

# BANNAN INSTITUTE FOR JESUIT EDUCATIONAL MISSION



Last year, Santa Clara theologian Paul Crowley, S.J., asked his students what the Second Vatican Council was. One of them responded, "Wasn't that something that happened back in the middle of the 20th century?" That comment is not all that surprising coming from someone who was born 17 years after Vatican II (1962-65) and had grown up in an American Catholic Church that largely took the Council for granted. However, for Father Crowley and most of us who lived through it, Vatican II was the most dramatic and promising time of our lives as Catholics. In this issue we will look at what became of the great promise of the Council as we approach the 40th anniversary. After Pope John XXIII opened the Church to the breeze of the Spirit and dispelled its defensiveness to the modern world, the intellectual climate of Catholic higher education changed dramatically. Did the Council mark the end of the style of Catholic life that was inaugurated by the 16th century Council of Trent and reinforced by the defensive European Church of the 19th century? Or was it an interlude of 1960's optimism and experimentation that has since been curbed by a "restorationist" Vatican?

Francis Smith, S.J., systematic theologian at SCU, provides a fine overview to the cultural and intellectual currents ended the Church's defensive stance toward the modern world and led the Council to seek a rapprochement. Paul Fitzgerald, S.J., assistant professor of social ethics and ecclesiology, provides an empirical profile of the generation of American Catholics who have been born since the Council. A recent graduate from our religious studies department, Kristin Simms, offers a profile of one engaged American Catholic: committed to integrate faith and justice, and willing to work with the poor from a theologically informed spirituality of liberation.

Next, I give an American reading of the massive changes that occurred in moral theology, beginning with the Council's new embrace of human values. Eric Hanson of political science describes how the Church moved from its Cold War anti-Communism to a more involved role in world affairs just as American Catholics were migrating from their own tight subculture into the economic and cultural mainstream of America. Mary Novak, a practicing attorney and an administrator with the Bannan Institute and Arrupe Center, writes of a changing sense of vocation. Joseph Grassi, professor of New Testament, recounts the dramatic shift in official Church teaching on Scripture begun by Pope Pius XII, developed by the Council and recently ratified by the Vatican.

We support a variety of projects (see page 32), and one of our accomplished grant recipients is Thomas G. Plante, chair of the psychology department. He reports on his empirical research on the effect of religious belief and practice on health that has brought him and the University national recognition.

We hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to your feedback.

By William C. Spohn, Director

[Return to Web format](#)

**Post-Vatican II Catholics**  
**By Paul Fitzgerald, S.J.**

Common assumptions are that young adults in America are radically different from their elders in appearance, interests, motivation and inspiration. The young are often characterized as web surfers who spend hours in virtual chat rooms, clicking from site to site. Growing up, they were often latch-key kids who came home from school to be greeted by TVs rather than parents. Many are the survivors of divorce. They are often called "slackers," accused by their elders of not working, playing, or caring hard enough, to which they answer, "whatever." They are the mavens of a new style that ranges from casual Gap to serious Salvation Army, and whether they themselves are pierced, dyed, branded, or tattooed, most of them are comfortable with these generational symbols. And finally, they are believers, who hope that God is and that God cares, for them and for the world. What sort of Catholics are these young people, born since 1962, the year the Second Vatican Council opened?

**HOW RELIGIOUS ARE THEY?**

We can begin by asking whether younger Catholics are less religious than their parents and grandparents. Our answer must be a very Abelardian *sic et non*, yes and no. If we define religiousness as participation in organized religious events, e.g., church attendance, then yes, there is a clear diminution of institutional practice over the past several decades. However, if we define religiousness as spirituality, as attention to the deeper questions of life's meaning, goal and purpose, then no, there is no sociological evidence to support the claim that young people are any less oriented towards a courageous and candid listening to the mysterious presence of God in their own interiority, in their religious traditions, and in the social world. Nevertheless, there has been fairly radical change of late in the vocabulary and the forms of this religious search.

Altogether, about 95 percent of young American Catholics believe in God, a figure that matches that of the general population and has been fairly constant since studies began in the 1940s. There has been no dip in basic faith in a Higher Power.<sup>1</sup> While young Catholics are believers, they are somewhat less likely than their elders to go to church, both in absolute terms and in terms of frequency. But the choice not to attend was mostly made by their parents, not today's youth. The decline in church attendance in the United States mostly happened during the late 1960s. Nevertheless, the proportion of young Catholics attending services today (at whatever frequency) is the same as that of young Catholics forty years ago. The percentage of young people in the congregation has decreased mostly because families have fewer children now. As well, the fact of lower levels of religious practice among young people is not new—demographic studies over several decades indicate that there is a life-cycle pattern that has remained fairly constant. Young people have long been less interested in going to church. As they mature, marry, and have children, adults increase their organized religious practice.

Even if they do attend, the young do not strictly heed the moral codes of the Church. Take pre-marital cohabitation as an example. Today, 40 percent of Catholics live with their partners before marriage. This is double the percentage of their parents' generation. Do they do so to test the waters? To save money? Is this merely "pre-ceremonial sex" between two people who already consider themselves married by intention? What differences are there between the 60 percent who wait and the 40 percent who don't wait? Surveys indicate that the cohabiters are more likely to come from inter-religious homes, from unhappy childhoods, and from stressful adolescent situations, and they are less religious than their peers who don't cohabit before marriage. Young people who don't cohabit go to church more and pray more. Among the cohabiters one would expect to find the least church-going of the younger generation, and indeed only ten percent of these go to church every Sunday, yet

half of them take communion when they do go, 40 percent say that they pray several times each week, and 25 percent consider themselves to be very close to God.

Among young people there is great stability in religious identification. Kosmin reports that the U.S. population remains mostly Christian, with 86.5 percent of all adult women and 81.1 percent of all adult men identifying with a Christian religious denomination. Among young adults, Catholics come out on top at about 33 percent of the general population, a higher percentage than one sees in older age cohorts. The age pyramid among Catholics is positive, with many more young people than elderly folks. This is due to a variety of factors, including immigration, a higher birthrate, some defections over time and good success in recruiting new members. The good news is that the Catholic Church in the U.S. will continue to grow in the decades to come. The bad news is that the number of priests will most probably continue to decline. Young people find Catholicism to be quite attractive, but not the priesthood-as it is presently configured.

## MARKS OF THE NEW RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW

Certainly, religious faith is always inculturated. There is no belief system and no religious practice that is not enfolded and lived out in the context of a given moment in a culture's history. Religious belief, by its very nature, is going to reflect, and reflect upon, the contours and the challenges, the hopes and the fears, the joys and the sorrows of human beings within given cultural contexts. The social context of young people has shaped their spirituality. In a recent book, Tom Beaudoin suggests four distinctive marks that are characteristic of this new religious worldview.<sup>2</sup>

### Wariness about institutions

Young Americans grew up with too much news about political and ecclesial scandals, too steady a diet of exposés on corporate America's abuse of workers, consumers, and the environment. Isolated cases of malfeasance are disheartening; an overload of bad news has bred among young people a deep-seated distrust of all sorts of social, political, and private institutions. If young people are jaded, they have much justification for such an attitude. The universal response, "whatever," is an expression of a deeply held hermeneutic of suspicion.

### Candor about suffering

During the 1980s, Baby Boomer former hippies transformed themselves into yuppies and eagerly re-mythologized their social outlook under Ronald Reagan's leadership. Meanwhile, their children were living with, and talking openly about, some of the fall-out of their parents' frantic search for identity: drugs, divorce, AIDS, etc. Young people are less likely to vote in national elections and don't want to find systemic solutions to major social problems; instead, they go to soup kitchens in droves to assuage the pain of real persons.<sup>3</sup>

### Comfort with ambiguity

In school they were taught Chaos theory; in society they experienced it as a new version of Social Darwinism-change as blind chance, survival of the strongest. In their personal lives, they are surrounded by, and at times engulfed in, a casual and paradoxical sexuality ("I sleep around, and I am looking for someone to really love me"), which leads to serial broken hearts. They live peacefully in an increasingly multi-cultural life-world, which is good, yet there are some real dangers: the possibility of absolute moral relativity and the confusion of tolerance with approval.

### Desire for community

If Boomers asked, "Who am I?," their children ask, "Will you be there for me?" Young folks wear uniforms and employ code words in order to build up communities of meaning. Yet here too there is danger, for groups can become hardened, as we see in the balkanization of cities, the self-segregation of minorities, and the disappearance of shared language for public debate about the common good.

If young people today are in fact suspicious of authority, honest about suffering, comfortable with ambiguity, and searching for communities of meaning, then we can ask, what does this say to the post-Vatican II Catholic

Church? Given the perduring faith of young people, are the marks of youth culture stumbling blocks or stepping-stones for evangelization? One can compare these marks to the conditions surrounding Jesus' announcement of the coming of the Reign of God. These same four themes were arguably quite positive orientations for the Christian neophyte of the first century, and so why not of the twenty-first?

Older church members should not be offended when young people are critical of some aspects of the institutional Church. Even when their interrogations are naïve and their observations are disconcerting, these may also harbor great depths of understanding that go to the heart of the matter. Churches should offer young people a welcoming environment for prayer and for worship, wherein young people will move beyond critique of institutions to the deeper questions of faith. Churches should also encourage the suspicion of young people towards the marketplace, the State, and even organized religion (Pope John XXIII called the Council based on his belief in the *Ecclesia semper reformanda* or "the church always needs reform"). Finally, Church communities should offer young people real chances to serve the poor and the marginalized, and in that service to explore the spiritual inspirations that lead them to respond to suffering with compassion.

Certainly there is much that is unique about young Americans today, but too, there is something about these marks that is generally true about young people always and everywhere: the escape from parental control, the end of childhood's many comforting illusions, the challenges of establishing an adult identity, and the strong desire to transform the social world into a realm of justice and peace. A Church that is open to the signs of the times can and should see young Catholics for who they are: young human beings in search of meaning and love, to whom the Gospel is addressed.

#### ENDNOTES

1 Statistical data on belief in the U.S. is available on an on-going basis from the Gallup organization's American Institute of Public Opinion, the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, the National Survey of Religious Identification (CUNY), the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, and the U.S. Census. See, for example, Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Myth* (Oxford: Collier, 1990), and *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); see also B. Kosmin, et al., *One Nation Under God* (New York: Harmony Books, 1993).

2 *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998). See also Douglas Coupland, *Life After God* (London: Pocket Books, 1994), which ends with the confession, "My secret is that I need God-that I am sick and can no longer make it alone..."

3 For an insightful exploration of this, see Ted Halstead's "A Politics for Generation X" in *The Atlantic Monthly* (August 1999), 33-42.

By Paul Fitzgerald, S.J.

[Return to Web format](#)

The logo for Bannan Institute for Jesuit Educational Mission features the text "BANNAN INSTITUTE" in a large, white, serif font, with "FOR JESUIT EDUCATIONAL MISSION" in a smaller, white, serif font below it. The text is centered over a dark, semi-transparent background that shows a person's hands raised in a gesture, possibly during a lecture or presentation.

# BANNAN INSTITUTE FOR JESUIT EDUCATIONAL MISSION

**Vatican II: Sources, Achievement, and  
Unfinished Business  
By: Francis R. Smith, S.J.**

Next year will be the fortieth anniversary of the opening of Vatican II. Catholicism changed more in the four years of the Council (1962-1965) than it did in the previous four centuries. Many applaud the changes, while others think Vatican II was a terrible mistake. I think Vatican II had to happen, was a long time coming, and that there is still plenty of work to be done in the spirit of Vatican II.

My own experience is illustrative of the many changes that Vatican II initiated. I took my first vows as a Jesuit a month before the Council opened. Eugene Bianchi, a theologian of note, had given a lecture on the forthcoming Council to the community at Sacred Heart Novitiate in Los Gatos the summer before the Council opened. In the question period, one of the novices asked Bianchi, "What can we expect from the Council?" His reply was, "Very little." Bianchi was simply expressing what everyone acquainted with the Roman Curia knew, namely, that there was no enthusiasm for a general council in the Vatican apart from one person, Pope John XXIII, who wanted an *aggiornamento*, an "updating" of Catholicism.

## IDENTITY AND RELEVANCE

Religious traditions face a perennial problem. It is called the "identity/relevance problem." If a religious tradition wishes to preserve as its core what it has always said, it will concentrate on the immutability of that expression. The identity of its belief will be unambiguous, clear, and timeless. But as cultures change, the way those central beliefs are expressed may no longer have the impact they once had, may no longer even express for new hearers what the original formulations meant to say.

The Roman Curia has always stood for identity. That was one of the reasons for the Latin liturgy. But Pope John XXIII was concerned about relevance. In his address at the opening of the Council, he made a significant distinction. He acknowledged the necessity of continuity, but he said what was expected from the Council was:

A step forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration....1

I think I saw at the time the potential for change in those words, but what really caught my attention was reading that the schema (working draft) on "Divine Revelation" prepared by the Roman Curia had been rejected in the first few weeks of the Council by the bishops. That schema, if enacted by the Council, would have made a dogma of the Catholic Church, the standard theological buttress against Protestant insistence on the primacy of scripture as a norm for interpreting tradition. It would have said that there were two separate sources of divine revelation-beliefs not found in scripture would be found in tradition. For a number of years theologians in northern Europe, much closer to ecumenical dialogue, had been working out a more balanced way of saying that what comes first is the revelation of God in the life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the sending of his Spirit, and that news of this salvific event was transmitted by preaching (tradition) and precipitated in what

is called scripture in such a way that the New Testament acts as a norm for tradition. This line of thought is what a key document of Vatican II would adopt in its Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), which is a key document of Vatican II, along with the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*).

## THE STRUGGLE WITH SCRIPTURE

The rejection of the Curia's schema and the adoption of a theological current more at home north of the Alps should not be read as takeover of Vatican II by non-Vatican bishops. In fact, the issue of scripture (and revelation is inevitably concerned with scripture) had been a topic of intense struggle within the Vatican for a number of years. Pius XII had started shaking the edifice in his 1943 encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. In an historic move, he urged Catholic biblical scholars to read the Bible according to the literary genre in which each book is written. In other words, the way (genre, or type of literature) the author uses must be understood if one wishes to understand what the author is saying (and not saying).

When a religious tradition has a scripture, a normative written account of the origins, and then changes the way it reads that account, one should expect significant change in the tradition. Imagine what would happen in Islam if one read the Koran not simply as the Word of God in the words of God (Arabic), but by attending to the historical, cultural, and sociological situation of Mohammed.

What I would like to show is that the theological principle Pius XII was incorporating in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* is, in fact, the principle that gave Vatican II its distinctive openness toward the world, other religions, modern science, and politics, and that it has led to a greater balance in the Church's role in the world's transformation.

## THE ONE AND THE MANY

What is this theological principle? Even a casual acquaintance with the history of religions (or philosophies) reveals how difficult it is for human beings to reconcile the reality of God with the reality of the world. The Greeks called this the problem of "the One and the Many." One can affirm the existence and independence of the One at the expense of the existence of the Many—the Platonic Solution, believed to be typical of the great Asian religions. Or one can stress the existence of the Many at the expense of the reality and independence of the One—the Aristotelian solution, generally thought more typical of modern Western philosophy.

In *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, Pius XII was using the "biblical" solution to the problem of the One and the Many to affirm that scripture is God's Word but in human words. The biblical solution (the Jewish solution) is to deny that there is a real problem because the One is "transcendent." Of course, the Bible never uses that word to describe God. But implicit in what the Bible says about God is a recognition that God transcends the world, that is, that God is not part of the world; and not only is God not conditioned by what conditions the world (namely space and time), God is completely self-existent and therefore not conditioned (limited) in any way.

But the unconditionality of God is only half the story. Israel's experience was that God's unconditionality made God radically free to love, that God is hesed, covenant love, and emet, faithfulness.

So what happens in a love relationship? Does the lover's love rob the beloved of its independence? Human love is transcendence. The lover seeks the good of the beloved. True love has the effect of not absorbing or dominating the beloved, but of contributing to the beloved's humanity, making the beloved more itself.

When God is conceived as power, the understanding of how love works can be forgotten. But if the power of God is the power of love, then God's relationship to everything that is not God is one of love. God's creating and sustaining the world would not falsify the world but tend toward making it more itself. As Teilhard de Chardin expressed it, "God makes things make themselves." In 1950 Pius XII wrote an encyclical that is often said to have some of the opinions of Teilhard de Chardin as its target. What is often overlooked is that, just as Pius XII saw in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* that a transcendent God would not participate in the writing of a

scripture by dictating it, but in and through the human process of a community reflecting on the meaning of its beliefs, so in *Humani Generis* the pope made clear that there was no theological conflict with the theory of evolution as a scientific account of the emergence of human life as material.<sup>2</sup> Just as he was recognizing in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* that anthropology, linguistics, and literary analysis are apt scientific tools for the breaking open of the meaning of scripture, so he was recognizing that biology and paleontology have their own autonomy.

## GOD HELPS THE WORLD MAKE ITSELF

Vatican II was a thoroughgoing application of the principle at work in Pius XII's two encyclicals. The principle was not new. It is as old as biblical religion, however incompletely applied in varying historical circumstances. It was violated as long ago as David's welding together of priestly and political power. Since an institutional priesthood had been co-opted by political authority, the classic prophets (Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) emerged. They stood for the autonomy of the religious order and, correspondingly, for what a truly authentic political order would be, a striving for justice. Vatican II adopted this prophetic stance and expressed it in *Gaudium et Spes* #42, "The Help Which the Church Strives to Give to Society":

Christ, to be sure, gave his Church no proper mission in the political, economic, or social order. The purpose that he set before her is a religious one. But out of this religious mission itself come a function, a light, and an energy that can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to divine law.

One must immediately point out that, in the Catholic understanding, "the divine law" is found not only in the order of redemption but also in the order of creation itself. The Council is claiming for the Church the mission of helping to clarify how an autonomously created order would be true to itself.

The principle that the transcendent (God) acts to make the categorical (the World) more itself is as old as the biblical doctrine of creation, but this principle has defied consistent incarnation in the history of the Church. Anyone can point to moments of faithfulness and unfaithfulness to the principle. Events of the fifth century illustrate well the chiaroscuro character of developments. In *The City of God*, Augustine wrote on the distinction between the competence of the civil order and the competence of the religious order. Likewise in 451 the Council of Chalcedon made clear that there is "no confusion" between the "two natures" of Jesus, that his being divine does not rob his humanity of its authenticity. But by the end of the century, religious authority claimed competence over civil authority, and some bishops rejected Chalcedon because it seemed to them that either Jesus cannot be fully human, or if he is both divine and human there must be two of him.

Maybe it is too much to expect consistent and thoroughgoing application of this fundamental principle. It does, after all, require a breakthrough into God's very nature. But Vatican II was about the Church, about its past and about its future, and the Church claims to represent God. Vatican II tries to do this. At times the Church had failed to recognize the autonomy of science, so Vatican II affirmed it, but reasserted what the Church had always said: "Without the Creator the creature would disappear" (GS #37). The Church had at times seemed to think God was only at work through the institutional Church, so it affirmed the transcendent God's activity in non-Catholic ecclesial communities (LG #15), and even in non-Christian religions and in the consciences of agnostics and atheists (LG #16). The Church had enforced a period of literalism in Catholic understanding of the Bible (explicitly between 1903 and 1943), so it reaffirmed in *Dei Verbum* that the Bible is God's word but in human words when, for example, it made clear that the gospels emerged out of early Christian preaching (DV #7 & 8). The Church had at times so focused on eschatological salvation (life after death) that Catholics had failed to mediate God's present activity in the world, so Vatican II affirmed that the hope of eschatological salvation increases rather than decreases concern for the world (GS #57). These are a few of many examples.

## THE WORK AHEAD

Should the Church move forward on the basis of the principle Vatican II was employing?

Vatican II was a "pastoral" council. Its concern was the question of Church and World. Vatican II applied the fundamental biblical principle to issues that had arisen since the emergence of the Protestant Reformation (Scripture and Tradition [Dei Verbum], non-Catholic Christians [Unitatis Redintegratio], the Enlightenment, Religion and Science, Faith and Reason [Gaudium et Spes], the globalization of Christianity [Ad Gentes]).

What Vatican II did not focus on was a better presentation of core Catholic Christian beliefs. To some extent, recent popes, Paul VI and especially John Paul II, have returned to fundamental theological issues, but there is still significant work to be done. This work can be achieved by employing the principle of Vatican II I discussed above.

Let me conclude by exploring what this principle implies for what is perhaps the most crucial question for Christianity: Who is Jesus and what did he accomplish?

No one who teaches undergraduates would doubt that among Catholics monophysitism is alive and well (I have found it among Protestant students, too). Monophysitism is the position that Jesus is either just God or just human; he has only one (monos) nature (physis). Why do people feel they have to make this choice, especially when both the New Testament (e.g., the Gospel of John, Prologue) and constant teaching of the Church (e.g., the Council of Chalcedon)<sup>3</sup> say he is both (and Chalcedon adds, "without confusion")? Well, why did it take so long for Catholicism to work its way through the issues that Vatican II addressed so successfully? It is because the very nature of God is at issue. In his book, *The Road to Nicea*, Bernard Lonergan said that none of the theologians (including Irenaeus, Origen, and Tertullian) before the Council of Nicea grasped clearly that God transcends space and time. Augustine was forty-four years old before he could ever conceive that something could be but not in a material way. It is still as hard as it ever was, but there have been key breakthroughs (they are actually a reaffirmation of the key biblical principle). When the first general council of the Church (Nicea, 325 AD) condemned Arius' position that the Son is a creature, it was implicitly recognizing that if the Transcendent gives expression to itself, that expression would be what the Transcendent is. When the fourth general council of the Church (Chalcedon 451 AD) maintained that there was in Christ one subject in two natures and that there was "no confusion" between the two natures, it was implicitly applying the fundamental biblical principle: the Transcendent (the divinity of Christ) does not rob the categorical (the humanity of Christ) of its authenticity. The Transcendent subject "assumes" an authentic human nature. When Maximus the Confessor, the last of the Fathers of the Church, said that not only would the divinity of Christ not compromise his humanity, but it would make him the most authentic human who ever existed, he was explicitly recognizing that the Transcendent makes the categorical not less, but more itself.

And if the incarnate Word of God is genuinely human, then his humanity is not only the revelation of the Father, it is a revelation of what human authenticity is. But this is a revelation that depends on Jesus' human freedom if it is a revelation that depends on Jesus' human authenticity. The upshot of this is that the history of Jesus is not a "done deal." His was a real human history, worked out in faithfulness to the mission given him by the One he called Abba, but an understanding mediated through a genuine (finite) human consciousness. He struggled as human beings struggle to respond to God. He did this in faith (as the late Cardinal Hans Urs von Balthasar pointed out) and the fate of the categorical depended on his faithfulness (as the newly minted Cardinal Walter Kasper maintains).

But something else depended on Jesus' finite human choices-the whole project Jesus called "God's reign." Contemporary interest in the "historical Jesus" is enormous and there are vastly differing encapsulations of him. But on one point there is unanimity-the central theme of Jesus' preaching. Jesus was above all the proclaimer that the "reign of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). What is "the reign of God"? Since God is love (1 John 4:8b), the reign of God is a reign of love. Since love is not merely "acting on behalf of," but self-gift, the reign of God turns out to be God's gift of Godself, as God is. The event Jesus called the reign of God is not merely the revelation of God as origin (Father), as expression (Son), and as union (Spirit), but God's self-gift to God's creation as God "always" is.

But the staggering fact is that none of this is a "done deal." The project of God called "the reign of God" depended on the human faithfulness of Jesus and faithfulness is never a "done deal." So wherever God is giving God's self in the world, universally according to Vatican II, even in the lives of non-believers (LG #16), the gift of God's Spirit has been mediated once and for all by one of us, Jesus of Nazareth.

By Francis R. Smith, S.J.

#### ENDNOTES

1 Walter Abbott et al., eds. *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York, 1966), 715.

2 DS, 32 ed., 3896.

3 Neuner-Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 1981), 615.

[Return to Web format](#)

**American Catholicism and World Politics:  
The Second Vatican Council and the Cold War**

By Eric O. Hanson

It would be difficult for anyone who did not experience mainstream Catholic parish life during the 1950s to recreate the political-religious mindset of that period. "American Catholic nationalism"<sup>1</sup> combined strong patriotism, virulent anti-communism, union and ward-based Democratic politics, increasingly autocratic Irish and Irish-American hierarchical leadership, and a largely anti-intellectual piety fostered in the parishioner-financed world's largest network of private schools. By the 1950s this unique United States social mix had "saved" the American working classes for the church while their European co-religionists had generally left the institutional church for anticlerical cultural Catholicism. The American approach succeeded because it met the real religious, political, social, and psychological needs of an immigrant church, e.g., "We don't need the Harvard or Yale that rejects us because we study the more ancient classical civilization of Rome." In 1957 only five percent of the United States Catholic bishops had a parent with a college degree. Today's Mexican, Sudanese, Filipino, Salvadoran, and Vietnamese Catholic immigrants tend to understand this earlier social dynamic better than American Catholics whose ancestors fled the potato famine, pre-World War I Genoa, or the Kaiser's military initiatives.

Grasping the successes of American Catholic nationalism provides the key to understanding the Catholic ferment of the 1960s when the next generation of young Catholics, educated on the GI Bill and no longer feeling discriminated against, crafted a new religious vision in dialogue with the international Catholicism of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). I still remember arguing passionately in Houston newspapers as a high school senior in 1959 for the right of fellow Catholic John Kennedy to run for the presidency, even though, I wrote, I hoped the Republican Party would give me the chance to vote with my anticommunist "Conscience of a Conservative" for Barry Goldwater. American Catholicism in the 1960s suffered more tension than American society as a whole because of its greater paradigm shift. The Trappist monk Thomas Merton, whose best-selling *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1952) celebrated his unlikely conversion at Columbia University in the 1930s, joined Vietnam War protests and began a dialogue with the Zen scholar Suzuki. And Merton explained this shift in terms of the deepening of his religious experience.

The nuclear weapons-based Cold War began on "the day after Trinity [test site in Alamogordo, New Mexico]," one month before VJ Day. The Soviets also soon had the A Bomb and the H Bomb. The Catholic Church under Pope Pius XII (1939-58), the former Italian church diplomat Eugenio Pacelli, constituted an integral part of the Western alliance. After all, the new Communist governments of Eastern Europe and Asia made those Catholic churches their principal domestic adversaries. Pius responded by calling on the Catholic clergy to stay at their posts and embrace martyrdom. Italy had remained with the West under a Christian Democratic government supported by Washington's financial and political diplomacy and the Vatican's stricture against voting Communist. Certainly, Pius warned of the dangers of all-out nuclear war, but these moral statements were drowned in the international politics of the decade by the pope's denunciations of Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. The 1950s produced a whole genre of American Catholic literature with titles like *Four Years in a Red Hell*.

Not until the early 1960s did the Vatican begin to exercise the role of a global mediator in the Cold War. Compared with the very secular first American Catholic president Kennedy, Pope John XXIII (1958-63) and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev instinctively understood each other out of their peasant backgrounds and similar struggles to modernize their respective entrenched bureaucracies. When the former second-string Vatican diplomat Angelo Roncalli received Khrushchev's daughter and son-in-law in April 1963, most of

Vatican bureaucracy and the entire Italian Christian Democratic Party protested. Kennedy dispatched John McCone, Catholic Knight of Malta and Director of the CIA, to express his reservations. But the pope's Kremlin connections proved useful that October when John XXIII mediated the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was the beginning of one of the Vatican's most successful diplomatic campaigns during almost two thousand years, Ostpolitik [opening to the East] under Secretary of State Cardinal Augustino Casaroli.

The cardinals, especially the Vatican bureaucrats, had voted for Roncalli as a compromise papal candidate who seemed likely to die soon and to do nothing upsetting in the interim. They were right on the first count and incredibly wrong on the second. For John XXIII, it seems to me, the failure of the Church and of all Western institutions to respond effectively to the challenge of the Holocaust convinced him that major ecclesiastical changes were necessary, and that these major changes could only be brought about by a worldwide ecumenical council. During World War II Roncalli had seen the effects of the Holocaust first hand. He had been a relatively obscure papal diplomat in Sofia, Athens, and Istanbul when he provided thousands of unsigned Catholic birth certificates to be used by Jews in escaping the Nazis without the least mention of conversion.

In what degree his predecessor Pius XII failed on the Jewish question as a person is still the subject of significant academic debate, with serious books written yearly. Whatever the final judgment, the Catholic Church does not need more saints badly enough to canonize Pacelli. There can be no dispute, however, that at the very least the Catholic political-ecclesiastical system of concordat Christianity failed. While he was Nuncio to Berlin and Cardinal Secretary of State, Eugenio Pacelli had sought to protect the Church with a series of treaties (concordats) with hostile powers. Pius perceived the hammer and sickle as more menacing than the swastika, and like almost all Western leaders, he underestimated Hitler. Such concordat Christianity reinforced exaggerated ecclesiastical hierarchy, and led to the demise of the Catholic Centre Party which might have effectively opposed Hitler. Even from a secular perspective, then, Vatican II's changes in ecclesiology, the Church's understanding of itself, constitute the Council's most crucial political actions. Americans like Jesuit John Courtney Murray, with his passionate defense of religious liberty, contributed significantly to such changes. Thus, the Declaration on Religious Freedom, The Church in the Modern World, the Decree on Ecumenism, the Declaration of the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, and other Council documents envisioned a new self-understanding of the Church that necessitated dialogue with other religions and other cultures.

In 1965, the Vatican Council passed the decree *Nostra Aetate*, which stated unequivocally that Jews were not responsible for the killing of Christ. The political rapprochement of the Vatican and Israel had to wait for John Paul II, formed in the Cold War struggle with the Polish state and the international Catholicism of Vatican II, who began his pontificate with the reception of longtime Polish Jewish friend Jerzy Kluger. John Paul II also met with many Polish Jews during his trip to the Holy Land in March 2000. The frail old man, suffering from Parkinson's disease, was visibly moved to silence by his experience at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. The pope also deplored the conditions and the displacement at the Palestinian Dehaisheh Refugee Camp. In May 2001 John Paul II visited Athens to apologize for Catholic wrongs against the Orthodox and went on to Damascus to become the first pope to enter a mosque. In the post-Cold War period, if the religious institutions cannot contribute to political and social dialogue, there will be little hope for global peace, even if Samuel Huntington overstates his case for civilizational conflict, e.g., the West versus Islam, in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*.

The post-Vatican II American Catholic Church also helped calm political rhetoric and action during the second period of Cold War apocalyptic military danger, the early 1980s. When the Reagan Administration proposed a \$1.6 trillion military buildup in October 1981, and hinted at "winning" a nuclear war, the Democratic Party proved incapable of adopting the cohesive opposing position that party systems theory assigns to it. It was left to the United States Catholic bishops to articulate such a moral political document. American Catholic Nationalism, exemplified by ex-paratrooper Archbishop Philip Hannan of New Orleans, still existed within the hierarchy, but only as a minority position on the right. From there one could proceed along the political spectrum to Just War Self-Defense, to the "Polish Position" of Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, to

Establishment Liberalism, to the fifty-seven pacifist Pax Christi bishops on the left. That by 1983 such a disparate group could vote 238-9 for the final text strongly critical of the United States government was a testament to the traditional episcopal style of consensus and to the moral leadership and the diplomatic skills of the committee chair, Archbishop Joseph Bernardin of Chicago. At one crucial juncture the archbishop joined the Holy Spirit and a nuclear missile on the cover of Time [November 29, 1982]. In the final three days of episcopal debate, the majority of the bishops consistently voted for every amendment that would strengthen the document's moral and political stand against nuclear war without specifically making the moral and military judgment that there could be no conceivable use of such weapons that could be justified.

The Berlin Wall fell in November 1989 and the Soviet Union in December 1991. At the two most crucial nuclear threats to the survival of the inhabitants of the Cold War system, Pope John XXIII and the American Catholic bishops, inspired by the spirit of ecclesiastical changes that were codified during the Second Vatican Council, played positive roles in dampening the conflicts. The current post-Cold War global political-religious challenge centers on promoting reconciliation and dialogue among religious believers and institutions.

By Eric O. Hanson

#### ENDNOTE

1 Eric O. Hanson, *The Catholic Church in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 166-73.

[Return to Web format](#)

**Moral Theology After Vatican II**  
**By William C. Spohn, Bannan Center Director**

No area of theology changed more dramatically in the generation following Vatican II than moral theology. And few national communities of Catholics changed so much in their attitudes towards Church authority as did Catholics in the United States. If before the Council the attitude of most Catholics on moral matters was "Authority first, conscience second," within twenty years it had become "Conscience first, authority second."

The catalyst for this reversal was Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical on birth control *Humane Vitae*, which sparked unprecedented open dissent from Church authority by American laity and theologians. Up to that point, American moral theologians had played a key role in keeping the American church closely in tune with Roman authority. Led in large part by Jesuit seminary professors, they explained the Vatican's teachings to American clergy, who used the pulpit and the confessional to enforce the official directives. Catholics were supposed to act differently from their neighbors, refraining not only from eating meat on Friday, but also from divorce, family planning, and other weightier matters.

The unified front on moral behavior presented by the leaders of the American Catholic subculture was of course tempered in practice by pastors who asserted the moral ideals from the pulpit, yet took a more humane and understanding approach in the privacy of the confessional. As one old professor described the process, "First you have to build the fences, then you have to teach people to jump over them!" This practice was not hypocritical because the confessors were trying to combine a public stance of high ideals with a compassionate realism that met people where they were and did not demand more obedience than was possible.

The Vatican Council raised the hopes of American Catholics, who were the best educated and also among the most observant laity in the Church. Pope John was opening the windows to let fresh air into a stuffy Church just as many Catholics were moving into the American mainstream and beginning to chafe under the strict rules promulgated by the clergy. Certain themes in the Council documents encouraged these hopes: the Church is now "the People of God," not an aristocracy run by clergy; everyone is called to holiness, not only the religious professionals; if individual conscience has to be respected by the state, shouldn't the official church respect it as well? If the spring of *aggiornamento* was here, could summer be far behind?

#### THE BIRTH CONTROL CONTROVERSY

Looking back almost forty years later, it is difficult to determine how much the Council was leading and how much it was following changes occurring in the broader culture. Which changed first, theory or behavior? Consider the old practice of frequent confession. All around the world after 1965, Catholics stopped going frequently to confession, the most dramatic drop in sacramental practice in the history of the Church. Did that happen because they no longer believed in God primarily as a Judge, or did they change their image of God because they no longer went to church every week to examine their consciences minutely and confess to the priest?

The birth control controversy was partly caused by the Council's teaching on conscience and partly the effect of American Catholics declaring their independence from Church authority. By the time Paul VI finally issued his prohibition against "artificial birth control," the majority of American Catholics of childbearing age had already embraced the new technologies that allowed them to decide whether and when to conceive children. When the American hierarchy largely took a hard line and demanded obedience, most lay Catholics moved in the opposite

direction. They had heard the word that an adequately informed conscience was God's voice within them, and they did not hear that voice telling them that using the Pill was a mortal sin. For the first time in the history of the American Catholic Church, a large segment of the laity found themselves publicly disagreeing with the bishops and the pope.

Where were the moral theologians in this crisis? Some insisted that since Rome had spoken, the case was closed. The majority, like Fr. Charles Curran of Catholic University, listened to their own relatives and friends and couldn't find anything wrong with what they heard. Richard McCormick, S.J., the most respected moralist of the day, wrestled with the arguments and publicly changed his position to say that on birth control, the conscience of the couple could take precedence over the official prohibition. As the controversy grew, what had started as a debate over reproductive ethics quickly expanded into a serious disagreement over the nature of authority in the Church. The very text of the encyclical had conceded that the ethical arguments on birth control were not conclusive, but the weight of tradition had to be respected. Pope Pius XI had adamantly insisted that any form of birth control besides abstinence was unnatural and evil, seemingly fixing the teaching in stone. Paul VI feared that reversing it would diminish the authority of the Church in the eyes of Catholics.

Ironically, just the opposite happened: relying on authority to carry a weak argument diminished the credibility of the teaching church. Many Catholics who had relied on their conscience on birth control began to appeal to it to exempt themselves from other Church teachings. The old dictum, "Don't waste your ammunition on target practice," came into play. Having spent much of its credibility on birth control, the official Church had very little left when much more serious issues came along, like abortion. By then many American Catholics had gotten into the habit of going their own way.

At the same time, the sanctions that had helped maintain traditional moral rules were crumbling. Fewer people believed that the compassionate God now celebrated and preached could ever condemn anyone to hell. Could it really be a "mortal sin" to miss Mass on Sunday? Although most Catholics still went to Mass regularly, many did not go every Sunday. Officially, Catholics didn't get divorced, but diocesan tribunals were granting a great many more annulments, mostly on the new grounds of psychological incapacity to make a lifelong commitment. Although only about 10 percent of American Catholics who are divorced and remarried have gone through the annulment of their previous marriage, they did not consider themselves excommunicated or "living in sin." Where before the Council, those who had not been granted an annulment obeyed the rules that forbade them from receiving the Eucharist, many now felt justified in not doing so. Not infrequently, their local pastor had quietly approved of a "good conscience" solution for second marriages. They seemed to be spiritually fruitful even though it would have been difficult for the spouse or spouses to have their previous marriage annulled. In many cases, people bypassed the ecclesial structure on their own and considered themselves in a good relation to God and thereby welcome at the Lord's Table.

George Gallup undertook the most comprehensive study of attitudes of American Catholics in 1988. He found that on most questions of sexual and reproductive ethics, they held largely the same attitudes as non-Catholics, and they were more tolerant about premarital sex and homosexuality than the populace as a whole. In the 20 years that followed *Humanae Vitae*, it would seem that Americans largely withdrew their sexual and family practices from ecclesiastical control and did what they thought best, which even on such volatile practices as abortion tended to look just like their non-Catholic fellow citizens. Perhaps this would have happened anyway, as each generation of Catholics became less Roman and more American. Or it may be that the open atmosphere generated by Vatican II collided with later papal attempts to draw the line on sexual and reproductive ethics.

## DEBATE AND DISSENT

Meanwhile what were the moral theologians doing? Most of us quickly learned that if you publicly dissented from Roman officials on sexual ethics you could pay a high price, as happened to Fr. Curran who was eventually fired by Catholic University and prevented from teaching at any other Catholic school. If sexual and reproductive ethics would be discussed, from now on it would probably be by lay men and women theologians

who could not be silenced as easily as clerics- a roundabout way of getting the right people to theologize about marriage and family. Vatican II had singled out moral theology as the discipline most in need of drastic renewal. It had urged theologians to move away from a legalistic, highly philosophical form of reasoning to take more seriously the religious roots of Christian moral life: the call to holiness, the message of Scripture, and the person of Jesus Christ. Although the debates over moral rules and Church authority got the headlines in the years following the Council, a quiet and more fundamental change was occurring.

The question emerged, "What difference did it make to be a Christian?" The most prominent European moralists held that Christian life had the same moral content as ordinary human morality, but it was motivated by different reasons, those of faith. Others argued that the Gospels told a different story. Jesus called people to become his disciples, to follow his distinctive way of life all the way to the humiliating end of crucifixion and the reversal of resurrection. He was utterly devoted to bringing about God's kingdom on earth, a radically different way of living founded on love, forgiveness, non- violence, service to the poor, a thirst for justice, and detachment from material goods so that others could be helped.

Pope John Paul II was the first to write an encyclical on fundamental moral theology, *The Splendor of Truth* (1993). He sided with those who saw a distinctive ethics for Christians. Obeying the commandments (most of which are echoed in common human ethics) was only the first step on the way of discipleship, a journey that led to personal engagement with Jesus Christ and a way of life closely patterned on his. The pope, however, emphasized the obedience of Christ to the absolute will of the Father, an obedience, which he argued, that should be imitated by faithful Catholics. They are to obey the official Church, which has been given the role of making God's will known. This centrality of the magisterium is reinforced in the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), which insists on absolute laws that are timeless and invariant. Most moral theologians would see moral norms as more flexible in their application, even if certain fundamental moral limits are set.

The most promising developments in theory and practice have come in the Church's social ministry. Liberation theology gave voice to what Jon Sobrino, S.J., called "the irruption of the poor into history." Intrachurch squabbles pale in comparison to the poverty and misery of over half the world's population. Attention has shifted from personal sin to "structural sin," from concern over personal salvation to "the preferential option for the poor" and from the rewards of the next life to the necessity to address the injustice of this life. The American bishops brought a democratic approach of dialog, broad consultation and revision to the questions of nuclear deterrence (1983) and the American economy (1986) before Rome discouraged them from additional attempts.

Despite repeated attempts by conservative forces to slam shut the windows that John XXIII had opened, the Spirit still is blowing in the American Church. Whether or not Rome is listening to the voices of Catholic Workers and feminists, Hispanics and the other new immigrants, alienated and devout younger Catholics and their professional parents who have moved into positions of power in this culture, they are finding a hearing in American moral theology. What started at Vatican II has made both moral theology and the American Church more Catholic and less Roman, more biblical and less canonical, more lay and less clerical, and hopefully, more Christian.

By William C. Spohn,  
Bannan Center Director

[Return to Web format](#)

## **Living Our Faith: Ministry in the New Millenium**

By Kristin Simms '01

Martha's Soup Kitchen in downtown San Jose. Project Open Hand in San Francisco. Mission Dolores in East Los Angeles. Guarjila, El Salvador. Ft. Benning, Georgia.

In the past four years at Santa Clara University, I found my idea and experience of ministry in these places, as well as so many more. Yet, from what I understand from my parents, pre-Vatican II ministry was quite different. It was a ministry that involved watching the priest's back move across the altar while he spoke in a foreign tongue, listening to the nuns at their Catholic schools, and people calling themselves "hippies" who wanted "peace and love." What happened that caused ministry to leave the prayers spoken in Latin and enter into our daily lives and actions? When did we finally begin to live our faith?

I wish I could offer an exact day, moment, or event that caused this revolution to occur within the ministry of our Church. Alas, the only comfort I can provide your curious minds is that this revolution takes place at a different time, place, and moment for each individual in the Church. My "moment" began sometime during my freshman year at Santa Clara when I started going on a weekly basis to Martha's Soup Kitchen in downtown San Jose through our student volunteer organization, the Santa Clara Community Action Program (SCCAP). At Martha's I experienced real poverty for the first time and ministered by feeding the hungry. However, the soup kitchen became much more than simply filling hungry stomachs. I found there were many other ways to minister as well. By giving a listening ear to those who worked, volunteered, and were served at Martha's, I realized that ministry also means companionship, compassion, and simply respect.

I continued with this idea of ministry until my world took another turn after I spent seven weeks living in the small, rural village of Guarjila, El Salvador, during summer 1999. I lived with my family of two parents and four brothers. Each morning I made pan dulce with the women in the bakery and planned various activities at La Casa de los Ancianos. I spent the majority of my day with the boys and girls of Los Tamarindos, a faith-sharing community of young people. We worked together in the fields on Sunday mornings, then went to Mass in the afternoons, played basketball or soccer each evening, shared stories of friends and of school, laughed a lot, and cried some, too.

Yet, underneath this daily routine I became a part of a community that taught me about God's unconditional love. We shared our gifts and talents with each other, and the Salvadorians loved me as a sister in Christ. As a community, and as one Body, we lived the Gospel. After that summer I realized that our ministry in the Church today also means being in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Upon returning to Guarjila for another seven weeks during summer 2000, I truly lived as a part of the community. I realized fully the responsibility our faith calls us to have and the ministry we are called to in the Church today: actions through solidarity. Each day our ministry can be as simple as the coffee we choose to drink in the morning or how we commute to work. Our ministry today is not one of passivity, nor is it confined to the classroom or Sunday Mass. Rather, it is one of action and an active presence. It is a pursuit of justice.

Our quest for justice as a faith community is not a new "fad." In James' letter we hear that "faith apart from works is barren" (James 2:20) and Jeremiah reminds us that to know God is to do justice (22:13-17).<sup>1</sup> More recently Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría, who was killed in El Salvador on November 16, 1989, said, "we must fight injustice with every ounce of our strength."

Thus, our ministry today in the Church becomes the simple actions and choices we make each day. We are all called to be a "voice for the voiceless." Do we purchase any coffee sold at the local grocery store or do we look for Fair Trade coffee? Do we take the extra minute and e-mail our representatives asking them to support an end to the sanctions we have on Iraq, which are killing millions of children? Do we look at our own workers who keep the grounds of Santa Clara so beautiful and ask that they be paid a living wage? Yes, because this is our ministry in the Church today: action through solidarity.

Here in the United States, we have the gift and ability to be a "microphone" and can fight for justice without the fear of persecution or death.<sup>2</sup> We can gather at the gates of Ft. Benning, Georgia, as I did this past year, and be a "voice for the voiceless," asking the United States government to close the School of the Americas (now named the Western Hemispheric Institute of Security Cooperation). In fact, our faith and ministry today call us to be at the gates every November, and if not physically present, then in prayer with those who are gathered.

Looking at the thousands who gathered last November at Ft. Benning, the increasing popularity of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC), Pax Christi groups, and the many other groups and organizations saying "we want justice," I am not alone in my belief of ministry today. We cannot hide within the walls of the church building each Sunday. Even Jesus was "radical" as he spoke out for the oppressed and the marginalized of his community. So, if we are going to truly live the Gospel, our ministry should mirror his. This ministry is not an action reserved only for those who work in campus ministry, parishes, non-profits, or other service-oriented organizations. I invite all who believe in a Higher Being to actively engage in solidarity with our brothers and sisters.

Each day I ask myself the questions posed by St. Ignatius of Loyola: What have I done for Christ in this world? What am I doing now? And above all, what should I do? My ministry, our ministry, lies in the very answers to these questions.

By Kristin Simms '01

#### ENDNOTES

1 Brown, Robert McAfee. *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), 64.

2 Dennis, Marie, et al. *Oscar Romero*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), 91.

[Return to Web format](#)

## **A Reflection on Vocation in the Light of Vatican II**

By Mary Novak

"Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, falling in love in a quite absolute and finite way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart and what amazes you with joy and gratitude." By these simple words, Pedro Arrupe, S.J., describes for me a way of living our lives as a vocation.

For much of my life, I have understood that when one had a "vocation" she or he was a vowed religious. I understood that someone with a vocation had some special access to God and was therefore concerned with matters beyond my capacity to grasp. My early understanding of vocation is due primarily, I believe, to my age. I was born just prior to Vatican II and my early religious education, while occurring just after the Council, was based on pre-Vatican II precepts. One of those precepts was the Church's distinct separation from the world. Another, held by the Church since at least the thirteenth century, was that vowed religious life was a higher life, the life of perfection, a superior vocation not given to all Christians.

By reestablishing the Church in, with, and for the world in solidarity with all people of good will (*Gaudium et Spes*) and by affirming that all are called to the fullness of life and to the perfection of love no matter their state or walk of life (*Lumen Gentium*, art. 40), the Second Vatican Council fundamentally changed these precepts and in so doing, created the ground for a fuller view of vocation. Accordingly, we now hear "vocation" readily applied to everyone and described as that place "where our greatest gifts meet the world's greatest needs and the community verifies that call."

Reflecting on this significant revisioning of "vocation," I am reminded of all of the years that I viewed it narrowly. When I believed that only certain, special people could live a life responsive to something greater, I viewed my choices and my life as insignificant. When, however, I learned that each of us is uniquely called to live a life as a response to love, I came to understand that everything I did infinitely mattered.

Coming to this new view of vocation was for me both freeing and exacting. While I could now see myself as something more than a cog in the wheel of life, the responsibility was overwhelming. How was I to determine my greatest gifts and the world's greatest needs amongst so many, and who in fact was my community? In the process of determining how I might address these questions, I began to explore models of vowed religious formation to see what would work for me as a lay person. Since the Church has viewed vowed religious as having a serious vocation for hundreds of years in the Church-and the laity only since Vatican II-I found the nascent lay formation models significantly informed and enriched by the more developed religious formation models.

In the years following, I attempted to address my vocation questions keeping religious formation in mind: I found a wise spiritual director; left my for-profit practice of law and the security that went with it; learned about discernment through the Spiritual Exercises; saw many of my vacations turn into retreats; traveled to and briefly lived in developing countries; began to study theology; volunteered in the community; prayed a lot; and began teaching law to make ends meet. Along the way, I discovered lay analogues to the traditional religious commitments of poverty, chastity, and obedience discerned through the lens of one's understanding of her or his community. In the process, I also came to understand formation as a continual process where, as our gifts meet the world's needs, we discover ourselves more fully and in doing so we find deeper passions from which to

serve.

During these last few years, I have been privileged to teach law in a community context at the Law School's East San Jose Community Law Center. During this time, my heart has been continuously broken open as I have accompanied the students in seeking justice for those in the East San Jose community. Every term, we meet students who have come to the Law Center just "to get experience." While there, these same students begin to struggle greatly with the question of how to live their lives as lawyers in response to the call to address injustice that so profoundly comes in working with and for those who are marginalized. This Spring, I joined staff and faculty on a delegation to El Salvador and during our trip we were accompanied for a time by the SCU undergraduates who were also in the country. During our time with them in El Salvador, as well as during our gatherings upon returning, I witnessed the students embracing their vocation questions in fundamental and inspiring ways.

While we still have much work to do, my recent experiences of accompanying students underscore for me just how far we have come since Vatican II with respect to lay vocations and formation. In the process, I have found my own passion to challenge injustice as a lawyer overshadowed by what has broken my heart of late - being part of the students' processes by which they come to serve the world and challenge the injustices therein. So, how have I answered my vocation questions as I leave the practice of law to work with the Arrupe Center and Bannan Institute? I am not sure I know precisely. What I do know, however, is that I must never cease to respond to these vocation questions. And while the lawyer in me is not completely satisfied with this outcome, I am comforted by Arrupe's faith as he describes it: that if we "fall in love" and "stay in love," "it will decide everything."

By Mary Novak

[Return to Web format](#)

**Faith and Health: What Do We Know?**

**By Thomas G. Plante**

This is a report of research conducted with the support of a Bannan Institute Grant. For more information on Bannan Grants, please see page 34.

There has been a great deal of interest in the relationship between religious faith and health for thousands of years. Regardless of religious tradition, many have sought religious guidance and spiritual support to help prevent, recover from, or cope with both mental and physical health problems. In fact, it was the healing miracles of Jesus that resulted in so much commotion during the early part of his ministry. "The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk..." clearly highlights the relationship between faith and health.

In 1872, Sir Francis Galton was one of the first people to scientifically evaluate the impact of prayer on health outcomes. He reasoned that if prayer worked, missionaries and ministers would likely live longer than doctors and lawyers (who, I guess, he assumed didn't pray much). He found no difference in mortality rates between these groups. He then reasoned that royalty had many people praying for them and thus might live longer than wealthy commoners do. Again, he found no difference in mortality rates and concluded that prayer did not work very well regarding health outcomes such as mortality.

Thankfully, research methodologies and statistical techniques have improved a great deal since Galton's time. In recent years, behavioral and medical scientists have begun to much better evaluate empirically the relationship between religious faith and health outcomes. A growing number of well-conceived and methodologically rigorous studies have been conducted to examine if religious beliefs and behaviors might be related to health benefits or health risks. In fact, 1,200 professional scholarly studies and 400 reviews have now been published on this topic during the past 100 years (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). The vast majority of this scholarship has occurred during the past 15 years. Specifically, many investigations have suggested that religiousness is associated with better health practices, enhanced ability to cope with adversity and illness, and lower rates of mortality from all causes. Other studies have noted a relationship among lower anxiety, depression, and substance abuse, and higher self-esteem, marital adjustment, life satisfaction, and well being. Research has also begun to explore whether forgiveness, hope, and service to others are associated with positive health outcomes, such as lower cardiovascular risks and mortality rates. A few recent books have been published for laypersons (e.g., Koenig, 1997) and scholars (e.g., Koenig et al., 2001; Plante & Sherman, 2001).

## STATISTICAL CONNECTIONS

What does this research conclude? Research generally supports the notion that religiousness is associated with positive mental and physical health outcomes. This includes less depression, loneliness, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, alcohol abuse, and delinquency as well as more hope, life purpose, social support, marital adjustment, optimism, and well being among those who tend to be religious. Furthermore, the health benefits among the religious include 36 percent fewer deaths (23 percent fewer deaths after controlling for health practices such as drinking alcohol and smoking). In fact, infrequent church attendees are twice more likely to develop cardiovascular disease than frequent attendees and are 4 to 7 times more likely to have a heart attack. Hypertension is 40 percent lower for those who maintain a spiritual practice than those who do not. Meditation has been found to lower cortisol and other physiological stress reactivity levels (which are

independent risk factors for cardiovascular and other diseases) as well as lower hypertension, neuroendocrine responses, and mortality from all causes. Overall, the religious live 7.6 years longer than the nonreligious after statistically controlling for numerous relevant variables such as health practices, social support, socioeconomic level, family history of disease, and so forth (McCullough, Hoyt, Larson, Koenig, & Thoresen, 2000). These findings are especially strong for women and for public religiousness (i.e., attending religious services). Private religiousness (i.e., strength of faith, private prayer) is more closely associated with better health practices but not as strongly associated with increased longevity.

Service to others (e.g., people who volunteer their time to charitable causes) is also closely associated with many health benefits. In fact, volunteers have a 40 percent lower mortality rate relative to people who do not volunteer even after statistically controlling for social support and other relevant variables.

## DISTANCE PRAYER

The most provocative and compelling research in this area involves distance prayer. These studies have used state-of-the-art research methodologies such as double blind randomized clinical trials. For example, in the first of these studies (Byrd, 1988), almost 400 patients in the cardiovascular unit at San Francisco General Hospital were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. All received standard medical care. However, a prayer group outside of the hospital that had no contact with the patients regularly prayed for half of the patients. The patients and hospital staff did not know who was being prayed for. Of the 19 outcome measures (e.g., death, length of hospital stay, need for incubation), the group that received prayers did better on 16 of the outcome measures. This type of research (i.e., double-blind randomized clinical trials using distance prayer for severely ill patients) has been replicated several times with similar results and published in quality, refereed medical journals.

## SANTA CLARA CONFERENCE

Our research (in collaboration with colleague Dr. Allen Sherman at the University of Arkansas Medical School as well as Santa Clara psychology students Azra Simicic, Erin Anderson, Bea Saucedo, Chelsea Rice, Scott Yancy, Mira Guertin, Teresa Carroll, Charlotte Valleys, Naveen Sharma, and Dustin Pardini, and supported in part by grants from the Bannan Institute), has examined the benefits of faith among several hundred recovering drug addicts, more than a hundred bone marrow transplant cancer patients, more than a hundred cervical cancer patients, as well as more than 2,000 college students from Santa Clara, the University of Alabama, Samford University in Alabama, Vanderbilt University, Seton Hall, and several other schools (Plante, Simicic, Anderson, & Manuel, under review; Sherman, Plante, Simonton, Moody, & Wells, under review; Sherman, Simonton, Adams, Latif, Plante, Burris, & Poling, 2001; Plante, Saucedo, & Rice, 2001; Pardini, Plante, Sherman, & Stump, 2001; Plante, Yancey, Sherman, & Guertin, 2000). We have found that faith is consistently associated with good coping, optimism, social support, lower levels of anxiety and depression, and better health practices.

During May 2000, Santa Clara hosted a conference with 25 leading experts in this field for a weekend of discussions about the research in this area. This conference ultimately led to the publication of an edited book published in July 2001 by Guilford Press, entitled *Faith and Health: Psychological Perspectives* (Plante & Sherman, 2001). The conference was funded in part by the Bannan Institute, the John Templeton Foundation, and the California Wellness Foundation. The purpose of the conference was to develop a better understanding of the state-of-the-art scholarship in this area and to develop a research and practice agenda for the future. Furthermore, we hoped to publish a scholarly edited volume that truly reflected collaboration among the contributors and a synthesis of ideas by spending three days together discussing this topic.

There are many ways that faith might lead to better health. These may include developing a community of social support, maintaining healthy lifestyles, avoiding high-risk behaviors such as unsafe sexual practices and drunk driving, and developing meaning and purpose in life. Of course, divine intervention is also a possibility.

There are many questions that still remain. These include denomination effects such as which religious groups are more likely to obtain what types of health benefits. For example, Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists

frequently show lower rates of certain forms of cancer and heart disease, which may be associated, at least in part, to their dietary restrictions and excellent social support systems. Our research has shown that Catholic students may be generally more stress resilient than Protestant students but show higher levels of anxiety and depression relative to Protestants. Furthermore, the powerful role of placebo and belief in general may contribute to many of the health benefits of religion. Thus, if you truly believe that your faith will help you (regardless of the validity of these beliefs), it might very well help due to your belief regardless of what the belief may actually be. Potential confounding influences must be investigated too.

Ethical questions emerge in this area of research as well. If faith is good for health, should doctors prescribe it for their patients? Might people seek out religious involvement for the sake of their health and not from religious convictions? It is also important to point out that no research suggests that illness is due to lack of faith. It is very important not to blame patients for their illness because they are not active in church activities, prayer, meditation, and so forth.

Although much research is still needed and many questions remain unanswered, current scholarship suggests that religious practice (both attending religious services and private spiritual life) tends to be good for your health. Perhaps the popular adage of the future will be "take an aspirin, go to church, and call me in the morning."

By Thomas G. Plante

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[Return to Web format](#)

## **Biblical Hermeneutics From Vatican II Onward**

By Joseph Grassi

In the fall of 1949, I began classes at the Biblical Institute amid an atmosphere of excitement and hope. In 1943, Pius XII had issued his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in which he affirmed the importance of historical biblical criticism and gave biblical scholars a green light to freely pursue research with these methods. The guiding light behind the encyclical was the pope's friend and counselor, Augustin Bea, S.J., a professor who later became the director of the Biblical Institute and a Cardinal. I felt privileged to take his classes and those of other great Jesuit teachers such as Stanislaus Lyonnet, Max Zerwick, and Joseph Bonsirven.

However, there was considerable hesitation in some Vatican circles about this new direction for Catholic biblical scholars. This arose in the years before Vatican II as noted scholars began to test their new freedom by publishing their research. When Pius XII died in 1958, his critics came out into the open. I was saddened to learn that my esteemed former professors, Zerwick and Lyonnet, had been removed from teaching without any explanation.<sup>1</sup>

### Vatican II and Biblical Studies

Pope John XXIII surprised everyone by calling together an ecumenical council of the world's bishops. When asked for his reasons, he humorously answered by opening a window and saying, "to let a breath of fresh air into the church." However, when the council opened in 1962, there was an ultra-conservative group of bishops firmly determined to close that window as soon as possible. They had prepared declarations in advance, hoping for a quick approval and speedy ending of the Council. Fortunately, their first proposed schema on Divine Revelation, which was negative in regard to recent biblical scholarship, was opposed by many of the Council Fathers. In November 1962, Pope John XXIII ordered a new one to be written.

This dogmatic constitution, *De Revelatione*, placed a seal of approval on Pius XII's encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, in regard to the need for Catholic scholars to embrace historical criticism of the Bible, and it went even further. Chapter five applied this to the Old and New Testament. For the New Testament, the Council drew from the 1964 Instruction of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. In brief, this document affirmed a threefold stage of writing and interpreting the Gospels: that of the sayings, deeds, and scripture fulfillment of the earthly Jesus; the level of the apostolic preaching and teaching of the early church; and the level of the evangelists, each drawing from level two and the assistance of the Spirit to assemble and compose their Gospels in accord with the needs of their audiences.

Chapter six concerned the Bible's role in the life of the church, and it included statements that encouraged biblical scholars to continue their work: "The church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord" (6:21) and "The study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology" (6:24). These are responses to the attacks on scholars that took place after the death of Pius XII in 1958.

### Hermeneutics in a New Era from Vatican II to Today

However, Vatican II was not a sunset but a dawn for future progress. In 1968, the first Jerome Biblical Commentary was published with an introductory forward by Cardinal Bea. The late esteemed biblical teacher and scholar Raymond Brown, S.S., wrote the commentary section on hermeneutics. He seemed to be foretelling the future course of biblical interpretation when he wrote: "sometimes the written word takes on a life of its

own. Modern literary criticism seems to be moving away from an exclusive emphasis on what the author intended to a broader emphasis on what his words actually convey to the individual reader." In other words, biblical interpretation cannot look only at a twosome-God and the writer along with the process of transmission into the biblical text. There are three entities involved: God, the writer, and the audience to which it is communicated.

### The 1993 Pontifical Biblical Commission: The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church

This Instruction deals especially with audience communication. This eighty-page document, which features an introduction written by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,<sup>2</sup> cannot be fairly summarized in this small space; however, some of the salient features follow. The assembled biblical scholars from all over the world described newer and very valuable approaches to interpretation in addition to the predominant historical-critical method. This latter is "diachronic-particularly attentive to the historical development of texts and traditions across the passage of time." However, it also needs a "synchronic understanding of texts-that is, one which has to do with their language, composition, narrative structure and capacity for persuasion"; in other words, the process of communication to the audience at the time of listening or reading. Hence the word, synchronic. Here are some highlights from the Instruction with brief notes or quotations:

#### New Methods of Literary Analysis

1. Rhetorical Analysis, understanding that the Bible was written to persuade and motivate people. In doing so, it used methods common to the world of its writing: "The Bible is not simply a statement of truths. It is a message that carries within itself a function of communication ... a message which carries within it a certain power of argument and rhetorical strategy." 2. Narrative Analysis, "a method of understanding and communicating the biblical message which corresponds to the form of story and personal testimony." Also, "a text will continue to have an influence in the degree to which real readers (e.g. ourselves in the 20th century) can identify with the implied reader." 3. Semiotic Analysis (or structuralism). This is based on the dynamics of the text alone without looking outside of it. Here the Instruction warns that this should be open to the history of those who play a part in the text, whether authors or audience.

#### Approaches Based on Tradition

1. Canonical Approach. "The Bible is not a compilation of texts unrelated to one another; rather it is a gathering together of a whole array of witnesses from one great tradition." This approach "interprets each biblical text in the light of ...the (whole) Bible received as a norm of faith by a community of believers." 2. Approach through Jewish Traditions of Interpretation and 3. Approach through the History of the Influence of the Text. "A text only becomes a literary work insofar as it encounters readers who give life to it by appropriating it to themselves ... this can occur either on an individual or community level and can take shape in various spheres (literary, artistic, theological, ascetical, and mystical)."

#### Approaches that Use the Human Sciences

Among these are: 1. The Sociological Approach, which draws from an "exact a knowledge as is possible of the social conditions distinctive of the various milieus in which the traditions recorded in the Bible took shape." 2. The Cultural Anthropology Approach, to consider "the characteristics of different kinds of human beings in their social context-as for example, 'the Mediterranean person.'" 3. Psychological and Psychoanalytic Approaches, recognizing that "the interpretation of a text is always dependent on the mindset and concerns of its readers."

#### Contextual Approaches

1. The Liberationist Approach. This is because "the liberation of the poor is a communal process, the

community of the poor is the privileged addressee of the Bible as word of liberation." This approach is excellently documented by Prof. J. David Pleins<sup>3</sup> in his recent book on the social visions of Israel. He notes, as does the Instruction, that this is not the only approach to the poor and oppressed in the Bible. 2. The Feminist Approach. "Feminine sensitivity helps to unmask and correct certain commonly accepted interpretations which were tendentious and sought to justify the male domination of women." Professor and SCU Provost Denise Carmody's work<sup>4</sup> is significant in this area. 3. The Fundamentalist Interpretation-which must be rejected, because "it fails to recognize that the New Testament took form within the Christian church and that it is the Holy Scripture of this church, the existence of which preceded the composition of the texts."

### Philosophical Hermeneutics

"Hermeneutics is a dialectical process: The understanding of a text always entails an enhanced understanding of oneself." Part One of Professor Carmichael Peters' recent book<sup>5</sup> furnishes a careful explanation of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, which are noted by the Instruction of the Biblical Commission.

### The Interpretation of the Bible in the Life of the Church

In this concluding section, the document highlights that "exegetes may have a distinctive role in the interpretation of the Bible but they do not exercise a monopoly," and indicates that the church "receives the Bible as the word of God, addressed both to itself and the entire world at the present time." Actualization is necessary, meaning to "apply their (biblical texts) message to contemporary circumstances and to express it in language adapted to the present time." Professor William Spohn<sup>6</sup> has written a very helpful guide to this process of actualization. In relation to the church, the biblical Instruction quotes Vatican II: "The magisterium of the church 'is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on; by divine commission, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the church listens to the text with love, watches over it in holiness and explains it faithfully'" (Dei Verbum, 10).

### The Use of the Bible

According to the document, the primary place of the Bible is in the living liturgy of the church. Christ is "present in his word, because it is He himself who speaks when the sacred Scripture is read in the church." Secondly, it is the individual or community reading of texts in the atmosphere of "the prompting of the Spirit, meditation, prayer, and contemplation." Next, it is in pastoral ministry where the Bible "provides the starting point, foundation, and norm of catechetical teaching." The fruit of biblical teaching, especially the gospels, should be to "elicit an encounter with Christ." Finally, ecumenical dialog will benefit since "most of the issues ... are related in some way to the interpretation of biblical texts," including "the structure of the church, primacy and collegiality, marriage and divorce, and the admission of women to the ministerial priesthood."

### Conclusion

The document concludes by returning to its original premise-that historical criticism is a necessary prelude but not the final end of the exegete: "When historical-critical exegesis does not go as far as to take into account the final result of the editorial process but remains absorbed solely in issues of sources and stratification of texts, it fails to bring the exegetical task to completion." We have seen that the whole Instruction is oriented toward the completion of this task by taking into account the process by which the text communicates itself to the audience or readers.

By Joseph Grassi

### ENDNOTES

- 1 Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., later described this painful era in an article in *Theological Studies*, 22 (1961), 426-444.
- 2 In it, he explained, "The Pontifical Biblical Commission, in its new form after the Second Vatican Council, is not an organ of the teaching office, but rather a commission of scholars who, in their scientific and ecclesial

responsibility as believing exegetes, take positions on important problems of biblical interpretation and know that for this task they enjoy the confidence of the teaching office. Thus the present document was established. It contains a well-grounded overview of the panorama of present-day methods and in this way offers to the inquirer an orientation to the possibilities and limits of these approaches....I believe that this document is very helpful for the important questions about the right way of understanding Holy Scripture and that it helps us go further. It takes up the paths of the encyclicals of 1893 and 1943 and advances them in a fruitful way."

3 J. David Pleins. *Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible* (Nashville: Westminster/John Know, 2000).

4 Denise Lardner Carmody. *Christian Feminist Theology: A Constructive Interpretation* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995).

5 Carmichael Peters. *A Gadamarian Reading of Karl Rahner's Theology of Grace and Freedom* (Catholic Scholars Press, 2000).

6 William C. Spohn. *Go and Do Likewise* (N.Y.: Continuum, 1999).

[Return to Web format](#)