

6-1-2013

## From the Editor's Desk [Theological Studies, June 2013]

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This issue continues our commemoration of Vatican II's 50th anniversary with a set of four articles: one on mission, two on reception of the council, and one on religious life in the Vatican II era. There was no conscious decision to gather these articles, and those that follow, around a certain theme—except insofar as all Christian theological writing is centered on Jesus Christ as Savior. It does seem, however, that the articles all share a concern for the theme of dialogue.

I begin my argument for this unifying theme with a great generalization: In some sense dialogue is autochthonous to personhood. It expresses the relational character of what it means to be personal, whether in the uncreated triune God or in the created human community in its world. To be in relation is transcendently essential to created persons as spirits, vis-à-vis both their Creator and their fellow human beings with whom they symbolically communicate. This communication can occur and develop only through linguistic, imaginative, and practical dialogue. This admittedly philosophical theorem is supported, I believe, by Thomas Aquinas's great principle, adapted from Pseudo-Dionysius, that "bonum est diffusivum sui," an expansive and generous goodness that arises from God's love. In both beginning and end, then, dialogue is the enactment of self-reflective love.

Let me then apply this principle to the articles published here.

Stephen Bevans, with a fresh look at the Vatican II documents, teases out of them the council's missiology, which of course builds on the council's ecclesiology and soteriology. The church exists first to receive and then to communicate divine revelation in Jesus Christ "to the ends of the earth." In all its members and institutional expressions it must be engaged with the historical developments of the whole human family and with earth's ecology. Bevans sees the massive and complex phenomenon of globalization as profoundly affecting the church's mission today. We could perhaps even view the phenomenon as itself a kind of dialogue, primarily, but certainly not exclusively, between the Global North and the Global South. Characterizing the North in one significant aspect is that it is the primary seat of secularism—stemming from the Enlightenment and consequent divorce of throne and altar, such that it first became thinkable that one could live without explicit reference to a transcendent being or God and then became a way of life for increasingly large populations.

Then there is the Global South, home to seething populations on the move, populations not originally touched by Enlightenment values but soon increasingly so through a "dialogue" of ideas. From the North to the South: first via colonialization and Christian missionary efforts to convert and baptize "natives" into the church; and second via economic globalization spurred by new technologies and transnational corporations seeking cheap labor and global markets. Then from the South to the North, through the same technologies but also through migration of throngs of people fleeing poverty and corrupt regimes amenable to capitalist exploitation.

Between the Global North and South, then, an agonistic dialogue is underway—typically without agreed upon rules of engagement and often with consequent distress and anxiety over shifting unknowns due to, among other factors, differences of language, mutually strange ways of life, and entrenched capitalist self-interest. Yet ineluctably the dialogue continues. In the tumultuous mix, however, our faith is that God is present, continuing to be mysteriously *diffusivum sui* and to call the human

community to discern how revelation persists in the often alarming but nevertheless essential dialogue.

In the articles by Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator and Peter Phan we learn what the dialogue looks like in Africa and Asia, specifically in light of the global event of the Second Vatican Council. The authors argue that the council spurred a dialogue between the church and native populations that in many ways moved beyond the false beginnings of imperious colonialism to achieve a more authentic inculturation of the gospel: native populations finding their own ways of being Christian, developing their own theologies, owning their own churches, and effecting interreligious and ecclesial collaboration throughout Africa and Asia.

Maryanne Confoy sees religious life in the era of Vatican II marked by a failed dialogue between two views of religious life: a traditionalist view that sees it as a "state of perfection" and a historically adroit view that sees religious called to adapt founding charisms to the shifting realities of history. The latter view, she suggests, must supersede the former, as religious enter into "dialogical living" of founding charisms in order better to serve the global church in the 21st century and offer healing and hope in and through their prophetic, ecclesial witness.

Seeking "a possible universal theory of sanctification [or salvation]," Robert Daly suggests that dialogue between theology and the social and natural sciences is one promising avenue. The search might begin by bringing Bernard Lonergan's "Law of the Cross" and theology of conversion into dialogue with René Girard's mimetic theory. In Robert Doran's analysis, "Lonergan provides a heuristic structure for . . . understanding the doctrine of redemption, while Girard contributes . . . to filling in the details of that structure."

Another sort of dialogue concerns Kevin Hughes, who argues that the tendency of some scholars to pose Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure as dialectical opposites does a disservice to both them and the church. He sees their two theologies, rather, as providing dialogical, complementary traditions that can enrich the church's reflection on revelation.

Our three final contributions also center on the theme of dialogue. "Eucharistic hospitality" expresses Thomas Rausch's proposal that, prior to churches' agreeing to full interchurch communion, ecumenical dialogue might be practiced by offering occasional reception of the Eucharist to individuals in particular circumstances. Julia Fleming probes the theological history of double-effect reasoning, focusing on the theology of Jean-Pierre Gury. She argues that, for Gury, the principle of double effect arose and developed by dialogue among five key theologians from Aquinas (d. 1274) to Joseph Carrière (d. 1864); and that Gury himself operated through dialogue between two principles, imputability and justification. Finally, hoping to offer an account of the virtues needed for human flourishing today, Michael Lawler and Todd Salzman encourage dialogue between natural virtue ethics deriving from the Aristotelian tradition and Christian virtue ethics deriving from following Jesus Christ.

My point in belaboring the theme of dialogue is to affirm that we humans are true to ourselves as images of God only to the extent that we engage in dialogue at every level of our existence. This holds true as well for ecclesial offices.

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