1-1-2016

Kenotic Ecclesiology: Context, Orientations, Secularity

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Four communicative disjunctions are ways in which, "the Catholic Church today is … out of phase with the world it wants to speak to."[1] Unless and until the influence of Pope Francis permeates the Church at all levels and in all contexts his charismatic leadership cannot be said to have changed this condition altogether. He surely has set a direction away from the clerical culture among bishops that abetted sweeping clergy abuse of minors under a rug of silent re-assignments. Even the Church now represented in the deeds and words of Francis cannot by-pass coming to grips with the disjunctions and with abuse. So George McLean's theological response to the disjunctions and crisis of abuse remains a valid, long-term project. He advises nothing less than, "… rethinking the entire nature of the Church and its public presence in quite different, indeed kenotic, terms."[2] That is a tall theological order.[3] What does a theological project of that scope involve?

Outlining some directions along which to think about a kenotic theology of the Church draws on more than theological reflection and research. Interpreting the Word of God and the life of the Church depends not only on Scripture and tradition but also on non-theological knowledge of contexts. So sections I and II discuss

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[1] Charles Taylor, emailed memo, "Plan for a Meeting: The Church and the World," 12/28/10.

[2] George F. McLean, "Introduction: Disjunctions in the 21st Century," in Charles Taylor, José Casanova, and George F. McLean, editors, *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change Series I. Culture and Values, Volume 1 (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), pp. 1-14 at 3.

[3] In response to José Casanova's work on public religion I suggested a kenotic ecclesiology in "Missional Churches in Secular Societies: Theology Consults Sociology," *Ecclesiology* 7 (2011), pp. 173-194.

contextual matters. Section I consults sociology on U.S. Catholicism and proposes an additional disjunction. Section II discusses what it means to speak about the Church being "out of phase." Is it always a negative condition for the Church to be out of phase? Were not Israel's prophets often out of phase with Israel's kings, was not Jesus out of phase in his public ministry, and was not early Christianity out of phase with the Roman Empire? In what way is being out of phase an objectionable feature of postconciliar Catholicism? Sections III and IV then begin to reflect on kenosis in the Church.

I. Context: A Fifth Disjunction?

Are there more than four disjunctions in the Church's contemporary context? I understand Taylor's four disjunctions as logically antithetical ideal types. Ideal types are synthetic constructs that accent selected common features in many concrete phenomena. Ideal types help generate testable hypotheses. Max Weber's famous argument for affinity between an ideal-typical Calvinist, Protestant ethic and an ideal-typical spirit of capitalism plausibly framed diffuse historical, empirical phenomena.[4] Weber's ideal-typical correlation was open to detailed historical investigations confirming, falsifying, or modifying the Protestant ethic/spirit of capitalism connection.[5] But a limit in antithetical ideal types is to leave no logical space for in-between positions of greater and lesser proximity to one or the other opposed ideal type. They are logical contradictories that involve either/or judgments of identification. May it not be better to conceive Taylor's ideal types as logical contraries instead of contradictories? Then, between two opposed positions in each disjunction there lies a spectrum of intermediate points with varying degrees of proximity to or distance from each of the poles. This both/and allows for elasticity and tension in-between.

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[4] In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984) Jürgen Habermas expounds Max Weber's analysis as the instantiation of an account of modernity as the rationalization (disenchantment) of both society and structures of consciousness.

[5] Max Weber, trans. E. Schils and H. Finch, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Free Press, 1949), pp. 89-95.

On an anecdotal basis probably most of us know people whose religious situations in fact lie between the opposed poles of each disjunction. In-between may be the normal situation. The life of a person and a society is complicated. Crosscurrents as well as irresolvable differences run through every society and person. Philip Rossi helpfully points to immanent otherness in postmodern identities.[6] Solid selves exclude too much. Hybridity of many sorts is the postmodern normal for cultures and selves. May it not be that many people practically operate with an affinity for both poles in each disjunction? They are dwellers who are seekers, or vice versa; ecclesiastical decision-makers who also consult widely in concert with plural centers of decision-making; natural law thinkers who also appreciate new ideas about sexuality; Christocentric dialogue partners who learn from believers in other spiritual and religious traditions.

Furthermore, in their current formulation even such contrary poles seem to be structured as 'us vs. them'. One pole represents 'us' and our contemporaries in a secular age while officialdom is 'them'. The Church hierarchy is 'them', while laity and lower clergy are 'us'. 'They' are the dwellers, 'we' the seekers. 'They' have jurisdictional authority; 'we' struggle with conscience. 'They' hold to an abstract natural law morality on sexuality; 'we' have an historically conscious perspective. 'They' stress nothing but the Christocentric completeness of the Christian tradition. 'We' are open to enrichment by other spiritual traditions. The result is that even when re-conceived as logical contraries between which lies a spectrum of possible positions each ideal-typical disjunction presents a spectrum that is vertical with an 'over' and an 'under'.

Each disjunction locates the problem in the 'them', the 'over', the hierarchy, officialdom. Reform of the hierarchy then becomes the paramount objective. They need kenosis. There's no denying that. But a kenotic ecclesiology that focuses on the hierarchy alone defaults on McLean's principle of re-thinking the whole nature of the Church. A hierarchical preoccupation obscures, for example, another fault line that runs through the whole Church in a secular age. Vertical contrasts

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[6] Philip J. Rossi, S.J., "Seekers, Dwellers, and the Plural Contingencies of Grace: Hospitality, Otherness, and the Enactment of Human Wholeness," in this volume.

between seekers/dwellers, etc. may pre-empt attention and deflect exchange about a 'pervasive' rather than 'vertical' disjunction.

An example of a pervasive disjunction surfaces in data assembled in the sociology of U.S. Catholicism.[7] A disjunction between social and conventional Catholics occurs throughout the length and breadth of the Church, involving episcopacy, clergy, and laity alike. The point of division does not lie between those whose position in Church structure is one of hierarchical office and all others. This fifth disjunction pertains to how people on all levels of Church authority in a regional Church understand social justice. As a background statement from a theological perspective, both charity and justice in tandem, not one or the other, are integral to Catholicism. They are distinct yet in principle are co-present, interrelated commitments. The conjunction of charity and justice is normative in Catholic social teaching. A disjunction occurs insofar as the majority of U.S. Catholics wants social charity without social justice. The social-scientific data show 98 percent of all US Catholics putting a conviction about helping the poor in the topmost group of attributes in what it means to them to be Catholic. That represents unanimity on assisting the poor. However, 53 percent of U.S. Catholics do not associate helping the poor with social justice activities. In other words, the majority of Catholic laity wants assistance to the poor mainly in modes other than social justice.

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[7] The data comes from William V. D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge, Mary I. Gautier, *American Catholics Today*: *New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007) and William V. D'Antonio, Michele Dillon, Mary I. Gautier, "Catholics in America: Persistence and Change," special insert in the *National Catholic Reporter*, October 28-November 10, 2011, pp. 1-28a. The authors are not responsible for my interpretation of their data. Chapter Two in my *Connecting Jesus to Social Justice: Classical Christology and Public Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013) argues for the interpretation summed up here. The sociological data, regrettably, do not break out according to categories of Church office. Consequently for empirical facts on the social charity/social justice issue in the episcopacy and clergy I have to rely on media reports about public actions and statements by bishops, on official documents from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and on anecdotal observations of homilies, attitudes, statements by, and actions of clergy. Anecdotally, clergy seem more aligned than bishops with social Catholicism.

Sociological data do not spell out what people thought those other modes of assistance are. A plausible generic designation for generous assistance to the poor apart from obligations in justice would be social charity or social compassion, whether enacted by the government, individuals, churches, or other voluntary associations. [8] Generous charity or compassion carries on the traditional practice of almsgiving, albeit in indirect, organized modes. Social charity does not presuppose social analysis. Contrarily, Catholic social teaching on contributive and distributive social justice presupposes analysis of systemic problems. Analysis leads to advocacy for public policies to bring about structural changes toward a more just social and economic order.

Social justice and almsgiving whether individual or social, are compatible, indeed indissociable in principle. But in the U.S. less than half of Catholics identify social justice activities as very or highly important to their Catholic identity although 98 percent rank assisting the poor as very or highly important to their Catholic identity. 98 percent esteem and presumably in fact want social charity for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. But only a 47 percent minority links social charity and social justice in their Catholic identity. 53 percent of Catholics do not maintain a prominent place for social justice in their Catholic self-understanding. I will classify the 53 percent majority as conventional Catholics and the 47 percent minority as social Catholics.[9] That divide can be interpreted as a disjunction between social and conventional Catholicism.

'Social Catholicism' or 'social Catholics' have been historical theology's terms of art for a way of being Catholic that began in European responses to miseries and inequities due to the impact of

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[8] See David Wagner, *A Critical Look at American Charity: What's Love Got to Do with It?* (New York: The New Press, 2000) for a critique of this kind of charity. Wagner propounds an either/or outlook on charity and justice in favor of justice. Still, I agree with Mary Elsbernd, O.S.F. and Reimund Bieringer, *When Love Is Not Enough: A Theo-Ethic of Justice* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002) on an essential role for justice along with love or charity.

[9] It would be interesting to compare this interpretation of U.S. Catholics with Catholicism in France as explained by Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "Mapping the Contemporary Forms of Catholic Religiosity: (Some Suggestions to Make Things More Confused)," in Charles Taylor, José Casanova, and George F. McLean, editors, *Church and People*, pp. 25-38.

the Industrial Revolution.[10] The social doctrine of the Church is the most visible official sign of continuity in social concern from the end of the 19th century until the present day.[11] Social Catholicism involves active commitment to the dignity of the person, the common good, and a just social order in a given society and internationally. Social Catholics have found Catholic social teaching fortifying, clarifying, and guiding their own intuitions on economic and political activities fostering changes toward more just social structures. However, they are not the majority in the US Church.

Sociologist Jerome P. Baggett concluded from 300 in-depth interviews with Catholic parishioners in the San Francisco area to a lack in fluency in the language of Catholic social teaching. As a result there is what Baggett calls "civic underachieving." [12] Likewise sociologist Mary Jo Bane discovered what she called "the Catholic puzzle." The puzzle is "a strong set of official teachings on social justice and faithful citizenship alongside Catholic participation in civic life that is no higher than that of other denominations, and in a number of areas, lower."[13] Conventional Catholicism, it seems from Baggett and Bane, typifies parish life more than does social Catholicism. To be sure social Catholicism is strong in many parishes and individuals including those in diocesan offices of social outreach. But conventional Catholicism so far holds the numerical high ground.

The disjunction between social and conventional Catholicism is pervasive not vertical. Social Catholicism has an historical record of hierarchical, lay, and clerical adherents all on the same page. [14]

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[10] See Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe: From the Onset of Industrialization to the First World War* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1991) and Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2nd printing 2000).

[11] For a synthesis see the Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace, English transl. *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 2005).

[12] Jerome P. Baggett, *Sense of the Faithful: How American Catholics Live Their Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 175.

[13] Mary Jo Bane, "The Catholic Puzzle: Parishes and Civic Life," in Mary Jo Bane, Brent Coffin, and Richard Higgins, editors, *Taking Faith Seriously* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 63-93 at 64.

[14] Social Catholicism has a pre-modern tradition behind it. See Judith A. Merkle, S.N.D. de N., *From the Heart of the Church: The Catholic Social Tradition* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier Book, Liturgical Press, 2004) and Johan Leemans, Brian J.

Similarly, conventional Catholics can be found among laity, clergy, and bishops. Many official public documents on social topics from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tilt toward social Catholicism. At the same time in dioceses and at the national level episcopal, lay, and clerical public preoccupation with abortion and gay marriage have eclipsed the rest of social teaching. As a result, in the public sphere of a pluralistic society it is conventional not social Catholicism that has become the visible image of U.S. Catholicism. Doubtless, Pope Francis's emphatic option for the poor has put a new moment before conventional Catholicism. Not only Catholics see that the pope is making social Catholicism normative for the Church.[15] But the extent to which papal influence will stir conventional bishops, clergy, laity to become social Catholics remains to be seen. Resistance to or dismissal of *Laudato Si* by some Catholics among those denying climate change has been emerging in the U.S.

In light of a pervasive disjunction between social and conventional Catholics it would be a mistake to imagine from the outset that the principal zone of problems in Church/modern world relations lies in maladroit exercise of pastoral authority. The pervasive disjunction described above signals another dimension in the Church being out of phase. There is in the U.S. at least a need for kenosis and reform in the lower clergy and laity not only in the episcopacy. Too many conventional Catholics are in phase with laissez-faire capitalism à la Ayn Rand, with learned helplessness that enervates civic activism, and with Catholic voices whose public focus on abortion and gay marriage has marginalized Catholic concern for poverty, racism, the ecological crisis, and creeping plutocracy. That kind of 'being in phase' with prominent cultural currents would fail to express the breadth and depth of social concern inherent in Catholicism.

II. Theological Perspectives: 'Being out of Phase'

Section I explored non-theological knowledge of a problematic element in a national context. International in its framework Section II

Matz, and Johan Verstraeten, editors, *Reading Patristic Texts on Social Ethics: Issues and Challenges for Twenty-First-Century Christian Social Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011).

[15] See brief remarks online by journalist Naomi Klein in *The New Yorker* 11 July 2015, http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/31226-a-radical-vatican.

seeks to clarify what 'being out of phase' means in light of at least five theologies of the Church/modern world relationship. They can be understood as the theological context. The first of these theologies, now at best a rearguard action in Catholicism, governed the pre-conciliar commissions and preparatory documents. Pre-conciliar Neo-Scholasticism saw the Catholic Church as faithful to its tradition and doctrines by having raised a post-Tridentine wall around the Church in protest against and to protect its members from modernity, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and 19th century exaltation of human reason. Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) epitomized a principled being out of phase with a prodigal West to which the Church addressed a salutary summons to humble repentance and return. Deliberated opposition to modernity guided initial drafts of conciliar documents that curial commissions handed out at the inception of Vatican II. In the curial perspective being out of phase with a misguided modern world was being true to God, Christ, gospel, and Church tradition, particularly in light of Vatican I's emphasis on divine and ecclesial authority.

That outlook, however, did not survive conciliar deliberations by the world's bishops at Vatican II. Nowhere was the Church/modern world change, and a second concept grounded in a renewed continental Thomism, more explicit and nowhere did it carry more normative weight than in debates on Schema XVII (1963) that eventually became the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* approved by the bishops on December 7, 1965, the second last day of the council.[16] The *Pastoral Constitution* advanced into a new Church/modern world relation keyed by conciliar *periti* such as Dominicans Marie-Dominique Chenu, Yves Congar, and Edward Schillebeeckx, along with Karl Rahner, S.J. as well as by French and Belgian bishops.[17]

The conciliar text committed the Church to dialogue with the modern world, albeit a dialogue in which the Church is never oblivious to ambiguities and misguided tendencies. The whole set of

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[16] For a brief overview see Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005). For detailed historiography see Giuseppe Alberigo, editor, *History of Vatican II*, 5 volumes, Joseph Komonchak, editor, English version (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995-2006).

[17] See Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2012).

Vatican II texts but especially the *Pastoral Constitution* and the method of dialogue brought the Church into phase with the modern world to which it wished to convey the gospel message.[18] Though Aquinas was far from a leading influence on Vatican II, a renewed, world-affirming, Thomist perspective entered into the *Pastoral Constitution*. Modern Catholic social teaching developed a Church/modern world relation both positive because of the imprint of Thomism and dialectical in confronting problematic conditions since the Industrial Revolution. Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni patris* had installed Neo-Thomism as the predominant Catholic school of philosophical and theological thought after Vatican I. Leo also published *Rerum novarum* (1891) that initiated the modern tradition of social teaching on human dignity and the common good.

In a renewed Thomist perspective 'being out of phase' could mean approximately what an earlier Neo-Scholasticism promoted and that Bernard Lonergan described as the pre-conciliar Church being a day late and a dollar short on major issues of modern thought (e.g. religious liberty, science, evolution, historicism, historical-critical exegesis, etc.). Or it could mean something approximating Taylor's analysis of the postconciliar situation. Taylor's identifying of positive elements in modernity and rejection of a subtraction idea of secularization are harmonious with Catholic social teaching, renewed Thomism, and postconciliar reception of the *Pastoral Constitution*. All in all, Taylor's criticism of being out of phase and seeking an alternative route reclaims and develops the conciliar concept of a dialogical Church/modern world relation.

But there are three postconciliar rivals. A pronounced neo-Augustinian outlook, Radical Orthodoxy, and a family of socio-critical theologies all proceed with deeper suspicions of modernity. The neo-Augustinians and socio-critical theologies are not satisfied with postconciliar appropriation of the *Pastoral Constitution*, and criticize as

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[18] For a corporate continuation of the conciliar approach in a postmodern context see "Decree 4: Our Mission and Culture" from the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, in John W. Padberg, S.J., editor, *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees of the 31st to 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), section nn. 103-108, "Our Mission and Critical Postmodern Culture," pp. 542-544.

naïve much dialogue with the modern world.[19] To all three, Taylor's speaking about the Church 'being out of phase' with the modern world would sound like something positive.

Although during the council they approved the *Pastoral Constitution's* breaking away from pre-conciliar Neo-Scholasticism, still Henri de Lubac, S.J., Louis Bouyer, Jean Danielou, S.J., and Joseph Ratzinger had misgivings about what seemed to them a too enthusiastic embrace of modernity. [20] They saw in the *Pastoral Constitution* and postconciliar initiatives arising from it an uncomplicated optimism absorbed from the *Zeitgeist* of the 1960's. This troubled them greatly. They re-evaluated Vatican II's commitment to a dialogical model of Church/modern world relations in which the Church opened itself to modernity.[21] Their criticisms made a significant impact at the 1985 Synod of Bishops and can be heard echoing through chancery halls to the present. The view is more or less what Taylor criticizes as a subtraction idea of secularization.

Among neo-Augustinians papal office made Benedict XVI the most influential exponent.[22] They staked out the position of a prophetic minority whose revised idea of dialogue with the modern world involves defending the holiness of the Church against criticisms, upholding the primacy of transcendence in all zones of Catholic life against a perceived compromise with worldliness, and pointing out limits and flaws in modernity. The neo-Augustinians have shifted,

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[19] On the neo-Augustinian perspective see Joseph Komonchak, "Augustine, Aquinas or the Gospel *sine glossa*?" in Austen Ivereigh, editor, *Unfinished Journey: The Church 40 Years after Vatican II: Essays for John Wilkes* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 102-118.

[20] Introducing Jean-Luc Marion's, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) David Tracy remarks on a neo-Augustinian option as one of the two major trajectories in contemporary theology. In *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 50-52 Robert M. Doran observes that the main conflict in contemporary theological method has roots in medieval Augustinians' opposition to Aquinas.

[21] See Faggioli, "The Battle Over '*Gaudium et spes*' Then and Now: Dialogue with the Modern World After Vatican II," a paper delivered the Vatican II Conference at Georgetown University, October 11-12, 2012, https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/8sfzqvpejzznukwqalui.

[22] Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning*, 75-83. And yet Benedict placed his neo-Augustinian teachings in continuity with those of his predecessor, John Paul II. John Paul II stood with renewed Thomists in social teachings but was closer to neo-Augustinians on modern Western culture(s).

that is, from conciliar dialogue with a discerning eye to an outright postconciliar dialectic in Church/modern world relations. Their theological critiques counteract, in their view, a too eager partnering with an untrustworthy Western modernity. In this perspective what Taylor calls being out of phase signifies authentic Christianity guided by a critical intelligence with affinity for some but by no means all postmodern thought.

Socio-critical theologies—political, liberation, feminist, Black, ecological, and public theologies—all presuppose that the social mission of the Church in both praxis and principle has affirmed transformation that promotes the common temporal good of all civic neighbors. The affirmation has been a matter of practice in the social services of Catholic Charities in the U.S., and internationally by the Catholic Relief Services. Their benefits are available to all in pluralist societies, not just to Catholics or Christians. Public theology articulates that aspect of social mission and conceives its task as service to all in a society. States Scottish theologian Duncan Forrester, there is a "theology which seeks the welfare of the city before it protects the interests of the Church …."[23] Even more, explains South African John W. De Gruchy, "[p]ublic theology as Christian witness does not seek to preference Christianity but to witness to values that we believe are important for the common good."[24]

Judgments in political, liberation, Radical Orthodox, Black, womanist, Latino/a and public theologies vary on the location, depth, and extent of structural sin. Surely a renewed Thomist outlook and Taylor's analysis do not preclude engaging in explicit criticism of specific features and dynamics of modernity. The Church and Christians are or should be out of phase with much of what socio-critical theologies have criticized in the world to which the Church wishes to speak.[25] The objectionable features need to be changed.

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[23] Duncan Forrester, "The Scope of Public Theology," in Elaine Graham and Esther Reed editors, *The Future of Christian Social Ethic*s: *Essays on the Work of Ronald H. Preston 1913-2001*, Special Issue, *Studies in Christian Ethic* (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 5-19 at 6.

[24] John W. DeGruchy, "Public Theology as Public Witness: Exploring the Genre," *International Journal of Public Theology* 1 (2007), pp. 26-41 at 30.

[25] For a dialogical rather than polemical approach to the opposition between Catholic theologies representing public theology and the Hauerwasian, neo-Augustinian perspective see Kristin Heyer, *Prophetic and Public: The Social Witness of U.S. Catholicism* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006).

The socio-critical family of theologies puts the modern world on trial, but not according to Neo-Scholastic canons and not uniformly from exclusively neo-Augustinian premises. Liberation theology for its part began with a reaction against the *Pastoral Constitution*'s dialogue with modernity for having passed too quickly over modern imperialism, colonialism, slavery, oppression of women, and Western (Christian?) exploitation of the Majority World. In public theology my Church/modern world theology mostly accords with that of the renewed Thomists and Taylor. I do want to emphasize that Taylor's 'being out of phase' allows for socio-critical theology and specifically for a nonconforming, public, prophetic Church/modern world relation in any context.

The condition of possibility for a prophetic, public Church/world relation is that secularization has not necessarily produced privatized religion. The possibility of public, prophetic religion has remained open if not everywhere enacted. [26] The genre of public theology cautiously, conditionally, and critically endorses liberal democracy and late capitalism rather than abhors them root and branch. In dealing with the public sphere public theologians have drawn upon the socio-critical analyses of Jürgen Habermas and the constructive acuity of Charles Taylor. [27] A public-theological perspective incorporates much socio-critical analysis yet equally affirms a nuanced appreciation of values in modernity such as liberal democracy if not manipulated by plutocratic influence on mass media, majority rule that does not oppress minorities, capitalism if

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[26] See José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) and "Public Religions Revisited," Hent de Vries, editor, *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 101-119.

[27] See analyses of plutocratic pressures on democratic processes, a manipulative influence of mass media in the public sphere, and a decreased, tenuous public sphere in Jürgen Habermas, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1989) and Jürgen Habermas, trans. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, editors, "'The Political': The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology," in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2011), pp. 15-33. See Charles Taylor's more positive analysis of the public sphere in *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 185-196.

subordinate to and regulated by the common good, and human rights when understood to include not only legal and civil but also social, economic, and cultural dimensions.

Socio-critical theologies point out that the Church originated in the Incarnation and public ministry of Jesus whose option for the poor was seriously out of phase with the powerful in the world to which he wanted to speak. His incisive, sometimes sarcastic, often critical engagements with complex Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman people and meanings frequently were not irenic, though not pointlessly belligerent either. He contested a number of Israel's customs, beliefs, and practices, chastised religious leaders, and condemned the behavior of Gentile kings. He set forth the kingdom of God in contrast to any other kind of kingdom, such as the Roman Empire or the Zealots' ideal of a forcefully restored kingdom of Israel. [28] Jesus' message and deeds threatened religious and political authorities so they schemed to have him eliminated by state violence.

Phases connote temporal succession. Jesus introduced a new phase in God's redemptive history with humanity and creation. Jesus the Christ manifested and led the coming of God's new and final reign. The Christ did not adjust his mission, ministry, and teaching to dominant interpretations of divine power, which Israel, Egypt, and Rome alike associated with supreme human civil/sacral power and authority. Christ started in the grass roots and gave a place to the least and last. The Church participates in God's new, upsetting and interrupting presence in Jesus and bears witness to the final age heralded by the Incarnation, ministry, and paschal mystery of Jesus completed by Pentecost.

Consequently the pilgrim Church of Vatican II bears an 'already' realized message about the end of history that has 'not yet' come to fulfillment. The 'already' of the Resurrection precedes every subsequent historical period. So while absorbing, learning from, contributing to, and developing in a multitude of cultural contexts it would be a mistake of profound proportions for the Church to try to derive its fundamental self-understanding and agenda primarily from those contexts, even where the gospel has permeated those contexts to some extent. The (divine) origin, constitution, and mission of the

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[28] See among others, Richard A. Horsely, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

Church, to be sure, involved cultural and historical contexts, languages, peoples, and movements. But contexts were not ultimate and determinative sources any more than the Hebrew and Greek languages were the ultimate source of the divinely inspired Scriptures. Sometimes being out of phase with some specific element in a context, and more rarely with the context itself, means being in phase with the nature and mission of the Church.[29]

Until the Constantinian Holy Roman Empire the Church was out of phase with the power, authority, mores, imperial decisions, policies, and most rulers of the Roman Empire. Similarly, Stanley Hauerwas and authors of many entries in the *Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* argue that Christians are in principle and so should conduct themselves in fact as resident aliens in the modern or postmodern world.[30] The Church has a calling to exemplify social existence transformed by the power of Christ and in light of the gospel, not to be a fawning spaniel in the lap of late capitalism sunk into liberal-democratic nationalism. The school of thought known as Radical Orthodoxy invokes both Augustine and Aquinas in negating all things modern and secular on behalf of what some see as a new socialist Christendom. Christianity and theology, in this view, provide the antidote to the modern myth of violence underlying social sciences and secularization that has falsely promoted itself as a corrective to religious conflicts and thereby marginalized Christianity.[31] In this

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[29] For the Church challenging its contexts see Paul M. Collins and Michael A. Fahey, editors, *Receiving 'The Nature and Mission of the Church': Ecclesial Reality and Ecumenical Horizons for the Twenty-First Century* (London: T & T Clark, 2008) Appendix, "The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement," Faith and Order Paper 198, pp. 110-145 at 141-143, nn. 112-118.

[30] Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001; originally Trinity University Press, 1975), with William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989) among many and more recent publications. See Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, editors, *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Malden, MA, 2004). See the entry, "Stanley Hauerwas" by R. R. Reno in *The Blackwell Companion*, 302-316. Also, John Berkman and Michael Cartwright, editors, *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

[31] See, to begin with, John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990).

perspective being out of phase is a definitive hallmark of the Church faithful to its calling.

A socio-critical Church/modern world relation does not stem, however, from a subtraction idea of secularization and the secular. That idea seems to be the most limiting feature of neo-Augustinian thought and of Radical Orthodoxy. Neither neo-Augustinian nor Radical Orthodoxy's Church/modern world relations have space within which to let a Church/modern world dialectic become dialogical. A secularized world is presumed to lack any positive relation with God, gospel, faith, and Church. This outlook and language have seeped down into pastoral teaching in dioceses and parishes where, despite the explicit teaching of the *Pastoral Constitution* on a positive secularity, "secular" has come to mean antipathy to all things religious, transcendent, and Catholic. But regrettably, renewed Thomism, and by association Taylor's Church/modern world outlook, as well as most Catholic theology seem to have little interest in relating in some positive, dialogical way to Radical Orthodoxy.

For the Church to be in phase with the best elements in Western socio-cultural contexts furnishes a stronger platform from which to promote transformation of socially unjust structures. A kenotic Church in phase with its context, then, does not mean servile adjustment to any and every tendency. A kenotic Church need not abandon counteractive public witness and may well commit itself to non-violent modes of promoting social change. A more kenotic actualization of the Church will liberate the Church to be able to proceed more consistently according to an option for the poor. A kenotic ecclesiology puts the Church out of phase with contextual distortions. An authentic being in phase with the best impulses in a cultural context opens humanistic grounds for a prophetic, messianic being out of phase.

Then what kind of being out of phase do Taylor's disjunctions manifest? Taylor's idea of being out of phase does not register dissatisfaction with the prophetic, dialectical being out of phase typical of social Catholicism. Rather and primarily, what Taylor calls being out of phase points to pastoral authorities ignorant of the modern moral order, the contemporary social imaginary, and the ethic of authenticity. All three inhabit and are inhabited by those to whom the Church wishes to speak. In the U.S. there is precious little evidence

that chanceries consider it important to keep abreast of developments in Catholic sociology and philosophy. The direction in Taylor's analysis lies toward an authentic being in phase for the sake of, it seems to me, a messianic, kenotic being out of phase. On that premise sections III and IV outline some systematic-theological principles for a kenotic theology of the Church. The Conclusion proposes a tentative agenda for kenotic Catholicism in the United States.

III. Kenotic Ecclesiology: Six Orientations

McLean is surely correct to say that a kenotic Church will be more capable of "credible proclamation of the Gospel for these new and global times."[32] Pope Francis leads the way. But the international Church, not to mention the Vatican, is large and complex. Some circles in both may prove refractory. Insofar as Francis's example and teaching take hold to that extent actualization of kenosis increases. Nonetheless incremental, scattered changes of that sort in lived religion do not obviate developing a kenotic ecclesiology. Change involves communication of perspectives and value judgments. Kenotic ecclesiology can play a maieutic role by articulating and expounding themes that serve to articulate kenosis in the Church's self-understanding. A search for kenotic ecclesiology will do well to incorporate six orientations.

Toward Listening

The first is that theologians need to listen to philosophers, social scientists, and others who reflect on or study both Catholicism and cultural contexts. This is simply educated common sense in academic conditions where centripetal forces of specialization drive the disciplines farther and farther apart. Commitment to interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration can overtake resignation to disciplinary silos. Someone once remarked that actual problems do not come in discipline-sized chunks. Learning and dialogue across borders are necessary. The basis for dialogue on the part of theology is recognition

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[32] George F. McLean, "Suffering lays out path to new life for church," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 22, 2012.

that by itself theology does not have the whole picture.[33] By its own reckoning and in light of faith theology's particular part may be the vanishing point in the center of the painting without which the painting is not a unified whole. Theology's position vis-à-vis other disciplines has been in flux. Is it possible still to speak of theology as 'queen of the sciences'? A queen perhaps because of divine things in the subject matter, but a sister certainly in view of limits in human experience, speech, and thought that seek some understanding of the content of faith. (And a sister with something to say in Catholic universities.[34])

Toward Historical Precedent

The second orientation is historical consciousness of the theological situation in regard to a kenotic theology of the Church. Kenotic theology has been primarily a theology of the person of Christ. Russian Orthodox theologian Sergii Bulgakov also conceived the Holy Spirit as kenotic.[35] Usually kenosis has not been applied to the Church. There is one exception and it did not turn out well. Its ill effects linger like smog on the theological landscape. In the 1960's a number of theologians enthusiastic about the secular reconceived the meaning and purpose of Christianity's churches in terms of kenosis. Avery Dulles summed up this current of thought in the phrase, "secular-dialogical."[36] In this view God acts primarily through grace influential within the world. The churches perform the auxiliary interpretation service of articulating the primary and non-ecclesial action of God. The churches themselves do not continue the presence and mission of Christ. According to this 1960's view divine presence and influence lie

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[33] An eighth specialty, communications, completes theology in Bernard Lonergan's *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979; originally Herder and Herder, 1972). Among tasks in communications is dialogue between theology and non-theological disciplines on a cultural context.

[34] See Adriaan Theodor Peperzak, *Philosophy between Faith and Theology: Addresses to Catholic Intellectuals* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

[35] Sergii Bulgakov (1871-1944) spoke about a kenosis of the Spirit in *The Comforter*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), passim pp. 189-227.

[36] Avery Dulles, expanded edition, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1987), p. 92.

first and most significantly in the secular realm. The Church depends on and derives from the divine reality immanent in the secular. The Church exists as an hermeneutical servant that points to and interprets God's prior, independent, and redemptively most important presence in the secular.

Gibson Winter, for example, proposed a servant Church without structures for evangelizing and conducting worship. Dulles described Winter's proposal as, "the apostolate of the servant Church should be … discerning reflection on God's promise and presence in the midst of our own history."[37] Wolfhart Pannenberg's theology of revelation as universal history had no need for anything other than knowledge and assessment of historical facts to see God's purposes. Dulles admired the effort to break churches out of preoccupation with their own institutional structures and to seek an advancing of the Kingdom of God not limited to members of the churches. He nonetheless criticized one idea of servant applied to the Church. A servant works under the command of another. If the Church serves the world it means that the servant Church takes its cues, agenda, and purpose from the masterful world. In the most radical perspective the Church would empty itself of its own traditional nature, purpose, and institutional structures in order to offer a *diakonia* in which the Church has little original to say and ends up being expendable.

The defining mistake of secular-dialogical theology in the 1960's and 70's was not positive appreciation of the secular and of history. Nor was it recognizing that God is active outside the churches and that the churches have a duty to discern the signs of the times. Nor was it in arguing that Israel's increasing realization of divine transcendence and opposition to idolatry was a proto-secularization of physical nature. Nor was it that secularization owes something to Christian faith in the Incarnation as divine embrace of the human in all its aspects not only the formally sacred and religious. Secular-dialogical oversight lay in too simple an idea of the secular and of how the secular and the Church related. This early version of a kenotic theology of the Church proceeded from an uncritical idea of

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[37] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 95. Dulles discussed Gibson Winter's *The New Creation as Metropolis* (New York: Macmillan, 1963). Dulles also listed Harvey Cox and J.A. T. Robinson among Protestant and Robert Adolfs, Eugene Bianchi, and Richard P. McBrien among Catholic theologians. McBrien does not fit easily into the model.

Church/modern world dialogue. The dialogue lacked a dialectical moment of the sort evident in Catholic social teaching, the *Pastoral Constitution*, and most forcefully in socio-critical theologies.

Any contemporary kenotic theology of the Church has to learn from and distance itself from mistakes in 1960's and 70's elevation of the 'world' over the Church in Church/modern world relations. That misguided project operated from a dialogical Church/modern world relationship in which the Church did all the listening and none of the proclaiming of the gospel. Too, there was little sign of an ability to shift dialogue into a critical judgment or two and then back to dialogue. Secular-dialogical theology plunged the institutional and missionary structures of the churches into conceptual crisis. Theological reaction was swift and moved directly to re-claiming the theology of a prophetic church willing to challenge its contexts.

The realization was that, "the church can be missionary only if its being-in-the-world is, at the same time a being-different from the-world …."[38] Vatican II's *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* shared an earlier Protestant emphasis on *missio Dei*. Church mission and with it a Church/modern world relation originate in the divine, Trinitarian missions of Word and Spirit. Contemporary Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic theologies of the Church largely agree that Trinitarian communion and Trinitarian mission constitute the Church. The formal ecumenical consensus on 'high', Trinitarian ecclesiology starts from the inner divine life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit not from problems in the human dimensions of the Church. Such a perspective sees the Church not as a hermeneutical handmaiden to the secular world but as the Trinity's social mode of salvific mission.

Consequently embarking on a second round of a kenotic theology of the Church has to contend with being out of synch with contemporary theologies of the Church that still are in reaction against the first round. For example, the most significant contemporary statement of ecumenical consensus on the nature and mission of the

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[38] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 386. See also Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), pp. 289-295.

church ignores kenosis. [39] Why? Most likely renewal in Trinitarian theology presupposes a critique of the secular-dialogical model of Church/modern world relations and so dismisses a kenotic idea of the Church. A recent synopsis of Catholic ecclesiology likewise does not mention kenosis. [40] Accordingly the contemporary theological situation demands that new reflection in kenotic ecclesiology take account of and be seen to be congruent with gains from Trinitarian ecclesiology of communion.

In brief, a discredited series of 1960's attempts at secularizing the nature and mission of the churches forms a background to any re-thinking of the Church's whole nature in light of kenosis. There has to be a clear difference between ecclesial self-emptying and ecclesial self-extinguishing. Since the Church is a Trinitarian communion with a missionary nature the first question for theological reflection is not, how can the Church become kenotic? Rather the Church already is kenotic because of an origin and participation in the kenotic *missio Dei*. This prototypical divine kenosis launches, constitutes, and continues in the Church. Consequently the question becomes, how can the Church actualize its kenotic constitution in modern/post-modern contexts?

Towards Distinguishing Kenotic Constitution from Actualization

A third orientation for a kenotic theology of the Church arises from the distinction between the kenotic constitution and the historical realization of the Church. The constitution of the Church is kenotic because it comes into existence as concrete, social participation in Trinitarian communion. The missions of Word and Spirit are, as will be noted, kenotic, and draw the Church and her members into that dynamic. But actualizing the constitution, the identity, of the Church takes place in and through graced, struggling, fallible, disordered yet hopeful human beings in various contexts that mingle excellences with distortions. Renewal and reform toward a more kenotic Church

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[39] Faith and Order Commission, World Council of Churches, Faith and Order Paper 214, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2012).

[40] Michael Fahey, S.J., "Church," in Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, editors, second edition, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), pp. 315-373 at 360/1.

pertain not to the Trinitarian constitution but to its actualization by persons in history.

More basically, what is kenosis? The *locus classicus* is Philippians 2:7. [41] Paul describes Jesus as one who did not cling to the form of God. This can be understood to mean the superior, immortal fullness and otherness of divine being including divine glory, creativity, omnipresence and omniscience. In a gracious, free act, humble in an inconceivable extreme, Jesus in Israel was both heavenly and pre-existing no less than being mortal, and so vulnerable as to be subjected to crucifixion. Jesus emptied himself, in a sense took on nothingness, emptiness. Jesus manifested the omnipotent God's voluntary powerlessness.[42] This kenosis is an act of love not an extinguishing of the one taking on mortal human nature. The Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) clarified this in asserting that in the Incarnation neither divine nor human nature was changed. [43]

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[41] Exegetes have debated vigorously over Philippians 2. What does Christ's having emptied himself (*kenosen*) mean in its original pre-Johannine, pre-dogmatic context? Larry Hurtado's reading affirms that in pre-existence passages, "Jesus' origins and meaning lie in God, above and before creation and human history, making his appearance an event of transcendent significance," *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), p. 126.

[42] Wawclaw Hryniewicz relates Catholic participation in ecumenism to kenosis in "Ecumenism and Kenotic Dimensions of Ecclesiology," *The Challenge of Our Hope: Christian Faith in Dialogue* Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change series, vol. 32 (Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2007), chapter 11, pp. 135-147. In "Does Kenosis Rest on a Mistake? Three Kenotic Models in Patristic Exegesis," Sarah Coakley, in C. Stephen Evans, editor, *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 246-264, emphasizes that Gregory of Nyssa, "insists that the *kenosis* of the Incarnation is the sign *of* supreme divine power, not of the loss of it," p. 264.

[43] This is not to ignore major differences between Paul's text and context and those of the patristic period, above all Nicaea (325 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE) but to assume that John 1:1-14 became more important than Philippians 2 which was assimilated into pre-dogmatic "proto-orthodox devotion," Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, chapter 10. See Sarah Coakley, "Kenosis and Subversion: On the Repression of 'Vulnerability' in Christian Feminist Writing," in *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender: Challenges in Contemporary Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 3-39; originally in Daphne Hampson, editor, *Swallowing A Fishbone? Feminist Theologians Debate Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1996), pp. 82-111. Coakley points out that Cyril of Alexandria developed a Logos

Some Eastern Orthodox and Protestant theology sees Christians' *theosis* (divinization) and life of faith as a kenosis in which a disciple of Jesus lets go of self-will, plans, egoistic desire, and a purely autonomous life in order to surrender to the life, will, and providence of God. The disciple undergoes kenosis, a self-emptying that allows divine influence to transform, elevate, and guide the human person. In transformative *theosis* a believer is conformed to the mind and heart of Christ, participating more and more in God. *Theosis* can be said to be a process of 'becoming God' by human sharing in divine life as long as divine otherness and creaturely dependence do not disappear. *Theosis* bears out one meaning in 2 Peter 4: "… you may come to share in the divine nature …." *Theosis* involves human kenosis.

At the same time, an unnoticed paradox attends ascription of kenosis to human beings other than Jesus.[44] Kenotic theologies seem to overlook that paradox. Jesus relinquished manifestation of the incomparably greater mode of divine life. Disciples of Jesus, on the other hand, surrender sinful pride, distorted self-love, and a resistant incapacity in human nature for saving union with God. They abandon only absences of being, inferior actual conditions, and unlike Jesus enter into something superior. On a more positive reading of the human condition disciples surrender limits inherent in being a finite creature. A human, all humans, cease clinging to something creaturely in receiving something uncreated.

The paradox is that sinful human beings drawn into redemption by Jesus' cross, death and resurrection start indeed on a path of self-emptying. But not in the radical mode of Jesus. He let go of divine life in all its fullness to take on limited human life, so he could serve and redeem humanity. We let go of whatever blocks redemption but in no case let go of something superior to redemption by Jesus' kenosis.

Speaking about kenosis on the part of human beings actualizing the Church has to be mindful of that paradox in order not to weaken divine/human incommensurability. Wanting to reassure ourselves that Christ is like us and we are like Christ in every conceivable

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Christology in reference to Philippians 2. Still, that was a Logos (Johannine) Christology.

[44] For controversy on kenosis in relation to Christians' self-surrender see Coakley, "Kenosis and Subversion," and Stephen Pardue, "Kenosis and its Discontents: Towards an Augustinian Account of Divine Humility," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65, 3 (2012), pp. 271-288.

human respect except sin does not excuse ignoring divine/human otherness. The paradox is that kenosis is a universal Christian vocation yet also on the grounds of Philippians 2 an impossibility. Moreover ascetical admonition to kenosis can be dangerous for those, including Christian women, suffering oppressed identities. For them an ideal of kenotic self-sacrifice may become a passage to self-extinguishing and the foregoing of liberation through self-assertion, dialogue, and self-transcending mutuality.[45]

Is, then, kenotic *imitatio Christi* by the Church and believers impossible? In a secondary sense, it is possible. In word and deed the public ministry of Jesus disclosed the human meaning of the kenotic Incarnation that remains the exemplary measure of all future ecclesial *imitatio Christi*. This is a profound truth in liberation theology's turn to Jesus' public ministry as the principle by which to gauge and reform Church/modern world relations. Jesus acted with and taught an option for the poor.[46] Jesus' orientation toward the least, the most vulnerable, and the marginalized belongs to Jesus' and the Holy Spirit's constituting the Church as kenotic. The most intense moment in Jesus' kenosis comes in the suffering and death that, John's Gospel points out, together with the resurrection manifest the glory of God in an extremity of divine love and its blessed result. Jesus is the servant of humanity who exercises sovereignty through the influence of the Holy Spirit within human freedom not through external constraints.

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[45] On mutuality as integral to kenosis see chapter 5 in Jane E. Linehan, "The Kenosis of God and Reverence for the Particular: A Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann" (unpublished dissertation, Marquette University: Proquest, UMI Dissertations Publishing 1998, 99127729).

[46] Leading exegete John Meier remarks, the Jesus of history is "the Jesus we can 'recover' and examine by using the scientific tools of modern historical research," and for that reason is "a modern abstraction and construct," less than the totality of what Jesus felt, thought, said, and did, and other than the Jesus of faith-knowledge who is the object of theology, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume One: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 25. Exegetical debates swirl around societal aspects in Jesus' public ministry. Some claim he was all about social reform. To the contrary holds Meier, "the historical Jesus subverts not just some ideologies but all ideologies, including liberation theology … [and] ultimately eludes all our neat theological programs," p. 199. Is not an 'option for the poor' too a modern concept used to open the meaning of New Testament texts?

The option for the poor by the Church and individual members participates in Jesus' kenosis in his public ministry.

The fullest measure of ecclesial and individual kenosis takes place in witness to Jesus that suffers his fate of suffering and death. Historically, for the Church in El Salvador the option for the poor by the Jesuits at the University of Central America in San Salvador imitated Jesus in his public ministry in an option for the poor and came to the mode of complete witness. Martyrdom is *imitatio Christi* that depends on and participates in Jesus' kenosis but does not have its own original human meaning. Martyrdom enters into Jesus' kenotic death, and in Johannine perspective, also manifests the glory of God, hidden though the person's resurrection is. And facing martyrdom, John's Gospel assures the Church, involves the Holy Spirit in being Paraclete, Advocate for those undergoing false accusation and condemnation just as had Jesus. Not only the mission of the incarnate Word but that of the Holy Spirit is kenotic.

According to Thomas Aquinas the missions of Son and Spirit consist in the two Trinitarian processions to which a temporal effect is added. The temporal effect added to the procession of the Son from the Father is the assuming of an individual human nature by the Son. The temporal effect added to the procession of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son is more difficult to pin down. The Spirit's manner of presence in creation and salvation has qualities of both hiddenness and transparency. The Spirit, for example, inspires the prophets and authors of the Scriptures but does not have, as it were, a speaking role like that of Isaiah, Jesus, and the apostles. The Incarnation is the kenosis of the Word, but the kenosis of the Spirit is immanent in the world in a dynamic, diffuse, elusive, and yet divinely effective way. The visible mission of the Spirit from Pentecost onward elicits a hearing of the gospel that leads to belief in Christ, to a following of Christ that includes the option for the poor. The Spirit acts as Paraclete in those witnessing to Christ with an option for the poor under duress. One thinks of the courage of Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador.

In adverting above to the kenotic Church, I distinguished the kenotic, Trinitarian constitution from the continuous historical actualization of the Church through successive eras and in plural cultural contexts. To stress again a salient point, the dimension and scope of Church renewal pertain to historical actualization of an already given kenotic dimension. Any change in the Church toward

renewal or reform can be only a process of new historical actualizing of what the Church already has been given to be. At the same time it has to be recalled that much in reform and renewal depends on graced, free, human receptivity with more and less creativity. Historical contingency comes with any context and also enters into any renewal and reform.

Historically contingent elements change. Changes are fraught with stress and should not be underestimated. For example, before Gutenberg and the Reformation direct access to Scripture was limited to those adept in Hebrew, Greek, and/or Latin. Printing presses, new translations from the original languages and the Latin Vulgate into vernacular languages made possible multitudinous copies of the one Bible. All who were literate wherever they lived and to an ever-increasing extent whichever language they spoke potentially were gaining access to the written Word of God. That shift in actualization in access to Scripture was essential to the Reformation and a momentous change in historical actualization of how something in the Church's constitution, the New Testament, figured in the life of the Church.

Again, Jesus' calling of the apostles and momentum toward apostolic succession are an ingredient in the constitution of the Church. But it is a matter of contingent actualization whether a bishop like originally Middle Eastern Irenaeus of Lyon (130-202 CE) was seated on a special chair in a Frankish diocese modeled on the Roman Empire's administrative district or like Anglo-Saxon Boniface (ca. 645-754 CE) was a peripatetic monk-bishop who evangelized Frisians and Teutons. Actualization flows from divine grace but only in and through people's creativity, adaptation, spiritual insights, or contrarily has to make do with poverty of imagination that renders actualization dull and dreary.

Toward the Whole New Testament

A fourth methodological orientation, perhaps *pace* McLean, is that New Testament sources for a humbler, more earthy idea of the Church cannot be located only or even primarily in Pauline and deutero-Pauline writings. The whole New Testament, including the Gospel of

John, contributes to the theology of a Church marked by kenosis.[47] Concentrating on the concrete, earthly aspect of the Church McLean advises that focus on Philippians 2 will rid the Church of harmful triumphalism due to over-determination of ecclesiology by the Prologue to John's Gospel. McLean blames assimilation of John's Gospel for a too exalted a picture of the Church floating above its own humanity. To the extent that McLean commends Paul, that is all to the good. However, there are problems with preferring Paul. Before his dramatic encounter on the way to Damascus, Paul had no experience of Jesus in Galilee or Judaea, no human knowledge of Jesus' public ministry anywhere. His knowledge of Jesus and the gospel comes primarily and authoritatively from the risen Jesus, not from Paul's witnessing the public ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul's own, unique, direct access to Jesus, amplified by immersion in Christian community, was exclusively 'high' and heavenly rather than gained from a 'low' source that started from Jesus' Jewish followers' ordinary human experience of him.

That is to say, for one thing Paul's body of Christ ecclesiology did not contain the idea of the Church as People of God. For another Philippians 2 cannot be isolated from the Pauline idea of the Church as the body of which Christ is the head. Mystical Body ecclesiology tends toward maximum identification of the historically active and visible Church with Christ. Christ is sinless. The Church is Christ's body. So too the Church is sinless. But the members at least are not. Moreover McLean objects to an image of the Church as the spotless (sinless) bride of Christ, almost as if that image were implied only in John 3:29, Revelation 19:7, 21:2, 9–10, and 22:17. A more familiar, more explicit likening of the Church to the bride of Christ, however, is deutero-Pauline Ephesians 5: 24–25. Recourse to Paul, then, is not the whole solution to an overly high ecclesiology.

Towards Mission

A fifth methodological orientation collects and focuses a Trinitarian theme already begun. The Church derives from and shares in the eternal creativity of the Word/Son and Holy Spirit Who together

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[47] See George F. McLean, "Introduction: Disjunctions in the 21st Century," pp. 3-5.

remain immanent wellsprings in the Church. As an outcome of Trinitarian missions in which God gives away as it were divinity, not clinging to eternal life, the constitutive givenness of the Church already is kenotic. Consequently the question for Church/modern world renewal becomes, how can the constitutive kenotic givenness be re-imagined and re-actualized? I will not try to be exhaustive but only to underline a few major kenotic aspects of the givenness or the constituting of the Church by Christ and the Spirit.[48]

For one thing the Church shares in the kenotic aspect of the divine missions. Contemporary ecclesiology has recognized this in an ecumenical consensus on the missionary nature of the Church. The Church exists from and is constituted by divine kenosis in the Incarnation and the sending of the Spirit that together institute communion between humans and the Trinity and on that basis among humans. Communion is past, present, and future. As some have said with only slight exaggeration, the Church does not have a mission; mission has a Church. The missionary nature of the Church comes to dramatic kenosis in giving away without return what is most valuable, the good news of Christ, the life energies of missionaries, and Christian fellowship. [49] The missionary nature of the Church, moreover, means that all the baptized enter into the mission of the Church to continue and fulfill the mission of Christ. Continuing kenosis, divine and human, belongs to the missionary nature of the Church.

Consequently the historical actualization of Christianity as divinely constituted exceeds any and all cultural, linguistic, social, etc. instantiations. The Church is not and cannot be exhausted or fully realized in any one era, culture, language, or society. No era, culture, or people can claim to fully represent Christ, gospel, and Church. To think it could was an erroneous tendency in the euphoria of

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[48] See a brief blog by Ben Myers on a kenotic motif in the pastoral theology of former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, "Rowan Williams and Kenotic Ecclesiology," *Faith and Theology*, 2 September 2008, http://www.faith-theology.com/2008/09/rowan-williams-and-kenotic-ecclesiology.html.

[49] On the history of mission see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), Richard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), Stephen B. Bevans, SVD and Roger P. Schroeder, SVD, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

Constantine's legitimizing of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Augustine to the contrary taught that the Church could not be identified with the (Christian) Roman Empire. The Church is always more than its concrete actualization in any era or culture. In that sense the Church is always in process, continually becoming, and cannot be solidly identified with any culture, society, or period as if permanently normative. The Church has an inherent capacity for discovery and realization of new and unforeseen possibilities released in gifts and potentials in different cultures. Ecclesial self-surrender of elements in its own status quo when the gospel of Christ and the Spirit invite new cultures into Trinitarian communion is a type of kenosis. It has to cease uncalled-for clinging to even very valuable customs, habits of thought, auxiliary structures, and revered modes of operation. The transition from Vatican I to Vatican II still underway indicates how challenging that surrender is.

Too, the Church has more givenness in its identity than does any social formation derived from human ingenuity (voluntary associations) or human nature (family, state). The Church does not exist and act purely according to its own discretion as if it were a human project with an enduring purpose established by human agreement. The Church is at the disposition of the Trinity because the initial and on-going missions of Word and Spirit constitute the Church. In the nature of the case the scope of Church reform encompasses multiple, contingent, historical actualizations of a givenness in constant immediacy to the Trinity, and exposed to the corrosion of sin. But the divine institution and substance cannot be reformable.

Ecclesia semper reformanda does not mean the Trinity is always beginning over again, as if the New Testament origins of the Church were negligible not normative. It is helpful to recall that the Protestant Reformation was a demanding summons that the Church become what it already is in its normative origins.[50] True, opposed ideas of what the Church is eventually divided Luther's reform from the Church and vice versa. But those divided into Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Calvinists et al. sought nothing other than for the Church to be what it is given to be from God, and so to live, to actualize what Christ and the Spirit had given and were giving. The Reformation was

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[50] See John De Gruchy, "Re-forming Congregations in a Time of Global Change: Toward a Kenotic Ecclesiology," in *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 2006, pp. 51-67, digital journal: http://journals.ptsem.edu/id/PSB2006271/dmd008.

not about seeking to alter what God had given but about identifying the means of knowing what that is, and then reclaiming it. The Reformation was all about regaining the divine constitution of the Church in order to actualize it faithfully.

IV. From Context to Matrix: Secularization as an Ecclesial Good

Sections I and II have addressed the context of the Church. Section III laid out some orientations for kenotic ecclesiology. At this point an interruptive revisiting of context is appropriate. 'Context' denotes a larger text adjacent to a given passage and by extension refers to an environment or situation surrounding a particular historical reality. Generally speaking a context is conceived as other than the text or historical reality. That is how Sections I and II understood context. Yet that standard concept has a deficiency that leaves it inadequate. For what apparently is external may at the same time and in some way be internal to the text or historical reality. That is why for certain purposes Lonergan's concept of 'cultural matrix' is preferable to 'cultural context'. 'Matrix', from *mater*, mother, connotes something not only environmental or circumstantial but also generative and for that reason internally linked to something distinct from it that is related by origin. Matrix allows conceiving also a reciprocal internal relationship between what otherwise are text and context, historical reality and context thought of as an accompanying and explanatory environment. That is, appeal to 'context' in the humanities and theology emphasizes distinctness of text and context not also an internal co-presence signified by 'matrix'. The concept of matrix has an ecclesiological application.

It would be inadequate to think of the Church and world or Church in a context, as if the Church were something pre-formed and completed in heaven, as it were, and subsequently dropped into a series of diverse earthly circumstances that in no way entered into the Church's constitution, self-understanding, and actualization. To the contrary, however, the Church exists and acts in cultural contexts that always already have a presence inside an historical series and a panorama of simultaneous actualizations of the Church. So the Church has always existed in a cultural matrix with some manner, hopefully redeemed, of presence in the Church. This is to approach historicity by another route. The historical events of Christianity's

origin belong to the constitution and initial actualization of the Church. They are not simply the historical context in which Christianity originated.

Apart from the central event of Jesus's suffering, death and resurrection there were other incorporations of context into the Church's structure and self-understanding. In Acts 6: 1-6, for example, the apostles faced a very human, earthly issue. Some widows among followers of Jesus complained that they were not receiving an equitable dole of bread from the common stores of food. The apostles solved the problem by instituting a new Church office, deacons. The apostles appointed seven men as deacons who were to handle the administration and serving of food. The distribution of bread and the widows' complaint was a 'circumstance' that entered into not only the actualization but into the very constitutional structure of the Church in the apostolic period. In light of this apostolic initiative Benedict XVI taught the inherent, constitutive not adventitious role of social charity in the early Church and ever since.[51]

Kenotic ecclesiology starts with the kenotic constitution of the Church and seeks to imagine new actualizations of that givenness in modern/postmodern matrices. Secularity is a pervasive aspect of those matrices. However understood, secularization belongs to both Church and world, not to the world alone as if only an external context. Secularity is a feature of the cultural matrix around and in the contemporary Church. On the side of the 'world', its secularity can be defined by movement (emancipation?) away from a former proximity and subordination to the faith of the Church in the historical actualization that was Christendom. In modernity historical processes of secularization have affected and to some extent have entered into the Church's self-understanding, life, and pastoral practice, its actualization. In a subtraction model the Church has been a passive victim that lost many things: real estate; social authority and a monopoly on legitimating truth and value; political power; and members. In a more positive perspective did not the Church gain from secularization something internal to itself, as distinguished from accepting an external circumstance about which it could do nothing?

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[51] Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice, 2009), w2.vatican.va/.../hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html, n. 21 on Acts 6: 1-6.

An answer in favor of a positive contribution from secularization to the Church's historical actualization can appeal to the writings of John Courtney Murray, S.J. (1904–1967). His work, not least his influence as a *peritus* within the commission that prepared the *Declaration on Religious Liberty* at Vatican II, pointed to the institutional distinction of Church from state as something significant for the spiritual flourishing of the Church. Murray argued that pre-modern and early modern Church policies on its exercise of power in the temporal order blended the Church's possession and exercise of powers in spiritual and temporal realms in a way typical of Constantinian Christendom. Mainly the See of Rome but also local bishops were alleged to share Christ's comprehensive authority. Pope Innocent III propounded the full measure by declaring the Pope to possess the plenitude of all power temporal and spiritual granted by Christ to Peter. All royal and civil authority derived by delegation from papal authority. Against that background Murray argued past Robert Bellarmine's underwriting of papal exercise of temporal power in emergencies only. Murray's thesis that the Church, Pope, and bishops did not possess temporal power in the first place was a rude shock to curial theology that associated a curtailing of Church authority in civil matters with the French Revolution's anti-ecclesial separation of church from state.

But the French Revolution was not the meaningful event from which Murray proceeded. He looked to the founding and constitution of the United States. The First Amendment to the U.S. constitution states, "Congress shall make or pass no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Murray explained that this functional separation of church and state as institutions relieved the Church of the burden of thinking and acting with temporal power over civil authority. Appealing to the classic Letter to Emperor Anastasius by Pope Gelasius I in 494 Murray reclaimed Gelasian dualism. Gelasius had declared, "Two there are, august Emperor, by which the world is chiefly ruled …." The two kinds of authority, imperial authority at all levels and episcopal and papal authority, do not coincide. Of the two, ecclesial authority had primacy because its origin was Christ and its goal is eternal life. But Murray pointed to the long history of struggles between popes and rulers as a learning process for the Church. A series of trials and errors has led to clarifying the nature and exercise of the Church's spiritual

primacy. Vatican II's *Declaration on Religious Liberty* registered that new clarity.

The Church was true to its nature, here conceived as its constitution, when it sought to exercise authority toward what pertains to eternal life in the pilgrim condition only by spiritual and not by political or coercive means. Consequently, the policy and practice of legal establishment were not due to the constitution of the Church but to contingency in actualization. Vatican II abandoned the previously prevailing idea that Church doctrine required legal establishment under the coercive authority of the state, where feasible. The alternative was an idea, polity, and experience of non-establishment that Murray brought to Vatican II from the United States. Vatican II broke the putative bond between Catholic doctrine and establishment.

I think one conclusion from Murray's overall argument and Vatican II's *Declaration on Religious Liberty* can be stated in terms of secularization as a good for and within the Church. Assertions of civil authority's independence from Church authority led to the Church's eventual affirmation of the spiritual nature of the Church's authority. Letting go of claims to power in temporal matters purified the Church and enabled deeper appropriation of its own internal and external mission. The Church by divine institution indeed had the highest kind of authority from Christ. But that, on the principle of *imitatio Christi*, did not include possession or exercise of civil authority. Secularization as historical process incited in the Church clarity on the spiritual nature of its mission, its sacramental power, and on the spiritual nature of its teaching and governing authority. In modernity secularization exerted a successful, incremental, practical and theoretical influence removing civil from ecclesiastical authority. Vatican II grasped and approved that independence of civil authority in the *Declaration on Religious Liberty* and the *Pastoral Constitution.* Vatican II likewise understood and taught the spiritual quality of the Church's exercise of authority in those two documents. The ecclesiology in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* and the *Decree on Mission* likewise supported purifying the Church's understanding and exercise of power in temporal matters. It was to be a spiritual exercise of authority such as takes place in the sacraments, preaching, and teaching. In that larger ecclesiological framework the very secularization that ended Christendom also prompted a new depth in

the Church's self-understanding and way of actualizing its constitution.

Conciliar relinquishing of a claim on establishment could be understood as a type of kenosis, a letting-go of a too-wide exercise of authority in social existence. And this kenosis came through secularization of civil authority at governmental and personal levels. In accepting some of the results of secularization the Church did not surrender its Trinitarian constitution but let go of a contingent, customary Constantinian mode of actualization. The Church's kenosis due to processes of secularization seems to be an element in the wider meaning of secularization as letting creation be known and appreciated for its intrinsic existence and attributes. Neo-Augustinian resentment against modernity involves unremitting criticism of secularization. It will be interesting to see how Pope Francis interprets secularity. Will he continue the neo-Augustinian skepticism toward secularity of Benedict XVI and some theologians Catholic and Protestant, or will he recover the more balanced, positive yet discriminating view in the *Pastoral Constitution* and in John Paul II's social encyclicals? The beginning of an answer can be inferred from Francis's knowledge of chemistry and respect for the natural sciences, the realm of secularity *par excellence*, in his *Laudato Si* on climate change.

V. Conclusion: A Kenotic Agenda in a Pluralist Democracy

In conclusion I'd like to set forth a tentative agenda for a more kenotic actualizing of the Church in the U.S. context with attention to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The USCCB actualization of kenosis in the public sphere and political life needs development. Confusion comes from USCCB lobbying activities at federal and state levels on behalf of specifically Catholic convictions and goals at the same time that it espouses and advocates the common good. Sociologist and social ethicist John A. Coleman S.J. commented that, "[it] may be fairly hard, simultaneously, to be seen or to operate as a religious (albeit legitimate) interest group and also, at the very same time, as an interlocutor for the public or common

good."[52] Interest group lobbying in fact and in perception benefits private interests not the public common good.

Kenosis actualizes an orientation to service and the common good. Clarity in the USCCB's and individual Catholics' entry into the public sphere would benefit from the approach to social mission taken by public theology. It seems to me that a few items for a more kenotic USCCB public-theological agenda are these:

1) The USCCB could produce a brief public document teaching the universal right/duty correlation on religious liberty in the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*. The First Amendment right of Catholics and the USCCB to exercise religious liberty involves the corresponding civic and religious duty to fully respect the right to freedom of religion and conscience of all citizens, indeed of all human beings especially those minority religions in the U.S. whose right to freedom may be most at risk, such as Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. Why would not the USCCB ally on this concern for freedom with Baptists likewise vigilant about religious liberty in law and practice for religious minorities and all citizens?

2) The USCCB could issue a brief document on the importance of free, public education for the nation as a whole, with an offer of dialogue between Catholic and public school leaders for the sake of an overlapping objective, a literate, educated youth and citizenry with sound value-judgments pertaining to the common good in a pluralist democracy.

3) The USCCB and lay experts could re-institute the dialogical process and broad consultation that led to *Economic Justice For* All in light of cultural, social, and economic conditions that have emerged after the 1990's in legislative and executive dismantling of the New Deal. Ecumenical and interreligious consultation on those more recent conditions would be a valuable next step toward renewing application of principles enunciated in the 1986 document.

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[52] John A. Coleman, S.J., "North American Culture's Receptivity to Catholic Social Teaching," in Daniel McDonald S.J. *Catholic Social Teaching in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), pp. 195-218 at 208. Charles E. Curran made a similar point in, "The Reception of Catholic Social and Economic Teaching in the United States," in Kenneth Himes, OFM, editor, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), pp. 469-93 at 484.

4) The USCCB could re-conceive and re-structure the concrete manner of the Church's entry into the public sphere. The episcopacy could relinquish sponsorship of lobbying that seeks to influence the legislative and executive branches of government at federal and state levels. Instead the USCCB could shift the episcopal and pastoral priority from a focus on formation of public policies to assisting dioceses and parishes in gaining familiarity with the breadth of Catholic social teaching. An informed Catholic laity then would be capable and empowered to take up tasks in regard to public policies.

But how might that assistance take place in the grass-roots? Sociologists Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell provide a decisive reason for not conceiving a parish forum for Catholic social teaching primarily in terms of a classroom or lecture-hall for adult education.[53] They found that only one thing moved church-going people from social concern learned from Scripture, homilies, and churches' teachings into active involvement in civic praxis. Altruistic values are not motives. It was only active participation in a social network that led people from values, ideals, ideas, and principles into active engagement. Social networks involve close friends, or small parish groups, talking about religion with family and friends. Among parishioners civil and political activity flow from their participation in religiously linked social networks alert to social issues.

Consequently, dioceses and parishes are best advised to encourage and foster development of social networks connected to Catholic social teaching and focused on matters under discussion in the public sphere. Social networks would seem to be the specific kind of local forum best suited to enable more conventional Catholics to become social Catholics.

In the perspective of this chapter and the ecclesiology of Vatican II, it follows that the theologically and sociologically most appropriate influence of the Church in the public sphere and political life comes from the laity. They, claiming their Catholic vision and value-judgments are capable of acting in their independent capacity as citizens, not from episcopal sponsorship of lobbying or other direct episcopal influence on government officials. That role of the laity was the position also of Murray in consonance with the ecclesiology of

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[53] Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, with the assistance of Shaylyn Romney Garrett, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), pp. 471-479.

Vatican II. Lobbying and seeking episcopal direct influence on public policy and government officials by-pass the agency of laity, who after all also are the Church, believers who are citizens. Kenosis by the bishops would create space for kenosis by social Catholics divested of the primacy of self-interest to enter public life in exercise of their citizenship. The simplest kenotic change is to embrace the option for the poor, in line with Pope Francis. The simplicity is its accessibility without grandiose scenes of utopian outcomes. The option begins in a movement from asking how does this public policy or practice affect me, and those close to or like me, to asking how does it affect the most vulnerable, the poor, the marginalized. That is how the option for the poor takes root. A Church that asks that question sets itself on a kenotic path in the public life of a pluralist democracy.