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2022-2023

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2023 CONVENTION THEME – FREEDOM

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, who has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor and has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free," (Luke 4:18, based on Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:6)

The gift and challenge of freedom are central to the Christian faith. The Triune God creates, redeems, and sustains human freedom, which, in turn, reflects and manifests divine freedom. Biblical narratives of God's action on behalf of Israel in the Exodus and Jesus' public ministry recount and summon liberation from oppression and exclusion. Grace and sin precondition human choices without canceling freedom. Christian theological traditions have debated the relationship between freedom, grace, and the law, and philosophical reflection has parsed connections among freedom and human dignity, rational self-governance, and power. Whereas freedom remains a constitutive dimension of agency and a necessary condition of moral responsibility, it has suffered from an individualistic conceptualization; emphases on negative immunities or narrow notions of autonomy often overshadow the significance of social context, contingency, and freedom's costs. Recent social movements for recognition and accountability underscore the pervasive threats to freedom that persist in our day, from white supremacy to gendered violence to the global rise of authoritarianism. Tensions between individual liberty and the common good resurged during the pandemic, yet Catholic theology has long articulated a more robust understanding of freedom than mere license; the tradition has emphasized the personal and social responsibilities freedom entails. The time is ripe for renewed theological reflection on freedom.

These dimensions of *freedom* will serve as the focus for the 77th annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, which will be held June 8-11, 2023 at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Confirmed plenary speakers include Andrew Prevot, who will address the freedom of God and human freedom; Darlene Weaver, who will take up the relationship of freedom to moral agency, with Melissa Pagán responding; and Leo Guardado, Stan Chu Ilo and Mary Mee-Yin Yuen, who will address threats to freedom along with modes of resistance and agency in different international contexts. Francis Clooney, S.J., will deliver the presidential address.

A variety of our theological subdisciplines can help to illuminate freedom and its relationship to fragility, community, discipleship, identity, and the common good. Here are a few initial ideas, and I look forward to seeing your own creative applications:

- In light of our 2022 theme, how might we consider the meaning and grounding of freedom across world religions: whether as related to *geulah* in Judaism, in tension with surrender in Islam, in light of the multiple meanings of *moksa* and *nirvana* in Hindu and Buddhist traditions? How might the Southern African concept of Ubuntu or experiences of dispossession among the First Peoples of Africa, Australia, and the Americas inform understandings of the limits of freedom?

- How do insights from the Hebrew Bible shed light on the gift and task of freedom: whether in terms of liberation for covenantal relationship or release of those captive or in the shadow of exile/exilic mindset even after exile ends? How might freedom from enslavement to sin and death in the Pauline tradition do so, as well? How do other biblical narratives sustain those who must 'make a way out of no way' (Delores Williams), given barriers to their freedom?
- How might we reflect upon freedom and determinism in early Christian theology, from Christian attacks on gnostic determinism, to early Christian rejection of ancient notions of cosmic fatalism, to the question of the possibility of freedom from sin raised in the Pelagian controversy, or the question of the freedom of Jesus' human will in later Christological reflection?
- How might turning to divine freedom and the immanent Trinity along with the relationship of freedom to creation, sin, Incarnation, redemption, grace, desire, and reason inform theological reflection on the subject? How do insights from liberation, political, and decolonial theologies likewise illuminate God as a source of freedom or modes of struggle for emancipation?
- How do Rahner's fundamental option, von Balthasar's 'dramatic encounter' between infinite and finite freedom, and Cone's gospel agitation for Black freedom deepen our understanding of liberation? How do queer, feminist, womanist, Latinx, Asian American and disability theologies do so? In more practical ways, how can Christian communities recognize and respond to those inhibited by unfreedom(s)? How can they help unmask false freedoms?
- How might post-conciliar debates over 'freedom in the church' inform contemporary questions around participation, authority, disagreement, and dissent? How might Pope Francis' call for free and honest speech (*parrhesia*) guide processes and shape structures for discernment and decision making within a synodal church? What role does freedom play in the relationship between individuation and communion? between ecclesial identity and ecumenical inclusion? between the ecclesial periphery and the ecclesial center?
- How do resources from pneumatology, mysticism, and spirituality serve to cultivate interior freedom? How are we to understand freedom against the backdrop of nature (physical and metaphysical) and eschatological destiny?
- What does it mean across different global contexts to confess that through his redemption, Christ has set us free (Gal 5:13) and this freedom is a foretaste of our own future freedom in glory (Rom 8:18-23)?
- How might reflection on the relationship of freedom to embodiment and relationality influence or challenge atomistic conceptions of autonomy? How might findings in neuroscience and moral psychology or medical and technological advancements impact understandings of the relationship of freedom to finitude and theological anthropology more broadly?

- How can framing the moral life in terms of the cultivation of virtue shape considerations of freedom and our capacity to take moral responsibility for ourselves and others?
- How do undemocratic political structures, economic precarity, hyperincarceration, trauma, legacies of slavery, internalized logics, and idealized social norms constrain freedom, and how can other structures and cultures liberate? How do we understand freedom as constitutive of agency, conscience, and self-determination in light of such contextual realities? How do forms of oppression circumscribe not only freedom but also responsibility?
- What does our theological tradition have to offer contemporary debates around freedom of expression and its limits (e.g., hate speech, 'cancel culture')? How can the legacy of *Dignitatis humanae* inform religious liberty debates, particularly in light of the relationship of human dignity to the freedom of the Church? More broadly, how has Catholic social doctrine developed *vis à vis* negative and positive freedoms and related human rights?
- How can the sacramental life of church foster freedom for discernment and pursuit of the good in response to God's summons? How do Jesus' promise of abundant life (John 10:10) and Christian discipleship invite conversion from certain captivities and coopting forces? How can sacramental and other religious practices empower agency? How might art, community organizing, and social movements do the same?

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• *CTSA Proceedings* 77 (2023): 1–17 •

ELUSIVE FREEDOM: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

ANDREW PREVOT
Georgetown University
Washington, District of Columbia

The title of my talk announces one of its central claims, namely that freedom is elusive. As soon we seem to take hold of it—whether conceptually, institutionally, or spiritually—we discover it again, only at a distance. This distance, though, does not suppress the human passion for freedom but renews it. The struggle continues. This slogan expresses another central claim of this talk. By emphasizing the elusiveness of freedom, my goal is not to encourage pessimism or despair but rather to motivate action. My argument is against self-satisfaction: the false comfort of feeling oneself free enough already.

The English phrase, "the struggle continues," translates the Portuguese, "*a luta continua*." Eduardo Mondlane, the first president of Mozambique's anti-colonial liberation movement FRELIMO, introduced this rallying cry in the 1960s, urging his followers to keep fighting because victory was not yet won.[1] In 1973, it became the title of a documentary film about FRELIMO, which aired in the U.S. on the African-American-oriented public television series, Say Brother.[2] In postcolonial Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah adopted it as a part of his message to workers.[3] It may be familiar to members of the CTSA thanks to Ada María Isasi-Díaz's book, *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology*.[4] Echoes of it may also be heard in the new chapter, "Enfleshing Struggle," which is set to appear in an updated edition of M. Shawn Copeland's *Enfleshing Freedom*.[5] This saying reverberates across diverse contexts of social protest.

In the first part of my talk, I focus on the protracted freedom struggle of Mozambique. This context has not been discussed in any Plenary Session at the CTSA.

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[1] African Information Service, with photos by Robert Van Lierop, "Mozambique: The Struggle Continues," *The Black Scholar* 5, no. 2 (October 1973): 44–52, at 51.

[2] "Say Brother; African Liberation Committee Film; A Luta Continua (The Struggle Continues)," 25 October 1973, GBH Archives, http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/V_7E8FD3E200F84CC3ABEE5D8CCC94FD12.

[3] Kwame Nkrumah, *The Struggle Continues: Six Panaf Pamphlets* (London: Panaf, 2006 [1973]), 12.

[4] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

[5] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, Second Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, forthcoming).

The anthropologist Devaka Premawardhana contributed his ethnographic knowledge of this country to a 2022 Invited Session on Interreligious Learning in the Global South.[6] There have been plenaries related to liberation, human rights, and social justice,[7] and paper sessions on African theology,[8] which anticipate some of the points I want to make. But I would like us to consider Mozambique directly, both because its particular story—in which the Catholic Church is deeply implicated—deserves to be better understood and because it is a powerful symbol of the continual struggle for freedom taking place everywhere. I refuse all false binaries between the local and the global, the contextual and the traditional, the practical and the philosophical. Writing in solidarity with the people of Mozambique, I argue that any C/catholic theology that speaks about freedom needs to be informed by the historical, intersectional, and spiritual strivings of those who have been deprived of freedom, wherever they may be.

In the second and third parts of my talk, I comment on the material and spiritual conditions of freedom. I reflect on these conditions as they are sought both in Mozambique and in other social and theological contexts that may be closer at hand. Although the particularities of each place matter, there are connections, such as exploitative relationships of multinational capital and global networks of aid, solidarity, and resistance. Governmental, nongovernmental, and specifically ecclesial and religious organizations are involved in all of this. There are also isomorphisms, such as common patterns of economic inequality, racial subjugation, gender-based violence, social fragmentation, and climate crisis. In North America, as elsewhere, groups suffering from material unfreedom and persons of whatever material status who strive to make choices that align with God face enormous challenges. They have to confront equivocations in the meaning of freedom, restrictions on its material scope that divide the haves from the have-nots, and mysterious barriers to its spiritual fruition, exemplified by the Pauline saying, "I do not do what I want" (Rom. 7:15 NRSV).

In response to these problems, the compromise solutions provided by economic, political, cultural, and religious liberalism take us only so far. The stunning merger of liberalism with Catholic theology achieved by John Courtney Murray more than a half

[6] B. Kevin Brown, "Interreligious Learning in the Global South—Invited Session," *CTSA Proceedings* 76 (2022): 88–89; and Devaka Premawardhana, *Faith in Flux: Pentecostalism and Mobility in Rural Mozambique* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

[7] For example: M. Shawn Copeland, "The New Anthropological Subject at the Heart of the Mystical Body of Christ," *CTSA Proceedings* 53 (1998): 25–47; María Pilar Aquino, "Theology and Indigenous Cultures of the Americas: Conditions of Dialogue," *CTSA Proceedings* 61 (2006): 19–50; Bryan N. Massingale, "*Vox Victimarum Vox Dei*: Malcolm X as Neglected 'Classic' for Catholic Theological Reflection," *CTSA Proceedings* 65 (2010): 63–88; Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "A Global Sign of Outward Grace: The Sacramentality of the World Church in the Era of Globalization," *CTSA Proceedings* 67 (2012): 14–22; and Gemma Tulud Cruz, "Theology and (De)humanizing Work in the Twenty-First Century," *CTSA Proceedings* 75 (2021): 1–17.

[8] For example: Cyril Orji, "African Theology," *CTSA Proceedings* 66 (2011): 106–107; Emmanuel Katongole, "African Panel and Discussion—Selected Session," *CTSA Proceedings* 69 (2014): 91–92; and Emmanuel Katongole, "Reading *Laudato Si'* from an Africanist Background—Selected Session," *CTSA Proceedings* 72 (2017): 77–78.

century ago has deeply shaped the ethos of the CTSA and yielded many lasting results.[9] However, there is a danger that this liberal framework will tempt theologians to become satisfied by abstract principles and half measures and to forget the urgency of ongoing struggle. As the Black feminist Civil Rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer declares, "Nobody's free until everybody's free."[10] Although liberalism aims at universality, it leaves many in desperate straits. Questioning the limits of liberalism, along with other insufficient paradigms of freedom, I contend that theology needs to keep fighting for an integral emancipation that leaves no one in figurative or literal chains. In the final analysis, freedom is elusive because it is nothing other than full sanctification: God's life radiant through incarnate existence.

ELUSIVE FREEDOM IN MOZAMBIQUE

Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century, slavery already existed in the lands of southeastern Africa now known as Mozambique. Captives of interethnic wars were often enslaved. They were either kept within hierarchical households, in patron-client relationships, or traded to Arabia and India in exchange for textiles and metalworks. Portuguese Christian settlers and creoles imitated this slaveholding practice as they established trading posts for ivory and gold and plantations known as *prazos* in the interior. For several decades in the early-to-mid nineteenth century, the trade in slaves from this region of Africa increased dramatically, both because of the growth of plantation economies around the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and because of the labor vacuum created by first British—and then French—abolitionism. The capitalist ambitions of certain Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans changed the nature of slavery, stripping the enslaved persons of the meager social protections they had in the traditional system. Marauding bands conducted violent raids to acquire many thousands and eventually millions of Black "bodies" to ship to Zanzibar, the Seychelles, Brazil, or Cuba.[11]

Although Portugal had maintained a small presence in Mozambique, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century, with Europe's "scramble for Africa," that attempts were made to reduce the entire population to the slave-like condition of colonial rule. The decades of the twentieth century leading up to the nationalist struggle for liberation were marked by a two-tiered society similar to South African apartheid. The minority who were recognized as Portuguese citizens (including Whites, Indians, mixed-race persons, and a small number of assimilated Blacks) were paid at higher rates, enjoyed the right to vote, and were by many such measures "free," though it was common for the non-White members of even this group to suffer from discrimination.

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[9] John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005 [1960]); and John F. Quinn, "*We Hold These Truths* at Fifty: John Courtney Murray's Contested Legacy," *American Catholic Studies* 122, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 31–51.

[10] Fannie Lou Hamer, "'Nobody's Free Until Everybody's Free', Speech Delivered at the Founding of the National Women's Political Caucus, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1971," in *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is*, ed. Maegan Parker Brooks and Davis W. Houck (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 134–139, at 136.

[11] Malyn Newitt, *A Short History of Mozambique* (London: Hurst & Co., 2017), 52–55.

By contrast, Black natives, who made up the vast majority of the population, were subject to forced labor, denied all but the most elementary education, and harassed by police. Subsistence farmers were coerced into planting cash crops and selling them at low prices that left them wanting for food, or else were simply driven from their land. Others were compelled to work for unjust wages in the mines of the Transvaal.[12]

The Catholic Church cooperated with such arrangements. The Vatican entered into a formal concordat with Salazar's authoritarian regime. Catholic missionary schools took on the responsibility of providing primary education to Black natives. The aim was supposedly positive: to liberate them from their allegedly primitive and sinful ways by giving them both civilization and salvation. Yet the reality, as Mondlane observed, is that the Catholic Church was training natives to be "servants of Portugal."[13] Local Catholic leaders, such as the auxiliary bishop of Lourenço Marques, labeled all indigenous resistance to colonial rule as "terrorism" and "communism," forbade priests from supporting it, and declared, "The native people of Africa have the obligation to thank the colonialists for all the benefits which they receive from them."[14]

There were some exceptions to this pre-independence alignment of Catholicism with colonialism. The Missionaries of Africa (known as the White Fathers because of their white habits) trained some local African clergy and encouraged them to integrate indigenous cultural elements with Catholic faith. This emphasis on inculturation increased after the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). As the push for national independence grew in the 1960s, some African seminarians and priests joined the movement. A subset of White Fathers and Burgos fathers assisted the armed struggle.[15]

Mondlane received his early education in a Swiss missionary program where he learned to sing African American spirituals as a child, the very songs that inspired James Cone's Black theology.[16] Members of Mondlane's Presbyterian community arranged for him to do further study in South Africa, Portugal, and the United States, culminating with a doctoral degree in sociology from Northwestern University. They hoped that, as a return on their investment, Mondlane would come back to Mozambique to lead a youth ministry initiative.[17] Some scholars argue that Protestant missions provided fertile ground for revolutionary activity because they had critical distance from the Catholic political establishment.[18]

However, one should not overlook the fact that Mondlane had to break free from the patronizing, racist attitudes of his Christian community in order to become an anti-colonial leader and find freedom in his personal life. His benefactors vehemently opposed his decision to marry a White American woman, named Janet Johnson,

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[12] Eduardo Mondlane, *The Struggle for Mozambique* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1969), 35–57 and 76–98.

[13] Mondlane, *Struggle for Mozambique*, 75.

[14] Quoted in Mondlane, *Struggle for Mozambique*, 74.

[15] Eric Mourier-Genoud, *Catholicism and the Making of Politics in Central Mozambique, 1940–1986* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019), 86–87, 96, 103–104, and 114.

[16] James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

[17] Robert Faris, *Liberating Mission in Mozambique: Faith and Revolution in the Life of Eduardo Mondlane* (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2014).

[18] Teresa Cruz e Silva, *Protestant Churches and the Formation of Political Consciousness in Southern Mozambique (1930–1974)* (Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2001).

because of how this relationship would be perceived. His reply shows that, as feminist theory emphasizes, such a private matter was in fact deeply political and theological. In defense of his *marriage*, he wrote,

> It is my belief that political issues, economic issues and social issues will be rectified only if we humans here on earth receive God's demands and execute God's will. For me, human salvation does not begin in heaven but in this world. If our churches are interested in human problems, it is my conviction that they should take an interest at least in practicing what they know is God's will here in the world.[19]

In statements such as this, Mondlane demanded that Black people in Mozambique, and indeed everywhere, be recognized as full human beings with the freedom to pursue their own happiness. He presented this recognition as a strict matter of Christian obedience.

Mondlane was a leading figure in FRELIMO's armed struggle for independence, which began in 1964. This revolutionary war was not concluded until 1974 when a coup in Portugal finally ended the colonial regime. Militant resistance to the occupying Portuguese forces was a morally justifiable response to the brutality of the colonial system and the massacre of nonviolent protesters.[20] If a peaceful resolution had been possible, it would have been preferred, but Portugal stubbornly refused. In the fight for liberation, unity of vision was difficult to achieve. Tensions between regional ethnic groups, which had not regarded themselves as a single nation; clashes between capitalist and communist models of material freedom, which were fueling a global "Cold War" that was actually quite hot; and differences between traditional African, Catholic, Protestant, and other religious and humanist accounts of spiritual freedom complicated the struggle. Everyone in the movement wanted to be free, but they lacked a univocal concept. Although Mondlane endeavored to address these tensions, tragically, in 1969, he was assassinated. His death and the deepening rifts in the movement foreshadowed a fierce conflict over the future of the country.[21]

The hope that sustained FRELIMO was that independence would rescue Mozambique from its misery, and in some respects it did, but freedom in the fullest sense remained elusive. Soon after victory, the country was plunged again into war. Contras funded by the White-supremacist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa attacked the fledgling government's military and infrastructure.[22] These external destabilizing forces built on, and built up, resentment among certain rural Mozambicans who opposed the modernizing, secularizing, and collectivizing initiatives of the new socialist, single-party state. FRELIMO and RENAMO, as the counter-revolutionary movement came to be called, fought a brutal war until 1992,

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[19] Quoted in Farris, *Liberating Mission*, 86.

[20] African Information Service, "Mozambique: The Struggle Continues," 46.

[21] George Roberts, *Revolutionary State-Making in Dar es Salaam: African Liberation and the Global Cold War, 1961–1974* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 135–172.

[22] William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1994).

which left approximately one million dead, many millions displaced and traumatized, and many metrics of social and economic development plummeting. Although there were atrocities on both sides, RENAMO was condemned for using particularly inhumane tactics such as destructions of hospitals and schools, massacres of civilians, and abductions of women as sex slaves. Women suffered greatly in the war. They were unsafe at home and in refugee camps.[23]

To some extent, the conflict was about their place in society. The cultural clash between "tradition" and "modernity" that partly fueled the war concerned economic questions, such as whether local African chiefs would retain the power to allocate land, but it also concerned gender questions, such as whether Mozambique would continue to practice traditional rites of female initiation that, though typically not involving genital mutilation, did require women to submit to patriarchal authority. Women-led initiatives such as the Organization of Mozambican Women (OMM) increased women's participation in education, labor, military service, and politics and pushed for modernizing reforms that some Mozambicans viewed as threatening to their indigenous lifeways.[24] These fights revealed an ambiguity: Did freedom mean restoring a cultural past suppressed by European imperialism or forging a new egalitarian future beyond every domination, including by African men? The answer was clear for many prominent women in Mozambique's struggle, such as Josina Machel, an early leader of FRELIMO who is celebrated each year on Mozambique's National Women's Day (April 7).[25]

By the end of the 1980s, FRELIMO loosened its commitment to state-run socialism and began efforts to liberalize the economy and democratize the political apparatus. This shift was a pragmatic necessity given waning support from the Soviet bloc, the devasting effects of the war, and the immediate need for foreign aid and investment.[26] Privatization of property and the plan for a multi-party state facilitated the country's transition from war to relative peace. However, these policy changes were no panacea. They came with fresh problems of neocolonial extractivism and entrenched inequality. Although Portuguese rule is over, multinational corporations linked to the U.S., the E.U., Russia, China, and Brazil reap profits from the land and resources of Mozambicans and sometimes violently quash local resistance. The

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[23] Lily Bunker, "War Accounts from Ilha Josina Machel, Maputo Province," in *The War Within: New Perspectives on the Civil War in Mozambique, 1976–1992*, ed. Eric Mourier-Genoud, Michel Cahen, and Domingos Manuel do Rosário (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), 181–200; Mario J. Azevedo, *Tragedy and Triumph: Mozambique Refugees in Southern Africa, 1977–2001* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002), 70; and "Mozambique: Civil War," Mass Atrocity Endings, 7 August 2015, https://sites.tufts.edu/atrocityendings/tag/mozambique/.

[24] Kathleen E. Sheldon, *Pounders of Grain: A History of Women, Work, and Politics in Mozambique* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002), 131–36; and Helena Hansen, Ragnar Hansen, Ole Gjerstad, and Chantal Sarazin, "The Organization of Mozambican Women (A Organizacao Mulher Mocambicana/OMM)," *Journal of Eastern African Research & Development* 15 (1985): 230–244.

[25] Ama Biney, "Uncovering Josina Machel from Obscurity: African Women Hidden in His-Story," South African History Online, 3 April 2014, www.sahistory.org.za/archive/uncovering-josina-machel-obscurity-african-women-hidden-his-story-ama-biney-3-april-2014.

[26] Georgi M. Derluguian, "Mozambique in the 1980s: Periphery Goes Postmodern," in *The War Within*, 203–220.

freedom of global capital tramples on the freedom of the people themselves. Despite increasing growth, the structural adjustment programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have diverted monies from education and healthcare and worsened conditions for the impoverished majority.[27]

Although the struggle against capitalist exploitation continues, it is certainly good that the civil war has ended. Freedom requires peace. The lay Catholic community known as Sant'Egidio, which had been doing humanitarian work in Mozambique, facilitated the peace process. With assistance from the archbishop of Beira, they made contacts with the reclusive RENAMO leadership and gradually convinced them to come to Rome for a formal dialogue with the FRELIMO government. It is remarkable that such a humble religious organization, started in 1968 by young Italian Catholics who simply wanted to live the gospel and follow the teachings of Vatican II, made such an important contribution to the common good. Yet it was the voluntary participation of each side of the conflict and the voices of Mozambicans crying out for a better future that ultimately liberated the country from its death spiral.[28]

Recent popes have made apostolic journeys to Mozambique, bearing messages of peace: John Paul II in September 1988, while the war raged on, and Francis in September 2019, following the signing of a new peace accord meant to ensure safe and free elections. On his visit, Francis discussed the economic and social conditions that make lasting peace possible. He noted advancements in the areas of education and healthcare. He made special mention of the youth of Mozambique who are the present and the future of the country. He highlighted the needs of the unemployed and the landless poor. And he expressed solidarity with those suffering from recent climate-change-related cyclones.[29] According to the Global Climate Risk Index, Mozambique was the most vulnerable country in the world to adverse effects of climate change in 2019 and the fifth most vulnerable from the period of 2000 to 2019.[30] One encouraging aspect of Mozambique, from a human rights perspective, is its 2015 decriminalization of homosexual activity. This decision distinguishes Mozambique from countries such

[27] Jason Beste and James Pfeiffer, "Mozambique's Debt and the International Monetary Fund's Influence on Poverty, Education, and Health," *International Journal of Health Services* 46, no. 2 (2016): 366–381; Lucas Atanásio Catsossa, "Globalização do capitalismo extrativista, recursos naturais e o neocolonialismo na África: desafios e perspectivas para Moçambique," *Entre-Lugar* 12, no. 23 (July 2021): 310–355; João M. Paraskeva, "Mozambique: Neocolonialism and the Remasculinization of Democracy," in *The Developing World and State Education: Neoliberal Depredation and Egalitarian Alternatives*, ed. Dave Hill and Ellen Rosskam (New York: Routledge, 2008), 197–215; and "Human Development Index (HDI)," accessed 9 May 2023, www.hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI.

[28] Andrea Riccardi, "Promoting Democracy, Peace, and Solidarity," *Journal of Democracy* 9, no. 4 (October 1998): 157–167.

[29] Francis, "Meeting with the Authorities, Civil Society and the Diplomatic Corps" (Apostolic Journey to Mozambique, Madagascar, and Mauritius [4–10 September 2019], Maputo, Mozambique, 5 September 2019), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2019/9/5/autorita-mozambico.html.

[30] David Eckstein, Vera Künzel, and Laura Schäfer, "Global Climate Crisis Index 2021," Jan. 2021, www.germanwatch.org/en/19777.

as Uganda that are moving in the opposite direction, with deadly consequences.[31] Although the pope did not address this topic on his visit, he has since declared that "being homosexual isn't a crime" and "God loves us as we are."[32]

In the area of religion, Mozambique boasts traditional African, Islamic, and Christian (including Protestant, Catholic, and Pentecostal) faith communities, which either survived the 1970s Soviet-style suppression of religious freedom or, as is especially the case with Pentecostalism, blossomed in more recent decades.[33] The embrace of indigenous traditions—which happens in part through inculturation and, in some cases, multiple belonging—is an important means by which Mozambicans and other Africans resist Western imperialism and affirm their dignity.[34] This point is emphasized by Teresia Hinga, Elochukwu Uzukwu, Florence Oso, Stan Ilo, and other African theologians.[35] These scholars recognize that African culture is not a static, idealized given but a work in progress that is plural and contested. Questions remain about how best to mediate between ancient religiocultural practices and forward-looking possibilities and how best to embody the sanctifying grace of God in the midst of contemporary African realities.

Although the spiritual freedom that is sought through these complex choices about identity is not reducible to the achievement of material (i.e., political economic) freedom, these areas of struggle are related in various ways. To take one disconcerting example: the ongoing Al Shabaab insurgency in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado draws on the frustrations of an impoverished Muslim community that has been mistreated by foreign mining companies and abandoned by government complicity and corruption.[36] The idea that worship of Allah requires armed struggle

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[31] Carmeliza Rosário and Camila Gianella, "Progressive Legislation in the Context of Generalised Conservative Public Opinion: The Case of LGBT Rights in Mozambique," in *Queer Lawfare in Africa: Legal Strategies in Contexts of LGBTIQ+ Criminalisation and Politicisation*, ed. Adrian Jjuuko, Siri Gloppen, Alan Msosa, and Frans Viljoen (Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, 2022), 57–80.

[32] Quoted in Nicole Winfield, "The AP Interview: Pope Says Homosexuality Not a Crime," 25 January 2023, https://apnews.com/article/pope-francis-gay-rights-ap-interview-1359756ae22f27f87c1d4d6b9c8ce212.

[33] Mark Chingono, "The Role of Religion in Fuelling War and Promoting Peace in Mozambique," in *Religion and Human Security in Africa*, ed. Ezra Chitando and Joram Tarusarira (London: Routledge, 2019), 197–217, at 199; Premawardhana, *Faith in Flux*, 21; and Liazzat Bonate, "Islam in Northern Mozambique: A Historical Overview," *History Compass* 8/7 (2010): 573–593.

[34] Simão Chimango, "Inculturation and the Gospel: A Mozambican Perspective," *International Review of Mission* 88, no. 348/349 (1999): 98–104.

[35] Teresia Mbari Hinga, *African, Christian, Feminist: The Enduring Search for What Matters* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017), 59–80; Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 4; Florence Adetoun Oso, EHJ, "Inculturating the Faith in Africa: History, Context, and Debates," in *Handbook of African Catholicism*, ed. Stan Chu Ilo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2022), 80–94; and Stan Chu Ilo, "Theology and Church in Africa Today," in "Perspectives on Church and Theology in Africa," ed. Margareta Gruber, Stan Chu Ilo, and Stefan van Erp, *Concilium* (2023/2): 19–35, at 21.

[36] Emilia Columbo, "Stabilizing Mozambique," Council on Foreign Relations, 29 August 2022, https://www.cfr.org/report/stabilizing-mozambique.

against the state, and even justifies human rights abuses, only gains traction because social misery is widespread. However, the nexus of religious practice and political economy also has more positive dimensions. Mozambique's religious traditions, including Islam, inspire grassroots efforts to build life-affirming communities of peace and justice and help their participants cope with the traumas of poverty and war.[37]

On Pope Francis's visit, he spoke with an interreligious gathering of young Mozambicans, urging them to avoid resignation and anxiety and to draw on their diverse religious traditions to nourish their joy, creativity, and solidarity. He told them,

> Keep singing and expressing yourselves in fidelity to all the goodness that you have learned from your traditions. Let no one rob you of your joy! . . . It is not good to give up! Repeat after me: it is not good to give up! (All repeat: It is not good to give up!) . . . God loves you, and this is something on which all our religious traditions are agreed. "For him, you have worth; you are not insignificant. You are important to him, for you are the work of his hands. Because he loves you. Try to keep still for a moment and let yourself feel his love. Try to silence all the noise within, and rest for a second in his loving embrace" (*Christus Vivit*, 115).[38]

Freedom is elusive. The struggle continues. And yet, as Pope Francis reminds us, the love of God that is revered by multiple religious communities is here in this world. The spiritual practices that open us to receive this love are not supposed to separate us from the historical realities of our lives but to return us to them with renewed strength.

THE ELUSIVENESS OF MATERIAL FREEDOM

Mozambique's struggle confirms the emerging consensus among Catholic theologians and ethicists that freedom and unfreedom have material conditions.[39] Freedom is not merely a transcendental capacity for volition intrinsic to human nature. It is also a function of political, economic, and other material relations, which in some respects vary quantitatively. Those who preside over larger stores of material objects, because structural and social advantages permit them to do so, are materially freer. The world is arrayed to gratify their desires. By contrast, those on the losing ends of

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[37] Chingono, "Role of Religion," 203–205.

[38] Francis, "Interreligious Meeting with Youth" (Apostolic Journey to Mozambique, Madagascar, and Mauritius [4–10 September 2019], Maputo, Mozambique, 5 September 2019), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2019/9/5/giovani-mozambico.html, citing Francis, *Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html.

[39] Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005 [1986]); M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); Gustavo Gutíerrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, 15th anniversary edition, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988); and David E. DeCosse, *Created Freedom under the Sign of the Cross: A Catholic Public Theology for the United States* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022).

exploitation, racism, sexism, and colonialism are materially less free or even unfree. The world is for them a place of control and exclusion, which often fails even to satisfy their basic needs. The distribution of material freedom is wildly unequal.

Although theology's interest in freedom is not limited to the question of who has access to what, the fact that some hoard material wealth while many others are deprived of it is a gravely sinful situation that demands a theological response. The triune God of incarnate love whom Christians worship wants everyone to enjoy embodied, agential, and joyous relationships with others and with the created world. This is what Laurenti Magesa, interpreting the moral wisdom of African religions, calls "abundant life."[40] God's desire is for everyone to be free, not only spiritually but also materially. The divinely willed fullness of freedom depends on collective struggles to overcome material inequality and the forces that produce it—struggles like Mozambique's fight against Portuguese empire. But even if this or that significant battle may be won, the powers driving unfreedom are frustratingly nimble and intransigent, as Mozambique's postcolonial history indicates.

To have any hope of eradicating unfreedom, we must endeavor to fathom its complexity. Chattel slavery, like that suffered by the more-than-a-million Mozambicans who were captured and sold at the height of the nineteenth-century slave trade, is the paradigmatic example of material unfreedom. Persons who are enslaved in this manner, whether by law or force, are regarded as property. They are treated as objects of another's arbitrary will. Master and slave are both human, therefore endowed with agency, but materially one is free to do as he or she likes with extraordinary impunity, while the other is constrained by coercion, brutality, and trauma. Nevertheless, as Copeland demonstrates, enslaved women and men enfleshed freedom through practices of resistance and survival. Using what little material resources they had, and relying on the grace of God, they fought for the liberation of their people.[41]

Despite the success of abolitionist movements—which many African Americans interpret as another Exodus experience, a divine intervention in history[42]—slavery tragically remains a reality in the world of the twenty-first century. Modern slavery is carried out by persons, businesses, and states in the forms of "bonded labor, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, or forced marriage."[43] Its perpetrators and victims are not limited to any specific race, gender, or geographic region, but rates are higher in contexts destabilized by poverty, war, and ethnic or racial discrimination, and enslaved women face particular hardships because of their sex/gender. The abductions and forced marriages during Mozambique's civil war exemplify these dynamics.

In addition to slavery in the strict sense, violent patterns of exploitation, racism, sexism, and colonialism generate life circumstances that *feel* like slavery and resemble it in many respects. Low-wage workers, whether in the mines of the Transvaal or the

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[40] Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

[41] Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 38–59.

[42] Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, Updated Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 320.

[43] "Modern Slavery: An Exploration of Its Root Causes and the Human Tool: A CFR Info Guide," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed 27 May 2023, https://www.cfr.org/modern-slavery#!/section2/item-6.

retail shops of Milwaukee, are compelled to exchange their bodily labors for earnings that may or may not be adequate to sustain their lives. During work hours, members of this "precariat," as Gemma Cruz calls them, are made to act like assets governed by another person's or corporate entity's will.[44] Moreover, in the African diaspora, Black communities continue to suffer from what Christina Sharpe calls the "still unfolding aftermaths of Atlantic chattel slavery."[45] To be Black is to have one's freedom always under threat, whether because of heightened risks of economic deprivation, political disenfranchisement, unjust incarceration, or unprovoked violence.

Likewise, in contexts where patriarchal laws and customs do not give women opportunities to be educated, own property, choose their partners, and make decisions about their bodies, even so-called free women are treated like slaves. Some women in such contexts (whether in Mozambique or the U.S.) do not experience marriage as a relationship of mutual love but as an obligation or even a torture chamber, especially when they suffer from intimate partner abuse.[46] Finally, colonialism is an unjust arrangement in which the arbitrary power of one state or people is exercised over another—reducing it to a source of raw materials and cheap or unpaid labor. Not only Mozambique but, indeed, most countries in the world have suffered as colonies, and their civil societies still exhibit deep divisions between neocolonial elites cooperating with the powers of extraction and the alienated, racialized, and feminized poor.[47]

In this world where seemingly everyone wants freedom, its meaning remains disputed. As Joseph Drexler-Dreis's recent articles on W. E. B. DuBois and the Zapatistas show, the rulers of global capital and subaltern communities of resistance have very different ways of interpreting it.[48] One question driving polarization in the U.S. and elsewhere is whether freedom should be pursued by guaranteeing private property rights or by increasing access to public goods. While a libertarian emphasis on property rights is supposed to provide everyone equal opportunity under the law, in practice it favors those who are highly capitalized, and it judges and forsakes the poor.

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[44] Cruz, "Theology and (De)humanizing Work," 3. See also Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 69–84.

[45] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 2.

[46] Luce Irigaray, "Women's Enslavement," in *Democracy Begins Between Two*, trans. Kirsteen Anderson (New York: Routledge, 2001), 40–48; Kirsten Sword, *Wives not Slaves: Patriarchy and Modernity in the Age of Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021); and Elisabeth Vasko, "The Difference Gender Makes: Nuptiality, Analogy, and the Limits of Appropriating Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theology in the Context of Sexual Violence," *The Journal of Religion* 94, no. 4 (Oct. 2014): 504–528.

[47] Kris Manjapra, *Colonialism in Global Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Ashley Noel Mack and Tiara R. Na'puti, "'Our Bodies Are Not Terra Nullius': Building a Decolonial, Feminist, Resistance to Gendered Violence," *Women's Studies in Communication* 42, no. 3 (2019): 347–370; and Godfrey N. Uzoigwe, "Neocolonialism Is Dead: Long Live Neocolonialism," *Journal of Global South Studies* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 59–87.

[48] Joseph Drexler-Dreis, "Unchaining Freedom from Capitalism: W. E. B. Du Bois and Political Theology," *Theory & Event* 25, no. 2 (April 2022): 304–331 and Joseph Drexler-Dreis, "The Meaning of Freedom and the Kingdom of God: A Struggle against the Fetishization of Our Present World," *Horizons* 48, no. 2 (2021): 302–319.

Libertarianism comes with draconian consequences.[49] By contrast, while a liberationist emphasis on social welfare—in the form of state-funded education, healthcare, housing, and even employment and income—is supposed to uplift the masses, socialist regimes (like Mozambique's in the late 1970s and early 1980s) have had disappointing track records, including authoritarian abuses and unfulfilled promises. It is important to be honest about this. Whether such failures indicate fatal problems in the very idea of a socialist political economy or the negative effects of reactionary interference, mismanagement, or other contingent factors is open for debate, but one cannot deny that, by and large, utopian dreams have not been realized.

The notoriously vague concept of "liberalism," as I am using it here, represents a mediating position that seeks to protect private property and so-called free markets and free trade, while providing a social safety net of some limited value. It is a broad umbrella category that can be pushed in more neoliberal or social democratic directions depending on policy specifics. It is championed by international development organizations and the centrist segments of both major U.S. political parties. Like most compromises, liberalism is unsatisfying. It seeks to soften inequality through welfare programs and human rights initiatives but still tolerates and entrenches it by largely giving free reign to capitalist interests. Although some think liberalism is the surest way to achieve international peace, others argue that a global liberal order that traps many people in unfreedom is not really peace at all but another violence, albeit more concealed. Whatever the case may be, the recent rise in anti-liberal, anti-democratic, and neo-fascist movements is hardly comforting.[50]

The fact that libertarian, liberationist, and liberal models all flounder in different ways neither makes them equal in merit nor justifies an attitude of resignation. On the contrary, Catholic teaching requires ongoing struggle based on the "preferential option for the poor."[51] In the search for practices that satisfy this criterion, we might look toward Fannie Lou Hamer's founding of the Freedom Farm Cooperative and the "pig bank" for poor families in rural Mississippi. Although this initiative ended because of insufficient funds, it represented a form of nonstatist and radically democratic solidarity that meaningfully enhanced the freedom of the people themselves. Empirical studies demonstrate positive effects of similar farming cooperatives in contemporary Mozambique. Enterprises owned, not by multinational capital, but by workers—

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[49] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974) and Andrew Koppelman, *Burning Down the House: How Libertarian Philosophy Was Corrupted by Delusion and Greed* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2022).

[50] Jonathan Bell and Timothy Stanley, eds., *Making Sense of American Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Ioannis Tellidis, "The End of the Liberal Peace? Post-Liberal Peace vs. Post-Liberal States," *International Studies Review* 14, no. 3 (2012): 429–435; Roland Paris, "Saving Liberal Peacebuilding," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 2 (April 2010): 337–365; Andreas Fagerholm, "Towards a Lighter Shade of Red? Social Democratic Parties and the Rise of Neo-liberalism in Western Europe, 1970–1999," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 14, no. 4 (2013): 538–561; and Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

[51] Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* (September 14, 1995), §44, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html.

including women, people of color, and the formerly colonized—offer opportunities for agency and flourishing that may provide some measure of liberation.[52]

THE ELUSIVENESS OF SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

The individual and collective wills that are shaped by material conditions of freedom and unfreedom are also influenced by languages, cultures, and traditions that give freedom a more textured, positive meaning. Beyond arbitrary control, or what Karl Rahner calls "the psychological freedom of choice,"[53] freedom ultimately means an alignment with the good and avoidance of evil. It means making decisions that fit a well-discerned picture of how life should be lived. The so-called "negative" freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly, which do not prescribe a vision of the good but limit state coercion, are hallmarks of political liberalism and post-conciliar Catholic teaching. These negative freedoms respect the dignity, choices, and struggles of persons, while permitting various communal mediations of positive freedom, including ecclesial and theological ones.[54]

The socialist regime in Mozambique originally insisted on a secular account of positive freedom and actively suppressed the plural religious practice of the country, branding it as obscurantist. Although the state's subsequent liberalization on this front has been a boon for individual liberty and various religious institutions, some theologians in various contexts worry that the indeterminacy of a liberal society may dilute Christian faith claims.[55] In liberal environments, the "psychological freedom of choice" takes hold not just of material objects but also spiritual horizons and highest values. In principle, liberalism says: you are free to choose what freedom means to you. It makes a mortal god, not of the government but of the individual.

Versions of this concern come from different ends of the political spectrum, with some lamenting the liberal erosion of social norms related to gender, race, and sexuality and others critiquing the ways that liberal freedoms of religion and expression provide cover for sexist, racist, homophobic, and transphobic practices.[56] Although many in

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[52] "Fannie Lou Hamer Founds Freedom Farm Cooperative," Digital SNCC Gateway, accessed 22 May 2023, https://snccdigital.org/events/fannie-lou-hamer-founds-freedom-farm-cooperative/; Maren Elise Bachke, "Do Farmers' Organizations Enhance the Welfare of Small Holders? Findings from the Mozambican National Agricultural Survey," *Food Policy* 89 (2019): 101792; and Elizabeth L. Hinson-Hasty, *The Problem of Wealth: A Christian Response to a Culture of Affluence* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017).

[53] Karl Rahner, "Freedom in the Church," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 2, *Man in the Church*, trans. Karl Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), 89–108, at 90.

[54] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty: Incorporating* Four Essays on Liberty, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166–217; and *Dignitatis humanae* (December 7, 1965), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html.

[55] R. R. Reno, "Postliberal Theology," *First Things*, February 2018, www.firstthings.com/article/2018/02/postliberal-theology.

[56] Asonzeh Ukah, "Apocalyptic Homophobia: Freedom of Religious Expression, Hate Speech, and the Pentecostal Discourse on Same-Sex Relations in Africa," *Journal of Law and Religion* 36, no. 1 (2021): 72–91; and Richard Moon, *Putting Faith in Hate: When Religion Is the Source or Target of Hate Speech* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

the progressive camp may identify as agnostic or spiritual-but-not-religious (SBNR), because they have been alienated by the social conservatism of the "religious Right,"[57] theologians writing in feminist, Black, and queer traditions see the weakness of liberalism on these embodied identity questions precisely as a Christian theological problem: a failure to follow Jesus and be guided by the Holy Spirit.[58]

As in the economic realm, so too in the cultural, liberalism is an unsatisfying compromise. Some form of it may be necessary at a policy level, because government coercion is often not the best tool for addressing such sensitive topics, yet a firm stance against state intervention becomes morally questionable when lives are at stake, as in fact they often are. Culture wars have real casualties, such as women targeted by domestic violence, Black persons murdered by police, and gay and trans teens lost to suicide.[59] Although Catholic theology may have principled and pragmatic reasons to support liberalism to some degree, it must also attempt to decipher what is actually entailed by its own most foundational beliefs, which locate the essence of freedom not in individual subjectivity but in the saving revelation of the triune God.

According to Rahner, persons are naturally endowed with creaturely agency, but they are not free in the full Christian sense until they receive the gift of divine life that liberates their wills from unholy attachments and transforms them through wisdom and love. Rahner calls this gift the "freedom of our freedom":

> [God] is the freedom of our freedom by the grace of his self-communication, without which our free will could only choose bondage no matter what choice it might make. … God's communication of himself, which is the liberating *terminus ad quem* of our freedom, is called by us grace of justification and sanctification, or sanctifying grace, and the Bible calls it also "divine *pneuma*." We may say, therefore, that the divine *pneuma* is the liberating freedom of our freedom.[60]

Although Rahner emphasizes the Holy Spirit, he does not forget Christ's indispensable role. He explains that "this spiritual freedom of our freedom is

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[57] Ruth Braunstein, "A Theory of Political Backlash: Assessing the Religious Right's Effects on the Religious Field," *Sociology of Religion* 83, no. 3 (2022): 293–323.

[58] M. Shawn Copeland, with LaReine-Marie Mosely, S.N.D. and Albert J. Raboteau, eds., *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009); Catherine Mowry LaCugna, ed., *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993); and Andy Buechel, *That We Might Become God: The Queerness of Creedal Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015).

[59] Curtis Bunn, "Report: Black People Are Still Killed by Police at a Higher Rate than Other Groups," 3 March 2022, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/report-black-people-are-still-killed-police-higher-rate-groups-rcna17169; Linda Mshweshwe, "Understanding Domestic Violence: Masculinity, Culture, Traditions," *Heliyon* 6 (2020): e05334; and Rina Torchinsky, "Nearly Half of LGBTQ Youth Seriously Considered Suicide, Survey Finds," NPR, 5 May 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/05/05/1096920693/lgbtq-youth-thoughts-of-suicide-trevor-project-survey.

[60] Rahner, "Freedom in the Church," 94.

established by the very act of God freely present in the flesh of Christ."[61] By acknowledging the communication of divine life through Christ and the Holy Spirit, Rahner may seem to imply that there is nothing elusive about the freedom of our freedom. He believes that it has already been outpoured and that the church is already an effective sign, or sacrament, of this liberating grace.[62]

Nevertheless, Rahner recognizes that weighty questions remain open about how each person should choose to act in particular circumstances in order to receive this grace. Although norms derived from faith and reason set up basic parameters, there is much at an individual and contextual level that requires prayerful discernment. His thoughts on spiritual freedom draw on the Apostle Paul, Augustine, and Ignatius of Loyola, along with other Christian ascetical and mystical sources that detail processes of detachment from sin and union with God. At the same time, Rahner generalizes this spiritual discernment process, arguing that it is implicitly at work in any human being who makes a "fundamental option" in favor of the holy mystery of love that is the horizon of their existence. In this way, he opens the door to non-Christian (or perhaps "anonymous Christian") experiences of spiritual freedom.[63]

While acknowledging Rahner's contributions, his student Johann Baptist Metz and others who have taken a political turn in Catholic theology have sought to make the effects of sanctifying grace more clearly manifest in history and society.[64] The struggle to bring spiritual freedom out of the realm of transcendental abstraction and into concrete reality continues for multiple reasons. As I have indicated, there is the challenge of reaching theological consensus on concrete questions related to political economy and cultural identity, and there is the dissatisfying quality of liberal compromises. There are also, as Karen Kilby notes, major gaps between ideal visions of society and what people are actually willing to do, as well as opaque entanglements between structural and personal sin, which keep sanctity at a distance.[65] Furthermore, as Jennifer Beste argues, the horrors of child sexual abuse and other traumatizing

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[61] Rahner, "Freedom in the Church," 95.

[62] Rahner, "Freedom in the Church," 96.

[63] Karl Rahner, "On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 2, *Man in the Church*, trans. Karl Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), 217–234, at 230; Karl Rahner, *Visions and Prophecies*, trans. Charles Henkey and Richard Strachan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 17 and 26–27; Karl Rahner, "The Liberty of the Sick, Theologically Considered," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 17, *Jesus, Man, and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 100–113; Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christians," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6, *Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. Boniface Kruger (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), 390–398, at 394; and Peter Joseph Fritz, *Freedom Made Manifest: Rahner's Fundamental Option and Theological Aesthetics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2019).

[64] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Crossroad, 2007); J. Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics, and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998); and Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

[65] Karen Kilby, *God, Evil, and the Limits of Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 56 and 95–97.

experiences such as those related to war and oppression can have devastating effects on the survivor's sense of personal agency and relationship with God.[66]

Finally, there is the profound malformation of the will, recounted memorably by Paul and later Augustine, which inclines it at least partly *against* the good. Although neither of these early Christian sources adequately denounces material slavery and its analogues, such as patriarchy, both can help us see that such injustice is predicated on a more enigmatic spiritual slavery, which the world has hardly begun to abolish: a subservience to whatever it is within us that desires domination over others. Paul calls this the "sin that dwells within me" (Rom. 7:20 NRSV), and Augustine calls it the *libido dominandi*, "the lust for mastery."[67] It appears in slaveholding practices that have existed throughout human history. It appears in modern colonial powers, like the ostensibly Catholic Portugal. It appears in the neocolonial extractivism carried out by multinational corporations and the corrupt, oligarchic rule of many postcolonial governments. It appears in militarized police forces, anti-woke laws, toxic masculinities, and the global arms trade. All that is materially wrong in the world is a sign of a deep spiritual crisis, a radical unfreedom of the will that we seem incapable of overcoming by ourselves.

In view of these fearsome realities, we might ask: what would an abolitionist movement against spiritual slavery look like? It would certainly involve prayer, because our freedom is not free until it enters into communion with the infinite freedom of God. True prayer does not make one want to forsake the world. It makes one want to witness its liberation. It makes one cry out, impatiently, for this day to come.[68] And it would require poetry, because freedom must be sung before it can be achieved. But such practices are just the beginning of a divine-and-human work too deep and powerful to be fully understood.

As I bring this talk to a close, I would like to leave us with the words of Noémia de Sousa, a great Mozambican poet of anti-colonial resistance. My hope is that, while seeking peace, Christians would not lose the passion for justice that she describes:

> Before the new horizons which open themselves like a gift to us
> our souls which have been resigned now learn to desire
> both with strength and in rage,

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[66] Jennifer Erin Beste, *God and the Victim: Traumatic Intrusions on Grace and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 37–57.

[67] Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, bk. I, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3; Lisa M. Bowens, *African American Readings of Paul: Reception, Resistance, and Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020); Jennifer G. Bird, "To What End? Revisiting the Gendered Space of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 from a Feminist Postcolonial Perspective," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 175–185; and Katherine Chambers, "Domination and Slavery as Political Ideas in Augustine's *City of God*," *Heythrop Journal* 54, no. 1 (2013): 13–28.

[68] Andrew Prevot, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

and they rise up, warrior-like,
ready to face the hard struggle . . .[69]

Freedom is elusive. The struggle continues. May God be with us, because the work we have to do is not something we can do on our own.

[69] Noémia de Sousa, "Poem for Rui de Noronhain," in *Stained Glass: Poetry from the Land of Mozambique*, ed. Luis Rafael (Howrah, India: Roman Books, 2011), 123–125, at 123.

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FREEDOM IN A MORALLY DIVERSE WORLD

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Scripture says that the wise person loves one who offers reproof (Prov 9:8). A wise person welcomes correction, even rebuke, because accountability for one's wrongdoing can prod one to make amends and return to the good. Accordingly, both instructing the ignorant and the conversion of sinners count among the Works of Mercy. Scripture also says "stop judging, that you may not be judged" (Mt 7:1, NAB). The Bible includes examples of prophetic denunciation and stories of mercy that subvert or subordinate moral codes by pointing to higher moral obligations of compassion, forgiveness, and radical inclusivity. Jesus' own example includes both the frank, sometimes sharp, identification of sin, and a demonstrated preference for compassion and mercy. These two scriptural passages point to a tension at the heart of Christian moral theology. Charity and justice require us to form our own consciences, to practice fraternal correction, and to denounce injustice as an aspect of being in solidarity with victims. Charity and justice also require us to forbear the faults of others (also a Work of Mercy); to acknowledge factors that mitigate or remove subjective culpability; to subject moral judgments to critical reflection (for example by testing them for consistency and for the taint of bias); to acknowledge that our moral teachings are subject to historical development, imperfect articulation and application, and human fallibility; and to refrain from judgmental, self-righteous, and hypocritical attitudes.

These tensions play out in ecclesial polarizations among Christians and within Catholicism. Consider Catholic debates about the meaning, reception, and consequences of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) and divergent responses to the papacy of Pope Francis. Some Catholics, encouraged by the example of Pope Francis, call the church to reimagine many moral and pastoral positions. Others worry that what appears to be a moral laxism inspired by Vatican II and Francis's pontificate poses a threat to the religious reproduction of Catholicism. They believe that changing demographics among Catholics stem from a dilution of Catholic identity and practice. These demographics include declines in the real numbers of self-identified Catholics, and rising numbers among nominal Catholics who rarely or never receive the sacraments and who disagree with church teaching on matters of faith and morals. In such contexts, some traditionalists worry that efforts to welcome and accompany persons whose lives are ostensibly at odds with church teaching will sow confusion or scandal among the faithful. In short, polarization within the Catholic Church reflects tensions between central tropes of Christian faith, as well as disagreement and

uncertainty about how the church (as institution and as a people) should respond to the reality of moral diversity.

By moral diversity I simply mean the fact of divergent and competing moralities, such as differences over the kind of life one claims is worth living, the kind of person it is good to be, and the moral duties and obligations we have. What things are permitted to us? Who is worth emulating? What and who are considered wrong and why? Moral diversity includes not only the fact of moral disagreements but the plurality of ways of life, which our conceptions of goodness too often fail to convey.

Moral diversity involves differences and disagreements that can be distinctively challenging. They can evoke sentiments of anger, indignation, resentment, disgust, fear, and apathy. They can involve experiences of indifference, harm, victimization, and betrayal. Moral differences can call into question our fundamental beliefs and values, our very sense of self and of others. Some moral differences and disagreements may be unimportant, but many of them are painful, confusing, and frustrating. And their impact—direct and collateral—can play out across human domains and generations.

Moral diversity is both a consequence of and an occasion for the exercise of freedom. How should we respond to "moral others?" Instances of moral diversity may involve some overt action of yours upon me, a moral position of yours I find objectionable, or one of us finding fault with the other regarding the kind of person we are becoming or the manner of life we are living. Whatever the case, one's decision about what to make of instances of moral diversity is always also a decision about one's own moral commitments and a decision about how to relate to moral others.

Exposure to different ways of life, growing acceptance of behavior previously deemed morally unacceptable, and the sheer complexity of contemporary life can make it difficult to know whether some character trait, action, or facet of social life is morally deficient. Many factors, including shifting cultural norms, social networking, and coarsened social discourse facilitate public pronouncements of moral judgment. It is easy to express outrage without knowing the facts of a situation, or any of the persons involved, to denounce lifestyles different from one's own, to shore up one's identity by embracing a normative self-conception that is essentially in opposition to the moral identity one attributes to others. More precisely, though we may suspect something is wrong, it may be hard to give an intelligent and persuasive account as to why it is so. How do we speak about moral failure in ways that serve human flourishing, that are not prey to sanctimony or myopic hubris? How do we fashion lives that resist what is evil, that contribute to the common good, and affirm moral diversity, on the whole, as good?

We cannot fashion a just, peaceful, and humane life together without practices of moral correction and denunciation, but we need to learn to do so in ways that are themselves aligned with the human good, respecting and protecting others' freedom without ceding all contested questions to subjectivism, and forging effective partnerships to resist grave wrongs and transform unjust social conditions. In short, we need to learn how to exercise our freedom in a world of morally diversity.

Moral diversity is nothing new. But it is particularly challenging in the cultural moment we now face. We have precious few models for navigating it well. All I can really bring to that gap are some observations and some questions, and the hope that if those questions resonate with you, perhaps we can develop some models together. To

that end, I entertain nine observations about human freedom. The first five outline essential features of a Catholic conception of human freedom as well as resources in the Catholic moral tradition that are relevant to the wise exercise of freedom in a morally diverse world. While there is much to appreciate here, these resources are too often deployed in ways that make it more difficult to navigate moral differences and disagreements in a manner consistent with the good news of Jesus Christ, our "small-c" catholicity as church, and the needs of the world in which we find ourselves. The last three claims I make about freedom suggest ways of reorienting Catholic responses to moral diversity.

1. Freedom and Truth

In Catholic theological anthropology, the person's ability to make deliberate choices distinguishes them from other creatures. Freedom is therefore an essential component of the human person's inherent dignity. Through the exercise of their freedom, the person fashions themselves, impacts others and the world around them, and responds to God's self-offer in grace.

While the import of our choices for our identities and relationships accrues over time, during our earthly lives human freedom remains unfinished. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, there remains "the possibility of choosing between good and evil, and thus of growing in perfection or of failing and sinning. This freedom characterizes properly human acts. It is the basis of praise or blame, merit or reproach."[1] Freedom is therefore appropriately understood as a power for self-determination through the person's choices. Note, too, that this conception of freedom as a power to choose between good and evil identifies this capacity as the basis for praise and blame.

Moreover, as the language of growing in perfection or failing in sin suggests, a Catholic conception of human freedom affirms an integral relationship between freedom and an objective moral order which has God as its source and its end. True freedom lies in choices ordered to the good: "The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin."[2] Similarly, according to *Gaudium et Spes*, the human person cultivates a manner of life consistent with their dignity as they develop a propensity for the spontaneous choice of what is good.[3]

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[1] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1732 (hereafter cited as *CCC*), https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P5N.HTM.

[2] *CCC*,§1733, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P5N.HTM.

[3] *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965) § 17, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

Human freedom, therefore, must be distinguished from what Pope Francis calls "an illusion we are peddled," which would have us believe that we inhabit a moral reality we are "constructing from zero."[4]

The problem of moral foundations—whether moral claims are objective, on what grounds, and how we know them—is all the more pressing in an age of "alternative facts" and deep fakes. As Lisa Cahill and others have argued, the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition affirms our commonality as human persons—our humanity appears in bodily, intellectual, and social capacities and in shared experiences. These will vary across individuals and cultural inflections. Nevertheless, shared experiences of goods and evils, agency and vulnerability, aspiration and failure provide structure for some basic moral understanding and consensus between persons and communities. The interrelationship among freedom, our shared humanity, and our dignity as persons created in the image of God means that human self-determination through the exercise of freedom unfolds in a world that is already morally significant, rather than a malleable void.

Before turning to the second claim about freedom I want to explore, note that the magisterial sources enlisted here tend to define freedom as a power to choose. They accentuate freedom as a human capacity that is exercised episodically in situations in which an agent has the ability do otherwise. It is important to note that this does not exhaust the meaning of freedom in Catholic theology. Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, of course, highlighted dimensions of freedom as an evaluative orientation, or disorientation, as the case may be. Both grappled with the experience of a divided will, capturing the conflictual loves, the concupiscence, and the experience of internal division or alienation that can mark our moral lives.

When we think of freedom through these experiences, we may still arrive at negative moral appraisals of various behaviors or omissions, but we might also conclude that an agent's subjective guilt is mitigated, or couple our appraisal with compassion or solidarity. These aspects of Catholic conceptions of freedom play out in some of the observations I entertain next. The point to underscore here, however, is that freedom is a power for self-determination through our choices which we exercise in a context of common humanity, with the makings of a shared moral landscape, but also within diverse ways of life that are evidence of, not a departure from, that common humanity.

2. Freedom as Personal and Social

Our freedom is both deeply personal and irreducibly social. As we noted a moment ago, the exercise of our freedom is part of our dignity as human persons created in the image of God. It is from God and finds its end in God. Freedom is essential to our distinctiveness as creatures, and as individuals. No one can exercise our freedom for us. Freedom is both a gift and burden, a capacity we have and who we are in the totality of our lives.

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[4] Francis, Fratelli Tutti (October 3, 2020), §30, §15, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

Because freedom is not so much something one has rather than who one is, and because it is through the exercise of our freedom that each of us says our yes or no to God, the respect we owe to other persons on account of their dignity includes respect for their freedom. Put differently, other persons comprise constraints on one's freedom. We cannot treat them in ways that objectify or instrumentalize them, or that unduly restrict their freedoms. Respecting their freedom does not mean reserving all judgment about their choices or refraining from sanctions. It does mean that one's own freedom is not only integrally related to the truth but also to demands of responsibility toward one's neighbors.

However personal human freedom is, it is also thoroughly social. Human freedom unfolds and operates in a social world that impinges on it for better or worse. Each person's freedom is situated within the specificity of history and culture, and amidst social structures. The social situation of freedom makes some choices available to us and forecloses others, can be hospitable to our aspirations and purposes, or can confront us with tragic choices and morally injurious circumstances. Our social situation can assist our growth in a manner of life consistent with our dignity, or keep us perniciously vulnerable to the hostility, suspicion, and condescension of others.

The sociality of freedom attenuates judgments about responsibility, blame, and praise. And a robust body of scholarship, much of which springs from this academic society, advances our understanding of the impact of social structures on accounts of human agency and for practical deliberation about pressing social issues. Literature from the social sciences also informs our thinking about freedom and responsibility within choice architectures, across generations, and in contexts of global interdependence. Much of this literature raises more questions than we can answer, but it provides sorely needed insights for better understanding our freedom, and correctives to accounts of freedom that continue to over-emphasize episodic choices, and contexts where one has the ability to do otherwise.

These insights certainly give the lie to a picture of freedom as a default state of neutrality exercised only or paradigmatically in neatly demarcated courses of action. Freedom can only meaningfully be exercised within a given context and an array of constraints. Moreover, given our mutual interdependence, the integral connection between my freedom and my flourishing in a life ordered to the good, necessarily includes the use of my freedom in ways that promote that same flourishing for others. Put differently, human freedom is yoked to responsibility to, for, and with others, and this dynamic of freedom and responsibility lies at the heart of freedom's integral relation to an objective moral order.

3. Freedom, Sin, and Grace

The language of sin seems an unlikely resource to enlist in response to moral diversity, unless one's purpose is to engage in condemnation. Talk of sin can be weaponized against already vulnerable populations and used cruelly. It may be off-putting to religiously unaffiliated persons or exacerbate internal divisions. While it is important to remain cognizant of these challenges, the language of sin is nonetheless a useful resource for reckoning with human agency and the malformation of the world. It can invite one into honest consideration of one's identity as a person forgiven by

God. In doing so, the language of sin can shape Catholic responses to moral diversity from postures of humility, gratitude, compassion, and solidarity.

As we have argued, in and through the exercise of our freedom, we respond to God's invitation to share in the divine life through grace. Sin is therefore fundamentally relational, rather than consisting solely in the choice of discrete actions or objects. Human freedom emerges, and is exercised within sinful dynamics, incorporating our agency into a pervasive disruption of proper relationship with God, self, and others. Sin impacts not only freedom, but also our reason and appetites, effecting a confusion about reality. Sin interferes with our capacity to apprehend, articulate, and apply objective moral knowledge, making it harder to come to valid moral judgements across differences, while also manifesting itself as hypocrisy, excessive and bitter recrimination, and apathy.

Because sin is disruption of proper relationship with God, self, and others, sin effects a confusion that distorts our reason, affections, and will, that is, the very sources of our agency. Accordingly, grace draws us into an alternative economy of relationships, repairing our agency and allowing us to recognize sin as such. Grace is our participation in God's own life, which liberates us from the pathologies of sin and makes genuine freedom possible. This is why a Catholic conception of human freedom affirms that we are only truly free when our choices align with the truth.

Neither sin nor grace obliterate our agency. Within the dynamics of sin and grace we remain responsible for our choices. Indeed, sin and grace explain aspects of freedom that are elided or unintelligible in an account of freedom as autonomy.

Accounts of freedom that emphasize discrete choices we make when we have the ability to have done otherwise can neglect the pervasiveness of sin and elicit responses to others' moral choices that focus more on blame and condemnation than compassion. They can also neglect the operation of grace as our gradual re-formation into new relational possibilities, including ways of being in community with others that subvert some of the very moral distinctions made in ecclesial discourse around sin and morality.

Recognition of freedom's operation within dynamics of sin and grace therefore hinder and help our navigation of a morally diverse world. What kind of persons and communities do we need to become not only to talk about sin and the harm we cause as sinners, but to do so in ways that can be experiences of grace? That build community instead of divide us? That do justice as well as mercy? These questions are crucial for Christian persons and communities endeavoring to navigate a morally diverse world.

4. Freedom and the Labor of Conscience

So, the first three observations about freedom we have entertained map out general themes in Catholic conceptions of freedom. Human freedom is a power for self-determination, both deeply personal and deeply social, that emerges and unfolds in salvation history and in its totality comprises the person's response to God's offer of grace. That response is made in and through our relationships with others, with whom we share a basic humanity that attests to objective dimensions of morality and informs moral understanding and practices of moral judgment across our differences. Other persons impinge upon our freedom in better and worse ways. Their inherent value as

free moral agents also determines what it means to grow in freedom. Growth in freedom occurs through conforming ourselves to the good in the new patterns of community that grace makes possible.

Assuming those observations comprise a reasonably familiar portrait of freedom in a Catholic theological perspective, we can pivot to other resources in the Catholic moral tradition which speak to the exercise of freedom in a morally diverse world, starting with conscience.

Catholic conceptions of conscience assume an objective moral order. Like human freedom, conscience finds its proper orientation, efficacy, and end in the truth, which is to say the good. Accordingly, conscience has objective and subjective dimensions. Objectively, conscience is our capacity to distinguish right from wrong, to apprehend good and evil, and to reason ethically, whereas subjectively conscience refers to the totality of the person's response to God in and through her own life.

While conscience is a capacity for judgment about what to do or not to do, it also designates the whole of one's moral life before God and in relation with others. Conscience goes beyond decision-making, including the entirety of one's moral life. Conscience is a lifelong engagement with the circumstances in which one finds oneself, developing and regressing as one exercises their freedom in better or worse ways.

While conscience empowers us to know right from wrong it is fallible and subject to ignorance and malformation. The judgments of conscience can err. Moreover, the sinful dynamics in which our agency emerges means that the partiality, provisionality, and the fallibility of conscience are often hidden from us amidst the social and structural circumstances in which we find ourselves and which can obscure or serve to justify convictions and values that are mistaken or pernicious.

We are therefore obligated to engage in what Elizabeth Sweeny Block calls the labor of conscience.[5] The claim that we must work assiduously to form conscience is certainly not new, but Block argues that the labor of conscience includes sustained reckoning with the malformation that social sin effects. The reformation of conscience requires sustained efforts for critical self-examination, cultivation of ethical reasoning skills, and perspective-taking efforts to understand an issue from others' viewpoints. The labor of conscience is necessary for the navigation of moral diversity.

5. Freedom and Responsibility for Others' Choices

We have noted that freedom is not the absence of all responsibility but comes to fruition in it. Moral diversity poses many challenges and opportunities with regard to our responsibility to, with, and for others. Moral diversity may appear altogether threatening, as though being confronted with moral choices, positions, and lives that differ from our own regularly places us in the occasion of sin.

When freedom is understood as the ability to do otherwise, responsibility appears to be similarly individualistic. In such a framework the notion of being held responsible and blameworthy for another person's actions is difficult to parse. However, the

[5] Elizabeth Sweeny Block, "White Privilege and the Erroneous Conscience: Rethinking Moral Culpability and Ignorance," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 39, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2019): 357-374.

Catholic moral tradition provides resources that assist us in understanding these dimensions of responsibility. One such resource is church teaching about cooperation with evil. Catholic tradition distinguishes between formal and material cooperation. Formal cooperation refers to occasions when one person directly enables, permits, or even requires another's wrongdoing. Material cooperation refers to ways one may assist another's wrongdoing. These forms of cooperation can be more or less proximate, direct and indirect. Degrees of culpability would be assessed accordingly. The point is that Catholic teaching about cooperation with evil draws our attention to consideration of the ways we may facilitate others' sin and find ourselves implicated in sinful dynamics and systems we did not create and have limited or power to affect. Concerns about cooperation with evil are important and useful in reckoning with our own or others' responsibility, and in deliberation about personal responsibility in relation to systems and institutions. It can also warrant ecclesial strategies of disengagement and condemnation when the work of accompaniment and the practice of compassion and courage would demand more from us.

Catholic teaching about scandal underscores the earlier observation that responsibility toward others morally constrains the exercise of freedom. St. Paul states in his letter to the Romans, even when something may be lawful, we may have an overriding moral obligation to curtail or forego that freedom for the sake of our neighbors. Catholic teaching about scandal develops this insight.

In Catholic teaching about scandal, scandal refers to "an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil."[6] The crux of scandal is not really about another's emotive reaction to my scandalous attitude or behavior, whether that reaction consist in indignation, outrage, titillation, disgust, or other negative emotions. Scandal is about the impact I have in terms of influencing my neighbor to sin. Importantly, I can cause scandal through my overt actions, through my attitudes, and even by failing to act. As the Catholic sex abuse crisis made abundantly clear, institutions and cultures can cause scandal as well.

Catholic teaching regarding cooperation with evil and scandal are valuable resources that bring badly needed nuance to understanding the bounds of moral responsibility, human solidarity in sin, and the meaning of freedom in a tradition that treats human sociality with deep seriousness. These teachings link freedom to responsibility for others, and in doing so push us to consider with fresh eyes what it means to love our neighbors and what responsibilities we have to cultivate the common good. Nevertheless, concerns about cooperation and scandal are sometimes invoked in ways that truncate our responses to moral diversity and complexity. In doing so we can stop short of examining blind spots, bias, institutional shortcomings, and social dynamics that inhibit us from growing further in grace. We can deploy concerns about scandal and cooperation selectively to serve our own agendas. We can hide behind them rather than do the hard work of formation and accompaniment.

We would do well to ask whether Catholic teaching about cooperation and scandal are adequate for navigating a morally diverse world. We need additional resources that serve moral reflection on aspects of living in community, such as tools for thinking about the ethics of compromise, selective cooperation with partners on issues where we are able to agree, what respect for others' conscience means operationally in our

[6] *CCC*, §2284, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P5N.HTM.

social and organizational relations, prioritization of moral commitments in cases of conflict, and so forth. In short, must concerns over cooperation or scandal always override other values or relational choices?

6. The Freedom of Being Wrong

Catholic teaching about cooperation and scandal brings rich and enduring insights to bear on personal and communal moral deliberation and decision-making. They comprise tools that can assist us in responding to situations in which we confront moral differences and disagreement.

However, these tools are insufficient for the challenges and opportunities posed by moral diversity. To my mind they are both under-leveraged and overused. They are under-leveraged insofar as they prompt practical moral reasoning about situations at hand, activating conscience and equipping individual and communal decision-makers with useful moral distinctions. Over-used because they tend to dominate institutional ecclesial responses to moral diversity and foreclose opportunities for formation. Consider a Catholic school's decision to dismiss an unmarried teacher who becomes pregnant. The concern is that retaining the teacher might confuse others regarding the church's teaching on marriage and sexuality and comprise a source of scandal, though it seems quite possible that others would be scandalized by the decision to dismiss an expectant mother. It's important to note that the choice of whether to dismiss or retain the teacher is itself a moral decision about how to prioritize values as well as a developmental opportunity for the community to grow in grace.

With that in mind, the sixth observation about freedom I will share is that there is a freedom that comes with being wrong, or risking being thought wrong. Catholic teaching about cooperation with evil and scandal tend to privilege protective stances in the face of moral diversity, prioritizing the appearance of moral clarity and consistency, and foregoing opportunities to work through new ways of being in community and new depths of conscience formation. To be clear, we should avoid evil, and we should refrain from inducing others to sin. But we are all already sinners. And our hands are already dirty. How might we respond to the challenges and opportunities that moral diversity entails were we to decenter strategies built around preserving our liberty in a world we characterize as hostile to our moral commitments, or allowing fear of confusion to take precedence over the difficult and messy work of formation?

The freedom that can be found in being wrong is the freedom to relinquish the anxious maintenance of a goodness that is already something of a mirage. Being wrong—whether that means being mistaken, being judged at fault even when one is not, or being fully culpable for some moral failure—does not automatically or inevitably bring about such freedoms. Rather, reckoning honestly with moral failure is an experience of grace.

Rather than punt in the face of moral diversity, we ought to be asking ourselves how we can better equip ourselves and others to face it well. That effort is the labor of conscience. It is work that needs to transpire individually and communally.

7. Freedom and the Practice of Ethical Reasoning

The labor of conscience is indeed work we are obliged to take up in earnest and over our lifetimes. Moral diversity encompasses different kinds of disagreements, deliberations about normative commitments and practical dilemmas, decisions about how to respond to others' actions and behaviors when these are contrary to one's own commitments, and choices about what values to prioritize, when, and why. We are called to approach this work with care, compassion, curiosity, and courage. Recent scholarship on the ethics of the church and on university ethics is encouraged.[7] But as a church and as educators we can do better.

In parishes and in church-affiliated organizations, especially colleges and universities, we should focus more intentionally on the practice of ethical reasoning than is often the case. We should approach ethics education in ways that assist students in the moral appraisal of specific differences and disagreements, the evaluation of salient circumstances that might shift that appraisal or mitigate culpability, distinguishing diversity that appears within a range of morally appropriate choices from moral actions which are well-intentioned but misguided, and these from moral actions which are wrong full stop. We should equip others with the questions, tools, and patterns of ethical reasoning necessary to critical examination of moral claims and for grappling with substantive claims about reality.

We can make our work on curricula and pedagogies more visible. We can craft courses that focus very intentionally on teaching students how to reason ethically. We can advance scholarship on these issues, including scholarship on teaching and learning, and continue to share practices from communities and disciplines that do it well. We can continue to shape reflection in our parishes about the kind of leadership we want and the kind of community we want to become. We can practice accompaniment and inclusion, and balancing charity and justice, and we can fail, and we can try again.

I suspect that one reason why concerns about scandal often arise in response to moral diversity is that we have not done the work of building a culture that can tolerate nuance, and we have not formed leaders who can guide such change. Put differently, we remain very much in need of re-formation in grace, allowing ourselves to be drawn into the new relational possibilities and ways of being community that grace effects.

8. Freedom, Forbearance, and Fortitude

A number of recent publications in Catholic ethics and Christian ethics more generally focus on disagreements, democracy, and finding common ground. They do not use the language of moral diversity or emphasize the need to cultivate ethical reasoning skills, but these volumes do examine virtues, political rhetoric, ecclesiologies, and particular social issues with a view to supporting more constructive and more faithful communities and enabling better cooperation to address social problems.

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[7] James F. Keenan, *University Ethics: How Colleges Can Build and Benefit From a Culture of Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015).

Two virtues that are particularly important for exercising freedom well in a morally diverse world are forbearance and fortitude.

James Calvin Davis argues that "in the exercise of forbearance, we insist on the maintenance of community even with those we perceive to be in error."[8] Through forbearance we "may not only improve the health of our common life together as church; we may also seize a chance to witness to the world an alternative way to navigate difference, by demonstrating the power potential in forbearance as a set of 'transferrable skill that our political culture desperately needs."[9] In the face of moral diversity, we must cultivate forbearance.

Forbearance differs from tolerance or being non-judgmental. As the philosopher Gary Watson asks, "What would 'never judging' or 'accepting people exactly as they are'…come to, and why would these stances be at all desirable? If 'never to judge' means suspending our critical intelligence or not holding one another morally answerable, then nonjudgmentalism writ large amounts to nihilism, complacency, or a loss of moral nerve."[10]

Watson argues that standing in judgment can go wrong through "failures of interpretive generosity (roughly, too readily attributing fault in the first place)" and "being too unaccepting of others' faults."[11] Nevertheless, moral appraisal is necessary work. Confronted with non-trivial instances of moral diversity we might consider teasing apart the need for moral appraisal and the freedom we have to choose how to regard the other, respond to the moral issue at hand, and how to relate with them going forward. Making these distinctions and discerning how to live them out in practice is not easy to do, for individuals and much less for communities. The virtue of forbearance prioritizes efforts to maintain community while holding ourselves and others accountable.

Must we practice forbearance with everyone you may well ask? What about abusers? What about those who deny the humanity and equality of others? Forbearance is not a blank check, nor is the practice of forbearance undifferentiated across a community. There may well be instances where a community practices forbearance on behalf of a member who cannot reasonably be asked to do so given specific circumstances, or instances when an individual member finds a way to offer forbearance on behalf of the community as a whole. Examples that come to mind include the forgiveness practiced by members of the Nickel Mines Amish community following the 2006 school shooting, or Helen Prejean serving as a spiritual advisor to convicted murderers on death row.

In the face of moral diversity, we must also cultivate fortitude. Fortitude is required to stand by our values and convictions when doing so becomes costly, say, because our position is unpopular or when we are speaking truth to power. Fortitude is required to admit we may be mistaken, that our convictions may be motivated by self-interest or

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[8] James Calvin Davis, *Forbearance: A Theological Ethic for a Disagreeable Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2017), 19.

[9] Davis, *Forbearance,* 195.

[10] Gary Watson, "Standing in Judgment," in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, eds. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 283.

[11] Watson, "Standing in Judgment," 284.

bias, that having the "courage of our convictions" can be window dressing for blind spots, condescension, the maintenance of our own power or privilege. Fortitude is required for honesty about our own moral failures. Finally, fortitude is required to persist in the unresolved tensions that come with forbearance and accompaniment of others. We need it to be steadfast in forbearing while others clamor for more punitive responses, and fault us for hypocrisy or moral compromise.

9. Freedom in Community

While forbearance and fortitude need to be practiced by individuals, and are particularly crucial traits for anyone entrusted with the care of a community or organization, forbearance and fortitude also depend significantly on communities and serve communities. In *Fratelli Tutti* Pope Francis argues that "Fraternity is born not only of a climate of respect for individual liberties, or even of a certain administratively guaranteed equality. Fraternity necessarily calls for something greater, which in turn enhances freedom and equality."[12] Fraternity is a work of grace and is built through daily commitments to foster and sustain a set of virtues and practices. In this regard fraternity is an effect of freedom and a condition for the fullness of freedom in community.

Unfortunately, intra-Catholic polarization poses an ongoing challenge. Charles Camosy notes that "our identity is often defined not primarily in positive terms but rather in opposition to fellow Catholics."[13] Moral diversity raises profound questions for living together. Even communities that are deeply committed to valuing diversity, inclusion, and respect for others must determine how to respond to violations of community norms, whether and how to sanction offenders, what differences to tolerate and celebrate. On each of these points there will be disagreements. And more insidiously there will be—for many of us—an attachment to our differences that make it difficult to be open to the work grace could accomplish in us.

According to Pope Francis, the way to distinguish apparent virtue from authentic virtue is to identify whether it fosters openness and union with others.[14] Hence we return to an observation about freedom that began this paper, namely, that we respond to God's offer of grace through the exercise of our freedom as we respond to other free agents in ways that approach or fall short of the good. A criterion for evaluating the exercise of our freedom is whether it fosters openness to others and union with them. Neither openness nor union requires a false neutrality or moral subjectivism, but it does require us to bring sufficient nuance to ethical reasoning so that we can distinguish moral appraisal of another's actions from the choice to maintain community.

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[12] Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (October 3, 2020), §103 http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html (hereafter cited as *FT*).

[13] Charles Camosy, *One Church: How to Rekindle Trust, Negotiate Difference, and Reclaim Catholic Unity* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2022), 5.

[14] *FT*, §91.

Conclusion

Moral diversity raises *foundational* questions about grounds for moral judgments/truth claims; *epistemological* questions about how we validate these claims, limitations to that knowledge, and the import of those limitations for responsibility and culpability; and *practical* questions about forming conscience, navigating disagreements and differences, and responding to wrongdoing (our own and others'). All of this is complicated by high degrees of polarization and partisanship that make patience, humility, and accompaniment harder to practice.

But what is a plenary address for if not to plant seeds in hope for an eventual harvest? In ways big and small each of us is free to consider how we can nurture respect for others' freedom and conscience, moral judgments made with thoughtfulness and humility, and practices of accompaniment and inclusion, justice and mercy.

• *CTSA Proceedings* 77 (2023): 31–37 •

CAGED AND LIBERATED IN THE HISTORICAL STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM ACROSS AND BEYOND BORDERS

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Buenos Dias! Esta mañana les ofrezco una ofrenda: fragmentos de mi pueblo, un pueblo desplazado forzosamente por todo el continente. Good morning! Today I bring you an offering: fragments of my people, a people forcibly displaced across the continent. I open with a poem by a young Honduran Jesuit, Antonio Aguilera, S.J., titled "Día 8," the 8th day:[1]

Se nos han unido más
y somos miles.

Dolor centroamericano,
dolor haitiano y de otros más.
Andar de hondos pisoteos
que surcan la carretera,
a pesar del calor infernal
y del frío que orada los labios.

CNN muestra imágenes al mundo
de nuestros rostros desencajados,
como si fuéramos espectáculo de circo.

Y detrás de la TV,
desde la quietud de un hogar que no huye,
surgen
una tiritante compassion
y una degradante aporofobia.

More have joined us
and we are thousands.

Central American pain,
Haitian pain and of many others.
A journey of deep trampling
that furrows the road,
despite the infernal heat
and the cold that pierces the lips.

CNN shows images to the world
of our disjointed faces,
as if we were a circus spectacle.

And behind the TV,
from the stillness of a home that does not flee,
arises
a trembling compassion
and a degrading aporophobia.

[1] See his collection of poetry titled, *Se Van*, winner of the Juegos Florales Hispanoamericanos de Quetzaltenango in 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/16a1yVqzp57EC1anmofG4TX2E7zq5dmgk/view?fbclid=IwAR3w3v2jKgKc5pY5WconSb9bGaHbQ14qCekQ2n-teV8JaA6QbEYqrKGd0Cg.

PART I: CAGED

Caught in a world of concentric circles of militarized and digitized borders, the displaced poor of Latin America and the Caribbean, and all who cross the continent without authorization are caged in geographies of inhumanity. The United States pays Latin American governments to keep people from leaving their own countries, essentially purchasing humans' capacity for freedom. The US border has been externalized beyond US territory, continuing a long history of incursions into Latin America and the ongoing plundering of a people's time, space, and creative attempts to live beyond what modernity has bestowed upon so many of them: poverty and social insignificance.

In my home country of El Salvador, the first border patrol was inaugurated in 2019 with US money.[2] There are now over 800 military and police officers stationed at over 154 "blind spots"—rural crossing points at the perimeter of the country, especially where so called "caravans" of migrants gather to journey north. Salvadorans attempting to leave the country are now criminalized for helping each other out on digital platforms. José Eusebio Asegurado, a farmer, Juan Rufino Ramírez, a security guard, and Fátima Pérez, who ran a pupusa stand out of her home, were all charged in 2021 by the Salvadoran government for promoting trafficking after their mutual aid WhatsApp group was infiltrated by an undercover police agent.[3] Their goal was to make it out of El Salvador to join a caravan in Honduras, but they never made it out of the country. According to the government prosecutors, the victim of the crime was "humanity," technically, it was a crime against their own humanity for attempting to migrate.[4] To migrate is now to traffic oneself.

Farther north in Tapachula where Mexico and Guatemala meet, we encounter Latin America's largest migrant detention center, appropriately named "the twenty-first century." This facility cages persons on the move from across the world as part of what is widely termed "*una politica de desgaste*"—"a politics of wearing down."[5] The whole city of Tapachula is referred to as "ciudad carcel," "prison city," because it

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[2] Nelson Rauda Zablah y John Washington, "El Salvador lanza su patrulla fronteriza y se une a ola de complacencia regional a Trump," *El Faro*, September 2019, https://www.elfaro.net/es/201909/el_salvador/23649/El-Salvador-lanza-su-patrulla-fronteriza-y-se-une-a-ola-de-complacencia-regional-a-Trump.htm.

[3] Gabriela Cáceres y Roman Gressier, "Sting Operation against Migrant Caravan Arrests Working-Class Migrants as Human Traffickers," *El Faro*, May 14, 2021, https://elfaro.net/en/202105/el_salvador/25479/Sting-Operation-against-Migrant-Caravan-Arrests-Working-Class-Migrants-as-Human-Traffickers.html.

[4] The UN office on Drugs and Crime defines human trafficking as a crime against humanity, see "Human Trafficking," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/human-trafficking.html. See also, Cindy Wooden, "Human trafficking is 'crime against humanity,' pope says," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 11, 2019, https://www.ncronline.org/news/francis-comic-strip/francis-chronicles/human-trafficking-crime-against-hu manity-pope-says.

[5] Stephanie Brewer, Lesly Tejada, and Maureen Meyer, "Struggling to Survive: the Situation of Asylum Seekers in Tapachula, Mexico," *WOLA Research Report*, June 2022, 25, https://www.wola.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/FINAL-Struggling-to-Survive-Asylum-Seekers-in-Tapachula.pdf.

serves as a containment area in Mexico's poorest state of Chiapas where migrants without work, housing, or food, are corralled. Throughout Mexico's borders there are close to 30,000 military officers who are deployed for migration enforcement, using their lethal training for war to intercept and stop the northward movement of people.[6]

Despite these containment measures, throughout 2021 and 2022 large groups of migrants have made a way out from Tapachula, using the "caravan" approach to bring exposure to their plight with the hope that by having the gaze of the world upon them, they may be spared some of the repressive violence.[7] As the opening poem says:

> *Se nos han unido más*
> *y somos miles.*
>
> *Dolor centroamericano,*
> *dolor haitiano y de otros más. ...*
>
> *CNN muestra imágenes al mundo*
> *de nuestros rostros desencajados,*
> *como si fuéramos espectáculo de circo.*

It is exposure that simultaneously protects and targets. It is the forced performance of life and death on the global stage.

This spectacle of the twenty-first century was again on global news on March 27 as persons who had made it past Tapachula and into northern Mexico burned alive in the cages of the state. They were there because the people of Ciudad Juarez were fed up with their presence on the city streets and at the border crossings, and because US policies would not allow them to cross the border to ask for asylum.[8] This was not the first such fire, for in the past four years there have been at least twelve fires in the network of fifty-seven detention centers throughout Mexico. A Mexican newspaper asked: "What makes them risk their lives by setting fire in an enclosed space, between bars, chains and padlocks, without basic civil protection and emergency response measures?"[9] Anyone who has made the harrowing journey of forced migration knows all too well the human cost, even unto death, of struggling for the freedom of a dignified life.

Steel bars, chains, and padlocks are the visible manifestation of a deeper infrastructure the United States has built across Latin America as state power merges with digital power. Digital infrastructure amplifies the impact of material borders, detention centers, and of the military officers who simply carry out orders. A family

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[6] Brewer, Tejada, and Meyer, "Struggling to Survive," 8.

[7] José Miguel Vivanco, "Mexican Soldiers and Immigration Agents Violently Detain Asylum Seekers," *Human Rights Watch*, September 8, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/08/mexican-soldiers-and-immigration-agents-violently-detain-asylum-seekers.

[8] The Associated Press, "Mexico investigates 8 workers and officials over the fatal fire at a migrant facility," *NPR*, March 30, 2023, https://www.npr.org/2023/03/30/1166998571/ migrant-center-fire-mexico-ciudad-juarez-investigation.

[9] Daniel Blancas Madrigal, "Al menos una docena de incendios en estaciones migratorias, de 2019 a la fecha," *Cronica*, March 29, 2023, https://www.cronica.com.mx/nacional/docena-incendios-estaciones-migratorias.html.

who makes the journey through South America and then through the Darien Gap in Panama will have their biometric data taken by US funded Panamanian border patrol. The scans of their faces, retinas, fingers, and other pertinent information will then become part of BITMAP, the Biometric Identification Transnational Migration Alert Program, which in conjunction with eighteen other countries lets the Department of Homeland Security track their movement as they make their way north, and when desired, DHS and its collaborators across the continent can intercept and detain them before they reach the US border.[10] Homeland Security is now developing a new centralized database for all of its domestic and global biometric data with the help of Amazon and Veritas Capital,[11] the latter of which also owns Blackboard, the educational software that many of us use in our educational institutions.

The merging of vast amounts of biographical and biometric data across the continent gives to the United States and its corporate partners unprecedented control over human mobility. This is a new era of digital colonialism,[12] made possible in part through the surveillance capitalism that Shoshana Zuboff has aptly interrogated, and of which Paul Lakeland spoke in his 2019 CTSA presidential address.[13] The harvesting and appropriation of biometric data is a weapon of war, refined by the United States in Afghanistan over two decades.[14] Now, the displaced poor are used as a profitable target practice across the American continent.

The degrading *aporophobia*, the contempt for the poor mentioned by the opening poem, is a global war on the poor, and their deaths, disappearances, and incarceration is legalized warfare. But the life of the poor is fundamentally against war,[15] because in their struggle to *sobre-vivir*, to over-live the death trap of dominant modernity's geo-politics, we glimpse the mystery of a humanity liberated from the chains that the fear of death imposes. Their story of struggle is also a story of joy, and in their *lucha* we glimpse a way of dwelling in this world oriented toward a freedom that violence and

[10] Mizue Aizeki, Laura Bingham, Santiago Narváez, "The Everywhere Border: Digital Migration Control Infrastructure in the Americas," *Transnational Institute*, February 14, 2023, https://www.tni.org/en/article/the-everywhere-border. See also BITMAP Authorization Act, H.R. 2045, 117th Congress (2021), https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2045.

[11] PR Newswire, "Anthology Completes Merger with Blackboard, Launches Next Chapter in EdTech," Veritas Capital, October 25, 2021, https://www.veritascapital.com/news-info/anthology-completes-merger-with-blackboard-launches-next-chapter-in-edtech.

[12] Michael Kwet, "Digital colonialism: US empire and the new imperialism in the Global South," *Race & Class* 60, no. 4 (2019): 2-26. Kwet describes digital colonialism as "the use of digital technology for political, economic and social domination of another nation or territory."

[13] Michael Kwet, "Digital Colonialism: The evolution of US Empire," *Transnational Institute*, March 4, 2021, https://longreads.tni.org/digital-colonialism-the-evolution-of-us-empire. For Lakeland's text, see Paul Lakeland, "Crisis and Engagement: The Role of the Servant Theologian," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 74 (2019): 71-81.

[14] Ken Klippenstein and Sara Sirota, "The Taliban have seized U.S. Military biometrics devices," *The Intercept*, August 17, 2021, https://theintercept.com/2021/08/17/afghanistan-taliban-military-biometrics/.

[15] Nelson Maldonado Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

death cannot conquer. To that incarnate orientation toward the joy of freedom, and the sacramental horizon that grounds it, I now turn.

PART II: LIBERATED

Roseli, as she has asked to be called, was incarcerated in the Coastal Bend Detention Center in Robstown, Texas from late November of 2019 until late February of 2020 and was then expelled back to Mexico.[16] "Nos daban solo una o dos horas afuera en la semana,"—"we were given one to two hours outside a week," she tells me, during which time she would walk to the edge of the private for-profit prison to visit wild greenery with small flowers that were growing at the periphery of her detained world. "Yo las recogía y las ofrecía, poniéndolas en la tela de alambre, pidiéndole a Dios que cruzara"—"I would gather and offer them, placing them on the chain-link fence, asking God to cross." "Y cuando regresaba la semana siguiente, y veia que todavía estaban verdes, sabia que iba a salir y cruzar"—"And when I would return the following week, and they were still green, I knew that I would get out and cross." Hildegard of Bingen's theological notion of *viriditas*—greenness—which the late theologian William Harmless described as "an inner life force" that is in all creation and is manifest particularly through plants,[17] is an apt analogue for Roseli's sacramental encounter with the inner life force—the Spirit and spirits—pulsating in the untamed weeds of a detention center. Greenery that revealed and made *presente* the God of her people who along with the spirits of her ancestors journeyed north with her.

Roseli is a woman in her late 40s from an indigenous Mixteco speaking community in the mountains of Guerrero, Mexico and is a third-generation healer, a holy gift passed down by her father and before that by her grandfather. In a region where poverty and tradition forces families to sell girls into marriage "como si fueran animales" "as though they were animals," she exclaims, she was married at fifteen to a man who whenever she left the house would say, "you're not a man, why do you leave the house?" and who would then proceed to physically enforce the violent borders of *machismo* that structured their world.[18] Desperate, she turned to the saints, the spirits of her *antepasados*—her ancestors—and said to them, "Ayudame a donde yo voy"—"Help me where I am going." With their strength, one day she told her husband, "Yo no quiero sufrir mas contigo,"—"I don't want to suffer any more with you,"—and left north with a coyote who initially laughed at her for wanting to leave, and live, otherwise.

One by one she had already sent her sons north to New York, because "a veces solo teniamos tortilla con sal"—"sometimes we only had tortilla with salt." With

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[16] I have carried out research with Roseli for two years under Fordham University IRB Protocol #1798. The research focuses on the ways that migrant communities in New York City find a sense of health and healing amidst the various layers of personal, communal, ecclesial, and structural violence that harms their daily life. Most of the conversation used for this presentation was carried out in person on April 23, 2023 in my apartment in New York City.

[17] William Harmless, *Mystics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 74.

[18] Mexico News Daily Staff, "In Metlatónoc, Guerrero, girls sold into marriage for as little as 40,000 pesos," *Mexico Daily News*, May 11, 2021, https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/girls-sold-into-marriage-for-as-little-as-40000-pesos/.

sorrow she shares that when they would run out of firewood and had nothing else to burn, she would take pages from her children's books to burn for the *comal*, the griddle. She looks at me, perhaps aware of the books that surround us in my apartment, and in tears says, "I'm sorry, because that's not good." "Me duele"—"It pains me." Through her tears in the telling of this detail, I finally come to understand why she loves to hold books with wonder-filled reverence, in awe of the knowledge they contain, even if she cannot read them. Two years earlier she had already told me, "Yo sé de las montañas, tú de libro, yo quiero saber como tú sabes, y yo te enseño"—"I have knowledge from the mountains, you of books, I want to know as you know, and I will teach you." Unbeknownst to me, we were already partaking of a tender and sacramental ritual of healing our mutual woundedness across the inner landscape of memory, and the geographies of social suffering that mark our displaced communities.[19]

New York City and Los Angeles comprise the two primary communities of Mixtec people outside of Mexico, and Roseli's knowledge of the "anthropology of experience," to use Arthur Kleinman's fitting phrase,[20] is widely sought out by the Mixtec community. When she's not selling bouquets of roses, carnations, or *tamales de raja* in our neighborhood, she is "sacando el mal"—"drawing out evil"—that lodges itself in the bodies of her people, an evil that as the late Paul Farmer would say, is also legible as a chronic somatization of socio-political pressures in wider ecologies and anthropologies of suffering.[21]

What began a few years ago as my research into healing practices among immigrant communities in New York City has become an apprenticeship unto my own liberation through Roseli's ways of knowing freedom before God. When I find myself in an apartment in Queens discerning with her who could have sent evil to a child who has developed spine curvature, or in an apartment in the Bronx with a man whom doctors have diagnosed with a mental disorder, but who also knows that his illness is bound up with other persons, and that without addressing the communal conflict that is its source the illness will only get worse, I become aware of my own theological captivity in monolingual grammars of the divine. The invitation to come to know the freedom of God beyond and across the borders of the profoundly Euro-American Catholicism I have professionally learned comes to me through communities whose knowledge *de las montañas*—of the mountains—does not have a home in the dominant churches or academies of the United States. Instead, we gather in forests, in cemeteries, in overcrowded apartments, where the faithful presence of God is received and rituals for giving thanks are offered.

As Roseli invokes the communion of saints in Mixteco, a litany of tattered references to early church figures, remnants of an imposed colonial Christianity that has been mystically subverted with God's blessing, together we light the *copal* incense and arrange the flowers, we pour libations of *aguardiente* and light cigarettes, we crack

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[19] See Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock (eds.), *Social Suffering* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1997).

[20] Arthur Kleinman, "Everything That Really Matters": Social Suffering, Subjectivity, and the Remaking of Human Experience in a Disordering World," *Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 3 (1997): 315-35.

[21] Paul Farmer, *Partner to the Poor* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 52.

eggs, and we give thanks for the presence of our ancestors who descend upon the personal, communal, intergenerational, and transnational wounds of our displaced peoples in need of healing. Also, I am taken back to my mother's story of how as a baby in our mountain village in Chalatenango, El Salvador, my life too was saved through the healing knowledge of my poor community, who with wild greenery had for generations learned to liberate themselves from the grasp of death that tries to take one before one's time.

Like millions who have defied the containment measures I described at the beginning and who have entered into the United States without authorization, Roseli lives without legal protections and is a target of the state. Daily she must struggle against these and other forces that attempt to shackle her mind and spirit. However, the *practice* of her knowledge, the *exercise* of her right to not have to suffer under Man,[22] the *bearing* of ancestral gifts of healing for self and others, all defy facile notions of what actually constitutes the historical struggle for living oriented towards the radical freedom of the God of the living and of the dead who wills the fullness of life across and beyond borders.

I have shared in a narrative key the holy threads of one particular journey, and analyzed the macro geopolitical caging and experimentation taking place upon the displaced poor of the continent. I now conclude with Roseli's exclamation at the end of one of our conversations this spring, which like the celebratory response at the end of a people's liturgy of life, provides a glimpse into the expansive mystical freedom that grounds, nourishes, and vivifies the unauthorized community of we—*nosotros*:

"Gracias a Dios ya estoy libre, ya no estoy en el corral, ya no estoy encerrada, gracias a Dios." "Thanks be to God I am now free, I am no longer corralled in, I am not contained, thanks be to God."

[22] Joseph Drexler-Dreis and Kristien Justaert, eds., *Beyond the Doctrine of Man: Decolonial Visions of the Human* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

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INNER FREEDOM AND OUTER CONSTRAINT: REFLECTIONS IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT

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In this presentation, I would like to share about freedom and constraint in an Asian context. Both outer and inner freedom are imperative for leading a life of dignity, as the human person is holistic, needing material, spiritual, and social rights for human development. Our church's social teaching advises us that apart from the right to worship God according to one's conscience, other rights such as the right to express, to form associations, to take an active part in public life, and to make contributions to the common welfare of one's fellow citizens are basic rights and essential to the freedom of citizens. People are entitled to the legal protection of these rights and freedom.[1] In fact, freedom is constitutive of humans' moral agency.

I will start with the constraints of freedom of Asian peoples today. Asia indeed is marked by great diversity, in terms of religious, cultural, socio-economic, and social situations, which are resources of doing theology in Asia.[2] I will focus on East Asia, especially Hong Kong, in this presentation. Since outer constraint may lead to inside struggle which affects the inner freedom of a person, I will first delineate both outer and inner constraints through some recent events and narratives. I suggest that expanding inner freedom becomes more important when facing strong outer constraint, which creates fears and uncertainties and threatens freedom.

OUTER CONSTRAINT

In Asia, although most countries have been decolonized since the 1940s or 1950s, some places are still under authoritarian or highly suppressive rule, thus, lacking authentic freedom. People in these places are unable to enjoy personal freedom and civil liberties of various kinds. These outer constraints are imposed on people due to their religious belief, political viewpoint, ethnicity, or cultural background, leading to domination, discrimination, or suppression. As observed by some Asian scholars and pastors, there are "rising situations where freedom of expression and especially freedom of the press are being suppressed. Ethical principles, respect for just laws, and

[1] John XIII, *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), § 14, 23, 26, 27, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

[2] Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Methodology: Asian Christian Theology," *FABC Papers*, no. 96.

principles of subsidiarity are being manipulated and even not upheld where legitimate opposition is undermined by the use of power and corruption."[3]

According to the report, *Freedom in the World 2023: Marking 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy*,[4] some Asian countries have overcome decades of dictatorship to establish resilient democracies, driven by prodemocracy movements, as well as small improvements in judicial independence, anticorruption efforts, and freedom of movement. However, authoritarian forces elsewhere continue to push back against domestic calls for liberty and justice. The report identified several Asian countries and places which had the worst aggregate scores, that is, the most serious violators of political rights and civil liberties, including North Korea, China (Tibet and Hong Kong included), and Myanmar. Those who dare to criticize the government are subjected to severe penalties or even the sacrifice their lives.

For example, Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military overthrew the previous elected government on February 1, 2021, and detained many top officials, including ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The political, economic, and social freedoms that had begun to blossom in 2011, after more than fifty years of military rule, were abruptly interrupted by the military coup, which gave rise to unrest and a deep social crisis.[5] Moving to Northeast Asia, with a lack of religious freedom and other freedoms in communist-ruled North Korea, at the end of April, some Christians were arrested on charges of promoting an underground prayer service. In similar incidents in the past, those arrested were sent to re-education labor camps. In mainland China, generally speaking, people's civil liberties and the right to political participation are very limited. In terms of freedom of religion, more regulations on religious affairs have been implemented since 2021, with measures for the administration of religious personnel, religious education, and internet religious information services.

For Hong Kong, the place I come from, I would like to share a bit more about the situation. Since the change of sovereignty from Britain to the Chinese government in 1997, Hong Kong has been adopting the governance model of "One Country, Two Systems," so that Hong Kong would maintain its own laws, courts, economic system, and freedoms, which are different from those of communist China. But there was a drastic change in the past few years. In July 2020, after the 2019 anti-extradition bill saga[6] and the social movement in which the original goal was to strive for personal freedom, the National Security Law was implemented by the Beijing government, criminalizing the four acts of secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with

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[3] FABC 50 General Conference Core Group, "FABC 50 General Conference Guide Document," *FABC paper 165* (November 29, 2020), 13, https://fabc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FABC-Papers-165.pdf.

[4] Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2023: Marking 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy* (March 9, 2023), https://freedomhouse.org/article/new-report-freedom-asia-pacific-region-improved-slightly-2022 (accessed 5 April 2023).

[5] Conference of Catholic Bishops of Myanmar (CBCM), "Country Reports FABC 50 General Conference: Myanmar," *FABC Papers 172*, 44-46. https://fabc.org/document/fabc-papers-172/); "Myanmar: Mandalay Church calls on Catholics to pray for peace," *Vatican News*, January 14, 2022, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2022-01/churches-myanmar-mandalay-prayer-catholics-peace.html.

[6] For details, please refer to Mary Yuen, "Practicing Democracy: Upholding Human Rights and the Right to Participation in Hong Kong," *Asian Horizons* 11, no.4 (2020): 858-873.

foreign and external forces to jeopardize national security. It marks the most significant change to Hong Kong's law and political system.

Many people think that the enactment of this law is a serious attack on civil liberties and democracy, whereas the government argues that only a very small number of people would be affected. However, the reality is the following: a number of civil organizations were dispersed; one of the largest local newspapers and other news media were forced to close down; many commentators and political cartoonists were censored and warned; NGOs are warned or threatened not to organize or join public rallies or processions relating to women's rights, labor issues, the June Fourth Tiananmen Incident, or religious activities.

More sadly, some scholars, journalists, members of the Legislative Council, social activists, labor unionists, and many young people who joined the 2019 protests were arrested and detained one by one. Our cardinal, Joseph Zen, was arrested for supporting a humanitarian fund for helping people arrested in the protests. It is estimated that about 10,000 arrests (with arrestees ranging in age from 12 to 83) and 2,500 prosecutions are linked to the 2019 protest. Some have been detained without trial for over one or two years.

Moreover, teachers and civil servants are required to declare that they will uphold the Basic Law, the mini-constitution of Hong Kong, and bear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government. As a result, in the past two years, many people decided to migrate to another place with their children. In the past two years, about 150,000 Hong Kong people moved to Britain under the British National (Overseas) visa scheme.[7]

Inner Struggle and Inner Freedom

Apart from these outer constraints with the National Security Law, many people are not sure whether they will violate the law when expressing opinions. Hong Kong playwright Candace Chong's experiences illustrate this phenomenon. As a famous Hong Kong playwright who received numerous awards, Chong was invited by a theatre group some years ago to write a script called *May 35th*, to be performed during the thirtieth anniversary of the June Fourth Tiananmen Incident in 2019. Now, after several years, the play would no longer be able to be performed in Hong Kong anymore as it may violate the National Security Law. In the past year, intending to write something about what happened in the past few years, Chong expressed her inner struggle, which is shared by many Hong Kong people, in an interview,

> I have been constantly self-censoring when writing in the past year. I can't be myself. I can't fully express myself. There is a red line that I don't know what should I write? Ideas are very delicate or fragile. As a playwright, I have to consider whether people may

[7] Laura Westbook, "105,000 Hongkongers start new lives in UK since BNO visa scheme began 2 years ago," *South China Morning Post,* 23 February 2023.

> misunderstand my original intention if I use certain wordings. My script may affect the whole team.[8]

Despite this difficulty, Chong finally wrote a comedy called *Show Me Your Love,* with ten small stories and twenty characters who are ordinary people, performed by two of the most well-known stand-up comedians, as a gift to Hong Kong people. This play has been performed with great success. Chong said,

> I came more and more to believe in the goodwill I saw among ordinary people. Many people left the city but those remain in Hong Kong are ordinary people. I saw kindness in their hearts. For example, journalists who unwillingly changed careers, lawyers who are very serious about their cases, people who often visit prisoners, and teachers who work hard to teach students with more and more censorship. For these Hong Kong people, I really appreciate them.[9]

I would like to add that the church in Hong Kong is also trying to do something to help those in need after the social turmoil, such as sponsoring the youth in jail who want to study, looking for study and work opportunities for those released from prison, and strengthening the faith and inner freedom of the faithful, especially the youth, through faith formation.

Chong wanted to give comfort and encouragement to Hong Kong people through her play, building connections between people who left and stayed in Hong Kong.

With Chong's experience, Filipino Sister Mary John Manazan's "Easter kind of spirituality," which emphasizes the feast rather than the fast, came to my mind.[10] This is a kind of feminist spirituality that is empowering, liberating, integral, healing, and so on. It starts by reflecting on personal and social experiences, so that women's personal and social consciousness can be revealed.[11] It would be useful for strengthening inner spiritual freedom and links with social life, not only for Asian women, but for all experiencing impasse and uncertainty.[12] Through Christ's liberation, the oppressed can have a new self-understanding, accepting themselves, obtaining internal liberation, breaking through external and internal shackles. As a result, they can regain their freedom from external intimidation, pain and hatred. This

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[8] "Interview with Candace Chong, The Best Gift at the Worst Time," *Ming Pao Daily*, April 2, 2023, translation from Chinese by author.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Sr. Mary John Manazan, a Filipino Benedictine sister, is active in social and women's rights movement as well as gender and women's studies education. Sr. Mary John is a Zen spirituality practitioner committed to contemplative activism. See Solidarity Philippines Australia Network, "Feminism and Spirituality Like a Breath of Fresh Air! A Filipino Benedictine Sister Speaks of Total Liberation," *KASAMA* 12 No. 2 (1998), https:// cpcabrisbane.org/ Kasama/1998/V12n2/Maryjohn.htm (accessed 5 March 2023).

[11] Mary John Mananzan, "Theological Perspectives of a Religious Woman Today—Four Trends of the Emerging Spirituality," in *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader,* ed. Ursula King (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 347.

[12] Mary John Mananzan, *Challenges to the Inner Room* (Manila: St. Scholastica's College, 1998), 97-98.

spirituality pays attention to a person's breathing, not only practicing concentration, but also entrusting the whole person to the Lord at present, willing to commit to God, and participating in the action of liberation. This kind of contemplation allows people to have the space to purify and empty themselves, and lets people see clearly that everyone is valuable and precious, thus, everyone must be respected.[13] I heard from a friend that some prisoners also practice meditation and praying, among Christians or Buddhists. They said that this practice can give them strength and help them make connections to the outside world.

Freedom and Hope

Another example is the story of Hong Kong director K.W. Chow who is well-known for his social concern depicted in his films and his identity as a devoted Christian. During the 2019-2020 protest, he made a documentary called "Revolution of Our Times," interviewing a number of young protesters. It was shown in some international film festivals and overseas but never screened in Hong Kong as it is probably unable to pass the 2021 new film censorship law.[14] In a number of interviews, he said that he had an inner struggle and understood the risk of making this documentary, but his faith and conscience urged him to do what he thought is right. He wanted to keep a record of what had happened in Hong Kong during the social unrest and why the youth joined the protest. In order to protect other members of his team, Chow is willing to be the only spokesperson of this documentary and the names of his crew are hidden.

I am impressed by what Chow said in some interviews, depicting his inner freedom in spite of the outer constraint. He said,

> I believe that what I pursue is right according to God. If what I do is right and I have to suffer, I am willing to accept it, and there is no need to be afraid of it. For me, only by staying in Hong Kong can I have freedom without fear. On the contrary, if I go to another place because of fear, my heart is still full of fear. This is true freedom, true peace to me. Someone has said, danger is real; but fear is a choice. I try not to let fear affect my life.[15]

In the face of various challenges, based on his faith, Chow decided to stay in Hong Kong with his family and continue to produce movies. He also tries to bring his movies to the overseas Chinese communities, hoping to draw more attention on the Hong Kong situation.

This reminds me the image of "plants flourishing through cracks," suggested by Bishop Stephen Chow, the bishop of Hong Kong. As a Jesuit, rooted in the key idea of

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[13] Mananzan, *Challenges to the Inner Room,* 13-14.

[14] This law gives the chief secretary the power to revoke a film's license if it is found to "endorse, support, glorify, encourage and incite activities that might endanger national security."

[15] "How to Become a Hong Kong Film Director: Interview with K.W. Chow," *Goomomoon Podcast,* ep. 168, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7ktVRoaW7k (accessed 5 March 2023), translation from Cantonese by author.

Ignatian spirituality that emphasizes finding God in everything, he offered a reflection in the face of the shrinking of spaces of freedom in Hong Kong a year ago. Employing the image of flowers, shrubs, and even trees that have germinated from cracks, he highlighted that these plants have demonstrated that nothing can prevent life from flourishing, adding beauty and hope to our world. The tougher the condition, the more resilient life will be. From this, he claims that "God's love and light are found in all things, even in the cracks."[16] He said,

> Accepting the changing context as reality does not mean endorsing it. But learning to discern new possibilities with a creative mindset amid tensions from the changing context is the way forward. And the future still holds its promises beyond our understanding.[17]

Bishop Chow emphasizes that allowing ourselves the inner space to discern is essential and beneficial in the long run. He also points out on another occasion that although we are living in an anxious and messy world dominated by an entrenched political mentality, "our future generations need to have hope. We must make it possible for each other to have hope for a better future."[18]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Under authoritarian rule, many kinds of outer freedom in the world are eroded. Outer constraints and threats often cause fear and anxiety. In spite of this, we can still keep the freedom of thought and conscience that no one can take away from us. We have to clear our mind, setting our eyes on God and strengthening our inner self and inner freedom so that we can maintain hope. Such freedom can motivate us to take appropriate actions at the right time after discernment. We need to cultivate and strengthen our inner freedom by developing a holistic and integral kind of spirituality and faith formation, so that we can see God even in cracks and not lose our ability to make sound ethical judgments due to worries and fears.

Contemplation and prayer in action can help us strengthen our relationship with God and overcome our fears. Borrowing from Thomas Merton's point of view, Henri Nouwen said that we are called to be contemplatives, to peel off the blindfolds of illusions that prevent us from seeing God. We are called to observe with open eyes, to be awake, alert, and focused.[19] Apart from spending some quiet time with the Lord to clear our minds and see the outside world, we have to engage in contemplation in our secular life, observing the world through the eyes of faith, and understand and treat people with compassion and empathy. As our relationship with God grows closer, the

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[16] Stephen Sau-yan Chow, "Reflections: Flourishing through Cracks," *Sunday Examiner*, June 2, 2022, https://www.examiner.org.hk/2022/06/02/reflections-from-the-bishop-flourishing-through-cracks/features (accessed 5 March 2023).

[17] Ibid.

[18] "Easter message from Bishop Stephen Chow 2023: Dare to Have Hope," *Sunday Examiner*, April 6, 2023.

[19] Henri Nouwen, *The Road to Peace*, ed. John Dear (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 196.

act of love takes place. Love-oriented spiritual freedom involves our concrete day-to-day lives. Inner freedom makes us more hopeful to respond to God's love in charity, caring for the disadvantaged in society, and also taking care of our own spiritual need. Moreover, we need a community of mutual support in order to nurture our spirituality and encourage us in practicing faith.

Finally, I would like to conclude with the message of a Hong Kong song, called "The Stella Moments of Humankind,"[20] sung by a young singer. The song brings out the idea that the light that shines in the dark night actually belongs to all ordinary people, not just a few key leaders. And each one of us can contribute something, bringing light and hope in the darkest of times.

[20] This song is inspired by the book *Decisive Moments in History*, written by the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig, published in 1927.

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FREEDOM AND ESCHATOLOGICAL FULFILMENT: THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF MODERNITY FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

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To tell the story of freedom for Africa and all peoples of African descent, I would like to begin with the most widely read slave narrative, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, published in 1789. M. Shawn Copeland proposes that we read the African American spirituals as revealing something hidden from human view. In the same way, I propose that reading the narrative of an enslaved Black person, Olaudah Equiano, lifts the veil on the hidden wounds of slavery. This is because it presents some powerful apocalyptic imageries that can bring to our consciousness in many ways the painful long walk of people of African descent for freedom. Hopefully, the images, and words that I reverence though this account, can also help us all to think of so many people who look like Equiano who are facing the same painful realities that he faced in their ongoing struggle for life today more than two hundred years after the death of Equiano in 1797.[1]

Using Equiano's painful narrative of freedom's journey as the main text for my account of freedom, I argue that just like Olaudah, the stories of most people of African descent have been characterized for over five hundred years by the same persistent painful realities, namely: captivity to the contradictions of history and the fight for survival; promise, providence and peril, dominion and damnation.

Every Christmas when I sing that song put into English from the French by the Unitarian minister and music critic, John Sullivan Dwight, "O Holy Night," I wonder: When will this suffering, existential homelessness, racism, poverty, and pain end for people of African descent? When shall my people truly be free? The words of Dwight that I am sure you all know goes like this:

> *Truly he taught us to* love one another;
> His law is love, and His Gospel is peace;

[1] M. Shawn Copeland, *Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 170.

> Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,
> And in his name all oppression *shall cease*.[2]

If many people of African descent in the United States, Brazil, Haiti, South Africa, Sudan, Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, France, Nigeria—to mention but a few—do not enjoy abundant life and are not flourishing, if most of them are denied the possibility of living in peaceful and prosperous societies and nations, it is the task of an accountable theology to dig deeper into the reasons for this sad situation through a wider historical analysis. Many Africans today and African Americans here in the United States or in Canada and anywhere in the world who are members of our churches are asking the question, what difference does it make belonging to the church? What does the birth and the death of the Son of God mean to them? What does theology offer them in repairing their world, redressing historical wrongs, and transforming the structures of oppression and injustice that have continued to persist since the time of the slave trade. The sad realities faced by many people of African descent have nothing to do with Blackness, gene, culture, geography, or space. It has everything to do with many social, commercial, religious, and political determinants of poverty, health, social hierarchies, and exclusion in the course of history.

These realities, sadly, are firmly embedded in the construction of history in different versions of Christianity, some of which have been appropriated in some of our theologies, spiritualities, moralities, and teachings on divine providence, suffering, theodicy, and eschatology. This is why it is important to critically examine some religious and theological claims on the meaning of freedom and eschatology, and the theological account of how history unfolds among all peoples and human agency. This critical examination should extend to an interpretation of the forces driving the trajectory of history that constantly produce different outcomes for people because of their place of birth, race, sex, location, and other socially constructed identities and hierarchies.

This critical examination is particularly important since some of the claims of Christendom with its projects, ideas, and ideals of church and state, grace and freedom, human nature, sin and redemption are built on a very narrow epistemology, and notions of God, divine providence, and eschatology. These projects were implemented in non-Western societies by Western imperialists and missionaries and some of the consequences include slavery and racism and white supremacy among other sad images that we see in Equiano's narrative. It is important then to critically analyze such notions like freedom, liberal or illiberal democracies, international development, humanitarianism as well as some of the contentious issues of our times like immigration, poverty, terrorism, health inequity, and the false notion on the convergence of history through modernity and the construction of the global order. While I cannot fully unpack these complicated converging forces in this presentation because of time limitations, I wish to at least show the outline of their destructive prehensile reach in the way they function today by taking us back to their initial beginnings in the slave trade. I know that some people will be wondering, what

[2] J. S. Dwight, "Christmas Song: Cantique Pour Noel," Musical World 19, cited in Christopher J. Kellerman, *All Oppression shall Cease: A History of Slavery, Abolitionism and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2022), 116.

new thing can we learn from repeating this account. I will try to share with you my thoughts for its worth.

In telling the story of freedom through the narrative of an enslaved African person who managed to reclaim his own voice and agency, I am also recounting the story of a people, the people of African descent. His slave narrative was a communal narrative, a prosopography told in the most suffocating and destructive of circumstances. But Equiano's notion of community was not simply limited to his own Black community and race, but for all of humanity. The enslaved persons like the millions of poor and suffering people throughout the world understand the meaning of our common humanity more than those who enslaved them. However, as Equiano points out in his narrative there is no limit to which human greed and thirst for capital can take humans, who will stop at nothing to acquire capital. Angela Davis writes with some clarity about this abuse of the triumph of the self over community in *Freedom is a Constant Struggle* showing how neo-liberalism pushes people into small prisons, "neoliberalism attempts to force people to think of themselves only in individual terms and not in collective terms."[3]

Equiano writes among other things that his motive for writing his slave narrative was for the good of our common humanity:

> I am not so foolishly vain as to expect from it either immortality or literary reputation. If it affords any satisfaction to my numerous friends, at whose request it has been written, or in the smallest degree promotes the interest of humanity, the ends for which it was undertaken will be fully attained, and every wish of my heart gratified.[4]

Many enslaved persons, like many poor people today who are dying needlessly because of preventable wars, diseases, poverty, and violence never live to tell their own stories. May this my imperfect offering be an ancestral tribute to all people who are dying in our world today because of our destructive economies, violent nation-states. May this short account honor the millions of Black people and oppressed peoples throughout the world. These are our siblings whose narratives as victims of some captive historical forces remain buried in the rising rubbles of lies, deception, exploitative assaults on their personhood and autonomy through an unjust global order, false democracies, and manipulations that characterize neo-liberal capitalism and its associated projects that began in the last five hundred years with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The body bags that are produced by our systems and economies—or the economies that kill as Pope Francis calls them[5]—among the poor and oppressed people throughout the world should remind us of all that freedom is more than a word.

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[3] Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 29.

[4] Olaudah Equinao, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London, 1889), 3.

[5] Cf., Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013), § 53, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

I am standing timorously on Olaudah's shoulders as I tell my people's stories of freedom, in three cyclical movements of *captivity, condemnation, and Crucifixion*. I contend that my people are fighting for life. Until Black people throughout the world enjoy human flourishing and abundant life wherever they wish to live, the word redemption and salvation will continue to ring hollow to us. I invite you then into this struggle against the idols of power, money, race, nationalism, and exclusion in our nations, churches and religious groups. I invite you to become participants rather than spectators because the freedom and liberation of our common humanity is tied to the freedom and liberation of billions of people the world over who are condemned to die by the convergence of adverse historical factors legitimated through systems, structures and systems created by states, religious institutions, and international organizations—both local and global.

FREEDOM: A SHORT CONCEPTUALIZATION

Before engaging Equiano, let me speak briefly about what I understand as freedom. When I speak of freedom here, I can only be descriptive. This is because freedom for me as an African is more than a word that can be defined. Rather, freedom is a condition that can be described within contexts in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and have their being. So freedom should be told as a story; it is a story of a journey—mine, yours; your people, my people; my humanity, your humanity; my world, your world. Where are we going and how can we get there together? Thus, using an African communal philosophy, the conceptualization of freedom, in my thinking, can be framed through three fundamental and related questions. *What can I do (capability)? Where and how can I do what I desire to do (opportunities)? What moves me to act and why do I do what I do (motivation)?* The answers to these three questions offer the possibility of pointing in the stories of people's daily life the favorable and adverse conditions and factors for everyone's ultimate fulfilment and happiness through participation in the web of life. I am free when I can participate fully in the life of the community and contribute to creating the possibilities in the community for human and cosmic flourishing—for all. To operationalize it in the words of a woman leader in Soroti, Uganda that I met in the course of my work for the Canadian Samaritans for Africa, "We are not asking for money, but that the obstacles be removed on our path to the future that God willed for us."

I like to focus only on the third question because of time constraints.

The third question is: What moves you to act, why do you do what you do? This is the question of motivation. Susan Michie, et al., define motivation as "all those brain processes that energize and direct behavior, not just goals. It includes habitual processes, emotional responding, as well as analytical decision-making."[6] African social theorist, Achille Mbembe, offers a good framework for entering this realm of reasoning. What moves people to act must first be based on their location not in terms of spatial setting, place, or space, but within the stream of history. For people of African descent, this location, is what Franz Fanon writes about at the end of his book, *Black*

[6] Susan Michie, et al., "The Behavior Change Wheel: A New Method for Characterizing and Designing Behavior Change Interventions, *Implementation Science* 6, no. 42 (2011): 4.

Skin, White Masks when he says, "I am my own foundation."[7] The Black person, he argues, is motivated to claim this foundation not in a solipsistic manner, but as an act of resistance to being voided by external factors and circumstances. He or she must recover his or her agency through a reconstitution of "this capacity to be oneself and to act for oneself" as an inner fire surging forth "from the depths of an extraordinary arid and sterile zone" of non-being in the eyes of non-Blacks.

Mbembe argues that one cannot conceptualize freedom and the future of people of African descent without confronting the question of "actuality," that is, who we are today because of our journeys. It is so easy to talk about freedom and perhaps the theologies of freedom, or to blame the victims for their poverty and suffering. However, for most people of African descent, to use the words of James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing," we wish to become the protagonists of our own history. This is because like our ancestors did in the past, today we still sing the "harmonies of liberty" embodying the lesson that our "dark past has taught us," as we confront the realities we face today when "Hope unborn had died." We contemplate with our ancestors the many roads that "our tears have watered" on "the blood of the slaughtered" in our "gloomy past" filled with our weary years and silent tears.[8]

Mbembe wishes to locate the motivation of peoples of African descent in acting or not acting to change the arc of history in "the will to live and the future of affirmation (freedom—my interpretation) especially where the reign of negation dominates" the long road of tears and blood that we have traversed. It is a struggle to live again—to re-exist—to develop thought processes that can potentiate actions for the reversal of history for people of African descent. These actions are our struggles to breathe again because "I can't breathe!" It is a struggle to wrestle for ourselves a historical agency denied us through the systems so that we can "move beyond the cruel alternatives: Kill or be killed."[9] Or to put it in the words of James Cone in his answer to the question he posed: "What is the meaning of this unspeakable Black suffering—suffering that is so deep, so painful and enduring that words cannot even begin to describe it?" His answer to the question he poses offers an answer to my description of the meaning of freedom for people of African descent as to what moves us to act and the obstacles on our way: "Only the song, dance, and the shout—the voices raised to high heavens and bodies swaying from side to side—can express both the wretchedness and the transcendent spirit of empowerment that kept blacks from going under, as they struggled, against great odds, to acknowledge humanity and freedom denied."[10]

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[7] Achille Mbembe, "Thinking about the World from the Vantage Point of Africa", in *To Write the Africa World*, ed. Achille Mbembe and Felwine Sarr (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2023), 270.

[8] James Weldon Johnson, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," *Poetry Foundation*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46549/lift-every-voice-and-sing.

[9] Mbembe, 270.

[10] James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 124.

OLAUDAH, THE STORYTELLER

Bontemps, in the introduction to the *Great Slave Narratives*, credits Equiano for pioneering the literature genre that came to be known as slave narratives.[11] The slave narratives were both personal and intimate and opened up the world of persons who were held in the bondage of slavery. There have been slave narratives before Equano's. We know of such moving autobiographies of Briton Hammon (1760), James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (1774), John Marrant (1785 and 1789), and Venture Smith (1798), all of which like Equano's were also like spiritual biographies of captivity, condemnation, contaminating narratives, and death. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789 and 1791), has been described as "probably the most artful and influential black narrative in English before Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* appeared in 1845."[12]

The abolitionists who encouraged enslaved persons to tell their stories as a form of spiritual autobiography found in the narratives of Olaudah something that goes beyond spiritual biography. His autobiography was a critical account of the evil of slavery and the loss of human freedom and dignity suffered by him and Black persons held in the captivity of slavery. It was also a hope for freedom—if not for him at least for those Blacks who will come after him and the entire humanity. For many Black persons who were enslaved, they sought different ways to "reorient their worldviews" and telling the stories of their ordeal or singing their pains into dance, and praying their sorrows into tears was their way of finding freedom.[13] In the words of Alice Sewell, a former enslaved persons, "We prayed for dis day of freedom. We come four and five miles to pray to gether to God dat if we don't live to see it, to please let our chillen live to see a better day and be free, so dat dey can give honest and fair service to de Lord and all mankind [*sic*] everywhere."[14]

There are three moments in these slave narratives and Olaudah's followed the same pattern:

First is the capture, subjection into bondage and enslavement.

Second, is the condemnation to non-existence, natal alienation, deracination, and social death (Orlando Patterson) in the journey through the middle passage from Africa to North America, Europe, Caribbean or Latin America. In the case of Olaudah, he was enslaved in all these places as he was moved from one master to another; and from one country to another, and from one continent to another.

The third is the crucifixion: the strife of an enslaved person between life and death in the fight for freedom, to stay alive, to survive, and to be human when people around you want to neuter you and reduce you to nothing.

This third phase is usually filled with scenes of suffering and humiliation that worsens all the marks identified by Orlando Petterson (*Slavery as Social Death*) as

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[11] Arna Bontemps, ed., *Great Slave Narratives* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), vii-xix.

[12] See Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimke, and Sarah Grimke, ed., *American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), 7.

[13] Copeland, 158.

[14] Norman R. Yetman, ed., *Voices from Slavery* (New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, 1970), 263.

characteristic of slaves: natal alienation, social death, deracination, and loss of dignity, respects; and treatment as personal property because the enslaved person does not belong; he or she is a non-person.

Finally, is gaining freedom and remaining permanently under bondage or facing racism, and slavery by other means, e.g., incarceration, lynching, and other forms of barriers that made the life of a freed Olaudah worse than enslavement. Reading Equiano's narrative offer a portrait for reading the condition of African Americans and peoples of African descent in the world today. We as Black people are living a new form of slavery through other means and it is our vocation to fight for the liberation of our people. I will give some examples of these three moments, as I ask you to think of what freedom means for you today, and for people who look like Equiano.

CAPTIVITY, CONDEMNATION, CRUCIFIXION

Olaudah was kidnapped when he was 11 years. He was kidnapped with his sister and taken to the coast. As they were heading to the coast, he writes that, "The only comfort we had was being in each other's arms all that night and bathing each other with our tears."[15] However, one recurrent theme in Equiano's narrative is the hand of providence and how the loss of freedom left him in the merciful hand of divine providence: "I regard myself as a particular favorite of heaven."[16] He thanked God when he was under servitude to Mr. King and was treated better than his previous master, "I blessed God for the hands into which I had fallen."[17] Even his name, Olaudah, signified for him that he bore the seal of fate—Olaudah means *"vicissitude or fortune; one favored and having a loud voice and well spoken."*

In chapter six, he writes so strongly about his regular prayer to God to help him obtain his liberty on one hand, while he worked so hard (using every honest means) to obtain his freedom. However, being a predestinarian, he thought that "whatever fate had determined must ever come to pass; and therefore, if ever it were my lot to be freed nothing could prevent me, although I should at present see no means or hope to obtain my freedom."[18]

In chapter one he writes again of divine providence, "I might say my sufferings were great: but when I compare my lot with that of most of my countrymen, I regard myself as a particular favorite of Heaven, and acknowledge the mercies of Providence in every occurrence of my life."[19] Throughout the *Narrative,* Paul Edwards and Rosalind Shaw note the constant deployment by Equiano of the expressions "looking up to God mighty in the top for my right"; and that "providence was favorable to me than we could have expected." But one of the saddest contradictions he tells in his *Narrative* is the violence of which he suffered in the hand of "Christian depredators" even after he received baptism and became a Christian.[20] He was mortified by the

[15] Equiano, 50.
[16] Equiano, 3.
[17] Equiano, 81
[18] Equiano, 243.
[19] Equiano, 8.
[20] Paul Edwards and Rosalind Shaw. "The Invisible Chi in Equiano's Interesting Narrative," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 19, no. 2 (1989): 146-56, at 152-153.

discrimination he suffered including the refusal of white Christian pastors to bury a Black woman's little baby (in chapter eight). He drew a contrast between his own exercise of limited freedom in avoiding sin and doing harm to no one, and the abuse of freedom of his white oppressors in these words: "O ye nominal Christians! Might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you?"[21] The same outrage was expressed by Frederick Douglas with "Christianity and its collusion with southern sociopolitical structures."[22] He writes, "The dealers in bodies and souls of men erect their stand in the presence of the pulpit, and they mutually help each other. The dealer gives his blood-stained gold to support the pulpit, in return covers his infernal business with the garb of Christianity. Here we have religion and robbery the allies of each other—devils dressed in angels' robes, and hell presenting the semblance of paradise."[23]

Equiano oscillates between his free and beautiful home in Africa and the chaos and suffering of his enslavement. He writes of his motherland, Africa, as a land that is "uncommonly rich and fruitful"; a land that produces all kinds of food and vegetables where everyone worked together—men and women—in tilling the earth, where everyone enjoyed the freedom to participate in the common good, "everyone contributes something to the common stock; and as we are unacquainted with idleness, we have no beggars."[24] He speaks of the land of Africa as beautiful and African women as "uncommonly graceful, alert and modest…cheerful and affable—two of the leading characteristics of our nation."[25] He saw his birth as a promise, and his land of birth, the African motherland as a promise; but through the iron hand of fate, he was taken into slavery and the rest of his life was lived precariously on the verge of death, despair, and pain.

During his journey through the middle passage, he writes that he watched the beatings, the poor treatment, the insufferable sights beneath the ship's deck and some of his mates crying, for their freedom or death as they jumped to their death into the Atlantic, he said, "I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me."[26] As he reflected on all these on many sad nights during the voyage he was often woken by "the shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying that rendered the whole scene of horror almost inconceivable."[27] However, the "scenes of horror" that characterized his life from captivity to the end of his *Narrative* demonstrate that for Olaudah and millions of his siblings caught in this iniquitous and perilous slave trade the three questions (*what you want to or desire to do? Where and how you can do it? What moves you to act, why do you do what you do*) can only be answered in the negative—not in the affirmative. Immediately as one wishes to answer these questions what opens

[21] Equiano, 87.

[22] Alexis S. Wells-Oghoghomeh, "Re-evaluating Roots: Slavery as Source and Challenge for African American Theology", in *T&T Clark Handbook of African American Theology*, ed. Antonia Michelle Daymond, Frederick Ware, and Eric Williams (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 19.

[23] Frederick Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, An American Slave Written by Himself* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1993 [1845]), 105-106.

[24] Equiano, 21.

[25] Equiano, 22.

[26] Equiano, 73.

[27] Equiano, 79.

is a world of tears, pain, betrayal, suffering, death. It is in a word, a world that said "NO" to Equiano and that even today continues to say "NO" to most people of African descent today through systems and structures that objectify, thingify, instrumentalize, erase, exclude, dehumanize, patronize, belittle, and even exterminate the Black *other* and other subjects considered expendable and disposable in our neoliberal capitalist frame.

As Equiano writes with so much clarity, "I would rather die than allow myself to be treated so badly because to me life had lost its relish when freedom is gone."[28] The social condition of Blacks who were liberated in some parts of America in the early nineteenth century were as bad as those still held in captivity, as at the time Equiano was writing. The reasons for this, according to Equiano is a racialized thinking driven by godlessness, greed, and violence. He writes that no Black person should accept the simulacra of freedom by accepting to be insulted, plundered, and mistreated without any possibility of redress or accepting "a mockery of freedom" by continuing to accept "the misery of slavery."[29]

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In one moving passage in his narrative, Equiano writes that what gave him calm was his belief in providence, "I soon perceived what fate had decreed no mortal on earth could prevent."[30] With no friend to bring him comfort, and no hope to bring cheers, and no help from heaven above to put an end to his misery, he bore his bruised and battered body with some dignity in the hope that the night that came upon him had put an end to his miserable and toilsome day—thank God.

Equiano's narrative raises three questions for us as I conclude these thoughts: First, the role of our churches and theologies in undermining the journey of freedom in America and the world. Our theologies and churches often paper over the deep contradictions and trajectory of history that continue to unfold in the rivers of blood and tears of people of African descent, minoritized individuals, and marginalized peoples. We do this often with the "God of the gaps" narratives of God's will: God has a purpose in all things, carry it like a cross, etc.

We often talk about freedom, God's will, hope, and suffering as abstract terms. As Christopher Kellerman writes, the history of slavery is too horrific, too tragic to be put in words, but the sad thing is that the Catholic Church to which most of us are committed has "been so wrong, so callous, so caught up in the ways of the world as the cause of so much harm, century after century after century."[31] In that light, the discussion of freedom must begin with truth telling, listening to the hidden stories of pain, and the narrative ligaments that go back to the slave trade with capillaries that connect today's racialized societies with this iniquitous atrocity. Churches and theologies should provide moral clarity without sugar coating the story, and prophetic

[28] Equiano, 244.
[29] Equiano, 250.
[30] Equiano, 189.
[31] Kellerman, 214.

and pragmatic solidarity.[32] We must create the space for lamentation in our churches, classrooms, and public spaces. I believe that it is only by hearing narratives such as Equiano's and those who are condemned to die by our systems, structures, and institutions that we can begin to atone for the sins against freedom of which many of us are still beneficiaries or perpetrators.

Second, we must move away in our theologies from disembodied or spiritualized notions of freedom and grace, free choice of the will (St. Augustine), divine judgement, and destiny, etc. An embodied and socialized narrative of freedom that asks the three questions I propose when applied to individuals and groups can help us locate the barriers and roadblocks to the march to freedom and what freedom means for people who are too injured with our *Nos* to worry about the theological or philosophical conceptualization of freedom.

Finally, the myth that democracies guarantee freedom and that the presence of freedom in neo-liberal democracy brings prosperity—as advanced recently by the Atlantic Council's *Freedom and Prosperity Initiative* and Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom*—needs critical reappraisal. It is the mission of theologians today to develop the compass for a liberation historiography, the kind that can free our minds from imprisonment to worn out categories and terms like freedom, liberal democracy and Christian nationalism that grew from the Western construction of an unjust global order and the false promise of the convergence of global history through modernity. Today, we now speak of illiberal democracy, and we see the wreckages of our democratic experiments from Hiroshima to Kiev, from Kigali to Aleppo, and from Palestine to El Paso.

As an African, I have watched the convulsion in my continent in the last five decades since my birth after the first modern genocide in Africa, the Biafran War. I watch sadly the new battles between the United States, China, Russia, France and the United Kingdom playing out again in Africa. Some of the same forces that conspired to enslave our ancestors like Equiano are now gathering like vultures over the African Motherland as modern saviors of Africa. The stories of many African young people have become like that of Equiano's. Sadly, this time they are not being forced or kidnapped from a beautiful Africa. Rather, they are leaving the wreckages of the promise and peril of modernity in Africa and looking for some escape routes. Like Equiano, some of them seek for God's divine providence to unfold through their perilous pathway across the Sahara, the Atlantic or the Mediterranean and give thanks to God if they arrive safely to the United States or Canada, Greece, the United Kingdom, or France. Their countries all gained independence from the erstwhile colonialists, and they received the promise of better days, but all is dissipating before their very eyes. Many of them are so desperate that they are volunteering for Wagner on the Russian side and for the Kiev government's call for volunteer fighters for Ukraine.

Four years ago, young Sudanese flooded the streets and asked for their freedom from oppression, tyranny, and death from the hand of a dictator and hundreds of them paid with their lives. On 25 and 26 June, 1955, the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Indian Congress, and the South African Colored People's

[32] Olga Segura, *Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021), 75.

Organization and the Congress of Democrats signed the famous *Freedom Charter* that offered the most articulate and widely circulated understanding and interpretation of freedom for Africans and peoples of African descent.

Today these young Sudanese have all fled their country, many of them are wandering in the lonely path of forests and valleys trying to escape from Sudan or hide from bombs and bullets flying over their land from Khartoum to Darfur. Today South Africa's most popular party is no longer the scandal-ridden ANC, but the Economic Freedom Fighters led Julius Malema. Today young South Africans like young South Sudanese are asking the question: What is freedom? Where lies the future for us?

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Presidential Address
FREEDOM AND FEARS: THE MUSINGS OF A COMPARATIVE THEOLOGIAN ON THE FUTURE OF THE CTSA

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FACING JESUS, IN FREEDOM

Last evening I was honored to preach at our Eucharist at Old St. Mary's, for this feast of Corpus Christi. The Gospel selected for the day offered just a small portion of John 6, verses 51-58. As you may remember, my reaction to the passage was first of all to dwell upon the materiality and consequent sacramentality of the flesh and blood that Jesus so vividly, scandalously offers. He is portrayed as doubling down on the eating, which by the two verbs used becomes more and not less visceral and bloody. But then I stepped back and considered those verses in the context of the whole of John 6: the initial gratitude and celebration at the feeding of the thousands; his escape from their kingly designs, to be alone and pray; astonishment at his walking on the water; controversy over revered memories of the manna in the desert, now to be replaced by Jesus himself; Peter's own steadfast sticking-with-Jesus — even as John reminds us that Judas will choose otherwise. Like so many parts of John, Chapter 6 draws us too into the heart of our faith—into participation in Christ. To abide there we have to make choices. We are free to choose, as Peter and Judas were, yet our choices are grace: "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father" (6:65).[1]

With that reading in mind, I could not avoid feeling that John 6 shadows and illumines all we've said and done in these past several days: what is the freedom to which we are called, and at what price? Can we hold onto Christ without letting go of all else? Is this message a dark one, or one of hope? Perhaps both.

THE INSIDE-OUTSIDER

But first, and not entirely as an aside, I confess that I had other thoughts and insights that I did not mention last evening, images arising from my long study of Hindu traditions. Almost fifty years ago, on July 6,1973, I first traveled to India, on my

[1] The homily can be found at pages 230-231 of this volume of the *Proceedings*.

way to an unforgettable two years teaching at a boarding school in Kathmandu. In that long past summer I began to learn from Hindu traditions. I began to see that if I was to be a Catholic intellectual and a Catholic theologian, I had to comprehend and take to heart the faith traditions around me up there in the Himalayas.

And so it was that during my preparation of the homily, I was reminded of Hindu texts and practices. For instance, just a few weeks into my stay in Kathmandu I visited the temple of Dakshin Kali, a goddess shrine just south of the Valley. It was a Tuesday, a day for animal sacrifices. I watched the sacrifice of a few goats and many chickens, as devotees brought forward their offerings. The floor of the small sanctum was slick with blood, the priest's hands red, animal parts lying here and there. Somehow it was also rather mundane: like an early morning weekday Mass in ordinary time.

I remember too October 1974, a wonderful month that I spent out in the hills beyond Kathmandu Valley with Cap Miller, S.J. He was a Cambridge-trained anthropologist who by the end of his long life would spend over sixty years in Nepal. At that point, he was writing his dissertation on the "faith healers" (*jhankris*) so important in remote villages. These were people highly sensitive to the spirits, able to diagnose physical and spiritual ailments. Some ailments called for medicine, others for the propitiation of a goddess or a demon. We stumbled one day on a village where an unrelated goddess festival was in process. There we watched two men, naked except for loincloths, become possessed by the temple goddess and fall into a trance state. At the high point of the day's ritual, the two men drank fresh blood squirting from the artery of a dying buffalo. Through them the goddess drinks the blood due to her: though most would keep their distance, the villagers knew very well what drinking blood looked like, and now I did too.[2]

The Gospel's call to intimacy with Jesus also made me turn to the famed *Bhagavad Gita*, one of Hinduism's best known, beloved, and lived-out sacred texts. I am sure you know the overall story behind it, so I will give only the broad lines of it here. A great civil war is looming between two sides of an extended family, five princely brothers, and their one hundred cousins. Arjuna, the greatest of the warriors on either side, grows despondent as soldiers mass on the battlefield. Rather than signaling the start of fighting as is his due, he balks. He is overcome with grief: we may be killed and our kingdom never gained back; but if we win, it will be only by killing our cousins, elders and teachers; either way, society will be ruined by this terrible destruction. And so, Arjuna declares, I will not fight. Krishna, Lord of the universe and wise teacher, providentially happens to be Arjuna's charioteer. Krishna first scolds and mocks Arjuna—fight like a man!—and then begins to shock him out of his depression by sober words: what is finite always passes away and you should not grieve for it; know rather the deep, interior self with is never born, never dies, and you will overcome grief and fear; be utterly detached, entirely free, and then act with utter detachment.

As the teaching progresses, though, it becomes clear that Krishna, the teacher, matters as least as much as the teaching itself. At a climactic point Krishna invites Arjuna to focus totally on Krishna himself:

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[2] See the photos in Casper J. Miller, *Faith Healers in the Himalaya*, 1997 Edition (Delhi: Book Faith India, 1997). Some of the book's breathtaking photos were taken during the trip on which I accompanied Miller.

> Focus your mind on me, share deeply in me, make sacrifice for me, reverence me.
>
> You will come to me alone, thus focusing your self, your destination will be me alone (*Bhagavad Gita* 9.34).[3]

I thought of these words when I mentioned how Peter was faced with the decisive choice to be made:

> From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:66-68).

There is no other goal, no other way. Like Peter, we have to choose, entirely for Jesus as our only way. Krishna, I could not but think, is telling us the same.

Such back and forth movements of my mind, my reading, my heart arise from my double formation. I grew up Catholic in New York City. As a Jesuit, I have been formed in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition of learning and practice. I have benefited from philosophy studies at Fordham and from theology studies at Weston School of Theology. So all that is part of me, more than half, I suppose. But my mind and heart and memory are often elsewhere, infused with the memories, concepts, and practices of various Hindu traditions. This is, I suppose, not surprising. In addition to those first years in Nepal, I have spent several years in Madras (Chennai; 1982-1983, 1992-1993) reading with learned pandits and made many short visits over the decades. I travel there again in just a few weeks. My doctoral program in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago (1979-1984), deepened my learning on the intellectual level. *Because* I wanted to be Catholic theologian, I opted for that doctoral program, so that I could achieve some linguistic and cultural depth in a religious world far beyond the one in which I had grown up. That I have been teaching at a non-Catholic university for half my four decades of teaching has also perforated the boundaries between the Catholic and everything else.

Of course, the Society's presidential address is not the place for going on and on about blood rituals or for spelling out comparisons between the Gospel and the *Gita* (a process that has gone on for several centuries). My point rather is that the odd resonance of John 6 with blood rituals I remember, and with the deep sentiments of love and surrender enunciated in the *Gita*, is almost inevitable. It was not for nothing that I chose last year's theme, "Thinking Catholic Interreligiously." As I will show, experiencing a kind of liminal status also opens into the freedom essential to our movement forward as individuals and a Society. Being an inside-outsider is a good basis for reimagining who I am, who we are. My guess is that you too are an inside-outsider in some way or another. We belong to this Society as insiders, and as perennial visitors with the thought, "What am I doing here?"

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[3] Here and below, my translations of the *Bhagavad Gita* are adapted from *The Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation*, trans. Georg Feuerstein with Brenda Feuerstein (Boston: Shambala Publications, 2011).

All I can offer in these reflections is a way to find strength in the uncertainties of who we are, as we step out into a very uncertain future. Thus my title, "Freedoms and fears: The Musings of a Comparative Theologian on the Future of the CTSA."

THE PLEASURES OF BEING PRESIDENT: HOW MUCH WE LEARN!

Being president can be overwhelming. There is much stuff to do, of course, and about this I will not complain, since it is a great honor to stand where I do today. But committed collegiality takes time, in our intensively volunteer organization, and can be all too much. Had my hair not already been scant and nearly white even by the time I was elected vice president, it would surely have turned gray by now.

A great plus is that presidents learn a lot, because they have to. Though a long-time member (my first convention was in 1987), I have now seen much closer-up the diversification of theology and the intense yet diffuse nature of our annual gatherings. Like every president, and more than many, I have during these past few years been engaged in home schooling, peering into our history, noticing the questions arising over and over in every decade.

From the earliest years, the *Proceedings* have been recommended to us as our archive of wisdom. Rightly so, since they offer a rich summation of where theology has been in the context of any given year. I read most of the presidential addresses, and found them all fascinating, erudite, provocative. I could name them all, but here are just a few that stood out for me:

- 1955, William R. O'Connor, "The Grandeur and Misery of Theology"
- 1967, Paul McKeever, "Development of the CTSA in the Post-Conciliar Church"
- 1968, Walter Burkhardt, "Toward an American Theology"
- 1978, Agnes Cunningham, "Theology for a Future Church: Science, Wisdom, Ministry"
- 1995, Roger Haight, "Fifty Years of Theology"
- 2002, Peter Phan, "Theology on the Other Side of the Borders: Responding to the Signs of the Times"
- 2003, Jon Nielsen, "Confessions of a White Racist Catholic Theologian"
- 2022, Christine Firer Hinze, "Remembering the Rest of Life: Toward a Rest-Inflected Theology of Work and Action"[4]

On and on … . Charles Curran's *The Catholic Theological Society of America: A Story of Seventy-Five Years*[5] is a great example of delving into our history—enriched all the more by Charlie's own long memory. I have also learned from Eugene Burke, C.S.P.'s

[4] Each of these presidential addresses can be found in the respective volumes of the *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* at https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ctsa/issue/archive.

[5] Charles Curran, The Catholic Theological Society of America: A Story of Seventy-Five Years (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2021).

"A Personal Memoir on the Origins of the CTSA," published in two parts, 1980 and 1984.[6]

Looking closely in any given year can also turn out to be a fine way to learn. Consider for example the *Proceedings* of an early year, 1952 (volume 7). I surprised myself by finding these to be a solid set of papers that we would benefit from revisiting: a moment in our history, sometimes dense scholastic thinking that nevertheless in its frame speaks incisively to those who will listen, and as very concerned with the signs of the times. There were two plenaries:

- Emmanuel Doronzo, O.M.I., "The Essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass," 2.5 hours
- Gerald Kelly, S.J., "The Common Good and the Socio-Economic Order," 2.5 hours

And there were three concurrent sessions that reach out in various directions (2 hours):

- Charles Sheedy, C.S.C., "The Problem of Theology for the Laity"
- John Goodwine, "The Physician's Duty to Preserve Life by Extraordinary Means"
- Thomas McCarthy, "The Current Protestant Critique of Catholicism in the US"

Given my interests, I was particularly intrigued by the Presidential Address of Edmond Benard, "What Do the Theologians Do?" He is alluding to a question arising in James Hilton's novel, *Lost Horizon*. Miss Brinklow asks "the serene Chang," "What do the lamas *do*?" Chang answers, "They devote themselves, madam, to contemplation and the pursuit of wisdom." When she protests that then they aren't really doing anything, Chang responds, "Then, Madam, they do nothing." Father Benard does not go deeper into Tibetan Buddhism, of course, only commenting, "The Catholic theologian is by profession devoted to contemplation and to the pursuit of wisdom in a true if less, shall we say, exotic manner than the lamas of Shangri-la."[7] This first appearance of an Asian religion in the *Proceedings*, quick as it was, at least shows that Benard knew something of a much wider world. It was a start.

If only we could go back and have a dialogue with the Society's members in 1952, surely they and we would learn much, once we found ways to communicate in some reasonably accommodating English. We would differ, probably disagreeing on the parameters of our community, and regarding who's in and who's out. Of course. But I wager that we would still have more in common than divides us. We are of course not

[6] Eugene Burke, "Appendix B – A Personal Memoir on the Origins of the CTSA," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of* America 35 (1980): 337-345; and Eugene Burke, "Appendix II – A Personal Memoir: Part Two," *The Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of* America 39 (1984): 235-241.

[7] Bernard's presidential address is contained in Aloysius McDonough, "Minutes of the Meeting," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 7 (1952): 34-57, at 34-37, quotation at 35.

entirely different, though we are rightly pressed by the concerns of *our* times, with an underlying concern, "What is it that theologians do? And who cares"?

The very recent past teaches us too. We can be learning from persons until recently in our midst: Just recollect the all too brief stories we heard on Friday, of our twenty-one deceased sisters and brothers of this year. Their lives and writings remain witnesses, sisters and brothers on the way.

You do not need me to assure you that there is so much to hear and see here and now. Every year's program has a breath-taking range: our three plenaries; our sixteen topic groups; our ten consultations; our eight current interest groups, our weathervanes, indicative of new ventures, directions. There is so much very fine work going on! One could keep writing articles and books about the direction of theology, just based on what we are actually doing in any given year in our teaching, preaching, writing, conversations with one another.

GOING TOO FAST?

But are we going so quickly that we may be missing out on the riches of what is going on around us? We go fast—think of those forty-four concurrent sessions spread out over Friday and Saturday mornings and afternoons, a steady number unaffected by our smaller attendance at the convention last year and this year. We do the necessary work of speaking within our specialties, but do we have time to learn outside our specialties? Some of you urge me to come to your sessions, so well-planned, so well put together; I in turn urge you to come to a comparative theology session. Yet how rarely do we step outside our areas of immediate concern!

Can we slow down, hosting fewer sessions each year? The plenary sessions in 1952 were two and a half hours, our 105 minutes. Perhaps too idealistically, I imagine the assembled fathers—all male priests—sitting together for a more prolonged discussion, plenty of time for everyone to speak. (It was not said in the minutes how many were in attendance, though over two hundred were on the membership list for the Society that year.) There were only three breakout sessions (since a fourth had been canceled). We cannot go back to that model, but can we at least trim our sessions, so as to have more time for one another?

For instance, instead of eleven concurrent sessions on Friday and Saturday morning and afternoon — suppose we were to have eight concurrent sessions on Friday and Saturday morning, a bit shorter than customary, and then each afternoon, *two* sets of seven concurrent sessions? It all still adds up to forty-four, if I've done the math correctly. Slightly less time for any given sustained conversation, I concede, but more opportunities to visit and learn from each other's work. Give it a try?

The number of sessions aside, I ponder also how our considerable expertises—in the plural, for we are not all educated in a single way—get concealed by our shared English: we do not simply share the same language. Our English, spoken in myriad accents from myriad places, is itself always vexed and stretched, complicated by so many ways of speaking rooted in various life experiences and modes of study. I regret not knowing Spanish, to be sure, and neither can I speak German or French. But I do have the Sanskrit and Tamil I use regularly in my research and writing. As I am sure is true for you, I am used to the limits of English to provide the right words for what I am

thinking. How many terms from the South Asian context are casually understood and misunderstood in English! Think of *dharma* (righteousness), *varna* and *jati* (religious class and birth caste), *devata* (deity), *isvara* (lord), *karma* (action, ritual), *punarjanma* (rebirth), *atman* (self), and so on. Knowing about Hinduism—or Judaism or Islam or Buddhism—only through English is an invitation to misunderstanding, and possibly also to hasty judgments. Generalizations about Asian religions are necessary, but too often they are vague, lacking in concreteness. This phenomenon surely applies all the more to the many local languages that flourish all over the world but are rarely voiced and heard in our midst. But we should be thinking in our multiple languages, mother tongues but also languages learned meticulously in grad school—all heard now in some form of a common English. May our English become a bit more halting and uncertain!

Worries in a Critical Time

Now let me for a moment get a bit gloomier. I acknowledge the sadly obvious, that we are living in difficult times. We meet in a time of crisis, the world around us tormented in so many ways. It is sadly easy to start a list: environmental degradation, the extinction of species; the incivility of American society; racism, poverty, gun violence; abortion, death penalty; neglect of the young mothers, of elderly and disabled; the assault on the notion and practice of the common good; the secularization of our country as a kind of liberation, but without the assurance that any consensus on values will remain.

Our rapprochement with American culture is perhaps now more fraught with tension than in the early days of the CTSA when tensions with Protestant America were so strongly felt. We are being forced to ponder the decay of the very frame of our knowledge. That there is the loss of a particular kind of Christian culture is not in itself evil, but if the result is increasing incivility, lack of community, and a great diminishment of comprehension of what God and the spiritual are all about, then we cannot but worry about decline. (I say this from my vantage point at Harvard Divinity School, where in a way the spiritual flourishes, but perhaps with the essential sense of community needed for it to endure.) Perhaps a half century's rather optimistic rapprochement of the Society with American society and its cultural and intellectual infrastructure is over with. Christian hope, but no more optimism?

We have to be thinking of the decline in the very substance of our colleges and universities. The data is open to interpretation—and in any case I am not expert on such matters—but very many studies—and articles and op-ed pieces—announce the decline in the humanities, classics, and literatures, theology and philosophy included. Theology's place even on Catholic campuses is shrinking, even in the core curriculum; the paucity of majors and minors has to worry us all the more; the healthy but influential tension between theology and religious studies may be ending in the disappearance of theology in most institutions. Certainly, in a time of shrinkage, we need to keep discussing how the work of a theology department relates to other departments, other ways of imagining and getting at religiosity. But still, there may be a deeper problem: perhaps we've lost hold of a strong sense of what counts as "revelation," in Christian or in other enduring traditions.

Even sheer demographics tell us a lot, and the decline in the birthrate twenty years ago has predicted problems in schools ever since. The financial implications of a simple lack of college-age young people have been predicted for years. We know sadly that whole institutions are imperiled, as some colleges and universities close while others, on the brink, truncate the humanities in order to survive. Consequently—and you do not need me to tell you this—there are fewer jobs, and the shriveling of tenure security, and with that loss, a loss of the necessary frame within which scholars have the security, incentives, and leisure, to do the writing that nourishes the thinking, praying, serving church. It is hard also to avoid worrying about whether we really need a dozen doctoral programs in Catholic theology in North America.

And still closer to home, as we finish our seventy-seventh annual convention: fewer and fewer of us even now have the funding to attend this conference, as overall costs to be here run to $1000 and more. We do not intend and cannot benefit from a situation in which only a smaller and smaller percentage of our members can afford to come.

Such problems have always existed, but perhaps today the environmental crisis in theology too is nearly irreversible?

JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI'S RADICAL ADVICE

How much do we need to worry, and where might that worry lead us? Or suppose we worried about none of this, in true freedom? For the sake of these reflections I am offering you this morning, I suggest we need to be open to radical as well as modest remedies to what ails us.

Over the past year, as I often contemplated standing here, giving this presidential address, I kept thinking of a probably inappropriate counterpoint, Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986). He was the child prodigy, discovery of the perennialist Theosophical Society in south India, and eventually a world-renowned teacher. At a climactic meeting in 1929, where he was to be revealed as the teacher for the present moment and for the age to come, he shocked his listeners: Yes, I am that teacher, and I do have authority—so I tell you to go home, disbanding this society. Stop yearning for enduring hierarchies authoritative on earth and in heaven. Krishnamurti spoke of radical freedom, since the Theosophical Society itself was not really necessary:

> My purpose is to make you unconditionally free, for I maintain that the only spirituality is the incorruptibility of the self which is eternal, is the harmony between reason and love. This is the absolute, unconditioned Truth which is life itself. I want therefore to set you free, rejoicing as the bird in the clear sky, unburdened, independent, ecstatic in that freedom.

He goes on to proclaim,

> You must be free of all these things, free from your complications, your entanglements. For this you need not have an organization based on spiritual belief. … Organizations cannot make you free. No one from outside can make you free; nor can organized worship, nor

> the immolation of yourselves for a cause, make you free; nor can forming yourselves into an organization, nor throwing yourselves into works, make you free. … So you will see how absurd is the whole structure that you have built, looking for external help, depending on others for your comfort, for your happiness, for your strength. These can only be found within yourselves.[8]

He was seeking to disband "the Order of the Star in the East," the very heart of the Theosophical Society. He was trying to get them to not worry about organizations, since they were already Self, and that was all that they needed. He failed in his effort—the Society did not disband—but he did gain many followers over the six remaining decades of his life.

Krishnamurti offers no map of the future of our Society, no remedy for our problems. As Catholics, we cannot go all the way with him in abolishing institutions. The truth of Christ, in Christ, is not an entirely lonely quest. But I could not resist reading his words to you, mainly to push you and me both to ask us how far we want to go in being free, and whether we are worrying about the wrong things. For we need to be free, we need to be detached, freed and free, if we are to thrive in this new era of our existence. Can we find this inner self, in each of us, and in the Society, so that whatever is unnecessary can be discarded?

THE DAWNING THIRD AGE OF THE CTSA

What does it mean to be free as individual theologians, agile inside-outsiders today, and for us to breathe new life in our Society? I would like to propose, for the sake of argument, that we are entering a new era of the Society's life. Ready or not, we need to be thinking very differently about who we are and what we do. I will give it a try, though I am not a sociologist or even expert on American society, by suggesting that there have been two eras, and now a third is dawning:

- First, the era of the Seminaries, let's say, to 1965;
- Second, the era of the colleges and universities, let's say, up to COVID-19;
- Third, the era just beginning goes beyond the seminary era and the college/university era. It is a time of loss, and a time of unimagined new possibilities.

Era One: The early era when most of our members were seminary professors, presumed an inward-looking Catholic world that on its own terms was quite coherent, though distanced from American culture. This era featured a disposition to see the world from inside a church suspicious of that world and, for the survival of the Society, to rely on the support of bishops.

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[8] Quotation from an address given by Jiddu Krishnamurti, "Truth is a Pathless Land," (Theosophy's Star Camp, Ommen, Holland, August 3, 1929), https://www.jkrishnamurti.org/about-dissolution-speech.

Era Two: The great and golden era of colleges and universities provided us with unparalleled opportunities and security, amid a flourishing system of Catholic colleges and universities. Despite the many problems besetting American society, this era was marked with an optimistic view of American society and hence a push to integrate with that society, even if also taking a prophetic stance on injustices in the church and world.

Era Three: I am suggesting that there is a new era, just dawning. Era Three is marked externally by the deep problems tearing apart the fabric of American society, the stresses on the college-university system, and the waning ability of our members to depend on the systems of higher education to support theology, research, travel, etc. But this emerging era is marked also by new societal, political, and cultural dynamics, including unprecedented religious pluralism, a spiritual but not religious attitude toward established churches, and the freedom, imposed on us by economic change, to think outside the margins of both churches and universities and colleges. We stand in an increasingly fluid relationship with the very institutions at which most of us teach, and many of our younger members will have more fluid, uncertain relationships to those institutions.

We need to reinvent ourselves in an era rich in new possibilities, globally and in our own country and in the theological community, even as our situation seems all the more fragile. If I am on the right track, Era Three will be colored by some pessimism about the future of American higher education; by concomitant worries about the well-being, financial and otherwise, of our members and of the CTSA; by an at least mild depression about the American church itself; and yet too by unprecedented virtual and real-time possibilities for a more open and global CTSA. We are more fragile and yet we are offered a deep and wide new freedom. What might this freedom mean? What does it require of us? How do we get there?

FREEDOM IN PRACTICE

We can hardly understand Era Three, because it is hardly under way. We need a more radical freedom over again what we have been until now. Let me try again, coming closer to home now by quoting Thomas Merton's take on institutions. We all know of Merton and have read some of his writings; some of you are great experts on him and have studied him in depth and taught courses on him regularly. In his short life—only fifty-three when he died unexpectedly in Bangkok in 1968—he was voracious in his wide-ranging interests regarding all subjects religious and non-religious, and deep in his commitment to integrate all that he was learning in and for the sake of a rejuvenated Christian monasticism. He did not go as far as Krishnamurti, but he did have a strong sense that old structures were falling away, and that we should let go of them.

In his last lecture, given on December 10, 1968, the day he died, Merton tells a story of a young lama—not Benard's fictional lama, but a real one—in crisis as the institutions of Tibetan Buddhism started crumbling in a time of invasion:

> A young lama had to escape from Tibet to save his life, like most other abbots. When he was faced with the decision of leaving his country, he did not quite know what to do. He was absent from his monastery on a visitation to some other monastery, and he was

> caught out in the mountains somewhere and was living in a peasant's house, wondering what to do next. He sent a message to a nearby abbot friend of his, saying: "What do we do?" The abbot sent back a strange message, which I think is very significant: "From now on, Brother, everybody stands on his own feet.'' To my mind, that is an extremely important monastic statement. If you forget everything else that has been said, I would suggest you remember this for the future: "From now on, everybody stands on his own feet."[9]

Merton adds, a few paragraphs later:

> Coming now to a sort of conclusion, it is obvious that we have to plan the future. Let us look forward to the worst. Supposing that we are totally destroyed as an institution. Can we continue? … What is essential in the monastic life is not embedded in buildings, is not embedded in clothing, is not necessarily embedded even in a rule. It is concerned with this business of total inner transformation. All other things serve that end…[10]

The circumstances are quite different from those in which Krishnamurti gave his speech, but Merton too, perhaps influenced by the weeks he spent in India and Sri Lanka just before reaching Bangkok, is offering a similar message. The structures cannot save us, nor even support us anymore—so stand on your own two feet! You are an insider: let go of that, and act, think, pray, as if everything is up for grabs. Rely on who you most deeply are.

Most of us are not monastics, but I think a similar freedom is asked of us. There are changes we must make, and can make, because old securities are declining. My thinking as follows here is partly driven by my experience the last couple of years, related to the expenses of a convention, and the pressures this may impose on some of our members, particularly the younger, particularly those without tenure track positions, and those in institutions that can no longer be generous with funding for conferences and travel. Presidents need also to worry about such practicalities.

We must reimagine the nature and purpose and value of our meetings—at a good time, since our five-year review committee is doing its work, drawing on the questionnaires that most of us, I hope, have filled out. Dissolving boundaries, connecting, in small, ordinary, doable ways, changing of manner of proceeding more deeply over time. Here I will stop for a moment to reflect on just three connected themes: interrelatedness, virtuality, and continuity in leadership. Allow me now to comment briefly on each in turn.

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[9] Thomas Merton, "Appendix VII: Marxism and Monastic Perspectives," in *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, ed. Naomi Burton, Brother Patrick Hart, and James Loughlin(New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1973), 326-343, at 338.

[10] Merton, *The Asian Journal*, 339.

INTERRELATEDNESS

We have always been aware, I suppose, of our connectedness with other communities within the church, and outside it too. Perhaps there were times in the past, slower and more intimate, when theologians were bonded by greater familiarity than we can even imagine today. Now, if we had not studied in the same doctoral programs and if we do not teach in them, our paths may cross far less than in the past; we may come to the same convention year after year and not really know one another. And yet, interrelatedness seems the way of the future.

On a mundane level, with open borders, we cannot but at this point work more closely with other theological societies. We are well connected with the College Theology Society (CTS), many of us moving back and forth between our back to back conventions. I recently read through this year's CTS program, which was quite rich, diverse, and very interesting; and I was glad to see that some of you were on the program just a week ago at Sacred Heart University. I hear that Brian Flanagan, gave a very fine presidential address, "Theology, Theologians, and Humility." Though I rarely attend the CTS, I am all the more aware now of what I am always, annually, missing.

So too, some of you have long been founders and participants in the Academy of *Catholic Hispanic* Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS) and the Black Catholic Theology Symposium (BCTS). But how can our members who do not attend those conventions—people like me—learn more deeply and consistently from ACHTUS and BCTS, instead of simply applauding those who do belong to those communities and still come to ours?

Similarly, we might also interact more with the Academy of Catholic Theology (ACT), and the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars. I recently read through ACT's program for their conference from just two weeks ago, where the theme was "Trinity: Fundamental Ground of Reality and Mystery of Salvation." I am sure this too was a rich, diverse, and very interesting conference, in part because it was so different from ours, if one can judge by titles.

In my report at the Business Meeting, I mentioned the "summit" we had in February, among all the societies, was a promising start, with good will expressed among all the societies at the meeting. It was only a start, but intentional, explicit interactions seem essential to all of our futures even if we never merge into a single society. We need to lavish time on all these links, as should our colleagues in these other societies. It seems a very good project for the next generation in each society that we find intentional, considered ways to benefit mutually from our different cultures, all expressive of ways of being Catholic, American, theological.

Nor can we credibly limit our interrelatedness to the societies I have just mentioned. Our links with the International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology **and** World Forum on Theology and Liberation seem ripe for great new conversations, yet still unrealized. Zoom is now making new connections seem more possible and real. We belong to these organization, but how many among us take advantage of them? I, alas, have not previously done so.

We needn't cease to be Catholic, but we need more open borders, allowing other Christian identities to impinge on ours. We need to make more of our ecumenical opportunities, e.g., by the field of reciprocal ecumenism which Paul Lakeland among

others has championed. We need to be more engaged in the dialogues with Jews, with Muslims, and with people of all faith traditions. I am grateful how over the past thity-five years the interreligious reality has become more prominent, and even a regular part of the life of our conference. We are not the American Academy of Religion, but we can only gain from regular conversations with religion scholars.[11] And, we need to be thinking Catholic interreligiously—to echo the theme of our 2022 convention—in a way that makes the interreligious a more regular part of who we are. Perhaps we can find ways to give the theologians of other faith traditions a more visible presence at our conventions, ideally with our presence more visible at theirs.

VIRTUALITY

In reality, I suspect, the noble idea of opening in all directions is unlikely to succeed unless we recalibrate how we do things. Conversation needs to be deepened and sustained in ways that cannot possibly be contained with the bounds of an annual meeting that remains by far the focus of most of our collective energies. This year and every year, the convention turns out marvelously, due to the hard work of so many of us. But do we really want to keep putting so much of our CTSA energies into planning an annual meeting to which at most a third of our members come? We would lose so much if the young and the retired could no longer be with us.

The pandemic, a terrible thing, canceled our 2020 convention, a very sad outcome. It forced us to meet online in 2021, a hard thing to pull off. But in the end this was a good emergency test of the new vistas opening before us. We were forced to step into what is nothing less than an entry into the hybrid, virtual age. We are invited to complement the "bricks and mortar" annual convention with online possibilities of a far greater reach. We do accept analogous trade-offs, after all. Amazon and Barnes and Noble ought not bankrupt local bookstores, but neither should bookstores blind us to how much online booksellers make available—more books for more readers than ever before in history. Libraries have radically changed, and the stacks seem emptier, but never have students had as much to read easily available to them. The pandemic forced even churchgoers to experiment with online connectivity for worship; we regret the further decline in church attendance, and we do not think that the sacramental and communal life of the church can be lived on computer screens. But it would mean-spirited only to lament how people have been finding other ways to pray individually and together.

Each year the future is happening around us, is it not? We are having virtual sessions during the year; at the convention itself, suddenly QR codes are everywhere; the *Proceedings* are now rarely printed, but are easily available online to anyone who wishes to access them; I finish my year as president with hardly a page of writing on paper to be saved, but hundreds of pdfs and thousands of emails; we are filming the plenary sessions and, I expect, getting used to putting them online. We will be inventing for ourselves an ever more robust virtual presence as essential to our

[11] See also my essay, "What We Do and Who We Are: A Few Reflections on Jose I. Cabezón's 2020 AAR Presidential Address," forthcoming in *Buddhist Minds and Bodies: Essays in Honor of José Ignacio Cabezón* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications).

theological conversations, particularly insofar as we think outside the box and enter into more robust relationships with other theological societies, Catholic and other.

Conventions are events of community, and with great value, but obviously they are not as absolutely necessary as they were in the past; or, to put it more gently, they are necessary, but differently. So we can reinvent them, even as we vigorously explore alternatives. Online networks are not the best of all things, but neither are they merely a blip. Meeting in person is expensive and fuel inefficient. It makes no sense to be worried about wasting paper—no handouts! save the trees!—while flying across the country in large commercial jets, and taking Lyft and Uber here and there. And, of course, when we meet in person, we stand in danger of leaving out more and more of our less financially secure members who simply cannot afford the price.

LEADERSHIP

Interrelatedness! Virtuality! But can we be agile enough to reimagine any given CTSA year as more robustly virtual even as we still get together some years or most years? We need to work consistently toward focusing how we are to be, what we are to do, all with a coherent voice maturing over the years. *Who* will make all this happen? Based on my four years thus in the leadership line, I have been wondering whether we are structured properly to do all we need to do—open our borders, be more virtual, ensure our future by raising money, etc.—in terms of our current model. I am skeptical. That we are a volunteer organization is a strength, and we have done well in proceeding by shared leadership that changes a bit each year. In our small ways, we show what a collegial, collaborative Catholic community can look like when it is not constrained by a sclerotic hierarchy. But the deeply collaborative nature of the CTSA is also overtaxed. Too much depends on the good will of individuals. We work together and do our best to ensure continuity, but we are always, I find, under strain. By the time we finish our terms on the Board or in the presidential line, we are tired out, and, I find, a bit regretful about what we did not do. We learn the job, then give it up. I have figured out many things this past year; in just a few minutes from now, I will be letting go of my role here—to my own relief and delight, but also with a sense that it was all too quick.

My concern is not a new concern. Consider the lament of Luke Salm. FSC, in his presidential address, 1975:

> Other organizations, including the USCC and some of our Catholic universities, are sponsoring conferences and workshops designed to bring our Catholic tradition and faith experience to bear on the pressing problems of American social and political life. So far the corporate contribution of the CTSA to these projects has been minimal and ineffective with the initiative left for the most part to our individual members. Part of the problem for our Society is practical and structural. *We are limited in our resources, personal more than financial, with a transient presidency, volunteer help, and executive officers who have to steal the time from their many other*

> *professional and ministerial obligations just to maintain the routine functioning of the Society.*[12]

I think he was right in 1975, and still right in 2023. We are never quite getting done all we can do, because we do not manage ourselves properly. Concretely, it would be splendid if we have a robust development plan, but we all know that successful work in that regard takes years, with sustained conversations taking place with donors and funding agencies. We have the good will and generosity to work hard at this, but I am not confident we have the structures needed.

Consider how other organizations organize themselves: the CTS has a 2-year terms for president; ACT has a president with just a one-year term, and also a governing board, the members of which have 3-year terms, the chair of the board having a 4-year term. Both structures may work a bit better than ours, in terms of continuity in leadership at service to the members. We certainly can change our leadership model, but need to be careful and patient in doing so. Perhaps the Board and the Centennial Committee, both benefiting from the forthcoming five-year review, can make talking about this a priority?

PASSIONATE DETACHMENT

However we organize ourselves, how do we move forward? What kind of spiritual discipline do we need, to be very detached yet very engaged at the same time? Free enough to let go of all that we are identified by, yet practically engaged in the world around us? I must return once more the *Gita*. In Chapter 3 Krishna teaches that utter detachment, a lack of concern about winning and losing, does not lead to lethargy or inaction. Rather, it is the way to ideal, efficacious action in the world:

> For a person who has enjoyment only in the Self, who is satisfied with the Self and content in the Self, there is nothing to be done.
>
> Indeed, for that person no action done or not done here has a purpose. Such a person has no dependence on gain with respect to any thing.
>
> Be unattached, then continually do the work that must be done. The unattached person performing action attains the highest.
>
> By action alone king Janaka and others attained perfection. Consider only the world's welfare, and act accordingly.
>
> Whatever the best do, other people will do as well. Whatever standard they set, that the world follows (*Gita* 3.17-21).

Setting a good example, engaged in the world, yet not wearied by it; striving for something new, without judging what we have done and will do by ordinary measures

[12] Luke Salm, "Past Perspectives and Future Prospects for the CTSA," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 13 (1975), 239-250, at 250.

of success. But learning from the *Gita* is not so terribly different from learning from the Gospels. Reading is not enough—we need to dig deeper into the sources of true self, true detachment, for the sake of true freedom of spirit and action. So, as I draw to the end of this reflection, I suggest that we need to ponder further the state of a mind and soul needed today.

THE FREEDOM OF PILGRIM SOULS

Allow me then to return to last evening's readings at Mass, for wisdom that goes back to the beginning of our story, as Christians indebted to the Jewish tradition. Deuteronomy 8, our first reading, set for us an existential scene, an eternal dependence on God that testifies to a pilgrim people's need for their *daily* bread given *each day* by God:

> Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (8:2-3).

This is a beautiful passage, pointedly useful. It reminds us of the need to depend on the Lord all the time, for our sustenance, day after day, trusting in God as a way of life spiritually and in practice.

Or again, think again of Peter's choice, which I glossed earlier as a best and bravest response to the intimate, radical invitation to Jesus, to participate intimately in him: "Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). No one else, he seems also to be saying, shows us the way, has those words of life. He was ready to let go of what he had thus far, and venture into the unknown future, on the path of his friend and teacher, Jesus.

In her Call for Papers announcing Freedom as this year's theme, Kristen Heyer alludes to the words of Delores Williams:

> How do insights from the Hebrew Bible shed light on the gift and task of freedom: whether in terms of liberation for covenantal relationship or release of those captive or in the shadow of exile/exilic mindset even after exile ends? How might freedom from enslavement to sin and death in the Pauline tradition do so, as well? How do other biblical narratives sustain those who must "make a way out of no way" (Delores Williams), given barriers to their freedom?[13]

[13] See the Call for Papers in this volume, XX-XX.

"Make a way out of no way."[14] I thought again of Krishnamurti's claim, radical in another way, as he put it in 1927: "Truth is a pathless land. You cannot approach it by any path whatsoever."[15] Or Merton's image of a lama fleeing into the mountains, not sure where he is going.

It would be foolish for people like me to imagine ourselves to be bereft, homeless, without a way forward. However I am spiritually, I do not suffer like so many others after suffered. But still, the challenge is there: to be a person with no way, that God may clear the path; to be a Society willing to be unsure of its way forward, for God to show us how to be Catholic theologians now and in the years before our 100th anniversary in 2045.

In her landmark book, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, Williams writes of the narrative of her life and that of other black people, young and old, especially women:

> Many times, as a little girl, I sat in the church pew with my mother or grandmother and heard the black believers, mostly women, testify about "how far they had come by faith." They expressed their belief that God was involved in their history, that God helped them make a way out of no way. As they shared their trials, tribulations and blessings, they asked the other communicants to pray for them. Their testimonies suggested they believed their lives were about more than white people's oppression of black people.[16]

This is wisdom specific to the experience of Black Americans of whom Williams speaks—but then, on that basis, it becomes a gift for all of us. When there is no way, then God can make a way; in humility, we need to allow ourselves to be drawn out into the desert. Then God can care for us.

I was inescapably reminded of a song in south India's Tamil language that pairs utter helplessness and vulnerability with a choice for God alone. Here is a Tamil verse, where the poet saint worships the iconic presence of the Lord at one temple:

> I've done no ascetic deeds, I have no subtle knowledge but still
> I cannot bear to leave you even for a moment.
> My lord reclining on your snake bed, my father,
> Enthroned in the Srivaramangalanagar temple

[14] This is a term with a long oral history. See Wolfgang Mieder, *"Making a Way Out of No Way": Martin Luther King's Sermons' Proverbial Rhetoric* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010). Mieder traces the use of the term in writing, back to 1922, Coe Hayne's *Race Grit: Adventures on the Border-Land of Liberty* (Boston: The Judson Press, 1922).

[15] From Jiddu Krishnamurti, "The Pool of Wisdom: Who Brings the Truth" (address given in Eerde, Ommen, Holland, August 2, 1927), https://jiddu-krishnamurti.net/en/1927-the-pool-of-wisdom/jiddu-krishnamurti-the-pool-of-wisdom-12.

[16] Delores S. Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 10.

> Where lotuses bloom in the mud amid ripening paddy,
> Apart from you, I am nothing, even where you are.[17]

The Tamil saint reverently known as Nammalvar, "our saint," devotes this verse—and so many others in his 1102 verse long *Holy Word of Mouth* (*Tiruvaymoli*)—to expressing his experience of being bereft, helpless when it comes to finding God. He realizes that he has nothing, neither works nor knowledge. He has no way, and so for him, God alone must be the goal and the way. And then—and this is very important—his real mission is under way: he is able to sing, and by his songs inspire his community for a thousand years until now.

This verse—any many others too—rises up in my mind when I think about our next twenty-five years. To make our way, we must not hesitate to be regular borrowers from traditions other than our own. We can take ideas often applied simply to individual persons, and extend them to communities—as Deuteronomy does in showing us Israel in the desert, and as Delores Williams does in her evocation of God's power to make a way of no way for Black women. We need to do this as we look into an uncertain future where freedom is thrust upon us, so that we can be free with respect of all the CTSA is and has been.

FREEDOM FOR A HOPEFULLY UNCERTAIN FUTURE

In our fragile times, we are both weakened and being offered incredible new opportunities, and so, we need both utter detachment and bravery—to be free of all our baggage as individuals and as a Society, and to be free for the overwhelming resources lying before us. I hope I have made some sense to you, inside-outsider that I am, Hindu wisdom shadowing my Christian faith.

What kind of Society shall we be in 2045? We do not, cannot know, of course. But if the past seventy-seven years have been any indication, we will continue to ponder the mission and duties of the Society in accord with the signs of the times. We will continue, slowly, to make our way forward, sharpening our spiritual skills as outside-insiders (inside-outsiders) in order to imagine the Society in continuity with its past yet facing a truly new future. All of this is an entirely practical matter; and yet it is a very spiritual matter.

"THE AWFUL DARING OF A MOMENT'S SURRENDER"

I end on another note. For whatever reason—sanity in a too-busy year? enjoying poetry for no particular reason (the best reason, surely)?—I have been reading T.S. Eliot since winter, benefiting from that massive volume, *The Poems of T.S. Eliot*.[18] I love some of his poems, particularly the *Four Quartets*. Who among us does not? But during this just past, too busy month of May, I struggled to understand "The Waste

[17] *Holy Word of Mouth* V.7.1. As found in volume five of *Pagavat Visayam*, the standard edition of the *Holy Word of Mouth* with five classical commentaries. Edited by S. Krishnaswami Ayyangar. Trichy: Sri Nivasam Accukkutam, 1975–87. My translation from the Tamil..

[18] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 1, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (New York: Farrar, Straus and Geroux, 2015). "The Waste Land" appears on pages 55-71.

Land," published just over 100 years ago, in 1922. Eliot—quintessentially of the West—nonetheless learned poetically from the East, beginning with his brief study of Sanskrit at Harvard. "The Waste Land," his scarred and broken text, was composed in the shadow of the aftermath of World War I, the West's massive self-destruction and all the woes arising from it. It seems to me—no literary critic, to be sure—that the poem is set on remembering, breaking, fixing and pasting back together the lost poetic traditions of the West. If only we could do the same for theology, with the same aesthetic instincts and delicacy of language!

In the fifth and final part of the poem, "What the Thunder Said," Eliot has already obscurely evoked the scene where Jesus walks with two disciples on the road to Emmaus (lines 359-365), and the crowing of the cock thrice (lines 391-393), as if to remind us of Peter denying Jesus. Eliot then turns to *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*, an Indian text nearly 3000 years old. More than two thirds of the way through the Upanisad, at 5.2.3, the thunder rumbles Da, Da, Da — indicating, somewhat mystically, *dāmyata. datta. dayadhvam*:

> Thunder, that divine voice, repeats the very same syllable: "Da! Da! Da!"— Demonstrate restraint! (*dāmyata*) Demonstrate bounty! (*datta*) Demonstrate compassion! (*dayadhvam*) One should observe the same triad —restraint, bounty, and compassion (*Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* 5.2.3).

Eliot draws on this text in evoking a parched land awaiting the monsoon:

> Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
> Waited for rain, while the black clouds
> Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
> The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
> Then spoke the thunder
> DA
> *Datta*: what have we given?

The next words speak of a giving that can happen only when your hands are finally empty, all else having been said and written in vain:

> My friend, blood shaking my heart
> The awful daring of a moment's surrender
> Which an age of prudence can never retract
> By this, and this only, we have existed
> Which is not to be found in our obituaries
> Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
> Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
> In our empty rooms…

As the poem ends, a few verses later, Eliot mingles English, Italian, Latin, Sanskrit:

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon — O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquintaine à la tour abolie[19]
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.[20]
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
Shantih shantih shantih

Peace, Peace, Peace. In his notes to the poem, Eliot mentions here solemn words of peace and blessing, "the peace that surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4.7). And so, for us: Be controlled. Be generous. Be compassionate. Give it all away, rather than playing it safe. And be at peace, even in this uncertain moment when the difficulties of a new era make freedom a very risky but all the more necessary venture.

[19] These are three passages that speak to loss and silence, and the desire to find words again. *Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*: "Then he vanished in the fire that refines them" (Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVI.148). *Quando fiam uti chelidon — O swallow swallow*: "She sings, we are mute: when is my spring coming: when shall I be as the swallow, that I may cease to be voiceless?" (*Pervirgilium Veneris* XXII, authorship uncertain). *Le Prince d'Aquintaine à la tour abolie*: "I am the shadow, the widower, the unconsoled, the Aquitainian prince with the ruined tower, my only star is dead, and my star-strewn lute bears the black sun of Melancholy" (Gérard de Nerval, *El Desdichado*). I use the translations offered in the notes in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, 704-706.

[20] A reference to Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, a precursor to Hamlet. The allusion indicates a kind of madness and self-silencing that nonetheless speaks eloquently. See *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, 707.

ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN A POST-*ROE* AMERICA – INVITED SESSION

Topic: Ethical Challenges after the Supreme Court Overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022
Convener: M. Cathleen Kaveny, Boston College
Moderator: Christina Astorga, University of Portland
Presenters: Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, Mount Mary University
(presented by C. Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union)
Jana Bennett, University of Dayton
M. Cathleen Kaveny, Boston College

In 2022, the United States Supreme Court handed down *Dobbs v. Jackson Health Services*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and eliminated the constitutional right to abortion. This session considered the new challenges regarding abortion from a variety of perspectives. It was comprised of three presentations, followed by a vigorous discussion, ably and actively moderated by Christina Astorga.

The first presentation was a paper by Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, who sadly passed away in 2022. Daniels-Sykes's paper was originally published in the Political Theology Network Blog in July 2022 ("Catholic Re-Visions—Disturbing the Foundations: Feminist Ethicists Respond to the Dobbs Decision," Political Theology Network, July 22, 2022, https://politicaltheology.com/disturbing-the-foundations-feminist-ethicists-respond-to-the-dobbs-decision/). It was powerfully delivered by C. Vanessa White, who contributed her own distinctive voice by leading the session in prayer and song at the beginning of the session. Daniels-Sykes's paper, "Pro-Birth v. Pro-life: a Womanist Expands the Perspectives," highlighted the great disparity in maternal mortality between white women and Black women. She writes "As a former Labor and Delivery and Public Health Nurse, I contend that an unconditionally pro-life position, instead of a strictly pro-birth position, not only embraces the needs of early unborn human life in the uterus but also considers that a healthy pregnancy begins even before conception and continues with access to good prenatal care, along with early recognition and management of medical concerns to prevent high levels of Black maternal mortality."

Jana Bennett's panel contribution, "Challenges Facing the Pro-Life Movement," addressed three challenges. The first was to acknowledge the range and breadth of issues that impact the question of abortion—and not only for pro-life movements. She discussed the broad category of disability as a way of showcasing that breadth of issues related to abortion, that pro-life movements need to address. A second challenge, Bennett suggested, is that there are multiple pro-life movements with different rationales and theological foci. Some of the array of pro-life movements include pro-birth, anti-abortion, pro-woman, non-violentist, and seamless garment. Third, when thinking about the first two challenges, a third challenge is to consider the range of needs and concerns relative to both the array of pro-life advocate groups as well as the array of laws and situations that now exist in the fifty states. Moreover, across the United States, there will be a need to advocate for paid maternity leave and universal day care, preschool, and kindergarten, among other such policies.

In her paper, "Challenges Facing the Law," Cathleen Kaveny focused on the specific moral and legal questions posed by the increasing prevalence of medication abortion, which number over half of the abortions performed in the United States. She focused on two questions: first, whether the act of medication is better described as refusal to provide bodily life support than intentional killing; and second, how the logistical difficulties involved in regulating medication abortion raised questions about the relationship between the states and the federal government for purposes of defining the common good.

The ensuing discussion was lively and thoughtful. It was notable for both its tone and content. Avoiding "culture war" tropes and accusations, the attendees attempted to grapple with the range of complexities generated by the post-*Roe* era, appreciated and evaluated with appropriate ethical methodologies. A key focus of the participants was how to move beyond the narrow terms of the current public discussion of abortion, by bringing all the tools of Catholic Social Teaching, including concern for women and people of color, to examine the issue. At the same time, as one participant noted, we need to find a way to bring the level and quality of the session's discussion beyond the halls of the academy.

M. CATHLEEN KAVENY
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

FREEDOM ACROSS THEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: ENGAGING THE PAST AS INVITATION AND LIMITATION – INVITED SESSION

Topic: Freedom Across Theological Diversity: Engaging the Past as Invitation and Limitation
Convener: Linh Hoang, O.F.M., Siena College
Moderator: Conor Kelly, Marquette University
Panelists: Shawn Colberg, St. John's University (Collegeville, Minnesota)
Lisa Fullam, Jesuit School of Theology
Linh Hoang, O.F.M., Siena College

This invited session experimented with a different approach than having paper presentations. The moderator and panelists decided to have a guided conversation on the convention topic. The four participants prepared months in advance through many zoom calls. Since they did not know each other, this provided a means to connect but also to become better acquainted. After several discussion on the topic of freedom in theology, they agreed on five broad questions for conversation and engagement with others in attendance at the convention session.

The first part of the session was a brief introduction by Conor Kelly to explain the invited session. The panelists, then, briefly introduced themselves and provided a brief background: Shawn Colberg is a historical theologian. Lisa Fullam is a moral theologian who currently works full-time as a veterinarian and Linh Hoang is a historical theologian and Franciscan priest. Kelly, the moderator, is a moral theologian.

After the formal introduction, the following five questions were addresses by one or more of the panelists:

> Question 1: The Second Vatican Council summarized the pastoral work of the church in the modern world as "a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit," and famously insisted that "to carry out such a task, the church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 3, 4). This description of the church's mission gives theologians ample freedom to engage contemporary questions.
>
> Question 2: What are the "productive constraints" in the way you approach theology? How do you define the "out of bounds" markers that help orient theological freedom so that the most productive work can occur?
>
> Question 3: When we initially met to discuss this panel, we discovered (perhaps unsurprisingly) that a common thread across our various approaches to theology was a commitment to taking the past seriously even when we think about issues for the present. And yet, we each conceive of "the past" differently, and understand its influence in different ways. I want to explore this commonality further, hopefully to draw out some of the distinctions.

Question 4: In various ways, you all have noted a dynamic relationship in which we have a responsibility to the past alongside a duty to present. Yet it strikes me that there is not such a neat and easy dividing line between these two categories, so I would like to hear your thoughts on how the past and present interact as resources for our theology.

Question 5: Turning more immediately to the present, I would like us to think about unproductive constraints that limit our freedom in unhelpful ways, potentially even to the point of frustrating our flourishing.

- Recalling the constructive task(s) you each identified as the core of your understanding of your work as a theologian at the start of our discussion, what are the negative constraints that you have run into (or that you know others have run into) and that limit a theologian's ability to carry out their work?
- Where do you see the most significant of these unproductive constraints? Are they scholarly? Ecclesial? Social? Or, best captured in another category?
- How might a theologian's social location affect the constraints they face? Are there, for instance, certain constraints that exert more power for pre-tenure colleagues or those in contingent faculty positions?

After these questions were discussed by the panel, those in attendance were asked if they had any comments or questions to add to the conversation. There was a lively engagement between the panelists and attendees. An area that drew a lot of attention was the impact of theology in the future and how theologians can draw not only the laity but also those in the hierarchy into a conversation about the importance of theological reflection in the world today.

LINH HOANG, O.F.M.
Siena College
Loudonville, New York

FREEDOM FOR ALL OF US – INVITED SESSION

Topic: Freedom for *All* of Us
Convener: Bryan Massingale, Fordham University
Moderator: Miguel Diaz, Loyola University Chicago
Presenters: Elsie Miranda, The Association of Theological Schools
Bryan Massingale, Fordham University
Respondent: Adam Beyt, St. Norbert College

The session began with Bryan Massingale briefly explaining the project that inspired this session: "A New Agenda for Catholic Theology and Ministry: Perspectives from Queer Theologians of Color." The project's central question asks, *"What would Catholic theology and pastoral practice look like if they were done from the perspectives of non-European LGBTQI+ theologians and activists of color?"* The project was an unprecedented collaboration among openly queer-identified Catholic theologians and pastoral activists of color to explore what new forms of theological scholarship could emerge from serious intersectional reflection. Massingale also noted that this session occurs during what some have described as a "state of emergency" for the LGBTQ community in the United States. Thus forging a new, broader, and more inclusive theological and ministerial agenda is essential for defending human dignity and preserving human lives.

In her paper, "Free to Be Queer and Catholic: Gender Identity and the Liberating Love of God at the Intersection of Church and Culture," Elsie Miranda used ethnographic research among Queer, Catholic, Hispanic Latiné persons to examine the distinctive contours of Catholic Cuban culture and to challenge well-intended impositions of gender complementarity that rely on unscientific interpretations of gender identity to oppress, and diminish the dignity, beauty, depth, and complexity of, LGBTQ persons. In particular, she illustrated how her experience as a Catholic Cuban lesbian reveals how much Aquinas' essentialist anthropology has influenced the thinking and beliefs of Cuban, American and Catholic patriarchal cultures. In the process of contextual storytelling, this paper raised up instances where the power of God's love emerges to liberate and celebrate the fullness of what it means to be a human being. Giving such narratives voice and visibility provides a prelude for a socio-religious critique of Hispanic Latinx cultures that embrace heteronormativity and support oppressive judgments of their queer children.

Bryan Massingale's paper, "'I'll Fly Away': Toward a Black Queer Male Spirituality of Desire, Transformation, and Resistance," examined the distinctive characteristics of a spirituality of and for Black gay men. Beginning with GerShun Avilez's phenomenology of the Black queer person as "an injury-bound subject who desires," Massingale asked what spiritual resources are needed to sustain Black queer men who must navigate social and ecclesial contexts marked by the dual compounding threatening realities of heterosexism and anti-Blackness. Noting the paucity of research on the spiritual lives of Black gay men, he highlighted how art, music, literature, dance, and other forms of cultural expression become sites that communicate the interior spiritual nature of desire that pushes against and challenges external constraint and injury. Artistic production and practices attest to a Black queer spirit that maintains a

commitment to freedom even in a social context of injury. Moreover, research suggests how "pleasure and the erotic are integral to the decolonization of Black bodies and minds." Massingale concluded by stating that future explorations of the spirituality of Black sexual minority men must further articulate the role of erotic pleasure and creative energy in their spiritual understandings and practices (and those of us all) and how the "dark night" of classical Carmelite spirituality might be a fruitful avenue for articulating a Black Catholic queer spirituality. He avows the claim that Black sexual minority men enflesh the Holy Mystery completely reorients our understanding not only of these men but our understanding of the Divine itself.

Adam Beyt's response expressed appreciation for the groundbreaking intersectional nature of this project. He noted how gender and sexuality are always mutually constituted while also entangled in other categories ascribed to humanity, specifically race. Racializing categories are sustained by ongoing processes of colonization which persist in a multitudinous array of hideous social formations. Yet the compounding impacts of multiple social influences upon personal identities and cultural formations are not always recognized. Nor is the complicity of church teaching and policies in intersectional social evils often forthrightly addressed. Beyt noted how this project interrogates concerns that are usually addressed by the discipline of theological anthropology, while also calling for the creation of a different kind of church, one that is a countersign of the Reign of Sin—a faith community that promotes a sacred freedom for all and honors the human dignity of all regardless of ascribed social categories.

A lively discussion among the thirty-five attendees followed for about a half hour. Among the central concerns that surfaced were the meaning of and need for the "erotic" in Christian spirituality and theology, and the meaning of "queer"—specifically, how destabilizing of identity can Christian theology and ethics be given its commitment to a normative revelation.

BRYAN N. MASSINGALE
Fordham University
Bronx, New York

AN EXPLORATION OF UNFREEDOM IN THE MORAL LIFE – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: An Exploration of Unfreedom in the Moral Life
Convener: R. Zachary Karanovich, Boston College
Moderator: Daniel P. Scheid, Duquesne University
Presenters: Xavier M. Montecel, St. Mary's University
R. Zachary Karanovich, Boston College
Kate Jackson-Meyer, Harvard University

Xavier M. Montecel began the session with his paper, "Liturgical Vice: Unfreedom and Injustice in Christian Worship." In it, he challenged a facile assumption that liturgy is necessarily an arena for positive moral formation and argued, instead, that there are circumstances in which liturgy negatively impacts human freedom and flourishing. He offered three examples when liturgy "practiced well" was harmful: the past practice of American Catholic churches requiring Black Catholics to sit apart from white Catholics and receive the Eucharist separately; the sexual abuse of minors taking place in proximity to the material markers of clerical authority and liturgical solemnity; and the ongoing teachings of the church denying blessings to same-sex unions because those relationships are without grace. Montecel pointed to the work of theologian Katie Grimes to better evaluate these complex realities at the intersection of liturgy and ethics. Discussing white supremacy, Grimes argues that the habitat in which Christians' practice forms or deforms Christian habits. In light of Grime's evaluation that sacraments can cultivate vice, Montecel offered the concept of "liturgical vice," defined as those qualities of individuals and communities of faith, formed through liturgical practice, that undermine human freedom to embody in thought and action the promise of God's eschatological future, which is the flourishing of all things in God and the universal enjoyment of love and justice. Therefore, he argued, it is the Christian's obligation to unmask liturgical vice, despite its odor of sanctity.

R. Zachary Karanovich then offered his paper, "Agency on the Other Side of Oppression: Evaluating Moral Constraints on the Freedom for Solidarity." In it, he used working-class, white communities—the context of his upbringing—to illustrate how virtue and vice uniquely coexist and reveal a complexity in their moral evaluation. Drawing on sociologist Arlie Russel Hochschild's notion of "deep narratives," he argued that identities and worldviews are constructed through narratives often driven by feelings, not facts—the American dream being the prime example. Used as a carrot by political elites to entice working-class whites to vote and act in particular ways, the American dream is used by working-class whites as a cudgel against persons of color, immigrants, etc. The myth's influence results in an invincible ignorance. Building upon the work of theological ethicist Kate Ward, Karanovich asserted that those subjected to such a strong belief in the American dream should be evaluated through moral luck, which asserts that life circumstances shape human moral life. While moral luck applies to a person who is simultaneously advantaged and disadvantaged in different dimensions of life, Karanovich argued that working-class whites are simultaneously advantaged and disadvantaged in the same dimension—advantaged with a greater degree of social mobility and a "hyperagency," but disadvantaged by the myth's

affirmation of racial and racist stereotypes and caricatures. Instead of cultivating solidarity, the constraints on these communities under the American dream's influence result in vice's flourishing.

Kate Jackson-Meyer concluded the presentations with her paper, "Tragic Dilemmas and the Precarity of Moral Goodness in Light of Constrained Moral Agency due to Bad Moral Luck." In it, she foregrounded the concept of tragic dilemmas and argued that bad systemic and non-systemic incident luck are the sources for the moral constraints that define tragic dilemmas. Jackson-Meyer argued that tragic dilemmas are a type of bad incident luck that, although they do not necessarily undermine character, do render moral goodness precarious for moral agents and society. Against the backdrop of Aristotle, Kant, and Aquinas, Jackson-Meyer argued that circumstances alone cannot undermine moral goodness, but that there is an inherent messiness to ethics. Using the framework of ethicist Lisa Tessman, Jackson-Meyer argued that all tragic dilemmas are a result of bad incident moral luck—both bad systemic incident luck (e.g., when a Marine has to choose between killing an armed enemy or saving the life of the baby the enemy is using as a human shield in war) and bad non-systemic incident luck (e.g., when a natural disaster requires that we save only one loved one). Further, she argued that these circumstances of luck can eventually undermine moral goodness. Jackson-Meyer concluded by noting that moral luck offers a path toward better understanding moral dilemmas: God does not cause tragic dilemmas, social sin does. This should increase an awareness of personal and social guilt for participation or complicity in vicious systems and ultimately facilitate structural change.

Following the presentations, Daniel P. Scheid moderated a lively discussion during which implications were explored for each presenter's work and lines of commonality were drawn between the three.

R. ZACHARY KARANOVICH
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

DOING THEOLOGY FROM THE PERIPHERIES – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: Doing Theology from the Peripheries: Roundtable Discussion and Analysis from the North American Working Group for the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development Project
Convener: Bradford Hinze, Fordham University
Moderator: Meghan J. Clark, St. John's University
Panelists: Stan Chu Ilo, DePaul University
Jennifer Owens-Jofré, Saint Louis University
Darren Dias, University of St. Michael's

Stan Chu Ilo introduced *Doing Theology from the Existential Peripheries* as a research project undertaken by the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development of the Holy See. Drawing its inspiration from the teachings of Pope Francis with the aim of renewing theology, this project enlisted theologians and pastoral agents from around the world to initiate listening sessions with marginalized people. Their objective was to listen to and record the *sensus fidei fidelium* of those often excluded from conversations in the church and society to elicit the conversion of people at all levels of the church and society.

Three ideas inspired this project. First, at the inception of his papacy Francis urged people to listen to and learn from those at the "existential peripheries" of the church and society. Second, people were encouraged to reach out to denigrated people, such as migrants and refugees and others shamed and shunned in popular, public, and political discourse. Third, this project calls for collective deliberation with these marginalized persons and communities to search for ways to address these issues.

This project provides a staging ground to develop a different way of doing theology in colleges and universities, ministerial programs, and in the life of dioceses, parishes, and base communities. It calls upon theologians to cultivate a method of "spiritual ethnography" that encounters others within their own cultures, histories, and religious contexts as the bases of pastoral accompaniment. Such a process provides an innovative way of enacting a synodal process that incorporates voices that are often muted in the church and at centers of power.

Jennifer Owens-Jofré introduced this method by reflecting on her encounter with a second-generation Cuban American man living in Orange County who struggled against racism and the violence of neo-Nazis and as one who left the Catholic Church. She commented on the larger project by describing how each theologian interviewed two or three groups and three to five individuals. These pastoral ethnographers selected topics from a variety of the teachings of Francis that might elicit the lived experiences of those interviewed: Revelation and Joy, Dialogue and Encounter, Leaving Clericalism Behind, Hope and Trust, Christians in the Public Sphere, Women's Perspectives, Wisdom from the Margins, Ecological Conscience, Welcoming the Stranger, and Vulnerability and Tenderness. Those interviewed were asked to speak briefly about their joys and grievances within the church or society. They commented on their experience of God's presence or absence and how they name God, struggle with God, and how they experience God in communities of faith.

In many cases those interviewed felt alienated from the church and in society. They experienced hostility because of the color of their skin, their primary language, their context of origin, their gender, their sexual orientation, who they loved, and their own journey of discovering and claiming the gift of who they are.

Based on her experience, Owens-Jofré reached the conclusion that by promoting right and just relationships with those on the margins she discovered a way to promote the delicate dance between applying her expertise in practical theology, especially from Hispanic/Latine perspectives, with cultural and epistemological humility, while remaining rooted in practices of individual and collective discernment promoted by synodal process models.

The third presenter, Darren Dias, raised observations about the challenges posed by reaching out to those at the periphery about polarization and the exercise of power. Marginal groups were interviewed, but inevitably some were overlooked. How can theologians engage these people so that their voices can shape how theology is done? Classical approaches to the interpretation of scripture and doctrinal and theological traditions in theological disciplines must be interrogated based on these kinds of experiences with the marginalized. How can we consider God's mercy and compassion for those at the borders and the role played by the ordained and other pastoral agents, including educators? How can our approach to encountering life and the world be reconsidered and refashioned by our engagement with those at the margins? How can the marginalized set the agenda for theology?

It must be recognized that those conducting the interviews had a great deal of agency. Interviewers sought to listen and learn, but they were the ones asking the questions. What questions would the marginalized have asked those interviewing or interviewed? The group from North America interviewed people in or near Chicago, Ciudad Juárez, El Paso, New York, Toronto, and San Diego. These included groups of the poor, circles of women, people of color, LGBTQ people, and groups of migrants. Those interviewed seemed to welcome the interviewers as representatives of the Catholic Church, which can also be an obstacle. As Dias concluded, theologians are increasingly aware that theologians are engaging in critical border thinking with those marred by colonial and imperial wounds. We can't be naïve about the need for theologians to reform their discipline informed by these new levels of encounter and engagement.

BRADFORD E. HINZE
Fordham University
Bronx, New York

FREEDOM AT THE BEGINNING AND END OF LIFE: CONSTRAINED AND ENHANCED IN HEALTHCARE STRUCTURES – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: Freedom at the Beginning and End of Life: Constrained and Enhanced in Healthcare Structures
Convener: Daniel J. Daly, Boston College
Moderator: Shaun Slusarski, Boston College
Presenters: Emma McDonald, Boston College
Daniel J. Daly, Boston College
Respondent: Daniel K. Finn, St. John's University (Collegeville, Minnesota)

In her paper, "Freedom and Constraint in Transnational Surrogacy and Gamete Donation," Emma McDonald connected the Catholic social tradition and sociological analysis to evaluate transnational surrogacy arrangements. More specifically, she described incentives and constraints shaping couples' choices to use compensated surrogates in other countries, evaluating these choices with a criterion of justice and with reference to the duty of the family to contribute to the common good.

McDonald first illustrated how cultural ideals related to the nuclear family contribute to shaping couples and individuals' family formation aspirations and their entrance into the reproductive marketplace. McDonald explained how various factors shape which means of childbearing are available to families and which of these choices are easily accessible and attractive. She argued that families' agential decisions in turn shape the continued structures and cultures of the fertility industry, often in ways that continue established "repro-flows" facilitated by clinics and legal restrictions, but occasionally in ways that transform the industry. Although the global reproductive marketplace supports family formation, especially for couples who fall outside the normative ideal of the nuclear, heterosexual family, McDonald argued that in the case of transnational commercial surrogacy specifically, reproductive markets rely on and perpetuate global inequalities. She contended that although the relative affordability of donated gametes and commercial surrogacy services abroad is made possible by pre-existing structures of global inequality. Instead of counteracting global inequalities, the global reproductive marketplace takes on social and economic stratifications already present in the global economy, furthering the structures of "stratified reproduction" already operating in local contexts.

Explaining how surrogacy clinics often take advantage of the financial desperation of working-class women to recruit surrogates, who often lack access to education and possess limited economic resources, McDonald emphasized the vulnerability of surrogates as agents: they lack power and knowledge that would allow them to negotiate with clinic physicians and commissioning parents to negotiate and ensure transparency. She thus concluded that Western reproductive travelers should avoid commercial surrogacy in countries in which weak regulations and poverty fuel the industry.

Daniel J. Daly's paper, "The Constrained Moral Agency of the Dying: The Contribution of Structural Analysis to Catholic End of Life Ethics," began by demonstrating that the existence or absence of palliative care has a profound effect on the agency of patients, surrogates, and providers. Daly argued that end of life ethics,

and the entirety of medical ethics, for that matter, is often done in a way that is blind to the structural enablements and constraints that lead to ethical quandaries. The field has undertheorized the role of social structures in enabling and constraining the moral agency of patients and caregivers regarding end of life treatment and care. Moral freedom at all stages of life is situated in a socio-structural context. Although other subdisciplines of Catholic ethics have begun to appreciate this reality, end of life ethics has yet to develop a robust structural vision.

After defining palliative care, Daly turned to Leo Tolstoy's masterpiece, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, to provide some narrative insight into the benefits of what we now call palliative care. He then drew on the critical realist account of a social structure, which he described in five propositions.

Daly then argued that palliative care is a virtuous structure which benefits the whole person—her integral good, health, relationships, spirituality, psychological status, and happiness. That is, palliative care, as a structure, contains relations among social positions that are designed to promote the patient's integral good. Citing recent research, Daly claimed that the US healthcare system does not contain a structure that enables all seriously ill and dying patients access to palliative care. He concluded the paper with three recommendations.

Daniel K. Finn responded to each paper. He invited McDonald to reflect on the possibilities of "fair trade" surrogacy. In responding, McDonald emphasized the importance of international regulation and the work of Catholic organizations, among others, to combat injustices related to global inequalities more broadly to support vulnerable families with few options for dignified, fairly compensated labor.

Finn's response to Daly centered on structural change, which he argued, happens when persons who are disadvantaged "rise up." He asked Daly to consider who are the disadvantaged in the issue of palliative care, and what are their possibilities to effect social change. Daly noted that the disadvantaged in this scenario were seriously ill and dying patients who lacked the capacity to change structures. Social change, then, will need to emerge from physicians, hospital administrators, and patient advocates.

In a wide ranging discussion several related topics emerged: the role of healthcare providers in shaping structures and cultures of healthcare both at the beginning and end of life; how justice could bridge the gap between Catholic sexual and social ethics; whether noncooperation in surrogacy arrangements ultimately improves the lives of potential surrogates; and, how race influences which patients avail themselves of palliative care at the end of life and what can be done to close the palliative care gap between Black and white patients.

DANIEL J. DALY
Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
Brighton, Massachusetts

FREEDOM, COERCION, AND SELF-REALIZATION: VOICES FROM 20TH CENTURY THEOLOGY – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: Freedom, Coercion, and Self-Realization: Voices from 20th Century Theology
Convener: Catherine Yanko, Catholic University of America
Moderator: David Cloutier, Catholic University of America
Presenters: Catherine Duggan, University of Notre Dame
Catherine Yanko, Catholic University of America
Darren Yau, Princeton University

This session featured three papers, each approximately twenty-five minutes in length, followed by a question and answer period. The questions clarified different aspects of the papers' claims and brought those claims into conversation with other scholars and historical events.

In her paper titled "Preserving Freedom in Love-Governed Civic Liberalism," Catherine Duggan contributed to ongoing conversations concerning political Augustinianism, civic virtue, and Christian ethical engagements with John Rawls. In *Politics & the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (2008), Eric Gregory envisions a liberalism that puts not justice, but the virtue of love at the heart of the enterprise. According to Gregory, re-centering love, properly trained, in a liberal democracy gives citizens a thick sense of responsibility towards one another and at the same time ensures that citizens exercise self-discipline such that they do not overwhelm one another with a love for an ideal that results in acts of coercion. The paper evaluated Gregory's arguments for love as a core virtue of Augustinian civic liberalism. Duggan argued that Gregory does not sufficiently explain how love moderates itself and does not give us a clear way to identify who is vulnerable, that is, on whose behalf we may exercise coercion. Additionally, though Gregory says he and other Augustinian liberals cannot expect everyone to confess Jesus is Lord in order to be good citizens and lovers, he in fact endorsed Augustine's position that love matures through spiritual *askesis* and a movement of the soul towards God. Subsequently, Duggan proposed a more promising way to uphold "love" as a civic virtue. She identified ways of exercising power over others that were endorsed by liberal thinkers and illustrated how Augustine's actions could be situated within the sphere of these acceptable uses of power.

In her paper, "An Ethic of Self-Realization According to Herbert McCabe," Catherine Yanko revisited a common twentieth century term: "self-realization." In the twentieth century, humanistic psychologists, continental philosophers, and some theologians were using the term in conversations about human flourishing, either as a description or as a normative ethical principle. Yanko evaluated the term in a theological context by presenting the use of it by Josef Fuchs, who developed a theory of self-realization in conversation with these psychologists and philosophers. This presentation of Fuchs's theory identifies strengths of the term, such as accounting for the depth of morality in terms of personal dispositions and the gift and relevance of personal identity in descriptions of morality. It also leads to a few hesitations with using the term "self-realization" in a theological context, such as a potential collapse of the

mysterious character of God and the misuse of the term "decision" to describe a moral disposition. Yanko made a subsequent proposal to retain the language of self-realization while escaping the presented hesitations through the work of Herbert McCabe. In Wittgenstenian flavor, McCabe presents a morality where the culmination of the moral life is in becoming more of oneself through the telling, and re-telling, of one's life-story. Yanko concluded the paper by arguing that McCabe's vision of freedom is more compelling in a Christian theological context than Fuchs's.

In his paper, "Non-violence and the Problem of Political Coercion: Daniel Berrigan and Reinhold Niebuhr Reconsidered," Darren Yau examined the problem that non-violent action poses to deliberative democrats who claim non-violence as the paradigm of democratic politics. Deliberative democrats want to defend a democratic form of politics, robust political equality, and the idea of respect for autonomy and often see all three of these projects as linked through defending the value of deliberation or speech as foundational to politics. Some of these theorists have argued that social movements that use non-violence resistance could be interpreted as paradigms of a politics of speech, rather than violence. Using various accounts of the Catonsville Nine action in 1968, Yau showed how coercion is a necessary part of many non-violent actions, and that the moral relevance of coercion in politics might be analyzed through Reinhold Niebuhr's political realism. Yau concluded the paper by suggesting how inheritors of Berrigan and Niebuhr, despite their differences, could be unwitting allies in their characterization of non-violent politics against deliberative democrats.

CATHERINE YANKO
Catholic University of America
Washington, District of Columbia

PRE-LIBERAL THEOLOGIES OF FREEDOM IN A POST-LIBERAL AGE – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: Pre-Liberal Theologies of Freedom in a Post-Liberal Age
Convener: Michael C. Magree, S.J., Boston College
Moderator: Stephen Pope, Boston College
Presenters: Michael C. Magree, S.J., Boston College
Elisabeth R. Kincaid, Loyola University New Orleans
Grant Kaplan, Saint Louis University

This selected session was comprised of three papers of twenty-five minutes each. There was a shared question and answer time in the remaining half hour.

Michael Magree began by presenting his paper, "Origen on Freedom: Christian Exaltation of the Human in the Face of Gnosticism." Everything regarding true religion, in Origen's view, has to do with rational persuasion and not with blunt force. For Origen, it would make God unjust to have God forcing people to be condemned or to be at a lower level spiritually. The different levels of spiritual life must be traced back to rational freedom and not to God. Origen preserved at the heart of his concept of the state the notion that the state has an obligation to foster religious observance and to suppress bad religious observance. The defect of the state in his own time, Origen claimed, was that it suppressed the true religion, Christianity. Christians who "have their citizenship in heaven" (Phil 3:20) fight for the earthly state by their prayers and charitable works. Origen likened Christians in the Roman Empire to priests, to military generals, to "a special army of piety." Christians were radically free because of their conscious pursuit of an apocalyptic destiny, and yet this freedom did not withdraw Christians from the state but made them even better citizens of it.

Elisabeth Kincaid spoke on "Calvin and Suárez: Freedom of Conscience for a Post-Liberal Age." For John Calvin, each person possessed the ability to make radically free decisions that are not subject to the authority of civil law, which can never bind the conscience. Kincaid described Calvin's view of the state as "legal Gnosticism" in which "the body politic has no intrinsic value itself." Francisco Suárez, by contrast, saw conscience as practical judgment, subject not only to God and the natural law but also to civil and even customary law. When taking up the views of "the heretics" in *De legibus* III, Suárez seems to be responding directly to Calvin's view of conscience and to be developing by contrast a theory of conscience's moral obligation to obey the laws of the state. Suárez did allow one to reject a human law that is morally reprehensible, but only according to strict criteria. If observance of a civil or customary law causes the subject to sin, then it should be disobeyed. There are other cases, however, where a law may be imprudent and yet obedience to it does not cause sin in the subject. The civil law binds the conscience in this case, since order in the society is itself a moral good. Kincaid pointed to a case in which Suárez held that laws prohibiting bearing arms ought to be obeyed, despite the fact that those arms might be helpful in self-defense.

Grant Kaplan was the third to present, with a paper entitled, "On the Freedom of a Catholic? Möhler and Baur on Freedom." Johann Adam Möhler's contemporary, Ferdinand Christian Baur, proposed the essence of Protestantism as autonomy and

mature independence. Catholicism, for Baur, was deeply unfree, insofar as it was bound to creedal formulations and ecclesial authority. By contrast, Möhler's theology of freedom was intent on the freedom of the church in relation to secular authority and the freedom of the Christian from sin. Mandatory celibacy for priests and the authority of the pope were both under attack in German Catholic circles, but Möhler argued in favor of both, since he saw these teachings as essential signs of Catholicism's freedom from control by the state. In different ways, priestly celibacy and papal authority served as signs of the church's "eschatological hope for the kingdom of God." This Catholic freedom did not demand armed rebellion, but it helped "inoculate Catholics against osmosis into the state." There remains some tension between the individual and the group. For Möhler this tension must be lived ecclesially. The human being needs bonds of obedience to have true communion and community. Kaplan summarized by saying that, for Möhler, "There is not only no spirituality without religion, there is no belief without community."

The concluding discussion was a lively one, moderated by Stephen Pope. Kincaid presented an application of Suarezian principles to COVID-19 vaccine mandates. Kaplan responded to further probing on Möhler's position on celibacy. Magree clarified for one questioner that Origen does not have a sense of analogous levels of freedom extending, for example, to dolphins.

MICHAEL C. MAGREE, S.J.
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

SYNDOLADITY AND FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: Synodality and Freedom in the Church
Convener: Martin Madar, Xavier University
Moderator: James Nickoloff, College of the Holy Cross
Presenters: Kristin Colberg, College of St. Benedict/St. John's University
John Markey, O.P., Oblate School of Theology
Mary Kate Holman, Benedictine University

The Catholic Church is currently undergoing the largest consultative process in its history, namely, the Synod on Synodality. Many see the synodal process as a *kairos* in the life of the church and the most significant event in Catholicism since the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II, 1962-1965). The presenters at this session reflected on a connection between synodality and freedom in the church.

Kristin Colberg opened the session with "Synodality as Ecclesial Self-Actualization." Drawing on the work of Karl Rahner, she started by defining freedom as the human capacity to make a commitment to the path that leads one to become one's best self. In this line of thinking, freedom is seen as self-actualization. She spent the rest of her presentation reflecting on the current synodal assembly as an event in the church's self-actualization, a process in which the church is becoming more fully and truly itself. She emphasized three points. First, she argued that one clear characteristic of a self-actualized church would be its openness to the Spirit of God, which requires careful listening to the entire people of God and discerning the *sensus fidelium*. Second, she noted that self-actualization must be expressed in history. Therefore, to discern the *sensus fidelium* the church must establish structures, habits, and practices that are open and inclusive. Third, she pointed out that a self-actualized church realizes that listening requires accountability to what is heard. She concluded by expressing hope that the synodal process will help to bring about meaningful changes that reflect the church's true identity.

John Markey's presentation, "Freeing the Spirit to Free the Church: Implications of the Pneumatological Principle for a More Authentic Synodal Process," followed well on the points made by Colberg. His focus was on the pneumatology implicit in the synodal process. He offered a critical assessment of the Preparatory Schema for the diocesan phase of the synodal process. He argued that the synodal process as it is outlined in the Preparatory Schema betrays the pneumatology that grounds it by presuming that merely listening to the faithful is the same thing as including them in the discernment of what it means to be a Spirit-led church. Building on insights from Yves Congar, he proposed four practical suggestions that might aid in freeing the synodal process so that it can "free the church." First, the process must concretely demonstrate a repentance for clericalism and the almost total monopolization of charisms by the ordained and ecclesial elites. Second, the synod must be free to address any issues that the participants deem appropriate. Third, the examination of matters that touch on the ordinary life of believers such as gender, sexuality, and ecclesial organization and management should be considered the proper domain of synodal conversations; conclusions should be taken seriously. Lastly, the goal of the synodal

process should be to develop an ongoing institutional process of discerning what changes need to be made at the level of the universal church.

Mary Kate Holman's presentation, "The Freedom to Speak and the Freedom to Be Heard," was historical in nature. She examined the experiences of three French thinkers at Vatican II to understand how institutional structures can both facilitate and hinder the freedom to participate in ecclesial dialogue. Her starting point was Pope Francis' call to *parrhesia* (boldness and freedom of speech) and an observation that *parrhesia* has largely been absent from the modern history of the Catholic Church. However, she finds such speech in the lives and works of Henri de Lubac, Marie-Dominique Chenu, and Marie-Thérèse Lacaze. Holman concludes that there is a difference between the freedom to speak and the freedom to be heard, and that an effective shift toward synodality will require shedding an internalized culture of censorship. She noted that a call to *parrhesia* must be accompanied by a call to genuine listening. We must therefore ask which structures allow theologians and others in the church with bold ideas to inform the proceedings of the "institutional" church.

The session concluded with an energetic discussion among members of the audience and the presenters.

MARTIN MADAR
Xavier University
Cincinnati, Ohio

THEORIES OF FREEDOM AND CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: Theories of Freedom and Contemplative Practice
Convener: Jacob W. Torbeck, Valparaiso University
Moderator: Derrick Witherington, Loyola University Chicago
Presenters: Min-Ah Cho, Georgetown University
Jacob W. Torbeck, Valparaiso University
Kathleen McNutt, Marquette University

This session consisted of three papers, each approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes in length, followed by a question and answer session that filled the remainder of the allotted time.

In her paper, "Reclaiming Silence as a Spiritual and Political Practice of Freedom," drawn from her forthcoming monograph, Min-Ah Cho seeks to reclaim silence as a liberative spiritual practice through attending to the multivalent character of silence as something that can be wielded as a tool both for political oppression (censure) and political resistance (protest), and as something that is gendered and raced. In laying out her reclamation of silence as contemplative praxis, Cho highlights the role of silence in the apophatic and ecstatic, where it marks that which cannot be said, or that which must be unsaid in testimony to the Truth. Here, the character of Jesus in the passion narrative is lifted up as the model for our own practices of silence, which are to be aimed both at resisting political oppression and misguided cultural notions that foreground urgency and productivity, and promoting contemplative attention to the still small voices of the meek and humble, as well as God's subtle self-revelation "heard in a whisper."

Jacob W. Torbeck's paper, "One is Undone: Kenotic Freedom in Christian Mystical Theologies," began by briefly addressing the fraught history of "self-emptying" notions of freedom as having been abused either as a demand for others or as a kind of autarchy or self-mastery. As an alternative to these destructive forms, Torbeck draws from sources across the mystical traditions of Christian spirituality to articulate a vision of kenotic attention, contemplation that weds liberation for the soul to liberation from material oppression. This kenosis carries with it an understanding of freedom as "letting go of the self" that relies upon an imitation of God's self-emptying attention, which continually creates and sustains all creatures. In this imitation, the spiritual beholder hopes that they will both be filled with the Spirit and inspire and nourish others through attention to the spiritual and material needs of others, a disposition that leads the mystic to engage in both "working and waiting" for the new day that God will bring.

Finally, Kathleen McNutt examined the nature of human willing as it could relate to ecological action in her paper, "On Care for Our Common *Gnōmē*: Eco-spirituality and Freedom in Maximus the Confessor." Situating her paper in the context of our environmental crisis, McNutt details the two kinds of wills Maximus discusses, the natural and the gnomic will, to talk about how the proliferation of choices within a culture of consumption may malform our gnomic wills and lead toward environmental calamity. According to McNutt, Maximus offers us a way of understanding how our

gnomic wills might be better formed: first, through training our desiring will to "see better" through contemplation; second, through reintegration of our own responsibility through the virtues; and finally, through coming to desire the good of the planetary community—an expansion of the scope of our desire for the good.

The discussion that followed was fruitful and wide-ranging, and pushed the speakers to expand upon their papers. Aristotle Papanikolaou asked all speakers about the role of affectivity as it relates to spiritual and political freedom. Each panelist responded by speaking of unpresented aspects of their work that dealt with emotion and desire as an impetus and effect of contemplative praxis. Ruben Habito asked Jacob Torbeck about the difficult example of Simone Weil's life as it related to the notion of kenosis that Torbeck had proposed, and Torbeck responded by noting that among those for whom she advocated, what was appreciated was not Weil's maladroit labor, but her rare efforts at solidarity which few others attempted—Weil's sometimes scrupulous and ultimately self-injurious practice can indeed be critiqued. Andrew Prevot raised the problem of political freedom as a concept, wondering if there was enough agreement about what political freedom entailed. Other questions engaged Min-Ah Cho's paper directly, and asked about the essential nature of the cross to silence, and to what extent this might be part of a process of liberation. Additionally, another question asked how one knows when silence must give way to action. In answering these, Cho agreed that knowing when silence must be broken is difficult. She then directed our attention again to the ways in which silence is contextual, how silence can be "loud"—a silence of unspeaking, of anguished or exuberant vocalization that carries no particular phonemes—or melancholic, or defiant. In the spirit of the conversation, all the attending agreed to end the session with a brief period of contemplative silence.

JACOB W. TORBECK
Briar Cliff University
Sioux City, Iowa

ANTHROPOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Elizabeth Pyne, Mercyhurst University
Moderator: Eric Meyer, Carroll College
Presenters: Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo, Wake Forest University School of Divinity
Jessica Coblentz, Saint Mary's College
Daniel Minch, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

The Anthropology Topic Session hosted a panel featuring three papers on the convention theme of "Freedom;" each twenty-minute presentation was followed by ten minutes of discussion.

In her paper, "'No one takes my life, I give it freely': Reimagining Human Freedom in Light of Ecomartyrdom," Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo pursued a multifaceted examination of freedom and its constraints that was guided by the witness of Indigenous land and environmental defenders—especially of Berta Cáceres, a Lenca leader in Honduras, who was assassinated in 2016 for her resistance to a dam on the sacred Gualcarque River. Gandolfo described how, in the first instance, the life and death of Cáceres unveil "the mechanisms of unfreedom" associated with profit-driven extractivist projects. She noted the insidious way these projects' neoliberal ideology cloaks itself in the language of freedom and liberty, when it is fundamentally an assertion of the power to exploit both non-dominant peoples and vulnerable ecosystems. While ecomartyrs around the globe suffer the fatal consequences of this distorted view of freedom, their protest against it also limns an alternative yearning. Gandolfo acknowledged the danger of claiming that victims of violence "give" their lives, yet argued that a profound truth regarding human freedom is nevertheless present in their steadfast commitment to eco-social justice. Crucially, the freedom ecomartyrs "enflesh" is one that experiences human life as essentially bound up with the wellbeing of other creatures and the earth. Such a grounded cosmovision anticipates more recent theological interest in integral ecology and challenges the hierarchically dualist "extractivist paradigm [that] seeks human freedom from the constraints of the natural world."

Jessica Coblentz's paper, "Freedom from Sexual Attraction? Thinking with Asexual Reappraisals of the Human Person," illuminated the need to take seriously asexual experience in Catholic theological anthropologies and their broader cultural contexts. As it stands, views of the human person are largely governed by "compulsory sexuality"—the notion that to be human is to be sexual. This framing of what constitutes being a "normal" human, Coblentz noted, "distributes social validation unevenly according to race, ability, and size, among other social factors;" it also results in asexual erasure. Such erasure has a specific valence in Catholic magisterial teaching—for instance, in the assumption that all are called to the self-mastery required by chastity—but also appears in many progressive theologies of sexuality. Instead of arguing for the natural givenness of asexuality, or indeed any sexual orientation, Coblentz advocated for a more thorough reevaluation of the place of sexual desire in human life. Drawing from recent scholarship and varied first-person narratives of

"aces," she showed how "experiences of asexuality can enrich our conceptions of human personhood" by introducing an expansive definition of erotic attachment and nuanced distinctions around categories such as romance, sex, and love. These contributions have implications for Catholic perspectives on marriage and family as well as relational language describing humans' connection to God.

In his paper, "The Promise of the Future Is Also the Threat of the Future: Money as *Theos* and the Constraints of *Homo Oeconomicus*," Daniel Minch reflected on the anthropological consequences of a major shift in Western societies: the economization of life and personhood. Contemporary capitalism, he argued, retains an "essentially religious structure" in which values, imagination, and behavior are reshaped around a new "God-concept": "Money has become the supreme theological principle of power for Western societies, even those that firmly believe themselves to be largely secularized. It 'mimics' God by supplanting God as the highest object of desire, diverting our attention to itself." While money signals the promise and possibilities of the future—in a word, money brings freedom—the priority of competitive self-interest and the unstable dynamics of market activity (e.g., circular demand and deferred realization of desire) mean that this promise is simultaneously a threat. Patterns of structural exclusion radicalize this threat for certain marginalized groups. Moreover, Minch noted that, since the 2008 financial crash, such exclusion has taken on a punitive and moralizing cast, making these groups supposedly responsible for their precarity. He argued that this dominant economic anthropology must be contended with as *theological* in order to understand its role in current political and ecological crises.

Questions from audience members sparked fruitful discussion on points including: the meaning of freedom when attributed to other-than-human creatures; comparisons between contemporary asexual experience and the disallowing of sexuality for Black women under slavery; and connections among systems of economic and sexual regulation.

ELIZABETH PYNE
Mercyhurst University
Erie, Pennsylvania

BIOETHICS/HEALTHCARE – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Daniel J. Daly, Boston College
Moderator: Dorothy Lee Goehring, Boston College
Presenters: Jason Eberl, Saint Louis University
Shaun Slusarski, Boston College

The Bioethics/Healthcare session featured papers that considered the role of the common good in public health ethics.

In "Public Health Behind Bars: Incarceration, Bioethics, and the Common Good," Shaun Slusarski examined the ways that incarceration in the United States imperils the collective health and wellbeing of incarcerated people, their families and communities, and the wider public. As such, the US carceral system is a threat to the common good.

Slusarski argued that the focus on retribution in the US criminal justice system has not only resulted in harsher prison conditions, but it has also undermined efforts towards rehabilitation. At its best, the Catholic tradition has affirmed that punishment ought to promote the moral growth of the offender and prepare them for full reinstatement into the life of the community. The high recidivism rate, the prevalence of life sentences, and the disenfranchisement of formerly incarcerated people from certain basic rights indicate that prison in the United States fails to conform to the church's vision of criminal justice.

Slusarski contended that the pain of retribution extends beyond the incarcerated population. While prison causes chronic health conditions, enhances vulnerability to infectious disease, and increases various mental health problems among the incarcerated, it also directly affects the health outcomes of their families and communities. Mass incarceration, for example, has significantly increased the country's infant mortality rate, especially within the Black community. The COVID-19 pandemic also helped to demonstrate how carceral health policies have far reaching ripple effects. One study, for example, showed that 13 percent of all COVID-19 cases in Cook County during August 2021 can be attributed to jail cycling in March 2020.

The paper concluded with a call to embrace a public health approach to criminal justice. Slusarski argued that although there are many ways that the hurch ought to support such efforts, one way is for Catholic bioethics to center incarceration as a major area of study.

Jason Eberl's paper, "Freedom of Conscience and the Common Good During a Pandemic," argued that Catholics do not have a basis to request a religious exemption to vaccination mandates for COVID-19. He first claimed that vaccines produced with cell lines derived from aborted fetal tissue constitutes the appropriation of evil, not cooperation in evil. Although, he contended, such appropriation is morally licit given the church's long-standing position that Catholics may take vaccines derived from aborted fetal cell lines if there is a proportionate good at stake.

Further, he contended that being vaccinated against COVID-19, or similar infectious diseases, counts as "ordinary"—and therefore morally obligatory—medical treatment to preserve one's own life and health as well as that of others. Citing Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (now the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the

Faith) documents on the issue, Eberl argued that, in general, vaccines are not morally obligatory for otherwise healthy patients. However, the pandemic created a "state of exception," rendering COVID-19 vaccines morally required for those patients who could safely take the vaccine. Eberl argued that although it is important to respect individuals' conscience, even when misinformed, the bishops at the Second Vatican Council recognized that civil authorities have the right to regulate the exercise of conscience for the sake of the common good.

Members discussed the role of emotion in the two presentations, especially considering the role of "spite." Following Slusarski's paper attendees discussed the possibilities and limits of prison abolition as an ideal and explored what a rehabilitative model of justice might look like in practice. Eberl was asked about his application of ordinary and extraordinary means. A discussion ensued about a patient's fear of long-term effects from the COVID-19 vaccine and how that consideration should or should not be accounted for in the moral analysis.

DANIEL J. DALY
Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
Brighton, Massachusetts

CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Jens Mueller, Notre Dame of Maryland University
Moderator: Phyllis Zagano, Hofstra University
Presenters: Christopher Welch, Rivier University
Nicholas Olkovich, St. Mark's College

This session comprised two papers, each approximately twenty-five minutes, followed by a question and answer session and a business meeting that filled the remainder of the allotted time.

In his paper, "Work and Human Freedom in Consumer Culture and Higher Education," Christopher Welch addressed the issue of college undergraduates' more extensive work for pay habits to maintain a lifestyle formed in a culture of consumption. Welch argued that such attitudes and practices limit one's human freedom. Although Catholic Social Teaching promotes work as co-creation with God and as a vocation, such work, "good work," is often partial in paid employment. Catholic institutions of higher education must respond attentively to those constraints of consumer culture and promote a broader definition of vocation that includes paid employment and productive leisure. Welch suggested that college students, who free themselves from consumer culture, are more likely to have time also to explore vocation in the "good work" of communities of creative leisure through activities like making and crafting.

In his paper, "The Politics of Religious Freedom: Revisiting the Murray Project for a Polarized Age," Nicholas Olkovich discussed John Courtney Murray's juridical argument for religious freedom considering his critics like David L. Schindler. Olkovich contended that Murray's approach can be strengthened by complicating his unsystematic appeal to the classicism/historical consciousness distinction in the work of Bernard Lonergan. Moreover, he argued that Schindler's soft integralism has potentially given cover to a particular brand of postliberal Catholicism which is less inclined to trust in the "power of truth" or to affirm freedom for all. Olkovich began by posing Murray's juridical argument against the backdrop of pre-conciliar church teaching, followed by Schindler's critical project, which is centered on exposing the false neutrality of Murray's juridical argument. Central to Schindler's critique, Olkovich suggested, is the postliberal claim that negative conceptions of freedom are dependent upon positive conceptions of freedom's substance and purpose. After discussing Bernard Lonergan's classicism/historical consciousness distinction concerning John Courtney Murray's juridical argument of religious freedom, Olkovich concluded with Pope Francis' political vision *ad extra* and his *ad intra* call for a synodal church as the background against which an updated argument for the right to religious freed as both immunity and empowerment might be developed but also expanded to intra-ecclesial realities.

The discussion that followed prompted both presenters to move beyond their points. First, both panelists were given a few minutes to respond to each other's presentations and conversed for a few moments about the genesis of their respective projects. Among others, the questions discussed were on the nature of freedom and

work. For example, one question specifically asked about the nature of gang violence and its relation to freedom. Another question brought up the nature of volunteer work as an example of "good work." No unanimous verdict was reached.

In the end, the Catholic Social Thought Topic Session had a business meeting discussing on the future of this session for the annual CTSA meetings. The context of this discussion was the dwindling number of proposal submissions over the last few years. Possible reasons for the lack of submission were the submission deadlines, the lack of interest in the previous few years' overall themes, and, most concerning, a lack of interest or overgeneralizing sentiment of what Catholic Social Thought entails. Given next year's theme of "Social Salvation," Kevin Ahern suggests clearly explaining how this session exemplifies social salvation. He concluded the business meeting with the important phrase, "If everything is Catholic Social Thought, then nothing is Catholic Social Thought."

JENS MUELLER
Notre Dame of Maryland University
Baltimore, Maryland

CATHOLICITY AND MISSION – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Catholic Institutional Identities and Mission in a Time of De-Institutionalization
Convener: Laurie Johnston, Emmanuel College, Boston
Moderator: Antonio Sison, Catholic Theological Union
Presenters: Kevin Ahern, Manhattan College
Daniel Rober, Sacred Heart University
Respondent: Cristina Lledo Gomez

This session was comprised of two papers, followed by a response and then questions and answers. Kevin Ahern began with a paper that suggested a more robust understanding of the corporate dimension of charism could help Catholic universities live out their mission more authentically and discern a way forward amidst current challenges. A focus on charism has often functioned as an identity adaptation strategy for universities; in the face of growing diversity and dissatisfaction with the institutional church, it has sometimes allowed stakeholders to identify themselves with the charism but not with Catholicism. While this presents risks, it can nevertheless lead to a better understanding of the Catholic faith.

As gratuitous gifts or special graces, charisms are far more than a branding strategy or strategic plan. Since different charisms share the same divine source, they ought to complement each other rather than compete; colleges with varying charisms should consider how they might cooperate or even unite. Overall, genuine charisms are never self-referential and must always be concerned with the health of the wider communities where they appear.

Finally, Ahern proposed that a deepened sense of charism can help universities discern how to preserve freedom within the university, freedom for the university, and even—in some circumstances—freedom from the university, as a charism may invite a move away from present structures or traditional ways of institutionalizing the mission.

Daniel Rober also addressed questions of mission and discernment at Catholic institutions of higher education in the face of secularization and other challenges. Catholic universities find themselves in a bind: opt either for a strong (to the point of overbearing) emphasis on Catholic identity in order to attract those most interested or for a(n) (intentional or unintentional) de-emphasis in order to attract those least interested.

After describing the development of Catholic universities over the last decades from the Land of Lakes declaration to *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, he argued for applying the notion of inculturation to universities as a middle way between sectarianism and secularization. Engaging secularizing American culture involves drawing upon the Catholic intellectual tradition as a living tradition which extends far beyond the confines of the Euro-American world. Pope Francis' "missiology of attraction," grounded in new theologies of mission that have come out of the experience of the church in lands where it lacks the hegemonic past that it has had in Europe, holds promise for universities. To that end, Rober offered three prescriptions: Catholic institutions need to embrace Catholic mission as a positive but constantly negotiated

aspect of institutional identity; Catholic institutions need to orient and root their other choices in terms of mission; and finally, Catholic institutions must recommit themselves to educating Catholics, as the community that gives the institution its historic and contemporary identity. This ought not to be an exercise in hegemony, and certainly not one of conversion, but rather being true to institutional identity.

Cristina Lledo Gomez offered a response to both papers in which she cautioned that neither naming an institution "Catholic," nor explaining its Catholic values or Catholic charism, nor carrying out "Catholic" activities are sufficient. Certainly, the presence of Catholic "elders" who can be carriers of the mission is important, as indigenous traditions would remind us. But, drawing on Yves Congar, she noted that the Catholic identity of a university is utterly dependent upon God's intervention by means of the Holy Spirit. It arises not only from the explicit espousal of a Catholic identity and mission but in the activity of turning to the uncreated grace. Praying, in the various ways that it has been part of the church's history but also in its encounters and learnings from other religious traditions, enables the Catholic institution to do the work of being Catholic, of being the church and witnessing and building the kingdom of God by identifying the ways of injustice, marginalization, and indignities and placing those with little power as the center of concern for the university.

LAURIE JOHNSTON
Emmanuel College
Boston, Massachusetts

CHRIST – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Christology and Freedom
Convener: John Thiede, S.J., Marquette University
Moderator: Mary Kate Holman, Benedictine University
Presenters: Flora Tang, University of Notre Dame
Giadio De Biasio, Boston College
Taylor Ott, KU Leuven

This session consisted of three papers, each approximately twenty minutes long, that tackled very different Christological issues in conversation with the convention theme of "freedom." A wide-ranging question and answer session ensued.

Flora Tang began our session with her paper, "The Ungendered Flesh of Jesus and the Queer Body of Christ: Hortense Spillers and M. Shawn Copeland in Conversation." Tang framed her presentation around two opening questions: "for whom has [the] theological and social ideal of femininity, masculinity, and family not been possible? How can those who seek to invoke the image of Jesus … in writing queer theology today be responsible to these impossibilities?" She then turned to her paper's titular conversation partners, theologian M. Shawn Copeland (who was in attendance at the session) and the Black and decolonial literary theorist Hortense Spillers. Tang explicated Spillers' notion of "ungendered flesh," which describes the historically violent processes of the Middle Passage and chattel slavery which subjugated Black bodies, specifically rendering womanhood impossible by denying kinship and domestic families to Black women. She then turned to Copeland's argument that Jesus Christ's queer flesh is redemptive for Black women, reading it through the lens of Spillers. To call Christ's flesh queer, Copeland contends, is not a claim about his sexuality, but rather a statement of his opposition to empire. When queer flesh is understood through the notion of ungendered flesh, we can understand Christ's flesh as redemptive for all those whose gender and sexual experiences are deemed non-normative by the violence of empire. Tang concluded with further questions these insights might raise for contemporary theology, suggesting that "questions of the essence of gender may be… less pressing" than "how to heal from racialized-gendered violence and the structural dismantling of existing gender relations and familial kinship structures."

Giadio De Biasio then presented his paper, "Freeing the Pathway to Salvation: Christ's Death and Salvation of Infants Who Die Without Baptism." He reviewed four historical phases of Catholic theology's reckoning with this question: the apophatic approach of the Greek patristic phase, the anti-Pelagian insistence during the Latin patristic phase that baptism was necessary for salvation, the medieval phase whose notion of "natural beatitude" à la Aquinas served as the basis for the idea of Limbo, and the post-Vatican II era which emphasized a "hope for salvation," articulated in the 2007 International Theological Commission document. Wishing to develop an intellectually sound pastoral theology, De Biasio argued that there are several "theological knots" in the 2007 ITC document that his paper would untangle. Drawing on insights from Anselm, Aquinas, and Lonergan, he proposed an "inclusive Christic salvation" that might overcome these theological knots and affirm that infants who die

without baptism indeed can be saved. He contended that infants would find the way of salvation in their death, by which they are configured to Christ's death, receiving the effect of *quodammodo*-baptismal grace.

Finally, Taylor Ott shared her paper, "Following Jesus the Dissident: Developing a Theory of Dissent for a Liberative Church." Beginning with the insight from liberation theology that Jesus stands for the liberation of the marginalized, she expanded this argument to contend that dissent is "a necessary and normal part of liberative action." Drawing on the work of Richard Horsley to analyze the power structures of first-century Palestine, Ott contended that the historical Jesus stood with those harmed by the interlocking political, economic, and religious oppressions of the Roman Empire, and was threatening enough to existing power structures to be put to death. Connecting Christology to ecclesiology, Ott highlighted the irony that a church called to imitate Christ would itself be intolerant towards dissent, as has been historically true of the Roman Catholic Church. Connecting her paper to the convention theme of "freedom," she concluded with a call for a greater openness to the possibility that "dissent has an important role to play in building ecclesial community," not only because of its inevitability, but because "it is a potential site of grace."

The discussion that followed was collegial and covered many topics. Several questions addressed the possibilities and drawbacks of constructing contemporary theologies with the very complicated historical context of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as later historical theologies that might be asking different questions than our contemporary contexts are asking. Several audience members invited us to consider what voices might mitigate these drawbacks and further enrich these pastoral and theological discussions. One participant suggested that we attend to the perspectives of pregnant people and the parents of unbaptized infants when discussing the notion of salvation, while another invoked scholars of Judaism in antiquity and the present day as important conversation partners in discussions of Jesus' historical context.

MARY KATE HOLMAN
Benedictine University
Lisle, Illinois

CHURCH/ECUMENISM – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Freedom in the Church
Convener: Natalia Imperatori-Lee, Manhattan College
Moderator: Elyse Raby, Santa Clara University
Presenters: Layla Karst, Loyola Marymount University
Jaisy Joseph, Villanova University
Jeannine Hill Fletcher, Fordham University

The panel began with twenty-minute presentations, followed by a short question and answer session. Additional questions and conversation took place following the third presentation.

Layla Karst's presentation, "Bold Speech: Lay Liturgical Preaching and the Synodal Church," began with a claim made in the 2022 Vatican Working Document for the Continental State of the Synod on Synodality, which identifies the Eucharist as the "'source and summit' of the church's synodal dynamism." Karst also noted that the report overall is quite critical of Eucharistic liturgies. Karst suggested that, despite its own claims, the report actually demonstrates that non-eucharistic liturgies are the true center of a synodal church. Drawing on her own research on pandemic Liturgies of the Word, Karst argued that the freedom provided by the pandemic for laity to engage in preaching constituted a concrete liturgical manifestation of the synodal church. Karst further suggested that such pandemic liturgies could inform Eucharistic practices and point toward reform. Karst concluded that, in their current form, Eucharistic liturgies "often fail to give expression to a synodal church and instead reinforce a clericalist ecclesiology that ritualizes and consecrates the voice of the clergy and the silence of the laity." While acknowledging that "lay preaching in the moment of the Eucharistic homily faces significant structural barriers in the Roman Catholic rite," such barriers have still not stifled the Spirit.

Jaisy Joseph's presentation, "From Humiliation to Healing: A Mimetic Account of Finding Freedom through the Forgiving Victim," examined the way "the color line" which divides the United States as a country has been reproduced within the confines of the US Catholic Church. Joseph cited Julian Robinson Moore to ask whether "racism against black people and other non-white people [could] be a by-product of internal rivalry between white people," and the resulting unexamined, "unmetabolized" trauma of white-on-white violence. Drawing on the work of Resmaa Menakem, Joseph explained how "[t]he entire myth of race that necessitates the humiliation and dehumanization of entire groups of people according to skin color is based on the scapegoating mechanism that offers temporary unity between white people, helping them to manage their fears and rivalries with other white people." Yet "the temporary relief of the scapegoating mechanism provides no actual healing of earlier trauma," so that this trauma is merely "passed on to the next generation in an unmetabolized form." Ultimately, Joseph proposed a solution grounded in James Alison's mimetic understanding of the Eucharist. The presence of Christ, as the Forgiving Victim, in the Eucharist can enable the kind of truth telling required of white Christians to metabolize their "dirty pain," of avoidance, blame and denial, in to the "clean pain," of fully and honestly facing America's racial history and trauma.

Jeannine Hill Fletcher's, "In Bondage and In Freedom: Intimacies of a Black and White Catholicism," focused on the South Carolina parish of Saint James the Greater, one of the longest standing Black Catholic churches in the nation. Hill Fletcher described the story of St. James as "a story of freedom and unfreedom in a Black and White Catholic Church," a story that must be reckoned with to achieve freedom for the American Catholic church in our current ecclesial moment. Specifically, the relationship between two parish matriarchs, Elizabeth Pinckney and Henrietta (Hetty), a white woman and the enslaved black woman she owned, was identified as rich site of analysis. Hetty is listed as co-sponsor for a number of parish baptisms, despite the misrecognition of Hetty in the 1850 parish baptismal roll as "slave of Mrs. E. P." Hill Fletcher noted that "this same American Catholicism that gave life to Henrietta [and other Black Catholics]…was the very same structure that took the freedom of their lives from them" as White Catholic leaders like Bishop John England authored passionate defenses of slavery from a Catholic perspective.

Hill Fletcher concluded that, within the interconnected histories of Black Catholicism and White Catholicism, white Catholics "used the bodies and breath of Black Catholics to build wealth" and that "the Catholic tradition provided resources to sustain Black Catholics to withstand the Catholic assault on their personhood." Following Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's proposition that engaging historical trauma involves truth-telling about history, Hill Fletcher observed that American Catholics will only escape the unnamed bondage to the sin of white supremacy by telling the stories of communities like St. James.

KATHRYN L. REINHARD
Gwynedd Mercy University
Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Liberation in Christian, Hindu and Buddhist Traditions of South Asia
Convenor: Reid B. Locklin, University of Toronto
Moderator: Stephanie Wong, Villanova University
Presenters: Akhil Thomas, Harvard University
Matthew Vale, Boston College
Respondent: Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier, Loyola Marymount University

In his paper entitled "Christian-Hindu poems for South Indian Christians: A Comparative Reading of the Christian Poetry of Ernst Hanxleden," Akhil Thomas used selected sections of the long form poem, *The New Measure* (*Puthenpāna*), of Ernst Hanxleden, S.J., (1680-1731) to argue for the emergence of a new genre of Malayalam Catholic poetry and literature in eighteenth-century South India. He paid special attention to the role of karma in the poem. Here, it is hard to demarcate Jesuits missionaries from Indian Catholics, Indian Catholics from other South Indian religionists, Malayalam Vaishnavism from Catholicism, and, finally, Krishna from Christ. Looking at the epithets for Christ in the *Puthenpāna*, notably the ones that cast their long Vaishnava theological shadows, Thomas focused on the epithet "Inception of all karma and its dissolution." Thomas compared this with the sixteenth-century mystic poet Poonthanam Namboothiri's poem, *The Measure of Wisdom* (*Jñanapāna*), which beautifully etches the precarity of the human condition and the pivotal role of karma and devotion to the Lord of Guruvayoor as the path of liberation. As a conclusion, Thomas offered some general remarks on taking the voice of Indian Christian recitation and performance as an alternate starting point for comparative theology. This starting point, he argued, also complicates received notions of doing comparative theology for Christian ends.

Next, Matthew Vale presented his paper, "Natural Liberation: A Christian Reception of Mahāmudrā." The Tibetan Buddhist practice traditions of Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen are a significant presence in the West. However, unlike the Christian reception of Zen and Theravāda-style *vipassanā*, we have very little historically engaged work thinking through the Christian theological reception of these Tibetan traditions. In his paper, Vale articulated a theological rationale for receiving what Tibetans call "*sūtra Mahāmudrā*" practice as a contemplative style that follows from creation *ex nihilo*. Creation *ex nihilo* means that every created reality is grounded in nothing at all besides God's wholly uncoerced—and so wholly unqualified—"Yes" to its being. For a created reality to be at all, then, is for it to be intrinsically and inalienably good, grounded nowhere at all but in this joyful "Yes." Vale compared this fundamental conviction to Mahāmudrā practices of coming to rest in awareness. In this tradition, all appearances are themselves the radiance of Buddhahood, the manifesting (*rstal*) or self-resonance (*rang gdangs*) of a limitless empty-luminosity (*stong gsal*). From a Christian perspective, this means that coming to rest in awareness as grounded in nothing but the "Yes," the Joying, originating all things out of nothing, as unconditionally, radiantly OK. Even distressing thoughts and experiences are, in themselves, a "self-releasing" (*rang grol*) into their basic nature. In the same way, a

Christian rests in all experiences as always already self-released into the unrestricted "Yes," joying in them as good.

In her response, Tracy Tiemeier thanked Thomas and Vale for offering thought-provoking and rich presentations with many new avenues of theological reflection. Although each examined different traditions and topics, there were a number of striking themes that crossed their presentations, including the meaning and practice of liberation; the translation of traditions, theologies, and practices across contexts; the nature of the divine; and the ambiguities in a Christian comparative theology where the divine is the inception and dissolution of karma, or all of creation is seen in its "basic OK-ness." What is sin and evil if God truly is the Alpha and Omega? Tiemeier wondered further how Buddhist and Hindu notions of liberation open up Christian views of salvation, or, for that matter, how Buddhist and Hindu notions of liberation push Christian language about liberation.

These presentations were followed by a rich discussion of the implications of focusing on devotional or meditative practice in comparative theology, the ways these traditions reinforce and/or disrupt social hierarchies, and the potential and limits of creation *ex nihilo* as a locus of interreligious exchange. The session concluded with a brief business meeting.

REID B. LOCKLIN
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

CREATION/ESCHATOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M., Saint Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana)
Moderator: Elizabeth Groppe, University of Dayton
Presenters: Dylan Belton, Villanova University
Colleen Carpenter, Carleton College
Respondent: Vincent Miller, University of Dayton

In response to a call for papers that related the topic session to the convention theme of "Freedom," the Creation/Eschatology session featured two papers and a response.

Dylan Belton's paper, titled "'Openness' to the Transcendent and Human Animality: Re-Reading Henri de Lubac's *Mystery of the Supernatural*," began with what has been described as the recent "animal turn" in the humanities. Belton notes that the work of a number of theologians reflects this scholarly development, singling out the work of Eric Daryl Meyer as illustrative. Drawing on Meyer's 2018 book *Inner Animalities: Theology and the End of the Human* as a model for how to proceed in engaging classic theological texts in the spirit of this "animal turn," Belton revisited Henri de Lubac's influential study *The Mystery of the Supernatural.* In particular, Belton was interested in exploring what implications surface for de Lubac's claim of the natural desire for the divine when examined through the lens of human animality and nonhuman animal agency as framed within the context of *Umwelt* as articulated by the philosopher of science Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944). After Belton drew on a range of twentieth-century theologians in his rereading of de Lubac, he turned to the concept of *Umwelt* in an effort to clarify its meaning and significance, especially for theological reflection on the human person and nonhuman creation.

Colleen Mary Carpenter's paper, titled "'Behold I Make All Things New': Prophetic Eschatology and Climate Fiction," argued that recent works of fiction have been opening our imaginations to the challenges of the contemporary global climate crisis. The impetus for this paper arose in response to a claim by Amitav Ghosh in the 2016 book *The Great Derangement*, that works of fiction have traditionally addressed important social problems, but that it is incapable of addressing climate change. Carpenter began her paper with a statement about the universality and importance of narrativity. Framing her exploration of several recent works of fiction (including Richard Powers's *The Overstory,* Jessie Greengrass's *The High House*, Charlotte McConaghy's *Migrations*, Stephen Markley's *The Deluge*, Kim Stanley's *The Ministry for the Future*, and Matt Bell's *Appleseed*) with a theological claim, Carpenter argued that what climate storytelling needs is a better way to engage the end of the world. Drawing on the works of womanist theologian Joan Martin and *mujerista* theologian Ada Maria Isasi Diaz, Carpenter argued that contemporary climate storytellers would benefit from a prophetic eschatology, which may provide such authors with tools and frameworks to tell the climate story in a way that provides a freedom that is lacking in the status quo approach to narrating the climate catastrophe. As a result, the story can then be centered not in a place of fear and destruction, but within the context of God's

story of salvation that is ultimately a story of divine love that heals and renews all things.

Vincent Miller offered a thoughtful and probing response to both papers, lifting up some themes and contributions from each and then posing several questions to Belton and Carpenter. To Belton, he posed two sets of questions. The first pertained to the nature of the described disjunction between de Lubac's theological anthropology project and the benefits of further consideration of *Umwelt*. The second question related to the limits of claims about the distinctiveness of human intelligence and what *Umwelt* theory can help us to understand about ourselves and the more-than-human world. To Carpenter, Miller first posed some novel-specific queries. He then invited Carpenter to say more about what reading such works of fiction contributes to our eschatological imagination.

DANIEL P. HORAN, O.F.M.
Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, Indiana

FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY/METHOD – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Mary Beth Yount, Neumann University
Moderator: Nicholas Rademacher, University of Dayton
Presenters: Christina McRorie, Creighton University
Peter Nguyen, Creighton University
Jack Pappas, Fordham University

This session explored interiority, agency, and freedom. In her opening paper, "When Contexts Condition Our Agency, What's Going on Theologically?", Christina McRorie considered the possibilities of theologically interpreting experiences of nonvoluntary social conditioning. Research into ways that human actions and character are considered as significantly influenced by social context is wide-ranging, and examples that she used included Jennifer Beste (considering Karl Rahner and spiritual trauma), Leonardo Boff, and others. They consider various views of our understandings of freedom and salvation and their relationship to agency in light of social formation and, as McRorie put it, "malformation." Social contexts and structures impact agency, and she explored theories about whether, and how, they might impact grace. Often conceptual clarity is prized over acknowledging the complexity of agency, freedom, salvation, and grace. McRorie outlined a "compatibilist" account in which determinants conducing to virtuous formation enhance our freedom, even when causal. The dynamic interplay of social formation and experiences of sin, grace, and redemption is complex and we do not yet have the answers.

The second paper, by Peter Nguyen, was "Edith Stein on the Freedom of the Individual's Interiority Amid the Threat of Totalitarianism." For Edith Stein, the establishment of the individual's interiority, the soul, is the world of truth and freedom unconstrained by the exterior world. Stein's discourse on individuality and interiority was put in dialogue with Hanna Arendt's study of totalitarianism. Nguyen suggested that Stein's discourse of finding one's interiority is essential for a person's individuation, and, thus, protective against the concern (raised by Arendt) that totalitarianism's pervasive terror can result in the individual vanishing within a mass movement.

Nguyen extended Stein's thought to illustrate how a proper inward turn, wherein one encounters the loving presence of God, can awaken the soul to one's calling, helping one find the freedom to engage and heal a broken world. The inward turn, wherein one encounters God's presence, can awaken the soul to one's vocation, helping a person find the freedom to resist evil. Establishing an interiority gives a person the freedom to take responsibility to suffer for justice in an unjust world without falling prey to anger and grief. Interiority gives one the enduring virtues of faith, hope, and charity that justify one's anger or grief.

Nguyen detailed three kinds of experience that have an increasing involvement of a person's interiority: first, sensory, then categorical, and, third, affective (which has an aesthetic dimension). Experienced values are not just motives of actions, but furnish the impulsive powers, and receptive encounters can help one's affections be trained and developed. Healthy communities with strong values help shape us at the individual level; the more individualized and developed the members are, the stronger the

community is as a whole. According to Stein's thought, the church, if it is healthy, is bound together by the interiority of itself.

This is in contrast to a destructive movement, which, per Arendt's thought, is a menacing force in which each of its members is reduced and no one can be responsible for what is done in the name of the movement. Ideology and terror are linked to loneliness, which helps to sustain the possibility of the movement—loneliness is a wilderness in which people feel separated from others and experience the loss of one's true self. In this case, self and world, thought and experience, are lost. Thinking in solitude can help counter this, it produces ethical subjects, as inner dialogue that allows us to evaluate our own actions.

Nguyen raised the question of whether a damaged community can be restored to health on the basis of self-giving and becoming one with Christ. His conclusion was that the possibility of giving oneself to the other in a mass society requires an inward openness to nourishment by Christ. Self-giving guided by Christ's love—which can be an insertion of one's will into the divine will—helps with restoring community. Stein's notion shows that entrance into one's deepest interiority is what allows one to also be open to others.

The closing presentation was by Jack Pappas, who spoke on "Metanthropology and the Problematic of Freedom in Balthasar and Rahner." This paper was a critical assessment of the respective accounts of divine and human freedom articulated by Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Pappas explored the ways that their diverging notions of freedom shape Rahner and Balthasar's conflicting approaches to revelation, and their related efforts to integrate theological anthropology in Christology. He concluded that Rahner's incarnational approach performs a more thorough integration of divine and human freedoms than does Balthasar's counter-subjective emphasis on divine otherness.

The question-and-answer period was lively, with consideration of, in light of McRorie's paper, whether operative grace might be less dependent on historical conditions than other forms of grace and whether cooperating grace might include, uniquely, our social contexts. Alternatively, the question continued, is operative—converting us, etc.—*more* dependent on historical conditions? Discussion ensued. Another consideration was whether the distinction between the sacred and profane might be false, with the whole thing being God. In that case, we are called and brought to salvation *in* our historical circumstance.

The crowd inquired of Pappas about his thoughts on the correctness of the asymmetry of the human will of Christ across the thinkers he examined and what von Balthasar means when he represents obedience in the life of Christ. The incarnate Christ loves the Father so much that he loves what the Father loves completely, and, when he experiences opposition in the world, he experiences it as part of the will of the Father. Pappas explained that both are neo-Chalcedonian. The difference is at the point of expression—for von Balthasar, there are two wills, with the created will being pulled along by the divine will. The human is pulled along from above by the will of the Logos. That is a problem. The created and divine will are actually a singular will that will the same thing, and in Rahner there is a positive synthesis without an abstract distinction between wills. Both wills are always willing.

Another point of conversation for Pappas's presentation was the irony that von Balthasar wrote on Maximus the Confessor, as for him, virtue and salvation are manifested in the Eastern tradition. For Rahner, freedom cannot account for violence and trauma, but all three papers, a participant pointed out, can help address ways that, in our agency, our vulnerability is acted upon. Sometimes our word play is too quick when we want to conclude about agency and freedom, but it is not the case that sin is stronger. Words are limited—what can we do about that? Answers included (from Nguyen) art is a vessel of healing and can help us be open to healing beyond words. From Pappas: So many things are overwhelming and you can grant validity to the whole human domain of suffering. Any transcendental move cannot drive a wedge between the empirical and transcendental level. How do we work out the sites of resistance to comprehensibility? We can affirm the regional chaos to history without transcending it. How can suffering be redeemed? We can recognize it and we cannot say it is everything. We can bear the paradox because we are confident in grace.

Nguyen was asked about the corollary condition for contemplation according to Arendt. Solitude is the condition of contemplation, as she affirms interior dialogue but really solitude. An advantage to Stein's thought is that contemplation is, for her, transhuman plurality. The answer was that part of Stein's experience is that she was already in dialogue with her friends and so praying before the tabernacle with other people was similar. A comment by an audience member pertaining to his talk was about Arendt and her notion of totalitarianism as moral equivalence. It does not seem that Stein has the same concern in seeing the transcending of the person into the community. Stein has material and formal conditions for leisure and education itself is labor mobility.

MARY BETH YOUNT
Neumann University
Aston, Pennsylvania

GOD AND TRINITY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: God and Freedom
Convener: Susie Paulik Babka, University of San Diego
Moderator: Mary Ann Hinsdale, Boston College
Presenters: Robert Elliot, Boston College
Jonathan Heaps, Boston College
Brianne Jacobs, Emmanuel College

What does it mean to say that God is "free" or that divine freedom informs human freedom? Our session considered these questions and others in an exciting and well-attended forum. Robert Elliot delivered the first paper, "Human Freedom as Participation in Trinitarian Shared Intentionality," beginning with psychological research on "joint attention," a behavior in which two people focus on one object for the purpose of interacting with each other. Elliot argued that this activity is unique to human beings, making us capable of creating a "we" identity or intentionality. This shared intentionality is what reveals human mirroring of divine intentionality, that Father, Son and Spirit act as a "we," performing with shared intentionality, rather than creating, redeeming and sanctifying separately. Elliot argued, "As human beings intend common goals known to be common through their shared intentionality, so too do the trinitarian Persons intend their own infinite common intention through their own shared intentions." The trinitarian missions intend to elevate human shared activity into the divine life. He concluded that the "intersubjective and cooperative union of the trinitarian Persons is infinite, and thus wide enough to embrace everyone as potential partners in the act of shared intending and to embrace our own ordinary shared intentions intending ordinary common objects."

Jonathan Heaps presented the second paper, "Divine Desire, Divine Freedom, and Contemplative Prayer." Underscoring the lens of embodiment in contemplative practice, Heaps investigated the meaning of divine desire by way of Bernard Lonergan's work on the trinity. For Lonergan, Heaps asserted, the human commitment to self-transcendence is authentic in "an erotic desire for truth and value that of itself contains no principle of restriction." The eros to self-transcendence is present in every person, whether we are aware of it or not, as "a gift of divine light, a created spiritual participation in uncreated spirit," making eros a condition of human authenticity. Heaps took seriously Sarah Coakley's suggestion that agapic eros for truth and goodness is existential in Lonergan's understanding. Heaps argued, "The analogy from freedom—understood as the agapic willingness to cooperate with the erotic drive to self-transcending authenticity—might be … to God's free and loving willingness to be the God who knows and loves being God." Embodied desire then becomes the site of human liberation.

Our third paper was presented by Brianne Jacobs, titled "Prodigal Love: Gendered Parent Language and God." Jacobs began by referencing Shawn Copeland's notion that grace is the freedom to see history and one's body through God's eyes, loving oneself as God loves us. Loving oneself has not always been prioritized by women and persons of color, who have been subject to estimations of servitude. Women, for example, have historically been described as passive in the very act that has defined

female value, the act of reproduction. Jacobs noted that "parent language for God has in the Christian tradition been used to describe the loving way God 'sees' us." But how does this work when the tradition does not see the parental role as equal between female and male, but opposite, even opposed, between passive and active, or weak and strong? Hans Urs von Balthasar has preserved this distinction between male and female as analogical to the difference between God and the world. But this description limits language for God: Jacobs argues that God's love is "freedom-granting": "therefore what we know about the trinity and God as 'Abba' is not simply that God is a father/male, but that God's love is a freedom-granting love, and God's generativeness is not constrained or defined by gender." Merely inserting "Mother" language for God does not necessarily solve the problem, as Elizabeth Johnson has said.

Discussion followed the papers; some of the ideas explored included whether humans are indeed the only species to display joint attention, fashioning new non-gendered references for God, and whether prayer is an experience of attention or a reflection on the experience of attention to God.

SUSIE PAULIK BABKA
University of San Diego
San Diego, California

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Thinking Catholic Interreligiously/Freedom
Convener: Elizabeth Huddleston, National Institute for Newman Studies/Duquesne University
Moderator: Rita George-Tvrtkovic, Benedictine University
Presenters: Joshua R. Brown, Mount Saint Mary's University (Maryland)
Robert Trent Pomplun, University of Notre Dame

This session was comprised of two papers, each approximately twenty-five to thirty minutes in length, followed by a question and answer session that filled the remainder of the allocated time.

In his paper, "The Cultural Challenges of Creation: Catholic Faith and Chinese Reason in Giulio Aleni's Wanwu *zhenyuan* 萬物真原," Joshua R. Brown spoke about how Giulio Aleni Wanwu *zhenyuan* **萬物真原** sought to present a Catholic doctrine of creation to a Chinese audience and render it credible by appealing to arguments from both classical Scholastic philosophy and theology and concepts from Chinese intellectual traditions. Brown analyzed and assessed Aleni's work as a model for Catholic theology that both draws upon Chinese philosophies and that seeks to learn from Aleni's successes and missed opportunities as a way look towards the further development of a Chinse Catholic theology of creation.

In his paper, "Faith and Reason in the Tibetan Writings of Ippolto Desideri (1684–1733)," Robert Trent Pomplun introduced the notion of belief in Tibetan Buddhism, with a focus on how the Jesuit missionary Ippolito Desideri used the terms *dad pa* and *yid ches*, which are usually translated as "faith" and "conviction." Desideri's Thomistic theology of faith and its sources were introduced and then compared to the terms and phrases used in his Tibetan writings, which showed that Desideri gradually developed his Tibetan vocabulary to communicate certain Thomistic notions about the certitude of faith, its cultivation as a virtue, and its role in perfecting the intellect. Desideri's translations and explanations of the infused virtues of faith, hope, and love were then compared to canonical lists of the types of faith in Buddhism, showing how Buddhist notions of what was known to reason and what was known to faith allowed Desideri to criticize certain aspects of faith in Buddhism while accepting others. The paper concluded that Buddhist notions of vivid, enthusiastic, and convinced faith described their implicit faith properly to the degree that they recognized the qualities of a true refuge as they make acts of faith, hope, and love to buddhas and bodhisattvas (even if they were explicitly mistaken about the objects of their devotion). At the level of implicit faith, then, Desideri believed Buddhists to have understood the formal object of faith, its importance as a virtue, its necessity for salvation, and the crucial role it plays in theology and philosophy.

The session was attended by around ten people including the presenters and administration team. The discussion that followed prompted both speakers to clarify points and speak to further research on their respective topics. Brown was asked about the possibility of an analogue between Rabbinic and Patristic biblical commentators and the Chinese commentators spoken of in his paper. He answered positively that there is an analogue between the three respective traditions.

In the questions that followed Pomplun's talk, the group concluded that (1) Buddhists shared these notions of faith because they were found in texts considered canonical by all Buddhists; (2) that Desideri had witnessed a great deal of Buddhist practice, including liturgies and meditations, but that he did not always understand their significance; (3) that Desideri accepted the Buddhist philosophy of the Middle Way as true for all created things, but not for God; and (4) that Desideri distinguished carefully between religion as a virtue, faith as a body of teachings, and faith as a law established by legitimate political authorities.

This was a very interesting and well-received session!

ELIZABETH A. HUDDLESTON
National Institute for Newman Studies
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

LITURGY/SACRAMENTS – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Kimberly Belcher, University of Notre Dame
Moderator: Thomas McLean, KU Leuven
Presenters: LaRyssa Herrington, University of Notre Dame
Bruce Morrill, S.J., Vanderbilt University
Erin Kidd, St. John's University (Jamaica, New York)

Flora X. Tang, a Ph.D. student at the University of Notre Dame, read LaRyssa Herrington's essay, "Baptism as Mystical-Political Engagement? Exploring the Rite of Baptism in African American Slave Narratives During the Antebellum Period," in her absence. The presentation explored the meanings and freedoms afforded by baptism, eagerly sought by many enslaved persons. African American slave narratives and the spirituals associated with them demonstrate that despite the fact that Christianity served ambivalently in the antebellum South as a tool of coercion and a force for liberation, baptism was experienced as a mystical-political force for liberation for many enslaved people. Herrington analyzed the baptismal theology implicit in slave narratives that described hymns based on the Jordan image of Christ's baptism and the idea of new birth and adoption by the Holy Spirit. She recorded a stirring reading of an excerpt from Nat Turner's *Confessions,* which proved a uniquely enlightening source. Turner's apocalyptic imagery marks his understanding of baptism as a mystical-political engagement of the memory of the crucified Christ, which was "dangerous" to the system of slavery. Baptism and the Holy Spirit, then, became a primary force for Turner's resistance, even unto death. Herrington proposes that this mystical-political meaning of baptism is a fifth possible "image" of baptism along the four Maxwell Johnson has described in the early Christian period.

Bruce Morrill's presentation, "Taking Liberties with Liturgy: Consistency and Conflicts in Principles, Legal and Theological," considered the recent incidents surrounding the use of "we baptize you" instead of "I baptize you" in the baptismal formula. Reviewing the events against the backdrop of the ever-unfolding sexual abuse crisis, Morrill focused on the voice of lay people, who freely advised their bishop and objected to the removal of Fr. Andres Arango. Their comments rely on a theology of priesthood marked by moral exemplarity and relationality, and they appealed to the merciful authority of Jesus himself as a higher example than the bishop. This theological frame contrasts with that of the 2020 decision (reversing a 2003 ruling) that "We baptize you…" renders a baptism invalid, which is part of a Vatican strategy "to shore up its ideology of the priesthood" and likewise of the sacraments in ontological terms. This sacramental theology runs up against a predominantly moral and personal understanding of the sacramental life in American Vatican-II-formed Catholics.

Erin Kidd, in "Is the Feminist Free to Pray on Her Knees?" also interrogated liturgical practice in the context of the clergy sex abuse crisis. 4E cognition examines the way that thought is "embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended*"* in human physical posture. "Vertically oriented gestures" like kneeling and standing operate in many cultural systems as orientations to the divine (up) and human (down). Kidd summarized psychological studies that associate higher vertical positioning with both

moral superiority and power differentials. Downward, constrained postures like kneeling are associated with submission to God, but also with "authoritarianism and fundamentalism, low arousal, negative affect, and aggressive and vengeful images of God." This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that such postures, in a liturgical context, are often proximally directed at the priest, and by the different experiences of such postures by women and abuse survivors. Even though kneeling poses risks, Kidd argues, not kneeling also poses risks: "The practices of our submission to God will always be entangled with the powers of this world. … The dangers of kneeling will only be alleviated when we live in a world that embraces all people standing up for themselves."

The presentations were followed by a lively conversation on authority, embodied practice, cultural differences, and other topics, ably facilitated by Tom McLean.

KIMBERLY HOPE BELCHER
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

MORAL THEOLOGY I – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: New Methods for Urgent Moments
Convener: Rachel Bundang, Santa Clara University
Moderator: Marcus Mescher, Xavier University
Presenters: Cristina Traina, Fordham University
Anna Floerke Scheid, Duquesne University
Ish Ruiz, Emory University

This session was comprised of three papers, each approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes in length, followed by a rich question and answer session that filled the remainder of the allotted time.

In her paper, "Freedom or License? The Path through Vulnerability," Cristina Traina observed that political claims for personal freedom—rooted in a "rational, individual liberalism"—often slide into the language of selective license, or *carte blanche* permission to do as one wishes in some spheres of life. She further argued that returning to the language of the common good, to a Catholic theology of existential and moral freedom, or to conscience to resolve the distinction is often fruitless, as conflicts over these concepts are at the root of the problem. Traina put her thought in dialogue with the work of Hille Haker, Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar, and Ada María Isasi-Díaz and used ethics of care, (inter)dependency, and vulnerability in an effort to develop a critical distinction between license and freedom. Real freedom, Traina argued, is bounded in our relationships and vulnerabilities with one another. Recognizing that our sense of freedom is often grounded in fear of one another, she sees that the honoring the *imago Dei* in one another is not enough, so she called instead for "freedom rooted in interdependence and vulnerability."

In the second paper, "Agency, Technology, and Freedom from Radicalization," Anna Floerke Scheid started from events such as racist, antisemitic mass shootings and the January 6 insurrection to argue that political violence is a clear, demonstrable reality. As she sees it, such violence disproportionately affects minoritized communities in the United States, negatively impacts the freedom of vulnerable people, and degrades democratic values and institutions. Through her analysis, she claimed that among the factors contributing to radicalization are social media algorithms that operate absent specific human agency. Such algorithms challenge Catholic ideas about agency and compel Catholic ethicists to reshape our conceptions about that accordingly. With special attention to how collective agency is fostered in community, Catholic ethics has a role to play in efforts to prevent online radicalization toward religious extremism and political violence.

In the third paper, "Rescuing Probabilism: A Tool to Guide Catholic Schools Forward on Matters of LGBTQ+ Inclusion," Ish Ruiz argued that probabilism can help Catholic school leaders navigate controversies pertaining to LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools. Rather than solving theological or moral questions, probabilism allows Catholics to evaluate the validity of conflicting moral arguments and ultimately allows the conscience to act freely, thus justifying a necessary pluralism that will allow Catholic institutions to teach magisterial doctrine while welcoming conscientious dissenters. In his presentation, he offered an overview of the controversy in Catholic

schools, explained the tool of probabilism and its relationship to freedom of conscience, and applied probabilism to matters of LGBTQ+ inclusion in Catholic schools.

Given our fraught political moment, with its threats of political violence and very real assaults against fundamental human dignity—particularly against vulnerable groups and persons such as women, children, and others pushed to the sociocultural margins, especially where actual bodies and lives are concerned—the audience and presenters engaged each other thoughtfully and eagerly. The discussion covered wide terrain, delving into the particulars of each presenter's frameworks and theo-ethical methods in their analysis of the present. For example, Traina focused on ongoing questions about the sexual abuse crisis and LGBTQ+ issues in terms of whose power and freedom are actually valued when we privilege individual actors over the contexts and communities in which they live. Floerke Schied zoomed in on the rise of white Christian nationalism and consequent radicalization among some Catholics. Ruiz explored how probabilism offers an opportunity to navigate culture wars and Catholic tensions particularly around questions of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Participants also sought to make connections across the individual situations each paper addressed and drive toward new directions and possible practical resolutions for each. What was interesting was each one's commitment to bridge theory to application, rhetoric to action. How might we best live out these renewed Catholic understandings of freedom in the public square and make a "space for grace" in our dealings with one another?

RACHEL BUNDANG
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, California

MORAL THEOLOGY II – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Freedom in Pursuit of the Common Good
Convener: Marc Rugani, Saint Anselm College
Moderator: Kate Ward, Marquette University
Presenters: Elizabeth Sweeny Block, Saint Louis University
Ramon Luzarraga, Saint Martin's University
Sara Bernard-Hoverstad, Boston College

This session consisted of three papers, each approximately twenty minutes in length, followed by a question and answer period and topic session planning meeting for the next conference, which filled the balance of the allotted session time.

In her paper titled "Searching for Truth: What Religious Freedom Can Teach Us about Moral Freedom," Elizabeth Sweeny Block argues that the pluralistic environment engendered by religious freedom can be a vehicle for greater discernment and dialogue in the arena of moral freedom. She began with the provocative statement, "Freedom is a problem that needs solving," drawing attention to conflicts of personal freedoms and the challenge of rooting freedom in truth consonant with human beings' social nature. Block highlighted three points to advance her argument that if we embrace the inherent right to religious freedom, proclaimed in The Second Vatican Council's declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, we can come to a better understanding of moral freedom. By affirming (1) a communal search for truth engendered in relationality and dialogue, (2) the sanctity of freedom, and (3) the richness of human diversity and difference, we overcome insufficient articulations of freedom, such as those constrained by blind obedience to political and religious authorities, and moral agents will have the space for genuine moral discernment in our societies. This achieves an appreciation for the gifts of the Holy Spirit found in our personal and cultural diversity extolled in Pope Francis' encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Ramon Luzarraga highlights the architect of *Dignitatis Humanae* in his paper "John Courtney Murray: Prophet." Focusing on his 1960 work *We Hold These Truths*, Luzarraga argues that the current state of affairs in the United States is the "barbarism" about which Murray warned, and that by returning to Murray's prescient insights, we might find a way to overcome the polemic polarization and base majoritarianism that threatens our society today. To address the undermining of rational standards of judgment, the corruption of inherited wisdom, and the exclusive appeal to individual subjective feeling, we need the revival of civility in society through education in rational, deliberative debate based on common foundations in philosophy and the practice of rhetoric. For the kind of consensus needed in our times, Luzarraga concluded that that we need a robust account of natural law that includes all voices and experiences. Scholars innovating new approaches to natural law like Craig Ford, Vincent Lloyd, and Cristina Traina can help us account for the experience of especially marginalized members of our communities to interrogate the question of what it means to live a good human life. To overcome today's challenges to public consensus grounded in truth, we also must have the will and desire to live together, engaged in conspiring within our communities to "breathe together" through debate and the development of shared philosophies.

Sara Bernard-Hoverstad addresses another threat to moral freedom in the context of the global climate crisis in her paper, "Climate Anxiety, Moral Agency, and Social Ethics." Recognizing the effects that climate change has not only on the physical environment but also on the mental health and wellbeing of those directly and indirectly affected, Bernard-Hoverstad contended that narratives currently circulating in the global north intended to stimulate sustainable action can, in fact, overburden agents and lead to moral paralysis. To promote moral freedom, especially among young people disproportionately reporting "ecoanxiety," she argued that social ethics must appeal to affect and emotions for effective, sustainable responses to climate change and its effects. Invoking the scholarship of Emmanuel Katongole and Bryan Massingale, Bernard-Hoverstad argued that communal practices which name the situation as tragedy, which need not result from moral evil, and incorporate the ritual practice of lament can help not only individuals fraught with climate anxiety but also the layered, overlapping communities in which they are embedded move from shame and guilt to compassion and hope. Such a deliberate externalization of emotion can help people avoid what Sarah Jacquette Ray calls the "fetishization of action" in the confines of a capitalist worldview and assume a deeper responsibility for personal and structural change in creative, socially equitable ways not yet imagined under our current subjective and intersubjective constraints.

In the discussion that followed, those present offered insights into each paper, noting intersections in the papers according to the theme. A notable highlight was the identification of the essential connection between freedom and truth, noting that, for Christians, truth is a person—Christ. An encounter with Christ can help us act in freedom together as a community and look through the cross to the resurrection for hope, especially in the face of social injustice. Participants also discussed the prospects of rational debate and rhetoric to promote freedom in our times and its effectiveness, compared to a narrative approach for touching human affect for achieving consensus, community, and personal responsibility in our times.

MARC RUGANI
Saint Anselm College
Manchester, New Hampshire

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic:	Religious Freedom and Human Liberation: Mapping Dissonances
Conveners:	Milton Javier Bravo, Edgewood College
	Susan Bigelow Reynolds, Emory University
	Ish Ruiz, Emory University
Moderator:	Susan Bigelow Reynolds, Emory University
Presenters:	James Bretzke, S.J., John Carroll University
	Cynthia Cameron, University of St. Michael's College
	Richard Hanson, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

In light of this year's convention theme on freedom, the Practical Theology topic session curated a panel that probed theological, philosophical, ethical, political, and legal tensions between religious freedom, Catholic identity, and human development. The three presenters anchored their papers in concrete case studies drawn from Catholic education, developmental psychology, and the Supreme Court.

James Bretzke began the session with a dynamic presentation entitled "'Pride' and Prudence in Catholic School Identity: Flagging Freedom and Liberation." In June 2022, Worcester Bishop Robert McManus declared that Worcester's Nativity Middle School was no longer "Catholic," and forbade Mass, the sacraments, or any other privilege afforded other Catholic institutions in in his diocese. This was necessary, in the bishop's words, because the school had flown Pride and Black Lives Matter flags, which in bishop's view "embody specific agendas or ideologies [that] contradict Catholic social and moral teaching [and] sends a mixed, confusing and scandalous message to the public about the Church's stance on these important moral and social issues." The Bishop referenced canon law and the Holy See Dicastery for Catholic Education 2022 instruction, "The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue." However, Bretzke argued, neither canon law nor the recent instruction required such an episcopal response. A strong case can be made that these actions run counter to the Vatican instruction which counsels a more measured, less confrontational, and prudent response to such conflicts. The Vatican approach reflects traditional understandings of authority, derived from ancient Roman law, of a "listening" claim of authority of the *mater familias' auctoritas* that was meant to complement the ultimate exercise of *potestas* of the *pater familias*. Foregrounding these concepts in relation to the Worcester case enables us to envisage a less conflictual and more collaborative *modus vivendi* for similar future controversies.

Next, Cynthia Cameron presented a paper entitled "Living into Freedom: A Developmental Framework." Cameron began by noting that the Catholic theological tradition has largely neglected the theological reality of childhood and adolescence, deferring instead to a theological anthropology that assumes white male adulthood as its default. Bringing age and cognitive development to the fore in theological reflection offers a wider view of human freedom. How do the developmental capabilities of children and adolescents impact their ability to understand and articulate what freedom is? To answer this question, Cameron employed the work of theologian Karl Rahner and cognitive psychologist Robert Kegan. Rahner argues that childhood has its own intrinsic goodness that is not dependent on the goodness of adulthood; thus, what we

say about human freedom must have meaning for children and adolescents, and knowledge about children and adolescents should inform theological reflections on the human person. Kegan provides a framework for understanding freedom as a relational and, therefore, developmental task. His articulation of subject/object theory explains the process by which young people develop the ability to reflect on a reality like freedom, which requires a sophisticated ability to stand outside of a relationship in order to analyze it. Development occurs when ideas that a young person is not yet able to reflect on become available as an object of reflection; they develop the ability to see their freedom as a response to being in relationship with God and others. This, in turn, provides a developmentally nuanced context for thinking about the ways that children and adolescents comprehend and exercise freedom as human beings created in the image of God. It calls on theologians to articulate a more capacious approach to freedom that accounts for these developmental "ways of knowing." Such an approach takes seriously the intrinsic goodness of children and adolescents, consciously including them in understandings of the *imago Dei*, and provides a more adequate explanation of agency in children and adolescents.

Finally, Richard Hanson delivered an engaging lecture entitled "Secularity and Religious Freedom: Charles M. Taylor's Narrative of Secularity and Secularization as a Resource for Understanding the Dynamics of Religious Freedom in Modern Societies." Religious freedom is a potent area of controversy, as evidenced in the discussion around recent US Supreme Court decisions. Foregrounding the Declaration of Independence's assertion of equality and inalienable rights, the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, and philosopher Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age,* Hanson examined the underlying assumptions about religion and secularity in the context of three contentious cases: *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru* (2020), *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District* (2022), and *Groff v. DeJoy* (2023). Hanson surfaced seven conceptual touchstones from the analysis of freedom and secularity developed by Taylor as a practical lens for understanding the issues at stake in the cases. Hanson argued that Taylor's theologically relevant insights help to reveal, refine, and expand the context of religious freedom in secular societies; offer plausible strategies for engaging in controversies associated with religious freedom; and give Christians and their religious and secular interlocutors pathways for understanding ourselves and living out our traditions in richer and increasingly meaningful ways.

The three presentations were pedagogically astute and conceptually complementary. As such, they sparked enthusiastic conversation among attendees. The first question, for Cameron, wondered how Kegan would respond to the suggestion that youth who identify as queer are too developmentally immature to articulate a durable sense of identity. Cameron responded that Kegan's developmental phases illuminate how young people gradually grow in self-understanding in ways that do not imply a dismissal of such understanding as "just a phase." Questions that followed probed dimensions of Taylor's thought and inquired into the implications of presenters' arguments for various Catholic institutions.

SUSAN BIGELOW REYNOLDS
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

SPIRITUALITY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Contemplation and Freedom in Late Modernity
Convener: Mary Frohlich, Catholic Theological Union
Moderator: C. Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union
Presenters: Benedict Shoup, University of Notre Dame
Kristen Drahos, Baylor University
Christian Krokus, University of Scranton

Benedict Shoup led off the session with his paper, "The Freedom of Being Before God: Edith Stein, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and the Sanjuanist Paradigm." He developed the thesis that St. John of the Cross's articulation of the human movement through the dark night of purgation to mystical marriage and union with God was more influential than most realize in twentieth century thought on authentic Christian freedom. The Carmelite Edith Stein developed a phenomenology of the movement from sense knowledge to rational knowledge to faith knowledge. In her view, the latter, a deep touch of God at the very center of the person, comprises the most radical freedom. Jean-Yves Lacoste focused on the move from Heidegger's "empirical I," who cannot have any direct experience of God, to a "liturgical I," who freely embodies gestures (such as pilgrimage, the cloistered life, or vigils) that pattern life according to the logic of a relationship with the Absolute. For both Stein and Lacoste, the disturbance and confusion John describes as a "dark night" are unavoidable if the person is to be freed from the confines of familiar, natural ways of perceiving and relating. Shoup concluded his paper by suggesting that this Sanjuanist paradigm can be discerned in other twentieth-century theologians as well, among them Gustavo Gutiérrez and Hans Urs von Balthasar.

The presentation by Kristen Drahos, "Re-Calling Contemplation: Byung-Chul Han and the Promise of Mysticism," focused on the Korean-born German philosopher's critique of neoliberalism and his recommendation of the contemplative path as an antidote. Han asserts that neoliberal humans are trapped by infinite, shapeless horizons that promise they can "become everything." Even the "authentic self" becomes a commodity subject to endless cycles of production and consumption. Like Gregory of Nyssa and Bonaventure, Han calls for an ecstatic contemplative *itineraria*. The first moment of his contemplative path is "profound boredom," which opens the way to liberation from compulsive activity. He draws on Augustine's notions of receptive leisure, as well as Aquinas's development of contemplation as imbuing the active life. Han's primary source, however, is Heidegger's "dwelling" and "lingering" that allow things to emerge and exist as they are. Drahos concluded her presentation with both an appreciation and a critique of Han's invitation to contemplation. Her primary critique is that his "lingering" stance includes no real path forward toward transcendence and narrative coherence; thus, it risks dissolving into infinite insomniac wandering.

The third contribution, Christian Krokus's "Christian de Chergé and the Martyrdom of Love," highlighted the discernment process undergone by de Chergé and the other Cistercian monks of Tibhirine, Algeria, as they faced life-threatening danger during the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s. While their Muslim neighbors and

their local bishop expressed their need for the monks not to leave, the Cistercian Abbot General stated that "The Order has more need of monks than of martyrs." Krokus traces de Chergé's gradually growing awareness of his own inner freedom not to be coerced by these or any other pressures. De Chergé's talks to his brothers during this period reveal his developing spirituality of martyrdom as freely giving one's life in complete nonviolence, avoiding any hint of painting oneself as righteous victim and the killer as wicked enemy. A chief source for this spirituality was St. Jane de Chantal's "martyrdom of love," which consists of simple, unostentatious, everyday acts of love for all those whom one encounters. De Chergé saw the essence of Jesus' vocation to martyrdom expressed more incisively in the incarnation and the washing of the feet than in the cross. The Tibhirine community discerned together their call to remain in place, and in the end seven out of nine were killed. Krokus concluded that these men witness to the inner freedom to disarm completely in the act of giving oneself in solidarity with one's most vulnerable neighbors.

The question period engaged further exploration of contemplative freedom in relation to interiority, narrative, and apophasis. The question was raised of whether a "return to the senses" leading to a liminal communion with the natural world is the opposite of apophasis, or its culmination. A final comment invited consideration of Howard Thurman's insights into interiority and community life.

MARY FROHLICH
Catholic Theological Union
Chicago, Illinois

THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Chelsea King, Sacred Heart University
Moderator: Kevin Vaughan, The College of St. Scholastica
Presenters: Charles Gillespie, Sacred Heart University
Ligita Ryliškytė, S.J.E., Boston College
Benjamin Hohman, Providence College

This session was comprised of three papers, each approximately twenty-five minutes in length, followed by a question and answer session that filled the remainder of the allotted time.

In his paper, "Freedom and Observation: Theodramatics Meets Quantum Theory," Charles Gillespie invited a fascinating conversation between Hans Urs Von Balthasar's theodramatics and relational quantum mechanics. One of the main points in Gillespie's paper centered on the idea of "observation." As Gillespie emphasized, physicist Carlo Rovelli proposes "relational quantum mechanics" (RQM) to include the observer as part of the relations observed. In RQM, there is "no external standpoint" from which to predict the freedom of phenomena in a quantum system. This was precisely where Gillespie brought in Balthasar as a dialogue partner. As he indicated, the phrase "no external standpoint," belongs to Balthasar's theodramatic conception of salvation history and the confrontation between God's infinite freedom and the finite freedom of God's creatures. Gillespie concluded that theodramatics can come together with RQM as a way to illuminate theological observations of divine and human freedom not as binary choice but as an expression of spontaneous life in relation.

In her paper, "The 'Cosmic Freedom' and Emergent Probability," Ligita Ryliškytė proposed an analogical account of freedom by bringing together the work of contemporary voices, such as Sarah Coakley and Martin Nowak, as well as the work of Bernard Lonergan. Ryliškytė focused especially on Lonergan's "Law of the Cross" with his theory of the world's coming-to-be, conceived as generalized emergent probability. One of the main arguments in Ryliškytė's paper was that the willingness to forego personal advantage out of love is the pinnacle of human freedom, in which the "cosmic" freedom of the upwardly but indeterminately directed world order becomes conscious of itself.

In his paper, "Has John Haught Freed Freedom Enough?," Benjamin Hohman offered some biting critiques of theologian John Haught, especially in Haught's work *God After Einstein* (2023). Hohman addressed Haught's post-Einsteinian reading of the categories of "time" and "human freedom" in relation to the cosmic scope of "Big History." He next assessed how Haught's contribution related to (1) alternative scientific accounts of these topics rooted in theories of emergence and (2) the influential understanding of the category of human freedom inherited from Thomas Aquinas as read through the interpretations of Bernard Lonergan.

The discussion that followed prompted the presenters to move beyond their points considerably. First, Richard Miller asked Hohman how certain scientific accounts of evolution are understood by the scientists themselves—in particular, how many scientists seem to tend to favor Stephen Jay Gould over Simon Conway Morris. Miller

then asked whether Lonergan had an imaginative or affective style of writing, much like Haught's. Hohman responded to the first question by stressing the importance of allowing scientists to be scientists and advised that theologians should not claim to know more about science than the scientists. Regarding Lonergan's writing style, Hohman engaged in a discussion with Ryliškytė, highlighting the presence of metaphor and poetic language in Lonergan's work, albeit less so than in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's writings. The conversation then became focused on original sin—which prompted a very long and rich discussion on the differences between individual sin and social sin. All presenters were able to chime in about their various understandings of how sin fits in with their conception of freedom.

CHELSEA JORDAN KING
Sacred Heart University
Fairfield, Connecticut

ASIAN/ASIAN-AMERICAN THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

Topic: Faith and Freedom in Asia
Convener: Edmund Chia, Australian Catholic University
Moderator: Akhil Thomas, Harvard University
Presenters: Huili Kathy Stout, University of Dayton
Antonio D. Sison, Catholic Theological Union
Christina Astorga, University of Portland

In line with the convention's theme of "Freedom," the Asian/Asian American Theology Consultation constituted a panel of three speakers to address how (un)freedom is expressed in three different Asian contexts and eras. The first discussed how China in general struggled with freedom in the early twentieth century, the second how Japanese Christians survived oppression from the seventeenth till the nineteenth centuries, and the third the resistance that arose as a result of the subjugation of Filipinas in the colonial era. Together the panel offered a quick glimpse of challenges that Asians encounter, as well as opportunities for bringing forth new theologies arising from the realities and struggles of the people, especially those at the margins.

The first paper was presented by Huili Kathy Stout, who recently defended her doctoral thesis at University of Dayton. Her paper was entitled "Three Competing Visions for Freedom in Republican-era China." She begins by introducing what modern China looked like at the beginning of the twentieth century Republican era. It stood at a crossroads as it fought for survival and freedom from the western powers, Japanese imperialism, and domestic weakness. Among diverse visions competing among intellectuals of the day, she posited that one can discern three main currents, i.e., the liberal, the Communist, and the Chinese humanist. These currents remain vibrant competing visions in China's political and spiritual life even today. She then went on to compare them by examining the thoughts of their representative thinkers: Hu Shi, Mao Zedong, and John C. H. Wu. The historical examination shed light on the challenges yet to be resolved in China's future.

The second paper was presented by Antonio D. Sison, the Vatican II Professor of Systematic Theology at Catholic Theological Union. His paper was entitled "Silent Inculturation: Faith, Unfreedom, and Japan's Hidden Christians." He began by recounting how Japan's *Kakure Kirishitan* or "Hidden Christians" heroically defied and outlived the great persecution of the Tokugawa shogunate (1630-1867) as they found incredible ways of preserving their Christian faith under the shadow of torture and martyrdom. In the crucible of suppression and suffering, Kakure faith birthed religious iconography, prayers, liturgies, even a sacred text, from fragmentary recollections of missionary catechism and biblical narratives interwoven with Japanese Buddhist-Shinto influences. He then engaged with the question of whether inculturation—as against "acculturation"—is realizable in the unfreedom of terror. He went on to discuss at length the contributions of Kakure faith to a more liberative critical reflection on inculturation.

The third paper was presented by Christina Astorga, professor of theology at University of Portland. Her paper was entitled "Postcolonial Imagination: Towards a Postcolonial Filipina Feminist Theology." She began by stating that in the age of

antiquity, the Filipina held an honored and respected place in society, but all that was suppressed and erased by the imposition of the Iberian-Catholic colonization. But through the years, the Filipina spirit of old refused to be silenced, and continued to define who the Filipina is in her struggle and resistance. While religion was the site of colonization, so it is also a site of decolonization. She then proposed a Postcolonial Filipina Feminist theology that is premised on the iconoclastic image of Mary in her Magnificat that deconstructs the Filipina woman narrative shaped by a Filipino Marian culture which promoted passivity, subservience, and victimhood.

The lively discussion which followed began with a comment by one of the attendees talking about the underexplored devotional practices of Filipina women brought to attention by Christina Astorga's presentation. This was followed by general comments connecting aspects of Astorga's paper, especially the focus on Filipina women's voices, with the voices of the silent Japanese Christians, the subject matter of Antonio Sison's paper. The discussion concluded with a conversation about the role of inculturation in Asia and Kathy Stout's insights on the political state in Taiwan.

EDMUND CHIA
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne, Australia

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR – CONSULTATION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Jennifer Newsome Martin, University of Notre Dame
Moderator: Drenda Landers, Marquette University
Presenters: Christopher Hadley, S.J., Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
Travis LaCouter, KU Leuven
Respondent: Megan Heeder, Marquette University

In his paper, "The Spirit's Personal Freedom in Balthasar's Theology," Christopher Hadley, S.J., offered a constructive account of "pneumatological personhood" and human and divine forms of freedom by pairing Balthasar's strange and lyrical book *Heart of the World* alongside Shelly Rambo's *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (2010). After offering critiques of hierarchicalizing or subordinationist tendencies (gendered and otherwise) both latent and explicit in Balthasar's trinitarian theology, Hadley's paper demonstrated how "Rambo's pneumatology and commentary on the Middle Spirit's ministry to Mary Magdalene accentuates, challenges, and clarifies Balthasar's pneumatology to reveal the personally free Holy Spirit Who is free from anthropomorphization." Explicating the Balthasarian distinction between "individual" and "person" wherein personhood is constituted by a "graced participation in divine personhood via divinely initiated mutual relations with the persons of the Holy Trinity after the analogical pattern of their own mutual relations," Hadley offered a definition of freedom as "manifesting the truth of a person's self in a generous acknowledgment of the goodness of the other persons to whom one relates." The paper then considered the "non-gendered" and "even seemingly impersonal" procession of the Spirit in Balthasar's thought—especially as interpreted by Rambo's three theological aesthetic themes of (1) wind/breath, (2) time, and (3) love/eros and as the trinitarian person who performs the mute and vulnerable witness to trauma—as a potentially fruitful starting point for reconstructing a pneumatologically-inflected anthropology free from any hierarchicalizing *Tendenz* which, however, is still arguably authentically Balthasarian.

In "Playing the Part: Dramatic Action in Balthasar and Stanislavsky," Travis LaCouter offered a theological reading of the experience of the space of the theatre, that "dark cavern of collective questioning" which can "teach us about how to use our own fragile and mysterious freedom." Appealing to Balthasar's fundamental theological problematic of the interaction of finite and infinite freedom, LaCouter proposed a turn to Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) as an equally significant and understudied Russian source for Balthasar, especially for the latter's conception of theological freedom in the *Theo-Drama* and elsewhere. LaCouter traced Balthasar's debts to Stanislavsky, including the parallels between Balthasar's "given situation" and Stanislavsky's "given circumstances," both of which name a "bounded" freedom that is the product of the trifold interplay of the respective freedoms of others: (1) author/playwright, (2) actor, and (3) director. The second substantive section of the paper introduced both Balthasar's notion of mission/personal vocation as role as well as Stanislavsky's rich concept of the "*Ya Yesm*" ("I am"), an ancient church Slavonic

phrase that means something like, "I am in God and God is in me" and which, especially when articulated against the Russian background of *sobornost* ("togetherness"), implies the human relationality not only with God but also with other human beings. In this context LaCouter also identified further close resonances between Balthasar and Stanislavsky in their shared emphasis on readiness/availability, attention/attentiveness, and feeling. Finally, the paper offered three concluding points, including a renewed call to consider Stanislavsky as one of Balthasar's Russian sources; the implication that "the Stanislavskian imprint of Balthasar's dramatics" reveals a Balthasar who is particularly attuned to ethical action; and, finally, a query about what the performance of this radical "ensemble" freedom—marked by "genuine revision, experimentation, improvisation, collaboration, and adaptation"—would look like practically in the theological guild.

Megan Heeder then offered an integrated response essay which identified points of provocative convergence between Hadley's and LaCouter's respective presentations. Such points of convergence included the broadly trinitarian frame in which both were operating as well as an emphasis on *disponibilité,* vulnerability, and relationality, about which Heeder introduced a new interlocutor in Martin Buber's "I-Thou" philosophy as a helpful frame against which both papers might be read. With respect to LaCouter's concluding questions on practicing theology, Heeder suggested that the model of the theological pedagogue—the theologian as teacher in the classroom—might aptly illuminate the question of theology as ensemble craft and theologian as practitioner in a space which prioritizes both collaboration and improvisation. A lively and wide-ranging discussion followed in response to further questions and comments regarding what the "ensemble" or "theatrical" practice of theology might look like; the potential connections in and beyond Balthasar between the acceptance of a theatrical role and the acceptance of one's personal vocation; whether and how we could speak theologically of the Holy Spirit's suffering, vulnerability, and destitution; the relationship between performance, imagination, and eschatology; as well as further commentary about some of the contextual and historical particulars of how Stanislavsky navigated the political climate of Russia.

JENNIFER NEWSOME MARTIN
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

BLACK CATHOLIC THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

Convener: Rev. Emmanuel Osigwe, St. John Vianney Seminary
Moderator: Chanelle Robinson, Boston College
Presenters: Kayla August, Boston College
John Barnes, Fordham University

In her presentation, "Preaching as a Path to Freedom: Narrative Homiletics as a Tool of Healing the Black Community and Reclaiming Our Story," Kayla August argued that preaching is one of the vehicles by which the African-American community breaks out from the grips of dehumanizing narratives and traumatic experiences in order to bear witness to new possibilities for employing freedom. Drawing parallels between narrative therapy and narrative preaching, August, building on the work of Timone Davis, Maurice Nutt, and others, argues not only that storytelling can be a key ingredient in confronting the false narratives that internalize oppression among Black persons, but also that storytelling can assist in reauthoring those false narratives and remembering other narratives that allow for new possible futures. Such a narrative style opens space for the power of God to move through the preacher in the act of "*kairos* preaching," preaching that addresses the needs of a specific people at just the right time via a conversation between God, the preacher, the gathered community. Embodying the spirit of the *griot*, the oral storyteller in some African communities, the preacher draws on the historical wisdom of the Black community in order to urge the community forward. The result is the unleashing of a creative freedom—not only for the purpose of finding new ways for dismantling the forces associated with white supremacy but also for effecting the healing necessary because of the various lacerations that white supremacy inflicts. Ms. August's presentation was not only *about* preaching, it also was self-consciously given in a preaching style, drawing together form and content in an impactful way.

John Barnes gave the second presentation, "The Sound of Sweet Repose: The Black Musical Tradition as a Theological Response to Black Violence and Death." Also responding to the presence of trauma in the Black community, Barnes builds principally on the work of James Cone and upon the observations of luminaries like Frederick Douglass, W.E.B Du Bois, and Sr. Thea Bowman, in order to argue that, in the midst of Black suffering, the Black music tradition mediates the divine promise of freedom present eschatologically as both already and not yet realized. Such was the function of the various freedom songs sung by enslaved Africans, especially in the form of the spirituals. Barnes stressed that this freedom was not fundamentally contradictory like the freedom proclaimed in the American national anthem—the land of the free, yet the land cultivated by the labor of the enslaved—but is instead a freedom that aspires for the full realization of Black humanity. Quoting M. Shawn Copeland, Barnes recognizes this freedom as freedom for healing, for growth, and for self-love. Importantly, this spirit is not simply confined to the songs of the enslaved Africans. Alongside the descendants of the enslaved, this spirit of/for freedom lives on in subsequent Black musical expressions, like the blues, R&B, and jazz, as tangible expressions of Black freedom in the land that their enslaved African ancestors helped to build.

This year's consultation was well-attended, with an approximate total attendance of thirty-two people. The conversation that ensued also greatly deepened our engagement with the presentations.

CRAIG A. FORD, JR.
St. Norbert College
De Pere, Wisconsin

CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM – CONSULTATION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Nicole Reibe, Loyola University Maryland
Moderator: Mia Theocharis, St. Michael's College, University of Toronto
Presenter: Andrew Massena, Loras College
Respondent: Bethany Slater, Denison University

Nicole Reibe opened the session, welcoming everyone, and made a few announcements about next year's convention in Baltimore. She encouraged attendees to start thinking about the rich, often complicated, relationships between Jewish and Christian communities in the Baltimore region as possible paper topics. Reibe then turned it over to Mia Thecharis, the moderator and incoming administrative team member.

Andrew Massena (Loras College) presented his paper entitled "Freedom with the Law: Proposing a Christian Practice of *Torah Lishmah*." Rooting his paper in personal narrative, Massena described his attempts to read through the Bible, cover to cover, only to struggle with the legal materials of the Pentateuch. He also noted the Christian tendency to dismiss Torah study or to reduce it down to love of one another, based on a Christian reading of Galatians. Yet, the continued presence of the Law in the Bible must serve a greater purpose than that of a religious-legal artifact for Christians. Many Christian Hebrew Scripture scholars have approached the legal materials for their utility ("it can sharpen one's understanding of God, hone one's ability to love or act morally, put one in one's place"), but Massena sought a way to engage in Torah for its own sake, suggesting that Christian take up the practice of *Torah Lishmah*, "a late antique rabbinic concept that interrogates and develops the motivation behind one's action." Turning to the rabbinic tradition, Massena presented the interpretations of *Torah Lishmah* in Rava, R. Eleazer, and R. Meir as a way for Christians to approach Torah study. Christians should study Torah, not for its utility but because it is divine teaching. Readers should wrestle with the challenges that Torah presents because the Torah was given by God to be studied. Torah study is a disposition and a practice. Returning to his narrative, Massena reflected on the effect of his own *Torah Lishmah*, which he has practiced for eight years. While his practice has had periods of frustration and boredom, it has also developed into a form of worship that engaged his whole self and made him more reflective about his Catholic identity. It also became a kind of ascetic practice, requiring mental and physical strength and endurance. Finally, Massena has come to thoroughly enjoy Torah study, engaging with the voices of the rabbis to expose what he could not see, and giving himself out of love, not a quest for utility or a singular "right" interpretation.

Bethany Slater (Denison University) responded with a paper entitled "Servitude for its own Sake: Freedom and God's Law." Building upon Massena's paper, Slater introduced a quote from Simon the Just, "On three things the world stands: On *Torah*, On *Avodah*, and On *Gemilut Hasadi*m." Slater focused her presentation on *Avodah*, "the service of God for its own sake, and on deeds of loving kindness." Rooting her exploration of *Avodah* in the Exodus narrative, Slater drew on multiple sources (Torah, Mishnah) to reflect upon the meaning of *Avodah.* The freedom of the Exodus was an

end of slavery (*Avodah*) to the Egyptians. The freedom from the Egyptians allowed the Israelites to rightly serve (*Avodah*) YHWH. The Israelite servitude to YHWH is a gift to them; it is for their benefit. This develops an approach to the Torah in which Jews are bound to keep Torah as part of *Avodah*. *Avodah* creates a new type of freedom. Both papers approached the notion of freedom within God given boundaries. Freedom that is not easily maintained, but requires effort and discomfort (both intellectually and, sometimes, physically). Yet, it is through these efforts that freedom is experienced.

NICOLE REIBE
Loyola University Maryland
Baltimore, Maryland

LATINO/A/X THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

Topic:	Queer Puerto Rican Identity
Administrative Team:	Jennifer Owens-Jofré, CJ Baldelomar, Mauricio Najarro
Convener:	Jennifer Owens-Jofré, Saint Louis University, Loyola Marymount University
Moderator:	Bobby Rivera, St. John's University
Presenters:	Ish Ruiz, Emory University
Respondents:	MT Davila, Merrimack College Miguel Diaz, Loyola University Chicago

The Latinx Consultation for the 2023 convention explored the topic of queer Puerto Rican Catholic identity. Ish Ruiz presented a paper, titled "Liminality, Pedagogy, and Freedom: Exploring the Liberatory Practices of Queer Puerto Rican Catholics," and MT Davila and Miguel Diaz offered responses.

Ruiz's paper analyzed ways in which queer Puerto Rican Catholics, an emerging voice in Puerto Rican culture, live in a liminal space between these three conflicting identities. Through this lens of liminality, Ruiz examined the tensions present between several different intersections of this identity: the relationship between Puerto Rican identity (*Puertorriqueñidad*) and US citizenship, the relationship between queernes and Catholicism, and the relationship between queerness and *Puertorriqueñidad*. He concluded that queer Puerto Rican Catholics often live in a cognitive tumultuous state of "in-between-ness" which is characterized by both suffering and transformation. Drawing from the work of Roberto Che Espinoza, Ruiz argues that this liminal space equips queer Puerto Rican Catholics with a new epistemological and ethical perspective that allows them to engage in liberatory action. In other words, the liminal space is transformative internally and externally. Internally, a sort of synthesis occurs where queer Puerto Rican Catholics can examine each component of their identity in light of the other and—after reformulating their understanding of these identities—begin to experience harmony among them. Externally, according to Jose Esteban Muñoz, this synthesis equips queer Puerto Rican Catholics with a new epistemological understanding of utopia that informs and guides their political and liberatory practices.

MT Davila reflected on how the concept of queer Puerto Rican Catholic liminality was manifested in the 2019 protests to oust the governor of Puerto Rico. The island-wide protest events were varied and most famously included a *perreo combativo*, which involved blasting reggaeton music and dancing in a sexually provocative manner. More poignantly, the *perrreo combativo* took place at the steps of the Catholic cathedral, which is a few blocks in front of the governor's mansion. During this protest, a trans flag was hoisted upon the wall of the cathedral as queer people danced "obscenely" in front of this sacred place. Recounting this story in light of Ruiz's paper, Davila reflected on the liberatory power of such a protest in the liminal space, which is reflected on the fact that the protest took place at the steps of the cathedral, for they would not be allowed to conduct this action inside the cathedral itself. For Davila, the physical liminal space reflected in this protest at the steps of the cathedral supports Ruiz's claim of the liberative power at the intersection of queerness,

Puertorriqueñidad, and Catholicity. She discussed how the liminal spaces are places for liberation but also survival. She further reflected on her own experience in seeking gender affirming healthcare for her child and the safety measures that were in place that would facilitate this healthcare. In many ways institutions that offer a safe refuge for queer people, and especially queer people of color, are aiding their navigation of the liminality between their conflicting identities.

Miguel Diaz opened his remarks with a popular image of the relationship between Puerto Rico and Cuba, which states that each island is like a wing of a bird—both flapping over the same heart. With that image, he offered theological reflections on the cultural ties between Puerto Rico and Cuba as well as the image of a bird, which is often invoked in slurs toward queer people in both islands: the word *pato*, which translates to "duck," functions as an insult against them. Responding to the concept of liminality, he drew from his own work and his own experiences in support of Ruiz's claims. His recent book, *Queer God de Amor*, uses San Juan de la Cruz to reflect upon God's queer loving self-communication. De La Cruz is known for his poem, *Dark Night of the Soul*, which Diaz reinterprets as a liminal space where God's communication could be made manifest. Regarding his own experience, he recounted the liminal "dark nights" that he experienced in his own quest toward accepting his queer identity.

The ensuing discussion further reflected on the concepts of liminality and intersectionality. Some important questions discussed included: How does liminality bring about freedom and what implications does it have for religious freedom? Is liminality a temporary state or is it possible for some people to live in a liminal space in a more permanent manner? Does the harmony or synthesis that Ruiz alluded to involve erasing components of one's identity in order to accommodate others and wouldn't that be problematic (because it is giving in to oppression)? How does one reflect theologically on the presence of intersectional diversity? And how does *mestizaje* operate as an identity without an essence? The illuminating conversation was productive and showcased a variety of perspectives on the matter.

ISH RUIZ
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

LONERGAN – CONSULTATION

Topic:	Freedom
Convener:	Erica Siu-Mui Lee, Holy Spirit Seminary College of Theology and Philosophy
Moderator:	Robert Elliot, Boston College
Presenters:	Jeremy Blackwood, Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology Christopher Krall, SJ, Creighton University Eric A. Mabry, University of St. Thomas (Houston)

This session was comprised of three papers, approximately 20-25 minutes each. We paused for five to ten minutes of questions after each paper, and then concluded with a short group conversation, lasting roughly five minutes.

In his paper, "Graced Freedom as *Memoria* in Conversation: Developing Lonergan with Doran and Lawrence," Jeremy Blackwood brought together into a fruitful dialogue two of the most significant Lonergan scholars in theology, Robert Doran (d. 2021) and Frederick Lawrence. The focus of Blackwood's dialogue was Lonergan's theology of triune grace. Where Doran primarily elaborated (by way of *memoria*) upon what is called Lonergan's "four-point hypothesis" in which various dimensions of supernatural grace are related to the four distinct trinitarian relations, Lawrence draws out the theme of the Triune God as conversational (Speaker–Word–Listening), emphasizing instead the two trinitarian processions (the intelligible emanations of Word and Love). Blackwood convincingly used Doran's notion of a dialectic of contraries in which the two poles of the dialectic must be held in a harmonious tension (as opposed to a dialectic of contradictories, in which the position must be advanced and the counter-position reversed) in order to relate Doran and Lawrence to one another. According to Blackwood, as two harmonious poles, Doran's relational theology of *memoria* and Lawrence's processional theology of conversation together cultivate a more thorough understanding of the human person's freedom in grace that may withstand both the individualist and the collectivist errors of our age. Blackwood's paper made an important contribution to Lonergan studies by bringing two central figures into dialogue who are sometimes seen as representing opposing perspectives on Lonergan's trinitarian theology. Blackwood also made an important contribution to the interpretation of Lawrence's work by explicitly connecting many of the dots Lawrence leaves implicit in his theology.

In his paper, "'The Truth Will Set You Free': The Freeing Power of the Virtue of Humility Backed by the Neuroscience of Self-Esteem," Christopher Krall, SJ, brought together moral theology, Ignatian spirituality, and neuroscience to argue that humility is a valuable path to freedom and well-being. Using Bernard Lonergan's theology of grace and modern neuroscience studies on self-esteem, Krall argued that humbly acknowledging our weakness (both our mortality and our proclivity to sin) is humanity's strength. Krall began his paper with the notion of humility as a way of returning to the ground of our being (God), which sets the conditions for liberating conversion and enables the human person to face existential threats with greater freedom. Central to Krall's paper was his retrieval of the centrality of living-in-tension as essential to human freedom—Aquinas, Thomas á Kempis, Ignatius of Loyola,

Lonergan, and neuroscience all confirm that an authentic human person is most free when in tension. Drawing on another dialectic of contraries, Krall demonstrated that "the dialectic of humility and magnanimity allow a person to let go from achieving and doing perfect actions by humbly admitting weakness, sinfulness, and vulnerable dependency while seeking holiness and greatness for the glory of God." Rather than seeing humility and magnanimity as opposed, he argued that they belong together, and using neuroscience, suggested that this harmony is a healthy self-esteem.

In his paper, "*Deliberatio Christi*: Did Christ Decide Which Parables would be Best?", Eric Mabry asked whether Jesus Christ was free in all the ways that we are free. Despite the development of Christological doctrine, which affirms that Christ is like us in all things but sin and that Christ has a human will and human freedom, theologians have still exhibited a reticence to affirm *deliberation* within Christ's human will. According to Mabry, even Bernard Lonergan maintained that deliberation would be "superfluous" in Christ. Drawing on Thomas Aquinas and Bernard Lonergan, Mabry sought to go beyond each of these theologians by arguing that Jesus deliberated and addressing how to understand Jesus' deliberation in relation to, especially, Jesus' beatific knowledge as human.

The questions that emerged after each paper were fruitful and encouraged each presenter to push their thought further. For example, Grant Kaplan suggested in response to Blackwood's paper something to consider is the fact that Doran wrote multiple books whereas Lawrence never wrote a book and instead his writing took the form of essays. Kaplan also suggested it would be important to look at Doran's other influences (Heidegger and Jung) in comparison to Lawrence's (Gadamer), and think through how these influences might contribute to the different paths each Lonergan scholar pursued. Vincent Strand asked Krall about the how the third degree of humility in the *Spiritual Exercises* connected to what Ignatius says about the Father, and suggested ways for Krall to clarify this point. Jay Martin asked Mabry a question about deliberation in relation to wonder and appreciated Mabry's account of Aquinas on Christ's knowledge as human.

JENNIFER M. SANDERS
Saint Louis University
St. Louis, Missouri

KARL RAHNER SOCIETY – CONSULTATION

Topic: Grace, Freedom, and the Church
Convener: Brandon R. Peterson, University of Utah
Moderator: Michael Rubbelke, St. John's School of Theology, Collegeville
Panelists: Richard Lennan Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
Michael Canaris, Loyola University Chicago
Mary Beth Yount, Neumann University

The Rahner Consultation focused its attention on Richard Lennan's recent volume concerning ecclesiology, *Tilling the Church: Theology for an Unfinished Project* (2022). The panel opened with introductory remarks from Lennan, who framed the book in terms of Pope Francis's call for an integral ecology and the interdependence of creation. *Tilling the Church*, Lennan explained, aims at an integral ecclesiology, which insists that we cannot hope to fix one bit of the church without considering it as an interconnected whole. That whole, Lennan continued, must be understood both in terms of the givenness of God's revelation as well as our particular human contexts; against some trends he sees operative today, the church cannot be reduced to one or the other. Turning to Rahner, Lennan summarized three themes from *Tilling the Church* that draw on this influential German theologian's work. First, the church is an expression of the relationship between grace and freedom. That is, as the fruit of grace, the church is from God, but as the fruit of human freedom, it is also irreducibly complex, indeed, "messy." God's grace, according to Rahner, has an "incarnational tendency," and so we find the Mystery of God amidst the messiness and ambiguity of human life. Second, Lennan considered Rahner's vision of the church as sacrament. Such a category, which styles the church as an expression and means of grace, can be misconstrued so as to idealize the church. Accordingly, Lennan warned, we must remember that God's abundant offer of grace is not always met with our right response, and so the category of ecclesial sacramentality must be paired with the need for ongoing conversion. Finally, the church has an eschatological orientation. Lennan follows Rahner by insisting that eschatology is more than the "last part" of a dogmatics volume, but a structural principle (which informs the book's subtitle, the church as an "unfinished project.")

Michael Canaris then offered his response. In addition to drawing on Rahner, he observed, *Tilling the Church* is written in a context deeply shaped by another Jesuit, Pope Francis, who is calling the church to operate synodally. Both of these influential figures are deeply formed by Ignatius of Loyola and his *Spiritual Exercises*. Accordingly, Canaris's response proceeded by using Ignatius as a lens to draw out several additional Rahner-inflected themes in *Tilling the Church*, with the goal of showing the church to be "incomplete"—not in the sense of being "half-baked," but rather as on a lifelong journey into inexhaustible Mystery. Quoting from Ignatius about the need to appreciate God's many created gifts without centering our lives on them and thus displacing God, Canaris lauded Lennan's (Rahnerian) description of faith as an "activity" rather than "possession" and his insistence that the church, holy as it is, stands in profound need of ongoing purification, especially in light of the abuse crisis.

Subsequent themes considered included the pilgrim church, the church as future-oriented, and ecclesial reception.

Next, Mary Beth Yount offered her own response to *Tilling the Church*, praising its hope-filled vision of the church as an unfinished project and exploring the tension Lennan raises between the Holy Spirit's movement forward and structures within the church that can stifle needed growth. Lennan remarks in *Tilling the Church* that church structures are not all good or all bad, but their complexity testifies to an "abiding need for tilling." How can we, as theologians, best participate in this "tilling" work? Rahner has remarked that the church often prioritizes the calm over the storm and the old over the new. Proper "cultivation," Yount proposed, requires better understanding structural resistance, particularly when it obstructs God's work. To do so, Yount explored the sociological work of Kate Manne, especially on "backlash" by those in positions of power. While Manne focuses specifically on misogyny, Yount suggested that some of her insights have broader applications, particularly when it comes to reception in the church.

In his concluding response, Lennan reflected on the role of theologians in the church today. Though they are not in the limelight as so many were at Second Vatican Council, and while it is not particularly clear who is listening to them (even during a synodal process), Lennan warned theologians against taking themselves out of the conversation. After all, as Rahner once remarked, hope that sets limits belies its own essence.

A spirited discussion followed, moderated by Michael Rubbelke. One topic of conversation concerned the implications of "tilling." Does the cultivation process sometimes include pruning or even leveling? Who is responsible for the work of tilling? After Lennan responded that "all" need to till, the conversation turned to the ongoing synodal process, including the role of theologians in it—not only as contributors but also as listeners, particularly in our institutional and parish communities.

BRANDON R. PETERSON
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah

THE SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS IN THE CHURCH – CONSULTATION

Topic:	Framing the Problem: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Global North and South
Convener:	Cristina Traina, Fordham University
Moderator:	Daniel Horan, OF.M., St. Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana)
Co-presenters:	Julie Hanlon Rubio, Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University
	Paul Schutz, Santa Clara University
Co-Presenters:	Stan Chu Ilo, DePaul University
	Sr. Josée Ngalula, Catholic University of Congo, Kinshasa

Because theology and the practices it informs contribute to a culture of sex abuse in the church, theologians must be part of its diagnosis and cure. This requires methodological tools that are suited to the place, time, and culture of the research. It also requires framing the crisis within the history of the "architecture of violence" (Ilo) that shapes today's church. Our session addressed methods for two such settings: the United States, and Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both studies found that a culture of clericalism reinforced priestly silence about abuse in clerical solidarity born in part of blackmail.

In "Framing the Problem: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from the United States," Julie Hanlon Rubio (*in absentia*) and Paul Schutz described the combined empirical and theological methods they employed in "Beyond 'Bad Apples': Understanding Clergy Perpetrated Sexual Abuse as a Structural Problem and Cultivating Strategies for Change," a two-year study of the roots of the US Catholic sex abuse crisis funded by a grant from "Taking Responsibility: Jesuit Institutions Confront the Causes and Contexts of Clergy Sexual Abuse." They wanted to overcome the non-empiricism of most theological analyses and the individualism of most empirical psychological analyses. They uncovered structural clericalism invisible to both approaches by collaborating with sociologists and learning quantitative and qualitative sociological methods. They found that US clericalism's interdependent elements include repression as the main strategy for dealing with sexuality; single-gender formation and scripts of toxic masculinity; and an emphasis on priesthood as power.

An unexpected conclusion transcended liberal and conservative balkanization among US Catholics: a *culture of clericalism*, not *priesthood* in itself, emerged as the culprit. This success convinced them of the revolutionary potential of interdisciplinarity. They also noted the challenges of finding research samples. Diocesan seminaries refused them access to faculty and students; only nine diocesan priests and one bishop agreed to participate; and the sample skewed strongly to men in formation in religious orders in institutions of higher learning. Nevertheless, they hope that their key findings can transform US priestly formation at all levels and that other theologians will make rigorous use of sociological methods.

In "Framing the Problem: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Nigeria and DR Congo," Sr. Josée Ngalula and Fr. Stan Chu Ilo reported on 20 years of Sr. Ngalula's empirical research on church sexual abuse in those countries, focusing on clerical abuse of nuns. Ilo described the context of this abuse in Africa: a toxic mix of clericalism,

hierarchicalism, patriarchal world views, dominant masculinity, warped scriptural hermeneutics, and abuse of religious authority fuels and sustains an ecclesial culture of covering up abuses "for the good of the church" and condoning double lifestyles as "a coping strategy" for celibacy. Ilo described the narratives and data that Ngalula has collected as reflecting four realities facing the church in Africa on (i) what breaks our hearts; (ii) what breaks our bonds of life and love; (iii) what breaks our communities; (iv) what breaks our future. He traced clerical sexual abuse in Africa, particularly in Congo, to the time of slavery in the 16th century; it continues through series of exploitative relationships and layers of suffering and pain built on an architecture of violence.

Ngalula's empirical method involved leading small groups in a study of 2 Samuel 13, the rape of Tamar, in which feminine scripts of obedience and service play into masculine power and domination. With this method, nuns gradually begin to witness about similar experiences in the third person, often sharing their or others' stories for the first time. She reached 5,800 witnesses between 2002 and 2022.

This long survey shows that sexual violence often occurs in the context of spiritual abuse and abuse of authority. The enormous stigma surrounding victimhood is a barrier to research: 43 percent of nuns surveyed believe sex abuse renders victims spiritually impure, 0 percent of them would report abuse if they suffered it or learned of it, and canon lawyers ignore or dismiss the few reports they receive. A culture of "sacred silence" about the seriousness of clerical sexual abuse and boundary violations by clerics and religious results. This situation demands compassionate, creative research methods to help the victims.

In the discussion, Ngalula, Ilo, and some audience members noted that in addition to conducting astute, responsible sociological research theologians can contribute to ending sex abuse by 1) encouraging religious communities to rethink or replace their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; 2) demanding alteration of canon laws requiring victims to give accounts of their own abuse in ecclesiastical courts; 3) in some settings, using dance, music, and other performative media to encourage storytelling and lament, breaking the stigma of abuse along the lines of the US #metoo movement; 4) in some settings, leveraging traditional practices of community-repair-after-a-breach, which focus on reincorporating the victim into communal care.

CRISTINA L.H. TRAINA
Fordham University
Bronx, New York

THOMAS AQUINAS – CONSULTATION

Topic: Freedom
Convener: Daria Spezzano, Providence College
Moderator: Shawn Colberg, St. John's University
Presenters: William C. Mattison, University of Notre Dame
Robert Barry, Providence College
Nicholas Ogle, University of Notre Dame

The 2023 Thomas Aquinas Consultation began with a presentation by William Mattison of the University of Notre Dame on "Virtue and Freedom: Resources from Aquinas on Habit." He addressed the question of how the virtues incline a person to flourish while at the same time guarding human freedom. From a Thomistic perspective, Mattison argued, virtues are habits, and thus they incline a person to act more promptly and with greater facility. But this raises a crucial question: namely, how is it that the "funneling" of action that occurs in habituation both perfects human activity and guards free choice? Based on his new book, *Growing in Virtue: Aquinas on Habit* (Georgetown University Press, 2023), Mattison addressed this question in detail. In particular, he offered an account of habit which both advanced practical reasoning through stable specification of a person's powers, and which also necessitated (and did not simply permit) practical reasoning and the instantiation of the person's habitual ends in concrete actions. Discussion raised the question of what the precise difference is between habit and disposition. For example, can animals have dispositions? Mattison replied that animals can have disposition but not habits strictly speaking. Thus, dogs can have stably disposed qualities, but these would not be specified by reason as habits. Someone raised the point that animals can have proto-moral or quasi-moral inclinations, to which it was replied that these might help to constitute proto-moral dispositions rather than habits as such.

The second paper, offered by Robert Barry of Providence College, was entitled "Freedom Under Original Sin." Barry took up the following question: how do actual preexisting inclinations toward particular goods diminish or exclude the possibility of freely consenting to the deliberation and choice of the highest good? Relatedly and by contrast, he examined what habits make possible "the exercise of freedom to love God for God's own sake" in the first moment that one attains the age of reason. Barry's paper addressed that dynamic in the first act of reason a person exercises upon attaining the age of reason, delineating how it is that someone in that state is free, or not, to consent to the possible judgment that "God is to be loved for God's sake" (ST I-II, q. 89, a. 6). It was noted that pre-existing inclinations make us more or less disposed to certain actions, which the will may or may not consent to. Discussion turned to whether there is a difference between consent versus voluntary and non-voluntary actions, and whether we choose evil when we could not have done otherwise than we did. Barry replied that the key moral distinction has to do with the voluntary, that consent is something which accords with one's will, and that even moral wrongdoing does not pursue evil as such but seeks something under the aspect of the desirable or the good (which may be real or apparent).

The third paper was given by Nicholas Ogle of the University of Notre Dame, and was entitled "Aquinas on Free Choice and the Scope of Moral Responsibility." In it Ogle defended a reading of Aquinas on free choice that views him primarily as an intellectualist, but one who nevertheless integrates voluntarist elements into his account. He then considered how this reading makes sense of some of the more puzzling aspects of Aquinas' account of moral responsibility, including his discussion of the voluntariness of omissions and the culpability of actions performed with an erroneous conscience. Ogle argued that strictly intellectualist readings of Aquinas on free choice fail to provide an adequate psychological basis for affirming key conclusions of his moral theology regarding the scope of moral responsibility. For example, the will can present an obstacle to action, either by showing disinterest in what the intellect presents, or by focusing on something else based on one's desires. In fact, the will has much control over deliberation and does not simply obey the intellect "like a dog fetching a bone." The judgment "I should do this" does not necessarily lead to the choice to do this. The will can assent or reject to proposed courses; yet it is always reasons-perceptive. Hence, the conclusions of practical reason are ongoing and revisable. Discussion turned to questions of liability in law and how extensively intentionality was to be interpreted.

DAVID ELLIOT
The Catholic University of America
Washington, District of Columbia

WOMEN'S CONSULTATION ON CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

Topic:	Women's Freedom: 40 Years on since Ruether's *Sexism and God Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology*
Conveners:	Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education
	Margaret Mary Moore, Independent Scholar
Treasurer:	Jessica Coblentz, Saint Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana)
Secretary:	Jennifer Owens-Jofre, Saint Louis University
Award Convener:	Julia Feder, Saint Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana)
Moderator:	Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education
Presenters:	Theresa A. Yugar, California State University, Los Angeles
	Rachel Bundang, Santa Clara University

This panel explored how much freedom women, particularly feminist theologians, have (and have not) gained since Rosemary Radford Ruether's (1936–2022) strivings for the beginnings of a feminist theology in her book, *Sexism and God Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology (*1983). It honored both Ruether's and Teresia Hinga's (1955–2023) contribution to feminist theology, given that initially Hinga was scheduled to deliver the presentation with Theresa Yugar and only weeks before the convention, passed away. Thankfully, Rachel Bundang was able to step in at the last minute to present with Yugar. Hinga in fact studied under Ruether and recently published *Valuing Lives, Healing Earth: Religion, Gender, and Life on Earth* (2021), a co-edited volume with Yugar, on eco-feminist theology, a trajectory that Ruether herself set with her own feminist ecotheological work.

The panel explored the pressing questions for feminist theologies today such as women's roles in the church, women's bodies and reproductive capabilities, violence against women and the ongoing silencing of them in the church and the academy. Yugar described herself as a woman living on the margins because she is Catholic, lay, a woman, a feminist theologian, and called to be ordained but denied entry into a Catholic seminary, as she says in her own words, "because of my sex". Yugar pointed to the number of feminist theologians who themselves have been "targeted, persecuted, and silenced by the Vatican for their theological perspectives which privileged women's bodies, voices, and experiences." And such targeting and/or marginalization included the scrutiny of the US Leadership Conference of Women Religious between 2007 and 2012, as well as "disinvitations" rather than invitations to speak on justice for women, excommunications, and the highlighting of the dignity of the planet over the dignity of women. For Yugar, patriarchy maybe the cross of women for all time, but feminism would be their liberation—pointing to the various and abundant feminist theological work already forged out of a hermeneutics of suspicion, out of frustration with a church that sends inconsistent messaging on women and their dignity, and out of a deep belief of women's own equal dignity and worth as *imago dei*. Yugar suggested a list of ways the church could truly care for women and named the number of male clerics who were to be celebrated for their support of women, some at the great cost of their own vocations to priesthood.

Bundang responded by thinking through the promises of freedom and the ongoing "unfreedoms" in the church, using the framework of friendship—given what Bundang saw as the enduring friendships, mutual mentoring, and collaborative scholarship between Ruether, Hinga, Yugar and Bundang. Bundang explains: "I use friendship as my lens because these are voluntary associations: we choose each other freely…and lifelong friendships in particular, grounded in affection, affinity, and kinship, are themselves lifegiving and formative." With this approach in mind, Bundang set the scenery for the consequent table discussions after the panel presentation, highlighting first that women's ordination remains an issue in the Catholic Church but also that it was no longer as galvanizing as it once was. She pointed to one of its detrimental consequences, women finding their ecclesial home somewhere else given their paths to ordination are "dead-ended," creating an unfortunate "Catholic brain drain." Bundang then pointed to the dissonance between the church and the world in terms of how women inhabit their bodies and take up public space. She says: "Implicitly we tell women and girls to take, develop and engage their gifts in other spaces where they might be more welcome and free to flourish" but in the church space, their "opportunities for participation, leadership, and growth" are limited, leading Bundang to ask: "How might we model a religious and spiritual life that takes the inherited faith as its starting point, and grow forth from that, rather than pushing people out?" Bundang suggests against becoming "mouthy" women theologians and instead becoming either better models or better teachers of questioning and interrogating rather than teaching answers or to simply have faith. She also suggests the reimagination of relationships as a way of reimagining ecclesial structures, something to be done even prior to our theologizing. Mommy theology, negative associations for women, bodily autonomy and women's health, violence against women and their ongoing silencing in the church were the other topics placed on the table for discussion by Bundang. She ended her presentation with her learnings from Ruether and Hinga—"their shared commitment to those they claim as their communities of accountability, and their clear vision in incorporating everyday lived experiences into the theologies they saw and imagined and wrote." The panel discussion afterwards moved back and forth between the idea of women staying or leaving the church. The toll of staying was weighed against the toll of leaving. One woman in the room pointed to the work of fellow women theologians as redeeming and the only reason she was able to remain in the church. Many in the room agreed they found themselves in similar positions. The session ended with an awareness of the ongoing problems but a sense of not being alone in the struggle, even finding life in the friendships we had as fellow theologians together in the struggle.

The session moved onto the presentation of the Ann O'Hara Graff Award. This year's recipient is Cecilia Gonzalez-Andrieu. Layla Karst, Jennifer Owens-Jofre, and Susan Abraham spoke of the impact of Gonzalez-Andrieu on their scholarship and teaching but also on a wider scale, of her advocacy for women and people on the margins. In the acceptance of the award, Gonzalez-Andrieu paid tribute to her mentor Alejandro Garcia-Rivera. Over 40 people were in attendance.

CRISTINA LLEDO GOMEZ
BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education
Sydney, Australia

FIELDWORK IN THEOLOGY – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Ethics in Fieldwork
Conveners: Lorraine Cuddeback-Gedeon, Mercy High School
Jaisy Joseph, Villanova University
Layla Karst, Loyola Marymount University
Moderator: Lorraine Cuddeback-Gedeon, Mercy High School
Presenters: Laurel Marshall Potter, Boston College
Dorris van Gaal, Calvert Hall High School
Respondent: Edward P. Hahnenberg, John Carroll University

This session was comprised of two papers and one respondent, each approximately twenty minutes in length, followed by a question and answer period.

The session began with Laurel Marshall Potter's paper "*¡Que viva la ronda!* Dialogue as a Framework for Theological Fieldwork," which navigates the ethical questions of representation and intersectionality. She drew on both Linda Alcoff's 1991 article, "The Problem of Speaking for Others," and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 1988 essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," to consider not only what it means to speak for those who are often deemed more marginalized than the researcher, but also how "anxiety over control" regarding self-perception presents an important triangulating factor in the field. Marshall Potter proposed a dialogical framework that pulls the theologian-researcher away from any presumption of objectivity by sharing control over perceptions and representations of self and other. By ceding control, "the researcher starts by opening themselves up to feedback from the beginning, and commits to round after round of vulnerable speech and accountability."

To demonstrate this principle at work, Marshall Potter presented a few examples from her fieldwork among ecclesial base communities in El Salvador. She noted how the value system of Salvadorian CEBs subverts how one expects to be read under hegemonic colonial systems. She cannot control how she is received into the community and what prior frameworks may be projected onto her—whether she is categorized as a well-meaning religious sister who facilitated scholarships for community members or seen through the lens of university groups that visit every summer. Here, Marshall Potter suggested, the dialogical models helps to clarify the need to cede control of how she is read and understood and to allow the iterative process of dialogical trust to be built as both parties continue to know one another. Dialogue "is a way of extending our first impressions, of allowing time to revise who I thought you were, or who I thought I was, or, perhaps more precisely, who we are to each other, who I am when I'm with you" and it possesses the humility of recognizing that "in the beginning … we are all wrong."

Dorris van Gaal continued the conversation regarding ethics in fieldwork with her paper entitled "Migration Experience as a *Locus Theologicus*: Qualitative Research in Migration Theology." She first reflected on the importance of engaging in qualitative research in the field of migration theology. As migration becomes increasingly incorporated into the study of theology, it is recognized as a special location of divine revelation. Because most of the field in the United States has been dominated by conversations on Latinx and Asian immigration, she specifically chooses to study

African immigrants, whose experiences remain distinct from those who were brought during the period of enslavement. Furthermore, she correlates the experiences of African migrants to the United Sates with John of the Cross' narrative of the Dark night to "gain a deeper theological understanding of transformation of identity and faith in the experience of migration." The rest of van Gaal's paper focused on the ethical issues that emerged during her fieldwork. The most important aspect for her fieldwork, she argued, is to do justice to the communities she has encountered. Two examples of adhering to this principle involved both ensuring anonymity and being intentional about not projecting her own migratory experience onto those of her research participants.

In his excellent response, Edward Hahnenberg situated himself as a Gen-X, post-conciliar ecclesiologist who agreed with the premise of both papers that "qualitative research is *theologically* productive." If anything, the "Fieldwork in Theology" interest group has forced theologians of the past three years to focus on the question of method and to be as rigorous about naming contemporary experience as they have been when using historical or philosophical methods. Hahnenberg raised important questions regarding the how and the why of correlation. For example, how did van Gaal choose John of the Cross as a correlative theological partner for exploring the experience of African migrants? At what point in the process of participant-observation did such a correlation become an obvious dialogue partner? He also addressed the point of dialogue mentioned in Marshall Potter's paper as both "refreshing and challenging." In many ways, the vulnerability present in ceding control resonates with the intercultural dialogue present in the works of Orlando Espín and María Pilar Aquino, who both draw on the seminal work of Cuba philosopher Raúl Fornet-Betancourt.

During the question and answer period, there was a lively discussion that engaged the questions raised by Hahnenberg and the process of correlation in fieldwork. There were about fifteen people present for the session.

JAISY A. JOSEPH
Villanova University
Villanova, Pennsylvania

THE LIBERATING THEOLOGY OF JAMES HAL CONE – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: "Black Freedom, Black Power, Black Theology"
Conveners: Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, Xavier University of Louisiana
C. Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union
Moderator: LaShaunda Reese, University of Loyola, Chicago
Presenters: C. Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union
SimonMary Asese Aihiokhai, University of Portland

The final presentation of the three-year Interest group, The Liberating Theology of James Hal Cone, focused on the theme, "Black Freedom, Black Power, Black Theology."

In the weeks that followed the 2023 CTSA Convention, the United States observed two federal holidays that commemorate hard-won struggles for freedom. Juneteenth Independence Day, celebrated June 19, was established in 2021 to remember the day in 1865 that the last enslaved African Americans, a group in Galveston, Texas, received official word of their freedom, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed. Fourth of July Independence Day remembers the signing of the 1776 Declaration of Independence that proclaimed the American colonies free from the rule of Great Britain. Little more than two weeks apart on the calendar, these two celebrations conjure up contradictory meanings of the concept of "freedom" in American life. This session is another installment in the ongoing dialogue between esteemed ancestor James Cone, considered the Father of Black Liberation Theology, with Catholic scholars focused on a critique of US Christian tradition and the construction of theology that liberates and empowers God's beloved in the ongoing freedom struggle of Africans in America.

C. Vanessa White set the tone for her presentation, "James Cone's Spiritual Journey," by playing BB King singing the blues: "There Must Be a Better World Somewhere." She introduced Cone as a theologian whose works are rooted in Black religious experience that freed him over the course of his vocation to speak dangerous truths in the face of public tragedies and the ongoing terror of white supremacy. She described spirituality according to Michael Downey and lifting up core characteristics of Black spirituality—God-centered, biblically rooted, joyful, contemplative, holistic, justice- and liberation oriented, an aural-oral tradition—White traced Cone's spiritual evolution, asserting that self-love of his Blackness and devotion to his community inspired Cone's theological work. For him, Black music, especially the spirituals and blues, radically expresses Black experience that is essentially the cultural and spiritual source of Black freedom, resilience, and hope. White concludes with Cone's final book, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody: The Making of a Black Theologian.* In this work, she said, Cone details his own spiritual evolution to reinforce the conviction that the spiritual life is one that journeys in freedom and liberation in becoming one's true self in Christ.

What is freedom without the ability to wonder and imagine new ways of being in the world? This is the question at the heart of SimonMary Asese Aihiokhai's analysis of the contributions of two eminent scholars to the theological world and the response to coloniality operating in the Black world. In his paper, "A Decolonial Anthropology

of Freedom: Insights from James H. Cone and Franz Fanon," he drew from the insights of theologian Cone and psychiatrist Fanon to argue for an anthropology that decenters the narrative inherent in whiteness—a decolonial vision of surplus that defines the human person. Aihiokhai described whiteness as "the mode of being in the world that is anchored in the hegemony of racism and colonialism." He offered Fanon's understanding of Blackness as a construction of whiteness that devalues, renders invisible, pathologizes persons labeled Black. Cone, he suggested, accuses the US legal system of historically denying the personhood of Black bodies, disallowing them freedom and justifying inhumane violence against them. According to Cone, US law creates a hierarchy of human being—affirming, recognizing Black personhood only when it serves the profit motives of white persons. Fanon's interpretation of Blackness as pathology, Aihiokhai asserted, refers to the "enduring (Black) embodiment of lack or scarcity" constructed by white power, racism, and colonialism that hold Black psyches captive.

To escape Fanon's pathological dialectic of Blackness, Aihiokhai turned to Cone's (and Albert Camus') perception of rebellion as a ritual of freedom to discuss Blackness as an icon of saturated freedom. Black rebellion, saying "no" to injustice, represents movement away from scarcity towards a surplus of meaning and possibilities of encounters where fullness of life in God is experienced. In Cone's point of view, Aihiokhai asserted, the rebellion of Black Americans is an affirmation of God and the Blackness of the God in them, a rejection of racism and colonialism, an emptying of the word Black of its diminishment and scarcity to reclaim through the power of the Holy Spirit, "its iconic possibilities for mediating surplus humanities, surplus imaginations, surplus historicities, surplus memories, surplus encounters, surplus hospitalities towards all." Concluding his presentation, Aihiokhai lifted up Cone's appreciation of the Black spirituals as an authentic expression of rebellion against systemic oppression from the days of slavery to contemporary social injustices. The spirituals, he suggested are a testimony to the "wonder and surprise" that ensue when Blackness is the conduit through which believers engage with the God of solidarity.

KATHLEEN DORSEY BELLOW
Xavier University of Louisiana
New Orleans, Louisiana

MENTAL HEALTH IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE – INTEREST GROUP

Topic:	Mental Health in Theological Perspective
Conveners:	Jessica Coblentz, Saint Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana)
	Elizabeth Antus, Georgetown University
Moderator:	Marcus Mescher, Xavier University
Presenter:	Todd Whitmore, University of Notre Dame
Respondents:	M.T. Dávila, Merrimack College
	Andrew Kim, Marquette University

The third and final year of the interest group focused on addiction, which Todd Whitmore brought to the fore in his paper, "Who is My Brother and Sister?: A Kinship Approach for Responding to Addiction." Whitmore introduced kinship as an alternative lens to the two models of addiction that have dominated the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the moral-carceral understanding of addiction, which judges those who struggle with addiction as criminal, and the medical-therapeutic model, which views addiction as a disease.

Ushering in his discussion of kinship were the tales of two Indiana families: the Sackler family—the billionaire owners of Purdue Pharma—and the Grants, whose two sons have moved in and out of the prison system as they live with addiction. Stories of these families illustrated how politics shape tight, loose, plausible, and implausible kinship relations in contemporary American society. Gospel portrayals of kinship trouble these contemporary social configurations, however, as they cast an alternative vision for relational intensity and plausibility. Jesus' challenge to the family structures of his day as well as his elective kinship with the marginalized of his context exhort Christians to embrace as kin those otherwise deemed implausible kin by prevailing US social norms, including those who live with addiction. Whitmore pointed to the witness of Our Lady of the Road Catholic Worker and Motels4Now, a low-barrier housing program in South Bend, Indiana, as two concrete examples of what a Gospel kinship approach to addiction looks like.

Discussion of Whitmore's paper commenced with two formal responses. With appreciation for Whitmore's Gospel call to extend our chosen kinship networks beyond typical definitions of the American family, M.T. Dávila uplifted the experiences of blood-related kin who negotiate their own limits and self-care needs as they accompany loved ones through addiction and severe mental illness. Calling upon insights from Family Connections, a network of families and caregivers supporting those with borderline personality disorder, Dávila emphasized the importance of asking what kind of kin one *can* be to those who suffer. Dávila also recalled that accompanying Jesus' instructions to embrace new configurations of kinship were calls to leave behind previous ways of relating; accordingly, many must grieve those kinship relations that they can no longer sustain with loved ones. Dávila concluded with an invitation to reflect on some of the perplexing kinship sayings of John's gospel—where, for instance, Jesus says "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30)—which might help us reflect on the realities of kinship that remain beyond our understanding.

Carrying forth this invitation to think with the New Testament Scriptures, Andrew Kim asked how Jesus' tendency to divide people into two sets of kin—those associated

with God's kingdom, on the one hand, and those positioned antagonistically, sometimes cast as Satan's kin, on the other—maps onto Whitmore's portrait of Gospel kinship. Affirming the importance of Whitmore's kinship lens for addiction, Kim also inquired about its superiority to the moral-carceral and medical-therapeutic models; this prompted Whitmore to clarify that while the kinship model importantly supplements some of the weaknesses of the prevailing models, these three are not necessarily exclusive to one another when it comes to effective responses to addiction.

The lively conversation among presenters and audience members that followed touched on the relationship between addiction and the "epidemic of loneliness" currently plaguing the US, the biblical figure of the "neighbor" and its place within theologies of kinship, the significance of different roles within the kinship network that supports individuals with addiction, and how the proposed kinship model implicitly frames the problem of addiction.

JESSICA COBLENTZ
Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, Indiana

CATHOLIC THEOLOGY AND THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: The Human Person and the Catholic University
Conveners: Edward P. Hahnenberg, John Carroll University
Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos, Seattle University
Moderator: Nancy Dallavalle, Fairfield University
Presenters: J. Matthew Ashley, University of Notre Dame
Craig A. Ford, Jr., Saint Norbert College
Elisabeth Vasko, Duquesne University

The second year of the "Catholic Theology and the Contemporary University" interest group continued to explore ways in which theology can inform how our institutions respond to the challenges facing higher education today. Following the inaugural session's emphasis on ecclesiology, this year's panel took up theological anthropology.

J. Matthew Ashley began his paper "Teaching and Spiritual Direction: A Fruitful Tension?" by reflecting on the *perichoresis* between the objective-theoretical and the engaged-spiritual at play in his courses on mysticism and spiritual direction. How far can one go in imagining the university classroom on the model of spiritual direction? Pointing to wide-ranging research on the benefits of contemplative practices in higher education, Ashley argued that theologians have a special role to play in making such practices available to students. Moreover, rather than "disembed" these practices from their respective religious traditions, theologians teaching at Catholic universities ought to "re-embed" these practices within the larger schools of Christian mysticism out of which they emerge. Ashley illustrated the benefits of such contextualization with three examples. From the Cistercian tradition, Ashley noted how Thomas Merton's "Fourth and Walnut experience" was experienced within a "mystical anthropology" that presents the spiritual life as an often arduous and gradual schooling of desires. From the Ignatian tradition, Ashley argued that the movement from the first week to the second week of the Spiritual Exercises avoids imagining contemplative practice as a "bubble" of serenity, sealed off from a suffering world. From the Carmelite tradition, Ashley pointed to Constance FitzGerald's use of the Dark Night to help navigate the paralyzing impasse experienced in so many ways by our students today.

In "Catholic Theology and DEI Initiatives on Campus," Craig A. Ford, Jr., argued that it is vital for Catholic theologians to engage in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts on campus. He contrasted two approaches. The first (illustrated with essays by Matthew Petrusek and Justin Anderson) adopts an ahistorical, philosophical method that presents conceptual definitions of "inclusion" or "diversity" abstracted from the struggles on our campuses. In contrast, a second approach (exemplified in an essay by Teresa Nance) is autobiographical, contextualized, and data-informed. Nance offers an argument firmly grounded in the concrete reality of campus life today; however, what she does not provide is any theological analysis of these issues. Ford described a chasm between theological and philosophical analyses of Catholic identity, on the one hand, and on-the-ground efforts of DEI officers, on the other. Calling us into the breach, Ford challenged theologians to craft theological arguments that deliberately engage the

exclusions and inequities on our campuses based on race, ethnicity, ability, gender, and socioeconomic background.

In "Are You Brave Enough to Believe? Courageous Leadership in Catholic Universities," Elisabeth T. Vasko drew on the mystic Julian of Norwich and the poet Amanda Gorman to awaken the moral imagination within our institutions. For Vasko, Catholic universities have lost touch with Christianity's courageous origin story. Too many decisions are made out of fear instead of love. Starting with the abundance of love, Vasko argued, is neither sentimental nor naïve. It is the foundation for an alternative vision and for concrete, disruptive action that demands great courage. In a world of hegemonic violence, pandemic, natural disaster, economic inequality, and profound suffering—a world not unlike our own—Julian of Norwich saw an alternative to imagining a God of wrath. Her confidence that "all shall be well" was not a pious platitude; it was a radical call for inclusion. Julian's disruptive insight reveals "the power of vigilant reflection within the context of myopic vision." Many of us work in Catholic universities where all is not well. In order to unmask structural problems *and* disrupt a dysfunctional social order, people need creative space for healing and imagining afresh. Amanda Gorman suggests a path forward by asking two questions, "Whose shoulders do you stand on? What do you stand for?" Her poetry unearths the past in order to open up the future. We might do the same, Vasko suggests, by asking concrete questions at our own institutions: How did everyone arrive at their respective positions? How was the land acquired? How has money flowed over time? Doing so requires great courage and firm hope for the future.

Discussion among the thirty-seven participants ranged widely and fruitfully, touching on the communal nature of hope, false dichotomies, center versus periphery, the mental health crisis among undergraduates, the importance of building coalitions, and the need for a new theology of the university.

EDWARD P. HAHNENBERG
John Carroll University
University Heights, Ohio

DECOLONIZING CATHOLIC THEOLOGY – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Sites of Decoloniality
Convener: Rufus Burnett, Jr., Fordham University
Presenter: Mark Freeland, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee
Respondents: Cecilia Titizano, Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University
Steven J. Battin, University of Notre Dame

This year the Decolonizing Catholic Theology Interest Group set out to fulfill its goal to engage with a decolonial project in a site or location. Alongside the concurrent session, this goal was fulfilled with a pre-conference tour of Minowakiing (Milwaukee) and the Electa Quinney Institute for American Indian Education. The tour ended with a fire circle led by the resident elder Vern "Turtle" Altiman. The concurrent session featured a guest lecture by Mark Freeland entitled, "Minowakiing as the Good Land: Milwaukee and the Decolonization of Indigenous Relationships to Land and Life," and responses by Steven Battin and Cecilia Titizano.

Freeland's lecture exposed how settler colonialism persists in Minowakiing and Turtle Island by misrepresenting and dislocating American Indian life ways and languages. As an example, Freeland offered an analysis of the reductive "hunter gatherer" trope often used to render Indigenous ways of relating to the land as "primitive" in comparison to Euro-American ways. Freeland identified how "hunter gatherer" misrepresents Indigenous life ways in the US by erasing their farming innovations. The "hunter gatherer" trope, as Freeland discussed, made way for the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Johnson v. M'Intosh* case of 1823 in which Indigenous peoples were alienated from their ways of conferring and rescinding titles to their lands. For Freeland, the language used to justify Chief Justice John Marshall's opinion in *Johnson v. M'Intosh* illustrates the settler colonialist construction of a "fictive native." Freeland's lecture worked to dislocate the "fictive native" by reflecting upon aadizookaanag, an Anishinaabemowin origin narrative. From the worldview implied in aadizookaanag, Freeland argued that decolonization is an activity of restoring Minowakiing to—the good, beautiful, and plentiful *place*—and wresting it from structures of settler colonialism. These structures, transformed the place of *Minowakiing* to *Menewuk*, the Potawatomi term which means "the place where we were led away by hand." Decolonizing in Minowakiing, according to Freeland, means restoring the Anishinabe relationship to manidoo, the life energy that connects humans and other living beings in a given space. As Freeland argued, manidoo is often "euroformed" into Christian theological notions of spirit and Spirit, which dislocate manidoo and its connectedness to particular spaces. Similarly, Freeland argued that European Christian notions of history and linear time often dislocate the spatial and horizontal ways in which Indigenous peoples commune with their ancestors and the environment. To conclude, Freeland offered that if decolonizing Catholic theology is possible, then it would have to follow the language and logics of Indigenous thought in order that it might sufficiently eradicate, rather than "repudiate" and "rescind," the violent consequences of the doctrine of discovery.

In response to Freeland, Cecilia Titizano drew connections to her perspective as an Andean/Qolla person. She contributed that her work and Freeland's are based upon

"systematic philosophical treatises" or "cosmologies." In her remarks, she argued that decolonizing Christianity should begin with the reality of cosmological difference and work against the colonial logics that "euroform" Turtle Island and Abya Yala. Similar to Freeland's reflections on manidoo, Titizano offered that the Andean term for life energy, Ajayu, is also misrepresented and translated as Spirit. Titizano contended that theological decolonization must work to end what she referred to, following Brazilian anthropologist, Viveieros de Casto, as the "equivocation" of euro-Christian and Indigenous concepts. Titizano closed her reflection by offering that decolonizing Catholic theology requires delinking from essentialist Platonic interpretations of Christianity and the rethinking of Christian doctrine in light of the major challenges that "indigenous philosophical systems" present to Christianity.

Steven Battin's reflection on Freeland's lecture offered important points of distinction between what is referred to by the interest group as "decolonial theory" and what he referred to as "Indigenous movements." Indigenous movements, such as those referenced by Freeland and Titizano, are not, according to Battin, privileging or explicitly adding to the discursive work of decolonial theorists. Rather, they are actively engaged in their own analysis of domination which develops out of their lived experiences of colonial domination. Echoing Titizano and Freeland, Battin affirmed that decolonizing Catholic theology requires a commitment to sites of decolonial praxis where the activity of regenerating Indigenous life ways is embodied and active. Echoing insights set out in Freeland's book, *Aazheyaddizi: Worldview, Language and Logics of Decolonization*, Battin stressed that it is crucial for theologians to understand that Indigenous movements are rooted in *spatiality* in which relationship, balance, and equilibrium are the goals, "not temporal progress."

Other participants in the session raised questions and offered comments about the efficacy of decolonizing Catholic theology. One participant asked about Indigenous autonomy and Christian reception and whether or not Indigenous receptions of Christian ideas were fundamentally the result of colonialist coercion. Another participant asked about the Bible and how biblical scholarship figures into decolonizing theology. These and other questions remained open as the session came to a close. In all, the session concluded with a sobering appreciation of the challenge that Indigenous worldviews and movements bring to theological reflection.

RUFUS BURNETT, JR.
Fordham University
Bronx, New York

DISABILITY THEOLOGY – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: The Past: Looking for Evidence of Disability Theology
Convener: Mary Jo Iozzio, Boston College
Moderator: Stephanie Edwards, Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium
Presenters: Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F., Boston College
Miguel J. Romero, Saint Louis University

This first session of the three-year group status began with an introduction to the work of the Disability Theology Interest Group. Mary Jo Iozzio provided the general purpose and planned subjects to be covered in each of the three years with the goal of ever-more mainstreaming the CTSA's engagement with the diversity present in lives of persons with disability, the most diverse underrepresented group across the globe. This Disability Theology Interest Group signals a distinctly Catholic approach to work on disability—from systematics to history, scripture, and ethics—by considering welcome, accommodation, collaboration, justice, worship, play, and friendship over the three-year term.

The session included two papers, thirty-five minutes each, followed by a quick question and answer period, and concluded with a robust conversation among the presenters and audience. Stephanie Edwards moderated the pace of presentations and fielded the discussion. Unfortunately, Megan Hopkins, who scheduled to present her paper, "Conversion through Convalescence: Recovering the Disabled Ignatius of Loyola," was unable to attend the Convention.

In his paper, "Disability & Medieval Theology," Miguel Romero drew attention to the resource we have in the theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas, focusing on Aquinas's account of the preternatural perfection of humanity in the state of original innocence and the supernatural perfection of the body hoped for in the final resurrection. Aquinas's account of the human body amid the unfolding drama of the history of grace stands at odds with the contemporary cultural attitude profiled in the paper. Specifically, Aquinas's outlook resists both (1) simplistic idealized caricatures of humanity before the Fall and (2) heterodox eugenic fantasies about the resurrection bodies of the blessed. Thinking with Aquinas, he recognizes that, on the horizon of an entire lifetime, the diverse phenomena, social dynamics, and experiences typically organized under the contemporary heading "disability" are an unavoidable aspect of every particular person's life. He notes with no surprise that those phenomena, dynamics, and experiences have held a place of prominence in the Catholic intellectual tradition and the teachings of the Catholic Church. That prominence has been ignored at times and regularly faces challenges from various quarters in contemporary Catholic theology. Today, there is a need for a revitalized Catholic theological engagement with these themes, one which draws deeply from the sources of the Catholic tradition, translated and extended to meet the challenges of this moment in history.

In her paper, "Reinventing Life, Recomposing Faith: Reflections on the Interactive Dynamics of Disability, Interdependence and Theological Imagination," Margaret E. Guider set forth the position that persons with disability and the communities to which they belong are a *locus theologicus* of global significance. Continuing with a personal narrative that is informed and influenced by two specific and sometimes related

disabilities, Down Syndrome and dementia-related conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Guider reviewed various models of disability, and suggested that the model of interdependence lends itself to critical theological reflection. In doing so, she was mindful of the ways in which the two disabilities highlighted—one lifelong and the other late onset—invariably require persons in relationship to make adaptations to life and, particularly for those who are Christian, to search for more adequate responses to questions about the mystery of God, human suffering, and the meaning of personhood. Drawing upon selected insights from the Franciscan theologian, John Duns Scotus, an effort was made to extend the theological horizons of the Christian community in ways that will support people in the processes of reinventing their lives and recomposing faith in meaningful ways. To this end, she drew attention to the role that theological imagination can play in supporting and advancing alternative and emergent models of disability such as interdependence, while challenging the church's tendency to default to the religious model as recently expressed by Pope Francis' "Magisterium of Fragility."

Thirty years of disability studies continues to attract members of academic guilds, from the humanities and theo-philosophical disciplines to the applied sciences of architecture, economics, engineering, healthcare, law, et al. Many titles in disability theology are readily available and very good for their introductions to the global diversity and prevalence of disability in the human community. The theological significance and implications of engaging disability across our areas of study are far-reaching for the central questions in our tradition—from human dignity to the common good and the communion with one another and with Jesus, *The Disabled God*.

MARY JO IOZZIO
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

PUBLIC THEOLOGY – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Freedom
Conveners: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
David DeCosse, Santa Clara University
Moderator: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
Presenters: Victor Carmona, The University of San Diego
David DeCosse, Santa Clara University

This interest group will facilitate a multi-year shared space for theological scholars to gather across various interdisciplinary fields to further develop and future the praxis of doing Catholic public theology in the twenty-first century commensurate with a postcolonial, multiracial, global people of God. To align thematically with this year's convention, this inaugural session centralized and problematized different prevalent discourses and practices of limited and limiting realizations of freedom in the United States to which Catholic public theologies critically and constructively respond, especially in light of multiple intersecting systemic and structural oppressions. Showcasing recent salient publications that interweave ethics, history, and systematic/constructive theology about theologies of freedom and freedom movements, this session offered a panel that engaged with critical and constructive theological views, both historical and contemporary, about how more just alternative visions of Catholic discourse and praxis around freedom emerged from contextual, liberationist, decolonial, and human dignity-based perspectives about the divine, relationality in suffering and in hope, and embodiment in the body politic. After introductions about the interest group itself, the conveners, and both panelists, each panelist presented, and then the fifteen attendees enjoyed some small group discussion, followed by broader questions and discussion with the panelists.

In his presentation titled, "The Reign of God, Freedom, and US Immigration Policy," Victor Carmona interlaced narrative case studies of migration studies, US Latine theology, and ecclesial and political movements to critically analyze freedom in/and immigration policy and reform. Contextualized by migrant experiences of deserts, of hypermilitarized crossings, and of increasing border walls, Carmona drew on and extended Spanish biblical studies scholar José Antonio Pagola to stress divine compassion and tenderness in Jesus' preaching and ministerial praxis for the reign of God. Divine tenderness reveals a theological praxis of compassion that attends to and seeks to criticize and change the limited and limiting realizations of freedom in current US migrant experiences.

David DeCosse grounded his presentation in his recent book *Created Freedom under the Sign of the Cross: A Catholic Public Theology for the United States* (Pickwick Publications, 2022). He traced different approaches to freedom, with concrete cases ranging from progressive and populist to libertarian and authoritarian views. DeCosse then crafted a constructive theo-ethic of freedom at the nexus of creation and the cross, in conversation with Karl Rahner, David Hollenbach, and M. Shawn Copeland. He also argued that any such Catholic public theology must account for freedom in terms of the body, relationships, history, the moral good, and God. The

aim is a Catholic public theology of freedom that is credible about constraints related to race, gender, and sexuality and liberal, too, in its affirmation of religious freedom.

After both presentations, the moderator encouraged small group discussion. Attendees gathered in four groups and discussed this prompt: Theologians increasingly read and respond to, as well as refashion their theological praxis in light of, ecclesial and political signs of the times, as well as constructively imagine and concretize more just alternative visions of freedom and the common good. Describe and analyze in your view some of the conceptual and practical challenges regarding freedom in these publics we inhabit and also some of the ways that public theologians might respond to these challenges in our time, marked by globalization, political polarization, racial and gender-based violence, ecological violence and the climate crisis, or other forms of injustice, violence, and unfreedom in which we live, move, and have our being in the present moment. Groups engaged this prompt in diverse ways, then reconvened for an open-ended discussion about conflicting operative views of freedom that fuel this polarization and violence on the one hand and promote immigration reform, bodyrights, and healthcare on the other hand. In sum, freedom is actualized in relationships of mutual reciprocal rights and responsibilities to create the common good. The session concluded with gratitude to the panelists for an enriching session and discussion, and with an invitation to attendees to share further ideas for future sessions with the conveners. The second year of this interest group intends to address social movements for a multiracial, multicultural, and multifaith democracy, in conjunction thematically with next year's convention theme of social salvation.

ROSEMARY P. CARBINE
Whittier College
Whittier, California

THEOLOGIES OF PEACEBUILDING AND NONVIOLENCE – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: State of the Conversation
Conveners: Eli McCarthy, Georgetown University
Moderator: Leo Guardado, Fordham University
Presenters: Leo Lushumbo, Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University
Heather DuBois, Boston College
Lisa Sowle Cahill, Boston College

The session began with Leo Lushombo, whose paper, "Environmental Justice, Peacebuilding, and Nonviolence," centered the struggle against mining within the horizon of peacebuilding and nonviolence, reminding participants that mining was at the heart of the colonial project of the sixteenth century that continues today. Focusing on the Democratic Republic of Congo, she explained how the mineral extraction of tantalum, tin, and tungsten ("the 3 T's"), all of which are used in consumer electronics, fuels conflict and forced displacement in the region. To end many of the conflicts taking place around the world, issues of natural resources and mining must be addressed as a fundamental part of what drives conflict in modernity.

Building off of Pope Francis' teaching, Lushombo highlighted some ways of moving forward, which included simple daily gestures that break with the logic of violence, exploitation, and selfishness (*Laudato Si'*, 230), maintaining harmony with creation through active nonviolence, the self determination of Indigenous peoples, and ecological just peace. She lifted up integral ecology as a frame for understanding positive peace and providing norms for active nonviolence. She explained how active nonviolence for Pope Francis shows that unity is greater than (destructive) conflict, and that active nonviolence is about engaging rather than avoiding conflict.

But, she asked, can mining be performed in a just and sustainable way? Rather than providing a direct answer that foreclosed discussion, she guided participants through the experience of various communities across the globe who have responded to the structural and cultural violence embedded in mining practices to point to possible ways of constructively engaging mining and its supporters. Examples included communities in Peru, El Salvador, and the Philippines and the ways that universities, parishes, and base ecclesial communities have actively and nonviolently intervened to strengthen the local community's right to self-determination about mining. Lushombo ended by advocating for a greater social imaginary around peace that centers indigenous peacebuilding practices, values, and images.

Heather DuBois began her paper, "An Appreciative Inquiry," by explaining both her academic background in peace and conflict studies as well as her experience working in the nonprofit peacebuilding sector. Her framing question or "appreciative inquiry" was: "Ask—not yet—what more do we need, but—first—what do we have now?" The aim of this question was to invite those in the session—in a participatory manner—to communally discern what theology already has within its own discipline that resonates with and contributes to the many tasks of peacebuilding.

In light of the focus of this first year, DuBois provided an explanation of some of Johan Galtung's contributions to our understanding of violence and peace, particularly the differences between (1) personal and structural violence, (2) negative and positive peace, and (3) cultural and symbolic violence. She then helped participants see how

various kinds of theologies already attempt to respond to realities located within these three categories of violence and peace.

Dubois then examined the current state of key concepts in peace and conflict studies, with a particular focus on peacebuilding as a newer and more capacious term that exceeds more limited interventions like peacemaking and peacekeeping. This clarification of concepts and terms allowed for a discussion of where various theologies converge with peacebuilding, with examples of creative convergences happening in theological works that engage ethnography, community organizing, social psychology, spirituality, etc. In the conclusion, DuBois highlighted the possibility that simply shifting to the language of peacebuilding in theology can give rise to division, but that we are more than our divisions, and that there is much substantial transformation already taking place that begins by first naming violence and then developing new methods and interdisciplinary networks that enable nonviolence and build peace.

In her paper, "Can the Theology of Nonviolent Peacebuilding Co-Exist with the Permission of Just Defense," Lisa Sowle Cahill spoke about how Pax Christi International was founded both to offer nonviolent witness and peacebuilding. She specifically noted an important relationship of how nonviolent resistance helps to shift power, so that negotiations with adversaries (a core peacebuilding practice) are more likely to be fruitful. She also explained how the logic of just war is not conducive to sustainable peace. She mentioned the inherent escalatory dynamic of just war logic, such as leaning into the notion of "victory," and dispositions cultivated to sustain dominance. She argued that the war in Ukraine provides an example of this.

Cahill discussed Pope Francis' contributions in his 2017 World Day of Peace message, which focuses on nonviolence as a style of politics for peace. She argued that he goes beyond an understanding of nonviolent resistance as the shifting of power, to focus on nonviolence as a vital contribution to a just and lasting peace. She also pointed out how nonviolent resistance addresses the key pillars of support or institutions that prop up or enable unjust regimes or policies. She emphasized that Pope Francis invites us to focus on the means of nonviolence. Furthermore, she suggested that one way to understand Pope Francis' acknowledgement of a right to self-defense is that in principle one may consider violent defense justified; however, in practice there is no just war (defensive or aggressive).

This first session of the three-year interest group included about forty participants and led to a rich discussion, both with short pair shares after each speaker, and a larger group discussion. Topics included how peacebuilding can assist nonviolent resistance by building internal cohesion, engage negotiations with power holders, and sustain government transitions. Inversely, nonviolent resistance can assist peacebuilding by shifting power and raising urgency. The value of the language of active nonviolence in relation to and distinct from justice was also highlighted.

ELI MCCARTHY
Georgetown University
Washington, District of Columbia

LEO GUARDADO
Fordham University
Bronx, New York

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE CTSA? – SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Topic: What is the Future of the CTSA?
Convener: Frank Clooney, Harvard University
CTSA President
Moderator: Christine Firer Hinze, Fordham University
CTSA Past-President and Chair of the Centennial Committee
Presenters: Linh Hoang, O.F.M., Siena College
Craig A. Ford, Jr., St. Norbert College
Kevin Burke, S.J., Regis College.

Sponsored by the newly-created Centennial Committee (CC), this special session on the evening of Friday, June 9th featured panel and discussion on "What is the Future of the CTSA?" It drew close to 90 attendees. The evening's dual aim was to introduce members to the work being done by the CC, and to solicit member input to assist the CC in its charge 1) to consult widely, then 2) to draft, seek member feedback on, and propose to the CTSA Board a "Vision Statement" for the CTSA at 100, as well as a three-to-five year "Phase I Strategic Plan" for advancing that vision in the next three to five years.

Following a welcome and synopsis of the CC's genesis and charge by President Frank Clooney, S.J., a panel of three members very briefly summarized work to date in three key area. Linh Hoang, O.F.M., spoke on "Context, Mission & History", noting that in its more than seventy-five years, the CTSA had undergone several significant waves of change: Its primary membership had shifted from male clerics to laity, including women and members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Its relationship to bishops shifted from a focus on the magisterium to greater focus, in line with the impulses of Vatican II, on engaging the people and concerns of the contemporary world. And its institutional center of gravity has undergone several key shifts—from an early focus on seminaries, to a focus on theologians teaching in colleges and universities, to an as yet unclear new phase where the institutional security of academic theology and theologians is in a time of flux and uncertainty.

Craig A. Ford, Jr. spoke on "Critical Issues Facing the Society," outlining areas that CC has surfaced. Among them are Accessibility and Affordability (e.g., managing costs of attendance for scholars with limited or no institutional support; negotiating virtual and in-person meeting formats; enabling full participation for members living with disabilities; and better accommodating persons with young or dependent family members), cultivating external relationships (e.g., with other scholarly societies of Catholic theology and religious studies; with local churches, bishops and dioceses; with the global church and those it serves; with and societies), membership composition, and fundraising and financial stability.

Kevin Burke, S.J., elaborated briefly on the key area of Fundraising and Financial Sustainability, stressing that attention to funding and financial sustainability was not an end in itself, but must be approached in light of the Society's mission, vision, and goals for itself over the next twenty-five years. Here issues to consider include, e.g.,

cultivating non-traditional revenue streams, exploring creative funding models, and developing optimal policies for dues payment with payment flexibility options.

Attendees were then asked to join one of a dozen small discussion groups, each with a scribe from the CC, to discuss two questions: First, "What has motivated/motivates your involvement in the CTSA?" Second, "What do you hope and desire that the CTSA will be doing for its members, and for the field of theology in North America, when we celebrate our 100th anniversary in 2045?" Lively group discussions ensued. A compilation, report, and synopsis of attendees' responses prepared by CC member Craig Ford (to be available to the membership) noted, "By far, the most frequently mentioned reason explaining why we come to the CTSA is the community of colleagues gathered here as well as the exciting work of seeing theology happen in real time." With respect to hopes and desires for the CTSA at 100, responses clustered around three major axes of concern and envisaged opportunity: 1) How the CTSA positions itself within an ecology of US professional theological societies, with Universities, and with other professionals more broadly; 2) The CTSA's relationship to the larger mission of the Catholic Church in the United States, both at a local level as well as at a national level; and 3) The relationship between the CTSA and regional as well as global realities. Following a short plenary sharing time, CC Chair and CTSA Past-President Christine Firer Hinze thanked the assembly, and outlined the 2023-24 Centennial Committee's agenda (with timeline subject to adjustment): "Drawing on both wide and targeted consultation with CTSA membership, to create a draft Vision Statement and a draft Phase I Strategic Plan; to present these to the Board for initial discussion & input; to revise, circulate for members' input, and present a proposed 'CTSA at 100' Vision Statement and 'Phase I Strategic Plan' for Board review, and ultimately Board and member approval at the June 2024 convention."

CRAIG A. FORD, JR.
St. Norbert College
De Pere, Wisconsin

CHRISTINE FIRER HINZE
Fordham University
Bronx, New York

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY READING GROUP – PRE-CONVENTION MEETING

Topic: Freedom, Faith, and Law in Two Rabbinic Texts
Conveners: Axel M. Oaks Takacs, Seton Hall University
Daniel P. Scheid, Duquesne University
Moderator: Axel M. Oaks Takacs, Seton Hall University
Presenters: Bethany Slater, Denison University
Andrew Massena, Loras College

The purpose of this meeting is to bring theologians together who wish to explore the practice of comparative theology through guided readings of texts from a non-Christian tradition. This meeting invites someone to select short texts from the other tradition and prepare some introductory commentary. The texts along with the commentary is circulated ahead of time. At the breakfast, following introductory explanations of key terms by the presenter, the group engages in an interreligious, close reading together as a community so that fresh theological insights may be encountered.

This year, Bethany Slater, visiting assistant professor in the department of religion at Denison University, and Andrew Massena, assistant professor of Biblical Studies at Loras College, collaborated in presenting two Rabbinic texts. They also provided some biblical texts to facilitate comparisons with the Christian tradition, along with introductions to both texts and some guiding questions. The goal was to think about the conference theme of "Freedom" in conversation with the Jewish tradition and to bring new insights to familiar concepts, such as Torah, Law, faith, works, and obedience.

The first rabbinic text, provided by Andrew Massena, comes from the *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael* (or "The Tractates of Rabbi Ishmael"), a tannaitic *halakhic* commentary on the Book of Exodus. This is a verse-by-verse, sometimes word by word, commentary on Exodus, collating the midrashim of rabbis from the first two centuries of the common era, and concentrating especially on the legal material of Exodus. The specific text provided for discussion was a commentary on Exodus 20:2 in the form of a *mashal* (rabbinic parable). According to the parable, God is a king before approaching Israel, and yet God asks to be Israel's king. This raises the question of *over whom exactly* God had been king heretofore. More interestingly, if Israel were to deny God's offer, would God be divested of kingship? The parable gives no definitive answer to either question, but only hints at the reality that God's own identity is at stake in the entire exodus and Sinai affair. The reader is invited to discover and interrogate more ambiguities in the text. During the discussion, questions about freedom—to say yes or no to God—were interrogated and how the reception and refraction of Jewish sources in both the Christian traditions and later Rabbinical traditions conceptualized the people's relationship to God: *quid pro quo*? Unconditional surrender? Earned or unearned kingship? Etc.

The second rabbinic text, provided by Bethany Slater, comes from the Babylonian Talmud and is part of a longer conversation about how many commandments God gave to the Jewish people (613). The text then moves to bring voices of Sages who quote passages from the Hebrew Bible that they each claim offer summary statements of all the commandments. Each verse is said to be that on which all the other commandments

are established, as if the commandments are built on the foundation of these teachings. Slater provided Galatians 3:10-11 alongside Habakkuk 2:2-3a as a prologue to ground the rest of the comparative theological discussion. During the discussion, it was noted that following the 613 laws is presumed in both Habakkuk and the selection from the Talmud, and yet Paul divorces this presumption in Galatians. Resonances with how Jesus often summarizes the law in the gospels were also noted. Attendees learned a great deal about the relationship between faith and the law in Rabbinic thought; it also allowed many to reassess how Paul understands the law and faith in Galatians 3:10-11.

There are too many takeaways to recapitulate. However, one overarching insight—or affirmation—was related to the ongoing scholarship on how Jesus, along with the early Jewish Jesus movement, the New Testament Gospels, letters, and epistles (especially Paul's), relate to intra-Jewish debates in the first and second century CE. These debates continue in Rabbinic Judaism, as evidenced by the texts provided for discussion. These insights demand comparative theologians carefully and critically reflect on how boundaries are setup between religious traditions generally, and between Jewish and Christian traditions specifically. It also allowed us to reimagine how we employ terms such as "faith" and "the Law" in our own scholarship and in the classroom. Finally, the question of freedom as a theological and anthropological category was engaged: how free are we in the face of God?

Many thanks to Bethany Slater and Andrew Massena for allowing us to use their summary handouts in this report.

AXEL M. OAKS TAKACS
Seton Hall University
South Orange, New Jersey

REPORT ON THE 2022-2023 MID-YEAR GATHERINGS

Ad Hoc Board Committee on Virtual Events:
Elyse Raby (Chair), Mary Kate Holman, Christina Astorga

Fall Topic:	Synodality and Listening Reports from the Field
Date:	December 5, 2022
Moderator:	Elyse Raby, Santa Clara University
Presenters:	Kristin Colberg, St. John's School of Theology and Seminary
	Stan Chu Ilo, DePaul University
	Edmund Chia, Australian Catholic University
Spring Topic:	Theology and Teaching in Light of ChatGPT
Date:	April 4, 2023
Convener:	Christina Astorga, University of Portland
Moderator:	Mary Kate Holman, Benedictine University
Introductions:	Elyse Raby, Santa Clara University
Presenters:	Anne Carpenter, Saint Mary's College of California
	Stephen Okey, Saint Leo University
	David Turnbloom, University of Portland

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the Society continued the practice of holding two online gatherings. The sessions were organized by a committee composed of Elyse Raby (Santa Clara University and Committee Chair), Mary Kate Holman (Benedictine University), and Christina Astorga (University of Portland and CTSA Board Member). Both meetings were well attended by members of the Society.

The theme of the first meeting was "Synodality and Listening Reports from the Field." It met on December 5, 2022. The session sought to engage members of the Society on practices of synodality, with an eye toward the 2021-2024 Synod on Synodality. Elyse Raby moderated a panel discussion of three CTSA members—Kristin Colberg, Stan Chu Ilo, and Edmund Chia—who each drew on their disciplinary expertise and their experience in formal synodal processes. Kristin Colberg, drawing on her experience as a member of the Theological Commission assisting the Synod of Bishops, addressed the theological foundations and processes that are shaping the Synod on Synodality. Stan Chu Ilo addressed what he has learned as the head of the Doing Theology from the Existential Peripheries Project of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development. Edmund Chia drew on his earlier work as executive secretary of the Office Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference. Following the three presentations, participants broke out into small groups for discussions. When members returned from their breakout sessions a robust discussion ensued about the possibilities and challenges for a synodal church. There were sixty-nine attendees.

The theme of the second meeting was "Theology and Teaching in Light of ChatGPT." It met on April 4, 2023. The session sought to provide an opportunity for members to engage in discussion about the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) and chat bots on theology and teaching theology after the release of the AI chat bot,

ChatGPT, in November 2022. It began with a demonstration of the capabilities of ChatGPT by Elyse Raby. Following Raby, three panelists addressed the challenges posed by ChatGPT and similar technologies. David Turnbloom spoke about the nature of artificial intelligence and encouraged members not to avoid assignments that might allow students to use ChatGPT (e.g., traditional essays and papers). Rather, he proposed assigning those traditional essays and papers in ways that reduce the pressure that leads students to use AI technologies (e.g., scaffolding assignments or contract grading). Stephen Okey drew on the developing conversation among academics from various disciplines as he highlighted the challenges of student and faculty use of AI (e.g., the threat to the development of critical thinking skills and originality in student work, the potential perpetuation of biases that AI models have learned and which would further harm already marginalized groups, the ability of students to easily use AI to fulfill basic course requirements in ways that seems like and may be cheating) as well as some opportunities (e.g., reimagining the types of assignments we develop and ask students to complete). Critically, he addressed these topics within a framing question about purpose of higher education—and Catholic higher education, in particular. Anne Carpenter used the work of Bernard Lonergan and John Henry Newman on the nature of belief and knowledge to frame the problem of not knowing whether students have completed their work or whether it was completed by an AI chat bot. In doing so, she pointed out that the dilemma is not merely a problem of morals (cheating or not cheating) but also a problem of the desire for learning, knowledge, and understanding. Following the three presentations, participants moved to small groups before coming back together for a larger conversation with the panelists. The conversation highlighted the limits of ChatGPT and what it gets incorrect, differences in responses to AI among various student populations, the importance of critical thinking, concerns about AI that are particular to the teaching of theology (e.g., biases and claims about the nature of the divine), possibilities for new types of assignments, and the pressures that lead students to turn to AI. The session was attended by forty-nine members.

B. KEVIN BROWN
Gonzaga University
Spokane, Washington

SECRETARY'S REPORT
THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

The Catholic Theological Society of America held its seventy-seventh Annual Convention on June 8-11, 2023 at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee Hotel in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The theme of the convention was "Freedom." Registration for the convention was conducted electronically in the months leading to the meeting. The Women's Consultation on Constructive Theology met on Thursday, June 8 at 3:00-5:30 pm, CST. The 2023 Ann O'Hara Graff Award was presented to Dr. Cecilia González-Andrieu, Professor of Theology and Theological Aesthetics at Loyola Marymount University. The Opening Session was led on Thursday, June 8 by CTSA President Francis X. Clooney, S.J., starting with a Land Acknowledgement Statement. Most Reverend Jerome Edward Listecki, Archbishop of Milwaukee, gave a word of welcome to all convention participants and led the opening prayer. President Francis X. Clooney, S.J. introduced the first plenary speaker, Dr. Andrew Prevot from Georgetown University. The evening concluded with a reception. The CTSA gratefully acknowledges the support provided by the following institutions: Boston College; the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts, the Department of Theology, and the Department of Catholic Studies at Duquesne University; President John J. DeGioia and Georgetown University; Harvard School of Divinity at Harvard University; John LaFarge Jesuit Community; Marquette University; Saint Louis University; University of Dayton; and Villanova University.

On Friday, June 9, the day began with a Memorial Service to remember and honor CTSA members who passed away during the previous year. The service was followed by the second plenary session, delivered by Dr. Darlene Fozard Weaver from the University of Dayton. After a day of sessions and conversations, the business meeting was held on Friday afternoon from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm, CST. Active members present at the business meeting welcomed the new Active and Associated members presented to them by the Admissions Committee. The president's reception for new and newer members followed the business meeting. Additional receptions were also sponsored by a collaborative of publishers (Liturgical Press, Orbis Books, and Paulist Press) and Marquette University. At 8:30 pm, CST, a special session called "What is the Future of the CTSA?" was led by the Centennial Committee. The session was open to all members attending the convention.

After morning prayer on Saturday, June 10, the third plenary session was a panel presided by Dr. Kristin E. Heyer. The panelists were Dr. Leo Guardado from Fordham University, Dr. Stan Chu Ilo from DePaul University, and Dr. Mary Mee-Yin Yuen from Holy Spirit Seminary College of Theology & Philosophy. After the panel, sessions and conversations followed throughout the day. At 6:30 pm, CST convention participants gathered at Old Saint Mary Parish in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to celebrate the Eucharist. CTSA President, Rev. Francis X. Clooney, S.J. presided and preached. After the liturgy, a reception and the convention banquet were held back at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee Hotel. Toward the end of the meal, President Francis X. Clooney, S.J. read the citation and presented the John Courtney Murray Award to Rev. Roger David Haight, S.J.

On Sunday, June 11, after morning prayer, Dr. Francis X. Clooney, S.J. delivered his Presidential Address. After this, he formally concluded his term as CTSA President and introduced the new President, Dr. Kristin E. Heyer.

Dr. Layla A. Karst from Loyola Marymount University served as the Liturgical Aide. During the convention several special receptions, breakfasts, sessions and other meetings took place. See the convention program below for more details.

CONVENTION PROGRAM

Concurrent Sessions At-A-Glance

I. Friday Morning

1. Freedom Across Theological Diversity
2. Anthropology
3. Theology of Peacebuilding and Nonviolence
4. An Exploration of Unfreedom in the Moral Life
5. Lonergan
6. Theories of Freedom and Contemplative Praxis
7. Catholic Theology and the Contemporary University
8. Spirituality
9. Latino/a Theology
10. Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church
11. Christianity and Judaism

II. Friday Afternoon

1. Doing Theology from the Peripheries
2. Freedom at the Beginning and End of Life
3. Christ
4. Thomas Aquinas
5. Mental Health in Theological Perspective
6. Rahner
7. Catholicity and Mission
8. Public Theology
9. Black Catholic Theology
10. Disability Theology
11. Hans Urs von Balthasar

III. Saturday Morning

1. Ethical Challenges in a Post-Roe America
2. Synodality and Freedom in the Church
3. Practical Theology
4. Freedom, Coercion, and Self-Realization
5. Church / Ecumenism
6. Bioethics/Healthcare
7. Comparative Theology
8. Catholic Social Thought
9. Moral Theology
10. Fundamental Theology/Method
11. Creation/Eschatology

IV. Saturday Afternoon

1. Decolonizing Catholic Theology
2. The Liberating Theology of James Hal Cone
3. Asian/Asian American Theology
4. Pre-liberal Theologies of Freedom in a Post-liberal Age
5. Liturgy/Sacraments
6. Historical Theology
7. Fieldwork in Theology
8. Moral Theology
9. Freedom for All of Us
10. Theology and Science
11. God and Trinity

Plenary Sessions At-A-Glance

First Plenary Thursday Evening	**Andrew Prevot** Georgetown University
Second Plenary Friday Morning	**Darlene Fozard Weaver** University of Dayton Respondent: **Melissa Pagán** Mount Saint Mary's University
Third Plenary Saturday Morning	**Leo Guardado** Fordham University **Stan Chu Ilo** DePaul University **Mary Mee-Yin Yuen** Holy Spirit Seminary College of theology and Philosophy
Fourth Plenary	**Francis X. Clooney, S.J.** Harvard University President, CTSA

Special Session of the Centennial Committee

Friday Evening	"What is the Future of the CTSA?"

Pre-Convention Events, Thursday, June 8, 2023

CTSA Board Meeting 9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Crystal Room

***Theological Studies* Board Meeting** 1:00–5:00 p.m.
Pere Marquette

Registration 1:00–4:30 p.m.
and 6:00–7:00 p.m.
Regency Prefunction

Exhibits 1:00–7:00 p.m.
Atrium

Minowakiing debwemagad (The good land, it is true): An Indigenous Experience of Milwaukee 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.
Off Site
Pre-registration required to participate in the tour.
Group will meet in hotel lobby.

Women's Consultation on Constructive Theology 3:00–5:30 p.m.
Lakeshore

Administrative Team: Jessica Coblentz, Jennifer Owens-Jofré, Julia Feder, Margaret Mary Moore

Convener: **Cristina Lledo Gomez**, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education
Moderator: **Cristina Lledo Gomez**, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education

Presenter: **Theresa Yugar**, California State University, Los Angeles
Paper Title: "Women's Freedom: 40 Years on Since Ruether's *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*"

Respondent: **Rachel Bundang**, Santa Clara University

Ann O'Hara Graff Memorial Award 4:30–5:00 p.m.

The 2023 Ann O'Hara Graff Memorial Award will be awarded to
Cecilia González-Andrieu
Professor of Theology and Theological Aesthetics
Loyola Marymount University

Business Meeting 5:15–5:30 p.m.

WCCT Steering Committee Members:

Conveners:	**Cristina Lledo Gomez**, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education
	Margaret Mary Moore, Theology & Life Institute
Treasurer:	**Jessica Coblentz**, St. Mary's College
Secretary:	**Jennifer Owens-Jofré**, Saint Louis University
Award Convener:	**Julia Feder**, Creighton University
Members:	**Annie Selak**, Georgetown University
	Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos, Seattle University
	Chanelle Robinson, Boston College
	Colleen Carpenter, St. Catherine University
	Elissa Cutter, Georgian Court University
	Elyse Raby, Santa Clara University
	Jaisy Joseph, Villanova University
	Julia H. Brumbaugh, Regis University
	Kathryn Lilla Cox, University of San Diego
	Katie Mahowski Mylroie, Boston College
	Kim Humphrey, Boston College
	Layla A. Karst, Loyola Marymount University
	Mary Jo Iozzio, Boston College
	Mary Rose D'Angelo, Notre Dame University
	Nichole M. Flores, University of Virginia
	Nicole Reibe, Loyola University Maryland
	Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
	Jane Russell, Belmont Abbey College
	Stephanie Edwards, Boston College
	Stephanie Wong, Villanova University
	Susan Bigelow Reynolds, Emory University
	Win Whelan, St. Bonaventure University

Thursday Evening, June 8, 2023

Opening and First Plenary Session 7:00–9:00 p.m.
Regency Ballroom

Presiding: **Francis X. Clooney. S.J.**, Harvard University
President, CTSA

Land Acknowledgement

> The Catholic Theological Society of America acknowledges the Menominee, Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk, Fox, Mascouten, Sauk and Ojibwe nations, on whose homeland we convene in Milwaukee in June 2023. Members of these nations have known these lands as relatives for millennia, and their descendants remain our hosts. We also acknowledge that

Milwaukee is located along the southwest shores of Michigami (meaning "big water" in Anishinaabemowin), where the Milwaukee River, Menomonee River and Kinnickinnic River meet. We are mindful of our responsibility to practice good relations with the land and water as elders and ancestors past, present and emerging have done.

Our responsibility here, and where we live and teach, entails learning about these cultural traditions that inform good stewardship of our environment and practicing ongoing good relations with the sovereign nations who care for it. In a spirit of reconciliation, we can create the conditions of hospitality for current Indigenous community members and all yet to walk with us. We likewise remember, in the same spirit of repentance and with a resolve to work for healing and reparation, other legacies of violence, enslavement, displacement, and dispossession that have created the local landscape here. We recall, in particular, how Milwaukee's history of institutionalized racism has yielded the hyper-segregated city that it is today.

Welcome and Opening Prayer:
Most Reverend Jerome E. Listecki
Archbishop of Milwaukee

Address: **Andrew Prevot**, Georgetown University

"Elusive Freedom: The Struggle Continues"

Opening Reception 9:00 p.m.
Atrium / Executive Ballroom

Donors:

Boston College

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts,
the Department of Theology, and the Department of Catholic Studies,
Duquesne University

President John J. DeGioia and Georgetown University

Harvard School of Divinity, Harvard University

John LaFarge Jesuit Community

Marquette University

Saint Louis University

University of Dayton

Villanova University

The CTSA is grateful for the generous support of these institutions.

Friday Morning, June 9, 2023

von Balthasar Society Breakfast 7:00–8:15 a.m.
Solomon/Juneau

Mentorship Breakfast: 7:00–8:15 a.m.
Navigating as New Members **Executive B**
Prior registration required

Schillebeeckx Breakfast 7:00–8:15 a.m.
Executive C

Comparative Theology Reading Group Breakfast 7:00–8:15 a.m.
Executive A

Zen Meditation 7:15–8:15 a.m.
Crystal

Memorial Service 8:15–9:00 a.m.
Remembrance of Deceased CTSA Members **Regency Ballroom**

Exhibits 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Atrium

Registration 9:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.
Regency Ballroom Prefunction

Second Plenary Session 9:00–10:30 a.m.
Regency Ballroom

Presiding: **Christine Firer Hinze**, Fordham University
Past President, CTSA

Address: **Darlene Fozard Weaver**, University of Dayton

"Freedom in a Morally Diverse World"

Respondent: **Melissa Pagán**, Mount Saint Mary's University

Coffee Break 10:30–11:00 a.m.
Atrium

Concurrent Sessions I **11:00 a.m.–12:45 p.m.**

I.1 Freedom Across Theological Diversity: Engaging the Past as Invitation and Limitation – Invited Session **Lakeshore A**

Convener: **Linh Hoang, O.F.M.**, Siena College
Moderator: **Conor M. Kelly**, Marquette University

Panelists: **Shawn Colberg**, St. John's University
Lisa Fullam, Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University
Linh Hoang, O.F.M., Siena College

I.2 Anthropology – Topic Session **Lakeshore B**

Administrative Team: Elizabeth Pyne, Eric Meyer, Tiffany Hartnell-Howden

Convener: **Elizabeth P**yne, Mercyhurst University
Moderator: **Eric Meyer**, Carroll College

Presenter: **Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo**, Wake Forest University School of Divinity
Paper Title: "'No one takes my life, I give it freely': Reimagining Human Freedom in Light of Ecomartyrdom"

Presenter: **Jessica Coblentz**, Saint Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana)
Paper Title: "Freedom from Sexual Attraction? Thinking with Asexual Reappraisals of the Human Person"

Presenter: **Daniel Minch**, Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Paper Title: "The Promise of the Future Is Also the Threat of the Future: Money as *Theos* and the Constraints of *Homo Oeconomicus*"

I.3 Theology of Peacebuilding and Nonviolence – Interest Group **Lakeshore C**

Administrative Team: Eli McCarthy, Leo Guardado, Teresia Hinga (d. 3/31/23)

Convener: **Eli McCarthy**, Georgetown University
Moderator: **Leo Guardado**, Fordham University

Presenter: **Lisa Sowle Cahill**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Can the Theology of Nonviolent Peacebuilding Co-Exist with the Permission of Just Defense?"

Presenter: **Leo Lushombo**, Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University
Paper Title: "Environmental Justice, Peacebuilding, and Nonviolence"

Respondent: **Heather Dubois**, Boston College
Paper Title: "An Appreciative Inquiry"

I.4 An Exploration of Unfreedom in the Moral Life – Selected Session **Gilpatrick AB**

Convener: **R. Zachary Karanovich**, Boston College
Moderator: **Daniel P. Scheid**, Duquesne University

Presenter: **Xavier M. Montecel**, St. Mary's University
Paper Title: "Liturgical Vice: Unfreedom and Injustice in Christian Worship"

Presenter: **R. Zachary Karanovich**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Agency on the Other Side of Oppression: Evaluating Moral Constraints on the Freedom for Solidarity"

Presenter: **Kate Jackson-Meyer**, Harvard University
Paper Title: "Tragic Dilemmas and the Precarity of Moral Goodness in Light of Constrained Moral Agency"

I.5 Lonergan – Consultation **Solomon Juneau**

Administrative Team: Erica Siu-Mui Lee, Jennifer Kendall Sanders, Brian Bajzek

Convener: **Erica Siu-Mui Lee**, Holy Spirit Seminary College of Theology and Philosophy
Moderator: **Robert Elliot**, Boston College

Presenter: **Jeremy W. Blackwood**, Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology
Paper Title: "Graced Freedom as *Memoria* in Conversation: Developing Lonergan with Doran and Lawrence"

Presenter: **Christopher Krall, S.J.**, Creighton University
Paper Title: "'The Truth Will Set You Free': The Freeing Power of the Virtue of Humility Backed by the Neuroscience of Self-Esteem"

Presenters: **Eric A. Mabry**, University of St. Thomas (Houston)
Paper Title: "*Deliberatio Christi*: Did Christ Decide Which Parables would be Best?"

I.6 Theories of Freedom and Contemplative Praxis – Selected Session **Milwaukee A**

Convener: **Jacob W. Torbeck**, Valparaiso University
Moderator: **Derrick Witherington**, Loyola University Chicago

Presenter: **Min-Ah Cho**, Georgetown University
Paper Title: "Reclaiming Silence as a Spiritual and Political Practice of Freedom"

Presenter: **Jacob W. Torbeck**, Valparaiso University
Paper Title: "One is Undone: Kenotic Freedom in Christian Mystical Theologies"

Presenter: **Kathleen McNutt**, Marquette University
Paper Title: "On Care for our Common *Gnōmē*: Eco-spirituality and Freedom in Maximus the Confessor"

I.7 Catholic Theology and Contemporary University – Interest Group **Milwaukee B**

Administrative Team: Edward P. Hahnenberg, Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos

Convener: **Edward P. Hahnenberg**, John Carroll University
Moderator: **Nancy Dallavalle**, Fairfield University

Presenter: **J. Matthew Ashley**, University of Notre Dame
Paper Title: "Teaching and Spiritual Direction: A Fruitful Tension in the Classroom?"

Presenter: **Craig A. Ford, Jr.**, Saint Norbert College
Paper Title: "Catholic Theology and DEI Initiatives on Campus: Emerging Roles for Theologians"

Presenter: **Elisabeth Vasko**, Duquesne University
Paper Title: "There Is Enough to Go Around: Do You Have the Courage to See It, to Believe It?"

I.8 Spirituality – Topic **Crystal**
Contemplation and Freedom in Late Modernity

Administrative Team: Mary Frohlich, Axel Marc Oaks-Takacs, C. Vanessa White

Convener: **Mary Frohlich**, Catholic Theological Union
Moderator: **C. Vanessa White**, Catholic Theological Union

Presenter: **Benedict Shoup**, University of Notre Dame
Paper Title: "The Freedom of Being Before God: Edith Stein, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and the Sanjuanist Paradigm of Freedom in the Twentieth Century"

Presenter: **Kristen Drahos**, Baylor University
Paper Title: "Re-Calling Contemplation: Byung-Chul Han and the Promise of Mysticism"

Presenter: **Christian K**rokus, University of Scranton
Paper Title: "Christian de Chergé and the Martyrdom of Love"

I.9 Latino/a Theology – Consultation **Executive C**

Administrative Team: Jennifer Owens-Jofré, Mauricio Najarro, Cesar "CJ" Baldelomar

Convener: **Jennifer Owens-Jofré**, Saint Louis University
Moderator: **Cesar "CJ" Baldelomar**, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

Presenter: **Ish Ruiz**, Emory University
Paper Title: "Liminality, Pedagogy, and Freedom: Exploring the Liberatory Practices of Queer Puerto Rican Catholics"

Respondent: **María Teresa Dávila**, Merrimack College

Respondent: **Miguel Díaz**, Loyola University Chicago

I.10 Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church – Consultation **Executive D**
Framing the Problem: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Global North and South

Administrative Team: Cristina Traina, Stan Chu Ilo, Julia Feder, Daniel Horan, Megan McCabe

Convener: **Cristina Traina**, Fordham University
Moderator: **Daniel Horan**, Saint Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana)

Presenters: **Julie Hanlon Rubio**, Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University
Paul Schutz, Santa Clara University
Paper Title: Framing the Problem: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from the United States

Presenters: **Stan Chu Ilo**, DePaul University
Sr. Josée Ngalula, Catholic University of Congo, Kinshasa
Paper Title: Framing the Problem: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Central Africa, Nigeria, and Congo

I.11 Christianity and Judaism – Consultation **Pere Marquette**

Administrative Team: Nicole Reibe, Andrew Massena, Carol Ann Martinelli

Convener: **Nicole R**eibe, Loyola University Maryland
Moderator: **Mia Theocharis**, St. Michael's College, University of Toronto

Presenter: **Andrew Massena**, Loras College
Paper Title: "Freedom with the Law: Proposing a Christian Practice of *Torah Lishmah*"

Respondent: **Bethany Slater**, Denison University

Friday Afternoon, June 9, 2023

Women's Consultation on Constructive Theology Luncheon 1:00–2:15 p.m.
Executive AM

Hearing of the Resolutions Committee 1:00–2:15 p.m.
Regency Ballroom

Presiding: **Nancy Pineda-Madrid**, Loyola Marymount University
Vice President, CTSA

Parliamentarian: **William Loewe**, Catholic University of America

Concurrent Sessions II 2:30–4:15 p.m.

II.1 Doing Theology from the Peripheries: Roundtable Discussion and Analysis from North American Working Group for the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development Project – Selected Session **Lakeshore A**

Convener: **Bradford Hinze**, Fordham University
Moderator: **Meghan J. Clark**, St. John's University (New York)

Panelist: **Stan Chu Ilo**, DePaul University
Paper Title: "Encounter—Listen—Discern—Learn—Humble Accompaniment"

Panelist: **Jennifer Owens-Jofré**, Saint Louis University
Paper Title: "Doing Theology in Ways that Develop Right and Just Relationships"

Panelist: **Darren Dias, O.P.**, University of St. Michael's
Paper Title: "Doing Theology by Engaging People Where They Are"

II.2 Freedom at the Beginning and End of Life: Constrained and Enhanced in Healthcare Structures – Selected Session **Lakeshore B**

Convener: **Daniel J. Daly**, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
Moderator: **Shaun Slusarski**, Boston College

Presenter: **Emma McDonald**, Boston College
Paper title: "Freedom and Constraint in Transnational Surrogacy and Gamete Donation"

Presenter: **Daniel J. Daly**, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
Paper title: "The Constrained Moral Agency of the Dying: The Contribution of Structural Analysis to Catholic End-of-Life Ethics"

Respondent: **Daniel K. Finn**, St. John's University (Minnesota)

II.3 Christ – Topic Session **Lakeshore C**

Administrative Team: John Thiede, S.J., Mary Kate Holman, Eugene Schlesinger

Convener: **John Thiede, S.J.**, Marquette University
Moderator: **Mary Kate Holman**, Benedictine University

Presenter: **Flora Tang**, University of Notre Dame
Paper Title: "The Queerness of Jesus and the Ungendered Flesh of Christ: Hortense Spillers and M. Shawn Copeland's *Enfleshing Freedom* in Conversation"

Presenter: **Giadio DeBiasio**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Freeing the Pathway to Salvation: Christ's Death and the Salvation of Unbaptized Infants Who Die"

Presenter: **Taylor Ott**, KU Leuven
Paper Title: "Following Jesus the Dissident: Developing a Theory of Dissent for a Liberative Church"

II.4 Thomas Aquinas – Consultation **Gilpatrick AB**

Administrative Team: Daria Spezzano, David Elliot, Gregory LaNave

Convener: **Daria Spezzano**, Providence College
Moderator: **Shawn Colberg**, St. John's University

Presenter: **William C. Mattison**, University of Notre Dame
Paper Title: "Virtue and Freedom: Resources from Aquinas on Habit"

Presenter: **Robert Barry**, Providence College
Paper Title: "Freedom under Original Sin"

Presenter: **Nicholas Ogle**, University of Notre Dame
Paper Title: "Aquinas on Free Choice and the Scope of Moral Responsibility"

II.5 Mental Health in Theological Perspective – Interest Group **Solomon Juneau**

Administrative Team: Elizabeth Antus, Jessica Coblentz

Conveners: **Jessica Coblentz**, St. Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana)
Elizabeth Antus, Georgetown University
Moderator: **Marcus Mescher**, Xavier University

Presenter: **Todd Whitmore**, University of Notre Dame
Paper Title: "Who is My Brother and Sister?: A Kinship Approach for Responding to Addiction"

Respondent: **M.T. Dávila**, Merrimack College

Respondent: **Andrew Kim**, Marquette University

II.6 Rahner – Consultation **Milwaukee A**

Administrative Team: Mark Fischer, Jakob Rinderknecht, Mary Beth Yount

Convener: **Brandon Peterson**, University of Utah
Moderator: **Michael Rubbelke**, St. John's School of Theology

Panel Title: "Grace, Freedom, and the Church: A Conversation with Richard Lennan about *Tilling the Church* (2022)"

Panelist: **Richard Lennan**, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
Panelist: **Mary Beth Yount**, Neumann University
Panelist: **Michael Canaris**, Loyola University Chicago

II.7 Catholicity and Mission – Topic Session **Milwaukee B**

Administrative Team: Laurie Johnston, Antonio Sison, Cristina Lledo Gomez

Convener: **Laurie Johnston**, Emmanuel College
Moderator: **Antonio Sison**, Catholic Theological Union

Presenter: **Kevin Ahern**, Manhattan College
Paper Title: "Liberating Charism: Freedom, Grace and the Mission of Catholic Institutions"

Presenter: **Daniel Rober**, Sacred Heart University
Paper Title: "Catholic Higher Education and Theologies of Mission at the Crossroads of Identity and De-institutionalization"

Respondent: **Cristina Lledo Gomez**, BBI-The Australian Institute for Theological Education

II.8 Public Theology – Interest Group **Crystal**

Administrative Team: Rosemary P. Carbine, David DeCosse

Conveners: **Rosemary P. Carbine**, Whittier College
David DeCosse, Santa Clara University
Moderator: **Rosemary P. Carbine**, Whittier College

Presenter: **Victor Carmona**, The University of San Diego
Paper Title: "The Reign of God, Freedom, and US Immigration Policy"

Presenter: **David DeCosse**, Santa Clara University
Paper Title: *Created Freedom under the Sign of the Cross: A Catholic Public Theology for the United States* (Pickwick Publications, 2022)

II.9 Black Catholic Theology – Consultation **Executive C**

Administrative Team: Rev. Emmanuel Osigwe, Chanelle Robinson, Nicole Symmonds, LaRyssa Herrington, Craig A. Ford, Jr.

Convener: **Rev. Emmanuel Osigwe**, St. John Vianney Seminary
Moderator: **Chanelle Robinson**, Boston College

Presenter: **Kayla August**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Preaching as a Path to Freedom: Narrative Homiletics as A Tool of Healing the Black Community and Reclaiming Our Story"

Panelist: **John Barnes**, Fordham University
Paper Title: "The Sound of Sweet Repose: The Black Musical Tradition as a Theological Response to Black Violence and Death"

II.10 Disability Theology – Interest Group **Executive D**
The Past: Looking for Evidence of Disability

Administrative Team: Mary Jo Iozzio, Miguel Romero

Convener: **Mary Jo Iozzio**, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
Moderator: **Stephanie Edwards**, Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium

Presenter: **Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F.**, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
Paper Title: "Reinventing Life, Recomposing Faith: Reflections on the Interactive Dynamics of Disability, Interdependence and Theological Imagination"

Presenter: **Miguel Romero**, Salve Regina University
Paper Title: "Disability and Medieval Theology: A Subversively Orthodox *Ressourcement*?"

II.11 Han Urs von Balthasas – Consultation **Pere Marquette**

Administrative Team: Jennifer Newsome Martin, Charlie Gillespie, Danielle Nussberger

Convener: **Jennifer Newsome Martin**, University of Notre Dame
Moderator: Drenda Landers, Marquette University

Presenter: **Christopher Hadley, S.J.**, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
Paper Title: "The Spirit's Personal Freedom in Balthasar's Theology"

Presenter: **Travis LaCouter**, KU Leuven
Paper Title: "Playing the Part: Dramatic Action in Balthasar and Stanislavski"

Respondent: **Megan Heeder**, Marquette University

Friday Evening, June 9, 2023

CTSA Business Meeting 4:30–6:00 p.m.
Regency Ballroom

Presiding: **Francis X. Clooney, S.J.**, Harvard University
President, CTSA

Parliamentarian: **William Loewe**, Catholic University of America

Publishers' Reception 6:15–7:45 p.m.
Hosted by Boston College, Paulist Press, and Liturgical Press **Atrium**

Marquette University Reception for Alumni, Faculty, and Students 6:15–7:45 p.m.
Executive CD

President's Reception for New/Newer Members 6:15–7:45 p.m.
Prior registration required/ticket provided in registration packet **Executive AB**

Special Session of the Centennial Committee 8:00–9:30 p.m.
What is the Future of the CTSA? **Regency Ballroom**

Convener: **Francis X. Clooney, S.J.**, Harvard University
President, CTSA

Moderator: **Christine Firer Hinze**, Fordham University
Past-President, CTSA

Panelist: **Kevin Burke, S.J.**, Regis University

Panelist: **Linh Hoang**, Siena College

Panelist: **Craig A. Ford, Jr.**, St. Norbert College

Saturday Morning, June 10, 2023

Benedictine Universities and Colleges Breakfast 7:15–8:45 a.m.
Sponsored by College of St. Benedict and St. John's University **Executive B**

Breakfast Meeting: Karl Rahner Society 7:15–8:45 a.m.
Executive A

Zen Meditation 7:15–8:15 a.m.
Crystal

Morning Prayer 8:30–8:45 a.m.
Crystal

Exhibits 8:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Atrium

Registration 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Regency Ballroom Prefunction

Third Plenary Session 9:00–10:30 a.m.
Regency Ballroom

Presiding: **Kristin E. Heyer**, Boston College
President-Elect, CTSA

Panelist: **Leo Guardado**, Fordham University
"Cage and Liberated in the Historical Struggle
for Freedom Across and Beyond Borders"

Panelist: **Mary Mee-Yin Yuen**, Holy Spirit Seminary College of Theology and Philosophy
"Inner Freedom and Outer Constraint:
Reflections in an Asian Context"

Panelist: **Stan Chu Ilo**, DePaul University
"Freedom and Eschatological Fulfilment:
The Perils and Promise of Afro-Modernity"

Coffee Break 10:30–11:00 a.m.
Atrium

Concurrent Sessions III 11:00 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

III.1 Ethical Challenges in a Post-*Roe* America – Invited Session **Lakeshore A**

Convener: **M. Cathleen Kaveny**, Boston College
Moderator: **Christina Astorga**, University of Portland

Presenter: **Jana Bennett**, University of Dayton
Paper Title: "Challenges Facing the Pro-Life Movement"

Presenter: **Shawnee Daniels-Sykes**, Mount Mary University (d. 10/31/22)
as read by ***C. Vanessa White****, Catholic Theological Union*
Paper Title: "Pro-Birth v. Pro-Life: A Womanist Expands the Perspectives"

Presenter: **M. Cathleen Kaveny**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Challenges Facing the Law"

III.2 Synodality and Freedom in the Church – Selected Session **Lakeshore B**

Convener: **Martin Madar**, Xavier University
Moderator: **James Nickoloff**, College of the Holy Cross

Presenter: **Kristin Colberg**, College of St. Benedict/St. John's University
Paper Title: "Synodality as an Act of Ecclesial Self-Actualization"
Presenter: **John J. Markey, O.P.**, Oblate School of Theology
Paper Title: "Freeing the Spirit to Free the Church: Implications of the Pneumatological Principle for a More Authentic Synodal Process"

Presenter: **Mary Kate Holman**, Benedictine University
Paper Title: "The Freedom to Speak and the Freedom to be Heard"

III.3 Practical Theology – Topic Session **Lakeshore C**
Religious Freedom and Human Liberation: Mapping Dissonances

Administrative Team: Susan Bigelow Reynolds, Milton Javier Bravo, Ish Ruiz

Convener: **Susan Bigelow Reynolds**, Emory University
Moderator: **Milton J. Bravo**, Edgewood College

Presenter: **James Bretzke, S.J.**, John Carroll University
Paper Title: "'Pride' and Prudence in Catholic Schools Identity: Flagging Freedom and Liberation"

Presenter: **Cynthia Cameron**, University of St. Michael's College
Paper Title: "Living into Freedom: A Developmental Framework for a Theology of Freedom for Children and Adolescents"

Presenter: **Richard Hanson**, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Paper Title: "Secularity and Religious Freedom: Charles M. Taylor's narrative of secularity and secularization as a resource for understanding the dynamics of religious freedom in modern societies"

III.4 Freedom, Coercion, and Self-Realization: Voices from 20th Century Theology – Selected Session **Gilpatrick AB**

Convener: **Catherine Yanko**, Catholic University of America
Moderator: David Cloutier, Catholic University of America

Presenter: **Catherine Duggan**, University of Notre Dame
Paper Title: "Preserving Freedom in Love-Governed Civic Liberalism"

Presenter: **Catherine Yanko**, Catholic University of America
Paper Title: "The Ethics of Self-Realization According to Herbert McCabe"

Presenter: **Darren Yau**, Princeton University
Paper Title: "Non-Violence and the Problem of Political Coercion"

III.5 Fundamental Theology/Method – Topic Session **Solomon Juneau**

Administrative Team: Mary Beth Yount, Ryan Duns, S.J., Nicholas Olkovich

Convener: **Mary Beth Yount**, Neumann University
Moderator: **Nicholas Rademacher**, University of Dayton

Presenter: **Christina McRorie**, Creighton University
Paper Title: "When contexts condition our agency, what's going on theologically?"

Presenter: **Peter Nguyen**, Creighton University
Paper Title: "Edith Stein on the Freedom of the Individual's Interiority amid the Threat of Totalitarianism"

Presenter: **Jack Pappas**, Fordham University
Paper Title: "Metanthropology and the Problematic of Freedom in Balthasar and Rahner"

III.6 Bioethics/Healthcare – Topic Session **Milwaukee A**

Administrative Team: Nichole M. Flores, Stephanie Edwards, Daniel J. Daly

Convener: **Daniel J. Daly**, Boston College
Moderator: **Dorothy Lee Goehring**, Boston College

Presenter: **Jason Eberl**, Saint Louis University
Paper Title: "Freedom of Conscience and the Common Good During a Pandemic"

Presenter: **Shaun Slusarski**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Public Health Beyond Bars: Incarceration, Bioethics, and the Common Good"

III.7 Comparative Theology – Topic Session **Milwaukee B**

Administrative Team: Reid Locklin, Stephanie Wong, Julius-Kei Kato

Convener: **Reid Locklin**, University of Toronto
Moderator: **Stephanie Wong**, Villanova University

Presenter: **Akhil Thomas**, Harvard University
Paper Title: "Christian-Hindu poems for South Indian Christians: A Comparative reading of the Christian poetry of Ernst Hanxleden (1681–1732)"

Presenter: **Matthew Vale**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Natural Liberation: A Christian Reception of Dzogchen"

Respondent: **Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier**, Loyola Marymount University

III.8 Catholic Social Thought – Topic Session **Crystal**

Administrative Team: Jens Mueller, William George, Kate Jackson-Meyer

Convener: **Jens Mueller**, Notre Dame of Maryland University
Moderator: Phyllis Zagano, Hofstra University

Presenter: **Christopher Welch**, Rivier University
Paper Title: "Work and Human Freedom in Consumer Culture and Higher Education"

Presenter: **Nicholas Olkovich**, St. Mark's College
Paper Title: "The Politics of Religious Freedom: Revisiting the Murray Project for a Polarized Age"

III.9 Moral Theology – Topic Session **Executive C**
New Methods for Urgent Moments

Administrative Team: Rachel Bundang, Kate Ward, David Kwon

Convener: **Rachel Bundang**, Santa Clara University
Moderator: **Marcus Mescher**, Xavier University

Presenter: **Cristina Traina**, Fordham University
Paper Title: "Freedom or License? The Path through Vulnerability"

Presenter: **Anna Floerke Scheid**, Duquesne University
Paper Title: "Agency, Technology, and Freedom from Radicalization"

Presenter: **Ish Ruiz**, Emory University
Paper Title: "Rescuing Probabilism: A Tool to Guide Catholic Schools Forward on Matters of LGBTQ+ Inclusion"

III.10 Church/Ecumenism – Topic Session **Executive D**

Administrative Team: Natalia Imperatori-Lee, Kathryn L. Reinhard, Elyse Raby

Convener: **Natalia Imperatori-Lee**, Manhattan College
Moderator: **Kathryn L. Reinhard**, Gwynedd Mercy University

Presenter: **Layla Karst**, Loyola Marymount University
Paper Title: "Bold Speech: Lay Liturgical Preaching and the Synodal Church"

Presenter: **Jaisy Joseph**, Villanova University
Paper Title: "From Humiliation to Healing: A Mimetic Account of Finding Freedom through the Forgiving Victim"

Presenter: **Jeannine Hill Fletcher**, Fordham University
Paper Title: "In Bondage and In Freedom: Intimacies of a Black and White Catholicism"

III.11 Creation/Eschatology – Topic Session **Pere Marquette**

Administrative Team: Daniel Horan, O.F.M., Elizabeth Groppe, Daniel Scheid

Convener: **Daniel Horan, O.F.M.**, Saint Mary's College
Moderator: Elizabeth Groppe, University of Dayton

Presenter: **Dylan Belton**, Villanova University
Paper Title: "'Openness' to the Transcendent and Human Animality: Re-reading Henri De Lubac's Mystery of the Supernatural"

Presenter: **Colleen Carpenter**, Carleton College
Paper Title: "'Behold I Make All Things New': Prophetic Eschatology and Climate Fiction"

Respondent: **Vincent Miller**, University of Dayton

Saturday Afternoon, June 10, 2023

***Theological Studies* Editorial Consultation Luncheon** 12:50–2:15 p.m.
Manager's Suite, Third Floor

CUERG Luncheon 1:00–2:15 p.m.
Executive AB

Concurrent Sessions 2:30–4:15 p.m.
IV.1 Decolonizing Catholic Theology – Interest Group **Lakeshore A**

Administrative Team: Bradford Hinze, Rufus Burnett, Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo

Convener: **Rufus Burnett, Jr.**, Fordham University
Moderator: **Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo**, Wake Forest University Divinity School

Presenter: **Mark Freeland**, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Paper Title: "Minowakiing as the Good Land: Milwaukee and the Decolonization of Indigenous Relationships to Land and Life"

Respondent: **Cecilia Titizano La Fuenta**, Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University

Respondent: **Steve B**attin, University of Notre Dame

IV.2 The Liberating Theology of James Hal Cone – Interest Group **Lakeshore B**
Black First and Everything Else Second

Administrative Team: Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, C. Vanessa White, LaShaunda Reese

Convener: **Kathleen Dorsey Bellow**, Xavier University of Louisiana
Moderator: **LaShaunda Reese**, Loyola University Chicago

Presenter: **C. Vanessa White**, Catholic Theological Union
Paper Title: "James Hal Cone's Journey to Freedom"

Presenter: **SimonMary Asese Aihiokhai**, University of Portland
Paper Title: "A Decolonial Anthropology of Freedom: Insights from James H. Cone and Frantz Fanon"

IV.3 Asian/Asian American Theology – Consultation **Lakeshore C**

Administrative Team: Edmund Chia, Stephanie Wong, Min-Ah Cho

Convener: **Edmund Chia**, Australian Catholic University
Moderator: **Akhil Thomas**, Harvard University

Presenter: **(Huili) Kathy Stout**, University of Dayton
Paper Title: "Three Competing Visions for Freedom in Republican-era China"

Presenter: **Antonio D. Sison**, Catholic Theological Union
Paper Title: "Silent Inculturation: Faith, Unfreedom, and Japan's Hidden Christians"
Presenter: **Christina Astorga**, University of Portland
Paper Title: "Postcolonial Imagination: Towards a Postcolonial Filipina Feminist Theology"

IV.4 Pre-liberal Theologies of Freedom in a Post-liberal Age – Selected Session **Gilpatrick AB**

Convener: **Michael C. Magree, S.J.**, Boston College
Moderator: **Stephen Pope**, Boston College

Presenter: **Michael C. Magree, S.J.**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Origen on Freedom: Christian Exaltation of the Human in the Face of Gnosticism"

Presenter: **Elisabeth R. Kincaid**, Loyola University New Orleans
Paper Title: "Francisco Suárez, SJ: Freedom for Whom?"

Presenter: **Grant Kaplan**, Saint Louis University
Paper Title: "The Freedom of a Catholic? Johann Adam Möhler's Political-Theological Turn"

IV.5. Liturgy/Sacraments – Topic Session **Solomon Juneau**

Administrative Team: Kimberly Belcher, Xavier M. Montecel, Benjamin Durheim

Convener: **Kimberly Belcher**, University of Notre Dame
Moderator: **Thomas McLean**, KU Leuven

Presenter: **LaRyssa Herrington**, University of Notre Dame
Paper Title: "Baptism as Mystical-Political Engagement? Exploring the Rite of Baptism in African American Slave Narratives During the Antebellum Period"

Presenter: **Bruce Morrill, S.J.**, Vanderbilt University
Paper Title: "Taking Liberties with Liturgy: Consistency and Conflicts in Principles, Legal and Theological"

Presenter: **Erin Kidd**, St. John's University (New York)
Paper Title: "Is the Feminist Free to Pray on Her Knees?"

IV.6 Historical Theology – Topic Session **Milwaukee A**

Administrative Team: Elizabeth Huddleston, Joshua R. Brown, Rita George-Tvrtkovic
Convener: **Elizabeth Huddleston**, National Institute for Newman Studies
Moderator: **Rita George-Tvrtkovic**, Benedictine University

Presenter: **Joshua R. Brown**, Mount Saint Mary's University
Paper Title: "The Cultural Challenges of Creation: Catholic Faith and Chinese Reason in Giulio Aleni's Wanwu *zhenyuan* 萬物真原"

Presenter: **Robert Trent Pomplun**, University of Notre Dame
Paper Title: "Faith and Reason in the Tibetan Writings of Ippolto Desideri (1684–1733)"

IV.7 Fieldwork in Theology – Interest Group **Milwaukee B**

Administrative Team: Layla A. Karst, Jaisy Joseph, Lorraine Cuddeback-Gedeon

Convener: **Layla A. Karst**, Loyola Marymount University
Moderator: **Lorraine Cuddeback-Gedeon**, Mercy High School

Presenter: **Laurel Marshall Potter**, Boston College
Paper Title: "¡*Que viva la ronda*! Dialogue as a Framework for Theological Fieldwork"

Presenter: **Dorris van Gaal**, Calvert Hall High School
Paper Title: "Migration Experiences as a *Locus Theologicus*: Qualitative Research in Migration Theology"

Respondent: **Edward P. Hahnenberg**, John Carroll University

IV.8 Moral Theology – Topic Session **Crystal**
Freedom in Pursuit of the Common Good

Administrative Team: Rachel Bundang, Kate Ward, David Kwon

Convener: **Marc Rugani**, Saint Anselm College
Moderator: **Kate Ward**, Marquette University

Presenter: **Elizabeth Sweeny Block**, Saint Louis University
Paper Title: "Searching for Truth: What Religious Freedom Can Teach Us about Moral Freedom"

Presenter: **Ramon Luzarraga**, Saint Martin's University
Paper Title: "John Courtney Murray: Prophet"

Presenter: **Sara Bernard-Hoverstad**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Climate Anxiety, Moral Agency, and Social Ethics"

IV.9 Freedom for All of Us – Invited Session **Executive C**

Convener: **Bryan Massingale**, Fordham University
Moderator: **Miguel Díaz**, Loyola University Chicago

Presenter: **Bryan Massingale**, Fordham University
Paper Title: "I'll Fly Away: Toward a Black Queer Spirituality of Desire, Transformation, and Resistance"

Presenter: **Elsie Miranda**, The Association of Theological Schools
Paper Title: "Free to be Queer and Catholic: Gender Identity and the Liberating Love of God at the Intersection of Church and Culture"

Respondent: **Adam Beyt**, St. Norbert College

IV.10 Theology and Science – Topic Session **Executive D**

Administrative Team: Chelsea King, Kevin Vaughan, Megan Loumagne Ulishney

Convener: **Chelsea King**, Sacred Heart University
Moderator: **Kevin Vaughan**, The College of St. Scholastica

Presenter: **Charles Gillespie**, Sacred Heart University
Paper Title: "Freedom and Observation: Theodramatics Meets Quantum Theory"

Presenter: **Ligita Ryliškytė, S.J.E.**, Boston College
Paper Title: "The 'Cosmic' Freedom and Emergent Probability"

Presenter: **Benjamin Hohman**, Providence College
Paper Title: "Has John Haught Freed Freedom Enough?"

IV.11 God and Trinity – Topic Session **Pere Marquette**

Administrative Team: Susie Babka, Darren Dias, O.P.

Convener: **Susie Babka**, University of San Diego
Moderator: **Mary Ann Hinsdale**, Boston College

Presenter: **Robert Elliot**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Human Freedom as Participation in Trinitarian Shared Intentionality"

Presenter: **Jonathan Heaps**, Boston College
Paper Title: "Divine Desire, Divine Freedom, and Contemplative Prayer"

Presenter: **Brianne Jacobs**, Emmanuel College
Paper Title: "Prodigal Love: Gendered Parent Language and God"

Saturday Evening, June 10, 2023

Eucharist at Old Saint Mary Parish 6:30 p.m.
844 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

Walking Directions: Exit the hotel and turn right onto Kilbourn Ave. and walk to N. Broadway. The church is located on the corner of E. Kilbourn Ave. and N. Broadway.
Bus Transportation will be provided for those unable to walk to the church. Coach lines will be parked near the hotel entrance.

John Courtney Murray Award Banquet 7:45 p.m.
Regency AB

Sunday Morning, June 11, 2023

Conveners' Meeting 7:15–8:45 a.m.
Executive Ballroom

New conveners (or their delegates) of Topic Sessions, Interest Groups, and Consultations will meet Kristin Heyer, CTSA President-Elect, Nancy Pineda-Madrid, CTSA Vice President, and Kevin Brown, Editor of Proceedings, for evaluation and preliminary planning for the 2024 convention.

Zen Meditation 7:15–8:15 a.m.
Milwaukee A

Morning Prayer 8:30–8:45 a.m.
Milwaukee A

Exhibits 8:30–11:00 a.m.
Atrium

Fourth Plenary Session: Presidential Address 9:00–10:15 a.m.
Regency Ballroom AB

Presiding: **Nancy Pineda-Madrid**, Loyola Marymount University
Vice President, CTSA

Address: **Francis X. Clooney**, Harvard University
President, CTSA

"Freedoms and Fears: The Musings of a
Comparative Theologian on the Future of the CTSA"

Appointment of the New President 10:00–10:15 a.m.
Regency Ballroom AB

Coffee and Pastries 10:15 a.m.
Atrium

Appointment of the New President 10:00 a.m.
Capital Ballroom South

Meeting and Luncheon: CTSA Board of Directors 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
Milwaukee B

Catholic Theological Society of America
78th Annual Convention

"Social Salvation"

June 13–16, 2024
Marriott Waterfront Hotel
Baltimore Inner Harbor, Maryland

The CTSA would like to thank the following members for their service and assistance with the annual convention:

Local Arrangements Committee

Kate Ward, Marquette University
Daniel Stosur, Cardinal Stritch University
Shawnee Daniels-Sykes (d. October 31, 2022), Mount Mary University
Eternal rest grant to Shawnee, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her.

Liturgical Aide

Layla A. Karst, Loyola Marymount University

Parliamentarian

William Loewe, Catholic University of America

Photographer

Paul J. Schutz, Santa Clara University

Program Organization Assistant

Emma McDonald, Boston College

Registration Team

Dora Del Toro Herrera, Cardinal Stritch University
Dorie Goehring, Boston College
Emma McDonald, Boston College
Cecille Medina-Maldonado, Marquette University
Christine Mellick, University of Dayton
Joseph Rosales, Harvard Divinity School

Videographer

David Rohrer Budiash, *Review for Religious*

JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY AWARD 2023

Citation from Dr. Francis X. Clooney, S.J., CTSA President:

The John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Theological Achievement

The colleague whom the CTSA honors this year with the John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Theological Achievement has for over half a century contributed significantly to theology and to the life and well-being of the church and God's people. Well before "public theology" became a watchword, our honoree set about rethinking the language of faith in the contemporary world. With typical understatement and modesty—yet equal resolve—he became a leader in the theological community and among us especially in the CTSA.

Our honoree was born in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, attended parochial school in Caldwell, New Jersey, and then Xavier High School in Manhattan. There followed a BA (1960) and an MA in Philosophy (1961) from Berchmans College, Philippines, and some practical experience teaching in the Philippines.

He then earned an STB from Woodstock College, Maryland (1967), when that school was at the height of its academic fame. Then came a Ph.D. in Theology from the prestigious Divinity School of the University of Chicago in 1973. Later on, in 2005, he was the recipient of that Divinity School's Alumnus of the Year Award.

In a long career he has taught for extended periods of time at graduate schools of theology in Chicago, Toronto, Cambridge, Massachusetts and, since 2004, at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He has also lived out the global dimension of theology as a visiting professor: in Pune, India; Lima, Peru; Nairobi, Kenya; Paris, France; and Manila, Philippines.

Major publications in the first decade of his career include several foundational books: *The Experience and Language of Grace* (1979); *An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology* (1985); and *The Dynamics of Theology* (1990). His best-known book is a work in Christology which attracted attention world-wide—including even in Rome—and was awarded the Catholic Publishing Association First Prize for Theology in 1999. Even today it is found on countless course reading lists.

In the decade following that momentous book he turned to more historically centered publications, including three volumes of *Christian Community in History* (2004-08) as well as *The Future of Christology* (2003). He focused then on more contemporary versions of what was at once partly fundamental and partly interconfessional theology: *Christian Spirituality for Seekers: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius* (2012), *Spirituality Seeking Theology* (2014), and *Spiritual and Religious: Explorations for Seekers* (2016).

There was still more to come from his prolific pen: *Faith and Evolution: A Grace-Filled Naturalism* (2019) and, just a few months ago, *The Nature of Theology: Challenges, Frameworks, Basic Beliefs* (2022), reprising and renewing themes from earlier years.

Recognized from the beginning of his long career as a dedicated and insightful teacher, in every context our awardee has been appreciated as a guide and mentor to students at all levels—many of whom speak of him as "the best teacher I ever had."

It was entirely fitting then that we honor the theologian who was President of the CTSA in 1994-5 and gave the Presidential Address for the fiftieth anniversary of the Society in 1995 in New York City. He likewise graced us with the homily for our virtual celebration of our seventy-fifth anniversary in 2020.

And so it is with pride and gratitude tonight, here in Milwaukee, that the Catholic Theological Society of America is exceedingly happy to confer the John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Theological Achievement on Roger David Haight, S.J.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The membership of the CTSA met for its annual Business Meeting on Friday, June 9, 2023. Dr. Francis X. Clooney, S.J., called the meeting to order at 4:33 pm, CST. Dr. William Loewe served as parliamentarian.

Report of the Admissions Committee

Dr. Rachel Bundang presented the report on behalf of the Admissions committee. Members of the Admissions Committee for 2022-2023 were Dr. Steve Battin, Dr. Rachel Bundang, Dr. Anna Bonta Moreland, Dr. Ted Ulrich, and Dr. Hosffman Ospino, Secretary, *ex officio*. The Committee had several interactions via email and met via Zoom in May 2023.

Between May 1, 2022 and April 30, 2023, the CTSA received a total of sixty-seven applications. Five were special case applications. Four of these were moved forward upon satisfactory receipt of further documentation; one was postponed for further consideration by the Admissions Committee in 2024. The membership received sixty-six applications distributed in the following categories (as you can see from the list circulated/posted): New Active membership applicants: forty-one. Of these, ten corresponded to Associate members applying to Active membership. New Associate membership applicants: twenty-five. The committee recommended that the CTSA Active members present at this Business Meeting accept all sixty-six applications vetted by this year's Admissions Committee and put forward for membership.

The CTSA members present at the meeting approved the committee's recommendation by a voice vote. The new Active and Associate members present at the meeting were greeted with a round of applause. President Francis X. Clooney, S.J., encouraged them to participate actively in the life of the Society, including elections. New members are found in the appendices to the CTSA Directory contained in this volume of the *Proceedings*.

Report of the Nominations Committee

After a process of receiving, vetting, and discerning nominations from the general membership, the members of the Nominations Committee, Dr. Bradford Hinze (*Chair*), Dr. Susan K. Wood, and Dr. Bede Bidlack submitted the names of candidates recommended to stand for election to serve on the Board. Dr. Bradford Hinze read the names proposed by the committee:

The slate of nominees proposed by the committee follow:

For Vice-President:	Dr. Susan Abraham
	Dr. J. Matthew Ashley
For board members:	Dr. SimonMary Asese Aihiokhai
	Dr. Daniel P. Castillo
	Dr. Elsie M. Miranda
	Dr. Jakob Karl Rinderknecht

There were no nominations from the floor.

President Francis X. Clooney, S.J., thanked all standing for election. As voting results became available, they were announced to the membership.

Dr. Susan Abraham was elected as Vice-President. Dr. SimonMary Asese Aihiokhai and Dr. Elsie M. Miranda were elected as Board Members. Dr. Hosffman Ospino (Secretary) and Rev. Patrick Flanagan, C.M., (Treasurer) were reelected by acclamation for another one-year term.

Dr. Kristin Heyer assumes the Presidency for the year 2023-2024. Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid becomes President-Elect. The rest of the Board of Directors are Dr. Francis X. Clooney, S.J. (Past President), Dr. Nancy Dallavalle (Board Member) and Dr. Linh Hoang (Board Member).

The President thanked Dr. J. Matthew Ashley, Dr. Daniel P. Castillo, and Dr. Jakob Karl Rinderknecht for their generosity to stand for election.

Report of the President

The following is the text of the report read by Dr. Francis X. Clooney, S.J.:

1. This is a Society that runs on generous service, and hence too on gratitude and appreciation. So many people deserve our thanks: administrative team members; conveners; presenters; committee chairs and members; our student assistants; everyone at the Hyatt Regency, and more. I wish also to thank our Board Members and Officers for their tireless work on behalf of the Society.

2. In particular, and on behalf of all CTSA members, I thank Kristin Heyer for her work as President-Elect in planning so interesting and timely a convention this year. I also thank Emma McDonald for her superb supporting work as Convention Assistant; the Local Arrangements Committee, Kate Ward, David Stosur, and our late lamented colleague, Shawnee Daniels-Sykes; Layla Karst and her liturgical team; and Mary Jane Ponyik and her Registration Team, for once again as always arranging every detail of the convention, anticipating every unexpected challenge, and making all this work out smoothly.

3. I am happy also to acknowledge this year's academic donors, whose generous gifts have enabled us to support our programs and students in need of scholarships to attend the conference: Boston College; McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts, the Department of Theology, and the Department of Catholic Studies, Duquesne University; President John J. DeGioia and Georgetown University; Harvard School of Divinity, Harvard University; John LaFarge Jesuit Community; Marquette University; Saint Louis University; University of Dayton; Villanova University. I also thank members of the Society who have graciously and most often anonymously regularly make gifts to the Society to support the works of the Society and our members.

4. **Revised Dues Structure.** At the June 8 Board meeting, the Board received from the Finance Committee a recommendation on a revised dues structure:

New Annual Dues Schedule	
Income Range	**Dues**
< $20,000	$40
$20-39,000	$70
$40-59,999	$90
$60-79,999	$110
$80-99,999	$130
$100-119,999	$150
$120-149,999	$170
$150,000 +	$190

The purpose of this revised dues structure is to alleviate undue burdens on junior members of the Society and those in less secure positions, the retired, etc., and to put in place more categories of dues calibrated to the likely salaries of higher paid members. The Board approved the recommendation. It will be monitored in the next years, and further adjustments made as warranted.

5. **Update on Five-Year Review**. I thank the Review Committee for their thoughtful and careful work in putting together the survey: Anna Bonta Moreland (chair), Susan Abraham, Meghan Clark, Grant Kaplan, and Carmen Nanko-Fernández. The survey the committee devised is a nuanced one that invites input from multiple angles about the nature and purposes of the annual convention. All members have been encouraged to fill it out, so as to give guidance to the Board in affirming our best practices and in making needed changes regarding how we use our Thursday-Sunday annual meeting time. This is all the more important today, in an era when expenses are rising, individual and institutional resources diminishing, and, on the positive side, new virtual possibilities for other modes of conversation opening up. The committee will complete their report this summer and give it to the Board, with their recommendations for moving forward.

6. **Fossil Fuel Committee.** As reported in last year's Proceedings in the Secretary's Report, in June 2022 the Board voted to freeze new investments in the Carbon Underground 200, to divest from direct or commingled investments in the Carbon Underground 200 no later than the 2025 convention. To this purpose, a committee was appointed by me in the summer of 2023: Erin Lothes, Chair; Daniel DiLeo; Matthew Shadle; and as a consultant, John O'Shaughnessy, CFO, Franciscan Sisters of Mary.

   On April 25, a virtual Town Hall meeting was held, where the committee made a preliminary report and discussed various aspects of it with those attending. The video of the meeting was made available to members who could not attend the meeting. The Board received the committee's final report in May, with this recommendation:

> The Fossil Fuel Committee has, as scheduled, provided the Board with the follow-up new investment proposal. The core of the committee's report is as follows: "After extensive research, which involved examining and rejecting six other asset management firms, the Task Force recommends that the Catholic Theological Society of

> America remove its assets from Christian Brothers Investment Service (CBIS), and re-invest the equity (stocks) portion in a separately managed account (SMA) managed by Aperio Group." This equity portfolio, the report noted, is to be constructed to track the S&P 500 benchmark index. Assets in the Aperio SMA should be held in a custody account through Schwab, which is a free account.

At the June 8 Meeting, the Board discussed the proposal at length, including by Zoom with Committee Chair Erin Lothes, and endorsed the committee's Report, thus committing us to a removal of our assets from CBIS and reinvestment of them in a separately managed account (SMA) managed by Aperio Group. The Board will continue to monitor our investments, and be alert regarding any further changes that might be warranted in years to come.

7. **Meeting with heads of Catholic theological societies**. In the winter months, I (and in some cases President-Elect Kristin Heyer as well) zoomed with the heads of other Catholic theological societies in North America: Academy of *Catholic Hispanic* Theologians of the United States; Academy of Catholic Theology; Black Catholic Theological Symposium; Canadian Theological Society; College Theology Society; Fellowship of Catholic Scholars; Société Canadienne de Théologie

   On February 6, 2023, representatives of the Societies met for an hour's meeting by Zoom. It was devoted to introductions to the various societies and to the individuals present on the Zoom as current leaders. We identified issues of common concern, for example: the well-being of Catholic seminaries, colleges, and universities; problems and possibilities related to theological exchange among the societies; our participation in the current global synodal conversations. We concluded by hoping that regular meetings—perhaps twice a year—might become customary, and that we might also visit each other's annual meetings on occasion. Further meetings will occur during 2023-24.

8. **Liaisons with the Bishops of the United States and Canada**. In 2022, Leo Lefebure (Georgetown University) and Catherine Clifford (St. Paul University) were appointed liaisons, respectively, with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Conference of Bishops. They have already been most helpful to the Society in helping us to renew and rethink how best we can relate to the two conferences. We anticipate a meeting with the Canadian Bishops' liaison in the fall of 2023. A similar meeting with the USCCB representative, possibly along with representatives of other Catholic societies, will occur during 2023-24.

9. **Collaboration with the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities**. In the early spring of 2023, I was in contact with Dennis Holtschneider, C.M., the President of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities. After other matters were dealt with, Fr. Holtschneider himself raised the possibility of our working together. He wrote in his March 9, 2023, letter, "ACCU and its constituent universities benefit mightily from the work of theologians, but we do not attend to

the discipline itself. For some time now, I have been worried about the state of your discipline and even more for its future. I wonder if the nature of the challenges you are facing can be resolved by faculty alone or need the partnership of the presidents and trustees my association serves. I approached you therefore to test my ideas and inquire whether CTSA would like our partnership."

Further conversation—among Fr. Holtschneider, Kristin Heyer, and me—explored the possibilities for collaboration. We agreed to start with the gathering and updating of data on the state of Catholic theology on campus, with respect to core requirements, majors and minors, and the number of tenure track positions available (with an eye toward trends, decrease, increase, or no change). As a result, we have agreed to work with ACCU in updating data from prior surveys and in compiling new data, with theologians providing key questions to guide the interpretation of the data and the drawing out of the significance of the data. This has become a multi-society endeavor, with three liaisons who will work with ACCU: Johann Vento, Georgian Court University, President, of the College Theology Society; James Keating, Providence College, representing the Academy of Catholic Theology; and our own Edward Hahnenberg, John Carroll University, representing the CTSA. Conversations are expected to continue over the summer months.

10. **The Centennial Committee**, missioned in 2022 to think ahead to where the Society will be in the next years, has been at work and has met numerous times in the past year. We have sought to identify key concerns facing the Society today and, on that basis, to clarify a vision for the years to come. The CC hosted at 830pm on Friday evening, June 9, a conversation on the work of the Committee and the crucial issues facing us in the next years. The meeting was well-attended, and much data collected by the Committee members.

11. **The New Members Reception** occurred as usual after the Business Meeting. Rita George Tvrtkovic (Benedictine University) and Darren Dias (University of St. Michael's College) offered words of welcome and shared their experience in finding their way in the Society; Stephanie Wong spoke on behalf of CUERG; Kristin Heyer and I also offered brief remarks. Invited too were the leaders of the eight current Interest Groups.

Report of the President-Elect

The following is the text of the report read by Dr. Kristin Heyer.

I would like to express deep gratitude to all who have helped plan and pull off this year's convention here in Milwaukee: in particular, for the enormous planning work and invaluable institutional memory of Executive Director Mary Jane Ponyik, the practical wisdom and diligence of Program Assistant Emma McDonald, who is a few weeks away from defending her dissertation, and the support and collaboration of members of the presidential line and board. Thanks to all of the administrative teams for their work in making the program possible, and to all of you on the program for taking the theme of "Freedom" in such generative and exciting directions. The plenary and concurrent sessions underway have already provided rich reflections on freedom,

marked by theological depth and various diversities: whether in terms of race/ethnicity, gender/sexual orientation/gender expression, national origin or viewpoint.

I also wish to thank the local arrangements committee, chaired by Kate Ward, who was joined by David Stosur and Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, may she rest in peace. Thanks too to Brad Hinze for his help facilitating the preconvention tour of nearby Indigenous sites with our guest Mark Freeland, which sold out. Our updated local land acknowledgements resource document may be found on the convention website. Thanks to our new liturgical aid Layla Karst, our returning photographer Paul Schutz, our impromptu videographer Dorie Goering, and, for the second year in a row, to Zen meditation coordinator Ruben Habito. Thanks to our pairs who participated in the "Sharing the Wisdom" initiative this year.

I'll let Mary Jane report on the convention numbers, but I'm very pleased to see so many here in Milwaukee during a period of continued caution and institutional funding cuts. I'm struck by how we can deepen theological friendships meeting in person. We are grateful for your adoption of our pilot QR code which saved about $7,000 in projector rental costs and to those who uploaded papers for greater accessibility.

Looking back, I add thanks to those who made possible the year's online programming related to the Synod and ChatGPT as well as the Fossil Fuels ad hoc committee for their informative town hall meeting. I look forward to learning how the pilot book club experience goes, as well.

Thanks to those of you who joined the USCCB's Zoom convenings with theological guilds related to the Synod on Synodality in recent weeks; we have already received some valuable suggestions about taking CTSA input on the synod further, with a study group or ongoing guild discussions, and I welcome input from others of you as well. I am likewise happy to receive feedback on the CTSA's relationships with the US and Canadian bishops' conferences more broadly, and am grateful to our liaisons' ongoing work in that vein.

In the year ahead, I shall work with the Board to take up input from the convention review committee and ongoing work of the Centennial Committee, from other important standing committees, such as CUERG (Committee on Underrepresented Ethnic and Racial Groups), and our liaisons to wider networks such as INSeCT and the World Forum on Theology and Liberation. I plan to continue the collaboration President Frank Clooney has begun this year in convening leadership representatives from other English-speaking theological guilds across North America, including a collaborative project with the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) just getting underway. As I plan to take up the work begun by immediate predecessors, I am mindful of the new economic challenges, ongoing demographic shifts, changing institutional and social climates—not to mention planetary climate!—amid which we do our work. I look forward to collaborating with all of you to help the Society adapt, so as to continue to foster theological engagement with urgent questions facing the church and our world.

Report of the Vice-President

The following is the text of the report read by Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid.

I wish to express my gratitude to Mary Jane Ponyik, Kristin Heyer, Frank Clooney, Chris Hinze and Hosffman Ospino for guiding my work and effort. Their wisdom was integral to all that I did this year. Every board member chipped in when asked to do so. Gracias.

I. Duties at the 2023 Convention

One of my responsibilities at this convention is to oversee the convention's liturgical services. In a particular way, I want to recognize with gratitude Layla Karst, CTSA Liturgical Liaison. The prayerfulness and beauty of our liturgical prayer services throughout this convention are because of her leadership and efforts. I thank all the members who contributed to our **Memorial Service** which honored the twenty-one members who passed this year**.** Thank you as well to all the members who contributed to our morning prayer services and meditation practice, and all who are contributing to our Eucharistic celebration tomorrow.

I am equally grateful to all members who made our New Members Mentorship Breakfast today such a success. Gracias.

I serve as chair of the Resolutions Committee, which in addition to myself, includes Min-ah Cho and Mary Kate Holman. We reviewed one resolution, "Supporting Members Harmed by Program or Institutional Closures or Cutbacks," written and presented by Kate Ward. The resolution earned unanimous support from the committee. The following is the text of the resolution considered by the CTSA members in attendance at the Business Meeting on June 9, 2023:

> In recent years, members of the Catholic Theological Society of America have been harmed by the closures of the academic institutions or programs that employ them, resulting in unexpected loss of employment even, in some cases, for tenured faculty. These circumstances seriously injure the worker dignity of the affected faculty and their right to stable and sufficient employment, as well as harming the students of the programs and institutions which are abruptly closed, usually without meaningful consultation with faculty, students and other institutional stakeholders. Furthermore, such sudden closures of programs and institutions harm all academic workers by creating a climate of fear and instability which disincentivizes academic laborers from defending our own dignity in employment. It is the position of the CTSA that as academic workers, we and our labor are not disposable or interchangeable, and that colleagues who lose their jobs due to program or institutional closures are still valued theologians with important contributions to make to our shared work. While deploring these sudden closures of programs and institutions in the strongest possible terms, the Society wishes to support colleagues in such situations in discerning their new path forward, in continuing their professional development, and in seeking other academic employment if they so desire.
>
> By adopting this resolution, the CTSA membership strongly urges the Board of Directors to actively pursue a plan that mitigates or

> waives membership fees and conference registration fees for a period of some years for members who have lost employment due to program or institutional closure.

The resolution was discussed, voted and adopted by an overwhelming majority of CTSA members: 115 in favor, 7 opposed, and 1 abstention.

Over the past year, I met with the leadership of CUERG a couple of times to seek input on the planning of the upcoming 2024 convention and to seek CUERG advice on how CTSA address "underrepresented" constituencies beyond race and ethnicity.

II. Seventy-Eighth Annual Convention, Baltimore, Maryland, June 13-16, 2024

I am thrilled to welcome each of you to Baltimore, Maryland for CTSA's Seventy-Eighth Annual Convention. For years, I have been haunted by a passage in the gospel of Luke "… and **all** flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Luke 3:6). Inspired by this phrase, I have chosen the theme, ***Social Salvation***. This convention theme invites CTSA members to consider: Is social salvation fundamentally a never-ending process in history that confronts and subverts evil, an ongoing interpretive process that *reads the past*, Jesus' vision of the reign of God, *towards the future*, the promise of eternal life, *in the present*, the here and now of our lives?

To help us consider Social Salvation, I am delighted to announce our plenary speakers:

1. Carlos Mendoza-Alvarez, O.P., Professor of Theology at Boston College and formerly of the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City.
2. Susan Abraham, Professor of Theology and Postcolonial Cultures and Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty at Pacific School of Religion.
3. Vincent Miller, Professor and Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology and Culture and Committee Chair of Doctoral Programs in Theology at the University of Dayton.
4. Kristin Heyer, CTSA President, Professor of Theology at Boston College

I am equally delighted to announce that Daniel Castillo, Associate Professor of Theology at Loyola Maryland has agreed to serve as the Local Arrangements Chair in Baltimore, and to announce that Rev. Dorie Geohring, Boston College doctoral student, will serve as Program Organization Assistant for this convention.

Most of all I want to thank you the CTSA members for your ongoing support. I look forward to seeing you in Baltimore next year. Gracias!

Report of the Secretary

CTSA Secretary, Dr. Hosffman Ospino, expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve the CTSA as the Secretary of the Board of Directors, which has been an enjoyable experience. He offered his gratitude to the members of the Admissions Committee Dr. Steve Battin, Dr. Rachel Bundang, Dr. Anna Bonta Moreland, and Dr. Ted Ulrich for working with him in the process of vetting applicants to Active and Associate membership. He noted that the CTSA remains strong attracting new members who will enrich the life of the Society. He encouraged all those present at the Business Meeting to invite colleagues in their earlier careers and doctoral students in theology or related fields who are not members of the Society to consider

applying for membership. He also brought to the attention of the membership the fact that there is a growing number of theologians who have applied for membership, have the academic credentials and are committed to the mission of the CTSA, yet are not working in traditional academic settings like colleges/universities and seminaries. He invited to consider identifying more of these professional leaders and encourage them to apply for membership.

Dr. Ospino expressed his gratitude to the CTSA Executive Director, Mrs. Mary Jane Ponyik for her outstanding service to the Society and its members. This year he served as a Board of Directors liaison to CUERG along with Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Vice-President.

He updated the membership about a process to archive digital materials associated with the life of the CTSA. We are currently engaged in conversations with the archivist at the Catholic University of America to ensure the best format to save digital information, particularly large quantities of emails, in formats that can be retrieved in the future.

Dr. Ospino reminded the members that he is available to support all members as they navigate the life of the Society.

Report of the Treasurer

The Treasurer, Dr. Patrick Flanagan, C.M., included the Financial Report in the documents provided to the members attending the Business Meeting. This report is also included in the *Proceedings*. Unable to attend the meeting for health reasons, Fr. Flanagan submitted his report after the Business Meeting. He thanks CTSA Executive Director Mrs. Mary Jane Ponyik and Dr. Dan Daily, S.J. for assisting him with his responsibilities. He highlights the work of the Ad Hoc Committee of Fossil Fuels and that of the Centennial Committee for helping the Society to understand its financial realities.

Dr. Flanagan reiterates that we are in challenging economic times in this country and the world. Many Catholic organizations, including our institutions of higher education, are facing difficulties. Many are bracing for a much-announced decline in enrollment in the next five years (a loss of about 800,000 new incoming students), affecting the Northeast in particular. There are global realities that have made the economy unstable. While the CTSA finances have enjoyed certain stability, currently our investments are down 7 percent. We have some funds that will help the Society on challenging days and to support initiatives at the service of the membership, yet those funds may run out quickly. We need more creativity. Fr. Flanagan will continue to monitor investments, work with the Fossil Fuels Committee to move investments, be more precise in the development of the budget, and seek out grants and donations to support the work of the Society. He invites members to continue to be generous with their donations and to encourage their institutions to support the CTSA.

Report of the Executive Director

The following is the text of the report read by Mrs. Mary Jane Ponyik.

Good evening! It is my pleasure to once again be together with you again. This year's convention attendance is 356 with 71 percent attending the John Courtney Murray Banquet tomorrow night.

There are nine publishing houses represented at this year's convention and eight program ads were purchased. There are seven additional ads within our program highlighting the universities and colleges who donated funds to the CTSA in support of our convention. These ad spaces were provided to these institutions as a token of our appreciation.

This year, sixty-one attendees reduced their carbon footprint by donating funds through Native Energy, an expert provider of carbon offsets initiatives. The project, "Turn Methane into Heat for Smallholder Farmers in Mexico," will be the recipient of the collected funds.

Kate Ward, David Stosur, and Shawnee Daniels-Sykes—who presence is greatly missed this year—served as this year's Local Arrangements Committee. They have done a terrific job in assisting Kristin, Frank, and me with the preparation of the convention. Emma McDonald served as a program organization assistant and as a member of our registration team. Layla Karst is serving as the CTSA's liturgical aide. Our photographer is Paul Schutz and our videographer is Dorie Goehring. Thank you all so much for your contributions to the annual convention.

Our terrific registration team includes student volunteers from Boston College, Cardinal Stritch University, Harvard Divinity School, Marquette University, and the University of Dayton. A huge thank you to our registration team as well.

Next year, the CTSA will travel to Baltimore. The room rate at the Renaissance Baltimore Innerharbor Hotel will be $165 and the meeting dates are June 13-16.

The CTSA awards convention scholarships each year to offer financial assistance to members. The submission deadline date to submit a scholarship application is October 1.

The CTSA continues to hold a strong presence on Twitter with over 1,800 followers. We continue to have a presence on Instagram during our convention (follow #CTSA2023). The CTSA has been on LinkedIn for a year now. So, whatever your social medium preference, be sure to follow us!

New this year with the CTSA is the development of the CTSA Book Club. We have eighteen members who have expressed interest in participating. On May 4, the book club met for the first time via Zoom to discuss Susan Bigelow Reynolds's book *People Get Ready: Ritual, Solidarity and Lived Ecclesiology in Catholic Roxbury*, (Chapters 1-3). The book was well received by the members in attendance. We are scheduled to next meet on June 22 to discuss Chapters 4-6. Please consider joining us!

A couple of housekeeping matters: An electronic convention evaluation request was sent to the email address you provided when you registered for the convention. Please complete and submit the evaluation within the next two weeks. Your comments are valuable to the president-elect in the planning of the next year's convention.

For those attending the John Courtney Murray Banquet, the CTSA provided the opportunity for attendees to pre-select their seats. If you have a banquet ticket and have not reserved your seat, please know that there will be a seat for everyone. Upon return from the celebration of Eucharist, please head directly into the banquet hall with your entrée ticket in hand. You will not be served an entrée without your ticket. Please see me if you have any questions.

It is my pleasure and privilege to serve as your executive director. Never hesitate to reach out to me.

Report of CUERG

Dr. Joseph Flipper presented an abbreviated version of the Report from CUERG. The following is the full text of his report:

Mission, Vision & Annual Gathering

The Committee for Underrepresented Ethnic and Racial Groups, a committee of the CTSA Board, was developed to serve as a resource to members of underrepresented ethnic and racial groups at the CTSA. It was also developed to challenge the overall CTSA membership to be more attentive at the convention and local levels towards the global and diverse nature of the church, in its leadership, writings, research, presentations, panel sessions, explorations and teachings.

Annually, a luncheon takes place at the convention where theologians of color and their allies gather, share scholarship, network, update, inform and strategize as members of the CTSA. This format emphasized community building, accolades, opportunities to share news about scholarship being done from the Asian/Asian American, Latina/o/x, and Black/African and African American Consultations, and ask questions or share concerns. The 2023 CTSA Convention is the first post-pandemic annual meeting and we have suffered disruption over the last several years. We determined that it would be appropriate to guide a discussion about the retrieval of what has worked in the past to support our communities and about the needs for the future.

CUERG Leadership Team

(Asian/Asian American, Latina/o/x, Black/African & African American Consultation Members)

1. Joseph S. Flipper (Chair), University of Dayton (2020–2023)
2. Stephanie Wong, Villanova University (2021–2024)
3. Leo Guardado, Fordham University (2022–2025)

Joseph Flipper served as chair of CUERG for 2022–2023. Stephanie Wong will cycle on as the next chairperson and will serve from 2023-2024. The leadership team selected Byron Wratee, Boston College to serve from 2023-2026. Both transitions in leadership will occur at the 2023 convention.

Liaison between CUERG Leadership & The Executive Board

In their commitment to give greater attention to racial justice since the publication of the racial justice statement by the CTSA in 2020, the Board appointed two board members to act as liaisons between the Board and CUERG leadership. In 2022-2023, the liaisons were Hosffman Ospino and Nancy Pineda-Madrid. The CUERG leadership has found that working with liaisons improved communication between the Board and CUERG and enabled CUERG to more effectively serve to consult the board. CUERG members are willing to speak at meetings of the CTSA board.

CUERG notes that the liaisons have asked what else must CTSA do to realize its commitments to racial justice. Even if the answer to the question is not always evident, CUERG and the Board are working toward more effective habits of listening.

Clarification of the Role of CUERG

In the 2022–2023 cycle, CUERG leadership noted that there needed to be a clarification and/or delimitation of what is expected from leaders of CUERG. We noted

in conversations this year that there was some lack of understanding among members of CTSA as to the role and scope of CUERG. Even though it is founded as a committee of the CTSA Board, because CUERG is composed of members from the Asian/Asian American, Latina/o/x, Black/African & African American Consultations, it could easily be interpreted as a representative body.

CUERG engaged in conversations with the Board to clarify the role of CUERG as a standing committee of the CTSA Board. The CTSA Board Liaisons acknowledged that in its role as a consultative committee, the Board can commission CUERG to carry out research and support programming for CTSA.

The Land Acknowledgement and "Becoming Kin"

CUERG is grateful that CTSA has instituted a land acknowledgement begun at the 2022 annual convention. And we are happy that this has continued with the 2023 convention in Minowakiing (Milwaukee), which also will include the pre-convention event on the indigenous experience of Milwaukee. Several people related to the CUERG chair that they were thankful the CTSA instituted the land acknowledgement.

While land acknowledgements can become routine and simply "performative," the CTSA Board and CUERG have been attentive to making its land acknowledgement real, that is, to be in relationship and solidarity with those on whose lands we are visitors. While CTSA members certainly have more to do, by instituting the acknowledgement the CTSA shows an understanding that we are guests and it sets the expectation that we enact reciprocal forms of relationship. In the words of Patty Krawec, we seek to "become kin."

Facilitating Effective Communication with Members from Underrepresented Groups

During the 2022-2023 year, there were several meetings directed toward establishing more effective and two-way communication with members of underrepresented groups. The question of communication was deeply connected to conversations from 2021–2022 about how to recruit and retain junior scholars of color and to encourage participation in the luncheon. And CUERG determined that structures for effective two-way communication were lacking and it required the capacity to send messages to CTSA.

Considering that the Catholic Church is in the multi-year process of discernment of its synodal nature and structures, CUERG has worked toward opening up communication structures to allow for more effective listening. With advice and support of the board, CUERG worked with the CTSA director to establish an official CUERG Gmail account for email and access to the CTSA distribution lists. The CUERG chair now is able to directly email the CTSA members or specifically those who identify as belonging to an underrepresented group. This year, it has allowed CUERG to encourage members to register for the convention and for the CUERG luncheon. It has also allowed us to highlight the sessions of the Asian/Asian American, Latina/o/x, and Black/African and African American Consultations, and other relevant sessions.

Future CUERG chairs will need to be trained in the use of the CTSA distribution list.

2023 Convention

1. Consultations and sessions

1. Latino/a Theology Consultation (Friday, June 9, 11:00 a.m.–12:45 p.m.)
2. Black Catholic Theology Consultation (Friday, June 9, 2:30 p.m.–4:15 p.m.)
3. Decolonizing Catholic Theology Interest Group (Saturday, June 10, 2:30 p.m.–4:15 p.m.)
4. Liberating Theology of James Hal Cone Interest Group (Saturday, June 10, 2:30 p.m.–4:15 p.m.)
5. Asian/Asian American Theology Consultation (Saturday, June 10, 2:30 p.m.–4:15 p.m.)

6. LUNCHEON: (Saturday, June 10, 2023)

1. Fifty-three registrations
2. AGENDA
    1. Welcome, Introduction of CUERG leadership team, and introduction to CUERG
    2. Blessing of the Meal and Lunch
    3. Guided table conversation

Future Items

1. The capacity to use the CTSA distribution lists are excellent for communicating from CUERG to the membership. We may require additional discernment of how we can build synodal structures to actively listen to members of our communities.

2. Consideration of recruitment, retention, and mentoring activities. The CTSA leadership has created several programming activities at the annual meeting aimed at recruitment and retention. CUERG has been in conversation with the CTSA leadership to consider the best ways to support these activities and to engage members from underrepresented groups. This may be part of ongoing discussions in the coming year.

Report of the INSeCT Delegate

Dr. Ramón Luzárraga, CTSA representative to INSeCT provided the following report.

1. INSeCT, with its revamped structure and website https://www.insecttheology.org is now fulfilling its renewed mission to be an international networking center for Catholic theological societies to communicate and collaborate with each other. Here are some recent examples of their work:
    1. INSeCT inaugurated an online lecture series, having completed two so far. The last series was held in April of this year, with decolonizing theologies helping decolonize the world as its theme. Dr. Melissa Pagán of Mount Saint Mary's University in Los Angeles and Dr. Pushpa Joseph of the University of Madras were the featured speakers.
    2. From March 27 to 30 of this year, INSeCT collaborated with the Catholic University of Leuven and the Ateneo de Manila University to hold an international conference, De/colonizing Theologies:

Global Histories, Contemporary Challenges.

3. Now, INSeCT is planning its General Assembly in Rome, scheduled for April 1-6, 2024. According to INSeCT President Ruben Mendoza, the reason this meeting is being held in Rome is to increase their profile among members of the Vatican Curia, and by extension the organizations which are members of INSeCT.
4. Dr. Mendoza has sent out a request which I am conveying to you in this report. If any CTSA members have contacts with members of the Curia, please communicate that to him and Dr. Judith Gruber, who are taking the lead in organizing this conference.

2. INSeCT hired a new executive secretary, Neven Vukic, to manage the website, and the daily activity of the organization.

3. The transition of INSeCT from being a registered charity in Europe to a 501(c) registered organization in the United States is still in process. The reason for this is my responsibility. The promised legal help, after several requests from me, did not materialize, coupled with a heavy workload inside and outside the University. This year for example, I raised funds, organized, and led the ACHTUS colloquium. Fortunately, I developed an excellent rapport with our business school faculty and will turn to them for help.

Report of the Delegates to the World Forum on Theologies and Liberation (WFTL)

Dr. Rufus Burnett, Jr., CTSA representative to the WFTL provided the following report.

It is with enthusiasm for the future that I submit this report to the CTSA. Several major developments have occurred since the last hybrid WFTL forum based in Mexico City and online in the spring of 2022. This report will highlight some of these developments and point to some of the implications that these developments have for enriching the ongoing relationship between the CTSA and the WFTL. These developments include: plans to meet in conjunction with the next World Social Forum in Kathmandu, Nepal; the development of year around WFTL programming; a new open access online journal for the WFTL; and new memberships.

The Forum

In March of 2023 the World Social Forum (WSF) announced that its next forum would take place in Kathmandu, Nepal March 13-17, 2024 (recently changed to February 13-19, 2024). The Secretariat, the Executive Committee, and the Methodology Committee have begun their work and will be meeting with the International Committee on June 7, 2023 to begin choosing a delegation to attend the WSF. These plans also include establishing a local delegation on the ground in Katmandu to work locally with the WSF team. Since its establishment, the WFTL has always meet in conjunction with the WSF and has offered sessions that could be attended by WSF participants. In May of 2022, this practice was greatly challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, logistical, and technical difficulties. In light of these challenges the International Committee agreed to host a separate online forum in June of 2022. Given the challenges of meeting in conjunction with the WSF in 2022, the WFTL is exited to send a delegation of at least twenty members to participate in the

WSF in 2024. The primary thematic for the WFTL during the WSF will be on practices of liberation in Asia.

Implications for CTSA Partnership:

This will be the first time in the history of the WFTL/CTSA partnership that the CTSA liaison members will have the opportunity to attend the WFTL forum. Plans are in the works to make the sessions hybrid. If local support and technology are sufficient, CTSA members will have an opportunity to attend remotely.

Programming between the Forums

This year the Executive and Methodological Committees proposed plans to include year-round programming in webinar and zoom meeting formats. These webinars will help invite a broader global audience into the WFTL and increase our opportunity to build partnerships beyond the WSF. In addition to the webinars, the WFTL plans to build long term partnerships with grassroots organizations working on projects for liberation. These partnerships (solidarity pairing projects) will be spearheaded by smaller delegations of WFTL members which will work with groups on the ground to help strengthen the WFTL's commitment to solidarity with local movements and organizations across the globe.

Implications for CTSA Partnership:

Plans for year-round online programming will offer CTSA members more opportunities to participate and potentially become members of the global community that is the WFTL. Ongoing webinars and solidarity pairing projects will also provide the CTSA liaison with a steady flow of content to share with the CTSA. CTSA members at large will be afforded opportunities to share and get feedback on their research and experiences in community with the WFTL.

Open Access Online Journal

The WFTL is in the last steps of the process of securing an online open access journal publication contract with Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal (PUM). The online journal will publish proceedings from the forums as well as articles on practices of liberation.

Implications for CTSA Partnership:

The open access journal will provide CTSA members with an additional resource to inform themselves about the theological perspectives that are emerging from the WFTL and its partners. It could also offer another outlet for CTSA members to publish if they are so inclined.

New Members

Following the forum in May-June of 2022, the Secretariat compiled a list of individuals who gave presentations. On February 4, the Executive Committee also proposed inviting other individuals whose writings and commitments align with the principles of the WFTL and demonstrate great quality. After discussions and further verifications, the Executive and International Committees, invited the following members to the International Committee along with other individuals from their countries: Elizabeth Isingi (Kenya), Patrick Gnanapragasam (India), Paul Hwnag (South Korea), Shiluinla Jamir (India), Felicia Dian Parera (Indonesia), Zakia Soman (India), Marta Luzie de Frecheiras (Brazil), Afonso Murad (Brazil), Cesar Baldelomar

(USA), Ariane Collin (Canada), Ángela Haager (Mexico), Laura Matamala Lienlaf (Mexico), Ignace Ndongala Maduku (Canada), Marisa Noriega (Mexico), Florence Ollivry (Canada), Marilu Salazar (Mexico), and Gareth Rowe (United Kingdom).

Concluding Thoughts

As I conclude, I would like to publicly thank Jaisy Joseph, Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University, for her work with the liaison over the last two years. I think I speak for the International Committee of the WFTL as a whole when I say that we hope that she will continue to participate in the WFTL. Her intellectual contributions, particularly her work "Responding to Shame with Solidarity: Sex Abuse Crisis in the Indian Catholic Church," *Asian Horizons* 14, no. 2 (2020) were illuminating and have no doubt influenced some of the new developments itemized above as well as the work of theologians in the WFTL. I look forward to continuing my service to the liaison in the years of 2023-2024 and plan to leverage the new developments within the WFTL to further enrich this partnership.

Presentation of the LaCugna Award

Dr. Reid B. Locklin read the citation for the Catherine Mowry LaCugna Award. He thanked the other members of the committee, namely Dr. Chris Pramuck and Dr. Judith Gruber, for their work in reading the submissions and selecting this year's winner. He also thanked all who submitted essays.

This year there were seventeen very fine essay submissions reviewed by the LaCugna Award Committee. Members of the committee reviewed the submissions independently, and then met over zoom to discuss and evaluate each essay. We were finally unanimous in our choice of the winner of this year's LaCugna Award, Susan Reynolds, for her essay, "'I Will Surely Have You Deported' Undocumenting Clergy Sexual Abuse in Immigrant Communities."

Meticulously researched and narrated in journalistic detail, the essay exposes a widespread pattern in which predatory priests intentionally targeted victims from undocumented families, while bishops systematically concealed and perpetuated the abuse by treating immigrant communities as dumping grounds for abusive clergy. Reynolds shows how the active "undocumenting" of victims by church authorities in the wake of their abuse—the myriad ways that truths are concealed, coded, and translated within existing documentary evidence—decenters and often erases victims' subjectivities, enfolding them, as she writes, "into a narrative in which their abuser plays the role of protagonist. "Laundered through chancery files," victims disappear "into the banal materiality of office paper and manila folders." The last part of the essay interrogates the post-Vatican II theological and pastoral landscape, suggesting that theological currents such as the preferential option for the poor – the idealization of intimacy with Hispanic and immigrant poor—"transformed barrios and parishes in cities like Los Angeles into new missionary wilds, helping to create the conditions for the production of undocumented victims."

Reynolds concludes her essay with a powerful message for the church, and indeed, implicitly, for her fellow theologians. "Attending to such testimony," she writes, "that is, to the presences lingering behind these absences—requires that we avoid mistaking the voices of documents for the voices of victims themselves. The practice of reading between the lines becomes not merely an attempt to connect a diffuse set of dots but

an epistemic strategy of witnessing to the undocumented subjects and testimonies hidden within and beyond the records."

Congratulations, Susan.

Action to Receive the Reports

All reports were received by acclamation.

New Business

No new business was introduced.

Adjournment

There being no new business, the meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm, CST.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

HOSFFMAN OSPINO
CTSA Secretary
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

TREASURER'S REPORT

Christina Astorga, Nancy Dallavalle, and I as members of CTSA's Finance Committee met throughout the past fiscal year to review and strategize vis-à-vis the overall positive financial health of the CTSA. We extend a great depth of gratitude to Mary Jane Ponyik, our learned society's Executive Director and Dan Daly, S.J., who dutifully volunteers his time as CTSA's accountant.

In 2022, CTSA lost $27,581.42 with expenses outpacing revenues. Our investments also took a 20% hit. While the latter matches the levels of downturn in our national economy, we are committed to strategically moving monies into holding that might produce greater returns. It is helpful that the CTSA voted to move our monies to Aperio, a financial company committed to more opportunities to further our commitment to Catholic values, particularly those associated with the environment. This transition will give us a fresh start and offer the CTSA different investment opportunities.

We are very grateful for the generous contributions totaling $11,990 with $11,240 coming directly from members. These monies allow CTSA to assist colleagues who apply for the Dolores L. Christie Scholarship as nine did in 2022.

As we look to the coming year, the Finance Committee together with the Board of Directors has established some goals related to treasury matters:

1. **Review** and **propose** a due structure that is based on *overall* income.
2. **Map** out membership actuaries for next 5-10 years in conjunction with our proposed demographic survey,
3. **Identify** ideal primary sites for future annual meetings.
4. **Strategize** how to network with other learned academic societies to build CTSA membership.
5. **Discuss** fund-raising strategies.
6. **Identify** just registration fees vis-à-vis growing challenges of membership.
7. **Strategize** ideal investment funds with Aperio after the transfer from CBIS.

In the end, our ongoing plan is to ensure long term fiscal stability considering the headwinds facing our Academy and higher education.

Catholic Theological Society of America
COMPARATIVE FINANCIAL REPORT
Fiscal Years Ending December 31, 2021/2022

COMPARATIVE BALANCE SHEET

Assets as of December 31, 2022/2021

Category	**2022**	**2021**
Cash in Checking	$ 39,518.09	$ 26,124.89
Investment	644,573.16	822,625.79
University Agency Account (Deficit)	(3,091.03)	(5.883.61)
Total Assets	**$ 681,000.22**	**$ 842,867.07**

Liabilities and Fund Balances

Category	**2022**	**2021**
CTSA Fund Balance – Beginning of Year	$ 842,867.07	$ 757,669.14
Net Surplus (Deficit)	(161,866.85)	85,197.93
Total Liabilities & Fund Balances	**$681,000.22**	**$ 842,867.07**

STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES

Revenue

Category	**2022**	**2021**
Dues	$ 100,115.00	$ 89,105.00
Proceedings	80.00	40.00
Convention*	102,193.24	32,251.11
Sales of Labels & Misc.	400.00	600.00
Contributions*	11,990.00	4,829.10
Other	306.00	16,147.46
Total Revenues	**$ 215,084.24**	**$ 149,972.67**

Expenses

Category	**2022**	**2021**
Convention*	$ 119,468.09	$ 15,685.31
Proceedings Expenses	5,064.34	5,061.92
Administration*	117,540.71	115,806.01
Fall Board Meeting*	592.52	1,946.03
Grant: Theological Initiative with Bishops	-	-
Grant: INSECT	-	-
Total Expenses	**$ 242,665.66**	**$ 138,499.27**

Analysis

Category	**2022**	**2021**
Net Operating Revenue (deficit)	$ (27,581.42)	$ 4,473.40
Gain (Loss) on Investments Net of Scholarship Withdrawal**	(134,285.43)	80,724.53
Net Revenue (loss)	**$ (161,866.85)**	**$ 85,197.93**

* *See additional information*

**** Withdrawals from Portfolio**

Category	**2022**	**2021**
Convention Scholarships	$ 9,000.00	$ -
Supplemental General Funds	38,000.00	-
Total Withdrawals	**$ 47,000.00**	**$ -**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Convention Revenues

Category	2022	2021
Registration	$ 66,988.00	$ 19,975.00
Withdrawal from Portfolio for scholarships	9,000.00	-
Institutional Donations	14,000.00	10,000.00
Exhibitor Income	2,750.00	2,150.00
Program Ads	2,475.00	100.00
Carbon Footprint	-	-
Third Party Sponsored Events	6,912.69	-
Other	67.55	26.11
Total Convention Revenues	**$ 102,193.24**	**$ 32,251.11**

Contributions

Category	2022	2021
Members	$ 11,240.00	$ 3,755.00
Institutional	750.00	1,074.10
Total Contributions	**$ 11,990.00**	**$ 4,829.10**

Convention Expenses

Category	2022	2021
Speakers	$ 1,500.00	$ -
Travel	3,264.05	-
Hotel	93,579.48	-
Awards	2,589.50	2,022.56
Liturgy	3,121.77	-
Printing	1,944.52	27.00
Supplies	1,315.91	244.05
Postage	-	-
Software Subscriptions	-	$6,400.00
Insurance	1,134.16	-
LaCunga	750.00	1,072.00
Scholarship Awards	8,055.82	-
President's Discretionary Expenses	1,000.00	1,000.00
Refunds	-	-
Miscellaneous	1,212.88	4,919.59
Total Convention Expenses	**$ 119,468.09**	**$ 15,685.31**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Administration Expenses

Category	**2022**	**2021**
Salaries and Stipends	$ 100,483.44	$ 98,318.26
Professional Services	425.00	-
Telecommunications	336.37	333.87
Postage	579.93	222.42
Service Contracts	2,780.46	2,807.76
Duplicating	0.50	-
Supplies	63.65	133.70
Insurance	1,092.00	1,594.00
Printing	234.01	66.91
Bank Fees	6,235.96	3,623.95
Rent	2,916.90	2,778.00
Capital Equipment	2,392.49	539.99
Miscellaneous	-	5,387.15
Total Administration Expenses	**$ 117,540.71**	**$ 115,806.01**

Fall Board Meeting Expenses

Category	**2022**	**2021**
Meeting	$ 592.52	$ 641.82
Institutional	-	1,304.21
Total Fall Board Meeting Expenses	**$ 592.52**	**$ 1,946.03**

PATRICK FLANAGAN, C.M.
Saint John's University
Jamaica, New York
CTSA Treasurer

APPENDIX I:
HOMILY FOR THE CONVENTION EUCHARIST

~

SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

~

THE RADICAL PARTICULARITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI

FRANCIS X. CLOONEY, S.J.
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

It is no surprise that there is great depth to the verses we just heard, John 6:51-58. Read on the Feast of Corpus Christi, they can be taken as providing a foundation to the feast: nothing less than an increasingly full and unhesitating participation in Christ. Politely eating the body of Jesus is not enough, as John makes clear: consuming his body and blood in verses 51-53 by what seems to be ordinary eating (*phagein*) turns, in verses 54-57, into a fiercer consumption (*trōgein*), as if one is tearing at the flesh, ripping off pieces and chewing them up, in an entirely visceral way. One can almost see the blood dripping down the face of the disciple who would take Jesus so literally. John wants to be absolutely clear that participation in Jesus is all or nothing.

But John rarely settles for a simple message, even one so fierce as this. We are asked surely to sympathize with listeners who respond only a couple of verses later, "This teaching is hard. Who can accept it" (6:60)? Hard: rough, abrasive, needlessly offensive. Jesus' wording is crude, and he has also just diminished their tradition: yes, God provided manna in the desert, but it was a temporary solution, "Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died" (6:49). Do more: come to me, participate in me, and step beyond the mortal limits of the very tradition you have so long prized and venerated. Unsurprisingly, a few verses later, many, probably most, walk away: "Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him" (6:66).

If we step back, we can see the arc of the whole chapter mix intensity with diminishment. The crowds listened to Jesus; he fed them, and they wanted to make him their king. They followed him around the lake, amazed that he seemed to have crossed over without a boat. And yet, by chapter's end, Jesus is left with almost no one willing to stay on. A choice for Jesus, a choice to participate wholeheartedly, unreservedly, messily in his flesh and blood, turns out to mean also a willingness to let go of everything else: nothing but Me. No wonder they walk away.

And so Jesus turns to those who have not left and asks, "Do you also wish to go away" (6:67)? Peter's answer is both an acknowledgment of who Jesus is—"You are the Holy One of God"—and an admission that he stays because there is no other way, nowhere else to go: "Lord, to whom can we go? You alone have the words of eternal life" (6:68). It is as if Peter is saying, "Had we options, we too might leave—but we know you better and we know that there is no one else. We are here because we are people needing a way forward, but find no way but you yourself. To whom could we go?"

Peter freely makes this choice. No one forces him to stay. But even this is not really Peter's own achievement: "No one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father" (6:65). Freedom is a choice, yet too it is a grace. Surely this is why John ends the chapter on a darker note: "Jesus answered them, 'Yet one of you is a devil.' He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot, for he, though one of the twelve, was going to betray him" (6:70-71). Choosing Jesus would mean little, were it impossible to betray him.

Corpus Christi, a feast grounded today in John 6, ought not be reduced to a pious veneration of Christ in the Eucharist or a celebration of Real Presence, even if the piety is not outdated and the Presence is really Real. But consuming the body and blood of Jesus also marks a radical particularity, a singularity excluding every other larger and smaller thing, action, person, memory, tradition: this and nothing else — or everything else, but not this. Everything may come back, but only after, later.

This seems a needed, sobering message for us as we near the end of our seventy-seventh annual convention. We have many concerns, challenges, duties, before us; we are very mindful of the needs of God's children all around us; we want to do our theological work, such as it is, in service of God's people; and we are aware that the circumstances of our work, even on our campuses, are quickly changing. We shall continue to do our best, but John 6 (as I read it) casts a shadow over all we do.

It reminds us that to flourish in an uncertain era, participating in the reality of Christ is the true bread of life, but first it may seem a diminishment. Only if we—persons, people of faith, theologians—give ourselves as fully, recklessly as did Peter, all will be well. Otherwise, we may find ourselves drifting away, as did the crowds. Or even worse, we may by indirection put aside his scandalous particularity, and betray the Christ who offers us an intimate sharing in his own self, his life, his freedom. As Jesus says just two chapters later, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). Let us pray that in the years to come, we as a Society continue, as best we can, on the way God has made for us from our very beginnings.

APPENDIX II:
JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY AWARD CITATION

for
ROGER HAIGHT, S.J.
Union Theological Seminary
New York, New York

The colleague whom the CTSA honors this year with the John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Theological Achievement has for over half a century contributed significantly to theology and to the life and well-being of the church and God's people. Well before "public theology" became a watchword, our honoree set about rethinking the language of faith in the contemporary world. With typical understatement and modesty—yet equal resolve—he became a leader in the theological community and among us especially in the CTSA.

Our honoree was born in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, attended parochial school in Caldwell, New Jersey, and then Xavier High School in Manhattan. There followed a BA (1960) and an MA in Philosophy (1961) from Berchmans College, Philippines, and some practical experience teaching in the Philippines.

He then earned an STB from Woodstock College, Maryland (1967), when that school was at the height of its academic fame. Then came a Ph.D. in Theology from the prestigious Divinity School of the University of Chicago in 1973. Later on, in 2005, he was the recipient of that Divinity School's Alumnus of the Year Award.

In a long career he has taught for extended periods of time at graduate schools of theology in Chicago, Toronto, Cambridge, Massachusetts and, since 2004, at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He has also lived out the global dimension of theology as a visiting professor: in Pune, India; Lima, Peru; Nairobi, Kenya; Paris, France; and Manila, Philippines.

Major publications in the first decade of his career include several foundational books: *The Experience and Language of Grace* (1979); *An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology* (1985); and *The Dynamics of Theology* (1990). His best-known book is a work in Christology which attracted attention world-wide—including even in Rome—and was awarded the Catholic Publishing Association First Prize for Theology in 1999. Even today it is found on countless course reading lists.

In the decade following that momentous book he turned to more historically centered publications, including three volumes of *Christian Community in History* (2004-08) as well as *The Future of Christology* (2003). He focused then on more contemporary versions of what was at once partly fundamental and partly interconfessional theology: *Christian Spirituality for Seekers: Reflections on the*

Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius (2012), *Spirituality Seeking Theology* (2014), and *Spiritual and Religious: Explorations for Seekers* (2016).

There was still more to come from his prolific pen: *Faith and Evolution: A Grace-Filled Naturalism* (2019) and, just a few months ago, *The Nature of Theology: Challenges, Frameworks, Basic Beliefs* (2022), reprising and renewing themes from earlier years.

Recognized from the beginning of his long career as a dedicated and insightful teacher, in every context our awardee has been appreciated as a guide and mentor to students at all levels—many of whom speak of him as "the best teacher I ever had."

It was entirely fitting then that we honor the theologian who was President of the CTSA in 1994-5 and gave the Presidential Address for the fiftieth anniversary of the Society in 1995 in New York City. He likewise graced us with the homily for our virtual celebration of our seventy-fifth anniversary in 2020.

And so it is with pride and gratitude tonight, here in Milwaukee, that the Catholic Theological Society of America is exceedingly happy to confer the John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Theological Achievement on Roger David Haight, S.J.

Presented by the President of the Catholic Theological Society of America
FRANCIS X. CLOONEY, S.J.
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts
June 10, 2023

APPENDIX III: ADDENDUM TO THE CTSA REGISTRY

NEW ACTIVE MEMBERS

Beldio, Patrick. Ph.D. in Religion and Culture, 2016, The Catholic University of America. Dissertation title: "Art and Beauty, Opposition and Growth in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram."

Browne, James Michael. D.Min. (Pastoral Care of the Elderly), 2022, Mount Angel Seminary, Oregon. Dissertation title: "Pastoral Care of the Elderly: A Handbook for Deacons."

Buechel-Rieger, Andy. Ph.D. in Gender Theology, 2012, Emory University. Dissertation title: "Can Anything Good Come from Nazareth? Perspectives in Queer Theology."

DeSpain, Benjamin. Ph.D. in Systematic & Historical Theology, 2016, Durham University. Dissertation title: "Hope for the Doctrine of the Divine Ideas: A Study on the Habit of Thinking Theologically in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas."

DiLeo, Daniel R. Ph.D. in Theological Ethics, 2017, Boston College. Dissertation title: "*Laudato Si'* in America: Constructing a Catholic Public Theology."

Herman, Carolyn. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2010, Boston College. Dissertation title: "Living as a Sacrament of God's Reign: Toward a Renewed Ethics in the Catholic Church."

Hinton Rosalind. Ph.D. in Feminist Theology, 2021, Northwestern University. Dissertation title: "'There Will Be a Grand Concert Tonight': Alma Lillie Hubbard, the New Orleans Years, 1895-1932, Making a Life, Building a Community. 2001."

Hofer, O.P., Andrew. Ph.D. in Theology, 2010, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation title: "Herald of the Word: Gregory of Nazianzus Evoking Christ."

Kockler, Nicholas. Ph.D. in Philosophy, 2006, Duquesne University. Dissertation title: "Courage for a Brave New World: Medical Genetics, Evolution, and a Roman Catholic Approach to Human Gene Transfer."

Krall, Christopher. Ph.D. in Theology/Neuroscience, 2022, Marquette University. Dissertation title: "The Human Person Fully Alive: The Transformation of the Body, Brain, Mind, and Soul of Humanity in the Encounter with the Divinity."

Kwon, Youngpa. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2021, Sogang University. Dissertation title: "A Study on a Dynamism of Faith According to Schillebeeckx's Theology."

Lushombo, Leocadie. Ph.D. in Christian Ethics, 2022, Boston College. Dissertation title: "A Christian And African Ethic of Women's Political Participation: Living as Risen Beings."

McNutt, Kathleen. Ph.D. in Theology, 2022, Loyola University Chicago. Dissertation title: "Deep Deification: Soteriology for a World in Ecological Crisis."

Mercer, Andrew. Ph.D. in Christian History, 2021, Southern Methodist University. Dissertation title: "Ecclesial Unity in St. Cyril of Alexandria."

Mitchell, Cory. Ph.D. in Bioethics, 2018, Loyola University Chicago.

Monroe, Ty. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2018, Boston College, Dissertation title: "The Development of Augustine's Early Soteriology."

Najarro, Mauricio. Ph.D. in Spirituality, 2019 Graduate Theological Union. Dissertation title: "Towards a Christian Spirituality of Radical Hope: Reading, Writing, and Translating in Simone Weil and Michel De Certeau."

Nava, Alejandro. Ph.D. in Liberation Theology, 1997, University of Chicago. Dissertation title: "The Mystical and Prophetic Thought of Simone Weil and Gustavo Gutiérrez."

O'Connell, Maureen. Ph.D. in Theological Ethics, 2005, Boston College. Dissertation title: "Upheavals and Interruptions: Political Compassion as Praxis for Justice."

Okeke, Hiliary N. S.T.D. (Patristic Theology), 2020, Gregorian University Rome, Italy. Dissertation title: "Augustine Grace - Theology Underlying *Lumen Gentium*'s Ecclesiology."

Ott, Taylor. Ph.D. in Theology & Social Ethics, 2022, Fordham University. Dissertation title: "A Role for Conflict in Catholic Social Thought: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Conflict as an Analytical Lens."

Petrin, Michael. Ph.D. in History of Christianity, 2017, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation title: "Saved by the God above Every Name: Salvation in the Theology of Gregory of Nyssa."

Rademacher, Nicholas. Ph.D. in Religion & Culture, 2006, Catholic University of America, Dissertation title: "Apostle of Social Justice: Paul Hanly Furfey and the Construction of a Catholic Culture."

Ream, Todd. Ph.D. in Philosophy / Higher Education, 2001, Pennsylvania State University, Dissertation title: "United the 'I' Stands, Divided the 'I' Falls: Exploring Heidegger's Theory of Ontology with Students at Selected Southern Baptist Universities."

Ruiz, Ismael, Ph.D. in Ethics & Theology, 2022, Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Dissertation title: "Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Educators in Catholic Schools: How Synodality Can Help Rectify Violations of Human Rights."

Ryan, Gerard. Ph.D. in Theology (Modern Theology), 2020, Oxford. Dissertation title: "Theological Recognition of Another."

Ryan, Gregory. Ph.D. in Contemporary Catholic Theology, 2018, Durham University, Dissertation title: "Receptive Integrity and the Dynamics of Doctrine: A Study in the Hermeneutics of Catholic Ecclesial Learning."

Sanders, Jennifer. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2017, Boston College. Dissertation title: "The Trinitarian Telos of the *Summa theologiae*: Thomas's Application of the Aristotelian *Ordo Disciplinae* to *Sacra Doctrina* in light of his Augustinian Heritage."

Sands, Justin. Ph.D. in Fundamental Theology, 2015, KU Leuven. Dissertation title: "Reasoning from Faith: Exploring the Fundamental Theology in Merold Westphal's Philosophy of Religion."

Slater, Bethany. Ph.D. in Comparative Theology, 2022, Boston College. Dissertation title: "Becoming Wholehearted: Constructing a Jewish Liturgical Asceticism."

Staron, Andrew. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2013, The Catholic University of America. Dissertation title: "Deciphering the Gift of Love: Reading Augustine's *De Trinitate* through Jean-Luc Marion."

Strand, Vincent. Ph.D. in Theology, 2022, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation title: "That They May Have Life: Trinitarian Deification in Matthias Scheeben."

Szukalski, John A. Ph.D. in Sacred Scripture, 2012, Catholic University of America, Dissertation title: "Tormented in Hades: A Socio-Narratological Approach to the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)."

Torbeck, Jacob W. Ph.D. in Theology, Ethics, 2022, Loyola University Chicago. Dissertation title: "Turn Not Thine Eyes: Holy Faces, Saving Gazes, and the Theology of Attention."

Torres, Cristobal. D.Min. (Practical Theology), 2022, Barry University. Dissertation title: "From Word to Praxis Through Image: Transformative Preaching Through Art at Barry University, Miami Shores, FL."

Vale, Matthew. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology / Comparative Theology, 2022, University of Notre Dame. Dissertation title: "Christian Vijñānavāda: Yogācāra, Nondual Cognition, and Christian Theology."

Vilas Boas, Susana. Ph.D. in Theology, 2022, Portuguese Catholic University. Dissertation title: "Le pardon entre memoire et esperance. Pour une lecture theologique de Paul Ricœur" (trans.: "Forgiveness Between Memory and Hope: For a Theological Reading of Paul Ricoeur").

Watkins, Michele E. Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2017, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Dissertation title: "A Sacralization to Foster: Democratic Womanism as a Construal of the Doctrine of Theosis."

Wykes, James. Ph.D. in Religious Studies (Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity), 2022, Marquette University. Dissertation title: "Behold the Beasts Beside You: The Adaptation and Alteration of Animals in LXX-Job."

Weyandt, Anne. Ph.D. in Educational Leadership (BA minor in Theology; MA in Theology; Professor of Contemplative Leadership and Theology), 2013, Minnesota State University – Mankato. Dissertation title: "An Examination of Culture and Structure: A Case Study of Three Middle Colleges."

Witherington, T. Derrick. Ph.D. / S.T.D. Systematic Theology, 2019, KU Leuven. Dissertation title: "Between Continuity and Discontinuity, Universality and Particularity: Louis-Marie Chauvet's Theology Revisited."

HOSFFMAN OSPINO
CTSA Secretary
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

APPENDIX IV: ADDENDUM TO THE CTSA REGISTRY

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Allen, John J. Program: Ph.D. in Theology, Duquesne University. Exp. 2024. Dissertation (working title): "Narrative Communities of Virtue: Christian Ethics in Recovery from Addiction."

August, Kayla. Program: Ph.D. in Theology and Education, Boston College. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): "How We Preach Without a Pulpit: Encouraging the Acquisition of Day to Day Homiletic Skills within the Lay Catholic Community!"

Barnes, II, John. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, Fordham University. Dissertation (working title): "Every Time I Feel the Spirit: Embodiment and Being, Toward the Construction of a Black Pneumatology."

Bernard-Hoverstad, Sara. Program: Ph.D. in Theological Ethics (Environmental Ethics / Moral Agency), Boston College. Exp. 2023. Dissertation (working title): "From Religious Cosmology to Environmental Praxis: Empowering Agency for Sustainable Social Change."

Birch, Vincent. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, The Catholic University of America. Exp. 2024. Dissertation (working title): "The Semiotics of Revelation."

Castillo, Cristina Noemi. Program: D.Min. / Practical Theology, Barry University. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): "An Ecclesiology of the Oppressed in the 21st Century."

Da Silva Monteiro, Sonia. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, Fordham University. Exp. 2024. Dissertation (working title): "Forgiveness: The Human-Divine Ladder in the Abyss of Sin: A Philosophical, Theological and Political Investigation."

Duggan, Catherine. Program: Ph.D. in Moral Theology, University of Notre Dame. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): "A Rapprochement between the Political Augustinians and Thomists."

Groth, Benjamin. Program: Ph.D. in Sacramental Theology / History, Tulane University. Exp. 2024. Dissertation (working title): "The Black Sacrament: How Baptism Created Race in New Orleans and the Atlantic World."

Jarrett, Madeline. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, Boston College. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): TBD.

Landers, Drenda. Program: Ph.D. in Religious Studies (Ethics), Marquette University. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): TBD.

Lee Goehring, Dorothy. Program: Ph.D. in Comparative Theology and Bioethics, Boston College. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): TBD.

McLean, Tom. Program: Ph.D. in Sacramental Theology, KU Lueven. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): "Liturgy: Given, Celebrated, Internalized: Connecting Theology, Performance and Prayer in the Sacramental Vision of Edward Schillebeeckx."

Melesky Dante, Cathy. Program: Ph.D. in Religious Studies (Ethics), Marquette University, Exp. 2024. Dissertation (working title): "A Lay Ethic toward Solidarity with Those Sexually Abused by Catholic Leaders."

Nolin, Patrick. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, Regis College, Toronto School of Theology. Exp. 2024. Dissertation (working title): "Psychic Conversion and the Transvaluation of Memorial Narratives."

Ogle, Nicholas. Program: Ph.D. in Moral Theology, University of Notre Dame. Exp. 2023, Dissertation (working title): Ignorance in Action: "A Thomistic Theory of Moral Culpability."

Perron, Timothy. Program: Ph.D. in Theological Anthropology, Fordham University. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): "Theorizing and Theologizing Sex/Gender and Sexuality in Conversation with Biological Science."

Shoup, Benedict. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, University of Notre Dame, Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): "Flame of God: The Mystical Pneumatology of St. John of the Cross."

Slabinski, Victoria. Program: Ph.D. in Religious Studies, University of Virginia. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): "Filipino American Decolonial Theology."

Slusarski, Shaun. Program: Ph.D. in Theological Ethics, Boston College. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): "Prison Healthcare Ethics."

Tang, Flora X. Program: Ph.D. in Systematic Theology and Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame. Exp. 2023. Dissertation (working title): "A Post-Traumatic Theology of Sacramental Healing."

Tarrant, Katherine. Program: Ph.D. In Theology (Catholic Social Teaching and Ecological Ethics), University of Virginia. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): "New Paths, Old Patterns: An Exploration of Historical and Theological Foundations of 'A Crusade of Prayer and Fasting.'"

Thomas, Akhil. Program: Ph.D. in South Asian Religions, Harvard University. Exp. 2026. Dissertation (working title): TBD.

Yanko, Catherine. Program: Ph.D. in Moral Theology, Catholic University of America. Exp. 2024. Dissertation (working title): "Self-Realization and Freedom in the Thought of Josef Fuchs, Servais Pincakers, and Herbert McCabe."

Yau, Darren. Program: Ph.D. in Moral / Political Theology, Princeton University. Exp. 2025. Dissertation (working title): "Resistance and Non-Violence."

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