquatch Books, 2010), 150.

[8] I do need to make one caveat before going further. When I first presented some of these ideas, ironically in a CATLA "lightning talk", I spoke of "promoting traditional reading". I want to repent of this sin. There is no "traditional" way to read. People have read and do read in a lot of different ways, and that is as it should be. By advocating slow reading I do not wish to claim that all other forms of reading should be banished. There is a time for skimming and a time for key word searching. I'm also chastened by Petrini's warning against nostalgia. Although we can learn from and draw inspiration from the past, I'm not here to romanticize a pre-digital utopia. The goal is not to defend a tradition but to serve our students by giving them the richest, most redemptive and ennobling experience possible.

[9] James Gleick, *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011).

[10] Gleick, 200.

[11] Gleick, 199ff.

But the Bell Labs engineer who is the hero of James Gleick's history of information is not Ralph Hartly. It is Claude Shannon (1916-2001). Shannon's genius at applied mathematics allowed him to make a number of significant contributions to twentieth century thought. As an MIT student in the 1930s, Shannon worked on combining electrical engineering with Boolean logic, demonstrating that "any operation that can be completely described in a finite number of steps using the words *if*, *or*, *and*, etc. can be done automatically with relays."[12] This was a key breakthrough in the development of modern computers. He followed that with his doctoral dissertation, "An Algebra for Theoretical Genetics." Written before the discovery of DNA, when genes were theoretical constructs, this dissertation would foreshadow the eventual breadth of Shannon's influence.[13]

For our purposes, Shannon's most significant writing is his 1948 article, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication."[14] Shannon came to this topic fresh from his war work on mechanically targeting anti-aircraft guns, and especially in cryptography. These projects impressed upon Shannon the need to process data rapidly, and the presence of patterns in communication. In a "Mathematical Theory of Communication", Shannon alters Hartley's definition of information. Shannon defined information as "uncertainty, surprise, difficulty, and entropy[.]"[15] Shannon was very interested in the redundancy of language. This can be illustrated in different ways. For example you can remove the vowels from many English sentences and a literate reader will still be able to instantly understand the message: a fact that is borne out regularly on Facebook. According to Shannon, the vowels that can be implied are not information: only the letters that surprise or that we find uncertain really add information.

Shannon analyzed the frequency of letters, and their combinations. He would perform experiments while reading detective fiction with his wife to observe how, given a certain amount of context, how often she could guess the next letter or word in the book.[16] Ultimately, he concluded that the English language has a built in redundancy of about 50 percent.[17] Not only did this have implications for detecting and deciphering codes, but Shannon's work demonstrated that it was possible to create algorithms that could effectively compress messages. This would not only create space for more messages, but messages that could be sent further without being obscured by noise, and messages that could contain more content, such as photographs and television broadcasts.[18]

Having defined information as surprise — the unknown and unpredictable — Shannon coined a new term to measure unpredictability and thus information. The term was "bit." Shannon understood one bit to represent the level of uncertainty in flipping a coin.[19] The bit allowed for information to be quantified, and gave us a way to compare the amount of information in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* with the information in an hour of television, and in turn compare these numbers to the information in a human chromosome.[20] The establishment of a consistent way to measure information makes it possible to exploit the redundancy in human communication, which in turn makes it possible to save a significant number of bits, and thus greatly increase the efficiency of sending and receiving messages.

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[12] Gleick, 175.

[13] Gleick, 175.

[14] Claude Shannon, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication," *The Bell System Technical Journal* 27 (July-Oct. 1948) 379-423, 623-656. http://cm.bell-labs.com/cm/ms/what/shannonday/shannon1948.pdf (accessed June 2, 2012).

[15] Gleick, 219.

[16] Gleick, 230.

[17] Gleick, 229. Shannon thought English becomes even more redundant when you look at the statistical models for sentences and paragraphs.

[18] Gleick, 230.

[19] Gleick, 229. Shannon would later cite Matthew 5:37 (But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.) when explaining bits on the lecture circuit.

[20] Gleick, 231-2. Discusses Shannon's estimates for the number of bits for the three items listed. He thought the human genetic code had the least number of bits, and then the encyclopedia, and finally an hour of TV contained the most.

Information as Commodity

This idea that we can become increasingly efficient in our use of information has reverberated powerfully throughout our culture. Nicholas Carr describes increasingly efficient access to information as the "religion" of Google. He writes,

> In Google's view, information is a kind of commodity, a utilitarian resource that can, and should, be mined and processed with industrial efficiency. The more pieces of information we can "access" and the faster we can distill their gist, the more productive we become as thinkers. Anything that stands in the way of the speedy collection, dissection, and transmission of data is a threat not only to Google's business, but to the new utopia of cognitive efficiency it aims to construct on the Internet.[21]

Carr describes Google's obsession with collecting data about how people use the Internet. These data are used to build its impressive search algorithms that we all routinely use to find quickly all sorts of information. And that Google uses to sell advertisements. Irene Au, user experience director at Google, in a *Businessweek* interview claimed that, "Google cares about being fast, so we want our user experience to be fast." Later in the interview Au is quoted as saying, "Our goal is to get users in and out really quickly. All our design decisions are based on that strategy."[22] The quest to save users time is not simply altruistic. The more clicks people make, the more opportunity there is for Google to make money. Carr writes, "The last thing [Google] wants is to encourage leisurely reading or slow, concentrated thought. Google is, quite literally, in the business of distraction."[23]

The commoditization of information is the current that the slow reading advocate strives to resist. Like the current of a broad river, its pull is not always apparent on the surface, and yet I suspect that many of us sense it disrupting our habits, pervading our libraries, and forcing us to ingest fast information. Step number one in the defense of slow reading is to understand the factors in our world that make it such an alien concept to so many. However, we must go beyond naming the obstacles. We must provide a counter narrative about information, one that maintains that merely counting and compressing bits, in pursuit of cognitive efficiency, is not the only way (or the wisest) to think about appropriating information.

Information and Reality

Shannon's "Mathematical Theory of Communication" brackets at the outset one important aspect of communication: meaning. He writes, "Frequently the messages have *meaning*; that is they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities. These semantic aspects of communication are irrelevant to the engineering problem."[24] This observation did not stop intellectuals in many fields from appropriating Shannon's ideas and applying them to their work. This "bandwagon" both excited and troubled Shannon.[25] However, slow readers will here part ways with the engineers. The correlation of information to physical and/or conceptual entities *is* relevant to us. However, in an information age, drawing connections between the messages that threaten to engulf us and objective reality is an increasingly arduous task. Philosopher Albert Borgmann discusses this task in his book *Holding on to Reality: The Nature of Information at the Turn of the Millennium*.[26]

Borgmann argues that information is related to reality in one of three possible ways. There is information *about* reality, information *for* reality, and information *as* reality.[27] To illustrate these relationships he asks us to imagine a concert. The account of the concert written by the local music critic is information *about* reality: the critic is describing an event that

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[21] Carr, 152.

[22] "Google's Irene Au: On Design Challenges." *Businessweek Online* (March 19, 2009): 7, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=37032438&site=bsi-live (accessed June 6, 2012).

[23] Carr, 157.

[24] Shannon, 1.

[25] Gleick, 263.

[26] Albert Borgmann, *Holding On to Reality: The Nature of Information at the Turn of the Millennium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[27] Borgmann, 1-2.

took place, and offering her observations on its success. The score that the musicians performed would be an example of information *for* reality: the score is a "cultural text" that allows the musicians to create, to perform the music. In 1999 Borgmann wrote that the compact disc represents the third, and distinctly contemporary, use of information: information *as* reality. The CD could be understood as a compressed stream of digital bits — thousands of ones and zeroes; however, that is not the way we typically encounter it. Rather than thinking of the CD as information *about* a performance, or as a means for us to create something, we equate the CD with the music. We listen to a Beethoven symphony, or a Bieber pop song on our iPods, rather than listening to information *about* those compositions. The CD is an example of *information as reality*.

Borgmann's definition of information reads "INTELLIGENCE provided, a PERSON, is informed by a SIGN about some THING within a certain CONTEXT."[28] The important flow here is intelligence, person, sign, thing, and context. Information is a sign that connects us to some reality. For Borgmann our experience of information is rooted in the natural world and the experiences of our earliest ancestors. It begins in the tracks that indicate the presence of game, or the altar Jacob builds to signify the presence of God. Here the signs are intimately connected to the reality they inform us of. They demand our attention and engage our senses. This, to Borgmann, is the paradigm of information about reality.

Closely related to this is cultural information: information that allows us to create. Cultural information includes scripts, songs, and stories; recipes, sewing patterns, and blueprints. These are all examples of signs that point us to a potential reality that we must act upon with skill in order to realize. Borgmann writes,

> Nothing so engages the fullness of human capabilities as a coherent and focused world of natural information. … Analogously, nothing so concentrates human creativity and discipline as the austerity of cultural information, provided the latter again is of the highest order, consisting of the great literature of fiction, poetry, and music.[29]

Here information is measured not by the congruency of the message from point A to point B, or by the speed by which a user can conjure up the necessary fact. Rather, information is discussed in terms of its ability to engage our capacities to the fullest, and to call forth discipline and creativity from us.

In Borgmann's view, technology is often appropriated to unburden us from the struggle of realizing cultural information, and often obscures the presence and contingency of natural information. When we adopt self-realizing technology, such as a CD player, information is allowed to take the place of reality, resulting in world of people and signs, where intelligence, things, and context are all removed.[30] He writes,

> As long as we remain in a cocoon of virtual reality or behold and control actual reality chiefly through information technology, the world out there seems light and immaterial. But once we take up the challenge of a natural area or the invitation of a truly urban space, material reality reappears in its commanding presence and engages bodily exertion and spiritual pleasure to the limits of our capacities.[31]

This brief survey of Borgmann's thought is offered as a counter narrative to the forces that treat information as a commodity, abstracted from any correlation to physical and/or conceptual entities. It provides an alternative to thinking about information solely as the transmission of a message, by introducing words like skill, creativity, discipline, and pleasure to use when evaluating how information is appropriated. Establishing the vocabulary is an essential step. To return to our food metaphor, so long as we are discussing food in terms of convenience and monetary cost, the fast food case is strong. It is everywhere, fast and cheap. However, once we broaden the conversation to include not simply the effects of food on our health but also the cultural and social meaning of food (and most significantly how pleasurable food can taste), the case for slow food case becomes much more compelling. By way of illustration, let's revisit the issue of redundancy.

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[28] Borgmann, 22. Emphasis in the original.

[29] Borgmann, 220.

[30] Borgmann, 183.

[31] Borgmann, 221.

Redundancy and Slow Reading

As mentioned above, one of Claude Shannon's contributions to information theory was devising mathematical ways to exploit the redundancy of human language to compress messages, thus economizing in the use of bits. While few of us may be able to express this redundancy mathematically, its presence is commonly acknowledged in the way our students often handle the texts they find in our library. I first started to think about how we read when I read these haunting lines in the 2008 British study "Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future":

> The average times that users spend on e-book and e-journal sites are very short: typically four and eight minutes respectively. It is clear that users are not reading online in the traditional sense, indeed there are signs that new forms of `reading' are emerging as users `power browse' horizontally through titles, contents pages and abstracts going for quick wins. It almost seems that they go online to avoid reading in the traditional sense.[32]

The study makes it clear that the "power browse" is increasingly popular with both students and faculty[33] and is corroborated by many other studies on the use of academic information.[34] I believe this behavior has a direct connection to the availability of an abundance of sources and limited time, but it also betrays an implicit belief that much of what is being viewed is redundant, at least from the perspective of the searcher.

To advocate for slow reading is to challenge this belief, and to embrace actively what may wrongly appear to be redundant. The slow reader will invite us to view reading as more than merely discovering a fact, key point, or "money quote." Adopting Borgmann's perspective instead, we can view reading as a skill requiring creative engagement and discipline. It is a skill mastered through practice, and one that brings about deep satisfaction and pleasure. A musician doesn't attempt a challenging piece only once and then move on, nor would a golfer feel adequately prepared after making a lone putt. Athletes, musicians, artists, chefs, and pastors all understand that excellence is a result of practice. That repetition is neither an annoyance nor an obstacle to avoid, but a necessary part of their craft.

If we only read *Moby Dick* with no purpose beyond discovering what happens to Ahab and the crew of the *Pequod*, we could skip many, many pages. But of course we read the Melville masterpiece not just to discover the fate of the white whale (who doesn't appear until page 600 in my version); we read it to enter into the world of the nineteenth-century whaler. As we perform the work in our imagination we build upon and expand our previous experiences. Borgmann writes: "To read is to gather our past and illuminate our present. … Intelligent reading of fiction and poetry, far from being an escape, is a tacit conversation with actual reality."[35] And I believe that Borgmann's argument can be taken further. To read theology or history intelligently is likewise an opportunity to engage another's view of the world that will require us to call upon our prior experiences, and to engage critically our current beliefs. But to realize fully this benefit we must be interested in more than simply how it satisfies our immediate need. If we open ourselves to how another describes the terrain, and are willing to follow the trail that they blaze, our world can expand in unexpected and exciting ways.

Thus far we have suggested that the case for slow reading starts with questioning the nature of information. We've seen that the popular definition of information as a quantifiable piece of communication has resulted in an ongoing quest to increase the speed, and lower the cost, of communicating. Information has become a commodity to be consumed in pursuit of some separate goal. The assumption that faster, more efficient information is better information has been largely unquestioned. However, this assumption can be challenged as we explore the ways in which information connects us to a world outside of ourselves, and contributes to (or detracts from) our flourishing.

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[32] "Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future." University College London. (January 11, 2008): 10, http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/reppres/gg_final_keynote_11012008.pdf (Accessed April 7, 2012).

[33] "Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future," 8.

[34] For an especially pessimistic summary of many studies see Mark Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2008).

[35] Borgmann, 92.

As librarians, we possess opportunities to strengthen the popular view, and encourage our patrons to see efficiency as an important goal. Alternately, we are in a position to challenge views that would "commodify" information. We can encourage library patrons to embrace opportunities to absorb cultural information skillfully, and approach reading as a practice that can enrich one's understanding of reality. Slow Food gained traction when its members started asking questions about how the consumption of food was influencing the quality of life. However, this was only a start.

Pleasure

> The education of taste is the Slow way to resist McDonaldization. It is not so much a question of fighting a fundamentalist war against the spread of the hamburger as it is of informing, stimulating curiosity, giving everyone the opportunity to choose. To train the senses, refine perception, restore atrophied dimensions of sensory experience — these are the objectives of Slow Food.[36]

The Slow Food movement does not want to be known primarily as the opponent of fast-food franchises. Instead they have chosen to direct their energies at educating people about the taste of different types of food, and at championing the idea that food should be pleasurable. One of the early Italian initiatives was the creation of taste workshops, where visitors could experience local food. The popularity of these events refuted the claims of skeptics who believed that young people were "wedded to fast food," and thus helped propel the Slow Food movement into the international spotlight.[37]

Reading can be many things, but we need to remember that one of the most important things about reading is that it can be pleasurable. Professor Alan Jacobs begins his recent book *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction* by asking, "Why should [books] be read?" To which he answers, "The first reason … is that reading books can be intensely pleasurable. Reading is one of the great human delights."[38] Jacobs uses the classic *How to Read a Book* by Adler and Van Doren as his foil, and suggests that their prescriptive tact can backfire and discourage would-be readers. Jacobs argues that they propagate "the idea that reading is so good for you, so loaded with vitamin-rich, high-fiber information and understanding, that it can't possibly be pleasurable — that to read for the joy of it is fundamentally inappropriate."[39] The mistake here is not the affirmation that reading is metaphorically rich in vitamins and nutrients; rather it is in not seeing pleasure as an essential good that reading delivers. Failing to make that connection may not inhibit people from reading, but their reading will be done with all the enthusiasm of the five-year-old eating just enough peas to be excused from dinner. Not expecting to delight in the experience, they will have little inclination to linger with the text, to unlock or savor what it has to offer. The objective is simply to get through the experience, capturing what nutrients they can. Jacobs adds:

> I believe that most people read quickly because they want not to read but to have read. But why do they want to have read? Because, I think, they conceive of reading simply as a means of uploading information to their brains. … [T]hough few people realize it, many books become more boring the faster you read them.[40]

A crucial task for librarians is to celebrate the pleasure of reading. Like Jacobs, I am fully aware that reading in an academic setting cannot always be either slow or pleasurable.[41] Furthermore, like the pleasures of eating, the pursuit of intellectual pleasures ought to be embraced with gratitude for God's bounty that allows time and ability to read, as well as the wisdom to avoid gluttonous excess. Yet, I think that we must encourage our students to seek the joy that can be found in reading. By both modeling and teaching we can encourage them to view reading as an important part of living well and not simply preparation for a well-lived life.

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[36] Petrini, 69.

[37] Petrini, 60.

[38] Alan Jacobs, *The Pleasure of Reading in an Age of Distraction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 10.

[39] Jacobs, 17.

[40] Jacobs, 72, 74.

[41] Jacobs, 114. Jacobs suggests that the educational reading should be primarily about "skimming well" and that slow reading ought to be left for leisure hours.

One practical step to assist our students down this path is to give them permission to read slowly by freeing them from the burden of keeping up with all the new literature. As librarians, we are naturally excited about the many new volumes we acquire, but to the student (if I may generalize from my experience) it quickly becomes discouraging to think of how many "essential" works one should master. It seems to me that often the goal of life-long reading is better served by allowing a student to take time to master and ideally to enjoy one work, rather than demanding of them to rush through four or five.[42]

But it is not enough to insist that "people should enjoy reading." A palate accustomed to salty French fries and fatty cheeseburgers may struggle to find pleasure in more diverse and subtle flavors, or may remain satisfied with the pleasures of fast food, limited though they may be. The Slow Food taste workshops don't simply assert the superiority of their fare. They bring into play the wisdom of farmers and chefs to teach people about differences in how food is produced and prepared, and to explain what they can expect to taste and why — all leading up to the sampling of a variety of sausages, wines etc.[43]

A similar educational effort is necessary if we are going to help students migrate from reading on the scale of Twitter and text messages to engaging with substantive theological texts. This is especially true, if like me you work with a significant number of undergraduates. University of Chicago sociologist Andrew Abbott writes of his smart, motivated undergraduate students, "They have no real reading skills at all. Moreover, they don't know that they have no reading skills, but think quite the contrary that they are pretty good with texts. But their model of reading and indeed of knowing comes from the Internet, and is worthless when applied to complex texts."[44] He describes how his students approach texts by searching for key statements to extract, often because their high school assignments expected this of them. Abbott continues, "They simply don't understand that books have arguments and that arguments have logic and direction. The Internet has taught them that you can enter a text anywhere for any reason."[45] Although he reports that his graduate students are somewhat further along, he still finds significant gaps in their preparation for serious research. The good news in Abbott's address is that he found his students, like the young consumers of Italy, eager to escape "the commodity approach to knowledge" when given an alternative.[46]

In my view, this captures our next great information literacy challenge — teaching students to follow complex arguments in texts. The ability to read a 200-page non-fiction book is not something we should take for granted, but is something that needs to be acquired through instruction and practice. Borgmann writes, "Reading of whatever sort is a many-storied skill, both in the sense that you must read many stories to acquire it and in the sense that it is composed of many layers."[47] Helping others acquire this skill calls for wisdom and care. Jacobs cautions, "First lessons must be in humility. If you haven't read a novel in the past five years, it might not be best to start with *Anna Karenina*."[48] He suggests that many people may want to start with poetry, not only because poems are often short, but because they require us to stop, concentrate, and read multiple times. They slow us down.[49] Sermons may also be a starting place for a theological librarian introducing students to the nuances of argument. Wherever we start, we need to be prepared for it to take time for patrons to acquire the skills and taste for slow reading. We should be prepared to celebrate victories, no matter how small, whenever possible.

Rethinking the tasks we assign students and how we evaluate them is also in order. For example, I think we should be cautious about handing out grades based on the number of sources a student can marshal. Abbott provides some

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[42] Again, to be clear, there may be other goals that trump this one and necessitate taking in various works in a relatively short time.

[43] Petrini, 76-81.

[44] Andrew Abbott, "The Future of Knowing" (lecture, University of Chicago Alumni Association and the University of Chicago Library, June 6, 2009) 12, http://home.uchicago.edu/~aabbott/Papers/futurek.pdf (Accessed on June 6, 2012).

[45] Abbott, 11.

[46] Abbott, 13.

[47] Borgmann, 86.

[48] Jacobs, 97.

[49] Jacobs, 94-96.

helpful pedagogical techniques that he employs to intentionally slow students down, such as asking them to memorize and meditate on portions of their course books. His students are also asked to outline the arguments of primary sources, and keep a journal of their interaction with the ideas they read about.[50] I'm sure other ideas will emerge as we move information literacy from being solely about finding information to include being a skilled and attentive user of information.

Let's not deny that there is a certain pleasure in reading a Facebook stream. However, reading even at this level can be a gateway to many more profound pleasures. Our students need experienced, enthusiastic mentors who can patiently explain ways to read that unlock the treasures of literature, and then offer some well-chosen and suitable samples. I can't think of anyone who is better positioned for this opportunity than we are, as librarians.

Community

The first lesson libraries can learn from the slow food movement is to establish a vocabulary about information that counters the narrative that information is a commodity. A second lesson is to emphasize the pleasure of reading and to give people the training and encouragement to discover that pleasure for themselves. And a third is that cultivating a community of slow readers will be crucial to our long-term success.

Community and food intersect at many points. The production of food is often a community event that connects the members in an annual agricultural rhythm, and results in unique regional flavors and dishes that help identify a place. Consuming food is often a community activity as well. We gather around the table to share food and conversation or did until television, microwave, and drive-through restaurants made meal time a more solitary and faster experience for many us.

The Slow Food movement has worked with both farmers and the proprietors of local family-owned restaurants to preserve traditional produce, livestock, and dining experiences. This is not an exercise in nostalgia. Petrini writes, "We are not museum curators, and it is not our intention to bring a dying breed of business tied to rural society of the past (or the urban one, before consumerism) back to life."[51] Instead, Slow Food advocates work to create space in the contemporary world, using modern media and science to continue and increase the practice of slow, life-enriching culinary practices.[52]

At first blush, reading has little of the communal associations that surround food. Reading is something we mostly do alone in quiet, solitary places. Yet I would contend, as I suspect librarians well know, that books have a lot to do with community. They are produced and distributed by communities, just as prized Italian cheeses are. Many find that books, like food, are also more enjoyable in community. From *pottermore.com*, to book clubs, to the shelves of commentaries and criticism in our libraries, book communities are plentiful if you know where to look. But many people don't know where to look.

In 2008, Steve Jobs was quoted in the New York Times as saying, "The fact is that people don't read anymore."[53] This is not true. Book reading and the Kindle he was dismissing are both quite alive. However, the belief that no one reads, especially not young people, is oddly persistent. There is real danger in this becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, if educators decide they can no longer expect young people to read, and if young readers come to believe that they are alone. I believe there are a handful of things libraries can do to constructively counter this claim.

First, we need to identify and celebrate the readers in our midst. Local bibliophiles, be they student, staff, or faculty members who can testify to the pleasure and satisfaction of slow reading, can become important role models, especially for students who may have had little previous exposure to literary joys. We also need to recognize and encourage those students who frequent our libraries most actively. While it is understandable to direct some of our outreach at people who are not using the library or struggle to navigate our sources, I would contend that we also need to reach out to

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[50] Abbott, 8-16.

[51] Petrini, 52.

[52] Petrini, 90-98 describes several creative Slow Food initiatives.

[53] John Markoff, "The Passion of Steve Jobs," *New York Times* Jan. 15, 2008, http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/15/the-passion-of-steve-jobs/?ex=1358226000&en=dc35254b0fcd5490&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss.

the advanced users, tapping into what one of my colleagues calls "the library cult." These are the students who can help market the library's services on campus, and provide a critical mass for library programming. They also provide a valuable feedback channel to think about how to advocate most effectively for engaged, more reflective reading on our campuses.

Second, librarians need to expose people on our campus to the broader scholarly book community. The book review can be a powerful tool to initiate people into the breadth and depth of book publishing, and model ways of engaging with texts. Making both print and online sources of quality reviews highly visible can help others discover and connect to reading communities. This past year my library bought a number of local literary journals and 'zines that we left laying around the library for people to pick up and read a poem or short story, getting a glimpse of the creative writing scene in Chicago. Library programming can also be used to expose people to campus authors. At North Park this year we hosted the release party for the campus literary magazine, and several of the students read their poetry in the library.

Third, we need to design physical library spaces that lend themselves to slow reading. Winston Churchill reportedly said, "We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us."[54] I think this aphorism can be applied in at least two ways. Distraction is commonly cited as the number-one enemy of slow reading and we will do well to consider how to create spaces that limit the amount of distractions our readers will face. I also think that it is helpful if our buildings communicate that reading is an important activity. It should be clear to people who enter our buildings that among the expected and privileged uses is careful, attentive, reading.

This final section grew out of my reflection on my own reading habits. My aspirations as a reader often outpace my practice. As I reflected on this, I realized that when I subscribed to scholarly journals and socialized with friends and colleagues who were actively reading, I tended to read much more. Yet when I invested more in relationships and life with peers off campus my reading suffered. Ultimately Mark Baulerlein saddles the under-30 crowd with the label "The Dumbest Generation" not because their individual intelligence is lower but because he believes they lack the social structures that allow for serious debate and ongoing scholarly conversations amongst people from different backgrounds. He writes:

> However serious their ambition and disciplined their reading, the would-be young intellectuals of today lack a vital component that earlier intellectuals enjoyed from their teens through college and that they credited for their later successes. It is a youthworld of ideas and arguments, an intellectual forensic in the social settings of the young.[55]

The presence of a vibrant intellectual community can be a powerful catalyst. The challenge is to cultivate just such a community in our libraries.

Conclusion

When I was discussing this topic and the opportunity to present it to you with my father, he asked with his own unmistakable candor, "What do you hope to accomplish by writing a paper for a library conference?"

I hope I have accomplished the following:

First, I want to encourage you to think about what information is and why that question is important.

Second, if you agree that information is not just a commodity to be consumed but "one of the great human delights," I hope that you will think about what is necessary to educate others to experience that delight.

Finally, I invite you to join me in trying to figure out how librarians can not only facilitate access to information, but help build a community that embraces the beauty and challenge of a way of reading that resists distraction, that connects us at the deepest levels, that is slow.

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[54] The Churchill Centre and Museum at the Churchill War Rooms, London, "Famous Quotations and Stories," http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/quotations (accessed June 9, 2012).

[55] Baulerlein, 224.

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Latinos' Informational Needs in Attaining Accredited Theological Education

Abstract

This paper explores published articles that report on theological education in the Hispanic/Latino community. It looks at U.S. demographic changes and the needs of the Latino community to provide civic and church leadership within their communities. The article reports on past efforts, and challenges, to increase Latino enrollment in graduate theological education. It looks at current strategies by Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH) to collaborate with American Theological Schools (ATS) and the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) to certify unaccredited Bible Institutes so that the educational standards will be strengthened and create a clearer pathway for Latinas/os to enter ATS-accredited member schools. The purpose of the paper is to present the AETH commission report and discuss ways in which theological librarians can assist in providing the informational needs of students in Bible Institutes.

Introduction

The rapid increase of the Latino population is transforming the U.S. cultural landscape. Yet, compared to the surge in growth, the academic performance of Latinos. According to one source, "Latinos are the largest and fastest growing minority group in the U.S. yet have the lowest education attainment level of any group in the United States."[1] The outcomes of how these two realities will play out in our national identity should cause all of us concern.

Between 1990 and 2000, the U.S. Latino population grew by 50 percent. In Arizona, Latinos make up 31 percent of a total of 6.5 million residents.[2] If national trends continue, Latinos will represent 60 percent of Arizona's population by the year 2050 and will make up 29 percent of the U.S. population overall. In Arizona, when age is calculated with race, the population is increasingly more Latino/Hispanic in the younger age categories, and over 80 percent white in the 65 and older category. Nearly 100 percent of Hispanic children under the age of 5 in Arizona — children of both documented and undocumented parents — are U.S. citizens, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Even states with the lowest Latino population are experiencing huge growth. From 2010 to 2011, for example, Alabama has seen a 158 percent increase in Latino population, moving from 72,000 to 186,000. South Carolina and Tennessee saw increases of 154 percent in the Latino population.[3]

A 2011 report from the Department of Education stated that by every achievement measure, Hispanic students are performing at or near the bottom. Fifty percent of Hispanic students do not receive a diploma four years after entering high school. Nearly nine out of ten (89 percent) of Latino young adults say that a college education is important for success in life, yet only about half that number — 48 percent — say that they themselves plan to get a college degree. The report concluded that a "persistent educational attainment gap remains between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites."[4]

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[1] See the report "Winning the Future: Improving Education for the Latino Community" (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

[2] See the report "Winning the Future: Improving Education for the Latino Community" (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, 2011), 1-2.

[3] Pew Hispanic Center, Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2010 (February 21, 2012); retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/02/21/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-united-states-2010/

[4] See the report "Winning the Future: Improving Education for the Latino Community (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, 2011): 1-2.

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As the Latino population in Arizon, the Southwest, and nationwide increases, an intentional effort to develop Latino leadership is critical. Latinos need to be ready to step into positions of leadership in academic, religious, and civic institutions, as well as private and business corporations. The lagging Latino educational performance heightens the urgency to create an environment of achievement that will produce civically and economically engaged participants.

One area that needs urgent attention is in the training of religious and civic leaders within the Latino community. Latino population is growing, which means that Latino churches are on the rise as well. The percentages of community and spiritual leaders who have gone to an accredited theological intuition is very low. In 2012, according to American Theological Schools (ATS), only 4 percent of the 70,000 theological students in accredited schools were Latino, just slightly above Native Americans.[5]

This paper seeks to recognize and affirm current community efforts, specifically the Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH), in its crucial role in fulfilling its mission of developing the leaders needed to radically transform the church and the Hispanic/Latino community in the U.S., Puerto Rico, and Canada and contribute to their vibrancy, health, and growth. (AETH serves the local community by providing resources to the more than 120 Bible Institutes that are dedicated to training and equipping community members to serve within their own communities.)

Literature Review

Latinos, today and in the past, have valued spiritual connections. A comprehensive study undertaken by Hispanic Churches in American Public Life (HCAPL), funded by the Pew Charitable Trust, provided statistics on religion and public life among U.S. Latinos, presented in the published report in 2003.[6] HCAPL learned that 93 percent of Latinos surveyed identified themselves as Christian. The Christian group with the highest identification level was Roman Catholic at 70 percent, followed by Protestant at 23 percent. Seven percent identified themselves as having no religious preference/other/none. A more recent study[7] shows that Latinos self identifying as having no religious preference/other has grown to 12 percent. Even though secularism is on the rise, spirituality is embedded in the Latino culture.

As stated by Mejido, religion "provides structure and moral order in a destabilized and vulnerable life world."[8] Many Latinos live in a state of "inbetweenness," straddling the ancestral /private and dominant/public. Latino spiritual history provides a transcendent point, a sacred place to deal with this hybrid reality. Religion, according to Mejido, is a vehicle of social empowerment, a place where community and networks are forged, a place where social activism is nurtured, a place where every voice is heard. Religion within any marginalized cultural group can serve as a vehicle to perpetuate their cultural heritage, and a buffer against forces of assimilation.

University graduate programs and seminaries "have a responsibility to ensure that Latinos/as can obtain the education they need to serve their growing community."[9] The National Survey showed that Latinos pursued further religious training to meet the needs of their community. Respondents stated pastoral counseling (90 percent), social service (75 percent), and youth work (69 percent) among primary fields of interest. Young Latina/o leaders showed high interest (89 percent) in learning about community development and social work. Religious schools provide not only spiritual leaders for churches but also community leaders in civic groups, and counselors and social workers who can serve within their communities. Latino families and communities face many life challenges in our complex world. They need trained, informed, and specialized professionals to design and provide services such as family counseling, economic and community development, and civic leadership.

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[5] Association of Theological Schools Factbook and Data Tables, 2012 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada), table 2012-2013.

[6] G. Espinosa, E. Elizondo, and J. Miranda, "Hispanic Churches in American Public Life: Summary of Findings. (South Bend, IN: Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame, 2003)

[7] J. Navarro-Rivera, B. Kosmin, and A. Keysar, "U.S. Latino Religious Identification 1990-2008: Growth, Diversity, and Transformation." http://www.trincoll.edu

[8] M. Mejido, "U.S. Hispanic/Latinos in the Field of Theological Education." *Theological Education* (34(2), 1998: 58.

[9] E. I. Hernández and K.G. Davis. "The National Survey of Hispanic Theological Education," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 8, no. 4(2001): 44.

There are many barriers between Latinos and higher education, and not all of them are academic. Edwin Hernández conducted a Pew Charitable Trust national survey to assess and provide data in understanding Hispanic spiritual leadership.[10] This was the single largest study of Latino religious leaders ever conducted. The study provided wide presentation from diverse religious denominations. The questionnaire was bilingual, included 302 queries, and was sent to 16,240 Hispanic religious leaders. The responses collected in 2001 from more than 2,000 returned questionnaires provided a large data pool to help understand the role of theological education in the lives of Latinos. Hernández identified the barriers that hinder Latinos advancing to higher education.

This survey provided insight into the role of Bible Institutes, and the realities of university graduate programs and seminaries for the Latino/a student. (I will discuss Bible Institutes more specifically later in the essay.) With respect to accredited graduate studies, the respondents cited family responsibilities and the necessity to stay employed as factors that hindered their completion of academic studies. Added to this fact, the majority of Latino churches are not able to support fully their pastors or leaders in vocational positions. Financial factors were seen as key barriers (seventy-two percent) to finishing their master's and PhD programs. Respondents cited reputation, location, and treatment of minorities as other key concerns in choosing a pathway for advanced education. Reputation — defined not by academic status, a reputation for spirituality, or theological standing, but by reputation in perceived treatment of Latino/a populations — was a primary concern for prospective students.

Latinas/os, students, faculty, and published scholarship are inadequately represented in theological education. Hernández's survey indicates that financial need, scarcity of time, and cultural marginalization contribute to this shortfall. As we have stated previously, ATS Latino enrollment is at 4 percent. Latino faculty are underrepresented as well: out of 2,925 total faculty in ATS member schools, only 130 of them are from the Latino community.[11] The number virtually stayed the same from 200 (100 male and 30 female faculty) to 2012 (98 male and 32 female). The effects of this are seen throughout the institutions. The courses and curricula lack a relevant component to Latinos. Curricula are most effective when integrated with a cross-cultural concern, and engaged in the plurality of social realities that are facing the Latino community. This begs the question of how effective training can take place when curricula are detached from the real needs of the Latino community. The low number of Latino faculty places additional pressure on the ones who are there, making it extremely difficult for Latino students to have access to Latino mentors, advisors, or dissertation committee members. Institutions place minority faculty on committees as well as expecting them to build minority enrollment. Lastly, there is a lack of Hispanic scholarship. Latina/o attendance and papers presented at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) are embarrassingly low. In September 1993, the journal *Church History* published a bibliographic article entitled "American Religious History in the Eighties: A Decade of Achievement."[12] The author, Martin E. Marty, provided a comprehensive analysis of scholarly books dealing with the religious history of the United States published during the period 1980-1989 and commented, "Sadly deficient was the attention paid to the largest non-English speaking group in America, Hispanics."[13] The fact that U.S. Latinos' religious life is dismissed seems like a bad dream. However, the reality is that the cultural record and history of Latino Protestants is being greatly neglected.

Hernández's research led to a new fellowship program, the Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI), which helped overcome some of the barriers that had exited betweeno Latinas/os and higher education. Over the course of ten years, HTI has supported numerous Latina/o scholars with the following mission:[14]

- To help identify and prepare highly trained educators and leaders who can articulate, model, and help teach values and ideas that will inform and make an impact in our Latino faith communities and communities in general

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Association of Theological Schools Factbook and Data Tables, 2012 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada), table 2012-2013.

[12] M. Marty, "American Religious History in the Eighties: A Decade of Achievement," *Church History* (1993): 336-371.

[13] Marty, 353.

[14] Hispanic Theological Initiative, Princeton Theological Seminary. Mission: http://www.ptsem.edu/uploadedFiles/HTI/Home_Page/Publications/FINAL%20BROCHURE%2011-12.pdf

- To increase the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of Latina/o PhD students across the nation by uniting and leveraging institutional resources (human, financial, and infrastructural)

- To increase the presence of Latina/o faculty — especially tenured faculty — in seminaries, schools of theology and universities

- To provide a forum for the exchange of information, ideas, and the best practices to address the needs of Latina/o faculty and students

This study and creation of the HTI moved the ball forward, but has still left theological education of Latinos/a in the hands of a very few. In the past fourteen years, HTI has successfully supported the graduation of forty-three master's and seventy-four PhD Latina/o students in theological and religious education.[15] Even so, that works out to three master's and five PhD graduations a year, for a total number of 117, assuming there is no overlap. Accredited theological and religious schools are still out of reach for so many Latinos. The desire and need to have future leaders be more fully trained and academically sharpened has led many church- and denomination-based institutions to provide it for themselves.

Community-based and "Organically Grown" Theological Education

In contrast to mainstream, academy-based theological education, the majority of Latino pastors and lay leaders receive training through local Bible Institutes. These schools are in large urban areas and are tailored specifically to the needs of Latinos in their communities. Advantages of Bible Institutes for many Latinos are that they are accessible, small, inexpensive, offer night classes, and — most important — do not require a bachelor's degree for admission. These unaccredited schools provide much of the leadership training, if any, that Latino pastors and community leaders receive. However, there are disadvantages as well. Attendees are poorly trained in critical thinking and research methods. Many do not pursue master's or doctoral studies.

In 2011, The Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH) received funding to collaborate with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), with two goals:[16] (1) to promote and improve the theological education of eligible Bible Institutes, so that their graduates can function at a baccalaureate level, and become equipped to become leaders for the transformation of church and society; and (2) to provide accessible pathways to enrollment in ATS-accredited graduate theological schools for graduates of AETH-certified Bible institutes. For this to occur the commission recommended certain criteria for Bible Institutes to become certified. Once the Bible Institute goes through a self-study and makes the changes needed, a visiting team from AETH evaluates its progress. After certification is granted, graduates will have access to attend ATS member schools, which are fully accredited seminaries and divinity programs, sometimes affiliated with universities. This approach will set up Bible Institutes as "feeder" schools to accredited theological programs, and will require ATS to be in close partnership with the AETH certification process.[17] Not only will institutional partnerships will be forged, but students from the various Institutes enjoy the benefit of increased opportunities to connect with each other.

The report cited specific ways for libraries and librarians to assist each Bible Institute to achieve certification status.[18] Each institute must have access to adequate library resources, including both online resources, and resident collections of books and periodicals. Students need to exhibit information literacy skills, such as finding and using common digital and printed information resources, and engaging in library research, as well as the ability to use computers and the Internet. The report states that students will be expected to conduct focused research on Latina/o contributions to mission and theology, and prepare written and oral reports. The assumption, then, is that the Bible Institutes will house, or develop,

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[15] Hispanic Theological Initiative, "Story" (http://www.ptsem.edu/uploadedFiles/HTI/Home_Page/Publications/FINAL%20 BROCHURE%2011-12.pdf)

[16] The Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH), 2013 (http://www.aeth.org/)

[17] E. I. Hernández and K.G. Davis, "The National Survey of Hispanic Theological Education," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 8, no. 4 (2001): 44.

[18] www.aeth.org

collections good enough to facilitate such inquiry. This would be a challenge for any institution, but for community-based, small, and privately run institutes/colleges, these standards can pose a heavy burden.

Miguel Figueroa, former Director of Member Programs for the American Theological Library Association (ATLA), discussed AETH's needs for services, programs, and resources to expand in order to be a success. He observed that "the biggest challenge in first generation Bible College or other institutions is that they are ill prepared for the research component."[19] Right now even fully accredited theological graduate programs and seminaries, barely have a minimum of resources. "They have what is easy and available," observed Figueroa. When I asked him about what programs, services, collections, and technology he would design specifically for them if he could, his response was that having a "core collection" of Latino resources for Bible Institutes and ATS member schools is crucial to meet the deeper and prevailing needs of the Latino community. Developing this would require a wider discourse between ATS and AETH. "Theological collections in libraries and repositories do not even know what they have."[20] To this end, there needs to be a comprehensive assessment of Latino resources, as well as the ways and means for Bible Institutes to access effectively and integrate such resources with their course work.

Moving Forward

For information to be accessible to a user, it must be available, findable, reachable, comprehensible, and useable.[21] The information provider in this scenario has the burden, or duty, of the "production" of information material. The quality of resources enhances users' access when materials are organized, distributed, and communicated clearly. When there is a shortfall of producing library resources for a marginalized group, this exacerbates the information-seeking deficiencies of that group. This lack of access furthers disenfranchises the minority group. Bible Institutes that want to empower their community members and provide in-depth education that helps develop critical thinking skills and the ability to write about complex issues that will empower their voice on the national stage need to identify, collect, and create information resources for the benefit of that community.

Similarly, it is important now to bring an innovative and a holistic approach to the design model. New empirical data documented in "A New Culture of Learning: Digital Storytelling and Faith Formation as well as Engagement 2.0"[22] and "How the New Digital Media Can Invigorate Civic Engagement"[23] shed light on how this can have a transformative effect. A new "culture of learning" has been ushered in by shifts in learning and energized by widespread access to digital technologies. Learning shifts are described in terms of participation rather than time based virtual rather than face to face. This, along with the data on how digital story telling can provide group identification, can help foster the creation of a virtual social network that can provide a powerful link between participants and resources, foster community identity, and inform community members of local and national issues. In summary, for information resources to be effective in strengthening the Latino community, they must be accessible digitally, foster a sense of community identity, and provide some means of linking users to community activity.

How might theological librarians and religious communities seek to assist AETH in fulfilling its goals? Some good starting points are a careful study of the AETH commission report, along with reflection on past and future trends in theological librarianship. These could lead to a design model of a centralized, virtual full-service library specializing in Latino resources. Such a deliberate endeavor could not only prove strategically beneficial for Bible Institutes but also for theological programs that seek a bigger presence of Latino informational resources within their institutions.

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[19] M. Figueroa, personal communication with the author, February 16, 2014.

[20] Ibid.

[21] K. Mathiesen, "Facts of Access: A Conceptual and Standard Threats Analysis" (Paper presented at the iConference, Berlin, March 2014).

[22] Mary E. Hess, "A New Culture of Learning: Digital Storytelling and Faith Formation," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 53 no. 1 (2014): 12-22.

[23] Lindsay Pettingill, "Engagement 2.0? How the New Digital Media Can Invigorate Civic Engagement." Conference Papers — Midwestern Political Science Association (2008 Annual Meeting): 1-22.

The AETH report points to two challenges that need to be overcome: (1) the lack of resources that are identified and accessible for students and professors in Bible Institutes, which will affect the strength of course curriculum; and (2) the absence of support services and training to access informational resources, as well as to gain proficiency in research and writing that will enable students not only to succeed and go on to an accredited theological institution but create life-long learners. Theological institutions and religious communities, can provide collaborations and intelligence that could greatly advance this design model. Suggested activities to make "Latino 2.0" a reality are

- A careful evaluation of the information-seeking habits of Latino Bible students and teachers

- The creation of clear links to library resources and support services currently available to them locally

- The identification of Latino theological resources; a "Core Collection" that will be accessible online

- The creation and design of an online course, or instructional aids, that are culturally relevant to help develop skills and writing proficiency

- The provision of a virtual space to record and display historical and cultural portraits of faith in the U.S. Latino context, looking at current issues from a faith-based ideology.

It is the hope of many to see such a design model come to fruition, and that a greater number of Latinos will have access to theological education that facilitates transformation throughout the Latino faith community while at the same time helping to shape national identity. Community leaders who can meet the needs of the whole person — spiritual and emotional — and who can be a voice of encouragement, are needed as Latinas/os seek to overcome barriers to the theological education and empowerment they need.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined current challenges that face theological education today, as well as current efforts to overcome the obstacles Latinos encounter in their endeavors to secure accredited theological education. We have also discussed current strategies by AETH to strengthen educational standards in Latino Bible Institutes. Finally, we have attempted to explore ways in which theological librarians and the religious community can work alongside AETH in developing an effective strategy for providing research resources.

Fulfilling a challenge as great as this will not be easy, and it will take time. Nonetheless, it is an opportunity that theological and religious communities are uniquely equipped and empowered to undertake, together.

Special Forum: Best Professional Development Experiences, Spring 2014

An excellent opportunity to "think bigger" about professional development came my way when I served for a few years on ATLA's Professional Development Committee, at the time of its formation. It was an exciting challenge to convene with other ATLA colleagues and ask the most wide-open questions imaginable, such as:

- "What sort of professional development do our fellow theological librarians need?"

- "What resources are in place to help them meet those needs?"

- "What can our committee do to help?"

There is much to be said for programs, events, strategies, and other more formally conceived plans for professional development, and our libraries do well to think creatively about this. At the same time, that's only a small segment of where professional development happens. For those who are alive to them, opportunities for professional development are constant and limitless. There isn't a single workday that doesn't offer some room for growth.

It was precisely with this in mind that I posted the invitation ("Tell us about your best professional development experience…") to ATLANTIS earlier this year, with the hope of bringing to the surface some individual high points and reflections from our own varied experiences.

What follows is an ensemble of reflections from within our community. As you'll see right away, they represent vividly how varied our work situations and our experiences of professional development are. I am so glad I posted this question.

The Power of Networks and Associations (Jim Pakala)

Engagement with certain organizations of libraries constitutes my most valuable professional development experience in Theological Librarianship.

The three most important of these organizations have been the American Theological Library Association, its regional group SEPTLA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Theological Library Association), and, since 1998, MOBIUS (which formerly stood for "Missouri Bibliographic Information User System"). MOBIUS is the most dynamic of my organizational commitments, owing to the very close interlibrary activity. As of 2014, the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries and MOBIUS are partnering to share via a courier service the books of all the member libraries of both organizations.

A key component of my professional development has been serving on the boards of these organizations as well as some others. Additionally, involvement with various chaplaincies, local clergy, and the Church has proved valuable. If time and funds permitted, I would prefer Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) and Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) meetings, and I know that some ATLA colleagues are active members of those organizations.

Long-time ATLA member Sharon Taylor and I have over the years remarked, half-jokingly, that the ATLA conference was the highlight of our year. For professional development in theological librarianship, ATLA stands head and shoulders above everything else. *(James C. Pakala is Library Director at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO.)*

The ATLANTIS Listserv as a Professional Development Resource (Becca Butler)

As a new theological librarian, my best professional development has been through the kindness, generosity, and collegiality I have found on the ATLANTIS listserv. My experience with the listserv began during my Theological Librarianship class at Dominican University when my professor (Melody Layton McMahon) encouraged me to seek out answers to my research question through the listserv members.

The wealth of information and the responses I received made me feel welcome as a new librarian in the field and contributed in important ways to a successful paper that eventually found its way into *Theological Librarianship*. Now

in this first year of my fellowship, I have returned to the listserv again and again to ask questions of my own, or to read answers that other librarians have posted. Nearly every discussion has led to a deeper understanding of my vocation as a theological librarian, or, at the very least, has pointed me in the direction of new and better resources. *(Rebecca A. Butler is Visiting Assistant Professor of Library Services at the Christopher Center for Library & Information Resources, Valparaiso University.)*

Discovering Vocational Clarity in a Theological Librarianship Course (Jim Darlack)

Not long ago, in a conversation with a friend after church, I mentioned to him that I had decided to stick with being a librarian. I explained that it seemed to be a good fit for my personality and interests, and that while there was no shortage of folks in the world with doctoral degrees in biblical studies, there was an ongoing need for theological librarians. His rejoinder — "Are you disappointed?" — might have been disheartening, had I had not already asked myself the same question. And to be honest, it wasn't that long ago that it was easy for me to see my decision to pursue library science as a retreat from my original plan of pursuing a doctorate with the objective of teaching biblical studies.

Thankfully, taking this course (Theological Librarianship - LIS 590TL) has helped me see that my decision, while a change in direction, is no retreat. Three aspects of our course material helped change my mind: (1) the rich heritage of theological librarianship, (2) the perception of theological librarianship as ministry, and (3) the contribution of librarians to theological education.

There can be a certain pride in taking one's place among the ranks of the theological librarians. We stand in line with the giants in our faith. Jerome, Cassiodorus, Harnack, and others had a hand in shaping the theological education of their day, and in some cases they helped set the course of Western Civilization.

While the legacy of those who have gone before us is affirming in its own right, the literature we care for holds a mystique as well. We are responsible for connecting the church in our time with the witnesses of the past. We help multiply experience in our seminaries, facilitating interaction with a diversity of views unhindered by geographical or temporal distance.

In taking this course, it has been interesting to hear and read the perceptions that theological librarians have of the profession. Some have viewed it simply as a job. Others, however, have perceived their work as the answer to a call to ministry: a vocation in the original sense of that word. One author describes the theological library as "the memory of the body of Christ." Another has stated that "theological librarianship is at its best a ministry," since the theological librarian is not simply concerned with the collections and their care, but has a chance to minister to patrons as they come through the library.

It is important to see ourselves as having an active role in theological education. Our choices in collections, efficiency in circulation, exactness in technical services, and aid in reference all help shape the students' educational experience. Regardless of our specific duties, or our official status within the institution, we serve best when we see ourselves as serving an integral role in the educational process. We bear primary responsibility for selecting the resources that our students will engage. We help set the atmosphere in which learning takes place. We build the intellectual scaffolding of the seminary's collection with our cataloging and extend the reach of the faculty into one-on-one reference consultations online or over the phone.

My own theological education began in bible college, responding to God's call on my life to help teach his word to his people. This calling led to further academic pursuits in seminary. Never did I foresee that I would become a librarian. It has been encouraging during this course to learn how librarianship fits into a historical context as well as into the context of theological education. My perception of theological librarianship as a ministry has helped to shape the way I go about my day-to-day duties. And so I can answer the question, "Are you disappointed?" with a resounding "no." While my decision to become a librarian was a change in direction, it is not in any sense a retreat. *(Jim Darlack is Assistant Librarian for Reference & Bibliographic Instruction, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA.)*

Student Work Experience and Vocational Formation (Don Day)

On your question of "What has been my most valuable professional development experience for theological librarianship?" My first thought was the traditional workshop/seminar, but I admit I'd not been stretched theologically by those otherwise excellent events. But I then recalled where the rubber really hit the road. I'd been recently explaining to a new batch of international students something about my experience of calling, and formulated the following in hindsight.

Growing up, I attended a small, rural Baptist church. I was baptized there, and just down the hill from where it stands, there is a small library, where I worked as a teenager. I knew God was speaking to me when I went to church; if God was speaking to me while I was working at the library, I did not understand, at the time.

Library work helped pay my bills from my undergraduate days through two additional Master's degrees. But it was not until I finished a Master of Library Science that I found full-time paid professional employment. I started then to understand what I had only suspected before; that God had been saying something to me at the library when I was younger. He had been telling me, even when I was working as a teenager, that He could use the skills I had learned in the library.

I believe God has made it His business' consider my desires, but to satisfy the needs of others, for His own good purposes. *(Don Day is Director of Library and Information Services, B. H. Carroll Theological Institute, Arlington TX.)*

The Power of Improvisation (Anna Lois Kroll)

I have found through the years that professional development is something that happens gradually, as one gains experience in one or another area, or something that happens over a shorter period of time, when one becomes involved in a project or goes to a workshop or conference. For me, the most visibly rewarding experience I had that resulted in my development professionally was setting up a library for Irpine Seminary, located right outside of Kiev, Ukraine, in 1999. I worked with one of our graduates who teaches there and taught him how to maintain the collection once I was gone. I had to figure out how to take what I use here and fit it into their situation. Such factors as the inconsistency of their electrical power had to be taken into consideration. The students were so grateful to be able to finally have access to the books that they lined up one morning when my assistant and I came to work on the library and each of them shook our hands as we walked up to the door of the building. The library is still functional, and I developed a lasting friendship with our graduate with whom I worked.

P.S. I almost deleted your e-mail but reconsidered when I read. "This could be fun" at the end of your message. So I thought about it, and this experience came to mind as one of the biggest highlights of my career that might be fun for others to hear about. I could list a number of other experiences, but this one was certainly very satisfying and was one of those few times in a cataloger's career where the results could be seen so clearly and poignantly. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to share. *(Anna Lois Kroll is Cataloger at The Master's Seminary, Sun Valley, CA.)*

The Power of Kindness and Personal Affirmation (Tony Amodeo)

A long, long time ago, I was at an early point in my career in giving instruction sessions (a.k.a. bibliographic instruction). This was not something that library school had prepared me for (an unfortunate shortcoming of many LIS programs at the time), and my first attempt was a disaster (I simply read my notes to the class). My second attempt was better (this time, I used notes without simply reading them verbatim), but eventually I found out about a group of librarians who met at UCLA regularly to discuss instruction issues at the California Conference on Library Instruction South (now SCIL, a section of the California Academic & Research Libraries Association). Their meetings were a great help to me, as were their occasional programs. The spirit of cooperative learning, the sharing of experiences, and the problem solving were invaluable. I got to know, learn from, and befriend some of the pioneers and eventual national leaders in library instruction. Gradually, my class sessions began to improve. I went as far as to take speech and beginning acting classes to help with voice projection and presentation.

And yet I still felt that I wasn't getting through as a teacher.

One day, I mentioned my misgivings to the late Herbert Ryan, S.J., an outstanding teacher, scholar, and noted peritus (theological advisor) at the Second Vatican Council. He put his arm around my shoulders, looked at me, and said, "Tony, you're a natural-born teacher." I certainly didn't feel like one, and my response at first was that he was simply trying to shore up what was left of my diminishing confidence.

And yet somehow that became a moment that stayed with me. It planted a seed of hope, and also set down a challenge that I have carried with me all these years: to live up to his confidence that I could, someday, be the teacher I wanted to be. *(Tony Amodeo is Associate Librarian, Reference & Instruction, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA.)*

Being "Over One's Head" as a Professional Development Opportunity (Leslie A. Engelson)

Most librarians love to learn. They are drawn to opportunities to see a new perspective, gain some understanding, or attain knowledge in an area previously unknown or little known.

Very likely this is what draws us to librarianship, as there are few other professions that allow people to indulge in what delights them. But just because we like to learn doesn't means it's always easy to do so.

As a cataloger, it is important for me to have at least some knowledge of the subjects engaged by the resources I catalog so that I can assign accurate subject headings and classification numbers. It follows that much of my professional development happens as a matter of course as part of my daily work. Not only do I learn about the subjects of the resources I catalog, but over time I get better at applying the tools of my trade.

This often includes developing proficiencies with a variety of technological tools. I must confess that when it comes to technology, I often struggle to learn it on my own. It is mentally exhausting, it is time consuming, and there is often no one around to ask for help. Also, there are always plenty of other important tasks at hand, things I can usefully pursue instead of tackling some new technological challenge.

A couple years ago, however, I knew it was time to stop putting it off and learn how to use MarcEdit. I had been hearing about what a time-saving tool it is when a cataloger is dealing with a high volume of records. Since my "internal motivation" was somewhat lacking, I looked for an "external motivation" and found it when my proposal for teaching a MarcEdit workshop for the ATLA Annual Conference was accepted.

I enjoy teaching, especially in a hands-on learning environment, and was looking forward to teaching this workshop. Now all I needed to do was learn how to use MarcEdit. With that external motivation driving me, I downloaded the latest version of the software, gathered a small file of MARC records, and started reading the Help files and watching tutorials. I rolled my sleeves up and threw myself into the challenge. I clicked buttons, hit a number of frustrating dead-ends, and made something work without quite knowing how. Eventually, the fog of confusion began to dissipate as the warm light of understanding and knowledge began to break through.

By the time I taught the workshop, I felt reasonably confident in using a variety of tools available in the MarcEdit suite. It was exciting and satisfying to demonstrate its functionality, and to witness firsthand some of those "aha!" moments that every teacher longs to be part of. I'm quite proud of myself for accomplishing at least a minimal level of competency on my own, and have grown in confidence in my ability to take on whatever I need to in order to serve the constituents of my library. *(Leslie A. Engelson is Metadata Librarian/Assistant Professor, Waterfield Library, Murray State University, Murray, KY.)*

Conclusion

Such a lively and intriguing discussion helps us to clarify some useful principles:

- that a truly memorable "Best Professional Development Experience" brings together the right scenario for the right person. What's formative or even career defining for one person would not be for someone else.

- our need to be, as much as possible, in a perpetual state of growth and learning ourselves. The experiences described above represent many different career stages. And it's difficult to think of a working environment that is as conducive to constant encounters with new ways of thinking as are ours.

- the benefit of taking every available opportunity to hear what sources have nourished and sustained the vocations of trusted colleagues. Resources for "formal" professional development programs vary so much from one institution to another. But in reading the accounts shared here, it's striking how great a role is played by everyday work experience. This affirms that the way we engage new challenges — being honest enough with ourselves to accept that we must somehow acquire new capacities in order to rise to those challenges — is close to the heart of the vocational growth we all need.

Our thanks to all who participated.

Thomas Merton: American Monk, Artist and Social Critic

by David Joseph Belcastro

Introduction

From the outset, controversy has been characteristic of inquiries into the life and work of Thomas Merton. The title of an article in a 1953 edition of *Atlantic Monthly* by Aelred Graham, a fellow Benedictine, reflects something of Merton's reception by the Catholic community.[1] "Thomas Merton: a Modern Man in Reverse" was the first full-length appraisal of Merton. Graham's opinion of Merton as a young monk advocating medieval mysticism for laypersons turned out to be only partially correct. Merton would eventually be recognized as a monk moving in multiple directions with multiple tasks occupying his time and attention. As his vocation in the monastery unfolded, Merton's personal life and voluminous publications revealed trajectories that would eventually raise in the minds of many an enduring question: If he is a monk, what kind of a monk is he?[2]

Initial biographies indicate how this question engaged and shaped studies of Merton. As scholars turned their attention to Merton, it became apparent that no one perspective would be sufficient. In order to express the many dimensions of this monk, a Braque or Picasso would be needed to create an image of Merton ascending the seven mountains. Absent these cubists, we have come to rely on the convergence of various perspectives articulated in seemingly endless publications. For example, the authorized biography by Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*[3] published in 1984, gathered and integrated all the available information into a monumental biography but was unable to reveal the heart and soul of a man. Five years later David Cooper's *Thomas Merton's Art of Denial*; *The Evolution of a Radical Humanist* [4]focused on an important aspect of Merton but came to a conclusion that overemphasized Merton's humanism and failed to adequately represent the significance of Merton's commitment to religious life. By 1992 William Shannon would publish *Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story*[5] and in 1999 Lawrence Cunningham would publish *Thomas Merton & Monastic Vision*[6] in an effort to correct and balance previous inquiries with in-depth considerations of Merton's life and writings. Yet, even with these publications, the question of Merton's monastic vocation has remained on the table.

Because of the complex nature of his life, Merton's vocation unfolded in unexpected and, for some, unappreciated ways. Merton was aware of this and eventually resolved the question not with a clear answer but rather with an unambiguous commitment. On the 31st of January 1964, he wrote in his journal:

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[1] Aelred Graham, O.S.B., "Thomas Merton: A Modern Man in Reverse," *Atlantic* 191.1 (January 1953): 70-74.

[2] At a meeting of Italian monks in 1958, Dom Benedetto Calalti raised serious questions regarding Merton's vocation as a monk. See *Survival or Prophecy? The Letters of Thomas Merton and Jean Leclercq*, ed. Brother Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 126 and 142-3.

[3] Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984).

[4] David Cooper, *Thomas Merton's Art of Denial; the Evolution of a Radical Humanist* (Athens and Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

[5] William Shannon, *Silent Lamp; the Thomas Merton Story* (New York: Crossroads, 1992).

[6] Lawrence Cunningham, *Thomas Merton & the Monastic Vision* (Grand Rapids Michigan and Cambridge, UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

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> The new *Monastic Studies* is out, only one copy in the house, in the Chapter Room. A long review takes in that Italian collection of monastic conferences in which Dom [Benedetto] Calati discusses me as — precisely what? As utterly out of his world. And, of course he is right. I do not belong to his monastic world at all, am no part of it — the world where the status quo is just all right. On the other hand I do not rebel against it either. I am just not concerned with it. And thus from many points of view I am not a monk. In general that is all right with me, since I need only to be concerned with loyalty to my own graces and my own task in life, and not with being recognized by them in their categories.[7]

What is beyond question is that Merton became a monk who engaged the imagination of his and subsequent generations to think deeply about religion in a secular age. It is important to note that he did this in *conversation*, directly and indirectly, with Dorothy Day, Abraham Heschel, Eric Fromm, Abdul Aziz, Ernesto Cardenal, Boris Pasternak, Albert Camus, Walker Percy and countless others. His extensive correspondence[8] and collection of literary essays[9] are artifacts of conversations that were essential to his monastic formation.[10] Merton's conversations underscore the multiple and often times contradictory dimensions of his monastic life. Here was a monk cloistered within a community of silence and solitude, and yet also a public intellectual speaking out on current issues and events. He became, as noted by Anne E. Carr, the "most influential and widely read American religious thinker of our time."[11]

The correspondence between Merton and Czeslaw Milosz is a fine example of a friendship and conversation that flourished. Their correspondence has been long recognized as one of the most significant in the Merton corpus. After reading Milosz's *Captive Mind*, Merton initiated an exchange of letters that addressed a common concern for the modern world and shared thoughts on one another's books. Eventually Milosz became aware of what he believed to be at the heart of Merton's work. Following his reading of Merton's second journal book, *The Sign of Jonas*, Milosz writes:

> I waited for some answers to many theological questions but answers not abstract as in a theological treatise, just on the border between the intellect and our imagination, a border so rarely explored today in religious thinking: we lack an image of the world, ordered by religion, while Middle Ages had such an image. This was not the aim of your diary and I have no reason to demand from one book of yours what can be demanded from all your work. But a reader (I can judge by introspection only) is eager to learn (gradually) what is the image of the world in Thomas Merton. In a period when the image accepted by the majority is clear: empty Sky, no pity, stone wasteland, life ended by death. I imagine a reader who says: he possessed a secret, he succeed in solving the puzzle, his world is harmonious, yet in his diary he tells already about sequences while we would be ready to follow him in 5 volumes through a very vision of the world redeemed by Christ.[12]

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[7] Robert Daggy, ed., *Dancing in the Water of Life; the Journals of Thomas Merton, Volume Five 1963-1965* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), 68.

[8] There are over 20,000 letters to over 2,100 correspondents in the archive at the Thomas Merton Center of Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. Selected letters were published between 1985 and 1994 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in five volumes: *The Hidden Ground of Love*, ed. William H. Shannon; *The Road to Joy*, ed. Robert Daggy; *The School of Charity*, ed. Patrick Hart; *The Courage for Truth*, ed. Christine M. Bochen; and *Witness to Freedom*, ed. William H. Shannon. In 2008, Harper Collins published a one volume edition entitled *Thomas Merton; A Life in Letters*, ed. William H. Shannon and Christine M. Bochen. These publications only include Merton's letters. Throughout the years both sides of a correspondence have been and continue to be published, for example the letters between Merton and Milosz and those between Merton and Leclercq noted in this essay.

[9] Brother Patrick Hart, ed., *Literary Essays of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1981).

[10] Ross Labrie's *The Catholic Imagination in American Literature* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1997), and Paul Elie's *The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage: Thomas Merton, Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Day and Walker Percy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), provide excellent studies of the importance of Merton's engagement with Catholic writers in America. Malgorzata Poks' *Thomas Merton and Latin America: a Consonance of Voices* (Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011) examines his relations with Latin American poets.

[11] Anne E. Carr, *A Search for Wisdom and Spirit: Thomas Merton's Theology of Self* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 146.

[12] Robert Faggen, ed., *Striving Towards Being: the Letters of Thomas Merton and Czeslaw Milosz* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 61-62.

Their correspondence reflects, albeit in a slanted way, an effort to clarify this vision of the world redeemed in Christ. Merton's eagerness to join with Milosz, Albert Camus, Arthur Koestler and others in a revolt against the nihilism of the twentieth century is apparent from the outset.[13] For Merton, however, that revolt was grounded in Christ. In a letter dated the 28th of February 1959, Merton writes:

> Milosz — life is on our side. The silence and the Cross of which we know are forces that cannot be defeated. In silence and suffering, in the heartbreaking effort to be honest in the midst of dishonesty (most of all our *own* dishonesty), in all these is victory. It is Christ in us who drives us through darkness to a light of which we have no conception and which can only be found by passing through apparent despair. Everything has to be tested. All relations have to be tried. All loyalties have to pass through fire. Much has to be lost. Much in us has to be killed, even much that is best in us. But Victory is certain. The Resurrection is the only light, and with that light there is no error.[14]

With the publications of Roger Lipsey's *Angelic Mistakes; the Art of Thomas Merton*,[15] Monica Weis' *The Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton*,[16] and Christopher Pramuk's *Sophia: The Hidden Christ of Thomas Merton*,[17] we are presented with seminal studies that address the question raised by Aelred Graham. Each sheds new light on Merton's monastic vocation as a visionary of the modern world redeemed in Christ. Lipsey draws our attention to Merton's inquiry into the contemplative dimension of the human experience via his drawing and calligraphy. Weis shows how Merton's contemplative vision of nature reveals God drawing humanity into a collaborative endeavor to restore a paradise that has become obscured and threatened by commercial pursuits of wealth and power. Pramuk reveals the source of Merton's contemplative vision of the world rooted in a Christology enriched by his inquiry into other traditions that expanded his inclusive vision for a fragmented and conflicted world.

In examining these three works, this essay will place them in their bibliographic contexts. With this in mind, biographical background will be provided with reference to Merton's work as an artist, environmentalist, and monastic theologian.

Artist

The opening paragraph of Merton's autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, describes the world in which his pilgrimage would take place.

> On the last day of January 1915, under the sign of the Water Bearer, in a year of a great war, and down in the shadow of some French mountain on the borders of Spain, I came into the world. Free by nature, in the image of God, I was nevertheless the prisoner of my own violence and my own selfishness, in the image of the world into which I was born. That world was the picture of Hell, full of men like myself, loving God and yet hating Him, born to love Him, living instead in fear and hopeless self-contradictory hungers.[18]

It would be in this world, a world in which death, fear, and hatred are ever present, that Merton would set out on a path that would eventually bring him to the Abbey of Gethsemani hidden away in the knobs of Kentucky. Within those walls, his journey would continue ever deeper into the world of the twentieth century. The despairing image of his age so aptly described here became the impetus of a lifelong search for something hidden within the human experience.

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[13] Faggen, 4; letter to Milosz dated the 6th of December 1958.

[14] Faggen, 19-20.

[15] Roger Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes* (Boston, Masschusetts: New Seeds Books, 2006). Roger Lipsey earned a Ph.D. in the history of art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. He is director of the parent company that publishes the journal *Parabola*.

[16] Monica Weis, *The Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011). Monica Weis, Ph.D., is a Sister of St. Joseph and a professor of English and director of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program at Nazareth College in Rochester, New York.

[17] Christopher Pramuk, *Sophia; the Hidden Christ of Thomas Merton* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009). Christopher Pramuk, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.

[18] Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948), 3.

Merton understood that both the awareness of his age and the longing for a hidden wholeness were a legacy left to him by his parents.

> My father and mother were captives in that world, knowing they did not belong with it or in it, and yet unable to get away from it. They were in the world and not of it — not because they were saints, but in a different way: because they were artists. The integrity of an artist lifts a man above the level of the world without delivering him from it….I inherited from my father his way of looking at things and some of his integrity and from my mother some of her dissatisfaction with the mess that the world is in, and some of her versatility. From both I got capacities for work and vision and enjoyment and expression…[19]

Merton was indebted to his father for a vision of the world that "was sane, full of balance, full of veneration for structure …without decoration or superfluous comment." He remembers his father as a "religious man (who) respect(ed) the power of God's creation to bear witness for itself."[20] As we shall see, what Merton remembers of his father and his father's paintings would hold true for his own work as an artist-monk whose primary concern was to reveal the sublime grandeur of a hidden Presence to an age that lacked and sorely needed a new vision of the world for the years that lie ahead.

Merton's life and work can be understood as emerging out of the tension between these two visions of the world. Throughout the years, Merton's literary works have attracted the attention of scholars who observed in his letters, journals, essays, poetry, and photography the mind of an artist exploring, discovering and expressing in those works a new vision of the world that emerges from the convergence of the two.[21] *A Hidden Wholeness / The Visual World of Thomas Merton*, published two years after his death, brought to the public's attention the collaborative work of Merton and his friend, John Howard Griffin. In the prologue, Griffin explains:

> Thomas Merton's art is grounded in this belief that at profound, often imperceived levels "everything connects" — even apparent opposites. He was affronted by what was popularly termed "religious art," or at least by an art manacled to religious externals in such a manner that it cannot be free and true to itself. An art, on the contrary, that penetrated some of the mystery that is internal to reality elicited a deep response from him.[22]

The groundbreaking work of Roger Lipsey opens a deeper inquiry into Merton's search for a hidden wholeness where "everything connects — even apparent opposites." Lipsey's earlier work, *The Spiritual in Twentieth Century Art*, prepared the way for *Angelic Mistakes: The Art of Thomas Merton*. Lipsey notes at the outset Merton's indebtedness to Wassily Kandinsky, father of abstract art. Kandinsky's book, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, published in 1911, explored the possibilities of a new art that would give expression to "two universes in one — the visible universe of matter, space, and time, and an invisible universe of spiritual energies." Lipsey's interest, like that of Kandinsky's, extends beyond the world of art to the loss of deeper dimensions of life in the modern world that had become "dominated by science and material progress, distorted by world wars and totalitarian regimes, and unsure of its metaphysics…"[23]

Merton's search for a hidden wholeness resonated with Lipsey's thoughts on art and spirituality. He recognizes in Merton a person who shared his view of and concern for the world albeit from a different vantage point than that of an artist's studio. There is a close affinity between Lipsey's artist in search for the deeper dimensions of life and Merton's vocation as

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[19] *The Seven Storey Mountain,* 3-4.

[20] *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 3.

[21] The following publications represent inquiries into Merton as an artist: Victor Kramer, *Thomas Merton: Monk and Artist* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cisterican Publications, 1987); Ross Labrie, *The Art of Thomas Merton* (Texas: Texas Christian Press, 1979); Marie Theresa Coombs, *Mystery Hidden yet Revealed: a Study of the Interrelationship of Transcendence, Self-actualization and Creative Expression, with Reference to the Lives and the Works of Thomas Merton and Georgia O'Keeffe* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003); Debra Prasad Patnak, ed., *Geography of Holiness: The Photography of Thomas Merton* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980).

[22] Thomas Merton and John Howard Griffin, *A Hidden Wholeness / The Visual World of Thomas Merton* (Georgia: Norman S. Berg, 1977), 3.

[23] Lipsey, *The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art*, 3.

a monk striving to look beyond and within, surrendering himself to God, and thereby allowing all preconceived notions to be undone in order to catch a glimpse of a deeper and more profound vision of life. Note Lipsey's description of the artist-monk:

> Traveling those paths with difficulty, the traveler, now a pilgrim, is changed. The spiritual is not an abstract knowledge of cosmos or human nature; it is a renewed discovery, a beginning again and again. The pilgrim gains new eyes, a new feeling for things, a new sense of life, and this newness within cannot help but brighten the world at large and reveal its exquisite order. Then the new way of being fades or abruptly vanishes, together with all that it naturally reveals. The pilgrim is left wondering. However grand all that was, it lasted only a short while and cost a great deal. Is there any reason to go on? Who but a fool would collect *moments* of vision and coherent being, when one obviously needs permanence?[24]

For Lipsey, Merton was a pilgrim-monk, albeit with a vow of stability, whose entire life was a search for God. He was a Fool-for-Christ sustained in his holy quest by brief visions of the One he loved.

Angelic Mistakes focuses on the thirty-four works from nine hundred of Merton's original drawings and calligraphies in the archive at the Thomas Merton Center. Lipsey realized that the collection offered another chapter on the spiritual dimension of twentieth-century art while also providing insight into Merton's lifelong journey.[25] The book is exceptionally well organized, beginning with a foreword by Paul Pearson[26] that provides the biographical background to Merton's interest in art. This brief historical overview focuses on three periods: pen and ink illustrations for novels written during his school days at the Lycee Ingres in Montauban, in 1926; cartoons published in the *Columbia Jester* during his college days at Columbia in the mid-to late-1930s; and the drawings from his hermitage in the 1960s. Lipsey's excellent essay entitled "The Invisible Art of a Highly Visible Man" follows. He traces in greater detail the three periods of Merton's art. His account does not include the illustrations but rather focuses on the college cartoons, early monastic sketches of the Virgin and St. John of the Cross, and the drawing that Merton began in the fall of 1960. Most valuable is Lipsey's tracing out of influences reflected in the drawings that range from Ulfert Wilke in Louisville to Ad Reinhardt in New York to Kasimir Malevich and Vladimir Tatlin in Russia to Tao calligraphers and the Zen master D.T. Suzuki. With regard to Merton's materials and methods, Lipsey offers here and in the appendix an interesting investigation into Merton's hermitage-studio by three professors from the art department at the University of Louisville who worked with him to uncover Merton's process of printmaking.

While all of this information is interesting and helpful, it is when Lipsey turns to the task of interpreting Merton's art that the reading becomes most intriguing. In a brief preface to the drawings, Lipsey explains that the presentation of the drawings in this volume is similar to the layout developed by Merton in *Monks Pond*, a magazine he published from Gethsemani, wherein drawings were juxtaposed with short texts. On the one hand, we are told that the text that has been selected for each of the drawings reflects interior experiences and thoughts that characterized Merton's life in the 1960s. On the other hand, we are warned not to read the texts as "captions" or view the drawings as "illustrations." The drawings are presented on one page and the texts on the opposite. For example, image number five on page 71 resembles an *enso*, that is to say, a prevalent image in Zen art that represents a circle of enlightenment. The brush stroke is bold. The ink is dark. The circle is dynamic. On the facing page, page 70, Lipsey provides a title, *Not a shadow but a sign*, and two quotes, the first quote from *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* and the second from "Answers from Art and Freedom" in *Raid on the Unspeakable*:

> The nineteenth-century European and American realists were so realistic that their pictures were totally unlike what they were supposed to represent. And the first thing wrong with them was, of course, precisely that they were pictures. In any case, nothing resembles reality less than the photograph. Nothing resembles substances less than its shadow. To convey the meaning of something substantial you have to use not a shadow but a sign,

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[24] Lipsey, *The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art*, 9-10.

[25] Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes*, 3.

[26] Dr. Paul M. Pearson is Director and Archivist of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky.

not the imitation but the image. The image is a new and different reality, and of course it does not convey an impression of some object, but the mind of the subject: and that is something else again.

True artistic freedom can never be a matter of sheer willfulness, or arbitrary posturing. It is the outcome of authentic possibilities, understood and accepted in their own terms, not the refusal of the concrete in favor of the purely "interior." In the last analysis, the only valid witness to the artist's creative freedom is his work itself. The artist builds his freedom and forms his own artistic conscience, by the work of his hands. Only when the work is finished can he tell whether or not it was done "freely."

Both the drawing and the two quotes offer "markings" of Merton's journey and formation.[27] The references to "a new and different reality" and "the mind of the subject" direct us to what lies *within* Merton and specifically to his "creative freedom" as an artist-monk. The "new and different reality" is not created by the artist but rather *witnessed* by the artist as "spontaneous forms from nowhere."

We now turn to "Signatures: Notes on the Author's Drawings" that Lipsey places in the book just before the thirty-four drawings. It was originally published in *Raids on the Unspeakable* in 1966. Previous to this publication, the essay was presented as gallery notes for the exhibition of selected drawings. Merton begins by saying what the drawings are not. They are not works of art or polemics against art. The viewer is not to look for traces of irony. Nor will s/he recognize familiar categories or be able to say this is a drawing of this or that. More importantly, he goes on to say what the drawings are. They are described as "signs without prearrangement, figures of reconciliation, notes of harmony, inventions perhaps, but not in the sense of 'findings' arrived at by the contrived agreement of idea and execution." While he appears to be clarifying the nature and purpose of these "abstractions," he eventually moves away from a specific definition and eventually decides "one might call them *graffiti* rather than calligraphies" that summon the viewer to "awareness, but not to 'awareness of.'"[28]

Why does Merton choose to describe his drawings as *graffiti*? While he makes reference to other definitions, saying it may be like this or that, terms familiar to us from various artistic traditions, he chooses *graffiti*. It is a far more public genre than abstract paintings displayed in museums or calligraphies shelved in libraries and monasteries. Graffiti are public statements spontaneously scribbled *outside* in the open on the sides of trains, bridges, and vacant buildings. It is important to point out that these drawings even exist outside the church. As Lipsey points out, they were conceived and presented "at a certain inner distance from the church . . . and settled, instead, in an ecumenical, cross-cultural terrain where it awaited its audience."[29] As monk-artist, Merton situates himself outside all institutions, on the border between those institutions and a larger and all-encompassing Reality that he directly grasped as the source of life and creativity. For this reason, Merton refers to the drawings as extending "beyond language."[30] Furthermore, he wants us to see the drawings as "signatures of someone not around" who lives "in the desert"[31] "collaborating with solitude,"[32] contracting with the movement of Life, and witnessing to the One who is hidden yet present.[33]

While *Angelic Mistakes* opens another and important perspective on Merton's vocation as a monk, does it provide any insight into his monastic vocation and vision of the world redeemed in Christ? The simple answer is *yes* provided we

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[27] Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes*, 59.

[28] Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes*, 61.

[29] Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes*, 8-9.

[30] Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes,* 50, 51.

[31] Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes*, 39, 41.

[32] Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes*, 3.

[33] Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes*, 42. Regarding Merton's relationship to his potential audience, Lipsey writes, "Merton surrounded his visual art with as many walls, trip wires, and rabbit traps as he could think of to keep interpreters away. The images are not 'drawings of,' he said. They are 'summonses to awareness' but 'not to awareness of.' In case we still miss the point, he insisted that 'their "meaning" is not to be sought on the level of convention or of concept' and 'there is no need to categorize these marks.' They are 'signatures of someone who is not around.'" In other words, no interpretation is appropriate and no artist is available for discussion. This is the situation as we approach the engaging task of interpreting his art. We are unwelcome." *Angelic Mistakes*, 43.

clarify what we mean. He does not provide a vision but rather invokes the vision with seemingly "innocent" graffiti that sabotage our carefully constructed worldviews to catch a glimpse of a Presence, hidden yet at work, creating, sustaining, and redeeming Life. So, what kind of monk was Merton? It is becoming increasingly clear that he was an artist-monk who, like many artists before him, was driven by a vision beyond his immediate grasp but nonetheless captive of his heart.

Social Critic

This "glimpsing" was not confined to the monastic enclosure. In *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Merton provides an account of an experience at the corner of Fourth and Walnut in Louisville, Kentucky. This is recognized as a turning point in his life that would significantly refocus his writings on prayer and contemplation to include war and peace, race and justice, and other social issues facing humankind in the coming decades.

> In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness. The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream. Not that I question the reality of my vocation, or of my monastic life: but the conception of "separate from the world" that we have in the monastery too easily presents itself as a complete illusion: the illusion that by making vows we become a different species of being, pseudo-angels, "spiritual men," men of interior life, what have you.[34]

No longer seeing himself separate from the world, Merton not only entered the world but brought with him the unique vantage point of a monk with a prophetic outlook. It has often been noticed that Merton anticipated in his writings many of the challenges presently facing the Church and in the world with surprising insight.[35] This is particularly true with regard to the present environmental crisis. From the distant vantage point of knobs of Kentucky, he was able to observe the environmental problem that was looming over the horizon.

In "Rain and the Rhinoceros" Merton describes a rainy day in the hermitage. This account is important for it shows how his daily life and his experience of nature intersect to reveal an awareness of the natural world that he knew to be missing for his contemporaries.

> Let me say this before rain becomes a utility that they can plan and distribute for money. By "they" I mean the people who cannot understand that rain is a festival, who do not appreciate its gratuity, who think that what has no price has no value, that what cannot be sold is not real, so that the only way to make something *actual* is to place it on the market. The time will come when they will sell you even your rain. At the moment it is still free, and I am in it. I celebrate its gratuity and its meaninglessness.

> The rain I am in is not like the rain of cities. It fills the woods with an immense and confused sound. It covers the flat roof of the cabin and its porch with inconsistent and controlled rhythms. And I listen, because it reminds me again and again that the whole world runs by rhythms I have not yet learned to recognize, rhythms that are not those of the engineer.

> I came up here from the monastery last night, sloshing through the cornfield, said Vespers, and put some oatmeal on the Coleman stove for supper. It boiled over while I was listening to the rain and toasting a piece of bread at the log fire. The night became very dark. The rain surrounded the whole cabin with its enormous virginal myth, a whole world of meaning, of secrecy, of silence, of rumor. Think of it: all that speech pouring down, selling nothing, judging nobody, drenching the thick mulch of dead leaves, soaking the trees, filling

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[34] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 140-1.

[35] Over the years there have been important works on Merton as social critic: Robert Incausti's *Thomas Merton's American Prophecy* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998); James Thomas Baker's *Thomas Merton Social Critic* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009); and Robert Nugent's *Silence Speaks: Teilhard de Chardin, Yves Congar, John Courtney Murray and Thomas Merton* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2011).

the gullies and crannies of the wood with water, washing out the places where men have stripped the hillside! What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone, in the forest, at night, cherished by the wonderful unintelligible, perfectly innocent speech, the most comforting speech in the world, the talk that rain makes by itself all over the ridges, and the talk of the watercourses everyone in the hollows![36]

By invoking in the title a reference to Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, Merton compares the "they" in his essay with the characters in the theatrical production who lose their humanity by running blindly with the herd. For Merton, blindness was not the only problem underlying the social issues of the twentieth century. Without the interior silence to which Merton witnesses here, the voice of nature goes unheard. Blind and deaf, we strip hillsides, pollute streams, and destroy natural habitats. This spiritual disability presents another and equally devastating effect. We will no longer hear or catch glimpses of "a whole world of meaning, of secrecy, of silence, of rumor." For Merton the outer world and the interior life are not separate and unrelated. On the contrary, nature and humanity share an intimate relationship. This blending of inner and outer geography is reflected in his art, writings and, most importantly, his life. The integrating of geographies played a significant role in the unfolding transformation of Merton's consciousness, spirituality, and vision.[37]

Weis's study of Merton's concern for the environment first found expression in a 2005 publication entitled *Thomas Merton's Gethsemani; Landscape of Paradise*.[38] In 2011, she would publish a more comprehensive study with *The Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton*. Focusing on the connection between Merton's spirituality and his emerging ecological consciousness, this publication brings to our attention the necessity to "see" the world in a direct and immediate manner that is characteristic of contemplatives and poets. With regard to the connection between Merton's spirituality as a Cistercian monk and his concern for the environment, Fr. James Conner in the foreword to this book writes:

> "*Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei*": "The heavens proclaim the glory of God; and the firmament shows forth His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). Thomas Merton chanted these words from the psalms almost every week for the twenty-seven years of his monastic life. These, along with many other expressions found in the psalms, served to deepen Merton's awareness of creation as a manifestation of God in the world.[39]

Conner draws to our attention the way in which technology is one of the main obstacles to contemplation and the ability to see the world clearly, beyond abstractions and illusions — abstractions and illusions that result in the degradation of the natural world:

> Merton shows that it will be impossible to take part in this dance (of creation) so long as we view creation and other people simply as objects; doing so removes the seer from direct contact with the reality he or she sees. Merton illustrates this by contrasting the way a child views a tree — a vision "which utterly simple, uncolored by prejudice, and 'new'" — with the lumberman's vision "entirely conditioned by profit motives and considerations of business." He says that "this *exaggeration* of the subject-object relationship by material interest and technical speculation is one of the main obstacles to contemplation."[40]

While both points made by Conner clearly articulate the relationship between the way in which the contemplative life opens the eyes to a clear and direct vision of the world and nature in its own right, the second paragraph underscores the challenge presented by the technological age to seeing life in a deeper and more authentic way, and this is the problem that *The Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton* addresses. As a consequence, the book not only offers a major contribution to Merton studies but to environmental studies that seek to understand and address a social problem that threatens the future of our planet.

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[36] Thomas Merton, "Rain and the Rhinoceros" in *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1964), 9.

[37] Weis, *The Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton*, 97-98.

[38] Harry L. Hinkle, Jonathan Montaldo and Monica Weis, *Thomas Merton's Gethsemani; Landscape of Paradise* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005).

[39] Weis, *The Environmental Vision*, ix.

[40] Weis, *The Environmental Vision*, ix.

Weis focuses on "touchstone" moments in Merton's life. These brief moments in time are recognized as transformative "flashes of vision" and "spurts of spiritual growth" for Merton.[41] Consequently, each moment contributed to Merton's formation as a monk and opened for him a vision of a hidden wholeness. We will only touch on two.

The first chapter is entitled "Encountering Rachel Carson; Environmentalist and Provocateur." In 1963, Merton read Carson's *Silent Spring*. Soon afterwards he wrote Carson a letter. Weis sees this encounter as an "epiphanic event" in Merton's life. Merton's letter reveals his appreciation for Carson's timely book, his concern for "*both* birds and people," and his belief that the environmental crisis was part of a much larger problem. Merton writes:

> We dare to use our titanic power in a way that threatens not only civilization but life itself. The same mental processing, I almost said mental illness, seems to be at work in both cases, and your book makes it clear to me that there is a *consistent pattern* running through everything that we do, through every aspect of our culture, our thought, our economy, our whole way of life. What this pattern is I cannot say clearly, but I believe it is now the most vitally important thing for all of us … to try to arrive at a clear, cogent statement of our ills, so that we may begin to correct them…. It seems that our remedies are instinctively those which aggravate the sickness: *the remedies are expressions of the sickness itself*. I would almost dare to say that the sickness is perhaps a very real and very dreadful hatred of life.[42]

The tone and message here is reminiscent of the opening paragraph in *Seven Storey Mountain*. Once again, the vision of a world imprisoned in its own fear and hatred is set before us. This vision of the world, however, does not stand alone. Merton continues to collect moments of a deeper vision of things.

Another touchstone moment considered by Weis is the experience at Fourth and Walnut on the 19th of March 1958. The vision that emerged at that moment was, as already noted, significant for Merton. After narrating an account of the event, Merton explains its significance:

> Again, that expression, *le point vierge*, (I cannot translate it) comes in here. At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of *absolute poverty* is the pure glory of God in us. It is so to speak His name written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependence, as our sonship. It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely …. I have no program for this seeing. It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.[43]

The epiphany in Louisville provided for Merton insight into humanity's relationship with God that in his words makes "all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish." The hidden wholeness that he has sought from his earliest years is here revealed and eventually becomes for him an understanding of God as the hidden ground of Love.[44] This awareness of the *point of nothingness* underlying all things was essential to Merton's formation as a monk and central to the vision he wished to impart to the world. He found in the notion of *le point vierge* an insight that influenced his approach to social issues.

Weis's skillful unfolding of Merton's environmental consciousness reveals a vision of "life itself, fully awake, fully alive, fully aware that it is alive." She carefully clarifies the ways in which vision *informed* Merton's interior life. His interior

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[41] Weis, *The Environmental Vision*, 3.

[42] Weis, *The Environmental Vision*, 12-14.

[43] Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 142.

[44] In a letter to Amiya Chakravarty dated the 13th of April 1967, Merton writes: "The reality that is present to us and in us: call it Being, call it Atman, call it Pneuma … or Silence. And the simple fact that by being attentive, by listening to listen (or recovering the natural capacity to listen which cannot be learned any more than breathing), we can find ourself engulfed in such happiness that it cannot be explained: the happiness of being at one with everything in that hidden ground of Love for which there can be no explanations." See Merton, *Hidden Ground of Love*, 115.

landscape became one with the woods thereby creating within him a "spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being."[45] To illustrate, Weis quotes Merton's reflections on the season of Lent wherein nature and spiritual formation resonant with one another:

> The first Sunday of Lent, as I now know, is a great feast. Christ has sanctified the desert and in the desert I discovered it. The woods have all become young in the discipline of spring, but it is the discipline of expectancy only. Which one cut more keenly? The February sunlight or the air? There are no buds. Buds are not guessed or even thought of this early in Lent. But the wilderness shines with promise. The land is first in simplicity and strength. Everything foretells the coming of the holy spring. I had never before spoken freely or so intimately with woods, hills, buds, water and sky. On this great day, however, they understood their position and they remained mute in the presence of the Beloved. Only His light was obvious and eloquent. My brother and sister, the light and the water. The stump and the stone. The tables of rock. The blue, naked sky. Tractor tracks, a little waterfall. And Mediterranean solitude. I thought of Italy after my Beloved had spoken and was gone.[46]

The environment is no longer seen as simply the context in which we live or a resource for commerce but rather a sacrament of God's presence in nature sanctified by Christ. It is through the witness of the woods becoming "young in the discipline of spring" that we enter into the "expectancy" of our interior wilderness that like February days "foretells the coming of the holy spring." Any distinction between humanity and nature is gone; we have become one with "the light and the water" whom Merton addresses and encourages us to address as "brother and sister." Merton's vision of the world is intimate, full of wonder and awe, graced with the Presence of his Beloved. The closing line recalls a moment described in *The Seven Storey Mountain* when, as a college student visiting churches in Rome, Merton's vision of Christ was first formed.[47]

Monk

As noted at the outset of this essay, Cunningham and Shannon indicate that any inquiry into Merton's life and work must keep in mind that he was first and foremost a monk whose vision of the world was cultivated by monastic practices. Monastic life in the Trappist tradition was the most significant formative factor for Merton. While an artist and social critic, his work was rooted in a life centered in Christ. This is most evident from the talks he gave at Gethsemani. From October of 1955 until April of 1965 Merton gave weekly conferences to the young monks. Patrick O'Connell has been editing Merton's notes from those conferences. The sixth volume provides Merton's thoughts on the Benedictine vows of obedience, stability, and conversion of life. It becomes clear from the notes that Merton understood that the ultimate purpose of the vows is the "restoration of one's authentic identity as made in the divine image and the unconditional gift of this true self to its Creator."[48] Christian monasticism was clearly the primary formative factor in his life.

At the end of the prologue to *The Sign of Jonas*, his second journal book that narrates his initial years in the monastery, Merton writes:

> The sign of Jesus promised to the generation that did not understand Him was the "sign of Jonas the prophet" — that is, the sign of His own resurrection. The life of every monk, of every priest, of every Christian is signed with the sign of Jonas, because we all live by the power of Christ's resurrection. But I feel that my own life is especially sealed with this great sign, which baptism and monastic profession and priestly ordination have burned into the roots of my being, because like Jonas himself I find myself traveling toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox.[49]

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[45] Weis, *The Environmental Vision*, 5.

[46] Weis, *The Environmental Vision*, 105.

[47] *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 109.

[48] Patrick F. O'Connell, ed. *The Life of the Vows, volume six in Initiation into the Monastic Tradition*, (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2012), liii.

[49] Merton, *Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), 11.

For Merton, to be a monk meant living the question of what it meant to be a monk. Recognizing that he did not satisfy the definition of monk as defined by others, he was nonetheless committed to being true to his own graces and tasks.[50] And that would mean embracing those paradoxes that had become apparent to him. He was a silent monk whose voice was heard around the world. He was a solitary hermit who stood in solidarity with all humanity. He was a pilgrim lost in the world on his journey to God leaving along the way journal entries, letters, poetry, essays, and graffiti. Those roadside notes reveal that he was never able to say exactly what kind of monk he was. This, however, turned out to be a grace that sustained him. The ambiguities and paradoxes of his vocation contributed to Merton's formation as a monk with a vow of poverty leaving him with only one precious pearl…desire for God.[51]

For Merton, the underlying source of problems facing the modern world is the loss of Wisdom. In order to fully appreciate Merton's focus on Wisdom as the hidden ground of his life and work, we turn our attention to Merton's beautiful prose poems, *Hagia Sophia*. It begins with *Dawn. The Hour of Lauds*:

> There is in all visible things an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness. This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom, the Mother of all, *Natura naturans*. There is in all things an inexhaustible sweetness and purity, a silence that is a fount of action and joy. It rises up in wordless gentleness and flows out to me from the unseen roots of all created being, welcoming me tenderly, saluting me with indescribable humility. This is at once my own being, my own nature, and the Gift of my Creator's Thought and Art within me, speaking Hagia Sophia, speaking as my sister, Wisdom

> ….It is like the One Christ awakening in all the separate selves that ever were separate and isolated and alone in all the lands of the earth. It is like all minds coming back together into awareness from all distractions, cross-purposed and confusions, into unity of love. It I like the first morning of the world (when Adam, at the sweet voice of Wisdom awoke from nonentity and knew her), and like the Last Morning of the world when all the fragments of Adam will return from death at the voice of Hagia Sophia, and will know where they stand.[52]

As is readily evident from these few lines, here is the beginning of Merton's vision of Christ in the world. It is the vision of a contemplative created from moments of insight woven together by a brilliant intellect and a highly imaginative artist. And, as is equally evident, it is a vision emerging from Merton's lifelong experience extending back to his earliest years as a child of bohemian artists. Consequently, this vision is essential to understanding the depth of his vocation as a monk. Any effort to define what kind of monk he was must begin here.

Hagia Sophia is the focus of Christopher Pramuk's recent inquiry into Merton's Christology.[53] In *Sophia: The Hidden Christ of Thomas Merton* Pramuk draws our attention to the Christ that was the center of Merton's life and the focus of his work. Here we are introduced to the unseen Christ who was for Merton "a Love and a Presence that breaks through into the world, a living symbol and Name" through which the living God is encountered. It was this reality that Merton "chose, at his poetic and prophetic best, to structure theological discourse."[54] Pramuk weaves together theology, philosophy, and literature in order to discern and express the complex patterns of Merton's thought in this poem. His inquiry into the influence of Russian Sophia tradition on *Hagia Sophia* provides an exegetical commentary that reveals the maturing of Merton's theology.

Noting a journal entry from the 25th of April 1957, Pramuk points to Merton's admiration for Bulgakov and Berdyaev's courage to risk mistakes in an effort to "say something great and worthy of God."[55] For Merton, their works revealed

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[50] Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life*, 98.

[51] Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1958), 83.

[52] Pramuk, *Sophia*, 301.

[53] *The Merton Annual*, 23, eds. Gray Matthews and David Belcastro, celebrated Pramuk's book with a review symposium. The book was reviewed by three Merton scholars: Daniel Horan, Edward Kaplan, and Lynn Szabo. The symposium ends with Pramuk's response. An earlier study of his Christology is George Kilcourse, *Ace of Freedoms; Thomas Merton's Christology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

[54] Pramuk, *Sophia*, xxiii.

[55] Pramuk, *Sophia*, 11.

"profound insights into the real meaning of Christianity — which we cannot simply ignore."[56] Those profound insights contributed significantly to Merton's imagination and intellect in the creation of *Hagia Sophia* and his vision of Christ in the world.

The journal entry not only informs our appreciation of the poem but also reveals something of importance regarding Merton. He too was willing to risk mistakes. He too sought to say something great and worthy of God. And, he too was aware that whatever was revealed regarding God would result in profound insights into Christianity. The entry continues:

> Most important of all — man's creative vocation to prepare, consciously, the ultimate triumph of Divine Wisdom. Man, the microcosm, the heart of the universe, is the one who is called to bring about the fusion of cosmic and historic process in the final invocation of God's wisdom and love. In the name of Christ and by his power, man has worked to accomplish….Our life is a powerful Pentecost in which the Holy Spirit, ever active in us, seeks to reach through our inspired hands and tongues into the very heart of the material world created to be spiritualized through the work of the Church, the Mystical Body of the Incarnate Word of God.[57]

Merton's words say much about his monastic vocation and vision of the world redeemed in Christ. What kind of monk was he? He was a monk who turned his inspired hands as a writer and artist to the difficult task of awakening humanity to the spiritual dimensions of life. This becomes most apparent while reading *Hagia Sophia.*

Fortunately for the reader, the poem is included in its entirety at the end of the book.[58] Pramuk draws the reader's attention time and again to the poem. Consequently, the reader returns to the poem, less with an analytical mind than a contemplative one to catch a glimpse of the hidden Christ to whom Merton bears witnesses. This reading experience underscores what makes this book on Merton's Christology uniquely important. It is not simply a book about Merton's understanding a theological doctrine but an invitation to an experiential approach to Christology. This is what we have come to expect from a monk who was primarily concerned with the transformation of the human heart and mind enlightened by Wisdom. The book is thus more than a theological study for scholars. It makes theology relevant and available to the lives of persons who seek, as Milosz noted, a vision of the world redeemed in Christ.[59]

As a personal rather than simply an intellectual inquiry, Pramuk traces the emergence of Sophia in Merton's life and writings. Pramuk presents Merton's Christology as a story-shaped theology of God retrieved from Merton's life as presented in his journals, letters, essays, and poetry. Here we see Merton as awakened time and again by the mysterious figure of Sophia. Pramuk explains:

> First, there was a dream (February 28, 1958) in which a young Jewish girl named "Proverb" came to embrace him, a dream Merton later confessed to the Russian poet and novelist Boris Pasternak (October 23, 1958). She then came to him in the crossroads of a great city (March 18, 1958), the much-celebrated epiphany at the crossroads of Fourth and Walnut in Louisville, Kentucky. She found him again in the burning woods near Gethsemani (March 19, 1959), this time in the faces of local farm children, "poor little Christs with holes in their pants and … sweet, sweet voices." Over a year later, (July 2, 1960), on the Feast of Visitation, she came in the guise of a nurse, whose gentle whispers awakened him early one morning as he lay in the hospital. The experience strangely prefigured Merton's encounter with "M.," the nurse with whom he would fall in love in the spring of 1966: "At 5:30, as I was dreaming, in a very quiet hospital, the soft voice of the nurse awoke me gently from my dream — and it was like awakening for the first time from all the dreams of my life — as if

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[56] Pramuk, *Sophia*, 12.

[57] Pramuk, *Sophia*, 12.

[58] *Sophia: The Hidden Christ of Thomas Merton* includes seven of Merton's drawings placed at the outset of the Preface and following six chapters. They include images of a woman (Mary/Sophia), mother and child, and Christ unveiling the Old Testament/Sophia. The book also includes with the poem a line-cut of Victor Hammer's triptych painting of "Hagia Sophia Crowning the Young Christ." Merton saw the triptych while at the Hammer's home for lunch.

[59] The importance of Pramuk's book for lay persons became evident when a local Merton Study Group read the book over the course of a year. Without exception, the consensus was that it was the most significant book that they had read in years. This is a tribute to both Merton and Pramuk whose respect and concern for the reader is most apparent.

the Blessed Virgin herself, as if Wisdom had awakened me. We do not hear the soft voice, the gentle voice, the feminine voice, the voice of the Mother: yet she speaks to everyone and in everything. Wisdom cries out in the market place — "if anyone is little let him come to me."[60]

The author identifies and clarifies the significance of these epiphanies during the last decade of Merton's life. In so doing, he stresses two important insights that are true not only with reference to Merton's Christology but also to the intention of Merton's vocation as a monk committed to sharing with the world the redemption for which humanity longs. The vision of Sophia, the Hidden Christ, is not an abstraction but rather a reality deeply integrated in the very fabric of every aspect of life: religion, politics, economics, and various social issues. Furthermore, it is not limited to a moment of enlightenment but "an experience or event of being embraced by love and mercy, *the warmth of her embrace and of her heart.*"[61]

This personal experience of God was essential to Merton's life and work. As noted by Pramuk, "If we keep in mind the social and intellectual fragmentation of the 1960's, irruptions never far from Merton's view, it is enough to truly wonder, how did the center hold for Merton? What kept him from falling apart?"[62] The situation was particularly challenging for this was an "era in which a thousand voices proclaim, many quite credibly, that there really is *no center.*"[63] The search for a center was at the heart of Merton's pilgrimage. The monastery was the desert in which the journey took place. And, it was there that he discovered Christ, not as a theological idea but as a living reality of the hidden and unseen Christ/Sophia at work in the world. It was because of his awareness of this inclusive Presence that Merton was free to embrace the world. Merton's expansive vision of God's redemptive work in Christ/Sophia witnesses to a world in which humanity and nature are embraced as brother and sister.[64] This Christology, so skillfully retrieved from the Merton corpus and beautifully represented by Pramuk, was the heart of a monk whose vision opened possibilities for the world as it prepared to move into the 21st century.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay, we have observed the convergence of two questions. On the one hand, what kind of monk was Merton? On the other hand, what was his vision of the world redeemed in Christ? Lipsey, Weis, and Pramuk have each provided valuable perspectives on Merton's monastic vocation and together provide an image of Merton far more complicated than first presented by Alred Graham in 1953. Simply stated, he was a monk who revealed in his life and work a vision of the world redeemed in Christ. Drawing on his multiple talents as writer and artist, he sought to share that vision with the world. His concern for and commitment to that world extended the vision to all aspects of modern society with prophetic insight that remains relevant to readers today. Perhaps most importantly, we have seen that he was a Christian monk within the Cistercian tradition of the Roman Catholic Church who labored long and hard to be a faithful servant to his Lord. Whatever may be added to our understanding of Merton legacy in the future, this must not be forgotten or diminished. Those who may have reservations regarding his faithfulness need only to read Merton's essay on Clement of Alexandria, a Church Father whom he greatly admired:

> The voice of Clement is the voice of one who fully penetrates the mystery of *pascha Chrisiti*, the Christian exodus from this world in and with the Risen Christ. He was the full triumphant sense of victory that is authentically and perfectly Christian: a victory over death, over sin, over the confusions and dissensions of this world, with its raging cruelty and its futile concerns. A victory which leads not to contempt of man and of the world, but on the contrary to a true, pure, serene love, filled with compassion, able to discover and to "save" for Christ all that is good and noble in man, in society, in philosophy and in humanistic culture. This is the

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[60] Pramuk, *Sophia*, 13.

[61] Pramuk, *Sophia*, 19.

[62] Pramuk, *Sophia*, 2.

[63] Pramuk, *Sophia*, 27.

[64] Pramuk, *Sophia*, 285.

greatness and genius of Clement, who was no Desert Father. He lived in the midst of Alexandria, moved amid its crowds, knew its intellectual elite, and loved them all in Christ.[65]

As was true for Clement of Alexandria, so was it for Thomas Merton. Both men, devoted to Christ, loved their fellow citizens without reservation or discrimination, seeking to realize with their generation a world redeemed by God in Christ.

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[65] Clement of Alexandria, *Selections from The Protreptikos* (New York: New Directions, 1962).

Pope Francis's Strong Thought

by Keith Edward Lemna

Does a literature review of the most serious writings about or from Pope Francis confirm him to be a champion of "pragmatic" Christianity in the mold of "weak thought"? "Weak thought" (*pensiero debole*), the invention of the Italian atheist and nihilist Catholic Gianni Vattimo, is the most self-aware and logically consistent form of contemporary, progressive Christian (a-)theology.[1] It is, of course, not known to the run of journalists or editorialists in the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, "weak thought" underlies the prospect for the Catholic Church's future that journalists and media personalities, not to mention many Catholic academicians, thrill to when they assess Pope Francis.

"Weak thought" would empty the counsels of the Roman Catholic Church of any claim to divinely given authority, whether to teach, to preach, or to sanctify through the communion of its sacraments. "Weak thinking" by the Catholic bishops, united to the Bishop of Rome, would disclaim definitive interpretation of the Gospel, and *for that reason* would constitute, on Vattimo's account, a profoundly Christian configuration to the self-emptying or *kenosis* of Christ on Calvary, whereby he himself definitively gave up all claims to the prerogatives of divinity.

Consequently, "weak thought" should lead the Church to reinterpret its teachings in the arena of marriage, family, "gender," and life issues. Where the Church's traditional teaching enters into sharpest conflict with present-day European and North American social norms, there "weak thinking" will resign the "metaphysical violence" of *Überwindung* — of "overcoming" — in favor of *Verwindung* — of "tension," "twisting," "accommodation," "*healing*." "Weak thought" privatizes religion, moving it away from adherence to authoritative norms or principles and in the direction of social dialogue and edification. Santiago Zabala, a proponent of Vattimo's work, describes the direction that "weak thought" would take the papacy:

> Today, there are few Catholics who do not favor freedom of decision regarding birth control, the marriage of priests, the ordination of women, the free election of bishops by priests, the use of condoms as a precaution against AIDS, the admission to communion of divorcees who remarry, the legalization of abortion; above all, there are few who do not believe that it is possible to be a good Catholic and publicly disagree with the teachings of the Church. If the Catholic Church is to have a future as an institution in the twenty-first century, it will require a papacy that is not above the world, as the head of the Church, but in the Church as, in the words of Pope Gregory the Great, the "servant of the servants of God." The Catholic Church no longer needs primacy in law and honor; it needs a constructive pastoral primacy, in the sense of a spiritual guide, concentrating on the duties required by the present...[2]

In sum, Zabala sees a "post-metaphysical," "weak" papacy as little more than a dialogue partner for Western Europeans and North Americans, the function of which would be to consecrate the emerging secular, anthropological consensus that has come about in some ways apart from and in stark contrast to the Catholic Church's teachings.

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[1] For a summary of Vattimo's views, see: Gianni Vattimo, *Belief*, tr. Luca D'Asanto and David Webb (Stanford University Press, 1999); Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo, *The Future of Religion*, ed. Santiago Zabala (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Thomas Guarino, *Vattimo and Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009); Thomas Guarino, "The Return of Religion in Europe? The Postmodern Religion of Gianni Vattimo," *Logos* 14:2 (2009): 15-36.

[2] In Rorty and Vattimo, *The Future of Religion*, 16.

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Does the papacy of Pope Francis fit into this mold? In this essay, I shall suggest that, so far, books about Pope Francis lead us to think that it is not so very clear whether he is, or at least might become (through what is considered to be his admirable open-mindedness) a champion of a sort of "weak thought." On the other hand, I shall suggest, books that give us direct access to his writings disclose a Francis who commands a more robust, metaphysical, "stronger" Christian thinking than Vattimo would approve on any level. Yet, I will suggest in conclusion, even these books do not completely dispel what the journalists have told us about him, for there is indeed "weakness" in Pope Francis's "strength."

Certainly, Pope Francis has become a veritable superstar celebrity in the eyes of journalists, and his penchant for populist theology and spirituality has earned him the loving admiration of those who daily throng St. Peter's Square to hear him speak. In the United States, he has already been featured on the cover of *Time Magazine* (as 2013 "Person of the Year"), *Rolling Stone Magazine*, and even *The Advocate*, hardly traditional bastions of support for the Roman Catholic Church. Such publications generally understand Francis to be the great "liberal" reformer of Catholicism, who is indeed willing to set aside claims to divine authority, to make the Church's "official" thinking "weaker" in Vattimo's sense. By their accounts, Francis embodies a desperately needed correction to the malign legacy of his two immediate predecessors, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, who sought to revive an "authoritarian" papacy, to subvert the "spirit" of the reformist Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), convened by Pope John XXIII. These two "retrograde" pontiffs, as the media narrative would have it, closed the windows to the modern world that John XXIII had wanted to throw wide open; they thwarted John's intention that the Church reach accommodation with the democratized and pragmatic sensibilities of contemporary Western Europeans and North Americans, particularly in regard to the sexual revolution. Pope Francis, in presumably taking up again the mantle of John XXIII, has taken on the aura of "superpope," agent of a "transformative" papacy, a notion that Francis himself has acknowledged and publicly deplored.[3]

This sort of picture of Pope Francis — as atheist who will put an end to the Church (see the infamous remarks of big-media personality Bill Maher[4]), as champion of "weak thought," or, even as emissary of what has been called the most popular religion in the United States, "moralistic therapeutic deism" (a kind of spontaneous cultural expression of the instinctive, populist, American version of "weak thought"[5]) — might seem implausible on its face. There are those, media adulators aside, who might hope that a review of the literature on the Pope's life and thinking would dispel this kind of fantasizing. Nevertheless, the most pertinent secondary literature on Francis so far tends to encourage the view of a Pope who is uniquely open to the "weak Gospel" of Vattimo's theorizing. From the outset of his papacy, books have been rushed into print, sounding out, often in subtle ways, the hope for a "weaker" Church, a Church of dialogue without proclamation, a Church of the suffering humanity of Jesus, his eternal divinity "bracketed" or discounted altogether.

Very soon after Francis's election, the well-known Vatican-watcher Andrea Torinelli, who had known him as Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires, published what seemed to be a very innocuous book on the new pope.[6] The book contains some interesting biographical tidbits and a lengthy rehearsal of journalistic rumor-mongering

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[3] "Pope Francis Grants Inverview to Italian Daily Corriere della serra," Vatican Radio, last modified March 5, 2014, accessed May 13, 2014, http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/03/05/pope_francis_grants_interview_to_italian_daily_corriere_della_sera/en1-778625

[4] "Bill Maher: The Pope's an Atheist, and the Vatican Will Likely Poison Him," National Catholic Register, last modified June 2, 2013, accessed May 13, 2014, http://www.ncregister.com/blog/matthew-archbold/bill-maher-the-popes-an-atheist-and-the-vatican-will-likely-poison-him

[5] "The Francis Factor," The Archdiocese of Baltimore, accessed May 13, 2014, http://www.archbalt.org/about-us/francis-factor-omalley.cfm. Archbishop O'Malley is at pains to insist in this presentation on Pope Francis that the latter is not, in fact, a "moralistic therapeutic deist," as some have made him out to be. The expression comes from Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: the Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

[6] Andrea Torinelli, *Jorge Mario Bergoglio: Pope of a New World*, tr. William J. Melcher (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013). In a similar vein, one might also point to a book by John Allen Jr., *Against the Tide: The Radical Leadership of Pope Francis* (Liguori, MO: Ligouri Press, 2014). This book is a bit more updated than Torinelli's but written in the same vein. See also, Matthew E. Brunson, *Pope Francis* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 2013). This book gave a nice early look at Pope Francis and does a nice job detailing his Argentinian background and without any detectable ecclesio-political slant.

concerning the conclave that elected him. It is written in a perfunctory hagiographical style, and in many ways provides a nice, initial, popular introduction to Bergoglio's life and his pastoral sensibilities.

However, Torinelli's work also presents a subtle "hermeneutic of weakness" regarding the Pope's thought and character. The book portrays Pope Francis as a pastor who is willing to forego the rigors of Church discipline and doctrine for the sake of concrete pastoral exigencies. One almost senses a sigh of relief on Torinelli's part in this regard, because the previous two popes had stressed so consistently, from the time of Pope John Paul II's first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis* (1978), the anthropological relevance of the Church's doctrinal claims. They forthrightly taught that pastoral practice can be effective only if it communicates a doctrinally correct appreciation of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, John Paul II stressed the universal veracity of the Church's moral norms and the need to recover metaphysics in theology. Pope Benedict XVI, for his part, insisted that only the Trinitarian God affirmed in the ecumenical councils is the God of love, and that charity can flourish only through the living communication, in the sacramental communion of the Church, of Trinitarian doctrine. Torinelli's book, in my opinion, is among the first readings of Pope Francis to signal hope for the dawning of a new era of papal understanding in this regard, an era in which doctrine and praxis will no longer be so thoroughly conjoined. Pastoral praxis will become "weaker"; doctrine, responding to practice, will elevate the "imperatives" of an unmoored loving-kindness over the communication of eternal verities. This "weakening" would in fact be a return, so it is thought, to the guiding pastoral wisdom of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI.

Admittedly, I have read Torinelli's book through the lens of *Vatican Insider*, the renowned, ecclesially themed website of *La Stampa*, the newspaper that employs him. The daily articles of *Vatican Insider* tend to accentuate Pope Francis's "weakness." One can see this by contrasting these daily publications with those of Sandro Magister, the Vaticanist who created the equally renowned website *La Chiesa*, which highlights Pope Francis's strength in standing up to the regnant secular thinking on anthropology. Tellingly, the *Vatican Insider* website has featured the opinions of Leonardo Boff regarding Pope Francis.[7] Boff, a theologian and former Franciscan priest, was once an embattled stalwart of a directly Marxist form of liberation theology. His heterodox ecclesiology earned a silencing under John Paul II, and he is now dedicated to reflecting on environmental ecology. Boff lacks Gianni Vattimo's conceptual rigor and his sophisticated assessment of the history of ideas. However, his prescription for the future of the Church regarding marriage and family, life issues, and the like echoes Vattimo's. Boff is of the opinion, as reported by *Vatican Insider*, that Pope Francis is much closer to his view of things than many assume. Torinelli, for his part, does point out in his book that Pope Francis is doctrinally conservative, but book and website alike are given to the tantalizing prospect that, with Francis, pastoral practice may induce a "weakening" on the side of doctrine.

This hope for a "weak" papacy is spelled out unambiguously by the journalist Paul Vallely, in one of the most substantial books yet devoted to Francis.[8] This book relies on a deeper treasury of research than one finds in Torinelli's initial effort. Predictably, like Torinelli, and like most authors on Pope Francis to this point, Vallely spends a great deal of time discussing the conclave, and gives obligatory background information (now available from myriad sources, including many under review here) on Pope Francis's life. Vallely stresses Francis's experience as Provincial Superior of the Jesuits in Argentina, for his thesis is that Francis's celebrated "open-mindedness," his non-judgmental pastoral attitude, is owing to a conscience troubled by his role in the Argentine junta's "Dirty War" (1976–83) against dissident citizens from the Left.

Vallely's narrative describes the young Jorge Mario Bergoglio, appointed Provincial Superior in 1973, at age 36, as a "conservative," trying to roll back the clock of Jesuit formation to the pre-conciliar hour from which the Jesuits had, in the meantime, moved forward. His involvement in the events of the "Dirty War," which impacted the second half of his term as Provincial (1976–79), Vallely suggests, profoundly shook his convictions. Vallely discusses this thesis in great detail: the "Dirty War" is, he thinks, essential to who Pope Francis is now, for it changed him in a decisive manner.

Allegations that Fr. Borgoglio had been complicit in the actions of the Argentine junta had surfaced in the investigations of the post-junta Alfonsín government (1984), and were revived, widely aired — and widely rebutted — in the immediate

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7 Cf. "With Pope Francis Spring Has Arrived," Vatican Insider, last modified April 29, 2013, accessed May 14 2014, http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/inquiries-and-interviews/detail/articolo/boff-pope-el-papa-24413/.

8 Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

wake of Francis's election. Principal to the allegations was the fate of the Jesuit Frs. Francisco Jalics and Orlando Yorio, who were under Fr. Bergoglio's direct supervision. Somehow denounced as active supporters of leftist guerillas and terrorists, they were kidnapped by the government from the slums in which they ministered to the poor and were imprisoned and tortured. Set free after five long months of harrowing captivity, they were convinced that Fr. Bergoglio had been at least in part responsible for their ordeal.

Pope Francis has consistently and publicly denied complicity in their kidnapping. He claims to have intervened directly with the military government for their release, at least in secret, although some dispute this account. Torinelli dismisses unequivocally charges that Pope Francis was complicit in these matters, but Vallely lingers on the issue. Did Pope Francis aid or abet the military regime's "Dirty War," especially in regard to the Jesuit priests under his care as Provincial Superior? Vallely comes to the conclusion that he generally worked clandestinely and in secret for the good of the priests under his charge and for others. However, he suggests that Pope Francis suffers from bad or at least ambiguous conscience about his conduct. Could he have done more? Should he have been more public in his opposition to the military regime? These are surely, Vallely thinks, questions that run through the Pope's mind.

In much of the second half of his book, Vallely draws the portrait of a pope driven by a troubled conscience to be more "open-minded" about movements in the Church, such as liberation theology or radical pastoral outreach to the poor, that, prior to the "Dirty War," he had been inclined to dismiss on principle. Bad conscience seems to make for good ministry. Vallely appears to suggest that we might expect Francis's open-mindedness to extend to other issues as well. Who knows what such open-mindedness might be inclined to embrace as the Church moves forward? The pope, once a bit stodgy and retrograde, has seen the (literally) potentially fatal error of his previous intransigence. He has become, one might say, "weaker," in imitation of the Suffering Servant who renounced his divinity.

Vallely's portrait of Pope Francis in this regard is not as crudely drawn as many offered by his colleagues in the mass media, but he does, it seems to me, prop it up, as do his colleagues, by confecting a "Spirit of Pope Francis," an "open-minded" alter ego calculated to tame the instinctive doctrinal "conservative." Such a pope might be led to disabuse himself of claims to doctrinal authority for the sake of extending a pastoral embrace to elements in the Church and in the world that oppose some of the Church's traditional teachings, particularly in the anthropological domain. In the end, for all practical purposes, such a pope would not, in fact, prove "doctrinally conservative" at all.

Somewhat more promising among the secondary literature is a book that Pope Francis has himself been pleased to see published, *Francis: A Pope For Our Time*, by the Argentinian journalists Luis Rosales and Daniel Olivera.[9] Rosales and Olivera do not insinuate that Pope Francis is driven by bad conscience and is open to Vattimo-like "weakening" of Catholic thought, as many have publicly desired and Vallely seems to argue. Their book is certainly hagiographical, but in a relatively anodyne manner. It is divided into two parts. The first traces the standard points of Francis's biography, seeking to show how his experiences have shaped his pastoral practice, from his deep prayer life to his work with the poor in Argentina. For instance, as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, and well after the era of the "Dirty War," Pope Francis did much to encourage ministry to the poorest of the poor, who live in the slums on the periphery of the city. We learn from one of his priests that Pope Francis thought that the center or heart of Argentina is, in fact, on the periphery of the city, where the poorest of the poor reside, rather than in its traditional cultural center, the Plaza de Mayo. As Archbishop, Francis himself gravitated to the periphery, and his experience there surely has shaped his consistent message: the Church must "go to the periphery" — whether social, economic, or spiritual — where dwell those who belong at the center of the Church's evangelization.

Hence, Rosales and Olivera see Francis as a prophetic pope, whose teachings recall (as Francis, too, seems to acknowledge) the prophet Amos, who himself attacked the exploitation of the poor by kings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Yet, Francis is, they are at pains to insist, no Marxist, because, as they argue, he sees Marxism as an ideology, and he eschews all ideologies, including fascism and liberalism, that obstruct a pure acceptance of the practical teachings of the Jesus of the Gospel.

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[9] Louis Rosales and Daniel Olivera, *Francis: A Pope For Our Time: The Definitive Biography* (West Palm Beach, FL: Humanix Books, 2013). On Pope Francis's approval of this book, see "Pope Francis: Thumbs Up for Biography," last modified March 21, 2014, accessed May 13, 2014, http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/Pope-Francis-Luis-Rosales-biography-book/2014/03/21/id/561028/

In the book's second half, the authors explore the impact they expect Pope Francis to have on the issues facing the Church today. What does it mean, they ask, to have a pope so rooted in the example of Saint Francis? For one thing, they suggest, it means that the Church will become much more a "poor Church for the poor." The authors insist that in embracing voluntary material poverty, on the model of both Saint Francis and Pope Francis, the Church can better combat the spiritual poverty of the modern age, which refers to the loss, especially among the affluent of the "first world," of connection "to the transcendental meaning of our journey in this world."[10] Pope Francis's eponymous invocation of Saint Francis also portends, in their view, a greater environmental ecological awareness and openness to dialogue with Muslims, and a new, inspired witness on the part of the Bishop of Rome to the modern, mendicant religious orders. The book explores what the authors expect will be Pope Francis's profoundly positive impact on ecumenism, and they suggest that his Latin American roots mark him particularly as the pope for our time, in light of the Church's growth in the Global South.

Rosales and Olivera largely avoid their peers' tendentious portraiture. Nevertheless they do, in the very first paragraph of the book, make a statement that might be taken to set the tone for the rest of the book: "His [Pope Francis's] humility and simplicity, combined with his proven political prowess and his ability to communicate, create reason to hope that the Vatican will change its course after years of abandoning the essence of Christ's teachings and path."[11] I find it difficult to interpret this statement except as invective against the previous papacy; it is difficult, too, to locate its gravamen, except in disappointed desire for "weaker" pastors. Although, and in the next paragraph, the authors insist that the pope is in fact a "doctrinal conservative,"[12] their observation reads like a concession; it pales against their enthusiasm for Francis's "irreverent symbolic gestures,"[13] tokens of a pastoral de-emphasis on doctrine and discipline in the Church.

In contrast, Pope Francis's own words offer distinct evidence of "stronger thought" than many of his advocates, both in the mass media and in the books so far explored, might wish to ascribe to him. Doctrine and praxis appear not much disjoined in his thinking. One of his old Argentinian Jesuit teachers, Father Enrique Eduardo Fabbri, has implied that Pope Francis is not strictly a disciple of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, S.J. (1927-2012), the former progressivist Archbishop of Milan, who counseled a-doctrinal, pastoral "weakening" to the Church, and who famously said that the Church is 200 years behind the times.[14] Many contemporary journalists assume that Pope Francis is purely and simply a Martinian,[15] which, in some practical respects, would make him rather indistinguishable from Vattimo. Fabbri is a self-admitted Martinian, and he suggests that Pope Francis and he never developed a very close relationship because he, Fabbri, has been a little too Martinian or too "advanced" (Fabbri's word) in his thinking on marriage and family issues for Pope Francis.[16]

Certainly, when we read Pope Francis's own words, we are struck, as I have suggested, by a thinker who is indeed "stronger" and "less advanced," both doctrinally and pastorally, than the media-born figure in whom many have placed their deepest hope. He is not a "Martinian" *simpliciter*. Two interviews, given as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, have been published as books and translated into English; these indicate at junctures that Francis is given to "strong thinking," and is not about to accommodate the ambient culture in ways that would degrade the Church's doctrinal inheritance

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[10] Rosales and Olivera, p. 115.

[11] Rosales and Olivera, p. xi.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] *Pope Francis: Our Brother, Our Friend*, Alejandro Bermúdez ed. and trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013), 35-39. This book is much worth reading in order to get background on Pope Francis directly from the people who knew him in Argentina. Space prohibits me from discussing this book further in the present review.

[15] Cf. Paul Elie, "The Pope in the Attic: Pope Benedict in the Time of Pope Francis," *The Atlantic* (May 2014), accessed May 13, 2014, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-pope-in-the-attic/359816/

[16] *Pope Francis: Our Brother*, p. 36.

in the anthropological domain. Were the mass media attuned, so to speak, to the "whole Francis," he would surely be somewhat less popular with them.[17]

An interview Pope Francis gave to the Argentinian journalists Francesca Ambrogetti and Sergio Rubin has served as a foundation for several secondary sources that have explored the pope's biography.[18] The first half of the book deals with his family history and his path to the priesthood and religious life. Pope Francis demonstrates throughout his refined literary background, which is a subject, we learn, that he was asked to teach as a young Jesuit, even though he had no previous background in the subject matter of literature. The first half of the book offers theological reflections of real strength: the necessity of work as the answer to the social question of the modern age and the importance in the Christian life of suffering for the sake of imitating Christ. Regarding the latter point, Pope Francis stresses that self-sacrifice, deprivation, and fasting are essential to spiritual growth, as long as these are not exaggerated in the manner of the Spanish Baroque period and are lived with cheerfulness and joy, on the model of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, a saint for whom Pope Francis, like all of his papal predecessors stretching back a hundred years to Pope Pius X, has a special fondness.

The second half of the book deals with a range of specific religious questions that the Church faces in the current globalized social context. Pope Francis comes across in this part of the book as deeply motivated by the missionary mandate of the Church. Mission means, for him, that the Church must go outside itself, risk injury to itself (as he says), in meeting people where they are, rather than stay locked up within itself, subject to sickliness and atrophy. He emphasizes the need for a friendly, welcoming Church, a Church that communicates the joy of the Gospel. Must a welcoming, joyful Church be shaped by "weak thought"? Francis seems to deny it: "I sincerely believe that in this day and age the most basic thing for the Church is not to limit or reduce the requirements or make this or that easier, but to go out and seek people, to know people by name."[19] So, at the same time as Francis stresses the need to accentuate, in the service of evangelization, what unites Christian believers with the rest of humanity, he announces his conviction that what is distinctive in the Christian life need not, ought not, be downplayed.

In the second interview book, a conversation between Pope Francis and the Argentinian rabbi Abraham Skorka, Pope Francis's inclination to "strong thought" emerges with even greater clarity.[20] This book ranges over a wide variety of topics, from the existence of God, to the meaning of death, to public policy in Argentina. Pope Francis's desire to evangelize is no less clear in this book, but his commitment to the fundamental tenets of Catholic doctrine, even in areas that are ceaselessly called into question in the present day, is enunciated with genuineness. For instance, he affirms the existence of the devil very plainly: "I believe the devil exists."[21] As pope, he has not failed to emphasize this "hard teaching" of the Church. He has done so more than any other pope since Pope Paul VI. The devil is not, for him, merely a metaphor for the darkness of the human heart, although he affirms as well the "hard teaching" of the doctrine of original sin, which has indeed, he insists, left our hearts darkened.

It is true that some of the "weaker" accents in Pope Francis's teachings, those that are so beloved by the mass media, come out in this exchange with Skorka: for instance, his thinking on sin, which, if given a slight turn in a certain direction, can give the appearance of antinomianism (which is, after all, true of Saint Paul as well), his desire that the Church should avoid any hint of proselytism in its missionary endeavors, or the depth of his aversion to Catholic "restorationist" traditionalists, whom he regards as fundamentalists, more troubling to the Church's mission than people who publicly disavow the Church's teachings. On the other hand, he upbraids contemporary society for its consumerism, hedonism,

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[17] And yet, there may be already an awakening in this respect. See Jamie Manson, "Time to Face Facts: Pope Francis Agrees with Assessment of LCWR," National Catholic Reporter, last modified May 13, 2014. Accessed May 14, 2014, http://ncronline.org/blogs/grace-margins/time-face-facts-pope-francis-agrees-doctrinal-assessment-lcwr

[18] Francesca Ambrogetti and Sergio Rubin, *Pope Francis: His Life in His Own Words*, trans. Laura Dail Literary Agency (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2013).

[19] *Pope Francis: His Life in His Own Words*, 81.

[20] Pope Francis and Abraham Skorka, *On Heaven and Earth: Pope Francis on Faith, Family, and the Church in the 20th Century*, trans. Alejandro Bermúdez and Howard Goodman (New York: Image, 2013).

[21] Pope Francis and Skorka, p. 8.

and narcissism, and reaffirms the Church's consistent adherence to natural law anthropology on abortion and on marriage and family issues, even going so far as to describe the push for homosexual marriage in the present day as the pursuit of an "anti-value" and an "anthropological regression."[22] It is, in sum, difficult to make out a case that Pope Francis's papacy will eventually be shaped by "weak thought" on these issues.

Recently, three books have been published in English that contain articles, homilies, and spiritual conferences that Francis had written or given as Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires and that render his "strong thought" especially vivid. The first is a collection of messages to Argentine educators.[23] He promotes in this book the development of schools truly devoted to integrated education, to an education that respects the development of the whole person. He recognizes that the religious dimension of the person must be respected and nurtured, and that education should involve the transmission of wisdom, which entails "transmission" of Jesus Christ, who is wisdom incarnate. Francis's vision of education, as advanced here, opposes reductionist programs that would constrain the development of the intellectual life to the domains of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, that would, in *fine*, strip education of its religious dimension.

A particularly "strong" book devoted to Francis's own words, the second in the list of three to which I have just referred, details his profoundly theological and spiritual understanding of humility.[24] Here, Pope Francis emerges as a Christocentric thinker whose vision of the Christian life is rooted in deep, meditative prayer. The first part of the book contains presentations that he gave in Argentina on the nature of corruption; the second, on self-accusation, was inspired by the writings of Saint Dorotheus of Gaza, a sixth-century Christian monk and abbot. In these writings, Pope Francis communicates a strong sense of the need for interior transformation, away from corruption, but always informed by a sense of one's own inadequacy and need for God's merciful grace.

Corruption is, Francis argues, an interior state, the result of a fundamental turning away from God's grace through the delusion of habitual self-sufficiency. It can make its appearance in different ways, but it stems from a failure to receive God as one's most prized treasure. Corruption is different from sin, for it consists in habitual failure to open oneself to mercy, or in the disposition to refuse forgiveness and even to deceive oneself that one has no need of forgiveness. Corruption can set into the fabric of society as well as in the individual soul. As the liberation theologians speak of "social sin," Pope Francis speaks of "social corruption," but for Francis it is clear, as it may not be for some liberation theologians, that the guilt of the individual cannot be gainsaid. We each bear personal responsibility for our own corruption.

Francis's reflections on corruption, sin, and self-accusation show us a thinker who has strongly received the Christian monastic tradition. His prescriptions for the moral life are thus not detachable from his acceptance of orthodox Christian doctrine and spiritual practice. These are intertwined in his thinking as in the thinking of the Church Fathers. He is Augustinian in his understanding of grace. His focus on the need to be ever-vigilant regarding the truth of our own interior states of soul, so as not to become corrupt, hypocritical, or pharisaical, recalls the like focus of the Church Fathers — East and West. Like the Fathers, whom he has so clearly read, he grounds his understanding of the Christian life on the beatitudes of Christ, on the revealed architecture of interior transformation through grace. His reflections on corruption speak to all human beings — Christian and non-Christian — and call us all to conversion or to openness to God's merciful revelation in Christ, which is to overcome our false and habitual sense of self-sufficiency. The call from corruption to conversion, as Pope Francis understands it, is a call to divest ourselves of the inner Pharisee that resides within each one of us.

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[22] Pope Francis and Abraham Skorka, *On Heaven and Earth*, p. 95.

[23] Pope Francis, *Education for Choosing Life: Proposals for Difficult Times*, trans. Deborah Cole (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014). Other sources for Pope Francis's thought could be explored here. For instance, *The Aparecida Document*, the most recent production of the General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean, or his writings on Luigi Giussani, the founder of the ecclesial movement Communion and Liberation. Recently I have explored these in Keith Lemna and David Delaney, "Three Pathways into the Theological Mind of Pope Francis," *Nova et Vetera* 12:1 (Winter, 2014): 25-36. Also, this article explores the Pope's connection to the Argentinian "theology of the people." Space does not permit me to rehash this material in the present article.

[24] Pope Francis, *The Way of Humility: Corruption and Sin, On Self-Accusation*, trans. Helena Scott (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013).

Finally, the book in which the strength of Pope Francis's thinking and teaching stands forth most clearly is *Open Mind, Faithful Heart: Reflections on Following Jesus*, the third book to which I have referred and the last that I want to treat here.[25] A trinitarian, Christocentric, ecclesiocentric mindset is on full display in this book, as is a deep, prayerful appropriation of Sacred Scripture. In a word, this is the best book that has been published by or about Pope Francis thus far; it would not surprise me were it to become, over time, a modern-day, spiritual classic. Were someone to ask me to recommend just one book that gets to the heart of Pope Francis's thinking, I would direct him or her to this title.

Open Mind, Faithful Heart is a collection of texts from diverse spiritual retreats or conferences that Francis gave in Argentina to collaborators in Christian ministry. There is a compelling unity to the book, made possible by the book's editors and by Francis's coherent and consistent vision. The book is very practical and concrete. It is truly pastoral, but not without overt rooting in Catholic doctrine.

A forward by Argentine Archbishop José Maria Arancedo of Santa Fe de la Vera Cruz nicely summarizes the structure of the book, which is articulated in four parts. Archbishop Arancedo compares the logic of its structure to that of the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and he notes that its spiritual reflections are rooted in an orthodox Christology, which gives both the human and divine natures of the person of Christ their proper due. The starting point for the book is encounter with Jesus Christ and reflection on the nature of prayer; the need for personal relationship with the God revealed in Christ remains its theme throughout.

The stress that *Open Mind, Faithful Heart* places on the requirement that the Christian believer follow the way of the cross if he or she is to live an authentically Christian life illuminates Francis's early papal teaching. In the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, his first official papal writing, Pope Francis reminded us that the Christian life should not be forlorn or a life of sadness: it is a life of joy.[26] But the joy he speaks of comes through the glory of the cross.[27] There is, then, no opposition in the pope's thinking between the theology of the cross and a theology of glory. His exhortation is to follow Christ with missionary vigor wherever he wants to lead us, even if our life should be demanded of us. This sense of personal mission will, he insists, bring renewed zest and joy to the Christian life.

The theme of joy connected to the glory of the cross is prevalent in *Open Mind, Faithful Heart*. The pope calls us to live, perseveringly, a "constant encounter" with Christ; to live in perfect accordance with the mission that God has given to each of us and with the courage of the cross. God calls us in Christ to meet the evangelical needs of the Church, in love for him, for self, and for humanity.

There is, in fact, both strength and weakness in this proposal. Because these characteristics are uniquely juxtaposed in his teachings, we must acknowledge, in the end, that the journalists whose writings I have recounted in this review have a point in interpreting Pope Francis as they do, even if they have not quite taken the full measure of him. His doctrinal orthodoxy, the "strength" of his thinking, is the orthodoxy of radical conformity to the weakness and *human* failure of the cross of Christ.

The final few reflections contained in *Open Mind, Faithful Heart* help us to understand this apparently paradoxical juxtaposition of characteristics (see chapters 44-48 especially). Pope Francis wants us to grasp the totality of Christ's divestment of self on the cross, so that we can fully embrace the cross in our own lives and understand what it means to be Christian. Jesus dies, he reminds us, as the "accursed one" (cf. Deuteronomy 21:22-23), hung on a tree outside of the walls of Jerusalem. A prophet, we are told in Scripture, cannot be killed outside of the walls of Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). Jesus is thus not put to death as a prophet, but as a political revolutionary or zealot. He is not recognized for who he is. Pope Francis explains: "Jesus' total divestment includes the manner of his death on the cross: he did not even have the final satisfaction of dying in a way that bore witness to the true meaning of his existence."[28] The totality of Christ's

[25] Pope Francis, *Open Mind, Faithful Heart: Reflections on Following Jesus*, trans. Joseph V. Owens, S.J. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company).

[26] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Vatican Website, 2013, accessed May 14, 2014, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

[27] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, I.5.

[28] Pope Francis, *Open Mind, Faith Heart,* p. 278.

divestment is the inescapable model of all Christian discipleship. We must give ourselves to God in total surrender. We must exemplify, in our own lives, the "failure" of the cross. Good Jesuit that he is, Pope Francis universalizes Saint Ignatius of Loyola's counsel in this regard:

> To those making the Spiritual Exercises and deciding about how to lead their lives, he [Saint Ignatius of Loyola] proposes that they 'choose poverty with Christ poor rather than wealth, contempt with Christ laden with it rather than honors' (SpEx 167) — all this for the sake of following Jesus Christ more closely. This proposal of Ignatius is not a debatable spiritual opinion of a particular epoch; it is not just a 'corollary' that can be more or less negotiated according to circumstances. It is of the very essence of the destitution of Christ: if we do not accept it in the total way that Ignatius proposes, then we are not wholeheartedly following the Master.[29]

The weakness that Pope Francis embraces, with Saint Ignatius of Loyola, has nothing in common with nihilistic "weakness." If, in Vattimo's "weak thought," God hands over all of his power to man by revoking his own, an act symbolized in the kenosis of the cross, and thereby dismantles any relationship of power or verticality between himself and humanity, for Pope Francis the glory of the cross is an act whereby the God-man efficaciously models total, perfect human surrender to the will of the Father. The Father remains the Father and Christ is always the only eternally begotten Son of God. Certainly, Pope Francis understands the "weakness" of the cross to have certain implications in the pastoral life of the Church, implications of which we are often incognizant. He might very well differ from his two immediate predecessors in the papacy in this respect. In this limited sense, the journalists may be correct. Individual Christian witness and the witness of the Church at large must be, on Pope Francis's view, willing to embrace failure. It is a mistake for the Church to seek political dominance. Its witness must be more subtle than that, a "broken witness," one might say. The Church must be, unqualifiedly, willing and open, in Pope Francis's view, to show the power of God's transforming mercy through its own weakness and humility. In this way only can the Church reflect in itself the attractive glory of God's eternal, triune life.[30]

But none of this entails a Lent without Easter. Pope Francis has been insistent on the point.[31] I think it is clear from his own writings that none of this entails for Pope Francis a remaking of Catholic dogma, a denial of the triune God who has power over death. Rather, it requires, on his view, a better understanding and witness to the "paradox" of the Gospel: the strength of God's love is known to us only in the weakness and suffering of our flesh. Mission, in his view, can only proceed from a position of weakness, but it must be a joyful, merciful weakness, confident in the power of God to wipe away every tear. The doctrine of the Church must be embodied through this witness, not jettisoned or bracketed. Indeed, the doctrine can be better embraced by people who think they oppose the Gospel when it is offered to them with the face of mercy and self-surrender. This does not entail a reduction of the papacy to a mere partner in dialogue, in the sense implied by the quotation from Zabala given above.[32] The dialogue of mercy that Pope Francis seeks is a bringing across to people of the Logos of Christ. For Pope Francis, Christian dialogue should seek to bring to people the hook of divine revelation, including the dogmatic tradition through which God's eternal, triune love is made known to us, under the lure of humility and mercy, attitudes of the spirit that, he thinks, conform to the dogmas of the faith.

As we move forward in interpreting Pope Francis, it is essential that we read his own pre-papal words, and *Open Mind, Faithful Heart* is of special importance in this respect. The journalists who have written about Pope Francis thus far have missed the nuances of his theological message, however important and valuable their work is in giving us access to important biographical details. They have hoped for a change in doctrine or even, in some cases, for a bracketing of the transcendent God. Some have hoped for a re-envisioned Christology. None of this is to be found in Francis's own words. In his words there is weakness in strength, to be sure, but the weakness in this strength is the cross of Christ, through which the divine power of the eternal Trinity inaugurates the life and authority of the Church and brings real resurrection of the flesh.

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[29] Ibid, 279-80.

[30] Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, I.5.

[31] Ibid, I.6.

[32] See above, note 2.

Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook

Sharon Henderson Callahan, ed. *Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. 2013. 2 vols: 783 pp. $350.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781412999083. Also available electronically via SAGE, Gale, EBL, EBSCOhost, ebrary, and Credo Reference; contact vendor for pricing.

Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook, available in both print and electronic formats, is part of the SAGE Reference Series on Leadership. The goals of this series are clearly stated by the editor, Lucretia McCulley, a liaison librarian for leadership studies at the University of Richmond. Leadership studies, as a discipline, has emerged in the last twenty years by drawing "on established resources in the social sciences, humanities, and organizational management" that address this broad interest. McCulley contends that since leadership studies has typically been an interdisciplinary field, it has not had established resources devoted specifically to the topic. The handbooks from SAGE seek to fill this gap and to "provide a starting place for students who want an understanding of primary leadership topics within a particular discipline. Each chapter covers key concepts, controversies and history, among other issues. They also introduce central figures within the discipline being covered" (xi).

RL is one of a number of handbooks on the topic of leadership that SAGE has recently published. *RL* is a two-volume set that "tackles issues relevant to leadership in the realm of religion. It explores such themes as the contexts in which religious leaders move, leadership in communities of faith, leadership as taught in theological education and training, religious leadership impacting social change and social justice, and more. Topics are examined from multiple perspectives, traditions, and faiths" (http://www.sagepub.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book235989).

The print version of the handbook is broken into six broad sections with subjects that include "The U.S. Religious Context" and "Formal and Informal Leadership in Spiritual and Religious Traditions." In the print edition these are further broken down into subtopics. For example, Part IV, "Dialogue and Action for the Common Good and Peacebuilding," encompasses the subtopic "Leading Action for Common Good" and a "Spotlight" section that addresses "Leaders Who Have Shaped Religious Dialogue." Leaders included range from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King to Fetullah Gulen and Karen Armstrong. The electronic version does not include these divisions, which were helpful in navigating the table of contents and in understanding the categorizations used in the handbooks.

To take a closer look at the content itself, Part II on "Formal and Informal Leadership in Spiritual and Religious Traditions" provides an example of material contained in *RL*. Within this section is a chapter entitled "Innovations in Mainline Protestant Leadership" by Anthony B. Robinson. Robinson is president of Congregational Leadership Northwest and a senior consultant with the Center for Progressive Renewal. This chapter briefly outlines "changes that have led to challenges for Mainline Protestantism while also looking 'at a host of movements of renewal.'" The author describes seven renewal movements that are changing and affecting mainline Protestantism. He asserts that the "end of North American Christendom" and the "waning of modernity" represent a call that "requires learning and change, new thinking and new behavior on the part of churches and church leaders" (100-101). This chapter, like many of the others, is thoughtful and engaging. The authors and topics covered represent a wide range of perspectives on the forms that religious leadership can take throughout the world. To get a better understanding of the contributors to *RL*, a brief description of each is included at the beginning of Volume 1.

It's hard to consider *RL* as a reference item without comparing the usability and navigation between the print and digital. The handbook contains a vast amount of information that is opened up with the digital version. The index for the print version is incomplete, which makes it slightly confusing to use. For example, I was interested in finding a particular faculty member who had written a chapter for this resource, and his name was not indexed in the print version. It was only found by looking through each chapter in the table of contents. Also, authors that are included in the "References

and Further Readings" at the end of each chapter had more linked material in the digital version. For instance, when I looked for Phyllis Tickle in the digital version, I was linked to chapters 12 and 97. However, in the print version only the chapter 12 reference was included. When I searched for the word "prophecy" in the digital version, I received results in eleven different chapters. "Prophecy" was not included in the print index at all. Another advantage of the electronic is the ability to easily cite articles in any of four styles: APA, Harvard, MLA, or Chicago. These can then be exported to seven different bibliographic managers, including common ones like Endnote and Refworks and surprising ones such as ProCite.

Because of these factors, plus the general climate of shrinking library budgets and a preference to purchase digital materials when available for reference, the electronic version is an easy choice. However, the collection development decisions and challenges do not stop there. *RL* can currently be purchased from six different sources with a choice among eight different purchase options. The SAGE e-book license, which was the first purchasing option made available, offers unlimited access and a perpetual license. Despite these attractive features, however, licensing directly with the publisher can be time consuming. *RL* is also available through YBP and as part of the Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL). If the handbook is purchased directly from Gale, it can be added to the library's existing GVRL collection and is searchable within it. In our library's experience, *RL* could not be added to GVRL retroactively after purchase directly from SAGE, so libraries that would prefer to make the handbook's content available on the Gale platform should investigate the available options carefully.

Anecdotally, many of the students (MDiv and PhD) who passed by my desk while the handbook was sitting there paused to flip it open and express their interest. It easily garnered more attention than most of the items surrounding me. Leadership is a topic of current interest in theological education, and *RL* is a unique contribution with chapters written from a number of different perspectives covering many faith traditions. Whether you choose to buy the electronic or print version, it is sure to be a useful addition to your reference collection.

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The Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religions

Patrick Taylor and Frederick I. Case, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religions*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013. 2 vols: 1192 pages. $250.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 0252037238 (set).

The editors' goal for the new two-volume *The Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religions* is to encourage "a better understanding of the role of religion in Caribbean life and society, the Caribbean diaspora, and wider national and transnational spaces" (volume 1, xiv). The editors take a multidisciplinary approach, "[presenting] Caribbean religions in a way that combines the breadth of the comparative approach to religion with the depth of Caribbean spirituality as an ever-changing and varied historical phenomenon" (volume 1, xiii). Editors Patrick Taylor of York University and the late Frederick I. Case, formerly of the University of Toronto, are both respected scholars and authors in the field of Caribbean studies. The fact that they are scholars of Caribbean studies generally and not scholars of Caribbean religions specifically is apparent in the variety of topics covered by the *Encyclopedia*, including gender, sexuality, politics, art, music, and literature. This multiplicity of subjects and perspectives is further enriched by the diverse backgrounds of the consulting editors and contributing authors, which include international scholars, researchers, and practitioners. This international and interdisciplinary effort results in an emphasis on the relationships between world religions and their incarnations in the Caribbean as well as the relationships among Caribbean religions themselves.

The *ECR* provides multiple methods to navigate the entries, including tables of contents for each volume, a comprehensive index in volume 2, and cross-references to other entries in boldface within each entry. General entries on broad religious categories (such as Christianity) and geographical territories in the Caribbean (such as Cuba) serve as useful starting points for users beginning their research. These general entries provide the user with an overview of the subject and contain numerous cross-references for further exploration. Bibliographies at the end of each entry direct users to additional resources beyond the *ECR* which are as varied in approach as the *ECR* itself, enhancing the *ECR*'s value as a foundational reference tool. Most of the bibliographies include both recent and older works, providing an excellent overview of the literature for a researcher beginning a project. Volume 1 includes sixteen color plates, primarily of religiously inspired artwork, and a limited number of black-and-white photographs appear throughout the text for visually minded readers.

The *ECR*'s wide-ranging entries and multidisciplinary approach also make it a useful resource for researchers who are already familiar with the subject generally but are examining particular aspects of Caribbean religions. Entries on topics such as gender relations, literature, and politics are useful for researchers studying Caribbean religions through a specific lens, and researchers seeking information about specific individuals or institutions will also find relevant entries.

Perhaps the most interesting and unique feature of the *ECR* is the inclusion of personal narratives, which are meant to give "scholars as well as practitioners…the opportunity to share their varied understandings of the sacred in a sincere and scholarly manner among themselves and with the wider international community" (volume 1, xix). Although not as plentiful as the *ECR*'s introduction suggests, these narratives provide the reader with a glimpse into the personal experiences of the author, enhancing the reader's understanding of both the subject and the author's perspective when writing the entry. These entries are unfortunately not clearly and consistently identified as personal narratives, which could cause confusion among users, but this problem is mostly addressed by the noticeable shift in tone in the narratives (they are written in first person, unlike the vast majority of the rest of the *ECR*) and the fact that the titles of most of these entries include differentiating words such as "memoir," "my story," or "personal."

This combination of the scholarly and the personal invites the incorporation of author bias into entries, but for the most part the *ECR*'s contributors remain evenhanded and openly recognize their biases. All entries are signed, and brief contributor biographies in volume 2 allow users to assess authors' qualifications and perspectives. When necessary, special note sections at the ends of the entries provide information about any potential author biases, such as membership in the

church being described in the entry. (These notes also include information about any relevant fieldwork or additional contributors.) However, a sampling of entries did reveal some intrusion of unacknowledged bias and judgment. For example, the "Managing the Same Sex Debate" subentry within the "Sexuality and the Church" entry reflects the author's belief that criminalizing or vilifying homosexuality is "detrimental to civil rights" (volume 2, 953), despite the evidence presented in the entry about "the fundamentalist disposition of the Caribbean population" (volume 2, 951), which would indicate that a substantial number of Caribbean churchgoers disagree with that belief.

A significant flaw of the *ECR* is its inconsistency in coverage, treatment, and organization. Although all of the contributors use a similar writing style, they each arrange their entries differently and often cover completely different topics within each entry. These differences are most apparent when comparing entries of similar types, such as those for geographical locations. For example, the entry for "Cuba" comprises twenty-seven pages and includes an overview of the history and current state of religion in the country as well as a number of subentries on various special topics. Conversely, the entry for "Haiti" includes only the historical and current overview and is a mere three pages long. The types of information included also vary from entry to entry: some authors favor a quantitative approach, while others prefer qualitative descriptions. Users should be prepared for varying amounts of coverage and not expect specific information under one entry merely because it is included in another.

Despite these shortcomings, the *ECR* is by far the most comprehensive reference work available on Caribbean religions and as such is a valuable and much-needed contribution to the field. The editors identify "researchers and readers… [and] teachers and practitioners" (volume 1, xiv) as the target audience for the *ECR*. The work is scholarly in nature and requires an advanced college-level reading level for full comprehension. Strong information literacy competencies are also necessary to navigate the mixture of personal narratives with objective scholarly writing and to critically assess any biases. *The Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religions* is highly recommended for seminary libraries and libraries serving graduate students as well as those supporting undergraduate programs or faculty in Caribbean or religious studies. Public libraries serving Caribbean populations should also consider purchasing the work. Although it is suited to scholarly research, the *ECR* is, as the editors suggest, also of interest to teachers and practitioners.

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Nicole C. Dittrich
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Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets

Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012. 966 pp. $60.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780830817849.

The Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets completes IVP's highly regarded Black Dictionary reference series, totaling eight titles (the first volume in the series to be revised was released in October 2013). Those familiar with the series will not be surprised to see that this installment continues the high standard begun with earlier releases. The series covers both the Old and New Testaments, and the *DOTP* treats the major and minor prophets, Lamentations, and Daniel.

DOTP is comprised of 113 separate articles, authored by a wide range of Christian and Jewish scholars. While the publisher is often noted for representing evangelical scholarship, the editors attempted here to "portray a broad picture of contemporary scholarship on the Prophets" (ix). This ultimately is a strength of *DOTP* as it reflects the multifarious approaches current among scholars today. For instance, in "Isaiah: Book of," H. G. M. Williamson gives a reasonable (not dogmatic) defense for multiple author composition, while Douglas Stuart ("Jonah: Book of") offers "ample evidence to support the historicity of [Jonah]" (460).

As expected, each of the prophetic books receives treatment in a separate article. However, the major prophets also receive a second article on reception history ("History of Interpretation"). Additionally, the minor prophets are treated collectively in two similarly styled articles (as "Book of the Twelve"). There are also a number of articles on interpretive approaches, such as "Canonical Criticism," "Feminist Interpretation," "Intertextuality/Innerbiblical Interpretation," "Rhetorical Criticism," etc. Articles also address major recurring themes in the prophets, such as "Angels, Messengers, Heavenly Beings," "Covenant," "Day of the Lord," "Justice, Righteousness," and "Warfare and Divine Warfare."

The scope of articles that have broad interest to Old Testament studies is narrowed to the intersection of the topic with the prophetic books. For instance, Brad E. Kelle's 26-page article "Israelite History" devotes less than one page to a subsection called "Assyria, Israel and Judah Prior to the Mid-Eighth Century BC." Likewise, in his article "Afterlife," Philip S. Johnston focuses exclusively on the themes of the afterlife found in the prophetic literature.

The most striking omission from *DOTP* is a separate article on Assyria. (Bill T. Arnold's article, "Babylon," spans eight pages.) Given Assyria's prominent role in the destruction of Samaria and the royal dynasties of the Northern Kingdom, as well as the attention given to Assyria by the eighth-century prophets, this is surprising. The subject is instead covered loosely in a seven-page subsection within Kelle's article, "Israelite History."

The article "Habakkuk" by J. K. Bruckner is representative of the treatment given to most of the prophetic books. The book is discussed in its final canonical form, and only brief mention is made that "most scholars take the combination of genres as evidence of an uncertain redaction history by the author and/or editors" (295). Bruckner's discussion of genres in Habakkuk is surprisingly balanced. Instead of choosing between two exclusive options as most scholars tend, he reads 1:1-4 and 1:12-17 as a "lament used in a dialogical complaint" (295). This interpretation directs the reader away from the tendency of some to view the book as a product of the wisdom tradition. The article does not attempt to outline major viewpoints on issues of interpretive dispute, as often is the case in similar encyclopedic books. For example, the view is taken that the "wicked" in 1:4 is a reference to Jehoiakim (and company), with no discussion of the alternative theories that the text may indicate the Assyrians or the Babylonians. The article concludes with a brief, yet balanced look at the New Testament appropriation of Habakkuk 2:4b ("the righteous will live by his faith") in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. Similar to the discussion of other prophetic books in *DOTP*, Bruckner's article maintains balanced focus on the biblical text (with copious cross references) with little attention to divergent scholarly claims. He concludes with a helpful bibliography containing the major commentaries and monographs produced in the last half-century.

"Rhetorical Criticism," by Joel D. Barker (whose doctoral work under Boda was a rhetorical reading of Joel), serves as a very useful introduction to the methodology with an informed discussion of the history of the discipline. Although a wide variety of approaches to the prophetic literature has fallen under the rubric of rhetorical criticism, Barker demonstrates sensitivity to the current direction of scholarship, noting that it "provides a well-suited approach to consider the ways in which the prophets attempted to persuade their audiences" (677). He gives a brief discussion of Muilenburg's seminal address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1968 and the impact he had on rhetorical criticism. However, he rightly notes that Muilenburg's approach "bears a strong resemblance to aesthetic or stylistic analysis as it focuses on the text's use of literary devices as an end in itself" (678). More attention is given to the developments by scholars such as Wilhelm Wuellner and Yehoshua Gitay, who both sought to reestablish a more classical understanding of rhetoric as a means of persuasion. Barker does a great service to those new to rhetorical criticism by suggesting a methodology adapted from George Kennedy's work on rhetoric in the New Testament. The essay concludes with a consideration of newer methodologies, such as speech-act theory, "interested" methodologies (i.e., ideological criticism), and discourse analysis.

The article "Covenant" by Tiberius Rata provides an illustration of the treatment given to an ancient Near Eastern cultural practice by *DOTP*. Rata works from the premise that covenant is an early development within Israel's history (fifteenth century BCE). After a very brief discussion of covenants in general, the article is organized around the bearing of four covenants on the prophetic literature: 1) the Abrahamic covenant, 2) the Mosaic covenant, 3) the Davidic covenant, and 4) the new covenant (three of these sections are divided into subsections on the Major Prophets and Minor Prophets). The longest discussion, not surprisingly, concerns the Mosaic covenant. Rata demonstrates how the prophets often operated by criticizing the people for breaking the stipulations of the covenant "by referring back to the Ten Commandments" (100). The ensuing analysis systematically moves through allusions to the Decalogue within the prophetic literature (e.g., idolatry, Sabbath, bloodshed, adultery, stealing, and lying). A minor subsection is given to short treatment of the priestly covenant. The section on the new covenant discusses not only the text in Jeremiah 31, but also other allusions as found in Isaiah and Ezekiel. Although he makes reference to it, it is unfortunate that Rata does not devote some attention exclusively to the Hittite suzerainty treaties of the second millennium. The stipulations are certainly important to understanding the prophetic literature, but so too are the historical prologue, witnesses, and sanctions (blessings and curses are treated separately in an article by Robin Routledge).

Aside from the minor criticisms mentioned above, *DOTP* is a remarkable resource for its single-minded focus on the prophetic literature. It is refreshing to see diverse perspectives represented among the contributors, and the quality of the articles is consistently high. This important resource should quickly become a necessary reference tool for all engaged in research in the prophetic literature, from undergraduate to graduate level. Theological libraries with a program in biblical literature will find this volume to be a useful addition to their collection.

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Crash Course in Library Services to People with Disabilities

Ann Roberts and Richard J. Smith. *Crash Course in Library Services to People with Disabilities*. Santa Barbara, CA/Denver, CO/Oxford, England: Libraries Unlimited, 2010. 159 pp. $30.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9781591587675.

Despite the unfortunate words "crash course," *Crash Course in Library Services to People with Disabilities* begins by explaining its title. Patrons with various physical or mental challenges are not "disabled people," which makes the disability the most important thing, but people who have or suffer from disabilities. The authors spend the introduction and the first part of chapter 1 on this point. Seeing these individuals as persons first and foremost is an important ingredient in providing successful library services to these patrons. The book aims to provide practical information and resources to libraries that lack services for patrons with disabilities, partly by using the work of some libraries as models. There are six chapters. The first two cover general topics and issues related to serving patrons with disabilities. Chapters 3-5 concern specific services to different populations, and a concluding chapter summarizes the book. An appendix provides information on resources for libraries, and a second appendix offers sample forms for libraries to use.

In the first chapter, "Taking Stock," the authors first challenge librarians to examine their attitudes toward people with disabilities. Next, the authors go straight into planning for library services to people with disabilities. The chapter covers a wide array of topics, including legal and related matters, such as the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the American Library Association's policy regarding services for people with disabilities. It offers specific descriptions of issues for libraries in terms of collections, services, accommodations, etc. There are many specific suggestions about, for instance, the appropriate width of library doors and the conditions under which a service animal may be excluded from the library.

Chapter 2, entitled "Learn by Example," covers a wide array of topics paired with good library examples to follow. It begins with a discussion of where to get statistics to build the case for making a library more accessible, including the decennial census long form. This is followed by several other topics, and for most of them the authors describe a library as an example of the recommendation. For example, when describing the idea of "in-home library services," the book presents the Chelsea District Library in Chelsea, MI, which offers several programs for seniors and home delivery service. The authors then consider how to market in-home library services and the necessary screening process for employees and volunteers who are involved in providing these services. In an abrupt change of subject, which is common in this book, the authors talk about the desires of those with disabilities to have video games that are accessible. After several paragraphs, the authors state that librarians who are seeking to engage this population can offer gaming as attractive programming, including "Wii-habilitation."

Turning to a topic relevant to almost all libraries, chapter 3 looks at "Assistive Technology and Total Access." The authors introduce technology issues for those with disabilities. This is followed by a description of the "Alliance for Technology Access," a network of individuals and organizations that address such issues. The authors offer considerations for communicating the availability of services, preparing the facility, and ensuring that access to the programs and services of the library is fair, equitable, and "should not, even unintentionally, screen out people with disabilities" (52). Considering technology more specifically, the book stresses the need for library computers to be usable by people with vision, hearing, dexterity, or other limitations. A key component of assistive technology is having staff and volunteers who understand how to use the technology. The chapter includes several self-assessment tests and forms to use in dealing with gaps. Next the authors discuss library website accessibility, including specific standards and tests to see how well a site measures up to the standards. As a "Pragmatic Approach," the book considers the necessary balance between current needs of patrons, available resources, and anticipated needs of potential users. Concerning library computers, this reviewer has experienced multiple academic libraries with computers that are "locked" so that screen resolution,

mouse pointer size, and other factors are not adjustable, either by the patron or by the library staff, and that would be problematic for patrons with certain disabilities. It is why the authors recommend having at least one workstation that offers assistive technologies for patrons with varying needs. The chapter ends with a list of several common assistive technologies in libraries, from magnifying glasses to computer software and hardware.

Chapter 4, "Services to Baby Boomers and Older Adults," begins by giving reasons that local libraries should be courting older adults, especially the millions of baby boomers who want to stay active. Following a brief treatment of the changes that occur as adults age past fifty, the authors offer (ALA) guidelines for providing library and information services to older adults. Some of the recommendations relate to assistive technologies covered in chapter 3. The authors give particular attention to computer training for older adults and library websites, especially Web 2.0 social media. Some of these are simple, such as using 12- or 14-point fonts for body text on web pages. The book frequently points to good examples, and for this point it offers http://www.wiltonlibrary.org/senior. Several pages are devoted to offering (electronic) games, such as the Wii, as part of library programs for senior adults. Some academic libraries have embraced offering the Wii for the student body, but Indiana State University at Terre Haute also seeks to engage seniors in the community with the Wii. The chapter also offers programming ideas to improve the physical and mental health of senior adults, and describes options for the blind such as audio books.

The last major subject covered in the book is "Library Services to Persons with Mental and Learning Disabilities" (chapter 5). The chapter offers a brief introduction to these illnesses, but urges those with a regular patron with such a condition to get additional help. It also covers recommendations for offering services to the homeless, who may or may not have mental disabilities. Libraries increasingly have to deal with the homeless. Therefore, libraries need to develop policies that are fair to all, and the library staff should be trained in how to interact with the homeless. There is also a section on providing library services to people with dementia. The authors also describe the symptoms of various mental illnesses such as panic disorder, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia, and learning disabilities, such as dyslexia and ADHD. The three-page chapter 6, "Summing It All Up," does exactly that, repeating the essential issues covered in preceding chapters.

This book is indeed a "crash course," as it begins by giving a variety of tips without any meaningful context or any apparent logical order. Chapter 1 is more like a "Frequently Asked Questions" web page than a structured approach to this subject. Readers may want to read chapters 2-5 and then come back to chapter 1 again, once they have more information to use in understanding what the authors suggest. One of the issues that the book touches on is that having services and technology in place does not mean that people with disabilities will know about them or use them. As the reviewer has seen, if a patron who needs accessibility services that are not available comes into the library, there is not much a librarian can do. So, as the authors urge, librarians need to anticipate their patrons' current and potential needs and plan to meet those needs.

This book will be helpful primarily to librarians in public libraries, which serve a wide array of patrons. Academic and special libraries are less likely to encounter many of these issues. For librarians in these types of libraries, chapters 1 and 3 will be of most help. The book would have been a better resource if it had addressed more issues that are relevant to all libraries or that are particularly significant in academic and special libraries. Theological libraries will find chapter 1 helpful in planning and chapter 3 and, to some extent, chapter 4 useful as well. Chapter 3 offers them recommendations for making the collection more accessible to persons with various disabilities, and this is relevant with the beginning of chapter 4 on serving senior adults. Both students and clergy may need assistive technology due to impaired vision, not least from aging, or other physical challenges. This need could be especially acute if patrons need to access concordances or resources related to Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, or other ancient languages, as these tools generally use very small fonts. Overall, the book is helpful in providing pointers to resources to help libraries address the needs of persons with disabilities and for information and resources for such patrons.

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Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation

Steven L. McKenzie, ed. *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 2 vols: 1164 pp. $295.00 Hardcover. ISBN: 0199832269.

The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation focuses on several methodological approaches to biblical interpretation that have been or are currently being used in biblical scholarship. The purpose of the two-volume reference set, as stated by editor Steven L. McKenzie, is "to exclude topics on biblical books, scholars' biographies, and the like and to focus on interpretive approaches" (xix). To that end this two-volume work achieves its goal. The work contains a little over one hundred articles that cover a wide variety of topics, all of which have to do with some theoretical and methodological aspect of biblical interpretation. Few of the article topics will be completely unfamiliar to anyone with a basic understanding of the discipline of biblical studies.

Due to the length and style of each entry, they would most appropriately be called essays rather than encyclopedia articles. Furthermore, it perhaps would have been more accurate to call this a collection of essays rather than an encyclopedia since the collection is by no means comprehensive. In many ways this collection of essays has an eclectic feel to it. For example, there is little justification for the inclusion of some more minor approaches to biblical interpretation (like the wonderful essay on Trauma Theory) and the conspicuous absence of other, more significant, ones (such as neither a mention of the Princeton School of interpretation nor an article on biblical theology). In addition, a few of the essays seem to be mistitled. For example, the entry entitled "Asian American Biblical Interpretation" does not mention a single South or Southeast Asian biblical scholar and thus should more appropriately be entitled "East Asian American Biblical Interpretation." Also somewhat unusual is the inclusion of articles on Assyriology and Ugaritology. While both of these essays cover important topics in biblical studies, they present a decidedly historical approach to biblical studies rather than a contemporary methodological approach (as the vast majority of the essays do), thus adding to the eclectic nature of the collection. It is not clear to the reviewer if the articles as a whole should be understood as an historical overview of select methodological approaches or as a discussion of current methodologies with their respective advocates and results. McKenzie acknowledges this unevenness in the preface, but this acknowledgement does little to explain it, and as a result it does limit the encyclopedia's overall usefulness as a reference work. In other words, it seems at times that this collection of essays struggles with an overall cohesive theme or purpose.

These weaknesses — which do not doom the work, in light of the essays' high quality (see below) — do present a challenge in identifying to whom exactly this reference work might be best suited. Undergraduates and those generally unfamiliar with the topics will likely find the essays instructive even if they might have to struggle through unfamiliar jargon. There is, however, the likelihood of confusion for these undergraduates because of the small number of articles, which may implicitly suggest a narrowness that does not really exist in biblical studies. While the hundred-page index in the second volume is a gold mine of cross referencing, the novice researcher is likely to miss this wonderful resource. On the other end of the spectrum, biblical scholars will most certainly appreciate the quality and summative nature of the essays, but will likely struggle to appropriate the material into any of their research. The essays, while informative, are likely to be too cursory for more than a "refresher" on a particular method. For whom then would this particular resource be most appropriate? It is likely that it would be most valuable for graduate students, especially those in seminaries. Master of Divinity students taking hermeneutical or biblical courses, for example, would likely find it to be of great value, since each essay covers many of the important scholars and includes titles of many significant books and journals. Likely the survey quality in the essays will help graduate students with their research and will also help to launch them into further valuable resources for each approach. The same articles that would be overwhelming to undergraduates and underwhelming to established scholars will be of great use to divinity students or other graduate students taking graduate level Bible courses.

To put this resource in a more positive light, it is important to note that these volumes are a wonderful resource for students looking for introductory essays on biblical interpretation topics that they are unlikely to find in any other resource. Standard Bible encyclopedias such as the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* or the *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* do not offer the same type of introduction to these topics nor do they have the detailed bibliographies that this resource offers. Furthermore, the fact that many of these articles have been written by leading proponents of their respective topics gives the reader an opportunity to hear firsthand the strengths of these different methods. That being said, librarians would do well to advertise this resource to their faculty if they would like to promote the encyclopedia's use since many of the articles would likely prove great supplementary reading in many hermeneutics and biblical classes.

Several essays are worth noting. Susan Niditch's article on "Folklore and Biblical Interpretation" offers an excellent overview of the topic of biblical interpretation through the lens of folklore studies. Her article covers not only the key ideas and theorists, but also is loaded with great examples so that the reader can associate the concepts with actual texts that might benefit from the method. Walter Kaiser's article on "Evangelical Interpretation" masterfully explains the history and (more significantly) the theological motivations for Evangelical interpretations of the Bible. This article succinctly covers a huge body of literature in a way that even the most novice graduate student will be able to appreciate. Kenton Sparks's summary of "Form Criticism" fills a gap in reference survey material with his contribution that carefully explains the elements of this particular interpretive approach. The same can be said of John Christopher Thomas's "Pentecostal Interpretation," as he surveys the growing corpus of Pentecostal biblical scholarship. Finally, it would be remiss not to mention David Penchansky's delightful essay on "Deconstruction." Not only does Penchansky bring out the most important elements of the method, he skillfully weaves them into conversation with key biblical texts. His essay's first subheading, "In the Beginning was Derrida," brought a smile to this reviewer's face, as did some of the last lines of his essay, which serve as a good summary for the entire encyclopedia: "Does deconstruction let in the cold? Should we protect our children from it? Does it bring chaos? First one must question the division of hot and cold. One person's soul-paralyzing cold is another's fresh air" (204).

What does this resource do? It does a lot and also not too much. It clearly is a valuable resource for theological libraries to acquire, but likely its use will be based largely on the recommendation of those who can point learners to its essays. It is unlikely that its title's promise will do this alone, but for those to whom the covers are peeled back it will be of great benefit.

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